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Oxfam-Monash Partnership

Annual Report 2010–2011



Oxfam Australia



MONASH University

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www.facebook.com/home.php#!/OxfamMonashPartnership

Published August 2011

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A message from the Oxfam-Monash Partnership

Our first year has been one of tremendous growth. We are excited to share with you the activities and projects developed between Oxfam and Monash.

We have successfully advanced our core strategy of engaging academics and practitioners in a collaborative manner that realises the Partnership's principle of complementarity. The Search Conference and Working in Partnership Workshop are activities that demonstrate this principle. The first two funded projects arose from these activities. One project seeks to understand gendered impacts of climate change in Bangladesh with the aim of giving voice (and choice) to women. The second project aims to ensure South African communities, especially the poor, can put forward their real health needs in the public debate, and hold government accountable to implement a policy process – and the final policy outcome – that truly takes account of their needs. Researchers and development practitioners have worked intensively to distil areas of inquiry and new knowledge that provide immediate practical value to communities, the development of curriculum, public policy debates, and to Oxfam and Monash staff in their professional fields.

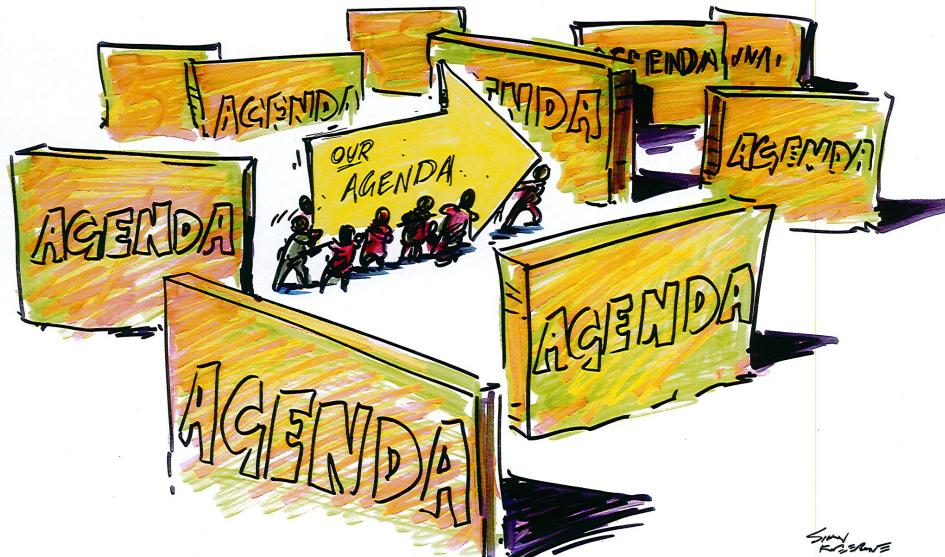
Our long term goal of creating a generation of researchers and development practitioners who engage in best practices (and critically assess and reflect on them) continues to expand with immense potential. The South Africa Summer Placements Program provides a "life experience" that exposes students to the realities of taking social action. Our close working relationship with Monash University's Faculty of Medicine has resulted in the development of a new unit, Improving Health Futures in a Global World. This unit enables students from all disciplines to have the opportunity to learn about critical issues affecting the health and well-being of people around the world. These student activities provide the best possible preparation for students to take on roles as future leaders in the field of social justice.

The structure we have put in place to grow this Partnership is a dynamic one. The Governance Committee is well resourced with tremendous expertise across sectors. The Committee is dedicated to leadership that is fresh, innovative and responsive. The Committee continues to meet monthly to maintain the high level of momentum that saw the speedy establishment of this Partnership, and to see the Partnership grow in a strategic direction.

We will continue to produce high impact projects in development research and practice. It is heartening to know that there are several projects that are ready to go for Year 2 that continue to be action oriented. Moreover, there are promising indications that a coalescing of government policy, political mandates, philanthropic support and interest from the sector, could give rise to the creation of a Centre for Civil Society, Leadership and Innovation for the development sector.

Professor Adam Shoemaker
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)
Monash University

Andrew Hewett
Executive Director
Oxfam Australia



Cartoon by Simon Kneebone for the Search Conference – September 2010

Introduction

The Oxfam-Monash Partnership

In 2008 Monash University embarked on a new journey with one of Australia's premier non-government organisations, Oxfam Australia.

Monash University is a major teaching and research university with campuses in Australia, South Africa, Malaysia and Italy. Its mission and practice increasingly aspire to the achievement of social justice. Monash has prominent strengths in research and education areas such as environmental resource management, international development and development economics, global health, HIV/AIDS prevention, the digital divide and Indigenous affairs.

Oxfam Australia currently supports programs in 28 countries and is part of Oxfam International which works in over 90 countries. Evaluations of its work on the ground confirm that the agency is making a significant difference to people's lives and has developed a strong core of expertise around enabling people to develop sustainable livelihoods, even under the most adverse of circumstances. Oxfam Australia has expertise in campaigning and advocacy that seeks to challenge the systemic causes of poverty and injustice.

By combining their strengths, these two organisations seek to significantly increase their impact on global poverty and health through catalysing change in the aid and development sector. In the first two years of working together, Monash and Oxfam established the Oxfam Summer Placements program in South Africa, set up a Monash staff giving program, opened the Fair Trade Oxfam Shop on Monash University's Clayton Campus, and continued to explore opportunities to enhance the relationship. These strong foundations underpinned the establishment of the Oxfam-Monash Partnership with the generous donation from the Empowerment Charitable Trust in 2010.

