

Action Aid Australia Ltd

WATER HARVESTING IN INDIA 2006

Ian Pickering

We were delighted at the evidence of abundant water in the tanks during our last visit. Tank restoration programs over the past six years proved to be invaluable when above average rains fell in late 2005.

Busy communities worked on abundant crops, a rare time of plenty in the project area.

Following the loss of AusAID funding, Action Aid Australia has determined to continue the good work of past years, and this year another two tanks have been desilted. Every new tank restored provides additional water for irrigation, pisciculture, and for ground water storages.

A growing focus in our watershed management program is the participation of women in community affairs. Strong development of Womens Self-Help Groups in participating villages now sees women involved in community decision making relating to tank management, water usage, and other critical matters. This is a most important bonus element in our project work.

With improved crop production this year, plus better financial management by members of our Womens Self Help Groups, family living conditions are definitely improving.

With at least average rains this year, flow-on benefits of better health and nutrition, community management of local natural resources, plus the greater education and empowerment of village women will occur. We are making a difference in the lives of families in need.

P.S.

An email in this week advises that the monsoonal rains are beginning

The plane is landing, the only thing seen is the dark sky and the beautiful lights that are spread over the base floor. A building came into view and we were slowly heading downwards, and that's when I knew this was India...

Tomas and Cyrielle were there to greet us at the airport and were going to take us to the place we were staying at. Being in the city of Bangalore for a night was most interesting. The place we were supposed to be sleeping in had been informed but had not passed the message on to other staff. When we finally arrived at a room we were surprised to find a staff member in our room, he quickly apologized and decided to stay a while. Not everyone agreed with that though because the only thing anyone wanted to do at 2 am. was sleep. The man stayed about half an hour and thought it might be time to leave after that.

We left for the SEDS farm the next morning and arrived around lunchtime greeted by Manil and Rajen. That day was filled with lots of hellos, unpacking and sleeping. We were still very tired from the trip. The next day I met the hostel children and the feeling of being a little shy was mutual for everyone except Aswini. Aswini was babbling on about Australia and kangaroos. Early afternoon, after a late lunch, Rajen took us out to his hill and showed us what new projects he'd done.

By the end of the second week of being at the SEDS farm I had made friends with all the hostel children but especially the older girls who ranged in age from 12 – 16. I spent a lot of time with these girls. I often spoke to the boys and younger girls but was more comfortable with the girls around my age group. Time was spent with the younger girls after school when the older girls were on their way home from school.

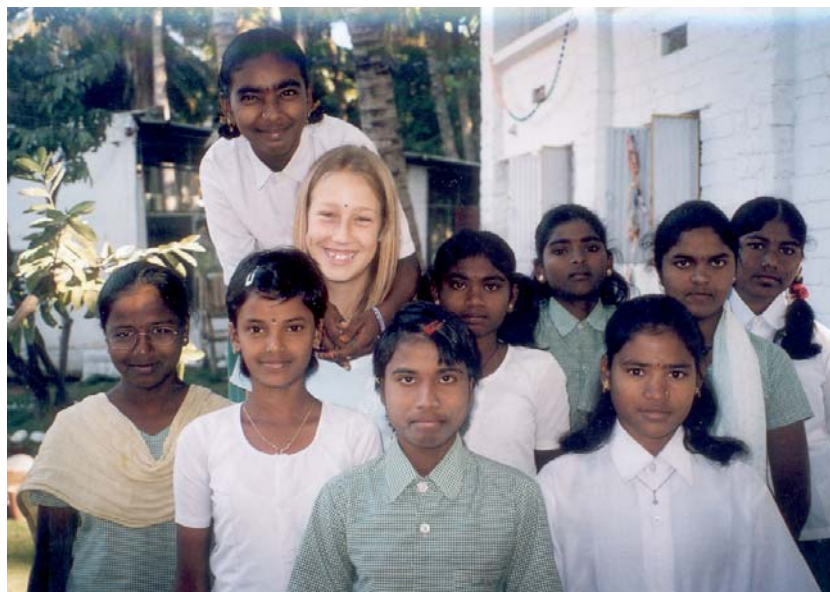


Photo – Kirra with Sumi (Sumithra), then left to right - Bhagya Rekha,, Gowramma, Aswini, Kalpana, Ramanjinamma, Kalavathi, Pallavi and Eswaramma

In the first week of being in India at the farm the girls had braided my hair a few times and painted patterns on my hands using a form of dye called henna. The boys were pretty quiet but often spoke to me only by themselves, or with one other boy. Some days I spent an hour or two playing catch with the younger boys. The older boys were hardly ever around but often came over when the younger ones were off to the study group and I played catch with them as well. (Catch – throwing a tennis ball to one another)



Photo – Kirra with Bhagya, Gowri, and Kalpana, after the girls had plaited her hair and patterned and henna dyed her hands.

The sponsored children's day at the farm was enjoyable because I was able to speak to some of the visiting children through the day with the help of the sponsored farm children that were translating. It made me feel really nice when the children received their new clothes and the look on their faces was incredible.

On the day where all the older people came to the farm for the bathing, manicure, pedicure, food and new clothes, I was extremely impressed with the work that was done by the SEDS team. Watching the older people receive their new clothes and come out with them on was just amazing. The old people looked almost brand new!

While at the SEDS farm I found it was easy to find at least one or two types of food that I felt comfortable eating and most days I tried one new type of food. When we went out from the farm, it was a little more difficult but I managed to just try whatever looked interesting and what wasn't too spicy.

I thoroughly enjoyed my stay in India, and meeting new people, and hope to go back in the near future.

