# City Research Online

## City, University of London Institutional Repository

**#AidToo: social media spaces and the transformation of the reporting of aid scandals in 2018**

**Dr Glenda Cooper**

**Senior Lecturer, Department of Journalism, City University of London**

**Author Contact details:**

**Dr Glenda Cooper,**

**Department of Journalism, City University of London,**

**Northampton Square, London, EC1V 0HB**

**Glenda.cooper.1@city.ac.uk**

# #AidToo: social media spaces and the transformation of the reporting of aid scandals in 2018

**Abstract:**

In 2018, sexual abuse scandals concerning Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK, which had been known about for some years in the industry, finally received widespread coverage.  Applying Greer and McLaughlin's (2017) scandal model and building on Langer and Gruber's (2020) work on agenda setting in a hybrid media system  this paper uses in-depth interviews with whistleblowers, legacy media journalists, and those who created alternative media spacesto analyse changing aid-journalism relationships.

The findings suggest the scandals were previously kept out of the public domain for several reasons: aid agencies' use of deflective media strategies and legal threats; fears by whistleblowers that such stories could assist the conservative media's anti-aid agenda; and unsuccessful approaches to liberal media outlets. The move from latency to amplification came about because of investigations by legacy media journalists, but also media spaces such as WhatsApp and the *Fifty Shades of Aid* Facebook group. These spaces allowed women to share stories and form connections. The paper examines the transformative the interplay of legacy and social media in a hybrid system and argues for the consideration of closed as well as open social media spaces when considering the process of scandalisation.

**Key words**: aid agencies, #AidToo, #MeToo, media, journalists, humanitarian, Facebook, social media

**Introduction**

On 9 February 2018 *The Times* newspaper published a front-page story about sexual exploitation and abuse by Oxfam workers in Haiti – a story that subsequently won its author Sean O'Neill the accolades of Scoop of the Year and News Reporter of the Year at the British Press Awards (News UK, 2019). A day after the O'Neill story, the *Mail on Sunday* published revelations about alleged abuse and harassment by senior executives at Save the Children UK's head office. Consequently, allegations were made against other non-governmental organisations such as World Vision UK, the United Nations and Medecins Sans Frontieres. Within six months, the UK's House of Commons International Development Select Committee had concluded that sexual exploitation and abuse were endemic in the aid sector, and there had been a collective failure of leadership and engagement and a "self-delusion" in dealing with and tackling problems (House of Commons, 2018).

The background to these events were as follows. In 2011, the Oxfam GB country director in Haiti, Roland van Hauwermeiren had resigned after an internal report found six staff guilty of misconduct. It emerged however in 2018 that the misconduct had been allegations of sexual exploitation, bullying and intimidation, and the downloading of pornography. One of those involved had been van Hauwermeiren. As a result of the scandal becoming public, Penny Lawrence, the deputy chief executive resigned, the Charity Commission started a statutory inquiry and a whistle-blower revealed that s/he had raised questions about allegations of sexual abuse by Oxfam employees several years earlier.

The Save the Children UK scandal concerned the head office in London after whistleblowers revealed that complaints of sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour had been made against former chief executive, Justin Forsyth, and head of policy, Brendan Cox. Cox left before a tribunal took place into the allegations; the allegations against Forsyth were settled through mediation. When Forsyth was given the deputy chief executive of UNICEF, Save did not tell his new employers about the complaints.

The consequences of these scandals receiving widespread coverage were catastrophic for the aid agencies at the centre of them. Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK both saw a succession of senior figures resign, while they also lost significant public support and donations - Save the Children alone estimated their loss in the region of £67m (Marsh, 2018).

Yet these scandals were historical. The Oxfam scandal dated back nearly a decade to the aftermath of the Haitian earthquake of 2010, while the allegations against Save the Children executives referred to incidents that had happened in 2012 and 2015. However, there had been little interest from the mainstream media until several years later.

How did scandals that were previously dismissed become front page news, and trend on social media sites? This paper therefore looks at the coverage of this humanitarian scandal. Some of the ideas developed in this paper were first outlined in Cooper (2019) and it adopts Greer and McLaughlin's scandal model (2017) to trace the development of the scandal, but considers the interplay between mainstream media and social media in bringing this scandal to public attention, following Chadwick (2017)'s and Langer and Gruber (2020)'s analysis of how the hybridity of media systems may allow different actors to participate and influence in media events.

**Methodology**

This paper uses Greer and McLaughlin's scandal activation model to analyse the coverage via Nexis. It also uses 12 interviews with whistleblowers, journalists, aid workers and social media experts who contributed to the scandal breaking. Beyond this it uses a survey, with members of Fifty Shades of Aid (n=*48*), a closed Facebook group for both men and women in which the scandal was widely discussed.
The subjects of the interviews were 'elite' (Gillham, 2000) – journalists, whistleblowers and aid workers who took part in the media coverage of this scandal, or who facilitated this. The journalists were selected by a Nexis and Box of Broadcasts search, where by lines were sourced and linked to reporting of the scandal, and also by snowballing where interviewees were asked to nominate potential informants on the basis of their own networks (Bryman, 2012: 202-3). The aid workers who took part were selected again primarily by Nexis but then by snowballing which led me to those who might have not been publicly named in the media, but who had played a role in bringing the story to media attention.
A participant information form and consent form were sent and answered before the interviews took place. The interviews consisted of open and closed questions (see Gillham, 2000:67-70 and Kvale, 1996:133-5) and explored historical context as well as the contemporaneous. Interviewees were asked about their involvement in the #AidToo scandal and the role they played in media coverage. Interviews were

generally face-to-face and lasted between 45 and 75 minutes; when some interviewees were overseas, however, I interviewed them via Skype or telephone. All quotes were anonymised. The interviews took place over the period July 2018 to August 2019; exact dates, locations and times are not given for identification reasons. One interviewee after having been interviewed subsequently withdrew consent for their quotes to be used directly but allowed the information to remain as background. The interviews were then coded and analysed thematically.

With the survey, I prepared a ten-question survey for the Fifty Shades of Aid group. The survey was distributed via the admins on the site with a clear explanation about the research and the researcher, and that it was an anonymous survey.

**The process of scandalisation**

Scandals evolve if someone accuses public figures or organisations of having trespassed social norms, or of having harmed someone/something, with the result that media cover the case provoking anger among the audience (Kepplinger et al, 2012, p.659). Academic discussion of scandal has moved from being dismissed as trivial gossip or rumour to serious consideration of how it affects the relationship between publics and those in positions of power. Castells (1997) saw media scandals as part of a crisis of democracy, in particular a phenomenon of liberal democratic countries where political parties who have been in power for many years. The growth of information management, where politicians could promote themselves also made them vulnerable to scandal, which became big business for the tabloid press (Tumber, 2004).

Thompson (2000) developed a social theory of scandal that takes scandals to be "struggles over symbolic power in which reputation and trust are at stake" (p. 262). Importantly is the fact that scandals are mediated "literally played out in the media and the activities of media personnel and organisations…play[ing] a crucial role" (p.74). The focus on figures such as the high-profile politician, the dissolving of the public/private divide and the increasing 24/7 media landscape has led to a condition "in which distant others are visible in virtually the same time frame" (p.39).

