

Empowerment Charitable Trust

2018 ANNUAL REPORT



The background of the page is a photograph of a garden, heavily tinted with a green color. It shows several wooden stakes in the ground, with various climbing plants and vines growing up them. The leaves are mostly heart-shaped and green, with some showing signs of wear or insect damage. The overall scene is lush and natural.

INTRODUCTION

The Oxfam-Monash Partnership was established with the generous support of the Empowerment Charitable Trust. The purpose of this Partnership is to improve development practice and its outcomes for communities. More specifically, we aim to bring together the differing yet complementary resources of Oxfam Australia and Monash University, and combine them to achieve greater development impact than would otherwise be possible.

The Partnership has an ambitious collaborative research agenda, student engagement and practitioner development activities. In line with our 2015 Memorandum of Agreement, our aim is that these activities will generate positive change for development communities around the world.

This 2018 annual progress report highlights the activities and outcomes of the Partnership's activities in 2018 and re-confirms the commitment of both parties to the Partnership.



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REPORT ON PROJECT

During the report period, January to December 2018, the Partnership continued to work to the guiding principles that inform its strategic agenda. These principles are:

Equality

Mutual respect between members of the Partnership, irrespective of size, power and influence.

Transparency

Dialogue on equal footing with an emphasis on early consultations and sharing of information.

Action-research oriented approach

Outcome based and action-oriented research that seeks to directly and indirectly improve the lives of people living in poverty.

Responsible and ethical behaviour

A commitment to accomplishing tasks responsibly and with integrity.

Complementarity

Building on our comparative advantages and complementing each other's contributions and those of our stakeholders and networks.

Sustainability

Undertaking our work in a manner that builds the sustainability of our respective and joint projects including sustainable change for those we seek to assist.

Multipliers

Actively seeking opportunities to scale up and multiply the impact of our work including pursuing additional funding sources for the Partnership's work.

The strategic agenda for 2018 reflected our collective commitments, as stipulated in the 2016 – 2019 Statement of Strategic Intent. These include:

- world-class research that makes a difference in people's lives;
- connecting current and future practitioners with the evidence base to effect change; and
- evidence-based advocacy for the systems, policies and practices to benefit communities.



01

Research

Over the past year, we've fostered quality research to strengthen the evidence base for development impact, and used our findings to influence policy and practice in international development.

Our research aligns with our four thematic research priorities, developed in the previous reporting period. These priorities reflect the ongoing and emerging needs of the communities and partners with which Oxfam works.

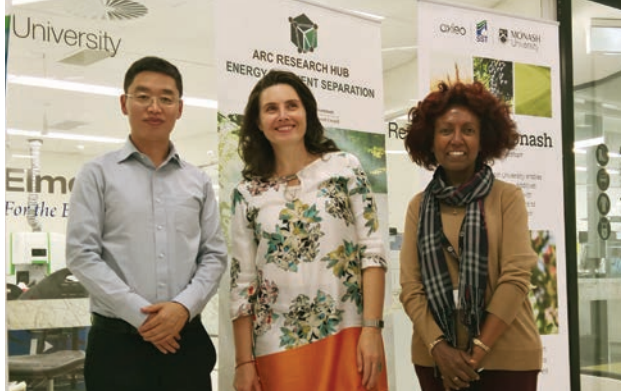
THEMATIC PRIORITIES 2016 – 2019

Gender equality // promoting gender equality to improve women's lives, family wellbeing and community development outcomes;

Climate change and resilience // supporting communities to adapt to climate change and to build the capacity to anticipate, mitigate and respond to these changes;

Migration and displacement // understanding the migration-development nexus including regular, irregular and multiple migrations and their impact on communities; and

Community accountability // as the development community engages with the 2030 Agenda, supporting communities to shape development goals and milestones and to hold key stakeholders accountable.



RESEARCH MATCHING AROUND NEW AND EMERGING ISSUES

Our research matching process, in the areas of climate change and resilience, migration and displacement, and implementation of community accountability around the Sustainable Development Goals, is built on lessons learned from the life of the Partnership on how to foster successful research relationships. We take a staged approach, which allows for flexible engagement between Oxfam in-country teams, Oxfam Australia staff and Monash University academics.

