

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

December
2009

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM took place on Tuesday 6 October 2009, and we were delighted to be joined by our colleagues from Symbiosis, Bangladesh. Rev Morris Lee, Mr Arkand, the Symbiosis Country Director, Dr Rahman, a medical doctor and Mrs Arkand, an administrative assistant talked about how the projects were progressing. Mrs Arkand presented us with a stunning red bedcover produced by the participants in the TTIS sewing training program.

Partners in Aid Chairman Anne-Marie Maltby reflected on what had been a busy, and at times frustrating year, culminating in a new name for our organisation and a smooth transition from Action Aid Australia to Partners in Aid. The Board is now looking forward to getting back



L—R: Anne-Marie Maltby, Dr Rahman, Mrs Arkand, Rev Morris Lee, Mr Arkand, Chris Pittendrigh



to 'business as usual' and focusing on our goal of empowering disadvantaged communities through community development, education, skills training and enhancing the status of women.

Members of the Alpine Women's' Group, Bright, admire the handiwork of the Bangladesh TTIS sewing program participants

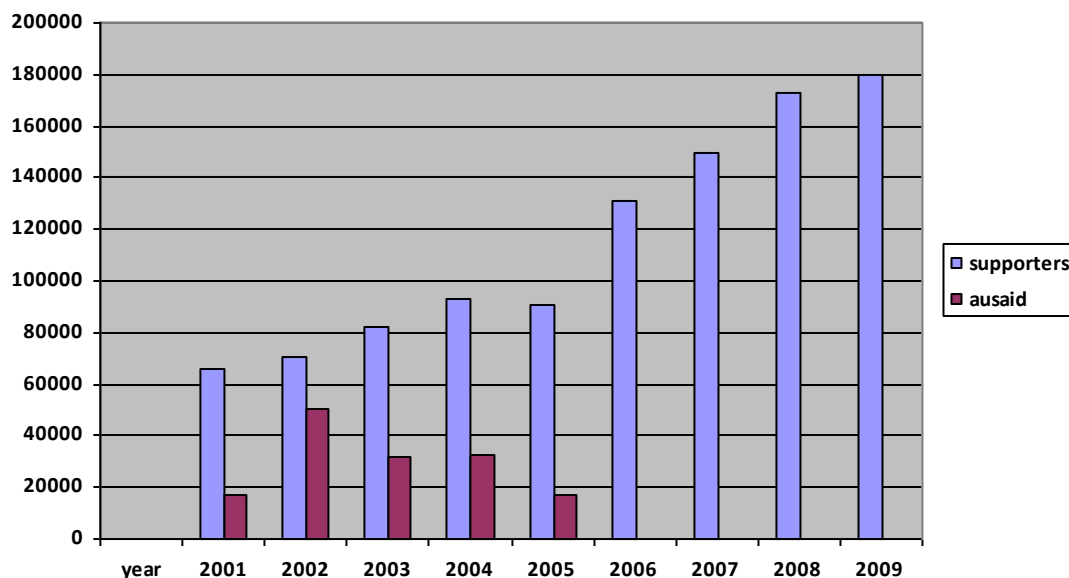
Please help us spread the word about Partners in Aid by passing this newsletter on to family, friends and colleagues once you have read it.

Thank you.

Financial Report – Andrea Pickering

It was a year that was expected to provide many challenges for charities across the board, given the economic conditions. We can happily report that Partners in Aid had a small increase in donated funds during the 2008/09 financial year.

Our income has been steadily on the rise over recent years, and this year has seen an increase of around \$7000, which can be seen on the graph below.



The continued support from our donors has allowed us to send \$198,553 to our partners overseas during the 2008/09 year, with the strong Australian dollar meaning we were able to obtain good exchange rates.

Due to the hard work of your Board and volunteers, we have also continued to contain our costs, with our administration expenses at 9.3% of donated funds.

Travel costs are an area of conjecture, as your Board members self fund their trips to visit project areas, and if we were to remove the travel costs from the accounts, our administration percentage would be 5.7%.

I believe that as an organization and a Board we should be very pleased with the outcome of the 2008/09 year, both in terms of the money received from donors, and the amount sent to our partners to continue their important work.

