



Partners in Aid

# Newsletter

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End of financial year is coming.....

Yes it's almost the end of the 2010/11 financial year already, which means it's an ideal time to make any tax deductible donations before submitting your tax return.

Any donations towards the projects featured in this edition of the newsletter would be very much appreciated by our overseas partners, and of course it's also fine to make a general project donation if you prefer, or set up a child sponsorship for ABWU or SEDS.



All donations of \$2 and over to Partners in Aid are fully tax deductible, and we will send a receipt for your payment.

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.**

## Why We Retain Our Passion For The Work In India. November/December 2010 S.E.D.S. Visit Lyn Pickering

Late November last year Ian and I were on a plane to India for a special one month visit, returning home three days before Christmas, in time for a family get together. It was special for us because our grand-daughter Kirra was returning with us as a volunteer. Kirra has her own story to tell. Kerryn Moore also joined us for this visit, and her experiences were detailed in the March newsletter.

We arrived to find the area very green for the second year in a row, after unseasonable heavy rains had washed many roads away, and caused some hardship to farmers with their crops. This year there was more damage because the level of water in the tanks/dams and other water catchments were not just full, they were overflowing to an extreme level. We travelled to another large town some two hours distance from SEDS and met older people who were long time residents who spoke **of never having seen their town's water storage facility at the level it was.** The weather patterns India has been experiencing over the past eighteen months appear to be a worldwide phenomenon.

Tank desilting continues as our major project work with SEDS, and the heavy rains of last year delayed the project for a while, but this work is now back on track. **Rajen Joshua of SEDS was quite in awe of the amount of water and kept saying "I have not seen this amount of water in this area in my 30 years of work".**

Each visit is different, and after thirteen and fifteen self funded visits respectively, Ian and I can both say that India touches parts of your heart and soul and draws you back. Over nearly twenty years we have been privileged to have made many good friends at SEDS and also through our Rotary connections. The SEDS work, carried out for more than thirty years, has maximised the water harvesting capacity of the area during these unseasonable rains.

Fish seeding was just something Ian and I had written in to funding proposals over the years, but during this visit, Kirra, Kerryn and I, along with staff and village people actually walked into the water and released 100,000 fish fingerlings into five tanks/dams. The fish were all in small bags, packed into larger cardboard boxes and transported back to SEDS in a two hour trip. Ian decided to be the photographer on the day so he remained clean and dry.



Getting ready to release the fingerlings into the tank



Kerryn, Kirra and SEDS staff unloading fish fingerlings

The fish were placed in their bags on the water for a short period to they could adjust to the water temperature, and then we swished some of the tank/dam water into the bag prior to releasing them. We visited five tanks in different locations, with each area having very different types of soil, ranging from sandy loam to red soil, black soil and the last one had a lot of clay.

## **Bernie's Bore Well**

This bore well has a name because Bernie, a long time supporter, had a significant birthday. He requested family and friends to donate money for a bore well, in lieu of presents. A fantastic gesture!

The people in the village chosen were very pleased and wished to acknowledge that pleasure by supplying us with food. After they had cooked fresh groundnuts (peanuts) and shelled them and handed them around, the ladies of the village appeared with a rice dish for lunch. Needless to say we did not require much food when we returned to the farm.



Whilst we understood that the food supplies in this village were very precious, their wish to return the compliment in the best way that they could was very meaningful to us all.

On the second day we visited this village we spent considerable time sitting in front of a home with Raj Kumar watching the village activity come and go. It was very hot, so this was most welcome. Raj had been a co-worker with Rajen Joshua in the early days of re-forestation of the hills, and was on a visit to SEDS carrying out some consultancy work.

After general discussions, village people started to speak about their difficulties with the Bank, whom they believed were not treating them fairly or honourably. Raj was able to give them some strategies on how best to approach the Bank, and he followed this up at a later date.

