

Empowerment Charitable Trust

Donor Impact Report

2019



Introduction

The Oxfam-Monash Partnership (OMP) was founded on a vision to bring about evidence-based change for some of the most vulnerable communities, and intractable issues across the world.

The brilliance of the Partnership is our ability to cut directly across practice and research: communities benefit today from action-research projects that are sustainably designed to instil lasting change.

The Partnership was established with the generous support of the Empowerment Charitable Trust. The purpose of OMP is to improve development practice and its outcomes for communities. More specifically, we aim to bring together the differing, yet complementary, resources of the non-government organisation (NGO) and academic sectors, and combine them to achieve greater development impact than would otherwise be possible.

The Partnership undertook a period of collaborative and participatory reflection to refresh our joint vision and purpose at the conclusion of the 2015 Memorandum of Agreement. Our current Memorandum reflects the outcomes of this process: it commits us to an ambitious collaborative research agenda, student engagement and practitioner development activities. These activities are designed to generate positive, lasting change for developing communities around the world.

This annual progress report showcases the Partnership's activities and outcomes in 2019, and reaffirms Oxfam Australia and Monash University's commitment to the Partnership until the end of 2020.

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Front cover credit: Dan Mahon

Left image credit: Keith Parsons/OxfamAUS



Report on project

In 2019, the Partnership continued to embody the guiding principles that inform its strategic agenda:

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 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 2019 reflects our collective commitments, as stipulated in the 2016–2019 Statement of Strategic Intent. These commitments 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 systems, policies and practices to benefit communities.

The 2019 program of activities was delivered jointly by Oxfam-Monash Partnership Co-leads Eleanor Jackson and Dr Saba Mebrahtu, with the support of Program Support Officers Courtney May and Carla Alzamora Goncalves. At the conclusion of 2019, the partners agreed to a further extension of their strategic commitment until the end of 2020.

Research

Over the past year, the Oxfam-Monash Partnership continued to facilitate quality research that strengthens the evidence-base for development impact by using findings to influence policy and practice in international development.

The Partnership continued to operate along mutually established thematic research priorities. These reflect the ongoing and emerging needs of the communities and partners with which Oxfam works.

Thematic priorities 2016-2019:

Gender equality

promoting gender equality with the aim of improving 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

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

Development practice

as the development community engages with the 2030 Agenda, shaping development goals and milestones to support communities.

Outcomes

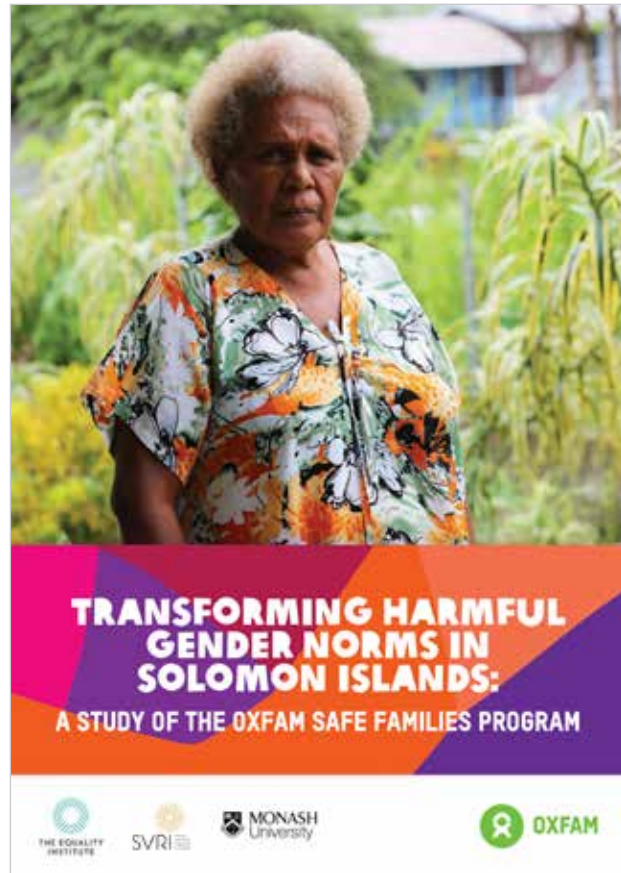
Research matching around new and emerging issues.