Much of the research into the significance and impact of scandals has been focused on elite political figures – Watergate being the key reference point (Schudson, 2004, Davis, 2006; Entman ,2012), or celebrity scandals that have been tabloid fodder (Petersen, 2010; Twombly, 2018). The #AidToo scandal certainly had

high profile 'players' in the fact that Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK were household names, but those at the centre of the particular scandals (Roland Hauwermeiren, the Oxfam GB Haiti director, Justin Forsyth, CEO of Save and Brendan Cox, director of policy at Save) were not public figures in the same way politicians or celebrities are.

So, the choice of Greer and McLaughlin's scandal model was therefore to examine two things. First, it would employ a scandal theory where institutional processes were paramount, as the significance of #AidToo was how the aid industry itself then had to confront uncomfortable truths about itself that went beyond the individual charities. Greer and McLaughlin draw on the work of Butler and Drakeford (2005) who analysed post-war UK welfare scandals and the impact of those scandals on social policy. Second, the model focuses on the intermediatization - what they call "the viral interaction within and between corporate and social media" (Greer and McLaughlin, 2017: 116). Greer and McLaughlin argue that while the work of Thompson, and Butler and Drakeford are valuable in theorising scandal, they predate a social media era which means that scandals can no longer be temporally constrained. I will argue that for the #AidToo scandal, the use of social media spaces played a vital role in the scandal, following the work of Langer and Gruber (2020) who analysed the Windrush scandal. They concluded that different types of media contribute to reaching an attention 'tipping point' which pushes issues onto a government agenda and overcoming previous inaction. Beyond this I will look at the particular importance of private social media spaces, unlike Langer and Gruber who focus on public sites such as Twitter and digital petitions.

Greer and McLaughlin developed their model to inquire into recent institutional scandals in the UK, and the regular calls for public inquiries by the news media, pressure groups and social movements that come in their wake. It conceptualises scandal as a *process* and suggests that there are five stages: latency, activation, reaction, amplification and accountability. This examines how a story moves from being an 'open secret' within a particular institution or sector through to publication, and to what Greer and McLaughlin call trial by media. The model predates the rise of the #MeToo movement but notes the processes of intermediatization as mentioned above. Like Langer and Gruber, and also Rottenberg et al, who looked at the coverage of the first six months of #MeToo, Greer and McLaughlin however say that social media is seldom sufficient to trigger scandal from latency to activation, but this paper

will argue that the interaction of social media with mainstream media journalists outside the development field was crucial to allow the scandal to move through all five stages.

## 1. Latency

Greer and McLaughlin describe the first stage of their scandal model as *latency*: when the 'scandal' is an open secret within the institution/sector, or is known to a select few, but is not in the public domain. The institutions then engage with denial, diversion or neutralisation to contain it.

Both the Oxfam GB scandal and the Save the Children UK scandal were known about in aid circles for some years before the 2018 media coverage. An Oxfam GB report in 2011 revealed that three men had been allowed to resign and four had been sacked after an inquiry into sexual exploitation, use of pornography, bullying and intimidation in Haiti. One of those men was Roland van Hauwermeiren, the country director.

This however did not receive coverage as a public scandal at the time in the sense that Kepplinger et al (2012) or Thompson (2000) describe it – and indeed in the way it was scandalised in 2018. While Oxfam GB were accurate to say later that they had made public the fact that there had been a report into the men's behaviour, I argue the charity engaged in forms of dismissal and diversion to neutralise the risk of the knowledge of the full scandal becoming public (Cohen, 2001; Marris et al, 2014)

Print coverage between 13 August and 13 September 2011, according to a Nexis search, reveals that there were only two Press Association newswire stories (Lancefield, 2011; Silverman, 2011) which resulted in one 'news in brief' ('nib') in the Sun and six 'nibs' in the regional press, as well as a short piece in *Third Sector*, a magazine covering the voluntary and not-for-profit sector.

[FIG 1]

The majority of the news stories were less than 100 words long, meaning they would not have a prominent position in the paper. None explicitly mentioned such terms as sexual exploitation or use of sex workers; instead Oxfam described the scandal as one concerning 'abuse of power' and 'bullying' but that there was no financial fraud involved. Van Hauwermeiren's resignation was said to be because he took 'managerial responsibility' for these issues that had occurred. The NGO also said no beneficiaries were involved, and none of the men were British.

Oxfam categorised these events as bullying/abuse of power of people and made clear they did not include misuse of donations. As a result, this would place any interest very far down a newspaper's news list (see Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001, 2017). Following Adams (1986), Oxfam's insistence that this was not a 'British' problem decreased interest the media might have had in it.

As well as neutralising the story, Oxfam GB also employed diversionary tactics – in particular, promoting personal coverage of its then chief executive, Dame Barbara Stocking, who had taken up her position ten years ago.  Just before the story broke in this limited way, Stocking was interviewed by the *Times* (Sylvester, 2011). In this piece, she described that before she had joined the agency she had "hidden behind the sofa" when an African child appeared on television during a disaster.  She then gave a wide-ranging interview to the *Guardian's* Women section, published during the coverage which focused on Oxfam's record on women. The interview began as follows:

> The idea that increasing female empowerment is the best way to reduce poverty isn't new, but in the 10 years Barbara Stocking has been chief executive of Oxfam, it has been at the heart of what the organisation does. (Saner, 2011: 16)

In neither of these pieces were there any references to the Haiti investigation.   A further positive feature also appeared in the *Times* suggesting different career options within Oxfam (Potter, 2011).

However, the model is complicated in the case of Save the Children, where arguably it moves beyond latency much earlier. Unlike Oxfam GB, there had previously been a specific story in the mainstream media detailing the Save the Children UK scandal, although it took considerable time to emerge. Interviewees claimed that the atmosphere inside Save had become "aggressive, unpleasant and macho" for several years before the story appeared and several interviewees made clear that others had confided in them about the problem (see also Glennie, 2018).

> [It] was the worst kept secret in the development world. I really don't know anyone in the development world when that story came out went 'Really?'…It was obvious but

then I heard from people that they were complaining, and nothing was happening. [Interviewee 6]

Cox resigned before a workplace tribunal took place and no information was given about why he had left. Whistle-blowers eventually turned to the media and in November 2015, the *Mail on Sunday* reported that both Brendan Cox, director of policy and Justin Forsyth, chief executive had left Save the Children (Walters, 2015).

The story – written by a political journalist -  was framed as the fall of those who had been closely linked to New Labour rather than as a humanitarian story because both Cox and Forsyth had previously worked in Number 10 Downing Street during the Labour administration of 1997-2010[1]. However, like the Oxfam story, there was limited follow-up to this story, apart from a brief news story in the *Times*, a diary item about Samantha Cameron's links to Save the Children in the *Mail* and a call-out from the *Guardian's* global professional development network for people to send in their experiences of working for Save the Children (Purvis, 2015a). In the follow-up piece, none of those published mentioned allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, except in the context of the charity taking a firm role in tackling norms that promote child abuse (Purvis, 2015b).

[FIG 2]

Interviewees said that they were reluctant to pursue the right-wing press because of fears that the story would be used to promote and anti-aid agenda but that it also seemed hard to interest the liberal press in pursuing the story, because they felt that those at the top of Save the Children were using their influence.

