

# Oxfam aWASH with Expertise to Transform Lives

*Silver Award Winner for Excellence in Content Production  
(not for profit) at the eLearning Awards 2013*



# Which glass of water would *you* choose to drink?

There are millions of people in the world who do not have the choice.

Oxfam is doing something about it – every day.

Last year Oxfam gave 5,700,000 people access to clean water.



## The learning need

### Capacity building

Six agencies: CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Save the Children and World Vision, formed the *Emergency Capacity Building Project* in 2003 with the aim of improving capacity across the humanitarian aid sector. Different agencies work on different areas of expertise, and Oxfam's work focuses on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion (WASH) as one of the global leaders in this key sector of disease prevention.

## Massive challenge

**Nearly 800 million people lack access to clean water, while 2.5 billion people lack access to sanitation.**

Oxfam GB are working on projects in 49 countries. In Oxfam terms, WASH incorporates:

- **Water:** water supply for human consumption and household needs, crops and livestock
- **Sanitation:** excreta disposal, solid waste management, drainage, vector control
- **Hygiene Promotion:** community mobilisation and management of WASH facilities; health data monitoring; information, education and communication (IEC); and hygiene kit distribution

Their work is delivered across the diversity of contexts in which people are vulnerable to public health risks and diseases, i.e:

- Acute and cyclical natural disasters (earthquakes, flooding, tropical cyclones, hurricanes)
- Slow onset emergencies (e.g. drought)
- Conflict and political unrest
- Complex situations encompassing a mixture of these factors, e.g. urban slums

## Developing skills of staff 'on the ground'

Oxfam invests resources into building the capacity of their staff 'on the ground' to help them deliver cash, food, clean water, sanitation and shelter quickly to the communities whom they know and understand.

Two training needs for the ECB project were identified by Oxfam GB's senior technical team leaders. The first was for **public health promoters** to develop critical thinking and analysis skills to help them tailor effective responses to a community's needs and culture. Course participants learn to assess appropriate methods and materials (e.g. radio spots, poster and leaflet campaigns) to engage with communities and help them take action to protect their health.

The second need was technical project management. Oxfam's **water and sanitation engineers** need to apply the principles of contract management and quality control. Teaching national staff how to balance the elements of quality, cost and time, whilst managing external contractors and suppliers effectively, would undoubtedly help to improve the quality of the water and sanitation work that Oxfam delivers.



### 1 Information, Education and Communication (IEC) in WASH emergencies



### 2 Technical Project Management (TPM) in WASH emergencies

## An effective learning strategy

Oxfam's work is underpinned by a rights-based approach. People who have been exposed to a humanitarian disaster have the right to immediate assistance and Oxfam sees it as its most important duty to deliver that assistance fast and effectively. In a sudden emergency, dozens if not hundreds of new staff are recruited to deliver aid, and there is usually insufficient time for substantive training. Oxfam was therefore ready to invest in a new learning approach that would allow more staff across all agencies to acquire the skills required in delivering an emergency programme.

*“Workshops, whilst valuable, nevertheless only reach limited numbers, and national staff in particular are less likely to be able to attend workshops in global locations. Also, there is a high turnover of humanitarian staff who often only get recruited for the duration of a programme - which means that whoever you train today might not be around tomorrow.*

*E-learning allows us to widen the reach of training, including those who cannot easily access locations for security or cultural reasons. We hope that this medium will, for example, benefit women who are often unable to travel to a workshop being held in another city or country.”*

**Christina Schmalenbach, PM, Oxfam GB**

E-learning delivers to the same standard. It is sustainable and cost-effective and has a smaller carbon footprint than traditional workshops.

E-learning caters for different learning styles - and allows the learner to progress at their own speed, which is vital when targeting such a diverse range of multi-cultural staff worldwide.



## Innovation and originality

'*Innovation and originality*' are terms that feature regularly in e-learning buyers' specifications. But the inclusion of the 'wow' factor has to be balanced against considerations such as bandwidth and accessibility when developing e-learning designed to reach the remotest parts of our world. The ease with which a developer can commit a cultural faux pas can tempt less experienced developers to create a bland – even sleep-inducing - learning experience.

**Innovation** means renewing, changing or creating more effective processes, products or ways of doing things. Within e-learning design we introduce innovation by including at least one meaningful interaction on every other screen plus a wide range of challenging activities to keep learners on their toes.

**Originality** means introducing something new and fresh and in the Technical Project Management module, we, at Walkgrove, introduced on-screen time, quality and cost indicators which change with every decision taken.