We thank our donors and supporters for their continued confidence and faith in our work. Should anyone like to see our Audited Financial Report, please view on our website at www.partnersinaid.org.au or contact the office.

All Bengal Women's Union, Kolkata

Project Co-ordinator - Anne-Marie Maltby

There have been no substantial changes at ABWU where they continue to shelter, educate, feed, clothe, protect and train deserted, abandoned and abused girls. Support from our sponsors and donors have contributed significantly to the numbers of girls and level of support able to be provided, with 86 girls now being sponsored and ABWU increasing the number of residents in the home.

We are pleased that some additional donations made it possible to provide a remedial teacher for 12 months. Most girls at the home have had little or no previous education and have special needs. Assistance is required 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.

Money was donated to allow ABWU to take girls on a trip out of Kolkata. This year some of the girls from the After Care Home had their first holiday ever. We were also able to provide funds for medical support.

We have also been able to pay for a professional cooking teacher to train 10 girls for 12 months. This training is aimed at giving girls the ability to get jobs in canteens, restaurants, etc.

We are all very pleased that Mita Das is now doing her second year at University and is also doing computer studies on a Braille computer. Her future looks considerably brighter than could have been imagined for an abandoned, blind child.



Saraswati & Mita

Vocational Training Projects

Tailoring and Cutting Project

Twenty girls have completed training in tailoring and cutting and have learned to make salwar suits, blouses, tops for under saris, dresses, kaftans, children's dresses, aprons, etc. They also learn fine embroidery to enhance the clothing and trained for six days a week. Some have found employment and others are at various stages of finding employment.

Weaving Project

Five ABWU residents and girls that have come in from outside organisations have done this training and have found employment.

Knitting Project

Four girls have completed machine knitting training and now have the skills for employment .

Fundraising

We are delighted to report that the annual Alpine Women's Group lunch took place in Bright on 16 November and raised almost \$3000 for ABWU. As always, a huge thank you to Joy Handley for her tireless efforts in organising this event and to the Bright community for their ongoing support.

Our newest Board member, Mary Dunne, put her Indian Head Massage skills to good use on 8 November, when she and naturopath Sonya Marshall donated their services for an afternoon of massage treatments to fundraise for a remedial teacher. The event raised \$770, which will fund one teacher for over a year. With other donations we have received towards remedial teaching, this means we are now well on our way to funding an additional teacher.

Joy Handley and Anne-Marie Maltby will be visiting ABWU in early 2010; Anne-Marie on a side trip as part of a volunteer team of health workers treating residents of a disabled home in West Bengal.

Background to our Bangladeshi Projects

Project Co-ordinator - Roger Hughes

Technical Training and Low Skills Jobs Training Program (TTIS)

The TTIS project provides training mainly to women of little economic means in sewing, embroidery, hairdressing and beauty treatment. The program admits some full fee paying students who subsidise the majority of the students who are of lower economic means. Occasionally men are admitted to the sewing course, but the courses are mainly for women. The courses are run at various centres spread across areas around Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Gazipur, Tangail and surrounding areas in the north of Bangladesh.

Associated with this technical training is general training in life skills. The program aims to improve the socio-economic and health status of the participants and their family members.

Jumana River Sandbar People Development Project (JRDP)

This project is novel in its structure and it is worth noting the setting in which it occurs before describing the project.

Deforestation in the catchments and along the banks of the Jumana, Brahmaputra Rivers, to a lesser extent the Padma River, and their tributaries upstream has greatly increased the silt load transported by these rivers, especially the Jumana River. Much of this silt has deposited in the river beds and decreased their depths. As the annual flow of these rivers has remained reasonably constant the shallowing of the rivers has caused them to widen dramatically, leaving many inhabitants of their banks either homeless or very precariously positioned. However, the decreased depth of these rivers and the increased silt loads has increased the occurrence of marginally habitable islands, especially in the Jumana River. These islands have become places where people displaced from the banks of the rivers can take refuge and eek out a living. From Landsat images it is estimated that along the Jumana River there are currently 56 such islands, called chars, that are longer than 3.5km and a further 226 smaller islands.