I thought about going to the Guardian and they did a fishing exercise [the piece from early November 2015] asking if anyone knew anything about what was going on inside Save the Children.  So, they had almost something like an 'insert here what you want to say'. I had people telling me it was bad and what they had fed into it [The Guardian call]. My intel group and I were using it perhaps for the first time to see what was going on for us. And [X] wrote this amazing piece for them. And then – nothing. The piece that they actually did publish was this very bizarre, they didn't talk about the bullying culture or the behaviours. [Interviewee 1]

The murder of Cox's wife, the MP Jo Cox in June 2016 and the widespread sympathy for him and his family meant there was no further discussion of the allegations in the mainstream media.

However, this did not mean that there was not considerable discussion around aid workers and abuse online. The use of secure online spaces proved particularly fruitful for women in this case. This sense of online community has been examined before – in such cases as Orgad (2006)'s study of breast cancer patients who communicated online, or more recently the use of secret Facebook groups by female professionals (Pruchniewska, 2019) which described how women used such spaces as non-hierarchical areas for sharing information and experiences. In crisis reporting, the work of Murrell (2014) on the Vulture Club (a secret Facebook group) for freelance foreign correspondents and Pendry (2015) on a similar (unnamed) one looked at how such groups provide (relatively) safe spaces[2] for their members to share information about newsgathering – the Vulture Club in particular was described as a 'freelancer's kit' where new reporters could ask advice from more experienced ones. Murrell suggests that the group acted as 'levelling the ground' for freelancers by sharing information on subjects such as visas, fixers and border crossings.

Women aid workers who were concerned about issues of abuse and harassment in the aid world similarly found that groups could be safe environments to share information and discuss strategies. Interviewee 1 talked about an informal 'intel group' that had been set up via WhatsApp for women who were working or had worked at Save the Children and been caught up in the Cox situation. Meanwhile, the 'Fifty Shades of Aid' Facebook group had been started as an open group in 2015 when its founder had written a piece for the Guardian's Secret Aid Worker series (https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/series/the-secret-aid-worker) about "flaky aid boys and comedy dating stories" in the humanitarian world. She set up a group to share stories which for a couple of weeks were light-hearted, until one poster shared a story of being harassed and abused; in solidarity many started to share similar stories. As the founder said:

> I wasn't ready for it. 800 people joined [the group] in a week. At that point it was completely open. The management of it – there was just me and I was on holiday in Poland at the time. And I'd said, 'if you don't want your name on something send it to me and I'll post it for you'. So people were back channelling to me stuff about

> rapes, about being sexually harassed and I became this kind of accidental conduit for
> a lot of raw stuff that people had never vocalised before and they felt they could
> because of other people. There was a kind of chain reaction effect. (Interviewee 9).

So, while the stories around harassment of aid workers were limited in the
mainstream media, online spaces were keenly discussing it.

## 2. Activation

Greer and McLaughlin describe the second stage of scandal is 'activation' – when the
allegations move from beyond a network or social media chatter into the mainstream
media. They argue that scandalous allegations circulating on social media can only
gain real traction when they are repeated by mainstream news media (Chagnon and
Chesney-Lind, 2015; Liebes and Blum-Kulka, 2004).

On 9 February 2018, the interviewees agreed that the intervention of the mainstream media
was crucial in the #AidToo story, which seems to confirm the Greer/McLaughlin
model and also compares with Langer and Gruber's work. With the Windrush
scandal, Langer and Gruber (2020) noted that legacy news media, despite the focus on
new and digital in the literature, played a crucial role in "initiating, amplifying and
sustaining attention" as part of a hybrid media landscape.

On 9 February 2018, the *Times* ran a front-page story with the headline *Top
Oxfam staff paid Haiti survivors for sex* (O'Neill, 2018a).

The day after the *Times's* story, the *Mail on Sunday* ran a piece reporting that
Brendan Cox of Save the Children UK had been accused of assaulting a woman at
Harvard University in 2015 (Walters, 2018a). While Cox initially denied the claims, a
week later he gave an interview to the paper announcing that he would resign from his
roles at the charities set up in his wife's name, and apologising to the women he had
allegedly harassed (Walters, 2018b). The paper also mentioned that Justin Forsyth had
also been subject to a complaint by a female employee.

The intervention of the *Times* and the *Mail on Sunday* brought the story into a
wider public domain. However, it is clear from the whistle-blowers' point of view,
they felt social media was also a vital part of this narrative. As well as the growing
community in closed groups, whistle-blowers said that they had been inspired to
speak out because of the #MeToo hashtag which had first started circulating in 2017.

The #MeToo stuff really started to become more prevalent and I think that was the final click in my head over that this is a problem, we do need to talk about it and it's not unique and it… became a story. I don't think any of us wanted to shy away from anymore, but that still wasn't an easy one to talk about. (Interviewee 1)

The #MeToo campaign starts, and a bunch of women start talking about it and declaring things on social media semi-anonymously and people start getting bolder and the media starts getting interested then Weinstein falls in a big way, then politicians, and it's people start saying on social media, it's going to hit the NGOs and rightly so and I think I was one of the people who said that. But we all thought it would be the Save story, not the Oxfam one. (Interviewee 6)There were people who'd been on the brink of talking, but it was just very hard before because there's so much sort of pressure on you if you think it's going to impact your job. And when the #MeToo moment happened, I think they sort of suddenly felt like maybe they could talk. (Interviewee 5)

Interestingly, the 2018 stories were not broken by those who traditionally covered this field, which perhaps also gave more freedom to the journalists involved. Both the Oxfam and Save the Children scandals were not revealed by foreign correspondents or development journalists but by crime and politics journalists from centre and right-leaning publications that were not well known for covering humanitarian issues. The Oxfam story was broken by Sean O'Neill. He was the former crime editor and is now chief reporter of *The Times*, with a long history of covering abuse stories, which are based in the UK. The Save the Children story was broken by Simon Walters, the political editor of the *Mail on Sunday.*
Scott et al (2017, 2019) note that the increased use of foundation funding on journalism has had a significant effect. While this does not mean that journalists do not cover difficult stories because of pressure from their funders they at times might have practised self-censorship (Benson, 2016), or followed other priorities. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to establish whether this happened in this case, it is interesting to hypothesise whether liberal outlets were reluctant to focus on the story because of their close relationship with both aid agencies and political figures, the view of several interviewees because:.

I think mates protect mates –disappointing but true and this kind of New Labour/Cameronite conservative grouping protects its own and thinks there are higher causes. So [Save the Children executive Brendan Cox] was seen as very important to the Remain cause or the pro-immigration cause, consensus politics and liberal democracy cause and that is seen as more important than women…. So those who were trying to get a story out they gave it to the *Mail* because they, they felt that the *Mail* would publish. Now, you know, these were feminists, anti-racist campaigners, people who do not buy the *Mail* who object to the *Mail*, who would never ever have gone to them first second or third but, who went there because no one else would publish. (Interviewee 6)

### 3. Reaction:

[Oxfam] didn't seem to have any concept of crisis management…I was thinking this is like the Catholic church 'We're morally unimpeachable, we're important people" *(*Interviewee 3, journalist)

Greer and McLaughlin describe the main approach of the reaction phase of the scandal model as trial by media (TBM). While scandal activation has had the intention of provoking shock and outrage from the public and confession, excuse or denial from the accused (Schonbach, 2010), Greer and McLaughlin say that TBM is a key driver and a "market-driven form of populist justice in which individuals and institutions are accused, prosecuted, judged, sentenced and permanently stigmatised in the 'court of public opinion'" (2017:120).

