



## Introducing Oxford HR Interim Services

Oxford HR is perfectly placed to connect the best global interims with the right organisations, in a short a time frame as possible. We have the expertise, connections and resources to facilitate this service, at the professional level you would always expect from Oxford HR.

Growth or change within any organisation can cause significant turbulence, which is why it's key to have the right people on board. They must ensure they have the adequate talent needed to steer the team and sustain the business and interim managers can play a key role during times of transition and change. Independent, expert and highly skilled, they can help move an organisation through a turbulent period after the loss of a key staff member, help shift them in their strategic direction or indeed help turnaround failing organisations. Being at arms-length, interims are often better placed to challenge the received wisdom, work without an agenda and deliver the change or support required at that time.

Oxford HR maintains a register of individuals with strong skill sets and expertise across the global development sector. These individuals are vetted by us for their track record, academic credentials and most importantly their impact on the ground, to ensure they can work quickly and effectively with your organisation to deliver the results you need. You can find out more about our interim service and download our brochure [here](#).

If you are looking to become an interim senior leader, our interims are highly skilled, senior leaders in their own right, ideally from the international development sector. If your skills and experience match the types of roles we can fit you with, then one of our consultants will be in touch for an initial online interview. If successfully added to our database, you will be appointed an Account Manager who will keep in touch with you regarding relevant opportunities and general updates. We really value our interims and the skills they bring to our clients and ensure that we support you throughout the Oxford HR interim hiring process. For more information on being an Oxford HR interim, please [click here](#).



## Oxford HR's Interim Experience

**Our team of consultants have significant experience in senior leadership posts within the International Development sector. Within this team, we are fortunate to have two highly skilled interim leaders, Yolanda Weldring and Josje Reinartz. We interview them below on all things interim.**

### **What is your interim experience?**

Both Yolanda and Josje have significant expertise in holding interim positions, across Uganda, Somalia, DRC, Rwanda, Indonesia, Thailand and Nepal. Yolanda acted as Interim Programme Manager, Interim Regional Director, Interim International Programme Director, Interim Network Advisor to the Board and Interim Inception Manager for Education Development Trust, Practical Action, Hivos and HelpAge International. Josje's experience was at Medecins Sans Frontieres, where she took on roles such as Interim Country Director and Interim Change Manager/Head of Department.

### **What would you say are the biggest challenges of being an interim?**

Josje mentions that one of the biggest challenges as Interim Country Director is building the bridge between the outgoing CD and the incoming CD and keeping a good balance between short term and long term goals. She notes that in this respect, good observation and collaboration with senior staff members are of vital importance. Yolanda adds to this by saying that interims often enter into situations where there are consequences

of mis-management by former post holders, and the interim needs to bring it back to normal before a new candidate joins. Challenges can arise if the mandate and expectations of the organisations are not clear.

### **What are the organisational benefits of using an interim manager?**

"Usually interim managers have good experience in taking up challenging tasks, as they come with 10-20 years of experience and have done these types of tasks before. They are less busy with positioning themselves in the organisation than with doing the task ahead of them within the given timeframe, meaning they are very task focused" says Yolanda. She mentions that in her experience, she would take two to three weeks to talk to the relevant stakeholders, make an analysis of the situation and a plan of action, and discuss that with the team and line manager before implementation. This is much faster than people who come into a longer-term job. Josje adds to this, and notes that having an interim manager in place also gives the organisation the opportunity to let the incoming, long-term director start with a clean slate as issues have been cleared by the interim.

## What are your top tips for applying for interim posts?

Be clear on your strengths and confident on what you can offer the organisation

Good communication skills are essential, as well as the ability to be decisive and be self-aware

Don't over/undersell yourself; good performance in a role is needed for future assignments, and be aware that expectations are usually high for interim managers

Be available in two weeks' time, as interims are usually needed yesterday



*Based in the Netherlands, Yolanda is committed to finding capable and high-performing candidates for interim jobs in international organisations and networks. Yolanda has over 30 years of experience in Human Resources Management, 18 years of which in International Development. She was International Director Oxfam Novib, Regional Director East and Southern Africa Save the Children UK, and member of senior groups within Oxfam and Save the Children International. Before joining Oxford HR, Yolanda carried out interim-director and management roles in Africa and Asia, and she has experience at Trustee-level and as Advisor to Boards. Yolanda is a trustee for Soa Aids Netherlands.*



*Josje joined Oxford HR in 2019. Her expertise lies in leadership, institutional development, network management and business operations in the fields of health, environment, and international cooperation. She brings 25 years of international experience. Josje was for seven years COO for Wetlands International's global network of 20 offices. She has a Master of International Public Health from Johns Hopkins University and led the Sibusiso treatment centre for mentally disabled children in Tanzania. Before that she worked for 15 years with Médecines sans Frontières. As an Operations Director she was part of the strategic management team in the Operations Centre Amsterdam and responsible for the programmes in Central Asia and West Africa. Josje lived in Angola, Azerbaijan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Mozambique, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda and worked with the teams in many other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.*