The aim of the Partnership begins and ends with the goal of improving and extending good practice on the ground. We plan to achieve this by:

- providing ongoing support for effective community development initiatives that are focused on empowering people living in poverty to produce sustainable livelihoods and to share their stories about this process locally and globally;
- collecting a better evidence base of Oxfam's impact and how it has been achieved, and communicating the findings and insights to influence the practice of organisations in the sector (including Oxfam's own practice), to support the development of academic curriculum, and to mobilise support from the Australian government and the public for high quality aid; and

- equipping the next generation of development workers and activists with the skills necessary to promote further positive changes in people's lives from knowledge and practice that emerges from joint Oxfam-Monash action.

The work of the Partnership focuses on three thematic areas:

- Accountability – how best to support communities to provide feedback to development agencies and governments and, in so doing, hold them to account.
- Climate change – how best to support communities to adapt to climate change.
- Gender equality – how best to support gender equality to positively impact upon women's lives, family well-being, and community development.

Over the past year the Partnership has achieved many milestones. Key agreements between the donor and the partner organisations are formally in place. The Governance Committee was appointed in July 2010, followed by the recruitment of a Program Manager in August. In September, sixty academics and practitioners took part in the Oxfam-Monash Partnership Search Conference at Monash campuses to kick off action research project proposals. On 18 May 2011, the Honourable Michael Kirby, retired High Court Judge and Monash alumnus, formally launched the Partnership and celebrated its achievements to date.

Report outline

The report focuses on the Partnership's major activities in five parts:

1. **Research in development** notes the Partnership's "ways of working" as demonstrated in its activities to generate research projects that lead to real and positive action
2. **Research in action** discusses how research is being leveraged for impact on the ground, and shares lessons from the first two major funded projects
3. **Capacity in development** details the student engagement and practitioner/academic development activities that are intimately connected to the goal of building capacity in the development sector
4. **Governance of the Partnership** outlines the unique and dynamic structure of the Partnership, including the Governance Committee with members from Monash and Oxfam, and joint program manager position
5. **Future in development** discusses a plan for next year and the possibilities for the Partnership as excitement builds around the research projects and the potential of the Partnership is being realised.



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Adam Shoemaker and Andrew Hewett at the
Oxfam-Monash Partnership Launch 18 May 2011.
Photo: Timothy Herbert/OxfamAUS.

1.0 Research in development

The Partnership is breaking new ground in trying to bring together different expertise and organisational cultures to create new avenues for research and action.

Central to the Partnership is the development of collaborative action research projects that generate outcomes beyond those that Oxfam or Monash could produce alone. A crucial part of this process is building relationships, understanding and establishing common ground. To this end, the Partnership has invested in bringing people together and will continue to do so to build on the activities in this first year. Major research achievements this year include the Oxfam-Monash Partnership Search Conference in September 2010 and the Working in Partnership workshop at the launch of the Partnership in May 2011.

Search Conference

In September 2010, Monash hosted the Oxfam-Monash Partnership Search Conference to establish relationships between academics and practitioners, to create the foundations for knowledge sharing between the two institutions, and to formulate a research agenda for the Partnership.

Thirty individuals attended the Search Conference from each organisation. Oxfam staff came from the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Laos, Cambodia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Timor-Leste, Thailand, Hong Kong, Sydney and Melbourne. They included Country Directors, thematic advisors, and advocacy staff. There were also colleagues from other Oxfam affiliates in the Asia Pacific region and staff of partner organisations including small civil society organisations. From Monash, academics came from diverse disciplines including business, economics, science, law, geography, education, information technology, social work and political science.

Over two days the participants identified critical research questions, mapped out projects, and discussed ethical frameworks for engagement in community research. Each participant worked on one of the Partnership's key themes: feedback and accountability; climate change adaptation; and gender equality. Theme leaders from Oxfam and Monash were designated to each theme to foster joint ownership of the process. These leaders were integral to the process of formulating the research agenda by generating feedback and consensus about ideas.

The Search Conference process provided real insights about the different perspectives and cultures of the two organisations. From the feedback we received, participants were committed to listening to one another and felt heard across institutions. A communiqué from the Search Conference was distributed widely to Oxfam and Monash staff.

The discussions bore fruit in the development of cross organisational relationships and research projects. Examples include:

- A project on health and accountability in South Africa, and a project on climate change and gender equity in Bangladesh that successfully received funding approval from the Governance Committee.
- Monash geography staff working on climate change with Oxfam program staff in Indonesia and Timor-Leste to

develop a proposal for farmer field schools in Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

- Ongoing discussions between staff in Cambodia and Melbourne to develop a project on how local communities hold the government, private sector and NGOs accountable in Cambodia.
- Continuing discussions and consultations on accountability for health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia including in the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Launch Workshop – Working in Partnership

The Governance Committee convened Monash and Oxfam staff again for a workshop at the launch of the Partnership. The aims of the workshop were to:

- strengthen relationships between Monash and Oxfam staff to develop collaborative research;
- clarify and discuss our understanding of action research; and
- strengthen our processes for working together to develop collaborative research.

Fourteen people participated in the workshop, including staff new to the Partnership. The workshop was used to discuss experiences to date and gather feedback on how best to support collaboration between the two institutions. Key issues discussed included:

- How can the Partnership best support and trial new innovations? What can be done to effectively generate ideas, and efficiently match (or reject) project ideas between the two organisations?
- How can the Partnership articulate more clearly its interest in research that has impacts and application at multiple scales?

If a project is primarily conducted at the community level, it must explicitly link to national and global debates, policies and issues. Likewise, if a research project is primarily engaged at the national level, or modelling global or regional trends (as may be the case with climate change), there must be links to projects in Oxfam's programming or advocacy work. While the action research project team themselves do not need to do the "linking work", the project must be conceptualised to include appropriate nexus with macro and micro scale development work.

- Key elements of action research need to be made explicit to ensure shared understanding between Oxfam practitioners and Monash academics. These elements include, but are not limited to, building relationships of trust, self-determination, agency, collaboration with participants and stakeholders, and dissemination of information.

