OXFAM-MONASH PARTNERSHIP
MID-PARTNERSHIP REPORT 2010-2013

OXFAM Australia | MONASH University

Cover Image: A woman and her child with an Oxfam-funded raised tubewell, giving people a source of clean drinking water during a flood. **Photo:** Dan Chung/Oxfam Australia.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE OXFAM-MONASH PARTNERSHIP

This has been an exciting year for us at the Oxfam-Monash Partnership.

In June we bore witness to the transformative possibilities of grounded, community-driven research at the **2013 Research Symposium: Learning Through Partnership**. There, we heard how Oxfam-Monash-supported research gives voice to communities impacted by infrastructure development in Cambodia, by climate change and natural disasters in Bangladesh and by proposed changes to health insurance funding in South Africa. Through these projects we are supporting individuals and communities in their fight to secure accountability from governments and become active citizens, as well as promoting greater equity and fostering innovations in practice. The case studies in this report tell of the journeys we have taken as part of these projects.

We also had a very successful year with the Oxfam-Monash South Africa Student Placement Program. We sent 10 bright students from Australia and South Africa to our five long-standing partner organisations — Refugee Social Services, Project Empower, Lawyers for Human Rights, Woza Moya and Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust — and for the first time we placed students with Oxfam South Africa. Year-on-year this student placement program continues to grow and strengthen.

Structural changes at Oxfam meant the Research Unit was incorporated within the Development Effectiveness Team. We also bid farewell to Andrew Hewett, long-serving CEO of Oxfam and keen supporter of the Oxfam-Monash Partnership, and welcomed the new guidance of Helen Szoke.

As we look back on the past 12 months it strikes us that a relationship that was once young and new now feels comfortable and cherished. We continue to work day-to-day on the challenges of global poverty and injustice but as colleagues rather than simply associates. In the latter part of 2013

"Advancing towards the mid-point of this Partnership we have taken the opportunity to reflect on our strengths, acknowledge our challenges and forge ahead with exciting initiatives."

we shifted gears to explore three years of partnership, learning and projects. Advancing towards the mid-point of this Partnership we have taken the opportunity to reflect on our strengths, acknowledge our challenges and forge ahead with exciting initiatives.

This is our Mid-Partnership Report and our opportunity to share with you what we have learned. We will outline the findings from our comprehensive mid-term review of the health of the Partnership, which considered how we were living up to our principles and where we could be doing better. Some of the major findings concern the way we are living and practising our core principles and how we are going about our work publically. We also discuss our central commitment to action research and explore some of the problematic assumptions within the practice.

Taking the recommendations of this review forward, in 2013 we held the Oxfam-Monash Partnership **Research Symposium: Learning through Partnership and Learning Retreat.** This fantastic opportunity allowed us to bring together research team members from around the world to share ideas and findings for the first time in the life of the Partnership. We also made strides with our student engagement, reconfiguring the South Africa Student Placement Program to allow for a richer and more meaningful participation for both students and partner organisations, and begun planning for a unique student experience — the Oxfam-Monash Innovators program.

We will also be looking to make a number of structural adjustments to reflect the recommendations that have emerged in this review. This includes reforecasting our budgets to fall in line with shifting funding needs and refining our governance structure to better draw on the strengths of our two organisations. This is an exciting time for us as we look ahead and continue working together as the Oxfam-Monash Partnership.

Professor Adam Shoemaker

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)
Monash University

Helen Szoke

Chief Executive Officer
Oxfam Australia

1.0 INTRODUCTION
THE OXFAM-MONASH PARTNERSHIP

Since 2008 Monash University and Oxfam Australia have been working together to harness the combined power of students, academics and development practitioners in pursuit of a more just and equal world.

Our mission is to combine our strengths in pursuit of global justice and poverty reduction, working to enhance development effectiveness and catalyse change through collaborative action.

Monash University is ranked in the top 1% of the world's best universities. A global university with campuses in Malaysia and South Africa, and a centre in Italy, it participates in partnerships with the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IITB) to create the IITB–Monash Research Academy in India, the Southeast University–Monash University Joint Graduate School in China, and an alliance with The University of Warwick (UK).

In 2012, Monash University made significant progress towards realising the vision articulated in its recently developed top-level strategic plan **Monash: The Next Ten Years**, which outlines what Monash will need to be if it is to best serve students, staff and the nation. As part of its efforts to be a university of global importance within the decade — producing the most sought-after graduates and the highest quality research — Monash is committed to ensuring that its graduates are successful

and responsible citizens and has sought to deepen its engagement with a range of NGOs, including Oxfam Australia, to create new opportunities for students. The prominent strengths in research and education have a focus on health and wellbeing, future technologies, sustainable environments and resilient cultures and communities.

In the areas of social justice and human rights, Monash is working to improve opportunities for Indigenous Australians, people from financially and socially disadvantaged backgrounds, people from rural and regional areas, people with disabilities and women in the workplace. Monash has also implemented a cultural-awareness program for staff and students to ensure that the university meets the needs of all its student body, which includes more than 21,000 international students. 2012 was also a successful year from a social justice perspective, with continued focus on the implementation of the Social Inclusion Strategy. Monash is a participant of the UN Global Compact (in the Academia category) and is committed to promoting equal opportunity in education and employment. This is in recognition of global principles of equity and justice

according to the United Nations and International Labour Organisation Conventions, Covenants and Declarations.

Oxfam Australia has been fighting poverty and injustice for 60 years in Australia and overseas. They work with partners and communities to generate simple, smart solutions to tough humanitarian problems. Oxfam Australia carries out long-term projects, campaigns for change, responds to natural disasters and conflicts, and raises public awareness about the causes of poverty. It is part of an international confederation of 17 Oxfams working in 94 countries. Oxfam Australia's long-term development, emergency response and advocacy work reached more than seven million people in 30 countries in 2011–2012. They worked with 193 partner organisations on 172 projects, including 22 emergencies. Oxfam Australia collaborates with local producers; in 2011–2012 Oxfam Shops worked with 63 producers in 22 countries. They are also partnering with 305 Oxfam International Youth Action Partners in 70 countries.

Oxfam Australia's domestic reach is incredible. Last year 905,307 people in Australia supported the organisation through direct donations, volunteering, fundraising or activism. The flagship fundraising event, Trailwalker, was an enormous success with 6,592 walkers raising $8.6 million dollars. There are 48

Oxfam Groups, including the Oxfam at Monash Student Group, working to raise the profile of important issues in the public sphere.

These strong foundations from Monash and Oxfam underpin the Oxfam-Monash Partnership. With a generous philanthropic donation of $2.9 million from the Empowerment Charitable Trust, our ability to make a positive impact in the development sector has grown. In 2010 the Oxfam-Monash Partnership began fostering specific research and project collaborations in areas of climate change adaptation, gender equality and accountability.

The aim of the Partnership begins and ends with the goal of improving and extending good practice on the ground — where vulnerable people and communities most need support — through enhanced development effectiveness, humanitarian and advocacy action. Over the past three years, we have endeavored to achieve this by:

> providing ongoing support for effective community development initiatives that empower people living in poverty to attain sustainable livelihoods and share their stories about this process locally and globally;

> collecting evidence of Oxfam's impact and methods, and communicating these findings to influence practice in the sector (including Oxfam's own practice),

develop the academic curriculum and 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 necessary skills to promote further positive changes in people's lives learnt through the knowledge and practice that emerges from joint Oxfam-Monash action.

This has been a Partnership characterised by vision; however vision can only carry us so far. Our mid-term review was an opportunity to bed-down our practices. In 2010 we aimed for a transformation of our two organisations through partnership. Now we need to be realistic about how we meet the challenges of intensive partnership work.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS 2010–2013

Since 2009 the Oxfam-Monash Partnership has placed 46 students in South Africa with Oxfam's partner organisations through the **South Africa Student Placement Program**. Reflections from our students and partners continue to demonstrate how powerful this program is in exposing students to unique experiences and lending a useful set of hands to help partners achieve more. Our students have spent time with Refugee Social Services, Lawyers for Human Rights, Project Empower, Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust, Woza Moya, Oxfam South Africa, Save the Children, The Gay and Lesbian Network and the Children in Distress Network.

Four major research projects have been funded, covering each of our major thematic focus: **climate change adaptation, gender equality and accountability**. We have disbursed almost $750,000 towards major research into community empowerment processes, distilling those findings into case studies for advocacy and best-practice models. We have also contributed to informed decision-making by governments, NGOs and donors. With this funding some of Oxfam's local partners have been able to distil and document their experiences for the greater benefit of their community.

Our **project pipeline** is packed with amazing research and learning projects. Every month for the next two years we will be busy wrapping-up funded projects, announcing new projects and research, and filling our calendar with sharing and learning events. Plans include an annual symposium series, three major research projects and numerous smaller-scale learning projects.

We have hosted three major events, most recently the **2013 Research Symposium: Learning through Partnership**. This event was well attended and raised the profile of research projects externally. Other major events included the 2011 Launch of the **Oxfam-Monash Partnership** which incorporated the *Land is Life* exhibition, and the **2010 Search Conference**.

Plans are well under way for the **Oxfam-Monash Innovators program**, a unique student learning event designed to harness the creativity of young people and give them a chance to turn exciting ideas for change into real-world action. We believe the fresh perspectives and new ideas of young people, when heard, can make an extremely important contribution to the field of international development, social justice and sustainability. This program is designed to help make that happen.

We have supported researchers and practitioners to attend major international events such as the **5th International Conference on Community-Based Adaptation to Climate Change** and convened working sessions to explore community responses to climate change in Indonesia.

Networks have developed to enable practitioners from Oxfam Australia to share knowledge more broadly with academics and students at Monash University through the **Improving Health Futures in a Global World Depth Unit** and other academic forums.

Monash Workplace Giving with Oxfam Australia, which began in April 2010, has raised $12,392 to date. Staff who are enrolled in this giving program receive information about emergency appeals, skilled volunteering opportunities and invitations to special events such as the Annual Corporate Partnership Breakfast with Oxfam's country directors.

The Fairtrade **Oxfam Shop** on Monash University's Clayton campus continues to raise the profile of Fairtrade products with students, staff and visitors to the university.

Key agreements between Monash University and Oxfam Australia are now in place, including the signed **2011 Memorandum of Understanding** between the two organisations. We also have key agreements in place with our donor — the Empowerment Charitable Trust — and Monash University and Oxfam Australia.

THE PARTNERSHIP'S WORK FOCUSES ON THREE THEMATIC AREAS:

Accountability: how we can best support communities to provide feedback to development agencies and governments and, in doing so, hold the latter two to account.

Climate change: how we can best support communities to adapt to climate change.

Gender equality: how we can best support gender equality to positively impact women's lives, family wellbeing and community development.

REPORT OUTLINE

This **Mid-Partnership Report** focuses in five parts on what we have learned over the last three years through Partnership activities:

1. Our section on **research progress and impact** shares how the Partnership's activities are taking root at various levels, from communities to campuses. This section draws upon what was shared at our 2013 Research Symposium: Learning through Partnership.

2. In our discussion of **student engagement** we outline our most recent activities, announcing a re-invigorated South Africa Student Placement Program and a schedule of events for 2013–2014.

3. **Partnership progress** discusses what we have learned over the past three years in terms of our shared values and progress, as well as challenges to our ways of working. This section draws on key learning from the mid-term review of the Partnership and outcomes of the 2013 Research Symposium: Learning through Partnership.