Focus areas: migration, gender-based violence, climate change and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our research matching process, facilitated by OMP program co-leads, is built on lessons learned over 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, multi-faculty 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.

Gender equality



Safe Families Sexual Violence Research Initiative

Solomon Island women experience widespread and persistent gender inequality, which is also reflected in extremely high rates of physical and sexual violence against women and girls.

Despite having some of the highest rates of violence against women globally, the region remains one of the most under-researched regions in the world. There is very little rigorous, published evidence on the effectiveness of primary interventions from the Pacific aimed at stopping violence against women before it starts.

Safe Families is the first long-term, intensive, locally developed community mobilisation-based violence prevention program to be implemented in the Solomon Islands. Implemented by Oxfam, the Safe Families program (also known as the Let's Make Our Families Safe program) was part of a 10-year strategic initiative, supported by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence in the Solomon Islands.

In setting out to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, the Oxfam-Monash Partnership released its final research findings in 2019, supported by the World Bank Sexual Violence Research Initiative. Partners from Monash University's Jean Hailes Medical Research Unit, Oxfam Australia, Oxfam Solomon Islands and the Equality Institute conducted the qualitative study and process evaluation, *Transforming Harmful Social Gender Norms in Solomon Islands: A Study of the Oxfam Safe Families Program*.

Findings on the Safe Families program showed positive results: community members showed increased knowledge and awareness of issues related to violence against women – with some self-reporting changed behaviour – and others willing to discuss issues openly. A crucial component of the program, the establishment of Provincial Alliances (PAs) – local networks promoting collective action to prevent family violence – also successfully strengthened service delivery at the provincial level.

Our findings also provided valuable insights into the strict gendered norms and gendered roles at individual, relationship and community levels in the Solomon Islands, the evolving nature of “bride price”, and how these practices, norms, and attitudes relate to violence against women.

The OMP report recommended that there should be more appealing options for delivering key messages (e.g. through ‘edutainment’), and that youth should be engaged more effectively and creatively as a cohort, including involving them in the design of the program. More consideration should also be given to local expertise, and donors should allow the design of programs to be more locally led.

Our key recommendations for the future implementation of the Safe Families Program include:

1. Working with communities to ensure interventions are transformative of attitudes, norms and behaviour, and not limited to awareness-raising.
2. Ensuring the program emphasises the benefits of gender equality to the community.
3. Actively shifting social norms around corporal punishment.
4. Continuing to build on the role modelling approach.
5. Including the subject of bride price in program messaging and community dialogues on violence against women.
6. Monitoring and evaluating the implementation and impact of the program.
7. Adopting more engaging and creative approaches, such as arts, dance, drama, sports, radio and television.
8. Focusing on children and young people.
9. Exploring potential links between the Safe Families program and other community development and economic programs.
10. Optimising and refining pilots, utilising the lessons learnt to scale up activities.
11. Ensuring a collaborative co-design process for the development of prevention initiatives.

Impact

The research not only brings new evidence on social norms that drive violence against women, the findings were guided by upskilled local researchers and community members generous with their insights. The research spanned the Solomon Island provinces of Malaita and Temotu, bringing together six communities and two provincial capitals where the Safe Families Program was implemented. Ten local researchers trained in qualitative research conducted interviews and focus group discussions with community members and Oxfam staff. In total, 15 Oxfam Solomon Island staff members and 170 community members engaged in the research.

The report progresses ethical and methodological approaches to researching violence against women and girls (VAWG). Due to the potential for research to re-arouse memories of traumatic experiences, or for disclosures to elicit threats from perpetrators, appropriate safety, confidentiality and interviewer skills and training is critical. While there are internationally established and well-recognised WHO guidelines for research ethics on VAWG, our research indicates that these guidelines can be strengthened with more specific needs, such as those uncovered by the Safe Families program. OMP's report advances our understanding of how to conduct research on violence against women and girls in the context of small, geographically-dispersed communities where violence is relatively normalised and access to services is limited.

Within the Oxfam network, the recommendations and research findings are being incorporated into Oxfam's Ending Violence Against Women programs in the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.