These activities and the ongoing dialogue between the two organisations are generating action research projects. These projects are discussed in Part 2.0.

Small Group Activity

- Based on your experience to date or your ideas for the future, discuss:
 - How appropriate are these guidelines for facilitating collaboration?
 - What could be clarified or improved, and how?
 - What has or could better enable collaboration in the future? (including guidelines, information, ways of working, other processes?)
 - What are the key barriers and what are your ideas for overcoming them?

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2.0 Research in action

Community focused action research is distinguished from other types of research by its emphasis on equal partnership, immediate usefulness, and ongoing commitment to refine results in response to feedback from the community. More broadly, action research is conducted as a collaboration between traditionally trained "experts" and members of a community. Each party is fully committed to a partnership of equals and the production of outcomes of practical value to the community. Each partner's knowledge and skills are fully utilised at every stage of the project, including problem definition and issue selection, research design, conduct of research, interpretation of results, and determination of how results should be used for future action. Action research can be conceived as a cyclical process whereby feedback and new insights can be regularly incorporated into practice and subject to "the test of reality". Conclusions and findings are subject to modification in response to new information from the field. This contrasts with other research that may be linear in nature and ends when conclusions are drawn.

The Partnership supports action research projects with the ultimate goal of leading to community empowerment. The Partnership has established a process for inviting joint action research proposals of any scale from staff and practitioners. Proposals must align with the principles and aims of the Partnership. In particular, the Partnership has clarified its focus to invest and support projects that would be most useful for Oxfam's programs and for the communities Oxfam serves. Proposals can seek funding up to a maximum of \$300,000 and up to three years. The Governance Committee reviews proposals on a quarterly basis. Applications were sought and received for funding rounds in November 2010, March 2011 and June 2011. Applications for next year are to be submitted to the Governance Committee by 16 September and 16 December 2011.

The following types of projects are of the kind the Partnership seeks to support:

- activities focused on supporting community empowerment processes;
- piloting new innovations through action research methods;
- on-the-ground sampling, research and training;
- providing social infrastructure necessary to support local workers to distil and document their experiences;
- building capacity among local partners to support students and researchers;
- activities that build sustainable networks of practice;
- building research alliances for advocacy and to influence policy; and
- developing and disseminating well researched case studies for advocacy, for best practice models, or as input into better informed decision making on the part of governments, NGOs and donors.

The Governance Committee has committed funds to two projects. Several other proposed projects show promise and are being supported to further develop the proposal for future funding rounds.



2.1 Funded Projects

Gendered impacts of climate change in Bangladesh

Full project title: *Gendered impacts of climate variability, particularly in relation to slow onset change and climate events, in Bangladesh.*

Partnership funding: \$300,000 for up to three years.

Partnership thematic areas: gender equality and climate change.

Synopsis

This three year project is a collaboration between the Gender Leadership and Social Sustainability (GLASS) Research Unit at Monash, Oxfam Australia, Oxfam Great Britain as well as local partners. The central aim of this project is to assess the gender-based impacts related to climate change, catastrophic events as well as slow onset events, in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is one of the countries in the world most vulnerable to climate change. Oxfam staff in Bangladesh see this research as potentially influencing the national approach to climate change adaptation.

Rationale and expected outcomes

Each year, on average, almost 250 million people are affected by "natural" disasters. Recent research suggests that by 2015, this could grow by more than 50% to an average of over 375 million people affected by climate-related disasters each year.

There is alarming evidence emerging from various post-disaster zones that the incidence of gender-based violence increases dramatically following catastrophic climate events. At a very basic level it is known, for example, that sexual abuse is one important reason why women in Bangladesh do not go to cyclone shelters during cyclones. There is also evidence emerging from the GLASS Unit's work in the Australia's Murray-Darling Basin region that drought and declining water is leading to an increase in family violence. This means at least potentially 120 million women per year are at risk of violence in such circumstances. This emerging issue is not insubstantial.

The gap this action research project will fill is paying systematic attention to women's stories in a climate change context allowing a greater understanding of the strategies that will make women and girls safer. The project seeks to capture, and learn from, the experiences, vulnerability and agency of women to determine appropriate and practical ways to address this issue. This will be realised by developing a robust and culturally sensitive methodology that balances quantitative data (climate and socio-economic) with qualitative information gathered from stories and experiences of women (and men) about their coping strategies.

The evidence and insights will then be used to inform policies, practices and mechanisms instituted by international, regional and local NGOs and government agencies to better support women. This may include, in particular, informing the drafting of guidelines for disaster preparation and post-disaster responses that directly address gender-based violence and increase the safety of women and girls, and equally important, that enables women to advocate on their own behalf to ensure that such plans, decision making and resources support their choices. The existing links the GLASS Unit has with NZAid, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other UN agencies, and that Oxfam has within the humanitarian arena will enable broad communication of the lessons. An immediate example is the "We Can" gender-based violence campaign in South Asia that Oxfam has long supported. It is also exciting that the new agency UN Women (UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) has already expressed interest in the findings from this project. Engagement with the Government of Bangladesh has already commenced to build interest in the project and understand how the insights can best contribute to national policy.



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Progress

Project team

- Project leadership:
Professor Margaret Alston (Director of the Gender Leadership and Social Sustainability (GLASS) Research Unit and Head of the Department of Social Work, Monash University); Tania Cass (Program Manager - India and Bangladesh, Oxfam Australia); Dr Kerri Wittenbury (Senior Research Fellow, GLASS Research Unit Monash University); and Dr Alexandra Gartrell (Research advisor, Oxfam Australia).
- Key members:
Alex Haynes (Project Manager, Oxfam-Monash Partnership Project, Bangladesh, GLASS Research Unit, Department of Social Work, Monash University); Md Badi Akhter (Program Manager, Bangladesh, Oxfam Great Britain); and Farhana Hafiz (Programme Officer in Bangladesh, Oxfam Great Britain).