4. **Governance of the Partnership** outlines the changing membership of the Governance Committee, the unique and dynamic structure of the Partnership, the joint program manager position and the role of the research fellow.

5. **Looking ahead** we discuss what the next two years hold for this Partnership and the activities we foresee as priority. Carrying on from our previous years' focus on **transforming lives**, we check in on the framework we laid out for the Partnership's long-term goal of demonstrating value in development and education, and reflect on how we can better impact the strengths, skills and knowledge of those we work with at the community level.

2.0 RESEARCH PROGRESS AND IMPACTS

Our research projects focus on supporting community empowerment processes, aiming to pilot new innovations through action research methods. By funding these projects we enable vital on-the-ground sampling and research to take place in diverse communities, which leads to the distillation of important findings on the community empowerment process.

The resulting case studies *(below)* serve as a basis for advocacy and best-practice models which can inform better decision-making on the part of governments, NGOs and donors. Moving forward we will invest our attention on program partners, and directly support local practitioners to distil and document their experiences with the aim of creating a sustainable network beyond the Partnership.

As many of these projects move to the final stages of their research we anticipate taking the exciting next steps together. Already, conversations have begun and ideas flourished as a result of the Research Symposium and Learning Retreat.

GENDERED IMPACTS OF CLIMATE VARIABILITY IN BANGLADESH

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

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

Partnership thematic areas: Gender equality and climate change.

PROJECT TEAM

Project leadership: Professor Margaret Alston (Director of GLASS Research Unit and Head of the Department of Social Work, Monash University); Tania Cass (Program Manager, India and Bangladesh, Oxfam Australia); and Md Badi Akhter (Program Manager, Bangladesh, Oxfam Great Britain).

Key members: Dr Kerri Whittenbury (Senior Research Fellow, GLASS Research Unit Monash University); Alex Haynes (Project Manager, Oxfam-Monash Partnership Project, Bangladesh, GLASS Research Unit, Monash University); Sonia Sarder (Program Coordinator, Bangladesh, Oxfam Great Britain); and Henna Hasina (Program Officer, Bangladesh, Oxfam Great Britain).

Through the experiences of Bangladeshi women, men, girls and boys, the Oxfam-Monash research team aims to understand gender-based impacts related to climate variability, catastrophic events and slow-onset events. This three-year project is a collaboration between the Gender Leadership and Social

During 2011, heavier than usual monsoon rain caused flooding in many parts of Bangladesh, affecting 13 districts out of 64 in the country.
Photo: Peter Caton/ Oxfam Australia.

Sustainability (GLASS) Research Unit at Monash University, Oxfam Australia, Oxfam Great Britain and local partners in Bangladesh. This action research will fill a gap in the literature and practice by paying systematic attention to women's experiences in a changing climate context, allowing a greater understanding of what strategies could support women to improve their lives and livelihoods and increase the safety of women and girls. The team worked collaboratively alongside a range of Bangladeshi research and program organisations for data collection.

The project team has now completed both their qualitative and quantitative field research across three field districts in Bangladesh

— Barguna, Gaibanda and Sathkira. Having transcribed and translated their interviews and cleaned their survey data they are now analysing the data and summarising key themes for discussion with partners and research teams. They plan to conduct a policy workshop at the end of 2013 to sharpen the findings and recommendations. They are participating in ongoing project team reflections and evaluation of the methodology, communications, team structure, fieldwork, dissemination and outcome and impact of the project.

There are a number of emerging themes from this research. Across the three project sites, climate variability and slow-onset events have been reported, including

changes to river flow, river erosion, intensity and timing of floods, cyclones, the length and conditions of seasons, increased summer temperatures and hot winds. This variability is reportedly having a range of impacts including changed livelihoods (shelter, access to food, agricultural practices) and security. Applying a gender analysis to the research, the team is finding migration, changing labor practices, changing social practices, corruption and agricultural developments are having a negative impact on women and their health. Importantly we have identified the need for further exploration of the role of NGOs in increasing awareness and mitigating impacts, improving education to break negative cycles, and creating opportunities for women.

The research team has planned a series of policy dialogues in Bangladesh in late 2013 to share findings, adjust their policy recommendations and meet with key decision-makers. These events are planned to coincide with sharing sessions between Oxfam and local partners, women's organisations and local NGOs. The team will work to devise local responses, with the aim of leveraging the research to impact on programs within country and on gender practice in local and international NGOs and government programs.

The research team has focused on several outputs for this research, including a learning paper aimed at the processes of the research project. This is to document learning for use within Oxfam Australia and for other research projects. They are also interested in how their findings can inform the broader debate on building resilience in programming at Oxfam, and in the greater aid and development sector. In addition, the research team is planning a number of publications and have made several presentations, most recently at the Research Symposium: Learning Through Partnership.

## PRESENTATIONS, PAPERS AND PUBLICATIONS

Action research: Being flexible and responsive. Presentation at the 2013 Oxfam-Monash Partnership Research Symposium: Learning Through Partnership, June 2013, Australia.

Gendered impacts of climate variability and climate events in Bangladesh: Project overview and initial findings. Presentation at the 2013 Oxfam-Monash Partnership Research Symposium: Learning Through Partnership, June 2013, Australia.

Women, Research and Action: The Oxfam-Monash Partnership in Bangladesh. Paper presented at the International Council of Women, Asia Pacific conference and workshop, November 2011, Fiji.

Women, Research and Action: The Oxfam-Monash Partnership in Bangladesh. Paper presented at the Gender and Climate Change, International Conference, September 2011, Italy.

Women and climate change in Bangladesh: Gender, vulnerability and resilience (forthcoming). Routledge: Women in Asia series — a detailed feminist analysis of the impacts of changing climatic conditions on women, their vulnerability and resilience and, subsequently, on gender relations, gender equality and empowerment.
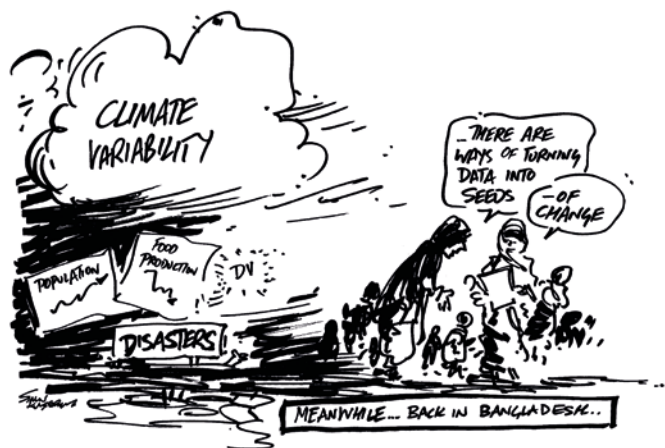
DEVELOPING A PEOPLE'S POLICY FOR HEALTH IN SOUTH AFRICA

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

Partnership funding: $120,000 for up to two years.

Partnership thematic area: Accountability.

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: Katherine Lay (Essential Services Program Coordinator, Oxfam Pretoria Office), Kevin Roussel (Advocacy and Campaigns Manger, Oxfam Cape Town Office), Urvarshi Rajcoomar (Senior Program Coordinator-Advocacy, Policy and Humanitarian, Oxfam Country Office, Durban).

The Oxfam-Monash National Health Insurance (NHI) Accountability team was awarded a two-year grant from 2011–2013 to implement a project on governance and accountability in the health sector and people's participation in the development and implementation of the NHI in three provinces of South Africa. Their aim is to ensure that democratic processes for the introduction of the NHI in South Africa are more participatory and representative of civil society, and to increase understanding and knowledge of the legislative drafting process by people living in South Africa.

Capacity building is a significant focus of the project. The research team are working with community-based organisations to build skills and knowledge on holding governments to account for efficient, effective and responsive implementation of the NHI. Through technical support and targeted capacity-building initiatives, the team aims to increase active citizenship.

The research team conducted a desktop review of the literature to better understand the context under which the NHI would be implemented. In the second stage they prepared NHI information brochures for testing that aimed to demystify the NHI and make it more accessible to a general audience. They then identified and engaged with strong grassroots community-based organisations in three areas (HIV and AIDS Prevention Group in Bela-bela, Limpopo, Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action in Edendale, KwaZulu-Natal, and Sophakama in Port Elizabeth and Nelson Mandela Metro, Eastern Cape). Training sessions have been conducted with these partners and they have held community consultations on the materials and information.

The research team is now undertaking an evaluation of the project and the materials to assess their suitability for community needs. They are interested in better understanding what model of

A woman collects water using a plastic drum. **Photo:** Matthew Willman/Oxfam Australia.

community engagement works best in this style of community-driven accountability.

Key outputs from this project include information sheets for communities, public presentations, reports on the NHI and community accountability, with forthcoming publications in the pipeline. In addition, the research team was able to gain unprecedented access to senior government officials due to Monash's participation. This enabled the project to influence the direction of public consultations by ensuring the spread of materials and awareness in the community of their uses. As a direct result of this project, there is now an opportunity to influence government policy around methods of public consultation. There was also significant learning with respect to action research which has been written up to share with the wider international development sector.

PRESENTATIONS, PAPERS AND PUBLICATIONS

Participatory Action Research and community participation: Developing a people's policy for health in South Africa. Presentation at the 2013 Oxfam-Monash Partnership Research Symposium: Learning Through Partnership, June 2013, Australia.

Community consultations in the development and implementation of the National Health Insurance in South Africa. Presentation at the 2013 Oxfam-Monash Partnership Research Symposium: Learning Through Partnership, June 2013, Australia.

The new National Health Insurance in South Africa: How it will affect you. Presentation at Monash South Africa Research Day, November 2011, South Africa.

Governance and accountability in implementing the National Health Insurance in South Africa. Presentation to staff and students at Monash South Africa, September 2012, South Africa.

Governance and accountability in the health sector: Developing a people's policy for health in South Africa. Presentation at the Oxfam-Monash round table at Monash South Africa, August 2012, South Africa.

People's participation in the National Health Insurance in South Africa: Phase 1 Report. November 2011.

Participatory Action Research and community participation: Developing a people's policy for health in South Africa (forthcoming). Abstract submitted to the Public Health Association of South Africa Conference, September 2013.

Community consultations in the development and implementation of the National Health Insurance in South Africa (forthcoming). Abstract submitted to the Public Health Association of South Africa Conference, September 2013.

Community engagement in the introduction and implementation of the National Health Insurance in South Africa (forthcoming). Geoff Setswe and Jackie Witthuhn. Journal of Public Health in Africa 2013, Volume 4: e6, 27–31.

STEERING MULTI-LEVEL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS FROM THE GROUND UP IN CAMBODIA

Full project title: Community-driven accountability: steering multi-level accountability systems from the ground up in Cambodia.

Partnership funding: $298,754 for up to two and a half years.

Partnership thematic area: Accountability.

PROJECT TEAM

Project leadership: Dr Shelley Marshall (Senior Lecturer, Economics and Commerce); Dr Adam McBeth (Senior Lecturer, Law); Dr Kate MacDonald (Lecturer, Political Science, University of Melbourne); Michael Simon (Advocacy Manager, Oxfam Australia); and Pauline Taylor McKeown (Mekong Regional Program Manager, Oxfam Australia).