More broadly, our research on the Safe Families program will contribute to a body of evidence to help primary prevention of family and sexual violence in the Solomon Islands, and globally.

Microfinance and Gender Empowerment

In 2019, building on research findings from the previous year, OMP continued to work with research lead Dr Sara Niner (Monash University Faculty of Arts).

Our work focused on investigating better forms of microfinance in the context of the 'microfinance is dead' debate, and the emerging discourse surrounding 'socially responsible' or 'inclusive' finance. We focused on community-led and micro-savings approaches as particularly promising as a potential basis for women's empowerment outcomes.

Building on our previous collaborations, OMP undertook a review of policy and selected micro-savings programs in the Asia-Pacific region with students and colleagues. Our focus continued to be on the South East Asia and Pacific regions, following on from our earlier findings that microfinance programs were expanding in the region while remaining under-examined in the vast literature on microfinance dominated largely by programs in South Asia, Latin America and Africa.

A key finding has been that while savings and loans groups (SLGs) provided economic and social successes for all participants, it was clear that groups still demonstrated adherence to established gendered roles and economic strategies, which often did little to challenge gender inequity and associated attitudes. In particular, women, identified as being more trustworthy and transparent, were confined to roles of treasurers and secretaries, while men were generally noted as better-suited for leadership roles.

Preliminary findings include that non-predatory micro-savings and cooperative approaches (programs with fair and just terms that do not lead to indebtedness) show potential in South East Asia and the Pacific, for greater promise in achieving outcomes for women's multi-dimensional empowerment than some mainstream microfinance programs.

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While savings and loan groups provided economic and social successes for all participants, it was clear that groups still demonstrated adherence to established gendered roles.
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Credit: Timothy Herbert/OxfamAUS



Impact

In 2020, preliminary policy recommendations were shared at the inaugural Development Studies Association Conference in Melbourne, Australia.

While micro-savings programs have not been as prominent in public debate in recent times, our investigation of the emerging body of research shows micro-savings might have significant positive social returns in South East Asia and the Pacific. Though these programs still include the practice of loaning money, it is from the pool of savings of group members. There are many different types of micro-savings, but globally Oxfam is promoting the Saving for Change (SfC) model, which targets poor women in rural areas, assisting them in improving their savings habits, and using the accumulated money to make loans to others in their group. A recent internal study showed a modestly positive effect on income, resilience, and enhanced social capital.



Climate change and resilience

Credit: Dan Mahon

Micro-desalination for remote, off-grid communities

OMP's research matching process has resulted in Oxfam Australia and Monash University's ARC Research Hub for Energy-Efficient Separation (ARC-EESep) collaborating to develop a micro-desalination [prototype water purifier](#), to improve access to clean, potable water for resource-poor communities.

The system is based on the well-proven five stage Low Pressure Reverse Osmosis (LPRO) technology, and includes a built-in, low-pressure pump and foldable solar panels. The purifier not only produces pure water from a variety of contaminated sources, such as surface and groundwater, and tanks, but is also low-cost, energy-efficient, compact, portable and easy to maintain.

Being solar-driven with a built-in small water pump, the system can function in locations where power supply is either costly, unreliable, or non-existent, and for both pressurised and non-pressurised water sources. The compact design sees it fit into a medium suitcase and, weighing only 37kg, it can easily be wheeled to remote communities in need of clean drinking water.

The prototype development was supported by a seed grant from Monash Infrastructure and Oxfam Australia. Additional support was provided by undergraduate students from the Faculty of Engineering and postgraduate students in the interdisciplinary Master of Environment and Sustainability to conduct literature reviews and comparative studies of key technological and methodological considerations, including social and economic analysis of the scalability of small desalination units; technical performance reviews of prototypes; surveys of water treatment characteristics; and benchmarking against Oxfam's internationally agreed performance criteria.

Impact

In 2019, our laboratory testing showed that the prototype meets Oxfam's performance criteria, in terms of minimum clean water production, low initial cost, low maintenance and low energy-use requirements. Our review of existing commercially available small- to medium-scale water purification systems in the market has shown that our prototype is among the most affordable water purification technologies that are being field-tested and expanded.