It is facilitated through a participatory process, involving thematic research champions for each priority area nominated by Oxfam Australia. These champions work with in-country teams to identify research needs and develop preliminary research concepts. These concepts are then used to undertake a whole-of-university search using research databases and faculty resources to identify Monash capacities in nominated areas. From this search process, matching workshops are held to support interdisciplinary research teams to:

- develop research questions together;
- identify methodologies;
- identify avenues for involving communities as active agents in the design; and
- identify delivery and analysis for research.

MICRO-DESALINATION FOR REMOTE OFF-GRID COMMUNITIES

In 2018 we received seed funding from Monash Infrastructure (MI) at Monash University to develop two micro-desalination prototypes for remote off-grid geographic locations. Led by Professor Xiwang Zhang, from Chemical Engineering at Monash University and Associate Professor Jie Zhang, from the School of Chemistry, a small-scale prototype, based on an emerging Low-Pressure Reverse Osmosis (LPRO) concept, was successfully developed in close coordination with Oxfam.

The prototype was designed to meet Oxfam's performance requirements: minimum production capacity, low initial cost, low energy consumption, low maintenance requirements, and scalability within existing market systems. By using a new LPRO membrane, the prototype is low maintenance, uses no chemicals, has low energy use, and is low cost. The team also examined the effectiveness of another emerging capacitive deionization (CDI) model, using solar energy for decentralised water desalination off-grid. The CDI model utilises direct current generated by an off-grid solar panel to separate soluble ions from water under an electric field. Though still at the developmental stage, this model is expected to be less costly than LPRO, as it consumes much less energy. No pressure pumps are used in the CDI system, the system doesn't consume any chemicals and it's easy to maintain.

Impact

With the completion of the micro-desalination prototypes, the team has expanded the partnership to include Oxfam affiliates in the Gaza Strip and Bangladesh, as well as Indigenous Australia, whose populations are increasingly affected by water salinity in drinking water. This has detrimental impacts on their health, including high blood pressure. We're running field trials through community participatory action research to build evidence on how innovative decentralized water purification systems can be used and how effective they are. In addition to improving access to potable water, these small-scale decentralized and local water treatment systems have the potential to make water treatment more sustainable by making use of multiple water sources, including re-use of wastewater.



*Demonstration of solar-driven, portable micro-desalination prototype 2018
Photo: Dr. Saba Mebrahtu Habte*



THE IMPACT OF FAMILY SEPARATION ON REFUGEE SETTLEMENT AND INCLUSION

In 2018, we initiated a new project to strengthen the existing evidence on the impact family separation has on refugee settlement and inclusion. The decision to move into this area was informed by an analysis of the evidence gaps that exist in the Asia Pacific region, as outlined in the 2018 Migration Policy Briefs authored by Professor Sharon Pickering (Monash Dean of Arts) and Rebecca Powell (Managing Director of The Border Crossing Observatory at Monash University). Seed funding was received from Monash Arts, with matching funds from the Partnership, to conduct a comprehensive literature review and analyse secondary data from the Building a New Life in Australia (BNLA) survey. Our research was led by Associate Professor Rebecca Wickes, Senior Lecturer in Criminology, School of Social Sciences. The BNLA is the largest and the most comprehensive survey of humanitarian migrants in Australia. It includes individuals and families who were granted protection visas through Australia's humanitarian program between May and December 2013. The longitudinal study was commissioned by the Australian Government to trace the settlement journeys and measure settlement indicators of participants for at least five years. This study is based on data collected annually via alternating waves of home visits (Waves 1 and 3) and telephone interviews (Waves 2 and 4), with a total of 1,929 (80.4%) remaining in the study by Wave 4 (responses collected in late 2016/early 2017).

Impact

The findings and recommendations emerging from this research will inform Oxfam's campaign on migration. This will focus on how important family re-unification is for refugees and the country, in terms of settlement, integration and inclusion. The additional evidence generated on the social impact of family separation will also be widely disseminated to enhance awareness and influence policy, using multiple communication channels. This includes a launch in 2019 to coincide with Oxfam's migration campaign, professional blogs, social media and online platforms, and peer reviewed journals.

SAFE FAMILIES IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

2018 saw a major breakthrough to kick-off this project through an intensive and coordinated effort of all key stakeholders — Oxfam Australia, Oxfam Solomon Islands, Equality Institute, and Monash University's Jean Hailes Research Unit. Ethics clearance for this research was successfully obtained through Monash University. Meanwhile, recruitment and training of field data collectors, and the data collection was run jointly by Oxfam Solomon Islands, Equality Institute, and the Jean Hailes Research Unit. This ensured high quality data collection, in line with global and national ethical and safety guidelines for conducting research on gender-based violence.