When media organisations publish investigative stories with potentially libellous consequences, it is always difficult for journalists at other institutions to cover them in depth. So, while legacy news media can have sustained discursive power during media storms (Jungherr et al, 2019), in this situation, the *Times's* exclusive could have well remained largely confined to just one paper – as Walters' story about Save the Children was in 2015 - had it not been for actions by actors within the aid world, as well as online commentary. However, Oxfam and Save the Children acted very differently in the way that they attempted to shut the stories down, and which ironically helped fuel the fire even more.

According to Greer and McLaughlin, the reaction of institutions caught up in scandal is to concentrate on protecting their reputation, but in this case, Oxfam seemed unaware of the reputational damage they were about to sustain. Oxfam put forward Barbara Stocking, who had been in charge of Oxfam GB at the time of the scandal and Mark Goldring the current CEO for media coverage relying on the previous good press both had previously received. Stocking agreed to do a *Newsnight* interview where she admitted Oxfam had known for years about the abuse. This gave other journalists a legitimate way to cover the story without possessing the documents and interviews that the *Times* had based its investigation on. Goldring decided to give an interview to Decca Aitkenhead of the *Guardian* to allay the growing media furore. An ill-judged comment had the opposite effect:

> The intensity and the ferocity of the attack [on Oxfam] makes you wonder, what did we do? We murdered babies in their cots? Certainly, the scale and the intensity of the attacks feels out of proportion to the level of culpability. I struggle to understand it. (Goldring in Aitkenhead, 2018)

Goldring's words immediately provided the next day's headlines, with condemnation and derision from the media and renewed focus on Oxfam's actions – what Greer and McLaughlin call 'claim and counter claim…publicly scrutinised for validity' (2017: 120).

Save the Children UK took a different approach. After the initial story, the chief executive of Save the Children announced a review of the organisation's culture, but the charity started to come under more pressure on the 19 February with a series of revelations by various journalists and in particular the BBC's *PM* programme (BBC, 2018) which led to Forsyth's resignation at his new role at UNICEF after it became clear that Save had not told his new employers about the complaints against him (Churchill and Martin, 2018).

Save the Children's attempt at reputational management was much more heavy-handed - they tried to close down the story by use of widespread legal threats against journalists, which meant that whistle-blowers who had decided to co-operate with the mainstream media frequently found that stories were not being covered.

> The money they spent on lawyers - everyone else now can see [this]. I knew I was experiencing it at the time because I would go and do, you know, long drawn out processes with journalists and then they'd still be hamstrung, you know, days later. And I was thinking, this is a tactic that it's being deployed. This is the silencing of women again [Interviewee 1]

> I was getting several [lawyers' letters] a day. It was insane. It was so bizarre the response was so heavy handed, And it was really interesting because the chairman was a PR guy and it was a very old-fashioned [approach] – this is how we deal with the story, make it go away as quickly as possible….On the day the CEO stood up and said we welcome the journalists who have brought this to light, so we can deal with it, I got another two letters! [Interviewee 5]

It was revealed that under the chairmanship of Sir Alan Parker, Save the Children spent more than £100,000 on the lawyers Harbottle & Lewis in order to try to shut down media reporting of the sexual harassment cases (O'Neill, 2018) and around £20,000 per week on crisis management consultants (personal communication, 2019). The end result, however, of this was that whistle-blowers became more, not less, willing to speak.

> There was an epic operation of trying to shut it down and I think that made people furious. It made people more willing to speak – I ended up with a lot of internal sources beyond, you know the victims…there were people who were quite despairing of it all. (Interviewee 5)

But beyond the errors of judgement that both Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK made in trying to contain and minimise the story, an important facet in TBM was also the way social media facilitated the continuation of the scandal even when there were problems covering it in the mainstream media.

In the survey of Fifty Shades of Aid members, more than half of those respondents said they first learned about the #AidToo scandals from social media compared to 18% who learned via mainstream media. This is a self-selecting group recruited online so this is not surprising, but it is notable that many engaged in several different online sites: Twitter, Facebook, Fifty Shades being the three most popular. Fifty Shades of Aid itself received so much interest in the wake of the Oxfam story that new information rapidly came to light:

> Within half an hour of [the news about van Hauwermeiren], we had members saying 'Oh my god I know him he got fired in Chad, he got fired from Merlin' and we tracked him over 15 years and that blew up in terms of us and people coming to us. (Interviewee 9)

Whistle-blowers themselves also found a voice through using social media and reaching wider audiences in a way they had not done previously:

> I've noticed everybody's on Twitter. It's not only Donald Trump. Yeah. Every time I say something on Twitter and Oxfam, the Charity Commission listen: if I write to them on email, they don't do anything.  (Interviewee 8)

> Facebook and WhatsApp were hugely instrumental because then people can connect to me. Someone in the Women's Equality Party very early on said you should talk to [X] and I was quite intimidated. I was like, I can't just contact someone I don't know and say I'm very interested, but a mutual friend said, you two seem to be in doing the same things. And so, there was the ability of Facebook to link you easily and the trustedness of it. And then by that point other people were kind of also telling me that they were working on different elements, more structured behind the scenes. (Interviewee 1)

The conjoining of social and mainstream media also strengthened because the administrators of the Fifty Shades of Aid group were then pursued by mainstream media to give comments and information to traditional journalists.  This interdependence between actors – legacy media interacting with different platforms shows the importance of such hybrid media systems.

However, as noted early with Murrell, Pendry and Orgad's studies, these groups were protective of those who had revealed information to them and were wary of becoming part of a media storm. The admins of Fifty Shades for example say that they ensured that they had group agreement before they decided to speak out.

> We asked the group - we said 'we think there needs to be an aid worker voice in the conversations because we were only hearing from aid agencies'. We were getting requests, but we went to the group first and the group said yes - with the caveat we

> didn't mention Fifty Shades. This was the first time we'd gone public. (Interviewee 9)

Crucially, this ability to connect online and have conversations behind the scenes allowed women to interact and decide a media strategy in an organised way to become part of the agenda setting process in a media storm, where the media agenda outruns the political agenda (see Boydstun et al, 2014; Walgrave et al, 2017) . The loose Save the Children 'intel group' operating mainly via WhatsApp co-operated so that the whistle-blowers who were prepared to go public could choose media outlets that they felt happy in pursuing. For example, Interviewee 1 did not feel happy talking to the *Mail* whereas other members of the group did. Others were happy to speak to the BBC but not commercial broadcasters or vice versa.  The public face of several whistle-blowers meant that several women felt more confident to speak out behind the scenes even if they did not put their faces or names on screen to the same extent.