In 2019, with additional funding from Perpetual Impact, we developed three models for further research under controlled conditions in the laboratory (indoors) as well as outdoors (under field-like conditions) to test durability and quality performance.

The Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation provided further support to launch the second phase of the project by mid-2020, which will involve collaborating with Indigenous communities affected by high salinity and other water contamination issues.

Following successful field testing, our findings on use, perceived health and economic benefits, and social and economic feasibility will be used to develop a comprehensive business case and strategic scale-up plan. Building on the exciting outcomes of 2019, OMP is actively seeking opportunities to scale up and multiply the impact of our work, including pursuing additional funding sources for the Partnership's work, and collaborative opportunities with community partners to further co-design and field test community pilot projects.

Migration

The impact of family separation on refugee settlement and inclusion

Family reunion is an important component of successful migrant settlement. Yet, in Australia, some humanitarian migrants are at a disadvantage when applying for family reunification visas.

Emerging evidence from OMP revealed that family separation can have negative effects on an individual's wellbeing and compromise the settlement process for new migrants. Conducted by the Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre, and supported by OMP, this research provided foundational evidence to inform Oxfam Australia policy on family reunion in Australia, with a specific focus on the impact of family separation and resettlement on social inclusion outcomes for refugees.

The research report, *The social impacts of family separation on refugee settlement and inclusion in Australia*, published in 2019, consisted of three data analysis methods: a systematic review of available scholarly and grey literature; an analysis of the 'Building a New Life in Australia' survey of humanitarian migrants; and two in-depth, case studies with refugees in Australia.

Our report identified a number of barriers to refugee migrant settlement and the impacts of family separation on individuals and families. Costs and lengthy processing timeframes for family reunification visas hindered refugee settlement opportunities and potential. Prolonged family separation was also associated with longer-term difficulties achieving settlement milestones, and mental health concerns were related to family separation and employment and educational variables.

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Credit: Tom Pietrasik/OxfamAUS

Impact

This OMP research was pivotal to Oxfam Australia's national campaign, Families Together, which aims to make it easier for refugees and humanitarian migrants to reunite with families overseas. The campaign is based on research on the social and economic benefits family reunification can bring, which was conducted by the Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre, Oxfam Australia and Deloitte Access Economics.

Our research examined the relationship between family reunion and successful settlement for refugees. It discussed the fact that family separation research has not, to date, focused on the benefits of family reunion, which include a lower probability of mental illness or post-traumatic stress disorder, but only on the devastating effects of separation.

In August, OMP hosted a flagship event for the Families Together campaign in Melbourne, launching Oxfam's central report for the campaign, *Stronger Together*. The well-attended and lively event saw Oxfam Chief Executive, Lyn Morgain, launch the research with a powerful discussion bringing together perspectives on the migration experience from representatives from refugee groups; Oxfam Head of Advocacy and Campaigns, Rachel Ball; Director for the Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre, Associate Professor Rebecca Wickes; and Deloitte Australia Senior Economist, Monique Champion.

The research generated much-needed public discussion on family separation issues, and has been widely covered in the [media](#), including SBS, ABC, The Guardian, DevPolicy, Independent Australia and ProBono Australia.

The findings have also informed strategic decisions for Oxfam's continued work with the academic sector to further strengthen the existing evidence-base on the impact of family separation on refugee settlement and inclusion.



L-R: Hasani
Attanayake, Buvini
Hewamanne,
Ashling Morone,
Sachie Seneviratne-
Epa

02



In 2019, OMP continued to build meaningful connections between Monash students, Oxfam Australia and the wider international development sector, to inspire a generation of aware and informed development practitioners by facilitating professional skills through internships, teaching and engagement activities.

Highlights

- Supporting two Monash student interns and five students from other higher education institutions to collaborate on multidisciplinary projects with Oxfam-Monash Partnership teams. The teams focused on micro-desalination and microfinance projects.
- The Oxfam-Monash Partnership Award for Research Impact was awarded to two students, Harry Quealy and Daniella Guzman. Harry and Daniella, both Master of International Development Practice students, achieved a tied result for the highest achieving research thesis in 2019. Donhathai Sutassanamarlee, 2018's OMP Prize winner, was awarded their prize during a ceremony held in May.