## **Sponsored Children**

Early on during our visit I received an email from a long time sponsor who requested a number of other children to support. I also have students who have just completed their Year 10 studies, and who may not continue on for further education. With that understanding, I sat down with Prasanth to interview the parents or grandparents and the potential new student whose data had been gathered by the Field and Health Care workers. Once the information is gathered the family comes to the farm for an interview so that data can be checked and photos taken for the records. This was a very interesting process and one which I enjoyed very much. Sitting under a tree on a chair and following the conversation, and asking my own questions gave me a better insight and understanding into the process. It has been the criteria for many years that the mother or grandmother (where appropriate) of a student, must belong **to one of the Women's Self Help Groups in their village. Initially some people did not wish to do this, but when they realised the benefits for their children, it became a good bargaining tool, and a win-win situation for their child.**

The children selected are nominated by several sources ie the local teachers, the SEDS Staff member responsible for the Village, the Health Care worker or the Village Organisation. All data collected in the field is checked, and then re-checked. During the interview we involve the family to ensure through discussion that we are not creating a welfare state.

A very good and memorable trip, which we enjoyed immensely.

My third and definitely not my last trip to SEDS in India.

November/December 2010

Kirra Pickering

After completing Year 12 in 2010 and studying developing countries in a VCE class, this trip to India helped to support the knowledge that I had recently acquired. Though I had already visited twice, previously, the first time when I was 7 years old and the second when I was 12, the third visit overall had more of an impact. I think this is partly because I **wasn't so sheltered this time from what I saw and experienced.**

**As this trip was my end of year celebrations or 'schoolies' after completing high school, I** had volunteered to work for roughly three out of the four weeks that I was there and in-between, I also had the chance to relax and hang out with people of my own age group. I travelled there with my grandparents, Ian and Lyn Pickering and a fellow volunteer, Kerryn Moore.

Most of my volunteering included working in the English medium school which is situated on the farm as we call it or, SEDS headquarters. Everyday working there was different. My first week involved playing with the children in the kindergarten. All could speak only a **few basic words of English of "Hello Missy", which is how they were taught to address** teachers and staff, and most were able to recite the alphabet and count, at least up to 10.

The next few times that I visited the school, I was placed as a substitute teacher in grades 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7. Some classes more difficult than others, my frustration levels were **definitely challenged. I had some misbehaving children cheating off others' work, and some** pretending not to understand questions given in English when it was clear that they did. While I enjoyed the time I spent working at the school, I found out my career of choice for the future is definitely not a teacher.

**In the days of work while I wasn't at the school, I helped in the office to file away data for** a low carbon farming project. It took hours of data entry which produced little results as it was such mindless repetitive work and Kerryn and I definitely felt bored on more occasions than one. But we continued on as we realised some staff were actually paid to do this task and I could not even imagine doing this as a day to day activity, stimulation was needed of **some kind. And though it didn't feel like progress, with Kerryn and I and the four or so** other staff who were doing this data entry, it was all completed before we left the farm to go back home to Australia.

I think the key thing that affected me was the life in the villages. Here in Australia, though **we have homeless people, it's only really evident in big cities, and there might be one or two people in one area. Even though that one or two homeless people maybe isn't as significant in comparison to the thousands of Indians living in the slums, that's all that** most Australians can really comprehend. To experience it first hand, the culture shock of **visiting a friend of a friend's mansion in the city, and then driving out of the driveway and** seeing families huddled under a tent-like structure with sticks and a piece of cloth to protect them from the fumes of the traffic really pulls on your heart strings.

# Highlights from All Bengal Women's Union, Kolkata

Joy Handley

ABWU continues to be very busy with all their activities and programs. A few of the ladies have been ill over the last 12 months which puts extra strain on those holding the fort.

## Children's Welfare Home (CWH)

Many of the girls are again involved in Duke of Edinburgh Awards which has been renamed International Awards for Young People (IAYP). Girls at bronze and silver level attended a 4 day camp at Ganga Sagar. These events are fantastic opportunities and experience for the girls and they were all presented with their bronze and silver certificates recently. Girls in Guides also take part in many orientation camps and events. They took part in a walk protesting against the use of high decibel fire-crackers during Diwali. Their charts won 1<sup>st</sup> Prize for slogans and artwork.