Key members: Depika Sherchan (Research Coordinator); Kol Leakhana (Project Officer); Chheong Sotheavan (Development Watch Research Officer, Equitable Cambodia); Ruth Bottomley (Research Coordinator); and Neth Virak (Senior Research Officer, Equitable Cambodia).

WASH Program Officers in Kratie Province, Cambodia. **Photo:** Timothy Herbert/Oxfam Australia.

There is widespread recognition in the development sector that communities should be able to hold to account the range of powerful actors who influence large-scale development projects. A broad range of accountability mechanisms have been put in place through governance, business and aid sectors but the experience of those mechanisms is highly fragmented. Unfortunately the way decisions are made and power exercised has been neglected. The research team draws on major infrastructure projects (such as dams or mines) as examples. These projects involve close collaboration between major players and overlapping accountability structures. However, there are serious gaps when it comes to being accountable to affected communities and conducting proper community impact assessments.

The central goal of the research is to investigate factors that enable some communities to develop stronger community-centred accountability processes than others when affected by development projects. The team aims to gain a better understanding of entitlement to influence, forums and capacity for influence, and the role of NGOs and other external actors in these processes. The research is based on three case studies:

> The Oxfam Integrated Community Development (ICD) program in the provinces of Kratie and Stung Treng. While not immediately affected by any large-scale development project, there is the possibility that these communities will be affected by the construction of dams across the Mekong River.

> The Boeung Kak Lake area in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh where 20,000 people have been affected by an urban land development project.

> The Lower Sesan II Dam where remote, rural ethnic minority communities in Stung Treng province will be impacted by the construction of a large dam on the Sesan River, with the construction due to begin in 2014.

Having progressed through several stages of data collection, the team is finding the strength of accountability processes depends critically on a community's capacity and sense of entitlement to influence decisions about development projects. This in turn is influenced by several factors, both internal and external to the community. Some of these factors include the quality of information they have access to, organisation and resources at a community level, community norms and expectations, roles, strategies and capacities of NGOs operating in the community. There are also the relationships that exist between communities, NGOs and government, and the structure of project decision-making (centralised versus decentralised).

The project team now moves into action stage — documenting learnings, informing policy and strategy, and disseminating information. In the first instance, the research team will be documenting the main findings of the three case studies for dissemination to NGO

partners and other stakeholders. They will be conducting feedback sessions to the communities and NGOs involved in the research. For Boeung Kak this feedback will look very much at the experiences and reflections of the activists in terms of their mobilisation and campaign to claim their land rights. The team hopes to work with the activists to distil these reflections into useful lessons that can inform other communities who find themselves in similar situations. This may take the form of a booklet that can be used by the activists for training purposes. They also plan to share their findings with Oxfam and the extended NGO community, and work on feeding research outcomes into Oxfam Australia's strategies around water governance in Cambodia. For example, in the case of Oxfam and their work around the 3-S

rivers (Sesan, Srepok and Sekong), the research can inform Oxfam and partner NGOs by bringing together stakeholders around a more coordinated approach to dam advocacy that supports the needs of affected people.

From the research findings, and in close collaboration with Oxfam Australia, the project team aims to develop brief, constructive policy guides for NGOs, government and companies to inform different actors about best-practice for accountability and information-sharing. Findings will be presented in Khmer at a national research forum in Cambodia and developed into a workshop for NGO participants present at the initial project inception workshop. This will encourage further reflection on their accountability.
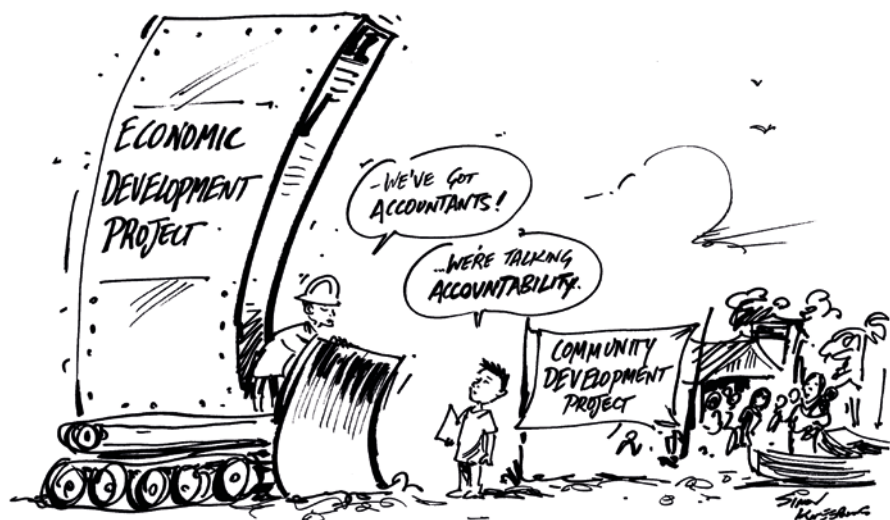
PRESENTATIONS, PAPERS AND PUBLICATIONS

Community-driven accountability in Cambodia. Presentation at the 2013 Oxfam-Monash Partnership Research Symposium: Learning Through Partnership, June 2013, Australia.

Participatory Action Research: Challenges of implementation. Presentation at the 2013 Oxfam-Monash Partnership Research Symposium: Learning Through Partnership, June 2013, Australia.

Headline findings from the Oxfam Australia integrated community development project case study were prepared and used during the documentation and closure of their program in Cambodia in 2012.

Boeung Kak case study. Presentation at the New Zealand Asian Studies Society 20th Biennial Conference on Environment, Dislocation and Cultural Space (forthcoming), November 2013, New Zealand.

'Capacity, sustainability and accountability in the face of modern development: Lessons from Oxfam Australia's development model in Cambodia' in Brennan, Linda et al (eds), *Growing sustainable communities: A development guide for Southeast Asia* (forthcoming), Tilde University Press.

Mapping accountability processes in Cambodia. Paper presented at Challenges for Participatory Development in Contemporary Practice, ANU, November 2012. Publication in the *ANU Development Bulletin* (forthcoming).

Case study analysis, collaboration research project between Oxfam Australia's Active Citizenship and Accountability Hub and the University of Melbourne, examining Oxfam's theories of change within their accountability and citizenship work, 2012.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY VOICES

Full project title:
Participatory Research: Empowering community voices.

Partnership thematic area:
Accountability.

PROJECT TEAM

Project leadership:
Professor Sue McKemmish (Director, Monash University Centre for Organisational and Social Informatics); and Dr Larry Stillman (Research Fellow, Faculty of Information Technology, Monash University).

The creation, storage and diffusion of community knowledge are critical to international development. Development Informatics is a field of research and action that studies these activities and the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). There is a concern in the Oxfam-Monash Partnership, and among donors, that community voices are muted or distorted in the communication chain, and that community knowledge is not well represented in decision-making processes.

This concern extends to the role of communities in research projects sponsored by the Oxfam-Monash Partnership, and the Partnership is committed to action research to address this issue. Ideally community members are engaged in research as active agents, not as passive subjects, and have an effective voice in decision-making about the conduct of the research, ensuring that its design meets their needs.

The aim of the Resilient Communities Flagship Project is to understand the views of participants and stakeholders on how well action research is implemented and community voices are heard. We ask to what degree do the principles associated with action research currently govern the collection, analysis, distribution and use of community information and knowledge in Oxfam-Monash Partnership-funded research? How can the outcomes of action research

contribute to community voices being heard freely and with authenticity in development initiatives? Through these questions we hope to understand what communities see as the most important problems associated with this methodology and how to ensure those who work with community members bring their voices to the fore.

We will explore knowledge- and information-management processes that result in community empowerment and self-determination. Overall, our objective is to ensure that community knowledge is not lost to the world views of other participants in the research process.

The project team will begin their first case study in September 2013 in collaboration with the National Health Insurance research team. They look forward to testing their methodology and tools within this research piece and commencing further case studies in early 2014.

A paper and workshop on community leadership and participation in development will be submitted to the 2013 International Information and Communication Technology for Development Conference in Cape Town, South Africa. Information on the project will also be shared at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem during a guest lecture for the Masters in International Development program.
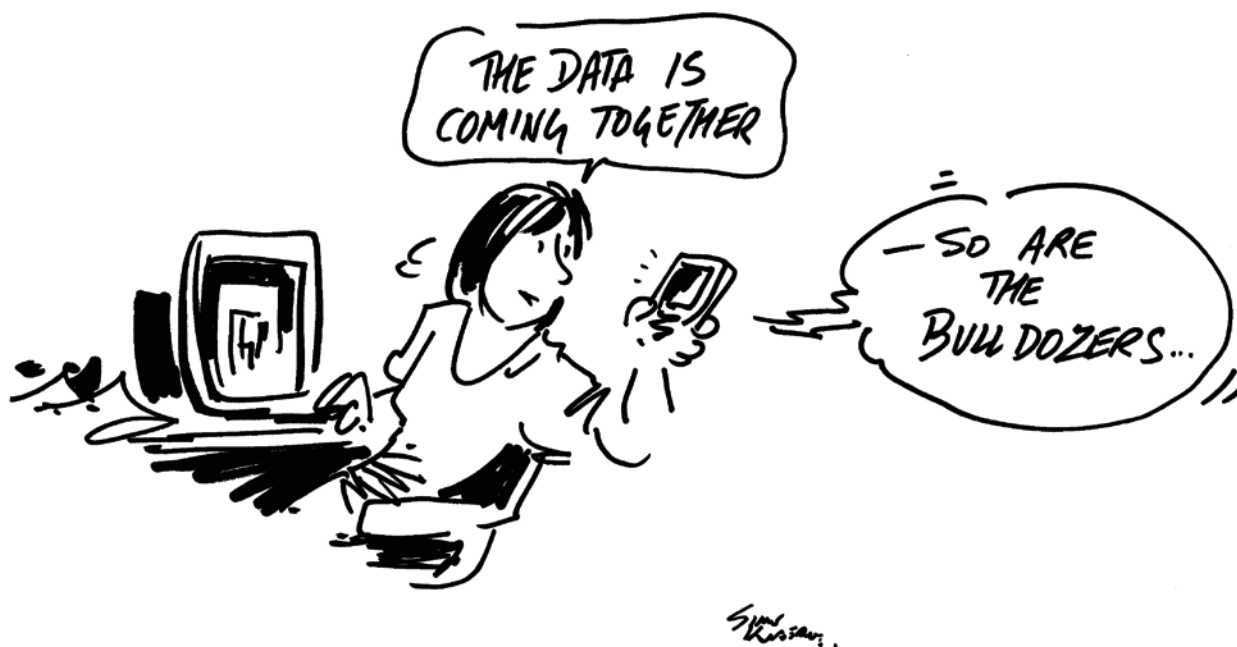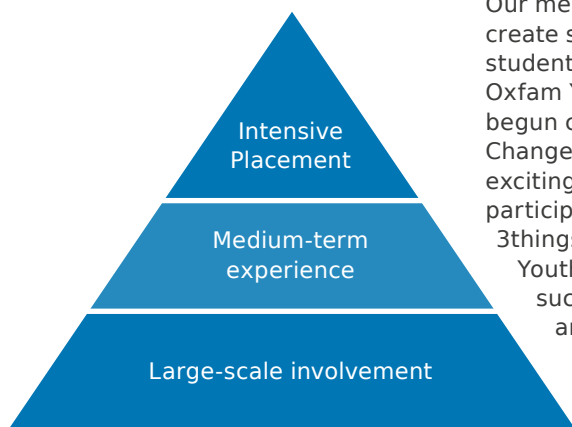
3.0 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Since 2009, a number of students from Monash Australia and Monash South Africa have undertaken six-week placements with Oxfam partners in KwaZulu-Natal. This program not only helped form the basis of the Oxfam-Monash Partnership but is also the cornerstone of our student engagement strategy.