In 2019, OMP continued to contribute to an inspirational learning environment for Monash students, providing insights into contemporary international development and professional role models through Oxfam guest lecturers and mentors. Many of these guest lectures have expanded into informal mentorships for Monash students, and ongoing collegial engagement between Monash academics and Oxfam program experts.

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Adam Stanic (Acting Associate Director, People and Culture, Oxfam Australia) was an incredible guest speaker! So interactive and student-focused!

Monash student studying Colab M: Mentoring for development practice and professional development course.

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- In 2019, OMP facilitated industry experts to provide real-life experience to almost 400 students across the following Monash course offerings
- Colab M: Mentoring for development practice and professional development, Faculty of Arts
 - Deconstructing development, Faculty of Arts
 - Gender and development, Faculty of Arts
 - Green Steps, Monash Sustainable Development Institute
 - Guiding principles for professionals engaged in disasters and humanitarian crises, Faculty of Arts
 - Human rights in global politics, Faculty of Arts
 - Issues in international communications, Faculty of Arts
 - Leading change for sustainable development, Faculty of Science
 - Monitoring and evaluation, Faculty of Arts
 - Project planning and management in international development, Faculty of Arts.



Credit: Courtney May
L-R Jessie Wen, Anna Gebbert
(Clubs Day 2019)

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Before Pam Anders (Director of Public Engagement, Oxfam Australia) came and spoke with our class, I would never have considered a career in international development or aid — now I’m completely reconsidering what I can do with my degree to make an impact!

Monash student studying Issues in International Communications

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Credit: Courtney May
L-R: James Riturban, Oxfam Australia Board Member; Donhathai Sutassanamarlee (2018 OMP Prize winner); and Professor Sharon Pickering (Dean of Arts)



Practitioner Development

In 2019, we continued our work to connect development practitioners and policy-makers with the evidence-base to effect change. We participated in a range of practitioner and public events that showcased Oxfam-Monash Partnership research, and enabled practitioners to develop and share their practice.

OMP research teams contributed to presentations throughout 2019 at the Australasian Aid Conference, SVRI Forum (the 6th Global Conference on Violence Against Women), Women in Asia Conference, ACFID Conference (Beyond Aid: Championing Sustainable Development Co-operation and Leadership for Inclusive Development Conference) and the Research for Development Impact Network Conference.

Credit: Kim Litera/Oxfam

03

Case Study: Research in Action

Connecting policy-makers with the evidence-base to effect change

Understanding the rapidly changing dynamics of global migration is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Monash University has a well-established and recognised track record in research on migration and global human movements across several faculties and departments.

Oxfam's decades-long experience addressing humanitarian crises driven by conflict, poverty and inequality is reflected in their advocacy for policies and practices that protect the world's most vulnerable people, including formal and informal migrants, refugees and displaced people.

With this collective expertise in research and advocacy, Oxfam and Monash have built collaborative relationships to support evidence-led advocacy and policy for positive social impact in the area of global migration.

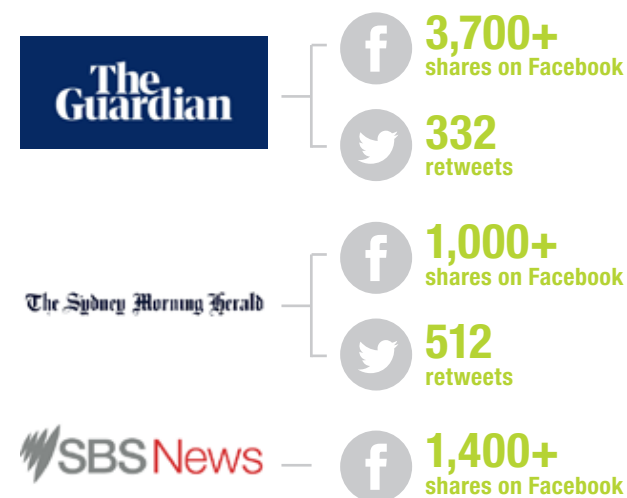
In 2018, Professor Sharon Pickering (Monash Dean of Arts) and Rebecca Powell (Managing Director of The Border Crossing Observatory at Monash University) worked with Oxfam's policy team to analyse evidence gaps in the Asia-Pacific region, with support from Monash Arts. These policy briefs considered the evidence base on issues such as women and irregular migration; high-harm, high-volume migration; and whether migration is a positive driver for development; and provided a shared, evidence-based understanding of the key policy areas for further collaborative work.

