



Partners in Aid

Newsletter

Partners in Aid Ltd
ABN 50 006 946 550

PO Box 42, Narre Warren LPO
VIC 3805 Australia

Phone: 03 9704 6315
Email: admin@partnersinaid.org.au
Web: www.partnersinaid.org.au

September
2009

Roger Griffiths Driving School



This year the Roger Griffiths Driving School was launched at SEDS, in honour of past board member Roger Griffiths, who passed away in 2008. Roger loved cars and was particularly attached to the SEDS project. The driving school was founded from donations made at his funeral as well as donations from a group of friends who do an annual drive along the coast. (As Roger's condition of Parkinson's disease weakened him, he had a friend drive one of his beautiful old cars so he could continue his participation)

We would like this to be ongoing project and are looking for support from anyone interested in donating. The program will teach young disengaged boys how to drive a vehicle, after they have learnt the basics of mechanics at the Vocational Training Centre. Once trained, the boys will have opportunities to work as driver for a family or as a courier, tractor, truck or taxi driver.

*Please help us spread the word about Partners in Aid by passing this newsletter on to family, friends and colleagues once you have read it.
Thank you.*

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 6 October, 2009, 8PM, Narre Warren

This year we are very pleased and excited to be joined by Symbiosis Bangladesh Project Staff at our Annual General Meeting. Mr Arkand, the Symbiosis Country Director, Dr Rahman, a medical doctor and Mrs Arkand, an administrative assistant will be delivering a presentation on the Symbiosis project. Please come along and hear about all of Partners in Aid projects and the progress made over the past year.

The meeting will be held in Narre Warren this year. If you are attending please contact the office for catering purposes and to obtain the address (ph: 9704 6315)

SEDS Update –The Microcredit Movement in India - All Good?

by Amanda Stone

SEDS has undergone a period of reflection and a review of its programmes in the past 12 months. It has reviewed its strengths and used these to address the challenges of the future. SEDS has particularly had to take a closer look at long term methodology for sustainable disaster management owned by the community. With climate change, as everywhere, extreme weather events are expected, especially long term drought, which threatens the livelihoods of thousands in the SEDS area, and has recently resulted in many more farmer suicides.

SEDS' community development work focuses on Community Based Organisations (CBOs) and Women's Self Help Groups (SHGs) and has been developing a database on CBOs, their families and village members, analysing this information to identify and focus on issues and problems in the area.

Their strategy is to work exclusively through organisations which have a 100% women membership apart from the VDAs (Village Development Associations) in the watershed areas. The need for social and political empowerment of women is high and the focus for this program is the population of 126 villages in 5 Mandals in the SEDS catchment area.

CEO Manil Joshua, writes: "Self Help Groups represent a unique approach to financial intermediation. They combine access to low-cost financial services with a process of empowerment through self management and development for the women that are members."

The groups can enable women to come together and to increase their savings and to access institutional credit. Besides these financial benefits, the SHGs have the potential to become a platform in the community from where women can become active in village affairs, stand for local elections or take action to address social or community issues, an aspect that SEDS has always put forward as primary. In recent years the Government of India and the state Government of Andhra Pradesh have started to give massive support to micro-credit/finance¹ initiatives and over the last decade SHGs are seen as a social movement sweeping the country.

"Andhra Pradesh has always been the leading state in the national micro-credit movement and the former Chief Minister C. Naidu missed no opportunity to reiterate that his is "the largest organized anti-poverty initiative in the world".

¹ The term micro-credit refers to the mere financial part of SHG's, micro-finance aims at using the credits for the empowerment of the members, by using it for their livelihoods, education, health, ...

Please help us spread the word about Partners in Aid by passing this newsletter on to family, friends and colleagues once you have read it.

Thank you.

“Sadly, the enthusiasm for micro credit has made it a fix all solution to poverty..... the emphasis is more on mere credit than on the proper use of credit for empowerment. More and more, credit has become a goal instead of a means.”