In March 2011, the research team from Monash travelled to Bangladesh to meet with Oxfam Great Britain staff members and began the careful process of building links with partner organisations and communities. They met with partner organisations including Jago Nari throughout southern Bangladesh focusing on the villages of Barguna District. Fieldwork in Bangladesh will begin in October 2011.

In September 2011, the project will be presented at the Gender Leadership and Social Sustainability International Conference in Prato, Italy to a range of international academics and advocates. The research team has already presented the project at the World Universities Network (WUN) Gender Justice Climate Change group in the United States. While overseas they also met with Australian embassy staff in Washington and New York, the US State Department, UN Women (formerly UNIFEM) and the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) to gain support for a forum in New York to raise the profile of gender and climate change issues and to discuss preliminary findings from this project. The team also plans to use the research findings in the profiling of gender and climate change issues at the forthcoming Earth Summit in June 2012.

"There is no substitute for talking with people in the places they live and work and experiencing the environment first hand. We all gained tremendous insight into the context and conditions within which our research project sits, and the daily life of the people who are the focus of our work."

Alex Haynes, Project Manager
Oxfam-Monash Partnership Project,
Bangladesh Gender Leadership
and Social Sustainability (GLASS)
Research Unit, Department of Social
Work, Monash University.

Right: the Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Alliance advocacy work in the Cyclone Aila affected district of Satkira in south-west Bangladesh. Credit: Angela Smith/OxfamAUS.



Developing a people's policy for health in South Africa

Full project title: *Governance and accountability in the health sector - Developing a people's policy for health in South Africa.*

Partnership funding: \$100,000 for up to two years.

Partnership thematic areas:
accountability.

Synopsis

This project is a collaboration of Oxfam's South Africa office, the Global Health Unit at Monash and the School of Health Sciences at Monash South Africa. This project asks the important question of how communities participate in and use democratic processes to hold the South African government to account for the development and delivery of an effective and efficient health system. The team will map out existing models of health accountability available to communities and assess the effectiveness of current accountability mechanisms that community members use to hold government to account for their promises. All this is made pressing and urgent due to the anticipated changes that will take place in the delivery of health care in South Africa in 2012.

Rationale and expected outcomes

The high level of poverty (71% in rural areas and 50% overall) and unemployment (38%) in South Africa make it difficult for – at the very least – some 18 million people to access adequate health services. The majority of South Africans have no access to medical insurance and are dependent on the public health system to access health care. The South African government is responsible for providing health services to more than 80% of the population. The public health system has been overwhelmed by demand while private facilities are being underutilised.

Given that South Africa has a multitude of challenges that are afflicting the health system a National Health Insurance scheme is being proposed as a lifeline to a failing health care system that will address past inequities in relation to quality and access to health services.

Furthermore, the information gaps on certain aspects of the scheme coupled with a non-transparent legislative drafting process make it difficult for ordinary users of the current health system to critically engage with the issues. Consequently there is a lack of adequate monitoring by the public that is necessary to keep policymakers accountable to meeting the health needs of the people.

This project aims to examine the capacity of communities to engage with government about their health needs and how this is translated into a responsive and effective health policy. In particular, the project seeks to demystify the policy process and content and thus assist civil society's capacity to influence policy reforms, especially by raising the profile of health needs of poor people. The project will evaluate the successes and failures of different strategies for mobilising civil society and various public

participation frameworks. The project aims to test a model of public policy engagement to increase awareness of, and accessibility to, policy at a local level. This will inform ongoing efforts to strengthen public participation.

The researchers plan to use the lessons from the community consultation process to draft a policy position to influence the shape of scheme. They plan to target members of the Parliamentary Committee once they are selected and begin framing the public debate about the scheme.

Finally, by identifying whether proposed policies will meet the health needs of people in South Africa, the project will highlight key elements for Oxfam (under the Oxfam Joint Country Analysis and Strategy (JCAS)) and Monash South Africa (within the School of Health Sciences) to consider in their planning around health programs in South Africa.



Gugu Ndlovu is a care giver at the Hillcrest HIV centre in Durban, South Africa. Photo: Matthew Willman/OxfamAUS.

Progress

Project team

- Monash staff:
Professor Geoff Setswe (Professor and Head of Health Sciences, Monash South Africa); Dr Ravayi Marindo (Senior Lecturer – Epidemiology, Monash South Africa); and Professor Brian Oldenburg (Professor and Chair of International Public Health, Monash Australia)
- Oxfam staff:
Ms Katherine Lay (Essential Services Program Coordinator, Oxfam Pretoria Office), Kevin Roussel (Advocacy and Campaigns Manager, Oxfam Cape Town Office), Ms Urvarshi Rajcoomar (Senior Program Coordinator – Advocacy, Policy and Humanitarian, Oxfam, Country Office in Durban)

Since the project received approval from the governance committee in May 2011, the Oxfam and Monash South Africa team developed a project management framework. In the last two months the team finalised the two year operational plan, applied for ethical clearance, and developed a draft Terms of Reference which will define the ways of working in the partnership. The team is in the process of setting up the advisory board for the project and developing a monitoring framework.