Impact

This study will address the lack of information currently available on social norms around violence against women (VAW), especially in small, remote and high-prevalence settings, such as the Solomon Islands. The findings will strengthen the existing evidence base. They will also generate important learnings in how to adhere to international ethics, safety standards and guidelines for VAW research in such settings. These findings will be used to inform global policy and practice to address these challenges.

MICRO-FINANCE AND GENDER EMPOWERMENT

Oxfam continued to work with Dr. Sara Niner from Monash Arts in 2018 on savings-led microfinance and gender empowerment. Dr. Niner published an article on the Oxfam flagship program Savings for Change (SfC) showing that it was one of the better models to enhance women's empowerment. This was followed by a series of in-depth case studies, one of which covered SfC, focusing on Cambodia and Mali. This involved Masters students from the Monash Arts Gender and Development unit and a policy review conducted with the help of Masters interns. This research will generate a consolidated overview of the most promising practices from these selected models, the challenges that remain and the lessons that have been learned. It will also present a comparative analysis of existing global microfinance and gender empowerment policies and guidelines against Oxfam's theory of change and principle of do no harm.

Impact

Through this project, we established links with ongoing research being conducted by Oxfam America on the SfC model in Timor Leste and Cambodia. This is providing a good opportunity to share our findings and discuss policy and program implications. Similarly, the policy review has provided an opportunity to expand the engagement with Oxfam Novib, which has been actively involved in the development of international policy on microfinance and gender empowerment, with a focus on savings-led models. The research findings and recommendations are expected to inform the future policy and program decisions of Oxfam's affiliates that are leading the SfC flagship program, as well as international policy development for this sector.



Student Engagement

In 2018 the Oxfam-Monash Partnership continued to build meaningful connections between Monash students, Oxfam Australia and the wider international development sector. We are inspiring a generation of aware and informed development practitioners by facilitating professional skills development through internship, teaching and engagement.



*Micro-desalination student internships meeting 2018
Photo: Dr. Saba Mebrahtu Habte*

HIGHLIGHTS

Placement of eight Monash student interns with Oxfam programs and teams. Team One focused on a micro-desalination evidence review. They examined the policy context, undertook an overview of existing and emerging small-scale water purification technologies, reviewed alignment with Oxfam's performance criteria, and assessed the gender, social and economic aspects. Team Two examined emerging documentation on the use blockchain technology for cash-transfer programs in humanitarian context. Team Three focused on reviewing existing evidence on feminist transformative leadership for gender equality with a focus in South Asia, in particular Pakistan and gender mainstreaming in humanitarian contexts, respectively. Team Four undertook a systematic literature review on the social impact of family separation, refugee settlement and inclusion.

The Oxfam-Monash Partnership Award for Research Impact was awarded to Felicitas Bran, a Master of International Development Practice student with the highest scoring research thesis in 2018.

The contribution of Monash Intern, Courtney May, was showcased on the Partnership's website, highlighting her work on the Microfinance and Gender Empowerment policy review.

In 2018, the Partnership broadened its offerings and facilitated practice insights from Oxfam programs through guest lectures and workshops to post-graduate students of:

- Deconstructing Development;
- Gender and Development;
- Guiding Principles in Humanitarian Response and Community Resilience;
- Mentoring for Development Practice;
- Green Steps — Perspectives on Sustainability;
- Project Planning and Management; and
- Research Methods.

Practitioner Development

In 2018, the Oxfam-Monash Partnership continued its work to connect development practitioners and policy makers with the evidence base to effect change. The Partnership participated in a range of practitioner and public events that showcased the Oxfam-Monash Partnership's research and enabled practitioners to develop and share their practice.

MIGRATION STATE OF EVIDENCE REVIEW LAUNCH

Three policy briefs on global migration were launched on 6 March 2018. The briefs were written by Professor Sharon Pickering, Dean of Monash Arts and Rebecca Powell, Managing Director of The Border Crossing Observatory at Monash University.

They focus on:

- Women and Irregular Migration;
- High Harm, High Volume Migration; and
- Migration, a Positive Driver of Development.