1999 PROJECT – 100 Acres, Community and School Horticultural Plots Lyn P.

Field trips during our visits to SEDS are frequent. We visit watershed development projects, schools and associated activities. During 1999 we had a one year AusAID funded project with 50% funding each from AusAID and Action Aid

The 100 acre area fronts the main highway, and is readily seen by passing traffic. The trees in the area where small bunding walls were made to hold water have grown well with some to ten metres, and the dry land trees are three metres tall in spite of severe drought, over many years.

School horticultural plots have also developed well in the majority of schools. Once trees are planted we rely on the schools – i.e. teachers and students to water them until they establish. In the majority of cases this has proven positive, with only one school not taking up the challenge to maintain the trees.

The third component was the community horticultural plots which we visited. The plots have shown a mixed result with several not progressing due to lack of water during those drought years.. The successful plots are those where there was good access to water. A plot, in the area of some of our new tanks this year, has improved steadily over the ensuing seven years. In addition to water, the local participants worked hard at maintaining the plot and using available water effectively.

Photo:

Mani (Health Care Worker from SEDS, and Siddhamma, a lady farmer who is holding guavas ready for market. They are in front of a very healthy flowering Mango tree.

MEMBERSHIP of ACTION AID AUSTRALIA

Membership of Action Aid Australia is \$25.00 per person, per year.

Dues are payable by the 1st July, 2006, for the twelve month period – 1st July 2006 to 30th June, 2007

SUPPORTERS FROM PERTH, W.A.

Our former Chairman, Dr. Brian Ryan relocated to Perth last year for a short term contract. Brian will now be staying on in Perth indefinitely. Brian remains an Honorary Advisor to the Board of Directors.

A supporter from Perth has expressed an interest in meeting with Brian and other WA supporters to discuss the work of Action Aid. Brian is willing to do this at a mutually agreeable time. Brian has contact details for Perth supporters and will contact them. .

ENTERTAINMENT BOOK

Thank you to supporters and friends who have ordered the entertainment books from us. Action Aid Australia receives **\$12.00** for each book sold. Cost of the books is **\$60.00**. If you have not yet ordered your book, please do so immediately before they are sold

A second book covering the Geelong, Bellarine, Surf Coast and Ballarat areas is also available.

Cheques payable to Action Aid Australia please.

Proposed Visit by Manil & Rajen Joshua

The visit by Manil and Rajen Joshua of SEDS did not eventuate due to the severe illness of Manil's father, and ongoing health issues for her mother in Malaysia.

We wish Manil's family the very best over the coming months.

We look forward to seeing them on a visit when this can be arranged.

M & K PRINTING

**For all of your printing requirements,
talk to KEN**

**at M & K Printing, Vesper Drive Narre
Warren.**

Telephone – 9704 8500

TRAINING COURSE

Honorary Directors, Lyn Pickering and Glenys Hughes, will attend a full day workshop on Child Protection . This will be held in Melbourne in June.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Lyn Pickering

During May, Ian and I again visited a Vision Impaired Support Group in Rye. We thank everyone at the luncheon for their positive comments on our presentation. We very much enjoyed their company and their enthusiasm, with special thanks to Zoe, Marge, Beth and Harry.

One of the questions we were asked again was “How Can I Help?”. There are obviously many answers to that questions, with some of them as follows :

- Support the Watershed Management Project
- Support Women’s Self Help Groups
- Sponsor a child
- Sponsor Vocational Training for Young people when they finish school
- Support school development for all the children, including sports equipment
- Make a general donation or specify the area the donation is to be used.

Beth and Harry’s daughter and son-in-law adopted two young Indian brothers some years ago, and the boys are now teenagers of 13 and 15. The boys bring much joy to their parents and grandparents. Last Christmas Beth and Harry asked their family to give money for children involved through SEDS in India, instead of buying Christmas presents. Beth rang me at 9.15 p.m. Christmas night to tell me of the generosity of her family. She knew we were leaving at 7 am on Boxing morning for the airport to visit India for three and a half weeks with Kirra, our 13 year old grand-daughter, and wanted us to know of the extra money for the children. Truly a wonderful gesture.

In past years, we have had a number of people do something similar to this, and I would like to hear your stories if you would like to share them.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

This story is similar to the one above. A long time supporter, Arnold, contacted me a short while before Christmas three years ago and asked me send out information re a young girl requiring support to attend school. This was to be his present to his wife, Gloria, for Christmas. I received a fax on Christmas eve that year to say that the profile and photos had arrived in time. They have been supporting since that time. Giving a child the gift of education and regular support is very special, and one which gives pleasure both ways. Thanks as always to those who are enjoying the experience.

KIRRA’s REPORT

Kirra, our 13 year old grand-daughter visited India with us in 2001 and her second visit this year, just prior to her 13th birthday was a terrific experience for her, and for Ian and I as well. We enjoyed her company, and watching the friendships which developed during her three and a half week visit. She was more adventurous with the food on this visit. Access to email, when the power worked, helped her keep in contact with her family and friends at home.

Action Aid Australia proudly presents



“LOVE LETTERS”

by A.R. Gurney, by arrangement with Warner Chappell.
A two man play featuring

JENNIE LESLIE and DAVID WEARNE

To be staged at the home of Dr. Roger and Mrs. Glenys Hughes
49 Napier Street, Fitzroy

Saturday,

Dinner at **7.00 pm**, Show at **8.00 pm**

Cost \$35.00 per person

BYO drinks and glasses

For information and tickets to this dinner and show evening,
please contact Ticket Secretary. Roger Griffiths on 03 9770 2706. .

A map will be sent out with tickets with advice on parking

WEB PAGE

Please visit the WEB page. Jess, our newest Board member is overseeing some updates.

www.actionaidaustralia.cjb.net

**COMPUTER
INITIATIVES**

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