2.2 Proposed Projects

Proposed projects span the breadth of the themes of climate change, gender equality, and accountability. The Partnership is supporting the development of proposals for the following projects:

- **Accountability in Cambodia:** this project examines bottom-up accountability among communities impacted by large-scale infrastructure and development projects in Cambodia. The proposal is well advanced and will soon be submitted to the Governance Committee for funding approval.
- **Climate change in Indonesia and Timor-Leste:** this project involves models of knowledge transmission, adaptation, livelihood maintenance, and education for communities impacted by climate change in Indonesia and Timor-Leste. In practical terms, it would work with farmer field schools to draw out how farmers are already adapting to changing weather patterns and other impacts of climate change.
- **Accountability in regional trade negotiations in the Pacific Islands:** this project will support citizens to be actively engaged in monitoring trade negotiations between governments in the Pacific Islands – in particular the regional trade agreement with Australia and New Zealand. The project will analyse the impacts of previous trade agreements in the region, assess the potential impacts of future trade agreements, and examine how the agreements can be focused to ensure benefits flow to people in the Pacific Islands countries.

Other project ideas in development include exploring Aboriginal health and accountability, gender and development planning, and sustainability models for natural resource management.

2.3 Key Lessons

The Partnership has consolidated lessons in progressing the first two funded projects and has made more concrete the “ways of working” across two different organisations:

- **Team building and “ways of working”:** the Partnership is implementing suggestions to enhance collaborative efforts such as negotiating roles and ways of communicating between the project team members early in the process.
- **Action research:** rather than assuming a certain level of core competency with key concepts and methodology, it is recognised that there needs to be support for academics and practitioners to ensure the action research methodology is grounded and as such each project will be supported by a staff member in the Research Unit of Oxfam Australia. Members of the Research Unit are skilled in action research methodologies and dealing with issues of ethics, especially projects that take place in development contexts.
- **Setting the research agenda:** as noted earlier, the Partnership has clarified its focus to invest and support projects that would be most useful for Oxfam’s programs and for the communities Oxfam serves. The Partnership therefore is being more proactive and deliberate in brokering and matching academic knowledge and research interest with practitioners and their areas of inquiry. This takes into account the practical realities of the two organisations, principally, staffing capacity and resource constraints.

Ongoing reflection and continuous improvement of operations and processes will benefit future joint projects.



3.0 Capacity in development

The Partnership seeks to support the current and next generation of development practitioners and academics to be better placed to contribute to social change. In this first year, the Partnership has invested substantially in activities that support student engagement and opportunities for academics and practitioners to learn from one another.

Over the past year, the Partnership strengthened its support for the South Africa Summer Placement program and evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of this program; supported the Monash Global Health Depth Unit in the development of curriculum; and worked closely with the new Oxfam at Monash Student Group to build their capacity and support their awareness raising activities.

3.1 Student engagement – developing the practitioners of tomorrow

The Partnership adopts a balanced approach to give it the greatest opportunity to engage with students across all Monash campuses and allow a large number of students to benefit from the Partnership. The Partnership identified the following key areas:

- **Student experience and curriculum development:** this includes supporting curriculum development through Monash Depth Units and other community or international development courses and supporting student leadership programs for course credits. These activities provide pathways to other Partnership activities. In particular, Oxfam's involvement will lead to a curriculum that is informed by Oxfam's practice; and in turn, Oxfam benefits from students' analysis of Oxfam's programs.
- **Community based leadership and engagement:** this involves working with local civil society organisations to offer innovative volunteer and work experience opportunities to students in their local area.
- **International opportunities:** this includes activities to continue fostering the South Africa Summer Placement program, to explore semester length internship opportunities, and to build on Monash University's international networks for new volunteer opportunities.

South Africa Summer Placements Program

The Oxfam Monash Summer Placement Program is a collaboration with Refugee Social Services, Lawyers for Human Rights, Project Empower, Save the Children, Hillcrest AIDS Centre, and Woza Moya – all partner organisations of Oxfam's program in South Africa. This program fills a particular niche for students wishing to explore their future career and academic options by experiencing community development work.

The Partnership funded a Support Officer position for the first time this year. Experience from previous years revealed a need for a dedicated support officer to coordinate placements and communication between Oxfam, Monash and partner organisations.

Ten Monash students spent their summer in Durban to undertake development activities, for example:

- Students at Woza Moya participated in rural HIV/AIDS home based care visits, supported after school care programs, assisted with early childhood education programs, and implemented food security programming

in the region by assisting with the delivery of food parcels and maintaining the community garden.

- Students at Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR) supported case load workers directly and were instrumental in assisting with the interviews of refugees and asylum seekers coming to the centre for legal representation.
- A student at Refugee Social Services took on a unique and innovative media project to document the organisation, projects, and profile staff for use in a public campaign.
- Students at the Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust worked directly with people affected by HIV in the respite care centre by supporting health care workers with their day to day activities, and worked alongside retail staff of the craft store.

In February 2011, the Program Manager of the Oxfam-Monash Partnership travelled to South Africa to meet with students, Oxfam staff, and their partner organisations during the final week of placements to evaluate the program and the Partnership's involvement to date. The feedback from partners and students was very positive. There were useful suggestions to improve logistics and operations to assist students to focus their time and energy in activities related to their placements, namely, community engagement and volunteering. The Governance Committee will consider the recommendations as it reviews its strategy and options for student engagement for Year 2. Some key considerations are:

- This program was almost universally described by both students and partner organisations as a "life experience", not an academic experience. This statement forces reconsideration of the purpose of this program in terms of student academic learning. One option is to tie the short placements with existing curriculum offered at Monash, such as the new Depth Units or intensive (overseas) courses.
- An expanded student placement program raises a number of challenges including seeking involvement from appropriate (and interested) schools, faculties and Oxfam offices with sufficient resources and networks, the capacity of partner organisations to take students for longer, and the viability of ongoing funding for the Support Officer position.

Curriculum development – *Improving Health Futures in a Global World* depth unit

The Partnership has been working closely with the International Public Health Unit to assist with the development of Monash University's new Depth Unit, *Improving Health Futures in a Global World* (MON2002). This new unit allows students from any discipline to learn about the critical issues affecting the health and well-being of people around the world.