## Meet our New Team Members

**This month we're excited to introduce the newest members of our team, Bob Dawson and Lewis Bryan.**



*Bob is an established professional in international development, having held senior management roles in the Asian Development Bank, Global Green Growth Institute and the Green Climate Fund. He is well known for his expertise in organization and management development, with substantial experience in human resources, administration, procurement and information technology. He was the Corporate Secretary in the Asian Development Bank and more recently, CFO and Director of Support Services at the Green Climate Fund. In addition, Bob has been active in the development and implementation of development projects in the education and social sectors in the Asia-Pacific region. Coming originally from Australia, Bob holds a Masters in Sustainable Management and a Bachelor (Hons) degree in Education. An avid advocate of life-long education, Bob has continuously updated his profile over the years, and is now working on culture development, developing green work environments, and proactively handling crisis in organizations.*



*Lewis joined OxfordHR in 2021. He has a BSc in Sociology from Cardiff University where he wrote papers focusing on various topics including social policy, race relations, gender equality, LGBTQIA rights, education, health, and genetics. While new to the world of NGO's, Lewis aims to use his knowledge of the social world and apply it by working closely with clients to create positive change for the people they work with. His main areas of interest are Healthcare, Policy and Human Rights, whereby he hopes to specialise in one of these areas by completing a master's degree in the future.*



## Reflections on the interim

Zoe Greenwood - Oxford HR Consultant, Europe

In the for-purpose sector specifically, interim positions have the potential to support transitions. And, let's face it, there will be plenty of need for transition as we weather the storm of Covid 19 and the corresponding humanitarian implications, as we re-imagine the status quo in response to structural racism and shifts to localisation, as funding streams alter and new ones emerge, when Presidents change and carbon reduction targets intensify (here's hoping). The for-purpose sector can be slow to change gear despite the urgency of the mission and, employees often commit for many years due to their passion for the cause. This sector could arguably utilise interim positions even more to overcome bumps in the road, bring in new skills and knowledge that may only be needed temporarily and discover innovative ways of doing things.

I have spent the last couple of weeks having fascinating conversations with Directors and CEOs in the for-purpose sector who have been or are in, interim positions. If one thing is clear it is this, the essential ingredient to success is, these roles should be short-term, as the name suggests. Joining an organisation for a ringfenced period of time gives a license to operate differently, to bring fresh eyes and to speak out without too much concern for organisational politics or cultural norms.

An obvious point perhaps, but one for hiring organisations to remember when mapping out an assignment or considering

if the interim person could perhaps become a long-term employee. 'The skills are different' said one senior leader. 'It's not that I can't stay in one place, but I approach an interim assignment differently both intellectually and emotionally – I am cautious not to get attached from the get-go.'

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*Stepping back for a moment, interims roles generally fall into two camps: holding the fort or making change happen.*

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It is helpful to have clarity on which role you are stepping into, or which you are advertising, but more often than not, the first morphs into the second when the fort turns out to be missing a wall. Typically, there is a change process required or something new to establish – often in a different geography.

Yolanda Weldring, an Oxford HR consultant and seasoned interim, with eight assignments in six countries under her belt, explains that:

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*'interim leaders bring exceptional management skills and experience of managing change. This is the critical skill.'*

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Kate Fitch, former Interim Director of Policy and Communications for Homeless Link adds 'emotional intelligence' to the critical list. She explains 'with many interim roles you are joining because there is a gap, and gaps can breed uncertainty. A big part of my role was supporting people and the sensitivity this required. I was a reassuring presence at a difficult time.'

I think it is fair to say successful interim leaders are resilient people with, I would argue, excellent knowledge of their own capabilities and an understanding of where the adrenaline stops, and the frustration sets in. For many, it is the thrill of the ride which makes being an interim role much more than a stop gap between dream jobs. 'It's a case of rallying the very best of your interpersonal skills while leaving sentiment at the door' said one, 'we don't bring any organisational baggage'.

Many people working in an interim capacity put in long hours and work at a pace that would be hard to sustain on a long-term basis, bringing with them an ability to ruthlessly prioritise. 'Interim roles can be great value for money, especially if it's swift change and new ideas you're looking for' said one CEO. 'Entrepreneurial people often thrive in these assignments.' At the same time, this is a role for people who are happy ultimately not to credit for their work. 'You aren't around to see the long-term results of your changes' I am reminded.

