

# OXFAM 2020 WASH STRATEGY

May 2015

For review:  
December 2015



OXFAM

*Credit: Andy Bastable*

There are numerous internal and external drivers for this new Oxfam WASH strategy. The most important external driver is the increasing demand for humanitarian support in the changing humanitarian context. Ongoing, repeated and new crises and demands for humanitarian assistance mean that the system is being pushed to its limits.

Humanitarian assistance will probably always be needed, but international NGOs are compelled to become better at what we do and to increase our support to governments and civil partners to respond more effectively to crises, so that we can focus on developing the resilience of the most vulnerable.

The need for improved access to WASH is clear and compelling. Food security is often strongly linked with WASH and there is increasing evidence that women and children benefit the most from improved WASH services.

It is predicted that severe weather events will become more likely. The number of weather related diseases has tripled in 30 years and climate change has been shown to be a key factor in the increasing incidence of natural disasters. The impact that this will have on health is significant and a recent report on climate change (IPCC 2014)<sup>1</sup> argues that, “it is expected that health losses due to climate change-induced under-nutrition will occur mainly in areas that are already food-insecure.”

A recent Oxfam report argues that inequalities between and within countries exacerbate vulnerability and make it harder for poor people to work their way out of poverty. By the year 2015, half of all people living on less than \$1.25 a day will be in fragile states or affected by conflict (Oxfam 2013)<sup>2</sup>. Oxfam’s vision of improving the resilience of poor men and women requires us to break down the divisions between relief and development and use long term approaches to address cyclical crises and poverty in fragile states.

The aftermath of crises increases risk for both women and men, but women are disproportionately affected due to pre-existing inequalities such as barriers to women’s participation and leadership. A 20-year global analysis shows that ‘natural disasters’ and their global impacts kill more women than men and that this effect is magnified following major disasters.

In the face of this mounting humanitarian need Oxfam’s Strategic Plan for 2013 – 2019 describes a bold challenge for the organisation to improve our delivery of assistance and protection to humanity’s most vulnerable people. The new vision emphasises the need to build the resilience of the women and men that we work with and to lead by example in becoming humanitarian brokers, supporting and influencing governments and civil society partners to deliver their humanitarian responsibilities and ambitions in relation to WASH.

# GOAL

Women, men and children affected by disaster and conflict will have access to appropriate and acceptable WASH services that enable them to mitigate public health risks in a dignified way. Vulnerable and disadvantaged groups will be actively identified; the response will meet their specific WASH needs and will give them a greater voice in how the response is designed and delivered.

# VISION

Oxfam aims to be the leading player in humanitarian WASH, demonstrating rapid and high quality emergency response, influencing the WASH sector with evidence of our effectiveness, supporting community resilience in disaster prone and fragile contexts and enhancing national capacity to improve WASH coverage for the most vulnerable.



Mackenzie Knowles Coursin/Oxfam

# 6 KEY OBJECTIVES

The WASH strategy focuses on the following 6 themes:

- More effective quality response and partnerships
- Building resilience and disaster risk reduction
- Influencing others and thought leadership
- Ensuring the basic rights of women, men and children with a focus on poor women's rights
- Acting as a broker to strengthen the capacity of states and civil society to meet their responsibilities to respond to disasters
- Creating an enabling organisational environment

# 1/ MORE EFFECTIVE QUALITY RESPONSE AND PARTNERSHIPS

Oxfam's impact and profile in WASH will be increased through good quality programming in large scale emergencies, working with international and national NGO partners and institutions, state actors and the private sector. Direct implementation of WASH responses will continue where this is considered critical to achieve positive outcomes for communities affected by emergencies. Long term engagement in building resilience will be facilitated in up to ten Key Countries at any one time, and new relationships with national partners will be brokered in these countries.

- Skilled people and equipment will be made available in a timely manner in line with "Commitments and Expectations" to support the rapid scale up of WASH programmes.
- WASH responses will reflect an analysis of the context, culture and capacities of the country and its people, in rural and urban environments, camps and host communities
- Oxfam commits to developing WASH partners in up to ten key countries at any one time, supporting their capacity to respond independently to Category 3 and small Category 2 emergencies
- Oxfam's expertise in community mobilisation and participation will be strengthened through defining clearer core models and principles for community engagement in rural and urban contexts, and by working with others to expand the evidence base to underpin these. The concept of community led monitoring which has been effective in some programmes will be further investigated and extended.

- WASH teams will better harmonise their activities with EFSVL, Gender and Protection colleagues in developing comprehensive context analysis to inform programme design and a coherent approach to working with affected communities. Safe programming and a 'Do No Harm' approach will underpin the delivery of WASH programmes. Learning and best practice will be systematically documented and shared internally and externally.

- A robust approach to measuring WASH quality in all emergencies will be developed based on the application of national and international standards and Oxfam's Minimum Requirements for WASH. Recommendations from programme learning reviews, RTEs and programme evaluations will be used to inform capacity building initiatives and learning from these will be shared with the sector.

## ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

Oxfam will increase its accountability to affected communities in WASH, collaborating with others to ensure that community participation and inclusion are central to the way we work, ensuring that affected populations influence the design and delivery of WASH responses.

- The effective use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) will be promoted to enhance programme planning, implementation and monitoring.
- Opportunities to collaborate with international learning institutions and networks to facilitate access to knowledge and resources will be explored in order to enhance programme quality.
- Oxfam will work with the Global and National WASH Clusters to support 'Accountability to Affected Populations' (AAP) by developing effective mechanisms for ensuring that programmes are accountable to people affected by emergencies.
- Opportunities to develop MoUs with non WASH organisations e.g government health actors, diverse civil society groups, will be explored to ensure community outreach in preparedness and response to emergencies..
- Review our experience of responding to disease outbreaks e.g cholera and more recently Ebola, and identify ways in which the learning outcomes can be used to refine the WASH 2020 strategy.

## 2/ BUILDING RESILIENCE AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Oxfam will aim to build community resilience and sustainability in WASH wherever it works. In particular it will strengthen its focus in this respect in up to ten key countries at any one time so that more sustainable and scalable WASH solutions can be found for communities affected by cyclical disasters. Breaking down the divide between relief and development programmes and looking for opportunities for closer collaboration will be key to the success of this approach.

Oxfam will:

- Support key countries to procure donor funds for long term WASH, DRR, emergency response and recovery interventions.
- Support robust country level context analysis and

scenario planning and the development of contingency plans and stocks in disaster affected countries

- Work with national and local authorities and affected communities to promote more efficient, equitable and sustainable access to water through effective water resource management.
- Support the development of government strategies to increase communities' resilience to recurring disasters.
- Support, promote and collaborate with national and regional networks to incorporate WASH in DRR, climate change and resilience initiatives to reduce the impact of disasters on vulnerable populations.



Kate Holt/Oxfam

- Promote sustainable WASH approaches and technologies in communities affected by cyclical disasters or long term displacement, along with advocacy for WASH policy initiatives that will support community resilience and reduce dependency on aid.

Specifically Oxfam will:

- Support Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) in drought prone and water stressed areas
- Promote resilient and demand led sanitation in flood prone areas
- Work with academic institutions and relevant government line ministries to develop effective strategies for cholera prevention and control
- Promote local capacity for sustainable WASH through the use of eco sanitation and solar energy for water distribution
- Explore opportunities for closer collaboration between humanitarian and development programmes and support integrated WASH and livelihoods approaches where this will build community resilience to crises.
- Support, as much as possible, Oxfam staff and partners in longer term WASH programmes to develop adaptable and transferrable skills to enhance national and regional resources for emergency WASH response

## MARKET BASED APPROACHES

Analysing markets for WASH goods and services can help to identify more effective interventions for the emergency context. The provision of essential hygiene items can be done by using vouchers thus giving people more choice and supporting local markets and small scale traders who are often women. Providing cash so that people can purchase water will usually be more cost effective than water trucking.

### 3/ THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCING OTHERS

Oxfam will influence sector wide WASH coordination and strategy through its capacity to demonstrate technical leadership, innovation and the consistent delivery of WASH programmes that meet international standards.

Opportunities to influence Government policy and WASH sector strategy will be sought in Key Countries by demonstrating sector leadership, innovative solutions to WASH challenges and high levels of technical competence in Oxfam staff and partners.

Oxfam will:

- Demonstrate leadership through technical competency and by rigorously researching new and more effective approaches to WASH, thus ensuring a robust evidence base for what we do.
- Where possible, identify national Women's Rights Organisation and collaborate with them on increasing leadership opportunities for women in WASH.



Kieran Doherty/ Oxfam

- Continue to play a strategic role in influencing the WASH sector through committed and active engagement with global and national WASH Cluster and other fora..
- Demonstrate, document and publish learning and best practice and use this to influence the WASH sector.
- Continue to work with major donors, product design-

ers, research institutions and key stakeholders in country programmes to develop context specific solutions to WASH challenges.

- Promote systematic reviews of the Global WASH Gap Analysis and use the outcomes to continue to influence and promote collaborative strategy development and planning with national and international WASH actors

## INFLUENCING OTHERS

Oxfam led the way in carrying out a global gap analysis with WASH partners in 2013 to identify major challenges in the sector. Oxfam also plays a major role in the Emergency Sanitation Project, which seeks to address specific sanitation challenges and develop new approaches such as emergency provision in densely populated urban areas. We have been working with and influencing product designers, research institutions and key stakeholders to identify innovative solutions to enable both improved sanitation and hand washing in diverse contexts.

### 4/ FOCUS ON POOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Oxfam will aim to reduce the unequal impact of conflict and disasters on men and women by recognising how power differentials affect the most vulnerable groups in affected communities. We will look at every crisis from the perspective of how it affects women's rights and focus on this in our programme design..