Monash depth units are research-based units that introduce students to major research challenges, industry experts and the professional skills. These skills can be applied to transform local and international communities. The units aim to teach students how to "act now for a better tomorrow".

Oxfam is providing support in terms of case studies drawn from Oxfam's development experience. These form the materials that will be used as core learning and teaching tools.

Improving Health Futures in a Global World unit description

Explore the impacts of today's global health challenges on international development efforts. Use real-life projects led by Oxfam Australia to learn how to respond to these challenges in the context of development.

The unit focuses on the living, working and other basic life circumstances that contribute to the health and wellbeing of people around the world; conditions like freedom from poverty, access to education, gender equality and the ability to survive natural disasters.

Actively contribute to Oxfam projects within Australia and overseas. Developed in collaboration with Oxfam Australia, the unit is based on projects that Oxfam is involved with.

See <http://www.monash.edu.au/education/passport/unit-descriptions.html#MON2002>

It included a three-day field trip to project sites around Bangladesh, followed by three and half days of presentations and workshops. The conference theme focused on 'Scaling Up: Beyond Pilots', looking to the next phase of international community based adaptation research and action.

In addition, separate workshops for Oxfam and Monash participants were held to share knowledge about community based adaptation and the nature of each institution's work on climate change, identify areas of interest including priority areas for action research, and clarify ways the Partnership can pursue work in this area. As a result, a strong foundation of links and relationships was laid for ongoing collaboration. For example, after a presentation at the conference on an African based climate resilience research project led by the UK based Oxfam, CARE, World Vision and Save the Children, the same four Australian based organisations are pursuing a proposal to apply the same methodology in the Pacific region.

3.2 Research and practitioner excellence through partnership

The Partnership's strategy for practitioner and academic development involves:

- supporting activities to build the Partnership in line with the themes of accountability, climate change and gender equality such as supporting Oxfam Hubs. Oxfam Australia has four change goal "hubs" – on gender justice, economic justice (including climate change), essential services and active citizenship and accountability. These hubs are networks where staff share information and lessons, analyse Oxfam's progress and feed into future planning. The Partnership's themes have been informed by discussions in these hubs and they are a key mechanism for findings from projects to be shared with staff across Oxfam. It is hoped that the hubs and the Partnership enjoy a symbiotic relationship of feeding ideas back and forth and furthering our ability to act against injustice and poverty; and
- supporting exchanges of lessons and ideas across Monash and Oxfam, such as symposia, presentations by staff to Monash and Oxfam, and workshops and conferences noted earlier and the Bangladesh conference noted below.

Bangladesh Conference

Addressing climate change is an organisational priority for Oxfam International and Oxfam Australia. Many of the communities that Oxfam works with are already experiencing the impacts of climate change. These impacts include declining agricultural yields and access to food, clean water, land and natural resources, and increasingly frequent and severe weather events such as floods and drought.

In March 2011, a delegation of twelve Oxfam and Monash staff attended the 5th Annual Community-Based Adaptation to Climate Change Conference in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The conference was organised by the International Institute of Environment and Development.

"We realise that university academics and Oxfam staff operate in very different ways with differing timelines, approaches, management structures and objectives. We also have very different organisational structures and resourcing so it was great to find out from both sides how we can work with each other's organisations, beyond just with the people at the conference. If we are to effectively work together it is vital that we have a shared understanding of these types of issues. Out of the conference I believe we have a cohort of people in both organisations with a much better understanding of each other, who can act as resource people to other colleagues. I think this was in fact one of the key aims of taking the group to the conference, and I think was a very successful outcome."

Annette Salkeld
Climate Change Program Advisor
Oxfam Australia



Oxfam Australia



MONASH University

4.0 Governance of the partnership

The achievements of the Partnership are due – in part – to a strong governance structure that allows the organisations to equally contribute to the strategic direction of the Partnership.

The governance approach is built on the principles and commitments set out in the original Partnership proposal, namely, transparency, equality, responsibility and ethics, complementarity, sustainability, action research oriented, and multipliers.

Both Oxfam and Monash are committed to ensuring the longevity and impact of the Partnership. Oxfam and Monash recently signed a new Memorandum of Agreement to underpin their ongoing collaboration signed on 18 May 2011.

4.1 Governance committee

The Governance Committee has provided a dynamic and focused environment for both organisations to chart a course for the Partnership. The committee was established in August 2010 with members from Oxfam and Monash who have the commitment, skills and expertise to direct the Partnership. Its role is to set priorities, manage the budget, approve reporting, engage in public communication, develop a research program, and assess and approve applications for funding. The committee currently meets on a monthly basis.

Finally, it is critical that the Partnership is innovative and fresh in its thinking. Two new members joined the Governance Committee recently. In selecting new appointees, the Partnership is conscious of enhancing the committee's breadth of skills, experience and ideas.

Members for this report period are:

- **Adam Shoemaker** is Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) at Monash University and is responsible for the quality, range and impact of the University's academic programs. He was Dean of the College of Arts and Social Sciences at the Australian National University (ANU) and Foundation Director of the ANU Research School of Humanities.
- **Chris Roche** is currently the Director of Development Effectiveness at Oxfam Australia, having previously been the International Program Director since 2002. His role includes leading on Accountability and Learning/Innovation, and engaging in sector wide debates on Aid quality and effectiveness. Before this Chris was head of Program Policy at Oxfam Great Britain for eight years, and worked for the International NGO consortium ACORD for ten years.
- **Cecilia Hewlett** is the Director of the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) at Monash University and is responsible for a wide range of strategic projects across the Education Portfolio. Prior to this she was Associate Director of the Monash University Centre in Prato, Italy.
- **Mark Clisby** is the Director of Research Services at La Trobe University. Mark was most recently Director Operations at Oxfam Australia with responsibilities in the areas of organisational learning and development, human resources, finance, risk management, information services, accommodation services, and served as the Company Secretary for Oxfam Australia and Oxfam Australia Trading.