> I think new media has made all the difference, social media amplified the scandal…Women are speaking out more and more and they are speaking online and I think it's because even if the systems [within NGOs] have changed, it's still the same people running it  - and so am I really supposed to have confidence?" (Interviewee 8)

New online spaces were developed with feminist agendas to support women who were trying to speak out in this area. While Fifty Shades of Aid was for all genders, both Changing Aid (Changingaid.org) and NGO Safe Space (ngosafespace.org) were explicitly formed as intersectional feminist platforms. They both had considerable success in gaining public attention – Changing Aid led co-ordination of an online letter signed by more than 1,500 female aid workers asking for reform of the patriarchal culture in the aid system and surveyed 51 aid workers across the sector to see what changed in the first half of 2018. NGO Safe Space offered support to women and also spoke out in the media and on public platforms such as the Women's March and the International Humanitarian Congress.

More than 60 percent of those who took part in the survey found online spaces positive or very positive when discussing #AidToo. While most had not shared their own personal experiences online, some went on to share their experiences offline as a result; others talked to journalists or got involved in policy. The use of online spaces

was not completely unproblematic though as respondents to the Fifty Shades survey noted:

> I think it was a double edged sword - cathartic for some on the one hand certainly but also really problematic in terms of stories shared that a) had the potential for triggering and b) [the] stories presented didn't reflect the continuum of harassment /abuse/bullying in the workplace - and maybe I mean from a legal definition but something may have been described as sexual abuse but was in fact harassment or inappropriate but overinflated to be presented as far worse. I think this really skewed some of what was happening in spaces but also allowed both the lesser and worse instances to stay hidden as there was an over presentation of what was happening. It also meant some of us who also had stories didn't feel able to speak up as ours 'weren't as bad' either in initial instance or in the impact felt. [survey respondent, specialist consultant].

> I think that discussions around #AidToo online empowered women in my office (HQ for a large international organization) to discuss their experiences with one another. These conversations were and continue to be important. The downside is that when [a senior member of my organisation] was named in an AidToo scandal online on a blog (that circulated on Fifty Shades), it catalysed some harmful actions by management against employees, and made my workspace incredibly difficult for myself and some of my female colleagues [survey respondent, international NGO]

## 4. Amplification and Accountability: what happened in 2018?

The consequences of TBM, Greer and McLaughlin say are a 'chilling' of public sentiments towards the accused, potential prosecution, new regulatory frameworks and policy reform. Certainly, both aid agencies suffered immediate consequences.

The Charity Commission launched a full statutory inquiry into Oxfam (Booth, 2018) and public donors and celebrity ambassadors deserted the NGO (Elgot & McVeigh, 2018; Slawson, 2018; Beaumont, 2018). As more revelations emerged, the deputy chief executive Penny Lawrence resigned, Haiti suspended Oxfam's right to work in the country, Mark Goldring announced that he would step down (Rawlinson, 2018) and Oxfam faced £16.2m worth of cuts (Anders, 2018).

Save the Children UK also found themselves under the spotlight, with a Charity Commission inquiry (Hope, 2018), the chair of Save the Children International, Sir Alan Parker, and the chair of Save the Children UK Peter Bennett-Jones resigning (Okiror and Ford, 2018). The NGO also suspended its UK government funding bids (Quinn, 2018) and estimated within a year that its income had dropped by a quarter (Preston, 2019).

Greer and McLaughlin's fourth and fifth stages of scandal model are amplification and accountability where "the actions of individuals are connected with wider institutional structures and practices" (Greer and McLaughlin, 2017:121) – in other words moving from the individual to the systemic. In the aftermath of these revelations about these two aid agencies, journalists started to frame the whole aid sector as problematic.

Greer and McLaughlin theorise that if a scandal is contained at the individual level, then there is a separation of individual and institutional accountability. However, if it is not contained, there is a "conjoining of individual and institutional accountability" (Greer and McLaughlin: 2017:122). It can be argued that there was such a conjoining in both the Oxfam and Save the Children scandals. Those who were the centre of the scandal at both charities (van Hauwermeiren, Cox and Forsyth) had already left the organisations, meaning the media and politicians focused on who else was responsible and on the structures which appeared to have allowed sexual harassment and abuse to occur at both charities. This was very much the focus of those operating in social media spaces too.

As a result, aid agencies found themselves facing widespread calls to change their practices. An investigation by the House of Commons' International Development Select Committee produced a critical report into the aid sector, referring to a 'boys' club' attitude across agencies which resulted in exploitation and abuse of women and girls, both beneficiaries and aid workers. Its conclusions included the suggestion of a global register of aid workers, followed by new measures from the Department for International Development (DfID) and an international safeguarding solutions conference in October 2018.

The scandal did also provide conservative newspapers – the *Mail, Telegraph, Times* and *Daily Express* in particular – with the opportunity to challenge the UK government's commitment to 0.7% of GDP on overseas aid, which whistle-blowers had earlier feared. While there were pieces in support of the aid sector (eg Hague,

2018), a ComRes poll conducted at the same time found that more than half of adults were now against the 0.7 percent commitment (ComRes, 2018).

The pressure was not coming just from the mainstream media, however. Both Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK now were confronted by a succession of women who were willing to go public as whistleblowers to speak about failures of process by the organisations (Bannerman and O'Neill, 2018). As mentioned earlier in this paper, Changing Space organised more than 1,500 female aid workers to sign an online letter protesting about the aid culture. They continued to organise public actions -  gate-crashing the charity's board meeting to demand the resignation of Parker and confronting the then development secretary Penny Mordaunt on stage at the safeguarding conference, accusing DfID of not giving women a voice (McVeigh and Summers, 2018).

This was also the focus of much of the social media attention, and the growth of different websites, and petitions as mentioned above, revealed the diverse actors who could engage in this story in a hybrid media system, as well as the interdependence across such platforms. Again, the key here was the fact that both public facing social media and closed social media groups continued to sustain this interest which was then reflected in coverage in legacy news media.

**Conclusion: The Humanitarian Scandal and #AidToo**

While it is undoubtedly true there was some interest in these stories prior to 2018 these previously failed to result in a media storm. The change in 2018 reflects the Greer and McLaughlin model in that there is an intermediatization that results from a viral interaction between mainstream and social media. This is possible because of the increasing hybridity of media systems (Chadwick, 2017) which allows many different actors to take part in agenda setting actions (Langer and Gruber, 2020).

The move from latency to activation in Greer and McLaughlin's model and the prominence of the scandals was undoubtedly due to the decision by legacy media the *Times* and the *Mail on Sunday* to run front page stories revealing the accusations, and the continuing importance of mainstream media to ensure dissemination of wrongdoing cannot be denied. The reaction to the scandal was fuelled by Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK's media strategies, both of which were heavily criticised

and which allowed journalists to continue to cover the story, but also galvanised aid workers and whistleblowers to continue to put information into the public domain. But given the fact that both stories had been known about and reported in minimal ways earlier, what was the significance of social media spaces in amplification and accountability?

The spike in coverage in early 2018 suggests that there was a big change in 2018. A Nexis search of UK publications containing the words "aid agency" and abuse or scandal reveals 209 stories between 1 January – 31 July 2018[3]. For the same period in the previous ten years the figures never go above 16 suggesting that a significant change happened.