Oxfam will:

- Enable the most vulnerable groups in affected communities to have greater control over the equitable delivery and quality of WASH resources and corresponding benefits. Opportunities for women to deliver leadership roles will be explored in WASH programmes.
- Ensure that the different practical WASH needs of women and men are appropriately addressed , that women's specific needs for privacy and dignity are met and that the response employs a holistic approach to menstrual hygiene management.
- Increase our focus on poor women's strategic needs, improving our understanding of the power dynamics between women and men and ensuring that this informs our WASH work.
- Strengthen our focus on poor women's rights while working with both men and women in affected communities ensuring that the rights of both are upheld
- Collect gender and age disaggregated data

## UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT NEEDS AND PERSPECTIVES IN A COMMUNITY..

... is an essential role of the public health promotion teams. Giving women, men and children a say in how we deliver WASH is an important part of the Oxfam approach. We will continue to provide adaptive assistance that recognises the varied WASH needs of different groups strengthening our focus on the needs of children, the elderly and people with mobility problems. We will ensure that WASH staff and partners are mentored effectively to analyse these diverse needs and design appropriate responses to meet them.

and develop expertise in measuring outcomes for women in WASH programmes.

- Document our experience of working with women and men to transform women's status through WASH interventions and share this with key stakeholders in countries and across the sector.



Sam Phelps

## 5/ ACTING AS A BROKER AND SUPPORTER TO STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF STATES AND CIVIL SOCIETY TO MEET THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES TO RESPOND TO DISASTERS

Oxfam will continue to respond directly to emergencies where country level WASH actors cannot meet the needs of vulnerable populations. At the same time, we believe that we can have greater impact on more people by increasing Oxfam's ability to support other humanitarian actors.

In selected countries Oxfam will explore opportunities to increase the reach and impact of WASH through working in partnership with the state, the private sector and civil society actors. Oxfam will:

- Explore opportunities, particularly in middle income countries, to support national and local governments in disaster prone contexts to increase their capability

to prepare for and respond to emergencies, e.g through:

- Technical secondments before and during emergencies
- Training on humanitarian standards
- Facilitating their access to international networks and academic and research institutions
- Support the engagement of the private sector and examine opportunities for using markets to increase access to WASH, particularly in urban conurbations and vulnerable informal settlements. This will be done by promoting:
  - Demand led sanitation approaches and sanitation marketing.
  - The use of social marketing approaches and digital technology for community mobilisation
  - The involvement of market actors to provide urban WASH services
- Explore opportunities to increase impact through influencing governments on WASH policy (DRR, resilience, response and recovery) for poor and vulnerable populations, particularly in middle income countries. Ensure that this experience in learning to influence is widely shared in Oxfam and externally.
- Spearhead a drive to influence the Global Wash Cluster to resource national WASH actors to manage emergency response
- Provide high calibre WASH practitioners capable of working effectively with influential WASH stakeholders in state institutions and national WASH
- Increase access to WASH by brokering relationships between WASH service providers and affected populations. Specifically we will:
  - Continue to lead multi – stakeholder WASH consortia to develop effective and sustainable WASH policy and services
  - Work with others to enable the views of affected populations to influence the development of government WASH policy

## 6/ CREATING AN ENABLING ORGANISATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

To deliver the goal and objectives of its WASH strategy Oxfam will need to create an enabling internal environment to address the challenges that currently limit our capacity to increase the global reach and impact of our WASH interventions. These include:

## The need for a holistic approach to programme development

The strategic engagement of senior management is needed to promote closer country level collaboration between emergency and development strategy development and programming. Increasing the autonomy of Oxfam's country programmes to manage WASH responses requires a more proactive approach to developing WASH partnerships and a greater commitment to longer term WASH. This will need to be addressed in the development of individual country strategies.



*Kieran Doherty/ Oxfam*

## The need to ensure predictable quality in WASH programmes

To maintain and enhance its global influence, Oxfam must be able to demonstrate effective, quality WASH programming at country level: investing in high calibre staff and partners is crucial to achieving this goal. Oxfam's credibility and capacity to influence others depends on being able to provide evidence of quality and effectiveness. For this to happen, Oxfam and partners must have the skills and competencies to deliver context specific, quality programmes to national and international standards. This will be achieved by:

- The humanitarian department, regional advisors and country managers working together with staff and partners to identify their learning and development needs as part of a strategic approach to capacity building.
- Reviewing, adapting and socialising the use of the WASH Competency Frameworks
- Promoting the use of the Minimum Requirements in WASH in countries and regions
- Enabling access to inter-active, self-directed WASH learning tools and materials for Oxfam staff and partners

## The need for cross sector collaboration across the organisation

In middle-income countries, more strategic approaches to working with state actors will require innovative thinking across the organisation. Supporting the resilience agenda will need better collaboration at all levels between policy, advocacy and humanitarian actors, within Oxfam and externally.

Clarity on funding priorities and a strategic engagement with donors in collaboration with funding colleagues will need to underpin longer-term programme development. Finally, a more coherent approach to monitoring impact and documenting learning will need strengthened engagement with the Programme Support and Innovations Team (PSIT).

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## FOOTNOTES

1. IPCC (2014) Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability, WGII report
2. Currently, the FAST team leads on rapid response for OGB. The Commitments and Expectation document will be reviewed and re-launched in the near future.