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*'You have to put the organisation ahead of your ego, it's their success and not yours that matters.'*

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A unanimous plea from the interims I spoke to is for hiring organisations to be clear and realistic about the brief from day one and to give the interim manager the agency to complete it, alongside clear reporting lines and space to manoeuvre. Solid negotiation and set up at the contract

stage are critical. 'You can't solve everything' continues Fitch, 'but you can start unblocking things. If you challenge too much too soon, you don't take people with you and then risk failure.'

I would further advocate for the importance of open coaching-style conversations with the current leadership team about the interim role and its mandate. Change is hard and everyone loves a scapegoat. The more people are in the loop and see the long-term value in having this position and the change attached to it, then the deeper the impact. Which, brings us back to the nature of these positions and the recipe for success – 'there is a frankness required' said one interim Director working in international development, 'this often proves popular at first, but if you stay in the role too long this frankness becomes untenable and starts to aggravate people.'

If established well with the right person, these roles can help to manoeuvre an organisation into new waters without turning the boat upside down and leave you plain sailing as they wave goodbye. The emphasis of course is on the word help. Interims may bring a little magic and well-honed skills, but let us remember, like any leader, they are not superheroes and what we do before they arrive, when they join and during their placement is critical so everyone can benefit.

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*Oxford HR works with global for-purpose organisations to find candidates for interim positions, at speed. We have a strong bank of excellent leaders available for interim roles and we understand their skills sets and what they can offer. Most importantly our consultants will spend time with you to really appreciate what your organisation needs, and our trained coaches can provide extra support to your chosen candidate throughout the assignment to set them up for the best success. Download our brochures [here](#).*

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*Zoe joined Oxford HR in 2018 after 16 years working in the charity/NGO sector. She has worked with a wide variety of organisations in the sector including UNAIDS, Plan International, Practical Action, Global Canopy, Ethical Tea Partnership and WWF to name just a few, placing Executive Directors, Directors, Trustees and Senior Managers. She is especially interested in leadership for a sustainable future and passionate about discovering and developing for-purpose leaders. Through her work at Earthwatch, the international environmental NGO, Zoe completed assignments in India, Ghana, Kenya, China, Hong Kong, Brazil, Costa Rica and Malaysian Borneo where she has collaborated with local organisations, global NGOs and climate scientists and to design and deliver nature-based behaviour change programmes alongside conservation and research projects. She has spent many years engaging with the corporate sector to embed sustainability thinking into their operations and culture and has worked across fundraising, field management, emergency response, communications, HR and L&D throughout her career.*



This month we were delighted to be invited to participate in the Oxford Forum for International Development. The discussion topics featured vital issues and trends including The Role of Sustainable Finance, COVID-19 and Climate Change and Opportunities and Threats for International Development. Our Director for Europe, Thibaut Mills, sat on the panel for Career Guidance in International Development. Here are our key takeaways from the event:

1. As a species, we have a limited capacity to worry. This means we tend to focus on pressing issues that are happening in the now; in today's world, this is the Covid-19 pandemic. Climate change is seen as further away and therefore not as urgent a concern, which is not the case and arguably damaging for progress in this area.
2. However, the pandemic has seen a shift in our behaviour and led to increased feelings of togetherness against a common threat. We were also able to see firsthand the effects of slowing down on the environment with the reduction of pollution, and we came to appreciate nature more than ever. This could push climate change higher in the agenda, especially considering that governments have now observed the effect of public engagement and collective action.
3. We need to think long and hard about how we can implement scalable solutions and integrate green finance with cuts to aid and funding. Covid-19 has had monumental impact on global economies, which will no doubt affect development agencies and their ability to carry out their programmes.
4. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of interconnectivity. The question of how to connect

those in rural, unconnected areas. Satellites will be crucial in this response as many areas are lacking the infrastructure, but once connected, technology will provide small communities by connecting individuals to identity, providing access to loans and wider markets, and improve education.

5. The prospects for the world's poorest have gotten worse. The World Food Programme estimates that those at risk of food shortages has grown from 70 million to 200 million, providing an additional layer of threat on top of existing poverty. This inequality gap will prove to be a huge issue, and we need to persuade policy makers that we can't go back to how things were before. It's dangerous to think we can create a new world out of Covid-19, but if we don't use it as a platform then we are not doing justice to the moment or ourselves. What are the moments of opportunity?

Huge thanks to the panelists at the event, Brianna Craft, George Marshall, Habiba Ali, Sam Bickersteth, Thibaut Mills, Amir Lebdiou and James Arroyo.

If you're interested in attending or participating in OxFID 2022, please subscribe to the newsletter [here](#) and follow them on [Facebook](#) for the latest updates.



We are incredibly excited to announce that we are sponsoring the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership's Conference In April, with the theme of 'Who are the Humanitarians?' Make sure you're following us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) to stay up to date with the latest announcements.



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