**[ Fig 3]**

The link between the online #MeToo movement and the aid scandal was made clearly in the International Development Committee report:

> In recent months, the #MeToo movement has helped bring to light the extent to which sexual abuse pervades workplaces and society at large. The international aid sector is not exempt, and we should not expect it to be. But the distressingly familiar pattern of senior male executives sexually harassing junior female employees - while present in aid organisations - is not the whole story in that sector. Sexual exploitation and abuse are ultimately an abuse of power and the aid sector is one of extreme power imbalance: those receiving aid in humanitarian crisis situations are some of the most vulnerable and disempowered people in the world. (International Development Committee, 2018)

Of course there had been recognition of problems in the aid industry as far back as 2002 with the publication of a controversial report by Save the Children and UNHCR regarding exploitation of refugee children in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (UNHCR & Save the Children, 2002). However attention to the sexual harassment and assault by and against aid workers in general had started to creep into the public domain two years before #MeToo with a succession of international reports in, 2016 and 2017 (Humanitarian Women's Network, 2016; Nobert, 2017) and  a major analysis by the Feinstein International Center (Mazurana & Donnelly, 2017).

The Guardian with its Secret Aid Worker column had also noted problems around sexual assault on aid workers (Secret Aid Worker, 2015; Nobert, 2015). But most of the reporting in the UK was restricted to speciality sectors such as the Guardian's Global Professionals Development Network and failed to reach more generalised public attention.

But the genesis of the Oxfam story came before #MeToo. O'Neill had started investigating the Oxfam story ten months before it was published, well before the Weinstein revelations came to light, while journalists had also been pursuing the Save the Children story before that time.

So, to directly link the initial exposure of aid agency scandals to #MeToo is difficult. However the framing of abuse and harassment stories in the light of #MeToo may well have encouraged these stories to move through all stages of the scandal model, rather stopping in the latency or minor activation phase as had happened earlier. As detailed earlier, when stories concerning these two scandals came to light in 2011 and 2015 respectively, they did not gain widespread traction in the media and quickly disappeared again, despite the fact that this was a time where other abuse scandals were coming to light.

While Langer and Gruber (2020) have shown the effective interaction of legacy media and public facing social media during the Windrush scandal, this paper argues a further group that needs to be examined, which is the use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp and closed Facebook groups. In the case of #AidToo, this allowed women to see other women discussing their experiences and strategise around how to liaise with mainstream media with the interdependence between the two sustaining the story and the public conversation about it. Interviewees talked about how they worked with each other to interact with the mainstream media but also form their own online spaces such as Changing Aid and NGO Safe Space[4] and liaise with each other. As Greer and McLaughlin suggest this meant that the scandals were not limited to the usual temporality afforded by mainstream media but the pressure on aid agencies was kept up, and afforded women a voice that they felt they had been denied in previous times.

References:

Adams, W.C. 1986, "Whose Lives Count? TV Coverage of Natural Disasters", *Journal of Communication,* vol. 36, no. 2, pp. 113-122.

Aitkenhead, D. 2018, 16 February-last update*, Oxfam boss Mark Goldring: "Anything we say has been manipulated. We've been savaged."* [Homepage of The Guardian], [Online]. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/16/oxfam-boss-mark-goldring-anything-we-say-is-being-manipulated-weve-been-savaged [2018, 28 August].

Anders, M. 2018, 18 June-last update*, Oxfam to begin £16M cuts with 'office and support functions'* [Homepage of Devex], [Online]. Available: https://www.devex.com/news/oxfam-to-begin-16m-cuts-with-office-and-support-functions-92948 [2018, 29 August].

Bannerman, L. & O'Neill, S. 2018, *Tantrums and 2am texts of 'Thick of It' charity chiefs*, 24 February edn, The Times, London.

BBC News 2018, 21 February-last update*, Ex-Save the Children boss Justin Forsyth apologises over texts* [Homepage of BBC], [Online]. Available: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-43134265 [2018, 29 August].

Beaumont, P. 2018, 15 February-last update*, Desmond Tutu resigns as Oxfam ambassador over 'immorality' claims* [Homepage of The Guardian], [Online]. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/feb/15/desmond-tutu-resigns-oxfam-ambassador-immorality-claims [2018, 29 August].

Benson, R. (2016) "Institutional Forms of Media Ownership and Their Modes of Power." In *Journalism Re-examined* Eds Eide, M; Martin, S.; Siovaag, H and Larsen, L. Bristol: Intellect, pp 29-47.

Booth, R. 2018, 12 February-last update*, Oxfam warned it could lose European funding over scandal* [Homepage of The Guardian], [Online]. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/12/haiti-demands-oxfam-identify-workers-who-used-prostitutes [2018, 29 August].

Boydstun, A.E., Hardy, A. and Walgrave, S., 2014. Two faces of media attention: Media storm versus non-storm coverage. *Political Communication*, *31*(4), pp.509-531.

Bryman, A. 2012. *Social research methods* (4th edition ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press

Butler, I., & Drakeford, M. 2005. *Social policy, social welfare and scandal: How British public policy is made*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Castells, M. 1997. *The power of identity*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.

Chagnon, N. & Chesney–Lind, M. 2015, ""Someone's been in the house:" A tale of burglary and trial by media", *Crime, Media, Culture,* vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 41-60.

Charity Commission 2018, 10 February-last update*, Charity Commission statement on Oxfam* [Homepage of Gov.uk], [Online]. Available: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/charity-commission-statement-on-oxfam [2018, 29 August].

Churchill, D. & Martin, D. 2018, *UNICEF boss quits - but says it's NOT over sleazy texts*, 23 February edn, Daily Mail, Scotland.

Cohen, S. 2012, *States of denial: knowing about atrocities and suffering,* 2nd edn, Polity, Cambridge. ComRes 2018, 28 February-last update, *Reputation Communications – Overseas Aid Charities*

[Homepage of ComRes], [Online]. Available: http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/reputation-communications-overseas-aid-charities/ [2018, 29 August].

Cooper, G. , 2019 #AidToo? The 2018 humanitarian scandals in Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK. In *the Routledge Companion to Media and Scandal* eds H. Tumber and S. Waisbord. London & New York: Routledge pp 342-353.

Davis L.J. 2006 *Scandal: How 'Gotcha' Politics Is Destroying America*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

DfID 2018, 6 April-last update*, International Development Committee Inquiry Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector Written Evidence Submitted by the Department for International Development,* [Homepage of Parliament.uk], [Online]. Available: http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/international-development-committee/sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-in-the-aid-sector/written/81120.pdf [2018, 29 August].

Elgot, J. 2018, 11 February-last update*, Oxfam told to show 'moral leadership' or lose government funds* [Homepage of The Guardian], [Online]. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/11/oxfam-show-moral-leadership-lose-government-funds-prostitutes-haiti [2018, 29 August].

Elgot, J. & McVeigh, K. 2018, 20 February-last update*, Oxfam loses 7,000 donors since sexual exploitation scandal* [Homepage of The Guardian], [Online]. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/20/oxfam-boss-mark-goldring-apologises-over-abuse-of-haiti-quake-victims [2018, 29 August].

Entman R.M. 2012 *Scandal and Silence: Media Responses to Presidential Misconduct*. Cambridge: Polity.