At the Oxfam-Monash Partnership we believe students are the next generation of leaders and that opportunities should align with their knowledge, understanding and personal journeys. We hope that by working on projects at the entry-level students gain perspective and that with intense on-the-ground experiences they gain knowledge and skills, putting theory into practice.

OUR STRATEGY AIMS TO HELP BUILD THE NEXT GENERATION OF NGO LEADERS AND ACTIVISTS IN THREE WAYS:

Intensive Placement

Medium-term experience

Large-scale involvement

With a conservative budget we have been able to reach many students with initiatives that form the base of our student engagement strategy. The Oxfam-Monash Innovators program has an estimated reach of 40 students each year and is part of our strategy to gain large-scale involvement of students at Monash University. We also support the MON 2002 Depth Unit with an approximate reach of 15 students each year and give annual support to the Oxfam at Monash Student Group with a membership reach of more than 150 students.

Our medium-term experiences can create some rare opportunities for students. Under the reinvigorated Oxfam Youth Program, we have begun collaborations with Design for Change and will further explore the exciting prospect of Monash student participation in ChangeCourse, 3things and the Oxfam International Youth Program. We also successfully hosted three media and communications volunteer placements with the Oxfam-Monash Partnership in 2013. We are looking

at ways for these placements to be accredited as internships under both the Oxfam Australia guidelines and within faculty parameters. We continue to offer students places at the table of all our Partnership-supported events, including the 2013 Research Symposium: Learning Through Partnership and the Annual Castan Centre for Human Rights Law Conference. By offering students the opportunity to attend these events they can build their own networks and advance in their careers.

At the pinnacle of our engagement strategy is the successful South Africa Student Placement Program (see case study below). We continue to refine our model of placements and support our long-term partnerships with organisations in South Africa, including Lawyers for Human Rights, Refugee Social Services, Project Empower, Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust, Woza Moya and Oxfam South Africa. In 2014 we will explore a range of new placement options including a longer-term placement in addition to our six-week experience.

SOUTH AFRICA STUDENT PLACEMENT PROGRAM (SASPP)

Highlights

Five years into the SASPP, students and partner organisations are gaining greater benefit from the experience as we refine the program. In 2013 we adjusted pre-departure training to include a wider range of preparation materials and support from Oxfam Australia.

Our plan is to bolster learning and practice elements of the placement by extending student time in-country and exploring for-credit project-based learning through faculties at Monash University. This is part of our objective to reward practical experience in development through for-credit coursework.

The 2014 placement round will grow to include some longer-term placements and aim to increase student ownership in the project. For more information on these exciting changes, please see our website: www.odvce.monash. edu.au/oxfam

In 2012 we conducted a review of the SASPP program in addition to our February annual reflection. During this review we explored options for expanding the program, how to create links with course content, and assessed student and partner desire for change. A summary of program benefits emerged from the review:

STAKEHOLDER	BENEFITS IDENTIFIED
Monash University students	> Creation of people-to-people links > Rewarding life experience > Greater understanding of development > Contributing positively to society > Career enhancing opportunity
Partner organisations (host organisations)	> Creation of people-to-people links > Extra staff resources > Availability of skills required for specific tasks
Oxford-Monash Partnership	> Meets core objectives of host organisations, Monash University and Oxfam Australia > Meets key objectives of the Partnership

This review highlighted that in order to fulfil the Partnership's objective of equipping the next generation of development workers and activists with the necessary skills to promote further positive changes in people's lives, we need greater consideration of how we integrate knowledge and practice. While the opportunity to work with local community-based organisations in South Africa is a strictly volunteer placement, the experience is designed to give students a deeper awareness of the issues affecting people living with HIV and AIDS and an understanding of issues related to community development, as well as build invaluable skills and knowledge that can be utilised in ongoing study and future careers. However, the connection between this student experience and the aspiration of the Partnership for a stronger and better-equipped generation of activists needs strengthening. Currently students are not given the space or supervision to explicitly draw out skills for a pathway into development or as change leaders, and positive change as a core concept is unexplored both in terms of practical application and improved knowledge.

In the next two years we aim to redress this imbalance in a number of ways:

1. Create links with faculties across Monash so students can apply the time spent in-country towards an industry-based learning internship, and gain credit for their placement.

2. Expand our student engagement with partner organisations in-country by creating connections in the months leading up to deployment, working with partners and students to identify projects and learning objectives well in advance, and expanding the time spent with partners to a minimum of 12 weeks.

3. Enhance our student engagement strategy to prioritise activities that build student skills prior to the commencement of the program, and that takes better advantage of their new skills set when they return home.

In our vision for the program we aim to transition to a more sustainable structure that is cost neutral for the Partnership and Monash University. Formally funded largely under strategic initiatives within the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education) and with a significant contribution from the Oxfam-Monash Partnership for in-country support, 2014 will see the program move increasingly to a student-funded

model. The goal is a total transfer of cost and ownership of the program to the students of Monash University and alumni of the program by 2016. This is for a number of reasons:

> Reliance on Monash University funds to support student placements needs to shift and respond to opportunities for funding across Monash.

> Students need to feel greater ownership of the program to inspire legacy initiatives that support our partners.

> Opportunities for students to link with for-credit units across faculties will encourage cross-campus engagement in the program.

The new model includes a program fee for participating students. Our model of in-country support will remain unchanged, with new advance support for students needing assistance with fundraising to cover program costs and seeking academic credit for their placement. This will take the form of a project officer, most likely placed at Monash University in Australia.

2013 South Africa Student Placement Program participants. **Photo:** Inger Harber/Oxfam South Africa.

SASPP 2013: OUR STUDENTS EXCEL

Transformation often begins with a challenge. In 2013 we set for ourselves a great challenge: to offer students an enhanced experience with our partner organisations and better prepare them as they head into the field. Traditionally SASPP provides students with an opportunity to undertake a volunteer assignment with Oxfam Australia's partner organisations in South Africa. In 2013 these organisations included Lawyers for Human Rights, Refugee Social Services, Project Empower, Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust, Woza Moya and for the first time Oxfam South Africa. The objectives of the program include students' deepened understanding of community development, building skills and personal growth, and exploration of possible career paths or academic options. After a very competitive application process, 10 Monash University students — three from Monash University South Africa and seven from Australian campuses — began their journey to transform and be transformed in early 2013.
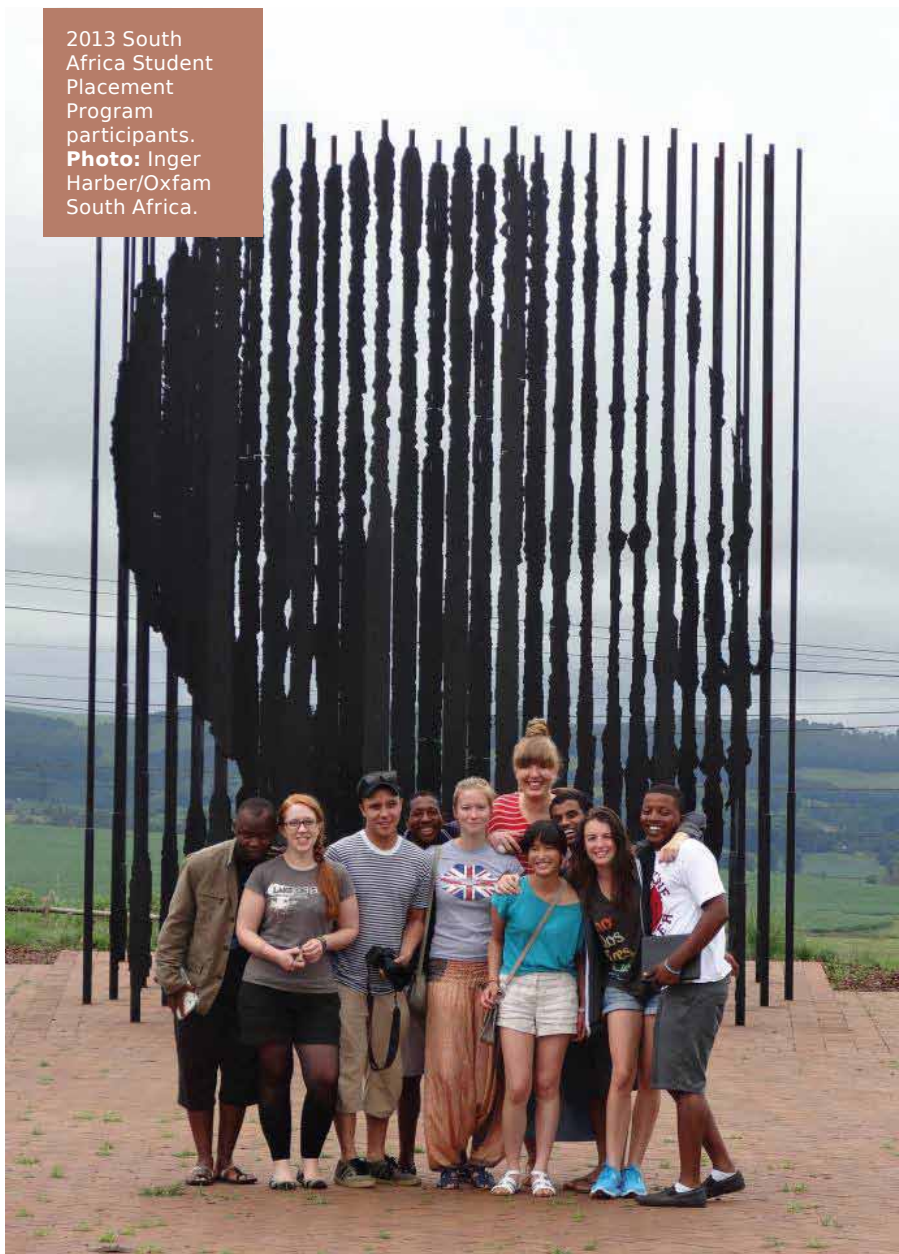
The 2013 group of students were an energetic, enthusiastic and mature group who were able to work independently and self-manage. Despite differences in future career plans, approaches to development, areas of interest in the development field, age, culture and experience, they all shared a common goal: to be open to learning and experiencing as much as possible. The academic backgrounds of the students included Computer and Information Science, Business Studies, International Studies, Law, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology and Marketing.

PROACTIVE STUDENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

> Upon arrival at his placement at Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust, Brian Sibanda realised that the computer system required a major upgrade and that the staff's computer skills could also be improved. He swiftly upgraded their systems using his knowledge of IT, procured several computer monitors and keyboards and conducted training classes with the staff. He set these tasks for himself and once he received the thumbs up from his supervisor, launched straight into action.

All students were based in KwaZulu-Natal province on the east coast of South Africa. In the first week of the placement, students were given an orientation and introduction to the South African context. This included seminars and group discussions with representatives from Oxfam Australia's partner organisations about health, violence, governance, infrastructure and resource management. The students' understanding of South African history, politics and society was particularly important to their volunteer placements, where they worked with populations made vulnerable by poverty, disease and inaccessibility to essential services. The group met weekly to debrief and for sessions on South African history and social context.