Another success was girls taking part in a dancing competition. They performed Kathak, which is a classical dance and also a piece choreographed by the Homes Movement Therapy Class. **Their outstanding performance gave them the prestigious 'Bharani Cup' which now occupies pride of place in Children's Welfare Home.**



Diamond Jubilee karate display

The Diamond Jubilee closing ceremony was conducted amid song and dance, yoga and karate displays which gave the local large audience a glimpse of the talent and skills of the girls, and resulted in some very good write-ups in daily newspapers.

The band which was formed four years ago is a runaway success! They are very much in demand by many groups and perform at lots of different events even being the opening entertainment at Eden Gardens IPL Cricket match

which was televised live on national television. They looked very professional in their lovely uniforms which were made by one of the older girls.



Girl Guide Band at Diamond Jubilee celebrations

## After Care Home (ACH)

The ACH continues to produce some lovely work from all the Vocational Programs. Tailoring, Knitting, Weaving and Block Printing all continue to be very productive and give girls the opportunity to become self sufficient. Two girls have recently found employment and are now living independently of ABWU. As neither have any family they are living in the same accommodation. Several girls have completed their University Degree and one her Masters. Two girls have married in the last month.

We have asked ABWU to identify the main project areas for which funds are required. These are:

- *Text books for senior students*
- *School uniforms and socks*
- *Waterproof school shoes and umbrellas (for monsoon season)*
- *Mosquito repellent (the Homes use 40 vials every month)*
- *Donations towards the purchase of heavy duty vacuum cleaners – the dormitories in the Children's Welfare Home are inundated with bed bugs and ABWU would prefer regular vacuuming to chemical-intensive (and very expensive) pest control.*

# Symbiosis Bangladesh: Success stories

Roger Hughes

Kohinoor Begum and her husband Razzaque Ali are subsistence farmers living in a sandbar village called Nischintapur (Nischinta means an absence of anxiety or worry). They have two sons and two daughters. **Kohinoor's life took a change for the better when she joined a Functional Education (FE) group run by Symbiosis.** She learnt literacy and numeracy skills and along with the other women in her group formed a savings group and began to build up their joint capital.

One day the Symbiosis staff during a group meeting discussed the importance of tree planting and the possibility of a tree nursery business. After talking with her husband, Kohinoor decided to take a loan of Taka 5,000 (\$72) from the group fund and established a nursery of eucalyptus trees with the technical support of the Symbiosis project staff.

Her husband assisted with the nursery work and Kohinoor was able to sell the saplings for Tk 20,000 (\$286), generating a profit of Tk 12,000 (\$171).

This year she again took a loan of Tk. 5,000 from the group savings in order to extend the nursery. She plans to grow 10,000 acacia and eucalyptus trees in her nursery, with the labour being shared with her husband. This year if she can sell the saplings, she will earn a **minimum profit of Tk 50,000 (\$715) from the business.** With such a profit, it is Kohinoor's dream to build a better house for the family.

**Kohinoor operates her saving group's accounts and is also the family money manager.** Along with the other group members, she has received training in health and environmental issues. Before this change in her circumstances, she took her eldest daughter out of school. Now her daughter has resumed her schooling. The family is now eating better, more nutritious meals.

**They may not have arrived at the point of "no anxiety, no worries" as their village name implies but they are certainly far less anxious and desperate.**



Functional Education group



Kohinoor taking care of her nursery

Tanjila Taba lives in a suburb of the provincial town Mymensingh in Bangladesh. She has a brother and sister and she is a student of a degree course. Her brother is married and lives separately from the family. A few months ago her father had an accident which resulted in him being unable to work, meaning the family had no **income. Tanjila's mother is a housewife and Tanjila faced the prospect of having to** discontinue her studies to support her family.



Around this time Tanjila heard about the Symbiosis TTIS Sewing Training Program from her neighbours, and made enquiries to the project staff. She joined the Program and successfully completed a four month long training course, then commenced a Symbiosis block batik course. Within three months she completed this course also.

Tanjila learning block batik techniques

She bought a sewing machine and started sewing and block batik work in her house. She collected orders from her neighbours and began to earn money.

