

## Oxfam GB's Research, Development and Innovation Fund For Water, Sanitation and Public Health Promotion

To create a flexible Fund to support research, development and innovation for sustainable water and sanitation technology and methodology, and to invest in projects on the ground to showcase developments and share best practice within Oxfam programmes and beyond. The Fund will ultimately help shape and inform future water, sanitation and public health technology, helping to save millions of lives and livelihoods globally.

### 1. Water and Sanitation – the facts

<sup>1</sup>Currently one billion people live without safe drinking water and 2.6 billion people have no basic sanitation. In the next 24 hours, diarrhoea caused by unclean water and poor sanitation will claim the lives of 4,000 children. Diarrhoea alone kills 1.8 million children under five every year, but most cases can be prevented or treated. When combined, appropriate access to water, sanitation and hygiene promotion can reduce the number of deaths caused by diarrhoeal diseases by 65 per cent. And, the simple act of washing hands with soap and water can reduce diarrhoeal diseases by over 40 per cent.

These facts are killer facts. A lack of water, sanitation and public health kills. Fact. Without clean water, appropriate sanitation and improvements in public health, any investments made in developing countries are impeded.

Oxfam GB's Research, Development and Innovation Fund is in direct response to the problems associated with a lack of water, sanitation and public health, and for the need to formalise and develop innovative solutions to specific problems, which can be adapted and replicated by Oxfam (and the wider water and sanitation community) on a significant scale.

### 2. Oxfam GB – the organization

Currently we are working in over 70 countries around the world, on development, emergency and campaigning issues. Oxfam is one of the world's largest agencies providing humanitarian water, sanitation and public health promotion and we have been working in this area for the last 50 years.

We are recognised globally as one of the leading agencies in the Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) sector, having set the standard for many now commonly used approaches and technologies. We are currently the chair of the Interagency Emergency WATSAN Group and a major supporting NGO to the WASH Cluster process (the United Nation's work to improve WATSAN during emergency responses).

#### **Oxfam's track record in research, development and innovation**

Oxfam has an excellent history of working to replicate and adapt new technologies and innovations. Previous work which addressed gaps in the sector include the Oxfam Delagua water testing kit (checking water is safe for human use), Oxfam water tanks (to store large amounts safely), Oxfam pump kits (to get water from tanks to tap stands), the Oxfam Bucket (to store water safely), the Oxfam latrine slab (to improve hygiene and maintain dignity) and Oxfam hygiene promotion approaches. Each one of these initiatives has influenced the entire water, sanitation and public health sector.

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<sup>1</sup> UN World Water Development Report, UN Environmental Programme

## The Oxfam Bucket

Until 1997, Oxfam used jerry cans to supply people with clean, safe water during an emergency. They were bulky, expensive to transport, and once the lid was lost, the water could become contaminated with dirt and germs.

Gathering feedback from health promoters, water engineers, and people living in refugee camps, Oxfam's Public Health Team developed the Oxfam bucket, with attention to the tiniest, but often most crucial, details.

For example, the moulding process leaves a small pimple on the bottom of normal buckets. This pimple is removed from the Oxfam bucket - an essential, but easily overlooked consideration for use in countries where loads are usually carried on the head.

It is now used around the world to help people to keep water clean in emergency situations.



### Qualities it exemplifies about Oxfam

- Innovation – award winning design, attention to tiniest detail (pimple on base removed for comfort)
- Practicality – easy to carry, nothing can be dipped into the bucket so water remains uncontaminated, and its stackable design means it's cheaper to transport than jerry cans.
- Sustainability – lasts longer than other buckets – moulded from plastic that doesn't deteriorate in sunlight
- Cost Effective – all for £2.75
- High impact – reduces incidences of water borne disease.

Because of our history, expertise, staff, and wider reputation, we must continue to innovate. Finding new or better ways to deliver water and sanitation and public health promotion at a low cost, in widely replicable ways.

## 3. The Fund

The aim of a Research, Development and Innovation Fund is twofold. Firstly to proactively assess the gaps in Oxfam and other agencies water and sanitation programmes and to develop strategies to address these. Secondly, to have the resources and the flexibility to enable Oxfam to quickly identify and evaluate good local solutions to problems and to invest in them to bring them quickly to wider communities, across many countries.

Investments made into a Research, Development and Innovation Fund would ultimately benefit the wider field of experts and agencies working to provide water, sanitation and public health for millions of vulnerable people globally.

### The Fund will support projects that:

- Demonstrate new methodologies, approaches and technologies that more efficiently address specific problems.
- Involve research into areas that represent gaps in the WATSAN knowledge or practice.

- Involve innovations which can be replicated/adapted in country or in other countries.
- Spread learning across the water, sanitation and public health sector.

### **Working in partnership**

Innovation, research and development cannot happen in isolation. Therefore the majority of Oxfam's research and development work is done in some form of collaboration with the Interagency WATSAN Group and various institutions, such as the University of Surrey, Cranfield University, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta. This ensures that we avoid duplication of effort and share knowledge and learning appropriately.

### **Beneficiaries**

The Fund will support the most vulnerable people, in any country where development, research or innovation within water, sanitation or public health has the potential to help lift them out of poverty.

Projects can be funded in any of the 70 countries where Oxfam has programmes. It is assumed that the bulk of the seed funding will be directed towards the poorest countries in Africa and South Asia as this is where the most pressing WATSAN needs are.

Over a period of five years, a maximum of 30 projects will be piloted – and not less than 20. It is also anticipated that many more women and children will directly benefit from individual projects and innovations as they usually carry the burden of water collection, storage etc...

### **Impact**

The Research, Development and Innovation Fund will enable Oxfam to encourage and nurture existing thinking from some of the world's leading public health engineers and promote talent to directly respond to specific issues, outlined above, in a strategic way. This will ensure that investments made are sustainable, adaptable and replicable.