STUDENT PLACEMENTS — EXCHANGING SKILLS WITH EXPERIENCES

At Project Empower, student Jamie Bennet assisted with administrative tasks and filled in wherever she was needed. One of the highlights of her placement was attending a trial at High Court. Lisa Harrison and Nicola Greenberg spent their placement at Lawyers for Human Rights conducting the intake of new clients at the front desk and interviewing clients before their cases were handed over to the lawyers. At Refugee Social Services,

Kumbirai Chiunda assumed a more administrative role where the organisation was most in need. He also accompanied staff on home visits in the community. At the Oxfam offices in Durban, Minto Felix and Linh Nguyen conducted research into partner engagement with youth and clinical work and used their research tasks as a means to explore KwaZulu-Natal and engage with Oxfam's partners. This opened the door to interesting, enriching experiences with Woza Moya, Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust and various other organisations. Brian Sibanda and Emily Carpenter were equally in demand at Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust. Brian assisted with the upgrade of computer systems, brokered a deal with a computer hardware store for discounted rates, tutored staff on basic computer skills and secured computer donations enabling staff to access this resource on a permanent basis. Emily made videos of organisation projects for their website and YouTube, helped with human resources templates and strategies for organisational structures, and assisted the organising team with the Gogo Olympics. At Woza Moya, Matthew Ncube and Timothy Chavarria were fitted in wherever was needed — qualities that Woza Moya value and require in their volunteers. In particular, they were able to assist staff with IT skills.

During placements the students appreciated the presence of the new Support Officer Basheerah Mohamed. Basheerah recently completed an honors degree in Community Development and has experience coordinating student programs in South Africa. In the past, many students commented on the necessity of a Support Officer and this year was no different. Basheerah helped students settle into life in Durban, oriented them at Oxfam and with its partners, and provided much-needed support as students integrated with their placements. The Support Officer position was funded for the first time in 2011 and continues to be integral to the student experience.

We look forward to evolving the SASPP in 2014 and sharing with you more stories of how the placements are impacting on our students' lives and the work of our partners.

> "Oxfam and Monash should just keep doing whatever it is they do, because it works wonderfully well from Woza Moya's perspective."
> — Sue Hedden, Woza Moya

OXFAM-MONASH INNOVATORS

The Oxfam-Monash Innovators program is an exciting new initiative of the Oxfam-Monash Partnership, designed to harness the creativity of young people and help them turn their exciting ideas for change into real-world action. We believe that the fresh perspectives and new ideas of young people, when heard, can make an extremely important contribution to the field of international development, social justice and sustainability, and this program is designed to help make that happen.

During the program, students will work to develop their original ideas for social initiatives into concrete project proposals. They will present these proposals to a panel of representatives from various NGOs, including Oxfam Australia, who will provide feedback and choose an ultimate winner. The winning project will receive $5,000 in start-up funds and ongoing mentoring through the Oxfam-Monash Partnership to help implement their idea. For students that don't win the grand prize, other opportunities to advance their ideas will be available. For example, Design for Change, an Oxfam Youth Program, will offer support to students with promising design-based projects. We will also encourage panellists from other organisations to adopt our students' great ideas.

Oxfam-Monash Innovators flyer, 2013.

The projects must be grounded and achievable, but may focus on any issue related to international development, social justice or sustainability, at either a domestic or international level. This could involve anything from an innovative employment-generating scheme for Melbourne's homeless population to an online, international student think-tank on alternative development strategies. It could be a city rooftop community farming project or a teaching exchange program between developed and developing countries. Students will be free to pursue any idea that they feel particularly excited by, and that's what's so great about this program.

The main event will take place on the 17 August 2013 at Monash's Caulfield Campus with a full day of presentations and workshops. The day will culminate in the presentation of their projects to a panel of NGO representatives, and in the announcement of the overall winner. We can't wait to hear the great ideas that emerge, and to see the program expand over the coming years into an even bigger and more exciting annual event.

OXFAM ON CAMPUS

DEPTH UNIT

The Partnership has been working closely with the International Public Health Unit at Monash University to develop a new Depth Unit: Improving Health Futures in a Global World (MON2002). This unit is open to enrolment from students of any discipline and introduces them to critical issues affecting the quality and access to health services around the world. Student feedback indicates this unit has been well received.

With a strong research component guided by the Harvard Business School case study model, this unit encourages students to delve into the transnational issues facing healthcare and its impact on development. Oxfam Australia has supplied case studies from its development experience to be used as the core materials and teaching tools. Through the framework of the UN Millennium Development Goals, students are encouraged to consider the challenges and achievements in health, develop critical thinking skills, and strengthen their leadership abilities to apply in their local settings.

In 2013, the Depth Unit will be under the new direction of Brad Crammond, a Research Fellow with the Michael Kirby Centre for Public Health and Human Rights. With a renewed focus on integrating the analysis and insight of Monash students enrolled in the course, this year's cohort will present some of their reflections and lessons to Oxfam Australia. We hope this will contribute to ongoing learning at Oxfam and better enable our students to receive grounded feedback from development practitioners. Oxfam Australia has supported this course in the past by presenting the most up-to-date information on their work. Oxfam will continue in this role, and in 2013–2014 will present on a range of topics including gender, health and climate change.

MON2002 course flyer, 2013.

OXFAM AT MONASH STUDENT GROUP

A global pursuit of justice begins with transformation in the local community. Oxfam at Monash aims to create awareness, dialogue and action about global poverty and injustice in the Monash University campus community. As a student-led organisation, Oxfam at Monash is affiliated with and supported by Monash University, Monash Student Association and Oxfam Australia.

Since Oxfam at Monash began in early 2011, it has established its presence on campus and is one of

the fastest-growing clubs at Monash. There are 370 formal student members of Oxfam at Monash and an additional 200 students on the group's mailing list. Highlights of the group's activities and events include circulating petitions and information about the Close the Gap campaign for Indigenous health; promoting Oxfam's GROW campaign for food security; launching the 3things short essay competition and a video competition on affecting change and promoting human rights at the community level; and hosting a Fairtrade tea event. Oxfam at Monash also links students to community development internships, lectures and events through its Facebook page.

The Partnership has provided Oxfam at Monash with contacts, materials and resources and often brainstorms with the student leaders about future projects and events. We are excited to continue working with this group of young, inspiring students.

FAIRTRADE AT THE MONASH UNIVERSITY SHOP

The Monash University Shop at Clayton's Campus Centre promotes, stocks and sells Oxfam Fairtrade items, including coffee, chocolate and gifts at competitive prices. By supporting Fairtrade producers Monash is taking part in a global movement calling for an end to unfair trade practices. Fair trade guarantees that workers and farmers in developing countries receive a fair price for their work as a means of ensuring a consistent wage and sustainable lifestyle to combat poverty. Products that receive Fairtrade certification also have strong environmental standards. By offering Fairtrade products at the University Shop, the Partnership contributes to greening the planet, which aligns with Monash University's environmental sustainability mission. The offering of Fairtrade items at Monash University has already expanded: Fairtrade

goods are now sold at Monash University campuses in Gippsland and Berwick and at the University Shop at The Alfred Hospital.

This has been an exciting year for the Monash University Oxfam Shop on the Clayton campus. Moving to a larger, renovated space in the campus bookstore has given Store Manager Melanie Ewers a better platform to promote Fairtrade products on campus:

"We support the partnership between Oxfam Australia and Monash, and we are serious. We want to ensure this is a planet for everyone, and that our products are recycled. Most products on offer today in retailer outlets are mass-produced goods, whereas Fairtrade is authentic and supports the local community. We want to ensure that students and staff on this campus have the choice to buy Fairtrade and support the work of Oxfam Australia." — Melanie Ewers, Oxfam Shop Store Manager, Clayton campus, Monash University.

The new Monash University Oxfam Shop proudly displays Fairtrade items. **Photo:** Lisa Elford/OMP.

Fairtrade items are now more in demand, and increasingly on offer as students realise these products support communities. With mainstream stores carrying products such as Fairtrade coffee and chocolate the pressure is on to diversify the product range and communicate Oxfam's message. Thanks to the relationship with Oxfam Trading, Monash are able to bring more choice to consumers on campus and support a broader range of producers. The Monash University Shop is also working to expand their supplier base on fair trade principles. For example, Melanie and her team have begun dealing directly with Fairtrade jewellery producers in Kenya. The Monash University Oxfam Shop has also increased its eco-friendly range, all from networks Melanie established through Oxfam Trading.

MONASH STAFF GIVE BACK

At Monash we have a long history of contributing to the work of Oxfam Australia through generous giving. Since 1995 Monash staff have contributed almost $60,000 through great initiatives such as the gruelling 100km Trailwalker, one-off appeals for disaster response and Oxfam's eye-catching Unwrapped. Last year (2012) Monash staff gave $4,880 through the Workplace Giving Program, and helped raise $11,175 by participating and fundraising for the Melbourne Trailwalker. This takes the total for Workplace Giving (2010–2013) to $12,392 and the total contribution for Monash teams participating in Melbourne Trailwalker (1995–2013) to $44,660. In total, through Workplace Giving, Trailwalker and one-off appeals Monash staff raised $16,525 in 2012.

Oxfam Trailwalker Melbourne 2013. **Photo:** Lara McKinley/Oxfam Australia.

4.0 PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

MID-TERM REVIEW AND RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

Over the last six months we have embarked on a mid-term review of the Partnership, attempting to live one of our key principles (and a benchmark for assessing our projects): action research. This review was envisaged in terms of cyclical learning.

It involved three phases, reflecting an action research approach with cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Initially we reflected on what we knew about the state of the Partnership (through our writing, communication and annual reflections) and took the basic principles of working in partnership back to those who have been involved in the Partnership from the beginning.

Through this process we aimed to collaboratively:

> interrogate our assumptions of working in partnership;

> identify key lessons from the previous 2.5 years of the Partnership;

> identify strategies for strengthening the Partnership for the next 2.5 years;

> strengthen the existing relationship between Oxfam and Monash; and

> increase institutional knowledge capacity in Participatory Action Research.

Our method of data collection included an email questionnaire for Phase 1, gathering short stories and experiences reflecting the seven principles of the Partnership (n=18). Phase 2 included stakeholders from

Oxfam and Monash paired for a participatory interview (n=20). This method had a two-fold objective — it aimed to strengthen relationships between institutions by providing insight into each other's experiences of the Partnership through open dialogue and reflection, and it gave us valuable feedback on the challenges and enabling factors affecting this Partnership. The real privilege came as we bore witness to a dismantling of barriers to open dialogue between projects and institutions. Participants across projects, institutions and positions were able to share their experience of partnership. It was during this reflection and sharing that participants were encouraged to pose questions, topics and challenges for Phase 3 of our research.

Phase 3 was envisaged as a participatory learning symposium where participants would be able to present and share lessons and discuss benefits, challenges and strategies to improve the Partnership. The themes of the learning forum were developed based on the key findings of the mid-term review and the key questions participants proposed. On 5 and 6 June 2013 the Oxfam-Monash Partnership hosted the

2013 Research Symposium: Learning through Partnership and Learning Retreat. Participants presented on their projects and discussed the benefits, challenges and strategies to improve their projects and the Partnership. More intensive learning and sharing also took place across projects, with teams participating in a Learning Retreat on day two to further refine their project goals, actions for the Partnership and recommendations for further partnership learning. These two days of events constituted the action stage of our research and gave everyone the opportunity to participate. The recommendations and lessons from these two days have been fed directly into our review.