Now Tanjila earns enough to pay her educational expenses, meaning she can **continue her degree whilst contributing to her family's living expenses. This has been** terrific for her self-confidence and she has a dream to start a show room of sewing and block batik.



Tanjila at work

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

Glenys Hughes

## **An experience of health development work in the community...**

As often as possible, the Sinangpad team members carry out monitoring and mentoring visits to the communities with which it is working. Distance and lack of vehicular access make some of these villages very difficult to visit. However these are often the ones most in need of support. This article describes the recent visit to one such village – Dananao, in the Tinglayan Municipality. This village is located in the centre of the far-flung Kalinga Province.

To maximize the use of resources, Sinangpad members and staff of the Provincial and Municipal Health Offices usually travel together to the more isolated villages. This enables the simultaneous monitoring of Sinangpad Healthy Village activities and those of different government-sponsored health programs. Monitoring these different activities at the same time not only conserves resources but is more efficient for community members. It means that they **need only sacrifice one day's work in the fields if they wish to take part in the different activities**, and thus encourages the participation of the whole of the community in all the activities.

The trip to Dananao required 5-6 hours on public transport (3 hours travel by road if a government vehicle is available). As usual, this part of the trip included a courtesy visit to the mayor and the municipal health officer prior to proceeding to the village. Once the road trip had been completed, it was necessary to undertake a few hours hike uphill to reach the village itself.

Dananao has a population of 689 (102 households), most of whom live below the poverty line. Sinangpad started working in Dananao in June 2009. The Project was initially resisted by the community because it entails hard work for them and most householders did not feel the need to give up the old unhygienic practices they had grown up with. The Sinangpad Project is strictly demand-based, and does not attempt to work in a village unless a large majority of the community members express the desire to improve the community health status through improving the overall local environmental sanitation. It is only as Sinangpad has made demonstrable achievements in some villages that other villages are expressing interest in taking part.



A typical scene in Dananao village

As with other communities, Project work in Dananao began with Community Health Development training for all households. In the course of this training community problems were identified. Most household members at the time practised open defecation. Pigs roamed freely around the village in areas where children played. The village initially looked bare and very few plants were seen around the houses. Few households grew vegetables that could improve their **children's diet**.

The implications of this situation for health, and ways of addressing the problems were discussed, planning undertaken, and commitment made to achieving certain goals. Community members themselves have set the goal that by 2012:

- all households will have access to sanitary latrines;
- all pigs will be kept in pens, and
- every household will have a backyard garden.

With this visit, the team arrived in Dananao at 5:00 pm and went directly to the health key person, the rural health midwife (the village chairman was not in the village at the time). The group rested for 2 hours, then met with the village officials and health core group that had been established in the community after the initial Community Health Development training to discuss progress with respect to health initiatives in the village. The factors either hindering or facilitating project implementation were discussed in detail, and the issues raised addressed there and then. Activities for the next day were discussed and teams were organized to perform specific tasks and functions, including vaccination of children, malarial control activities and a healthy village community evaluation walk through the village, followed by a workshop.

The next day began at 6.30am. The activities went well and the community members appreciated all being involved in the whole process, making them aware of their role in the totality of health development in their village. A health worker mentioned during the evaluation that the healthy village project has already started to show a significant impact on the lives of the people. Households are now beginning to address sanitation problems bit by bit.

- All children of eligible age in the community are now vaccinated
- 65 of the 102 households now have access to sanitary toilets (previously only one household did)
- Around 25% of households now have backyard gardens and have been beautified, compared to none previously.

However, only one household has constructed a pigpen. The other households have all fenced their yards to prevent pigs getting into their garden or that of their neighbour. This has not removed the health hazard, but people are beginning to accept that pig waste can be harmful to the health of their children.

The recommendation made was that continuous support is needed for the community to achieve their goal by end of 2012. Bringing about sustainable change is a slow process in most of these communities, and requires monitoring and encouragement over several years. It is achieved not by pouring in money (money is only provided to pay for building materials that not locally available but are required for latrines etc), but by gradually changing community attitudes and motivating and enabling them to improve their own health situation.



House-to-house measles vaccination



Evaluating household sanitation practices

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](mailto: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*