



Partners in Aid

Newsletter

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A Huge THANK YOU

We have some fantastic news to report on our recent fundraising activities.

The annual World Food Day Dinner was held at Bayles on 26 February and fortunately the weather was much kinder to us than it was in 2010. Over 90 guests enthusiastically enjoyed the home-cooked food and we raised over \$10,000, which far exceeded our expectations.

A special thank you to everyone who donated produce and products which were sold on the night to add to our funds. A big thank you to Geoff and Andrea for opening their home again, to all who helped to get the event organised and keep things running throughout the evening.

The annual **Alpine Women's Group** lunch took place in Bright in November and raised almost \$4,000 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 invaluable support.

We had a great response to our Christmas fundraising focus in the December 2010 newsletter, and raised funds for all the project areas featured. Thank you to everyone who donated.

Partners in Aid would like to thank all our donors, sponsors and friends for their generosity and continued support of our work.



***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.***

Visit to SEDS

Kerryn Moore

In December 2010 I was lucky enough to visit SEDS along with Lyn, Ian and Kirra Pickering. I had been studying development as part of my university degree which had given me an introduction to various academic theories on development in third world countries, but I knew nothing of how a development project might work on the ground - visiting SEDS certainly shed some light on this.

On our first day Rajen took us for a drive around the SEDS area. I almost didn't believe that I was in a drought-prone area as there had just been a lot of rain which was very unseasonal. Everything was so green and all of the tanks were full. This was wonderful to see. Even Rajen said that he had never seen it like this before, which I think goes to show how much of an impact SEDS has had on the area through projects such as reforestation, tank de-silting and the development of watersheds.



Looking green after the rains

I also visited the Mandal Facilitation Centre (MFC) and sat in on one of their monthly meetings. The MFC is governed by women of the Village Organisations and was set up so that issues at the village level could be solved collectively at the Mandal level. During this meeting they told us of one issue which was a great example of what the MFC can do. There was a problem with the drinking water in a village and the leader of the village wasn't doing anything about it. With the help of the MFC, the villagers brought in the media, and then set a card board cut out of the leader on fire in protest. The drinking water problem was fixed the next day! This highlighted the importance of empowerment; empowering the people to make changes for themselves, rather than imposing changes on them.



Sustainable agriculture training day

At SEDS I found that in all their projects there is a big emphasis on participatory development. Early in my visit Rajen took us driving around the SEDS area and we stopped by a sustainable agriculture training day. The farmers that were there all came voluntarily and the class was very interactive. Although one member of the class had apparently been doing some heavy drinking earlier that morning, there was a real willingness amongst the people to get involved and learn new ways of doing things to ensure a sustainable and more secure future.

On a separate occasion we were driving through some villages and one of the women's Self Help Groups was about to meet and invited us in to say hello. They told us that they had a rotating loan of 50 rupees that they mainly used on agriculture, and they would then sell the surplus to earn an income. While talking to the women I got the sense that they were all very proud to be a part of the SHG and were very appreciative of the opportunities that SEDS have given them.

I also helped file thousands of photos of SEDS which had been collected over the years in preparation for the 30 Year Anniversary Celebrations. It was fascinating to see some of the old photos, and was testament to the fact that Manil and Rajen have literally built SEDS from the ground up, and highlighted the importance of committing to projects in the long term.

And of course there were also the wonderful cultural experiences that you get when visiting another country – I learnt how to eat with my hand; what to do if you ram into the back of an auto-rickshaw; how to bribe your way out of a speeding fine; that driving down the wrong side of the highway is common practice; and that the deafening explosions at Sanipalli Hills are for road works, not the start of WWII as initially thought...

Visiting SEDS was certainly an eye-opening experience. I learnt many things, met some wonderful people and had a lot of fun along the way.

Happy 30th Birthday SEDS!!

Amanda Stone

It is 30 years since founders Manil Jayasena and Rajen Joshua left the comfort of Bangalore and set up a camp in a degraded and treeless rural area in Ananthapur, with the aim of assisting the "poorest of the poor" to become self sufficient.

From those early days of sleeping in the open on camp beds, where there was "not a blade of grass to be seen", Manil and Rajen have created a green, fertile centre which houses not only their own family but numerous staff, a school, an office, a home for nearly 30 children, and provides support to 125 villages living in the five surrounding mandals. SEDS is well regarded throughout India as an example of best practice in the work they do. Many NGOs do not last 30 years and it is a credit to the hard work, commitment and vision of Manil, Rajen and their team that SEDS has not only survived but continues to lead the way.



Dedication of new training wing

The 30th anniversary was celebrated with opening of a new wing at the Training Centre in memory of Father Vicente Ferrer Moncho, a missionary and humanitarian who worked with impoverished rural communities in India from the 1950s onwards.

There was also a DVD on the history of SEDS, displays of handicrafts from the villages and displays of the work on various projects supported by SEDS. Of course, a big party was held in the evening.

We are proud to support the wonderful work done by Manil, Rajen, Rashna, Vishal and all the staff.



Display of village craftwork



A special 30th birthday lunch for villagers

Symbiosis Bangladesh: A success story - Jobeda Begum

Roger Hughes

Jobeda Begum was an illiterate house wife in the village of Jajirar Char. Her husband, Kalu Mondal was also illiterate and suffered with poor health, asthma in particular, making it very difficult to find regular work. They have four children.

Jobeda worked mainly as a maidservant and Kalu obtained casual work as a day labourer. They also ran a small business selling oil, as a result of them being treated as lower caste and limiting their work options even more.

In Jobeda's area, Symbiosis Bangladesh was doing some development work, and a Symbiosis worker was surveying villagers to see if there was interest in starting a further education class. Jobeda signed up and studied alongside her existing work, learning to read, write and do simple calculations.