Oxfam Australia's CEO, Helen Szoke and Monash University's Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education), Adam Shoemaker at the 2013 Research Symposium. **Photo:** Carla Gottgens/ Oxfam Australia.

The Oxfam-Monash Partnership Annual Symposia series is an exciting initiative to share emergent lessons from our funded research projects, as well as to explore best-practice in the area of partnerships. By sharing and analysing what we have learned through our research and ways of working, we aim to grow an active and engaged cohort of activists, researchers and student leaders.

The 2013 Research Symposium: Learning Through Partnership was the first event of this series. This day-long event enabled participants of Oxfam-Monash Partnership projects to share what they have learned within and beyond the Partnership, as well as foster new relationships for collaboration.

This was a public event, attended by academics and practitioners across the Australian NGO and University sectors. Ultimately, we aim to build a community of interested participants in NGO and academic partnership-led research.

The day-long symposium focused on action research, learning and practice and the sustainability of partnerships, drawing on the experiences of almost three years of funded research projects. We discussed:

> how action research methods informs our approach to research in-country;

> how to improve our research practice to create better outcomes for partners, communities and organisations;

> how to share, integrate and utilise learnings and experiences generated through NGO and academic partnership-led research; and

> how to embed and sustain NGO and academic relationships to the greater benefit of people living in poverty.

For more information on the day, please visit our symposium website at: https://sites.google.com/site/oxfammonashpartnership/home
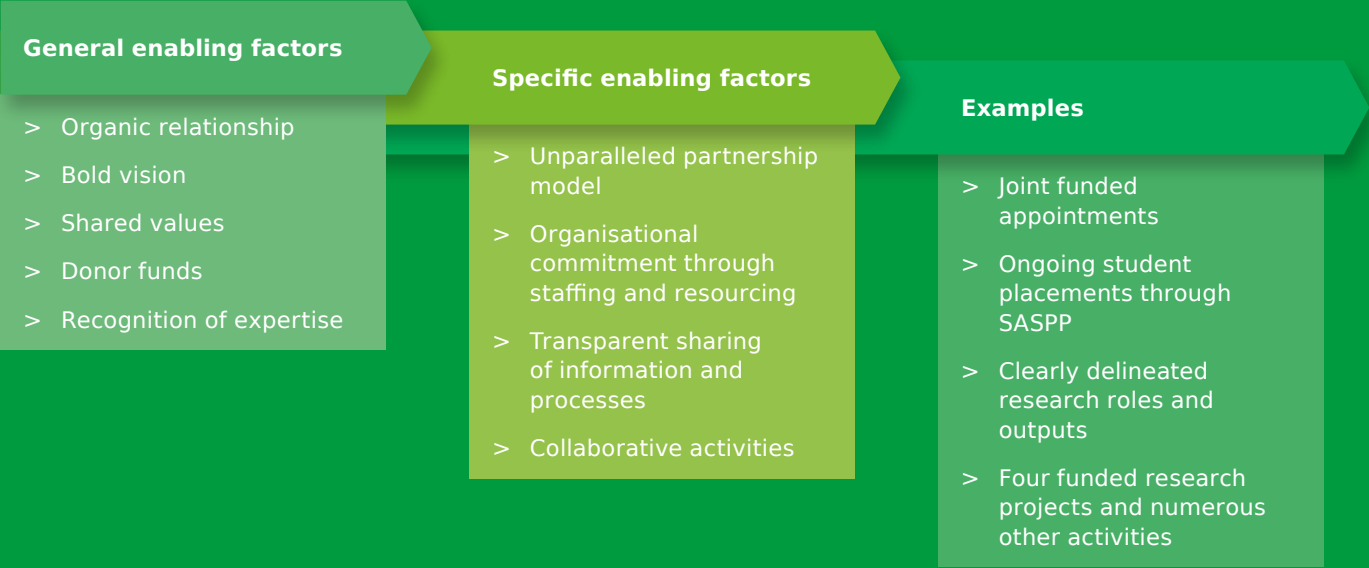
KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout the mid-term review, we found the health of the Partnership to be strong, having developed organically and integrated key personal relationships. It was grounded in the successful South Africa Student Placement Program and key players had a bold vision for working together with shared values on social justice, youth engagement in social change, transformative education and a global focus. Timing and donor funds were necessary conditions to solidify the relationship. Specific enabling factors included the unparalleled nature of the Partnership model and organisational factors such as commitment to common

principles, clearly delineated roles and responsibilities, open and consensus-driven communication, and acknowledgment and respect for organisational differences. While there were different views about whether or not the relationship between Oxfam and Monash is **equal**, the Partnership was generally considered **transparent**, with sharing of information and open discussions.

Partnership-led research was the focus of many discussions in our mid-term review and symposium. The Partnership has supported a number of collaborative activities that have enabled Oxfam and Monash staff to build relationships.

A key enabler was the distinct expertise of each organisation; secondary data suggests that collaboration between Oxfam Australia and Monash University builds on the strengths of both organisations. Relationships between organisational teams and with stakeholders was integral to success, as was consistent and dedicated staffing. Strong enabling factors include: collaborative research processes — such as governance structures and advisory teams — reflective, positive, open and regular communications about progress and project decision-making and the selection of appropriate partners.

General enabling factors

> Organic relationship

> Bold vision

> Shared values

> Donor funds

> Recognition of expertise

Specific enabling factors

> Unparalleled partnership model

> Organisational commitment through staffing and resourcing

> Transparent sharing of information and processes

> Collaborative activities

Examples

> Joint funded appointments

> Ongoing student placements through SASPP

> Clearly delineated research roles and outputs

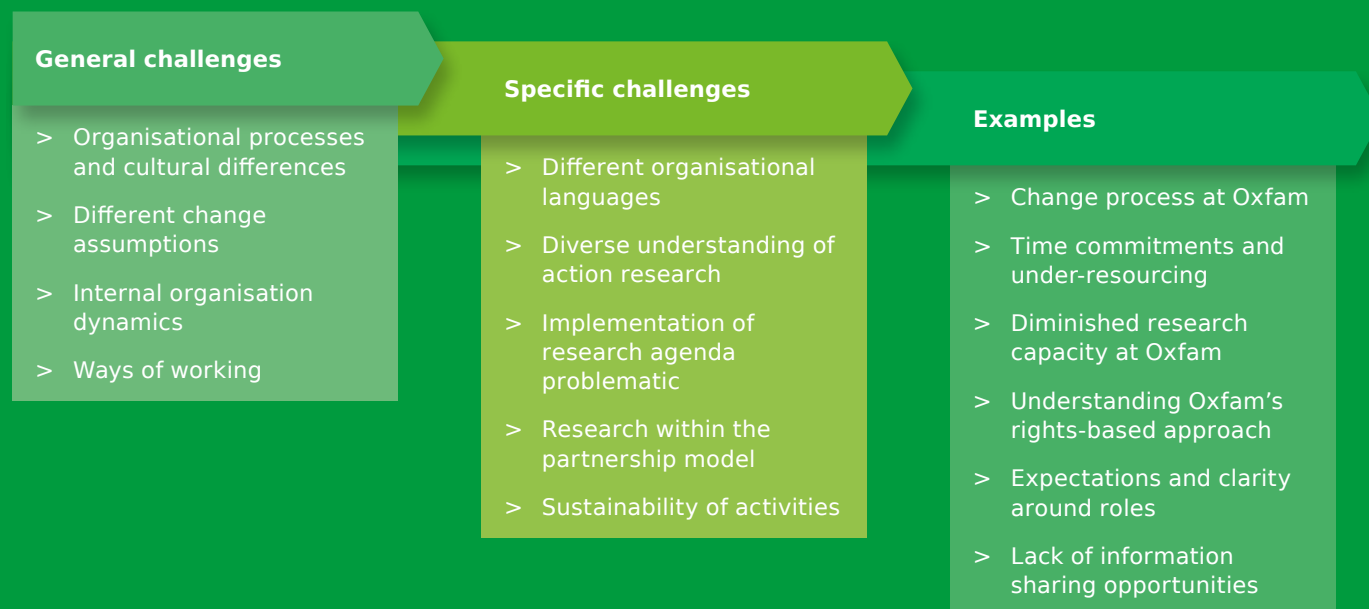> Four funded research projects and numerous other activities

> "When I do an evaluation, I do a report, it sits with us. Academics are not going to let that happen, the gatekeeping sort of thing … that is the beauty of this Partnership, academics will publish on findings, and that is the best part for communities, their stories go beyond the doors of Oxfam, they actually go external" — Research participant

Enabling factors were balanced by frank discussion of challenges. General challenges to a strong and meaningful partnership included cultural differences and organisational processes (including issues such as language), different assumptions about how change happens, internal organisation dynamics and different ways of working (including differences between Oxfam affiliates). Exploring more specific concerns, action research was particularly problematic and this will be explored in greater depth in the following pages. Responsible and ethical behaviour is being adhered to in principle, but is challenging in practice and, while there was conscious attention paid to the complementarity of the relationship (often focusing on mutual benefit and shared organisational understanding), there was always the risk these were superficially applied in reality. Regarding sustainability, a universal concern among the respondents was whether the Partnership can continue beyond the current funding and beyond the relationships that built it. This issue will need to be addressed by the Governance Committee.

General challenges

> Organisational processes and cultural differences
> Different change assumptions
> Internal organisation dynamics
> Ways of working

Specific challenges

> Different organisational languages
> Diverse understanding of action research
> Implementation of research agenda problematic
> Research within the partnership model
> Sustainability of activities

Examples

> Change process at Oxfam
> Time commitments and under-resourcing
> Diminished research capacity at Oxfam
> Understanding Oxfam's rights-based approach
> Expectations and clarity around roles
> Lack of information sharing opportunities

MAJOR AREAS OF WORK

Despite recognising many challenges and complexities, and the need to strengthen our ways of working, our review suggests a strong sense of hope about the potential of the Partnership to impact both organisations and make a positive difference in people's lives.

Four areas of focus were identified through this review and will be prioritised in the next two years.

PARTNERSHIP	> Recognising distinct expertise > Examination of our core principles
ACTION RESEARCH	> Diversity of understanding and practice > Processes and structures
LEARNING	> Documenting emergent practices > Shift to goal oriented learning
COMMUNICATION	> Consistent, timely delivery > As a vehicle for learning

PARTNERSHIP MODEL

Our model of partnership was seen by review participants as unique and special, but also challenging. Over the last three years the Partnership has supported a number of collaborative activities that have enabled Oxfam and Monash staff to build relationships through joint research projects. In addition to other joint activities, such as the South Africa Student Placement Program, these research projects have become an integral part of our Partnership model. One of the key enablers has been the recognition that through partnership we have access to the distinct expertise of each organisation, and that collaboration builds on the strengths of both organisations. In order to build these strong relationships, teams noted that consistent and dedicated staffing is essential and they recognise the significant time investment it takes to build such relationships. Some enabling factors discussed included: collaborative research processes, such as governance structures and advisory teams, reflective, positive, open and regular communications about progress and project decision-making, and the selection of appropriate partners.