- **Judy Mitchell** spent most of her professional life working in field of education. Judy also worked as the Acting Executive Director of the International Women's Development Agency. Since 1996, Judy has been involved in a voluntary capacity with Oxfam Australia. She served on the board of Oxfam Australia from 1996 to 2008, was Chair of the board from 2002 to 2006 and chaired the Governance Committee.

- **May Miller-Dawkins** is the Research Manager at Oxfam Australia. She leads the team tasked with the responsibility to increase Oxfam's capacity to do and use research to improve program quality and influence development policy and practice. In 2009 she led the Oxfam International study on the human impacts of the economic crisis across twelve countries.

- **Simon Adams** has worked in the field of international education and development for more than 15 years and lectured at a number of Australian, North American and African universities. Simon most recently served as Pro Vice Chancellor (International Engagement) at Monash University, and previously held a senior leadership position at Monash's campus in South Africa.

- **James Ensor** is currently the Director of Public Policy at Oxfam Australia. He joined Oxfam Australia in 1997 and was responsible for managing overseas development projects. He was appointed Director of Public Policy and Outreach in October 2001. Prior to joining Oxfam Australia, James spent seven years with the Central Land Council in the Northern Territory representing the interests of Indigenous landowners.

4.2 Program manager

The appointment of a dedicated program manager with reporting lines to both organisations was seen from the outset to be an important step in taking the Partnership forward. It has proved to be crucial to maintaining focus and momentum. This is evidenced in the consistently high level of activity that the Partnership has been able to achieve.

The program manager is the key point of liaison between Monash and Oxfam. The role includes responsibility for driving the research agenda and for facilitating the genesis, development and monitoring of research projects funded under the Partnership. The program manager also takes a lead role in the development and training of students and practitioners and provides support to the Governance Committee.

The Partnership was fortunate to appoint Lisa Elford in September 2010. Lisa previously worked as a researcher in humanitarian organisations in South Africa and as a community development practitioner in Canada. She has research expertise in the broad areas of mobile populations, human and political geography, and rights based approach to development.

From June 2011, Lisa is on maternity leave and the Partnership welcomes Thu-Trang Tran to this crucial role. Thu-Trang takes leave from her role as Principal Policy Advisor in the Victorian Department of Justice and brings her skills and experience in working across not-for-profit, government and corporate sectors.

4.3 Senior research fellow

Larry Stillman is the Senior Research Fellow of the Oxfam-Monash Partnership. Larry works in the Faculty of Information Technology (IT) at Monash specialising in research about the interaction between technology and communities in developed and developing countries. Larry has a background in the humanities and social sciences and over a decade of experience in community development. Larry's recent projects include the Doing IT Better Project with NGOs in Victoria Australia and with the Meraka Institute, CSIR South Africa on the Digital Doorway Project. Larry also organises a yearly communities and technologies conference at Monash Prato.

For the Partnership, Larry is undertaking a research program that seeks to explore social justice and development as concepts, initially targeting the following areas of inquiry:

- A baseline of understanding social justice and community engagement at Monash.
- An understanding of how the Partnership fits within Monash University's framework of social justice and community engagement.
- An understanding of the Partnership's communication, knowledge and information sharing approaches that it demonstrates as it undertakes its work.

Larry has undertaken work to progress the first area of inquiry and has submitted an interim report to the Governance Committee. Larry notes: "The most interesting finding is that Monash has a well developed policy framework for community engagement, but the more specific concept of social justice and how this is achieved at Monash still needs clarification". In order to do this, a case study is to be conducted in coming months about the impact of Monash Volunteering Program for the estimated 13,000 people registered and the organisations that utilise the program. Larry is proposing to carry out surveys and conduct qualitative studies with a select group of stakeholders.

Larry has also started pursuing activities relating to the third area of inquiry. A workshop was held with members of the Committee and a project staff member about information and knowledge transactions and how they affect the Partnership overall. Larry will explore the recommended option of working with the Monash E-Research Centre to develop a knowledge management solution that meets current needs of the Partnership.

4.4 Communications

The Partnership wishes to demonstrate good communication practices in its own "ways of working" that reflect its core principles of equality, transparency and complementarity. As the Partnership grows and engages more partners and supporters, the Governance Committee is developing a robust communication strategy to capitalise on the Partnership's unique strength and ability to build structures for students, academics, and practitioners to link and learn from one another.

The primary goal for Year 2 continues to be supporting project teams to engage in dialogue about the thematic areas, to build new relationships, and to share their insights and experiences as they progress their projects. There are now support mechanisms that ensure project teams can seek the support of the program manager and the support of the research unit in Oxfam. The Partnership recognises the tremendous investment of time, energy and focus to generate and document ideas, and therefore the Governance Committee will continue to provide full comments and feedback about project proposal to applicants. The program manager is also critical to this feedback process, working with applicants to refine their project ideas to meet the Partnership's criteria and principles.

The second goal is to ensure that partners and supporters are kept abreast of the activities and thinking of the Partnership. This report seeks to demonstrate our accountability to donors, project team members, staff at Oxfam and Monash, and to our growing base of supporters. This will be supplemented with our new regular "Star Points" monthly updates with five short items about Partnership activities, projects and news from the Governance Committee. The Partnership will continue to maintain its online and social media presence and will seek to enhance the digital interactivity of these public communication channels.



5.0 Future in development

Increasing global attention is being given to the effectiveness of international aid and development efforts. For the Australian Government, the growing Australian aid budget also focuses attention on how this money will be spent. This parallels community and political demands for greater scrutiny of the work regardless of whether the aid is direct or indirect, multi-lateral, bi-lateral or spent via International NGOs and Civil Society Organisations.