In an emergency there is often no right or wrong decision; and sometimes staff simply have to decide what is more important; time, quality or cost? Prioritising is not easy – and this reflects real life, real decisions and real consequences. In that sense the learning is uncompromisingly original because it is not offering concrete answers to complex problems. However, it gives learners the critical thinking and analysis tools to help them take a measured best decision in circumstances that most of us sitting comfortably at our desks in the UK cannot imagine.

Our designers at Walkgrove don't rely on bells, whistles, games and cute characters for innovation. The important skills involved in generating excitement and interest lie in the quality of the storytelling, the reality of the dialogue, the appropriateness of the graphics and animations and hence the compelling realism of the experiential situations created. This is what innovation and originality were about in this project; adding novelty, supporting learners' creativity, encouraging active participation and sharing information to innovate the old educational framework.

Innovation does not always lead to success: a project with an innovative approach can struggle to reach its objectives. On the other hand, there are really successful projects without any innovative perspectives. We believe that our project found the ideal relationship between innovation and success, i.e. the point when innovation contributes tangibly to success.

## Content production

Oxfam supplied subject matter experts. Initial work was carried out by two SMEs from Egypt and Brazil respectively; experienced trainers but with no experience of designing e-learning. Walkgrove designers worked with them to initially brainstorm, then structure ideas and content into logical and memorable learning experiences. Later in the project, others from Oxfam added their specialist knowledge and expertise to help create immersive and stimulating content and ensure dialogue was both compelling and had resonance. Situations are presented realistically, e.g. via briefing notes they are reading on the 'plane en route to the emergency. Content is punctuated with frequent interactive exercises, activities and tasks so that learner engagement and participation with the scenarios is required in order to progress. These are embedded within the scenarios, enabling the learner to assess their own ability and build confidence.

Learning works best by attracting learners rather than pulling or pushing them into it. We achieved this by making the learning varied and interesting and accommodating a variety of learning styles and strategies – visual, auditory and kinaesthetic.

Treatment of content, in addition to being colourful and richly written, is also informative and action orientated. Although background is provided to support recommended actions, the focus is on motivating and encouraging behaviour recognition and hence change.

The interactions help the learner practise critical reflection throughout the simulated emergency, provoking a positive response and a realisation that individuals can make a significant difference.

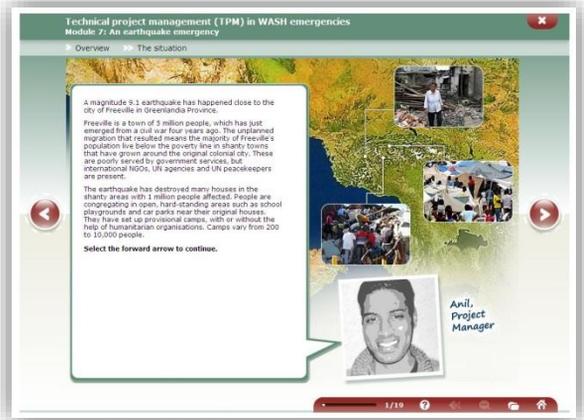
Within the e-learning, effective graphics comprising vivid imagery representing the diversity of people and places in the global network, appeals to the eye and fixes the learning.

Photographs of real Oxfam project staff are used to promote the realism of the situations created.

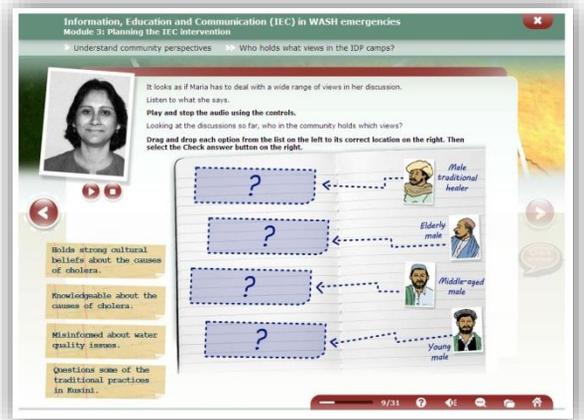
Learners are assessed both formatively and summatively and provided with constructive feedback.

