

Addendum to the Request For Proposal — Brand strategy development and renaming IRC / November 2023

IRC Background

Time is running out. The world has less than 10 years to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6, Clean Water and Sanitation for All (SDG6 (Sustainable Development Goal 6)), and we're badly off track, by a factor of 4.

IRC is an international think tank actively building strong water, sanitation and hygiene systems – from the bottom up and the top down. We exist to support countries to build strong local and national services, underpinned by resilient systems, that transform lives and build equity, justice and opportunity for all.

We believe that SDG6 and the global human rights failure to provide safe water and sanitation to everyone on the planet will not be solved by charity, but by sustainable and effectively funded water and sanitation systems. IRC are systems experts and work to make this happen. Successfully.

IRC works with governments, service providers, civil society, and other key sector actors in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Uganda, India, and Honduras. It aims to deliver sustainable water and sanitation services to one million people by 2030 in the 12 partner areas where it works and scale out its approach by working with national governments, regional bodies to positively impact everyone in country. In 2022, through our work as part of One For All, we worked in 14 focus countries, in 54 partner areas, reaching a total population of 7.8 million people. Globally we work to share our learning and work in partnership with key agencies like UNICEF, the World Bank and the intergovernmental body Sanitation and Water for All to promote these approaches.

We have formed a strategic alliance – [One For All](#) - with sister organisations Water for People and Water for Good to accelerate our collective impact because [IRC](#) believe we can step up the pace of progress. We share a vision and strategy for our work together called Destination 2030.

We know SDG6 will only be possible if we all work together – governments, businesses, and civil society. In doing so, we can multiply our impact and help more families move out of poverty, reduce child mortality, get more kids to school, and provide increased opportunities for jobs and income generation. We can do all this while we solve one of the world's most essential needs and human rights failures – access to reliable water and sanitation services.

We intend to play our part by doing this together in a strategic partnership – living an approach that we believe needs to be widely adopted if we are going to achieve the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals).

Current manifesto

At IRC, we believe that turning on a working tap should not be a surprise or cause for celebration.

We believe in a world where water, sanitation and hygiene services are fundamental utilities that everyone is able to take for granted. For good.

We face a complex challenge. Every year, thousands of projects within and beyond the WASH sector fail – the result of short-term targets and interventions, at the cost of long-term service solutions.

This leaves around a third of the world's poorest people without access to the most basic of human rights, and leads directly to economic, social and health problems on a global scale. IRC exists to continually challenge and shape the established practices of the WASH sector.

Through collaboration and the active application of our expertise, we work with governments, service providers and international organisations to deliver systems and services that are truly built to last.

IRC brand history + recent background

In 2012-14, IRC underwent a major brand, [digital](#) and identity redevelopment that led to a clear repositioning of its mission, focus and values alongside a repurposed identity, digital strategy and editorial approach to communications. The brand builds on IRC's heritage as a knowledge broker, reflecting the dynamic, mission-led organization it had become with a clear role to play in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector and beyond as an innovator, trusted partner and an enabler of change.

IRC has been using its brand positioning and identity for ten years.

Major pieces of brand development work were conducted over the past decade, but only led to small changes in brand expression. This work was influenced by changes in context, in the world in general and for the sector specifically – and can be broadly grouped into five phases:

- 2017 – stronger Systems focus
- 2019 – Moving beyond the sector to influence
- 2020 – Black Lives Matter + Decolonisation
- 2020 – An alliance with Water For People, and now in 2023, Water for Good and an Alliance brand
- 2021 – Elevating our think-tank identity

In 2017 the then new IRC's Strategy Framework 2017-2030 outlined a strategic shift towards 'systems development' as a critical requirement to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6) by 2030. This shift called for the need to provide greater corporate focus on explaining systems, IRC's unique role and approaches in systems strengthening and how IRC is delivering improvements in WASH at 'district-level' in its focus countries. For a while we used a new strapline that focused on systems. We introduced the concept of systems via social media campaigns to generate systems awareness (Patrick's Poo; Propellor; Expose the System) and we reworked the manifesto into a reworked one, based on a new message matrix.

A global perception study that was carried out in 2019 revealed the low status of WASH with high level decision makers, and triggered the start of the CONNECT programme driven by a newly established department within IRC focusing on connecting beyond the WASH sector siloes – the Communication and Influencing Unit. This work also triggered the development of a small sub identity, [Toilet Talks](#).

Website iterations – elevating our presence on the ground in the countries we work in – and elevating southern voice – came in as part of the process we underwent as an organization in response and [in support of the Black Lives Matter movement](#) - which has been a key trigger to review the whole organisational set-up, transferring ownership, power and liability to our countries.

In 2020 a strategic alliance with the US based charity Water For People was [announced](#) and a year later formalised into an alliance agreement between the two organisations backing Destination 2030. As part of the alliance building, IRC with Water For People commissioned a brand study with the Chicago based agency Brand Trust, which has resulted in the One For All brand framework and subsequent identity.

IRC's legal position and name

- Founded in December 1968, under an agreement of the World Health Organization and the Government of the Netherlands, as the **WHO International Reference Center on Community Water Supply** was established (abbreviated as **IRC**). IRC was then an annex of the Government Institute of Drinking Water Supply.
- In 1980, IRC became an independent foundation under the name **International Reference Centre for Community Water Supply and Sanitation** (abbreviated as **IRC**). In 1981, the IRC foundation was established through an Act of Dutch Parliament. The 'Stichting' has an oversight model of governance, consisting of a Supervisory Board and a Chief Executive Officer.
- In 1988, IRC changed its name from "International Reference Centre for Community Water Supply and Sanitation" to "International Water and Sanitation Centre", the abbreviation "IRC" stayed the same, however.
- In 2014, the brand and repositioning process included the recommendation of a name change for the organisation. The suggested name was not supported by IRC's Supervisory Board. IRC did change its name from IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre to **IRC** with as tagline "Supporting water sanitation and hygiene services for life". The usage of the name IRC without the previously used 'International Water and Sanitation Centre' - have caused name confusions with the 'other IRC's' including the International Red Cross and the International Rescue Committee. Over the years, the organisation has been able to circumvent issues by utilizing IRCWASH.
- The Network Process will entail a shift in legal position from Stichting into an international One IRC federation of Members.