When the class was finished, a savings group of 18 members was formed, called the Golap Female Group, with Jobeda as cashier. Members deposit as much as they can, and now, after three years, the Group has savings of Tk56,000 (around \$800).

Jobeda took a loan of Tk5,000 (around \$70) from the Group, added some of her own money and bought a cow. Two years later, the cow produced a calf and now provides enough milk each day for Jobeda to sell and generate a steady income to support her family.

Jobeda's future plans include rearing poultry, goats and more cows to give her family financial security and stability. She has a dream for her children to be educated and is now sending them to school.



Jobeda Begum with cow and calf

All Bengal Womens Union Anne-Marie Maltby

We have been working with ABWU to identify some of their unmet special needs and were very pleased to receive some directed donations for this. Among many others, particular thanks go to Bright Rotary, Our Lady of the Snows, Bright Book Club and our Christmas donors.

As a result we have been able to fund remedial teacher training, remedial therapy classes and purchase some other much needed items.

Many of the girls' backgrounds have left them with severe learning difficulties which the teachers have had trouble coping with and managing. We have been able to fund remedial teacher training and help with teacher salaries for this. Nine teachers have now attended a three day theoretical and practical training seminar.



Karate class

Some of the more troubled children have been doing dance therapy classes. It has been found that dance therapy teaches them how to focus, concentrate and reduces the disruption they often cause. Our funding has allowed this to continue and ABWU have been able to add karate classes to the dance therapy. It may seem unusual but these classes are a well established method of therapy and training and have proved to be very effective for ABWU children.

ABWU have also been able to buy reference books, in particular English, Bengali, Science and Geography, as well as some simple fiction to try and encourage the girls to read. They report that the ghost and detective books are quite popular. The block printing project has been able to buy more printing blocks to enable them to make a wider variety of patterns.

Our project funding is heavily weighted to the machine knitting and tailoring classes. These have been the most effective in providing training and skills which can directly translate to jobs after the girls leave the home.

Again, many thanks to our sponsors and donors. As the interface between you and ABWU, we greatly enjoy seeing how much difference your generosity makes in the lives of these young girls and women.



Dance therapy



Block printing class

Sinangpad Health Villages Project (SHVP), Kalinga Province, Philippines

Glenys Hughes

The SHVP is making a real difference to the lives of residents in participating communities. With pigs now in pens, garbage appropriately disposed of, drainage improved and sanitary latrines in use, the backyard is no longer a health hazard. Parents do not worry about their children playing outside their home. Parasitism and diarrhea among children have declined.

Parents have also commented on the fact that children taught about hand-washing in the SHVP School Program are now coming home and insisting that the whole family wash their hands before eating. Health workers are noting that since the SHVP training, parents are now more inclined to bring their children for vaccination. High on the list of beneficial changes in the view of many of the residents of participating communities (and passers-by) is also the fact that their villages now smell pleasant, the much-noted malodorous smells of the past having disappeared as a result of the improved environmental sanitation practices being adopted by villagers.

The philosophy of the SHVP has always been that a multi-faceted approach is needed to improve health in rural Kalinga. The SHVP approach involves:

- encouraging communities to recognise that they can improve the health status of their community themselves, and helping to motivate them to organise to do so
- helping communities and their leaders: firstly, to decide on the practices that need to change in their communities if health is to improve (e.g. stop pigs roaming freely through the village, eliminate the random disposal of garbage, bring open defecation to an end, etc), and secondly, to identify the local physical barriers to such change (e.g. lack of sanitary latrines, lack of pig pens, poor household drainage, etc)
- providing information on low-cost but effective ways of overcoming these barriers, and some funding for the purchase of materials such as cement necessary for the construction of simple infrastructure that can enable people to adopt more environmentally friendly behaviour
- working to strengthen the links and partnerships being community leaders and the staff of local government units and health agencies
- providing ongoing mentoring and encouragement over several years to help sustain the changes that take place.



Hand-washing instruction

Since its inception, the SHVP, in partnership with the Provincial Health Office and local Rural Health Units, has worked with 46 of the 153 villages in the Kalinga Province, helping them improve their environmental sanitation and thus reduce local health problems. The impact on health is now becoming apparent. As part of the SHVP monitoring process, a recent review of available statistics was carried out. The analysis showed that the improvement in a number of health indicators in participating villages was consistently higher than in the other villages.

Throughout the last year, the SHVP has continued to work with new communities wanting to become involved in the Project. It has also continued to mentor and monitor changes in villages where Project involvement commenced in previous years.

In addition, two new activities have been introduced – a school program and a soap-making program. In the school program, teachers and children are involved in promoting hygiene and environmental sanitation in the community. When teachers started to comment on how some of their children could not continue to practice their hand-washing at home because the family could not afford to buy soap, it was decided to pilot training in making low-cost soap in several communities. In addition to training, materials were provided for the first batch of soap. In return, the women making the soap have agreed to supply a certain amount of their soap, free of charge, to the elementary or pre-school in their community.



Teacher training workshop



Soap-making class



Hand-made soap

We would like to thank the following local businesses who help us keep our administration costs low by kindly providing their services at a reduced rate:

- M & K Printing, Narre Warren, 9704 8500 (Ken)
- Computer Initiatives, Berwick, 9707 4850 (Tim Moore)

Partners in Aid Donation Form



Donations

I would like to make a general donation to Partners in Aid

I would like to make a donation to a project:
ABWU

SEDS

Sinangpad Healthy Villages

Symbiosis Bangladesh

Child Sponsorship

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

Please tick the appropriate payment box:

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

Total Amount enclosed
(donations and child sponsorship)

If paying by EFT please 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, VIC 3805

Name for receipt: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Phone Number: _____

Email (for internal use and occasional updates): _____

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

Thank you for your support