“Although the purpose of savings here is to develop the habit of thrift and to offer credit to the poor women to acquire income generating assets, in actuality most SHG members use the loans they receive for current expenditure.(...) The women see the group as a conduit for credit and little else.”² Micro-credit has as such become a safety net and a survival strategy for millions of women.....but it has not made them more independent. On the contrary women pay off one loan with the other and are a member of several groups at once to access as much credit as possible, with the risk of getting trapped in a debt-cycle due to increased non-sustainable consumption.”

There is concern among NGOs that the microcredit movement allows corruption as it buys votes for regional governments and provides large corporations with markets in poorer rural areas. In its enthusiasm for what seemed to be a beneficial poverty alleviation method for all, from rural poor through the government to the corporate sector, it seems the government has forgotten to take care of the conditions to make micro-credit work and seems to consider micro-credit through SHGs as a solution to all of poverty’s devastating consequences, not as part of a bigger road to development. Being aware of these traps, the continuing work of SEDS with the local village organisations and SHGs is vital in educating women to use microcredit for empowerment and self determination rather than debt creation.

SEDS vital work in watershed renewal has continued this year with 700 villagers benefiting from the excavation of 3 tanks in 7 villages in the three months to June this year. The silt removed from the water tanks is applied to farmland to enrich the soil and improve its fertility. This work is supported by Partners in Aid funds each year and is essential to maintaining the livelihoods of these rural communities in the driest part of southern India.

Congratulations and Thank-you for 25 years of Joy!!

by Anne Marie Maltby

This year marks a milestone for us, as it is the 25th year that Joy Handley has worked with Partners in Aid. She first became involved as the office manager with ‘For Those Who Have Less’ was part of the transition to ‘Action Aid Australia’ and continues as a ‘Partners in Aid’ Honorary Advisor.

What can we say about our Joy? She has been described as a force of nature and a pint sized Scottish ball of energy and enthusiasm but most of all, she is known as a tireless worker for ABWU in Kolkata. She regards all and sundry as ‘her girls’ and it is obvious that she has inspired a great deal of love, affection and gratitude from them. We at Partners in Aid also have a great deal of affection and admiration for her.

Joy moved to Bright several years ago with her husband Barry and has achieved great results in increasing the profile of our organisation and publicising the essential work of ABWU. Thanks to Joy’s efforts, the Bright community have become significant contributors to ABWU and are held in very high regard by the volunteer women who care for the destitute girls at the home.

Joy has recently been honoured with a Rotary ‘Caring and Sharing’ award for her many years of devotion to helping others. Her local newspaper, the Bright Observer, recently featured her on the front page and we thought that Partners in Aid supporters might like to see this article.

Many, many thanks Joy and also thank-you to the Bright Community for all of your support.

² Menon P., 2002, “Micro-credit and mixed successes”.

Please help us spread the word about Partners in Aid by passing this newsletter on to family, friends and colleagues once you have read it.

Thank you.



Courtesy of the Bright Observer 29th Jul 2009

25 years on, Joy still gives to those in need

More than 20 years ago, a church newsletter changed the path for Bright's Joy Handley. Mrs Handley has been a volunteer with Action Aid Australia, now Partners in Aid, for 25 years and couldn't imagine doing anything else.

Partners In Aid is one of the longest serving aid agencies in Australia and was established in 1962. They work with Non-Government Organisations (NGO's) in Bangladesh and India to promote and assist with community development projects and all work is done on a voluntary basis.

Mrs Handley saw an advertisement for an office manager with the organisation and it prompted her interest in something she's always wanted to. "I thought this is something I can do, but it was a real learning curve," she said. The position allowed Mrs Handley to visit the projects and see the work first hand. "My first trip to Bangladesh was quite daunting," she said. "I just remember a sea of people."