Requiring deeper examination is the concept of partnership. Through our mid-term review we have shown that NGO-academic partnerships are challenging, complex, hopeful, ethically difficult, demanding, resource-intensive, rewarding and progressive. Our Partnership is grounded in idealistic goals which are often difficult to balance in practice. Feedback has shown that implementing the principles within this Partnership is a long-term process that requires ongoing reflection and reconsideration. This overwhelmingly speaks to the model of partnership we have chosen to pursue; one that is based on certain key principles and that aspires to teams meeting as equals, where action research is a goal, and where our contributions complement one another. Our principles were intended to be general but meaningful, a bold mission statement with deep agreement that did not tie either organisation into commitments they could not deliver, nor lock either organisation into transactional altercations.

During the Research Symposium and Learning Retreat many teams took the opportunity to reflect on this model of partnership through their comments and discussion of their research projects. Discussions ranged from specific concerns to more general and wide-ranging elements of our partnership model as outlined below:

> Conflict between collaboration and cooperation in tight funding environments. This was especially relevant to our academic colleagues who felt that the pressure to secure competitive funding sources and publish widely was in conflict with the slower pace of a collaborative partnership model.

> Lack of an independent Oxfam-Monash Partnership identity that can be differentiated from Oxfam or Monash. This was a broad reflection on the pitfalls of working through a model of partnership where work is embedded in both organisations, leading to confusion and misunderstandings in terms of processes and expectations.

> Over-burdened staff and difficulty with cost recovery. During the period of the Partnership, there have been a number of significant changes to Oxfam Australia, which have caused challenges for the projects. Participating Oxfam staff in Partnership research projects shared that they do not have sufficient time and resources to adequately engage in the research.

Overall the concern was that as a result of these challenges the quality of the research and Partnership will be negatively impacted. To address these concerns during the next stage of the Partnership, we need to:

> collect more evidence to understand the way our organisations think about the strategic role of the Partnership;

> develop an immutable vision for our Partnership, which aims to demystify engagement with one another; and

> consider specific inputs required for successful collaboration and direct funding support to these inputs.

This will enable a greater understanding of the value of the Partnership to both Oxfam and Monash and explore the bigger questions about the role of the Partnership in social change.

"Requiring deeper examination is the concept of partnership. Through our mid-term review we have shown that NGO-academic partnerships are challenging, complex, hopeful, ethically difficult, demanding, resource-intensive, rewarding and progressive."

ACTION RESEARCH

Within our Partnership principles, action research has proven to be difficult to enact, although simultaneously an inspiring and energising concept that has compelled teams to aim for greater outcomes within communities. At Oxfam, we believe that ownership of the research process sits within the communities, building capacity and creating an environment for empowerment for stakeholders. Informing this perspective is Oxfam's core belief that respecting basic human rights can move people out of poverty. At Oxfam, and in the Partnership, we share the perspective that action research is about people taking control of their research. We aim to minimise power differences between researchers and the community. Through the Partnership, we want to engage in continuous cycles of action and reflection by understanding and embedding learnings from our practice. We also want to effect change that directly contributes to positive outcomes for people living in poverty. We believe that the power of research is not only in the evidence it generates but in the space it creates for people to empower themselves.

Some of the difficulty we have encountered is putting our ideals into practice. Through our discussions with teams and presentations during the symposium, it became obvious

"With Action Research you are really getting involved; you have to figure out how to deal with divisions in communities and different ideas in community about what they want. The ethical dilemmas are much deeper."
— Research participant

that the practice of action research is diverse and that none of our research teams feel they have been able to do action research to its full potential. For some participants it was important to speak of action research as an orientation rather than a prescription. In this case, action research is a proxy for various approaches including a focus on change, adaptability and flexibility with research design, and working in a participatory way with local organisations and people. Others feel the purpose of adopting this paradigm is to entrench community voice and processes in a very nonlinear and non-traditional fashion. The complexity of this style of research sometimes made it difficult to pinpoint findings. For many involved in the Partnership and projects, action research is a new approach that challenges professionals to work in a very different way.

Some very interesting ethical challenges have emerged with the application of action research leading to dilemmas about extractive research and risk.

There are significant challenges to engaging local communities in action research paradigms. Some people may be exposed to risk by participating in research where the action component is in direct conflict with government or policy. Researchers spoke about the need to remain abreast of rapidly changing political and policy contexts to ensure action research did not lead to risk for partners and communities. Also, in the absence of true participation there is an additional risk of research becoming tokenistic and not incorporating community voice in a meaningful manner. As one team reflected, the ambitions for action research must be matched with the context and opportunities to germinate ownership of the research at the community level. For some researchers the grassroots ownership was especially challenging for communities in crisis. At best, action research in these contexts is an ideal to be aspired to and, at worst, a luxury that can be sacrificed.

Perhaps unlike other traditional forms of research, action research projects need more support mechanisms to ensure authenticity. Our teams agreed on the importance of maintaining a flexible research arrangement, which included responding to advice and guidance from in-country partners throughout the life cycle of the research project. It was felt that with action research, a larger burden is placed on people's time compared to other research projects. A number of participants reflected that the amount of work that went into an action research project was not immediately recognised. Support from the former Research Unit at Oxfam was also recognised; this unit was integral in bridging gaps between academic research and grounded practice at Oxfam.

KEY CHALLENGES TO ACTION RESEARCH IN A PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIP:

> Action research at both the Partnership level and within projects is diversely understood and practiced.

> Action research is a new approach for those involved and they are less comfortable with the method than traditional research methods.

> Ethical challenges have emerged with the application of action research leading to dilemmas about extractive research and risk.

> Action research projects need more support mechanisms in place to be authentic.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH:

> A way of learning about things that impact us (or impact on the lives of the community members we work with) and then using that knowledge to create change.

> People taking control of their research so as to take action to better their lives.

> A form of inquiry intended to produce both change (action) and understanding (research).

> Focuses on addressing a social problem that affects constituency group members.

> Aims to minimise the power differences between researchers and constituents.

"We need to start thinking about the best way forward regarding methodology. We need to recognise there are implications to those changes and take it on."
— Research participant

"We need to be careful about following action research for its own sake."
— Research participant

"I think it's important that the principle of an action research-oriented approach is put forward as a principle which should animate the design of the research process, but in a flexible way that recognises that it won't always be feasible, or indeed desirable (from a research ethics point of view), to pursue within every individual research project."
— Research participant

To address our concerns about action research during the next stage of the Partnership, we need to prioritise the following:

> Ensure that processes and structures in the Partnership are sufficient to support authentic action research, and that we have sufficient reason for using this method.

> Responsible and ethical behaviour is a challenging principle of the Partnership, particularly when conducting research on sensitive issues with people living in poverty; research teams are constantly grappling with ethical issues. As a Partnership and as two ethical organisations, we need to explore what processes and structures need to be in place to sufficiently support authentic action research as one of our core principles.

> In planning and assessing research projects, we need to plan and budget for activities to ensure they have adequate human and material resources. Timing and length of commitment are also important considerations.
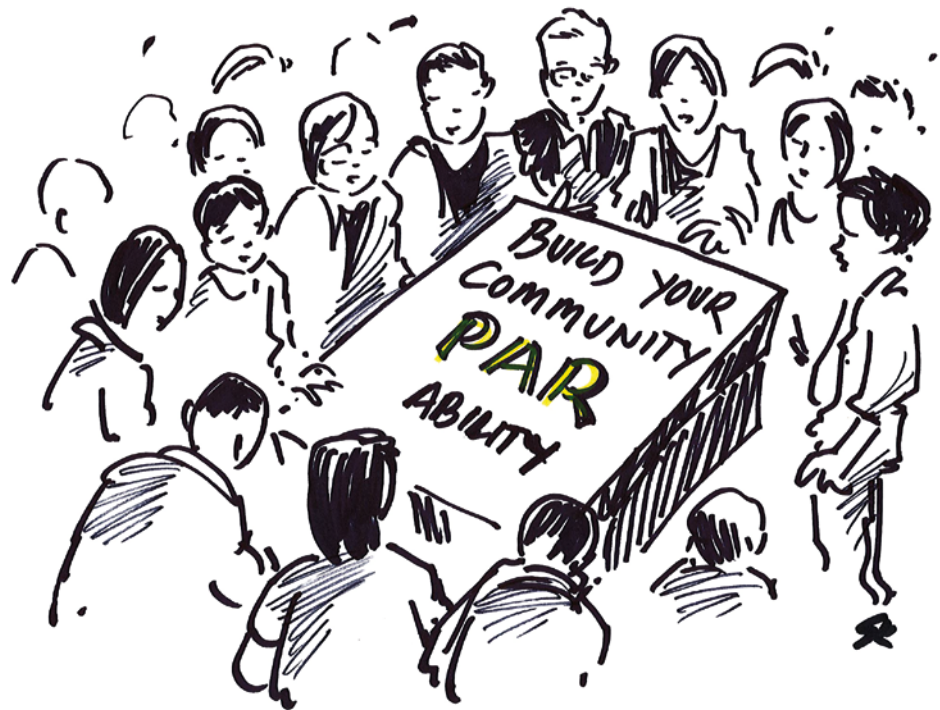
LEARNING AND EMERGENT PRACTICES

The Partnership was widely considered a process for learning and an opportunity to document emergent practices. While the Partnership was focused on learning through linking theory and practice in international development, the data shows that learning is occurring at multiple levels, including individually and in internal organisational systems. Yet, to a certain extent, communicating and leveraging what we have learned at these levels has been limited. This was identified by all projects as a necessary and important next step, and also as a lost opportunity if not seized upon by the Partnership, Oxfam and Monash.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT INCLUDE:

> Project- and Partnership-level focus on documenting, sharing and linking multiple levels of learning. A universal concern was how to ensure research findings were applied outside of traditional academic circles. Project teams are looking for opportunities to disseminate findings at Oxfam, in the extended NGO community and with Oxfam affiliates. By exploring accountability mechanisms, teams are also exploring ways to feed into policy strategies that ensure accountability to communities.

> Strengthen the approach of the Partnership to be more goal-oriented. For example, exploring a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Partnership and for individual projects. This may allow us to be more specific about research focus and aims, and articulate aims for publishing and outputs.

> Teams also look to Oxfam for opportunities to follow up and support communities engaged with the research project. The methodology employed by teams to engage with communities means that there is some expectation that research and action are ongoing learning processes. The steps beyond Partnership-funded research need to be explored.

> Teams also expressed that as active participants in the research process, communities have contributed to research design and implementation, and have a vested interest in the outcomes of the project. If we truly believe that the power of research is not only in the evidence it generates but in the space it creates for people to empower themselves, then ongoing research capacity building in-country should be a priority.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Underpinning each of these key areas for improvement is the need to provide more consistent and timely information and communications both within our programs and externally. In the last year we have developed and refined our communications strategy, began publishing our two newsletters, and tapped into social media to get more information across to wider audiences. However, as all participating staff in Partnership research projects expressed, time was at a premium and communication and the timely sharing of information are essential.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT INCLUDE:

> We need to better share our understandings and approaches to research, and our ways of working in community, and use this to enhance our work.

> Externally, projects teams indicated they wanted further opportunities for sharing knowledge between the Partnership research projects. It was agreed that by sharing these lessons across projects, all projects will benefit.

> Researchers are seeking technology solutions that help to build research capacity in communities, better enable sharing among time-poor project teams, and facilitate the action research methodology so that cycles of learning and feedback occur with greater ease.