These islands are routinely flooded during the wet season (providing a deposit of silt over them). To overcome the problem of flooding the residents construct mounds of silt and build their shelters on the mounds, but then must contend with the islands being slowly washed down stream by the river at a rate of several kilometres a year. Partners In Aid has been working through the Bangladeshi local NGO Symbiosis on an ambitious plan to assist communal development and cooperation by the poor living on the sandbar islands of the rivers of Bangladesh, located south-west of Jamalpur and north west of Tangail. This project operates on a sand bar, of size approximately 15km by 10km in the Jumana River. This sand island, which floods, serves as home to a community of extremely variable size up to 10,000. The current project has five major aims:

1. Increasing the capacity of the community to work cooperatively;
2. Raising literacy levels in new groups and consolidating the reading skills of the newly literate;
3. Increasing awareness levels regarding important social and environmental issues;
4. Improving livelihood security through increased income and food production; and
5. Improving mental and physical health and wellbeing.

A common view of life on the island during the wet season. The mounds providing protection vary in height and sometimes they are not quite high enough



SEDS

Project Co-ordinators - Lyn Pickering & Amanda Stone

Partners in Aid continues to support SEDS in the areas of child sponsorship, watershed management, women's empowerment through village self-help groups and health education and awareness raising among village populations in the Ananthapur District of Andhra Pradesh.

Child Sponsorship

What a wonderful year for two of our sponsored children! Maruthi is in his final year of an Arts Degree at University, and Sumithra has commenced her first year of Engineering. Gowri and Adi are studying for their Year 11 and 12 Certificates, and we have a number of students who will be sitting for their Year 10 Certificate next March. Sponsor support over several years has kept these young people at school, and allowed them the opportunity to advance where possible. The standard of teaching has lifted in this part of India over the past seven or eight years, due we believe to the work being undertaken by SEDS through the watershed project and other school and community related activities.

This past year the number of sponsored children dropped overall by ten. This has been due mainly to the economic downturn in the worldwide economy and two very long time supporters passing on. We sincerely thank all donors for their commitment over many years. Your support has allowed children to have the opportunity to attend school, something that would have been denied them because of the family situation they came from.

Watershed Management

Tanks to be desilted are selected using a participatory approach within the villages. In the past year, three water tanks servicing 6 villages were desilted. This is more than the usual number due to high levels of interest and support from local villages. Also higher than expected rainfall was an added incentive. Tank Users Associations are set up with each village selected for tank desilting and fish fingerlings are provided for each tank.

Other work, to protect water catchment areas and prevent top soil erosion, included fire tracing to protect against forest fires. Higher rainfall allowed more trees to be planted in forest areas.

Women's Self Help Groups

These groups are supported to empower women socially and economically through activities such as seed collection for oil processing and silk worm farming. While this work has continued as in the past, SEDS has been focusing on financial management and assisting women to make the most of microcredit opportunities.

Health Promotion

Most of the health projects in the rural areas are carried out by trained health workers for many years through networking and support from the Health Department. 125 village health workers covering 125 villages are working in the SEDS project area.

SEDS runs monthly meetings and training for the health workers and an annual training plan has been prepared to train the VHW's on specific subjects based on their request. With increased trust and respect for the village health workers, they are now in a position to charge a fee for their services. In the words of Manil, the CEO, "The continuous support of SEDS has helped them to carve a niche for themselves in the village with pride and dignity."

An additional project supporting health and nutrition is the kitchen garden project. Villagers are encouraged to see home grown vegetables and greens as economical, healthy and nutritious. Many kitchen gardens have been planted in villages and a positive extension of this program is that now some are investing in seeds and raising nurseries to sell nursery plants of vegetables for kitchen gardens.

Three board members –Lyn and Ian Pickering and Amanda Stone –will be visiting SEDS early in 2010 and will be able to report first hand on the project there next year.

Sinangpad Healthy Village Project, Kalinga Province, Philippines

Project Co-ordinator—Glenys Hughes

Kalinga is a mountainous province in the northern Philippines; some of its villages lack of vehicular access and can take up to 8 hours to reach by foot. Educational levels in rural areas tend to be low, with a significant proportion of some tribal groups being illiterate. The main means of livelihood for villagers is rice and wheat cultivation. Pigs and hens are also raised.