One of Mrs Handley's big passions is the All Bengal Women's Union home in Calcutta, which has been operating for over 70 years and is supported by Partners in Aid. It is an NGO run entirely by volunteer women to rescue abused, at risk, destitute, abandoned and orphaned girls. Mrs Handley has sponsored Mita since she was eight years old and said it was impossible not to develop a personal connection with the women. "She is now studying at the university of fine art," she said.

The last time she visited India was 2007 but a highlight for her was meeting Mother Teresa after the aid agency donated cattle to one of her orphanages. "Now every time I go I made sure I visit her tomb," she said. "It's given lots of memories. I do get satisfaction to see the girls grow and get an education. It gives me a huge amount of pleasure and I couldn't imagine not doing it."

Mrs Handley was recently given the caring and sharing award from Rotary Club of Bright, which recognised 25 years of great humanitarian efforts in sponsoring and training women of Bengal. When her friends in India heard about the recognition they said they "wished the had wings to fly over and see it"

Mrs Handley said she continues to get fantastic support form the community including the Alpine Women's Group but more is always welcome. "For nine years, Patrizia Simone has donated a beautiful lunch which we'll have once again later his year", she said.

Anyone wanting to help or donate money can contact Joy Handley on 5755 1344.

Please help us spread the word about Partners in Aid by passing this newsletter on to family, friends and colleagues once you have read it.

Thank you.

All Bengal Women's Union Needs Support for Remedial Teachers

by Anne Marie Maltby

ABWU have received project money for the year and report that education programs and vocational training are going relatively well. Most of the girls who arrive at the home have had little or no previous education and need a lot of additional assistance to get them to a level where they can join a 'normal' school class. This is an important first step in giving them some basic skills. Huge efforts are made to ensure that the girls leaving the home will be able to earn a living and support themselves. There is a very strong awareness that there is no point in 'rescuing' these girls unless they work to secure their future.

Throughout their education most continue to need extra tutoring. Supporters can donate funds to sponsor remedial teachers. A donation of \$55 will fully cover the cost of a remedial teacher for one month. We are hoping that enough will be received to sponsor the cost of 3 teachers for 12 months. If you would like to know more about this, please ring Anne-Marie on (03)94298598 (AH) or Joy on 57551344.

On the Islands in the Jamuna River During the Monsoon

by Roger Hughes

It is monsoon time again in Bangladesh. Over the years I have received many questions about what life is like on the islands of the Jamuna River during the monsoon and it is an appropriate time to answer a few questions.

There are numerous islands in the Jamuna River. They are caused by the high silt load in the river, which has been steadily increasing over the years as a result of deforestation in the river's catchments. During the dry season the islands are dry, erosion occurs on the upstream ends of the islands and deposition occurs just down stream of the islands. During the monsoon these islands are largely inundated with silt-depositing river water, even though the islands may be approaching ten meters above the dry season's river level. The lower islands, which in the dry season generally do not support human habitation but instead are often used to feed large herds of cattle belonging to the wealthy non-locals, are completely submerged. Depending on the monsoon, the higher islands may, or may not, be inundated. It is on one of these higher islands that our project is located.

To gain security, the island dwellers have built-up selected areas of the island into mounds by moving very large quantities of silt from nearby adjacent lower parts of the island. Buildings, including houses and our school, are built upon these mounds. Although the island is often inundated during the monsoon (otherwise it could not have been built in the first place by natural deposition) these artificial mounds remain out of the flood water. Often these built-up areas are long and thin, only wide enough for one home. Presumably this pattern of construction is so as to minimize the distance that the silt must be carried. However, because of the embankments on both sides of the mound, it is a method of construction that required more silt to be handled for a given plateau area on top of the mound. Our school is on a particularly large mound, measuring maybe 20m by 30m, as required for the size of the building and also for the children to have a parade/play ground. Interestingly, it is not particularly well connected with other high ground, although there is a low causeway between it and other nearby raised ground. The mounds thus constructed are often bedded with trees and other vegetation to stabilise them during the monsoonal rain, against a background knowledge that everything will ultimately end up in the river.