There is also a growing recognition that “business as usual” in the aid sector is not an option, and that responding to new challenges and a changing aid environment will require high levels of creativity and innovation, not least in how citizens in both “donor” and “recipient” countries are engaged in the process.

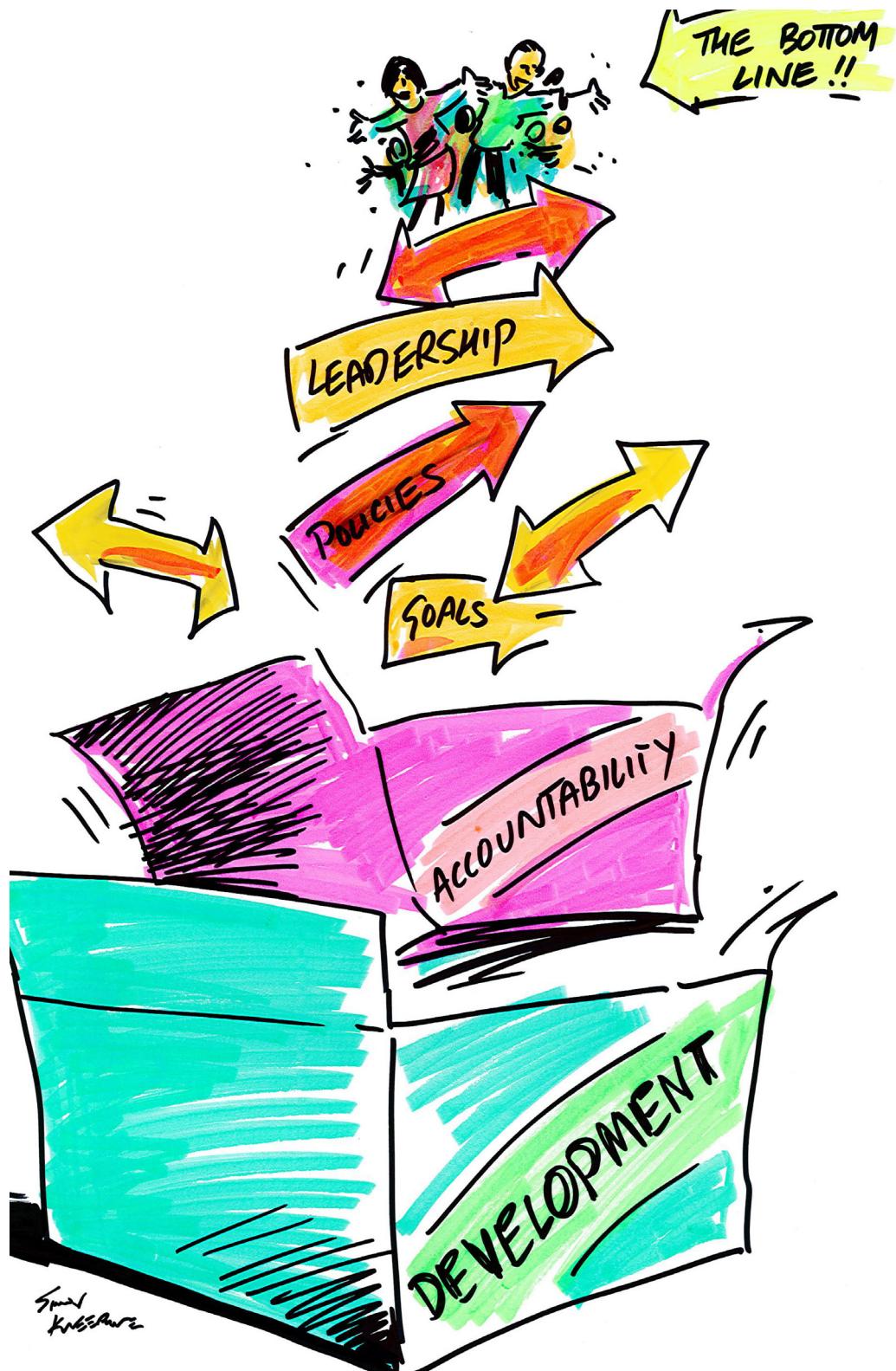
Additionally, a number of researchers suggest that many of the major new ways of working and innovative ideas that have emerged in the aid sector over the past twenty to thirty years have been largely produced by the not-for-profit or NGO sector, by civil society initiatives or by the private sector. This has included work by research institutes and universities.

However in Australia there are no substantive collaborations between International NGOs, civil society organisations and higher education or research centres. The sector is in desperate need of such collaborative research that is focused on capturing and sharing innovation and establishing a more solid evidence base for the effectiveness of such efforts.

A Centre for Civil Society, Leadership and Innovation has been a longer term goal of the Partnership since its inception in 2008. This centre would lead policy and action research agendas on the role of civil society in international development. This centre will fulfil a role that is currently missing in the Asia-Pacific and Australian region by focusing on Australian and regional practice, research and capacity building.

Such a centre would operate as a focus for interdisciplinary practice based research and innovation, as a clearing house and training provider for the non-governmental sector and as a leader in citizen-led forms of monitoring and evaluation. A centre would operate to share and promote good practice and to guide the scaling up of effective and high impact aid and development programs and innovations, wherever they occur. It would work on the boundaries of emerging economic, social media and political trends to explain, test and model new theories of change. Importantly, this centre can build on emerging work in developing countries within and between Oxfam and Monash under the Partnership. It would also build on research commissioned by AusAID through the Developmental Leadership Program.

The Partnership is engaging with peers in the sector and supporters in government to further develop options to bring about this much needed centre that can bring about the step change needed to improve the effectiveness of international development efforts.



Cartoon by Simon Kneebone for the Search Conference – September 2010.



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