In 2019, Associate Professor Rebecca Wickes (Senior Lecturer in Criminology, School of Social Sciences, and Director for the Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre) led a second phase of research exploring secondary data from the 'Building a new life in Australia' survey. The survey is the largest and most comprehensive survey of humanitarian migrants in Australia, and Monash's social impact analysis of this data provided foundational evidence for Oxfam Australia's national campaign, Families Together.

The launch of the report *Stronger Together: The impact of family separation on refugees and humanitarian migrants in Australia*, generated important coverage and debate of humanitarian and migration issues in the Australian media.

During its peak, between August and September 2019, the campaign attracted over 187 pieces of news coverage, reaching a cumulative audience of 1,161,667 people, and included outlets such as The Australian, ABC news, The Guardian, AAP and more.

The Australian community shared articles widely across social media.



Designed to influence the Australian Government, the research, combined with economic modelling commissioned by Oxfam Australia from Deloitte Access Economics, was presented to the Department of Home Affairs, and the Treasury in October 2019.

In a groundswell of support, hundreds of Oxfam supporters wrote to their local Members of Parliament calling on them to consider an increase to the overall humanitarian intake as well as a new Humanitarian Family Reunion visa stream.

This work demonstrates the powerful joint impact of the research and development sectors. The teams from Oxfam and Monash identified critical problems and issues in global migration; articulated the benefits and harms of potential solutions, their costs and consequences; and shaped advocacy and policy to aid real-time, evidence-based decision making.



Credit: OxfamAUS



Supporting the Research for Development Impact Network

The RDI Network is a network of practitioners, researchers and evaluators working in international development, supporting collaborative partnerships to improve the use of evidence in policy and practice.

Supported by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and working in close partnership with the Australian Council for International Development, the Network functions as a key cross-sector platform for shared learning and action in the international development sector.

OMP has long been an active supporter of the RDI Network. In 2019 the Oxfam-Monash Partnership Co-lead co-chaired the RDI Network Committee and served as a member of the 2019 RDI Conference Steering Committee. In these roles, OMP contributed to advising, leading and facilitating activities of the Network, including networking, work plan development, event management, project and team management skills, monitoring, evaluation and learning methodologies and practice, and ethical research and evaluation.

The Conference Steering Committee helped shape the national conference agenda, nominating key speakers and invitees, and developing program activities in Partnering for Impact on Sustainable Development, showcasing the essential role of research in driving effective, equitable development through evidence and collaboration.

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OMP has long been an active supporter of the RDI Network... OMP contributed to advising, leading and facilitating activities of the Network.

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Left: OMP Program Lead, Eleanor Jackson

Credit: RDI ©2019 The Research for Development Impact Network (RDI Network)

Governance

In 2019, the Oxfam-Monash Partnership continued to apply policies and procedures to ensure delivery against the Partnership’s vision and mission.

- The Governance and Operations Committees met regularly 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 in line with Monash University branding, and to align information within Monash Sustainable Development Institute.
- The partners agreed to an extension of the Partnership Memorandum of Agreement for a further 12 months to December 2020. The extension enables the Partnership to continue progressing its strategic agenda for world-class research that makes a difference in people's lives, and reflects both partners’ commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Financial summary

Current as at December 2019

GIFT SUMMARY	
Gift or gift pledged	\$2,994,500
Donations received	\$264,342
Interest and other income	\$90,869
EXPENDITURES	
Expenditure in 2019	
(1 January – 31 December 2019)	\$220,273
Total expenditure to date	
(all expenditure to date from the start of the gift or fund creation)	\$3,030,736
BALANCE	\$258,975

In kind contributions for the same period: \$296,349

In kind contributions to date: \$2,864,803

Further Information

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