On these artificial mounds the majority of the population survives the inundation of the monsoon. Certainly many of those people living on the island evacuate before the monsoon floods. Evacuation during the floods is perilous. (In some ways it is a dilemma equivalent to our bush-fire dilemma of

Please help us spread the word about Partners in Aid by passing this newsletter on to family, friends and colleagues once you have read it.

Thank you.

leaving or staying to protect the property). Those that evacuate often drift to the big cities where they join the shanty towns, which are also prone to flooding but in a less life threatening manner. Later they return to the island after the monsoon has passed and the flood has subsided.

Those who remain on the island during the monsoon have an extremely difficult time but they are generally able to care, in a limited manner, for any live stock that they may have. Food is scarce because there is no crop to harvest and the river is perilous for fishing. While I have certainly not been on the island during this period, I have heard from a reliable source, conditions been likened to starvation. However, from photographs that I have seen, it appears that there is always a little bit of vegetation around for the animals to eat, and if need be, as is common, for the human population to eat after the limited store of food for the family has run out or is deemed insufficient. Clean drinking water is difficult to obtain at the best of times and during the monsoon floods it may be too difficult to go to the local tube well although some water can always be collected by the population, if educated properly in hygiene, from rainfall during the monsoon. Such a source of water is not available after the monsoonal rains have stopped but while the river is remains in flood. It is during this period that water borne disease becomes prevalent. This is a time of extreme difficulty. Never-the-less those of the island seem to survive on the meager resources available to them but I am grateful that I am not one of them.

CSIRO set to welcome the RV BF Ryan

The newest addition to the CMAR vessel fleet has been named to honour the memory of Brian Frank Ryan who worked with CSIRO as an atmospheric scientist for 37 years before his untimely death in Perth in October 2006. As many of you know, Brian was also past chairman of Partners in Aid.



Brian moved from Aspendale to Floreat in July 2005 to renew and enlarge the Indian Ocean Climate Initiative: a climate research joint venture with the Western Australian government. This was to be Brian's last assignment before beginning his retirement in his home town of Perth. Brian has been greatly missed by his CSIRO friends and colleagues. He was a joy to have around (except on the Mondays following a weekend Collingwood victory). Staff at Floreat thought that naming the vessel after Brian would be a nice way to remember him. Brian's wife, Robin, said Brian would have been thrilled at the honour, although he was never one to want a fuss made of him. Due to be delivered shortly, the RV BF Ryan is a small vessel, just seven metres in length, and will be used for diving and survey work along the WA coastline. A naming ceremony will be held with Brian Ryan's wife, Robin, attending.

Congratulations!

A big congratulations to Andrea (our Treasurer), and Geoff on the very early, but safe arrival of Jasmine Joy Pickering (5lbs 2 ozs). Big brother Lachie is a little bemused by it all, and the four grandparents are very happy. This beautiful little girl came home last Saturday after two and a half weeks in hospital, above her birth weight and growing daily.

Please help us spread the word about Partners in Aid by passing this newsletter on to family, friends and colleagues once you have read it.

Thank you.

Sponsor a child

by Lyn Pickering

If you've ever read about or watched advertisements for child sponsorship you would know that the images of the impoverished children can be harrowing, with the children often looking close to death. The SEDS sponsorship program gives children the opportunity to attend school, have fees paid, along with school uniform and books. Each month the children visit the SEDS campus for social and cultural activities and health checks. The donor who sponsors that child will receive details and receive regular photos and updates of the children throughout the year, including a copy of their report card, photos of the children with their gift each year and a card at Christmas. In fact, the children enjoy the fun of making the cards for their sponsors, and it is an activity carried out over two visits to SEDS. Although the sponsorship program at ABWU is slightly different, with the girls and young women living at a home in Calcutta, their needs are similar in many ways. Both Joy and myself are only too happy to discuss this with anyone interested to know more.