## Impact

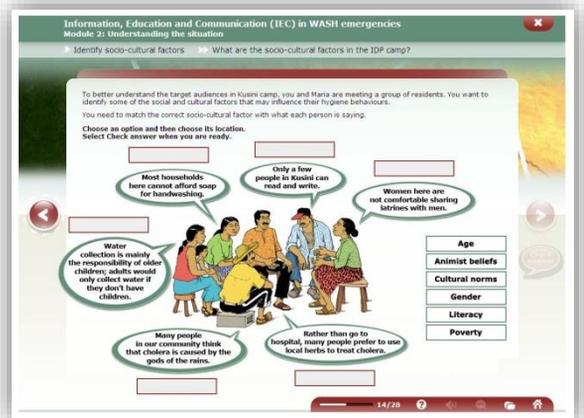
The Oxfam WASH programs were piloted by 288 staff from 52 different agencies in 49 countries and a further 107 staff have accessed them since their recent completion. These figures relate only to the Oxfam distribution; the programs are also being distributed by the other five agencies comprising The ECB Project.



### An earthquake emergency



### Who holds what views in the IDP camps?



### What are the socio-cultural factors in the IDP camp?

The modules will also be posted onto a public hosting site to make them available to non-ECB NGO and partner staff worldwide. In addition, they have been translated into French to broaden their reach.

As with any funded project, results must be reported via the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. The project is judged a huge success by project sponsors and has been well received across the worldwide audience. A level 3 evaluation via interviews has confirmed transference of skills to the frontline.

Responses to the courses taken from the level 3 evaluation, have been overwhelmingly positive. Almost all participants found the courses useful and informative and many stated that it helped them to think through the processes they use in their everyday jobs and find ways to improve them.

*"...It was a real eye-opener for me. It built on what we do in emergencies already, but was making it more professional and clear, the steps you have to take. ...These courses are very interactive, so you feel like you are in a classroom with a teacher, brainstorming things. It is very interactive and also very challenging. I think all engineers should have some induction into hygiene promotion as well, to understand the software, not just the hardware we are working on. Also Programme Managers, and Logistics staff, they should all do these courses to understand where they come in the process."*

**Achuti Mochama,  
WASH Engineer, Kenya**

*"I was already developing a radio spot for Dadaab, but after the course I did some pre-testing of the radio spot as well in Dadaab. I have now done this radio spot, and the section of the course on pre-testing radio spots was very helpful to me."*

**Abdinur Osman,  
Assistant Public Health Promoter,  
Dadaab Refugee Camp, Kenya**

*"Normally, the first bit that was important was involving the communities in siting the water points. So we are doing that, and we are looking seriously at our logistics as we were having some problems with this, and the rain etc. We realised that having materials pre-positioned before the rains is very important to allow the work to continue. Especially also was the time, cost and quality things. Integrating all of these together is so important, I won't forget this, and that logistics is really key for a good project to run."*

*I can see now so many things I can do, to change the way things are done, because now I would understand them better."*

**Vincent Otieno Ogira,  
Public Health Engineer, Sudan**

*"I'd like to take a moment to comment on the quality of the product. They are some of the best I've seen. As an ex-educational coach, I was very impressed by the pedagogy and workflow... Congratulations on a great product"*

**Tim Danes,  
LMS Application Manager, Australia**

*"So I was comparing what we do with what I learned. I used to think of Logistics as a totally separate department. But now I realise that I need to keep my own file of documentation for these equipments. I am re-evaluating the concepts. So now we are working much more closely with the logistics team. In fact, they are wondering why I am always asking for the delivery notice each time equipment is delivered!"*

**Achuti Mochama, WASH Engineer, Kenya**

*"We normally use more mass communications only, but now I see I need to focus more on our target area and audience, we need to talk more to the beneficiaries, and see if they are really understanding the messages correctly, and discuss these message with them. So now we are doing radio spots as well – we didn't do this before, only since I did this training we have tried out radio spots."*

**Stanley Njau Wanjiku,  
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Manager,  
Dadaab Refugee Camp, Kenya**

*"In September there was an AWD/Cholera outbreak in Juba, so the training really helped me in dealing with this. I went back to look at the course again to re-read materials and resources and remind myself of what to do. This training has enabled me to contribute more to the discussion around cholera in our office and especially around prevention, responses and flooding."*

**Josephine Wambui Njungi,  
WASH Officer, Somalia**

*"This was excellent. It appears as if one is in a real classroom, reading and having lecture with a professor. What is fascinating about this one is that the supervisors like Amina and other technical supporters respond to questions as if the learner did really ask the questions. It is almost like a real life scenario."*

**Procurement Officer, Liberia**