The reports were launched jointly with Oxfam Australia and The Border Crossing Observatory to coincide with International Women's Day, emphasizing the significant and growing impact of irregular migration on women and children. Key partners in the academic sector as well as civil society attended the event. Professor Pickering presented the main findings, which showed that the number of people forcibly displaced has significantly risen over the past years, particularly for the Asia Pacific region. This is gravely affecting the safety and security of the most vulnerable population groups — women and young children. Professor Pickering highlighted the main drivers — especially conflict and gender-based violence, with migration (which is often irregular) further exacerbating women's vulnerability. She identified the huge information and data gaps that exist especially for the Asia-Pacific region. The reports highlight the need to fill these gaps to support effective and timely responses and to mitigate the effects of irregular migration on the survival and security of those affected.

Impact

The findings and recommendations of these reports were used to inform policy and advocacy work by Oxfam in the area of migration and displacement — specifically in Oxfam's migration campaign which is focusing on family re-union. They also provided strategic guidance for Oxfam's continued collaborative work with the academic sector to further strengthen the existing evidence base, with a focus on the social impact of family separation on refugee settlement and inclusion.



*Migration policy briefs launch event 2018
Photo: Tshering Denka*

LAUNCH OF RURAL WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND RECOGNITION IN SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN POST-WAR SRI LANKA

This long-awaited report on women in agriculture for Sri Lanka was based on exploratory research undertaken across three districts of Sri Lanka — Hambantota, Polonnaruwa and Ampara. It was successfully launched on 28 March 2018 jointly with Oxfam Australia, involving Oxfam Sri Lanka representatives and Monash academic partners from Gender Peace and Security.

This multi-region research identified barriers and enablers to women's participation in agricultural livelihoods, including: conflict; ill-health and disabilities; gender norms around social reproduction; domestic violence; climate factors such as drought and flood; disruptions from wildlife; unsustainable or unavailable markets; high costs of inputs or underpayment; political patronage; and restricted mobility. Enablers of participation include support for social reproductive tasks such as childcare, land and asset access, training, and participation in collectives. Some factors such as access to financial capital were found to both enable and hinder production.

Impact

This research has generated a comprehensive evidence base on the impact of gender-blind agricultural policies at the national and regional level. As part of its translation process, the results were shared with Parliamentarians from Sri Lanka. The findings were used to inform a gender review of the sector by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and to inform Oxfam Sri Lanka's gender justice campaign.

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (ACFID) CONFERENCE, RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT IMPACT (RDI) NETWORK, AND MELBOURNE DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE (MDC)

Monash University's ACFID affiliate membership was approved in 2018, facilitated by Oxfam-Monash Partnership. The Partnership sponsored the ACFID conference, which provided an excellent opportunity to showcase our products and share our experience in working with students and practitioners. This generated high levels of interest from leading academic experts and civil society practitioners in networking and engaging with the Partnership.

Our Program Lead continued to serve on the Research for Development Impact (RDI) network steering committee. The committee worked to shape the RDI's research areas of focus and identify key development research experts to partner with for impact on sustainable development.

OMP Program Lead, Dr Saba Mebrahtu Habte, was also invited to share our experience during the Melbourne Development Circle (MDC) event on '*Adapting NGO business practices through collaboration to scale impact.*' She was part of an engaging panel discussion to explore how NGO's are adapting business practices through collaboration to achieve greater impact. MDC is a volunteer organisation that promotes a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing between individuals and organisations to create positive social, economic, environmental and cultural change.



RIGHT
Sri Lanka report launch event 2018
Photo: Tshering Denka

GOVERNANCE

In 2018, the following governance activities ensured that Oxfam-Monash Partnership continued to deliver against its vision and mission.

- The Governance and Operations Committees met and functioned in line with their respective Terms of Reference.
- The Partnership worked to an Annual Operational Plan and Budget informed by the Memorandum of Agreement 2016 – 2019 and the Statement of Strategic Intent which sets out measures for success, proposed activities, and a framework for monitoring, evaluation and learning.
- The Partnership website and branding was further refined to bring the Oxfam-Monash collateral more in line with Monash University branding and to align information within the Monash Sustainable Development Institute.
- Fair trade positioning at Monash and the Oxfam concessions at Monash's Clayton campus continue to promote the sale of Oxfam fair trade items. They are often featured at Monash student activities, showcasing the labour rights issues for workers and farmers in developing countries.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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The Oxfam-Monash Partnership continues by virtue of the support and vision of the Empowerment Charitable Trust. Through that work, the Partnership is able to achieve research outcomes that can deliver measurable benefits to communities; to connect the current and next generation of practitioners who will work to achieve those benefits; and to lobby and advocate for the policy and practice changes that would transform communities.