Through my interest in the children and watershed work at SEDS in India, I often find myself talking to people about sponsorship of a child. People usually express surprise when they find out the cost to sponsor through us as compared to other organisations, and the fact that 90% of their money is sent to ensure their child receives the education they deserve in India through SEDS or ABWU. Three of your Honorary Board members will be visiting SEDS, (at their own expense), this January. Ian and I are very excited to be returning after our longest time away, and Amanda will be joining us. We will be able to bring back updated information first hand.

To sponsor a child with SEDS or ABWU is \$240 annually, plus an optional \$20 gift to purchase a new set of clothes for children at SEDS. This is significantly lower than most other child sponsorships which are \$40 plus per month - approximately \$500 per annum.

We are always looking for new sponsors to support a young girl or boy and would welcome your support. Perhaps you know of a family member who has been considering doing something like this, and has not actually got around to doing anything. Coming into Christmas, now is a great time. In fact, over recent years, a number of people have decided to sponsor a child for their family members who have everything. What a wonderful gift this is - to support the education of a child for twelve months, including health checks and care. It could be for a Christmas present, a birthday present, or just a gift of love. Help us to make it happen for more of these beautiful children. Phone - Lyn Pickering - 03 9704 6315 or email me at lipickering@bigpond.com

Update - World Food Day Dinner - Bayles

For all our regular attendees and those that are interested in coming along the annual dinner at Bayles, we thank you for your previous support and wish to advise the dinner has been postponed from its normal time slot of November. Our host (and Treasurer) Andrea has just had a new baby, so we are looking at holding the dinner in the New Year. Please look out for the new date in our December newsletter.

M & K Printing

For all your printing requirements
talk to Ken at M&K Printing
Vesper Drive, Narre Warren
Ph: 9704 8500

Computer Initiatives

Tim Moore
Berwick
9707 4850

Please help us spread the word about Partners in Aid by passing this newsletter on to family, friends and colleagues once you have read it.

Thank you.

Partners in Aid Donation Form



Partners in Aid

Membership for 1 July 2009 – 30 June 2010

Please tick the supporter category you belong to

- | | Amount |
|--|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to renew my annual membership | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I would like to join Partners in Aid as a new member
(application form to be sent out) | \$25 |

Donation

Please fill out the amount that you would like to donate to each project in the blank box provided (to the right). Please total all donated amounts in the total space provided at the bottom

General Donation

I would like to make a general donation to Partners in Aid
(If you would like to specify an area please circle SEDS / ABWU / Bangladesh / Philippines)

Amount
\$

Special Project Donation

This quarter we are raising money for the following projects. If you would like to direct a donation to one of these projects, please fill out the appropriate box below

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| SEDS – tank desilting | \$ <input type="text"/> |
| Bangladesh – textiles to use by the sewing classes after graduation | \$ <input type="text"/> |
| ABWU – remedial teachers | \$ <input type="text"/> |
| Philippines Singpad Healthy Village | \$ <input type="text"/> |

Child Sponsorship Donation

I would like to begin/continue (please circle) to sponsor a child at ABWU/SEDS
(please circle and write in box number of children you would like to sponsor)

Please tick the appropriate payment box

3 months=\$60 6 months = \$120 12 months = \$240

Optional Present \$

Total Amount enclosed (membership, general donations, special project donation and child sponsorship)

\$

If paying by EFT email admin@partnersinaid.org.au for bank account details. If paying by cheque make it out to Partners in Aid and send to PO Box 42, Narre Warren LPO 3805

Name for receipt: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Postcode: _____

Email (for internal use and occasional updates) _____

Gifts of \$2.00 and over are tax deductible (receipt issued)

Please help us spread the word about Partners in Aid by passing this newsletter on to family, friends and colleagues once you have read it.

Thank you.