> To improve the impact of research, the Partnership and research projects should be better socialised across agencies and support given to Oxfam staff to increase their research capacity.
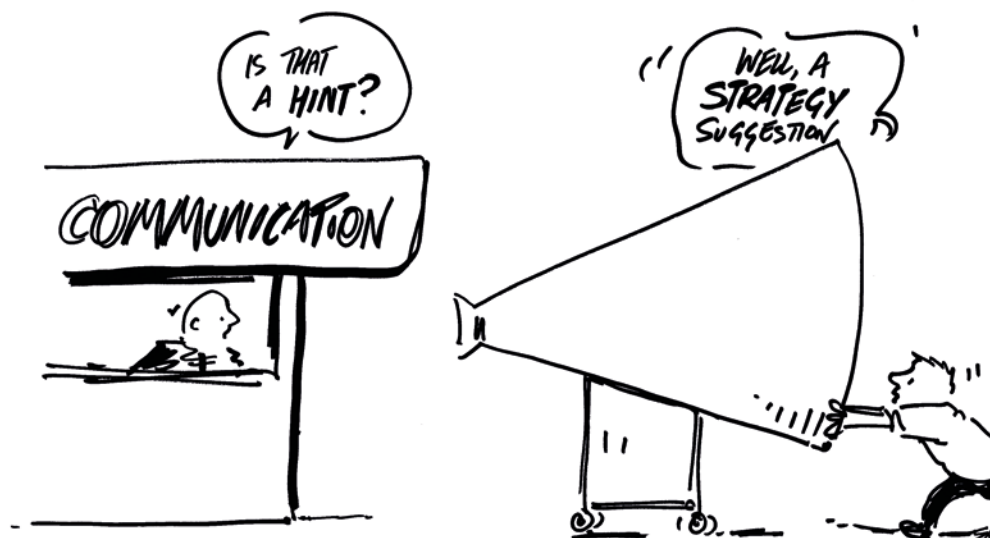
5.0 GOVERNANCE OF THE PARTNERSHIP

OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT TEAM

In 2011, the Research Unit at Oxfam Australia was included in an internal process that saw significant change across Oxfam Australia. As a result of those changes, the Research Unit, former home to the Partnership, was evolved to the Development Effectiveness Team and moved within the portfolio of the International Programs section of Oxfam.

The joint Operations and Management Team is now a mature reporting structure developed in year two of the Partnership. It has proven to be a more responsive mechanism to the needs of the research projects and accountable for the decisions we make. This joint team is now comprised of Chrisanta Muli, Oxfam's Development Effectiveness Team Manager; Louise McCall, Director of the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education); and Lisa Elford, Program Manager of the Partnership. Our primary responsibility is the day-to-day monitoring of the Partnership's activities and financial discretion for small-scale funds applications and disbursements.

The Governance Committee continues to have a strong and involved role in the financial management and strategic governance of the Partnership. More specifically its responsibility is to establish policies and procedures for the Partnership, evaluate and set the strategic direction, review and approve proposals for funding and provide ongoing monitoring and support for funded proposals. The Governance Committee meets on a quarterly basis to discuss applications for funding and takes decisions on the strategic direction of the Partnership. All other matters are managed by the Operations and Management Team.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

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.

Jacqui True is Professor of Politics and International Relations in the School of Political and Social Inquiry and Associate Dean of Research in the Faculty of Arts at Monash University. She is a specialist in gender, development and international relations and has particular research interests in gender mainstreaming and global governance, gender, peace building and conflict, and violence against women. Jacqui has been a close collaborator with the Women's International League for Peace and Security, which was the major INGO initiator of the women, peace and security agenda instigated by UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Colin Collett van Rooyen is Associate Director (Development Effectiveness) at Oxfam Australia. He has been with Oxfam since 2004, and his roles have included Country Director for South Africa, Country Director for Timor-Leste and Associate Director for International Programs. Prior to working at Oxfam, Colin worked in the NGO sector and in academia with a focus on research, HIV and AIDS and child and youth development.

Louise McCall is Director of the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) at Monash University. She was the former Deputy Dean (Education) in the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Monash University where she oversaw undergraduate and postgraduate coursework degrees and honours programs. Her educational research interests include transnational education and workforce development, including the role of inter-professional education.

Chrisanta Muli is the Development Effectiveness Team Manager at Oxfam Australia. She is also an adjunct lecturer at both RMIT and Canberra University in the schools of Global Studies (International Development) and International Studies respectively. Chrisanta is a member of the Master of Applied Social Research Advisory Board at Deakin University, and her research interests are focused on a wide range of social issues including gender justice and inequality, poverty alleviation and eradication, refugees and forced migration issues, sustainable capacity building in community development, and HIV and AIDS in Africa.

Mark Clisby is Director of Research Services at La Trobe University. Mark was most recently Director of Operations at Oxfam Australia with responsibilities in organisational learning and development, human resources, finance, risk management, information services and accommodation services. He served as the Company Secretary for Oxfam Australia and Oxfam Australia Trading.

Dr Natalie Gray is Oxfam Australia's East Asia Regional Manager and Chair of the East Asia and Pacific Program Governance Group for Oxfam International. She is a public health physician and international development practitioner with sectoral expertise in tropical medicine, communicable disease control, sexual and reproductive health and rights, nutrition and food security. Natalie has a specific interest in TB prevention and control, and strategies to promote equitable access to, and delivery of, essential health services in East Asia and the Pacific. Prior to her current role she worked as Oxfam Australia's Pacific Regional Manager and Research Manager.

The Partnership is grateful for the leadership of past committee members: Judy Mitchell, Simon Adams, Cecilia Hewlett, May Miller-Dawkins, Chris Roche and James Ensor.

PROGRAM MANAGER

The appointment of dedicated Program Manager Lisa Elford, with reporting lines to both Oxfam and Monash, has proved to be crucial to maintaining focus and momentum. This is evidenced in the consistently high level of activity that the Partnership has achieved.

The Program Manager is the key point of liaison between Monash University and Oxfam Australia. 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.

Lisa Elford previously worked as a researcher in humanitarian organisations in South Africa and as a community development practitioner in Canada. She has research expertise in mobile populations, human and political geography, and a rights-based approach to development.

SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW

Larry Stillman is the Senior Research Fellow of the Oxfam-Monash Partnership. Larry works in the Faculty of Information Technology at Monash University specialising in research about the interaction between technology and communities in developed and developing countries. He has a background in the humanities and social sciences and more than 10 years' experience in community development. Larry's recent projects include the Doing IT Better Project with NGOs in Victoria, Australia, and the Digital Doorway Project with the Meraka Institute, CSIR South Africa. He also organises an annual communities and technologies conference at Monash Prato. At the Oxfam-Monash Partnership we acknowledge the key role Larry has played in developing the relationship between Oxfam Australia and Monash University, and we recognise the important work he has undertaken to support the Partnership's success.

PROGRAM ASSISTANT

A casual Program Assistant appointment was created to help the Program Manager with many of the ongoing tasks of the Partnership, including support with drafting reports, organising pre-departure

"My experience as the Communications Volunteer for the Oxfam-Monash Partnership far exceeded my initial hopes and expectations. In addition to strengthening my understanding of the development sector and developing a wide range of important skills, I found it immensely rewarding to promote the work of what I see as an extremely important and exciting partnership. I would have no hesitation in recommending this wonderful opportunity to any other interested student."
— Anna Donaldson, Communications Volunteer, Oxfam-Monash Partnership

orientation for students and assisting with event management. Jaclyn Donahue, Naomi Godden and Anna Donaldson have made invaluable contributions to this Partnership. Jaclyn's guidance of the review into the SASPP helped us set a renewed focus for the 2013 deployment. Naomi Godden, a Monash PhD student in the School of Social Work at Monash, and often described as our action research compass, undertook incredible work on our mid-term review of the Partnership.

And finally, Anna Donaldson has excelled in student engagement and communications, exiting her previous role as volunteer with the Partnership to help coordinate our Oxfam-Monash Innovators program.

COMMUNICATIONS

As an ongoing role within the Partnership, the Communications Volunteer is selected from a competitive pool of student applicants from Monash University. The past three rounds, advertised through Oxfam Australia's volunteer website and Monash University's Volunteer Gateway, continue to garner a lot of interest. This role has proven invaluable to the ongoing development and implementation of the Partnership's communications strategy and the students involved have made a significant contribution.

Anna Donaldson joined the Partnership team as the Communications Volunteer in September 2012. During her time in the role, Anna worked to establish a more outwardly engaging statement of purpose for the Partnership, and channeled this through the Partnership's various communication mediums to expand the Partnership's appeal to a wider audience. She also built on and further developed the communications strategy implemented by previous interns. Her additions included the establishment of a regular research update, 'Research in Focus', and the creation of space for the Partnership on Oxfam's internal and external web

"The main reason I'm interested in working with Oxfam is due to their approach to helping people … Oxfam aims to provide those that need help with skills to continuously grow and develop. As someone born and brought up in South Africa, where many have benefitted from Oxfam's support, I'm highly supportive of Oxfam's aims to provide sustainable solutions to issues such as poverty and injustice."
— Alushka Rajaram, Communication Volunteer, Oxfam-Monash Partnership

platforms. Since the completion of her internship, Anna has continued her involvement with the Partnership in a supporting role, and is currently working on the development and implementation of the Oxfam-Monash Innovators program.

Alushka Rajaram is currently pursuing a double Masters Degree in International Business and the

European Union and International Studies at Monash University. Through this placement she hoped to pursue further her interests in international justice. Alushka brought with her a unique set of media skills as a writer, photographer and videographer. She helped us focus our blog communications and explore online media contacts.

6.0 LOOKING AHEAD

At the Oxfam-Monash Partnership we continue to learn and grow from our experiences. In keeping with our commitment to reflection and action, the next year will see us implement the recommendations from this review process. First and foremost, we will consider our approach to research and the implications of action research methodologies. We also need to prioritise our learning framework for the Partnership to enable us to document our experiences and evidence our impact.

Our approach to the Partnership is unique, as is our privileged position within Oxfam and Monash. Over the next two years we will continue to evidence our impact in both organisations and develop an enduring vision of our Partnership that survives beyond the five-year venture. In keeping with this long-term vision, the Governance Committee will review the diversity of the funding support we offer to ensure we focus on where we are most needed. This speaks from our commitment to sustaining the momentum of this relationship at a number of levels, including the grassroots level where we nurture capacity in-country and support our students, and at an organisational level so that we learn from this time together and are changed for the better. We are part a global community that cares about social justice.

The year ahead promises to be exciting. We will move to support pipeline research projects solicited from Oxfam and its regional teams through expressions of interest. There are a number of fascinating opportunities that have emerged, including research in the Pacific on the extent of community representation in development, and exploring women's participation in agriculture in South Asia. As some

of our research projects wrap up their funded phase in 2013–2014 we look forward to working with them to discover what they have learned and leverage their work further. An additional focus moving forward will be capacity building, particularly of local practitioners and the creation of shared spaces for communities of practice.

We are also thrilled by the prospects of our refreshed South Africa Student Placement Program, which will see students deployed in 2014 for longer, more intensive partner placements. And we can't wait to hear from our students in the 2013 Oxfam-Monash Innovators program as they present six great ideas to make a positive change and compete for funding to put their plan into action.

This fourth year of the Partnership will be a dynamic one, with learning and sharing through events, student experience, and active research in-country taking center stage. We move from taking stock of where we've been to asserting proudly where we're going. It is a journey we've been on for three years now and it shows no signs of slowing down.