Flinders, M.V. 2012, "The demonisation of politicians: Moral panics, folk devils and MPs' expenses", *Contemporary Politics,* vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 1-17.

Galtung, J. & Ruge, M.H. 1965, "The Structure of Foreign News. The Presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crises in Four Norwegian Newspapers", *Journal of Peace Research,* vol. 2, pp. 64-91.

Gillham, B. (2000). *Case study research methods*. London: Continuum.

Greer, C. & McLaughlin, E. 2017, "Theorizing institutional scandal and the regulatory state", *Theoretical Criminology,* vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 112-132.

Hague, W. 2018, 13 February-last update*, The Oxfam scandal should not lead us into the blunder of cutting aid* [Homepage of Daily Telegraph], [Online]. Available: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/02/12/government-aid-charities-dont-just-help-desperate-needy-make/ [2018, 29 August].

Harcup, T. & O'Neill, D. 2017, " What is news? News values revisited (again).", *Journalism Studies,* vol. 18, no. 12, pp. 1470-1488.

Harcup, T. & O'Neill, D. 2001, "What is News? Galtung and Ruge Revisited", *Journalism Studies,* vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 261-261-80.

Hope, C. 2018, *Children's charity to face formal inquiry*, 11 April edn, Daily Telegraph, London.

House of Commons 2018a, 5 June-last update, *International Development Committee: Oral Evidence: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the Aid Sector HC40. Andrew Mitchell MP* [Homepage of House of Commons], [Online]. Available: http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/international-development-committee/sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-in-the-aid-sector/oral/84608.pdf [2018, 28 August].

Humanitarian Women's Network 2016, *Survey Data*, Humanitarian Women's Network, Online.

International Development Committee 2018, 31 July-last update, *Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector* [Homepage of Parliament.uk], [Online]. Available: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmintdev/840/84005.htm [2018, 29 August].

Jungherr, A., Posegga, O. and An, J., 2019. Discursive power in contemporary media systems: A comparative framework. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *24*(4), pp.404-425.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.; London: Sage Publications

Lancefield, N. 2011, *Oxfam official quits post in Haiti* 13 August, Press Association Mediapoint

Langer, A.I. and Gruber, J.B., 2020. Political Agenda Setting in the Hybrid Media System: Why Legacy Media Still Matter a Great Deal. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, p.1940161220925023.

Liebes, T. & Blum-Kulka, S. 2004, "It takes two to blow the whistle: Do journalists control the outbreak of scandal?", *American Behavioral Scientist,* vol. 47, no. 9, pp. 1153-1170.

Marris, C., Jefferson, C. & Lentzos, F. 2014, "Negotiating the dynamics of uncomfortable knowledge: The case of dual use and synthetic biology", *BioSocieties,* vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 393-420.

Marsh, S. 2018, 9 July-last update, *Save the Children UK expects income to fall by £67m* [Homepage of The Guardian], [Online]. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/jul/09/save-the-children-uk-expects-income-to-fall-by-67m [2018, 29 August].

Mazurana, D. & Donnelly, P. 2017, May-last update, *STOP the Sexual Assault against Humanitarian and Development Aid Workers* [Homepage of Feinstein International Center], [Online]. Available: http://fic.tufts.edu/assets/SAAW-report_5-23.pdf [2018, 29 August].

Murrell, C. (2014). The vulture club: International newsgathering via Facebook. *Australian Journalism Review*, *36*(1), 15–27.News UK 2019 *News UK scoops up to 15 press awards* [Online] Available: https://www.news.co.uk/2019/04/news-uk-scoops-up-15-national-press-awards/ [2019, 3 April]

Nobert, M. 2017, *Humanitarian Experiences with Sexual Violence: Compilation of Two Years of Report the Abuse Data Collection,* Report the Abuse, Online.

Nobert, M. 2015, 29 July-last update, 
*Aid worker: I was drugged and raped by another humanitarian in South Sudan* [Homepage of The Guardian], [Online]. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/jul/29/aid-worker-rape-humanitarian-south-sudan-sexual-violence [2018, 29 August].

O'Neill, S. 2018b, *Charity 'spent £100,000 to shut down sex story'*, 23 May edn, The Times, London.

O'Neill, S. 2018a, *Top Oxfam staff paid Haiti survivors for sex*, 9 February edn, The Times, London.

O'Neill, S. 2017, *Official pushed me on to hotel bed and grabbed at my belt'*, 28 October edn, The Times, London.

Pendry, R. 2015. Reporter power: News organisations, duty of care and the use of locally-hired news gatherers in Syria. *Ethical Space*, *12*(2), 4–13.

Petersen, A.H., 2010. Smut goes corporate: TMZ and the conglomerate, convergent face of celebrity gossip. *Television & new media*, *11*(1), pp.62-81.

Phillips, B. 2018, 2 March-last update*, Save the Children whistleblowers speak out* [Homepage of New Internationalist], [Online]. Available: https://newint.org/features/web-exclusive/2018/03/02/save-the-children-whistleblowers [2018, 29 August].

Potter, R. 2011, *Many faces behind the war on famine;
Rachel Potter talks to Oxfam workers tackling the emergency in East Africa*, 13 September edn, The Times, London.

Pruchniewska, U., 2019. "A group that's just women for women": Feminist affordances of private Facebook groups for professionals. *new media & society*, *21*(6), pp.1362-1379.

Purvis, K. 2015b, *We're proud to work for Save the Children, but has it lost direction?;
We asked for your experiences of working for STC and received heartfelt replies, revealing both love and concern for the charity. Here are a few of your responses*, 11 November edn, The Guardian, London.

Purvis, K. 2015a, *Turbulence at Save the Children: share your stories of working for the NGO;
Following two high-profile resignations in as many weeks, we'd like to hear your stories of working for Save the Children*, 2 November edn, The Guardian, London.

Rawlinson, K. 2018, 16 May-last update*, Oxfam chief steps down after charity's sexual abuse scandal* [Homepage of The Guardian], [Online]. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/16/oxfam-head-mark-goldring-steps-down-sexual-abuse-scandal [2018, 29 August].

Rottenberg, C., Orgad, S. and De Benedictis, S., 2019. # MeToo, popular feminism and the news: A content analysis of UK newspaper coverage. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 22(5-6), 718-738

Saner, E. 2011, *G2: Women: 'I'm pretty tough': Barbara Stocking, chief executive of Oxfam, tells Emine Saner about being on the frontline in the battle against famine*, 2 September edn, The Guardian, London. Schönbach, P. 2010, *Account episodes: The management or escalation of conflict,* Cambridge University Press.

Schudson, M. (2004). Notes on scandal and the Watergate legacy. *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol 47 issue 9 pp 1231-1238.

Scott, M., Bunce, M. and Wright, K., 2017. Donor power and the news: The influence of foundation funding on international public service journalism. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, vol. 22 issue 2, pp.163-184.Scott, M., Bunce, M. and Wright, K., 2019. Foundation funding and the boundaries of journalism. *Journalism Studies*, vol 20 issue 14, pp.2034-2052.

Secret Aid Worker 2015, 29 July-last update, *Secret aid worker: sexual harassment and discrimination in the industry* [Homepage of The Guardian], [Online]. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/jul/29/secret-aid-worker-sexual-harassment-and-discrimination [2018, 29 August].