Key health problems in the province include diarrheal diseases, respiratory infections, tuberculosis, malaria (including drug resistant malaria), parasitism and malnutrition. The risk of the spread of these illnesses is exacerbated by a number of water and environmental sanitation issues, including poor access to safe drinking water, good breeding conditions for mosquitoes, no means of safe garbage disposal and animal management practices that can result in significant risks to human health.

The project aims were to -

1. Continue the work previously done to reduce the incidence of water and environmental-related illnesses in villages by helping the villagers to change behaviour that increases the risk of the transmission of such illnesses; and
2. Trial a community-based health intervention strategy which can be used to reach a large number of villages in a cost-effective manner and hence can be replicated in other Provinces.

The project is now approaching the end of its initial 3 years, and has delivered the following key outcomes -

Training

- Organizing and training of pool of trainers on Community Health Development (CHD) for the whole province of Kalinga.
- Training on CHD conducted in 46 villages.
- Workshop on community income enhancement on soap making covering 2 villages.

Health Promotion

- Teachers workshop on school based health promotion initiatives – conducted 7 sessions in 3 municipalities, covering 13 schools catering to 13 villages.
- Hand washing demonstration to school children undertaken in 10 schools covering 14 barangays (local districts).
- Materials: board games (snakes and ladders, consequence and jigsaw puzzle) and 5 story books, with workshop and distribution done in 14 schools covering 17 villages
- Hand washing demonstration done in 5 barangays.
- Conducted parents' class in 2 barangays/ villages focused on environmental sanitation and other health programs.

Funding

Provided funds for 32 barangays covering the following items -

- Construction materials for sanitary toilets for individual households, neighborhood/ communal, and for schools and health/ community structures.
- Construction materials for village drainage systems, pig management initiatives.

The project also incorporates detailed monitoring and evaluation activities, and organising community health task forces and core groups to ensure continuation of initiatives.

We are delighted with the success of this project, and hope to be able to continue our support in order for the approach to be replicated in other areas.

Christmas is Coming.....

If you're stuck for ideas for Christmas gifts this year, try something different and sponsor a child or make a donation towards one of our projects instead.

Not only do you avoid sitting in the car park queue at the Mall and spending your dollars on packaging which ends up in landfill, you are also making a real difference to the lives and prospects of people living in very difficult circumstances.



Here are some suggestions covering each of our project areas. It's also fine to make a general project donation if you prefer.

ABWU, Kolkata

- \$20—textiles for use by the girls in the sewing program
- \$55—a remedial teacher for one month
- Any donation towards the medical fund or orphans annual holiday

SEDS

- \$20—1000 fish fingerlings to use with the tank desilting program
- \$20—coconut tree and vegetable seeds for cottage gardens
- \$20—sports equipment for schools

Symbiosis, Bangladesh

- \$5— stationery for a school child on the island who can not afford to buy their own
- \$30—seeds for a school garden
- \$50—books for teachers at the school to distribute to the class during lessons (Bengali, English or Mathematics)
- \$50—textiles to use by the sewing classes after they have finished learning sewing using newspaper as material

Sinangpad Healthy Village Project, Philippines

- \$20 - education materials (books, puzzles, games) to promote safe health practices for the schools education program
- \$60 - construction materials for communal pig pens or toilets

World Food Day – Bayles Dinner

Our World Food Day Dinner (postponed from November) will be held on **Saturday 6 March 2010** at Bayles (near Pakenham).

The food is all donated and home cooked, and the meat is home grown on the farm at Bayles.

6.00pm for starters, main meal to commence serving at 7.00pm

Menu : finger food starters, roast meats, baked potatoes, salads, vegetarian options available, variety of delicious desserts.

Drinks : Soft Drinks provided, BYO alcohol

\$35.00 per person/donation for kids (tax deductible receipt issued)

If you would like a night out in a friendly, relaxed environment, we would love to see you. Come on your own or bring a group of friends – all welcome (including kids).

RSVP : Monday 1 March 2010

For more information or to book in, please contact the office on 9704 6315 or admin@partnersinaid.org.au (a map will be provided for those that require one).

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