Silverman, R. 2011 *Six leave Oxfam in bullying row* 5 September, Press Association Mediapoint

Slawson, N. 2018b, *Chairman quits scandal-hit Save the Children* 11 April edn, The Guardian, Online.

Slawson, N. 2018a, 13 February-last update, *Minnie Driver cuts ties with Oxfam over sex scandal* [Homepage of The Guardian], [Online]. Available: https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/feb/13/minnie-driver-cuts-ties-with-oxfam-over-sex-scandal [2018, 29 August].

Stocking, B. 2018, *Written Evidence to International Development Committee, Inquiry into Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the Aid Sector*, House of Commons, http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/international-development-committee/sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-in-the-aid-sector/written/86097.html.

Sylvester, R. 2011, *'Any time I saw a poor African child, I'd hide behind the sofa'; Saturday interview*, 30 July edn, The Times, London.

The Times 2018, *Aid in the Dock*, 1 August edn, The Times, London.

Thompson, J.B., 2011. Shifting boundaries of public and private life. *Theory, culture & society*, *28*(4), pp.49-70.

Tumber, H., 2004. Scandal and media in the United Kingdom: from Major to Blair. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *47*(8), pp.1122-1137.

Twombly, J., 2018. *Political Scandal and American Pop Culture: Sex, Power, and Cover-Ups*. Springer

UNHCR & Save the Children UK 2002, February-last update, *Sexual Violence & Exploitation: The Experience of Refugee Children in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone* [Homepage of Save the Children UK], [Online]. Available: https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/global/reports/health-and-nutrition/sexual_violence_and_exploitation_1.pdf [2018, 29 August].

Walgrave, S., Boydstun, A.E., Vliegenthart, R. and Hardy, A., 2017. The nonlinear effect of information on political attention: media storms and US congressional hearings. *Political Communication*, *34*(4), pp.548-570.

Walters, S. 2018b, *Yes, I Was A Sex Pest Confesses Jo Cox's Husband; New sexual assault claim forces partner of murdered MP to quit wife's charities ; the charity sex scandals ; Drunken night 'he grabbed a woman by the throat'*, 17 February edn, Mail on Sunday, London.

Walters, S. 2018a, *'He grabbed her hips, pulled her hair and forced his thumb into her mouth in a sexual way': Murdered MP Jo Cox's husband was reported to police over sex assault claim in Harvard bar - nine months before his wife's death*, 10 February edn, Mail on Sunday, London.

Walters, S. 2015, *New Charity Scandal as Save The Children Executive Quits After Women's Complaints*, 1 November edn, Mail on Sunday, London.

.

FIG 1 Press coverage of Oxfam GB in Haiti 13 Aug 2011 – 13 September 2011:

| Publication | Date | Headline | Word length |
|---|---|---|---|
| Press Association | 13 August 2011 | Oxfam Official Quits Post in Haiti | 163 |
| Sunday Mail (Scotland) | 14 August 2011 | Charity's Haiti chief quits job | 100 |
| Press Association | 5 September 2011 | Six leave Oxfam in bullying row | 377 |
| The Sun | 6 September 2011 | Oxfam 6 shamed | 41 |
| Irish Examiner | 6 September 2011 | Oxfam Haiti staff suspended | 69 |
| The Herald (Glasgow) | 6 September 2011 | Oxfam staff leave over misconduct | 50 |
| Evening Chronicle (Newcastle) | 6 September 2011 | Charity shame | 53 |
| Derby Evening Telegraph | 6 September 2011 | 'Bullies' in Haiti | 44 |
| Daily Post (North Wales) | 6 September 2011 | Charity probe | 85 |
| Third Sector | 13 September 2011 | Oxfam staff guilty of bullying | 142 |

(Search terms: Oxfam GB and Haiti. UK publications. Duplications and stories that did not mention the scandal omitted)

FIG 2 Press coverage of Brendan Cox and/or Justin Forsyth's resignation in UK publications 15 Oct 2015-15 November 2015

| Publication | Date | Headline | Word length |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mail on Sunday | 1 November 2015 | New charity scandal as Save the Children executive quits after women's complaints | 496 |
| The Times | 2 November 2015 | Save the Children executive resigns after complaints | 301 |
| The Guardian | 2 November 2015 | Turbulence at Save the Children: share your stories of working for the NGO; Following two high-profile resignations in as many weeks, we'd like to hear your stories of working for Save the Children | 337 |
| Daily Mail | 6 November 2015 | Ephraim Hardcastle diary column | 98 |
| Third Sector | 1 December 2015 | Management | 155 |

(Search terms: Brendan Cox and/or Justin Forsyth and Save the Children. UK publications. Duplications and stories that did not mention the scandal omitted)

Figure 3: Coverage of aid agencies, scandal and abuse 2008-2018
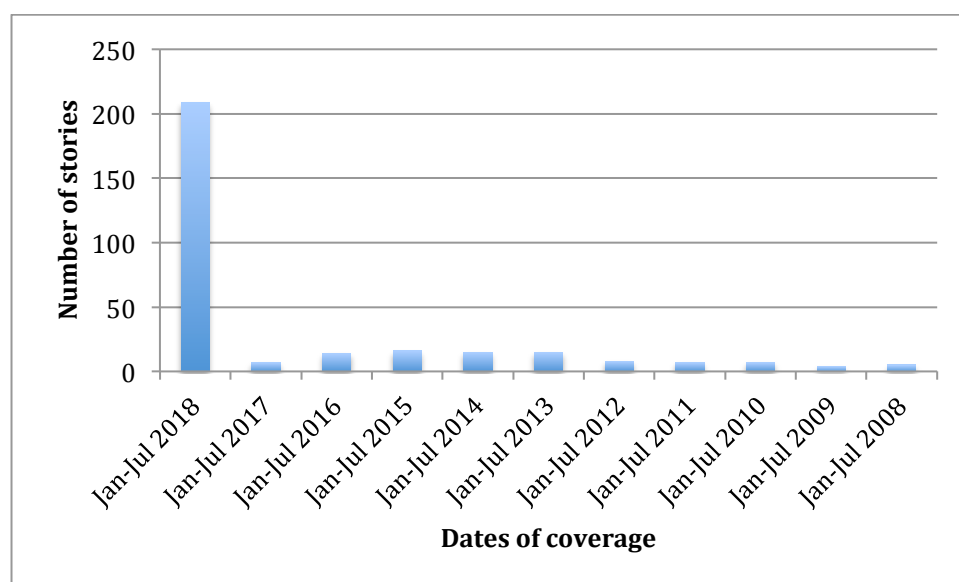


(Nexis search of UK publications containing the words 'aid agency' and 'abuse' or 'scandal' 1 Jan -31 July each year 2008-2018)

---

[1] Brendan Cox and Justin Forsyth had both worked for Gordon Brown during his premiership. Forsyth had earlier worked as an aide to Tony Blair.

[2] As Murrell points out, screenshots from conversations about an Israeli report on the site were made public on blogs (2014; 17)

[3] This was the time period from the revelations to the publication of the International Development Committee report

[4] See https://www.changingaid.org/surveyresults.html