



Newsletter

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September
2011

We're almost

50!

Next year our organisation will reach its 50th anniversary.

Partners in Aid started out in 1962 as the Society for Those Who Have Less, with the aim of supporting rural communities in India and Bangladesh (which was then East Pakistan).

In the early days, projects involved shipments of livestock, but during the 1980s the focus expanded to community development. We also became Action Aid Australia—For Those Who Have Less. In 2009 when Austcare changed its name to ActionAid Australia after joining ActionAid International as an affiliate, we then became Partners in Aid.

Our name change also reflects the way international development has changed over the past 50 years. Back in 1962, the broad view was that “the West knows best” and would decide how the poor should be helped. Now, the emphasis is on empowerment, community engagement and working in partnership at a very local level, to ensure that the support provided really does change people’s lives for the better.



***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.***

One of the biggest challenges facing disadvantaged and impoverished communities in developing countries is dealing with the consequences of climate change. In practical terms, this means farmers having to learn how to adapt their methods to cope with extreme drought, soil erosion and deforestation, low lying coastal communities (such as in Bangladesh) faced with sea level rises and flooding, and an influx of people moving from the country to already overcrowded big cities (such as Kolkata and Dhaka) because they are no longer able to make any living from agriculture. In 1995, there were already around 25 million environmental refugees globally, and according to the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), rising sea levels will wipe out more cultivated land in Bangladesh than anywhere else in the world.

Whilst Partners in Aid is not an environmental organisation, we are very aware of how these issues are affecting the communities we work with overseas, and a number of the projects we support do include activities which enable the local community to adapt, such as tank desilting at SEDS in India, and planting trees which not only provide crops but also stabilise the soil at the Jamuna River Development Project in Bangladesh. Our child sponsorship programs and the training initiatives we support will be more important than ever, as they equip vulnerable people with essential education and skills which means they can support themselves and their families when their traditional sources of income are no longer available.

We are currently reviewing our archive material, such as old newsletters and project information, and we plan to include some of the most interesting bits in newsletters over the next year. We'll also be featuring profiles of our overseas partner organisations.

We know some of our supporters have been with us a very long time, so if you are one of these and have any interesting stories from back in the days of 'For Those Who Have Less' please let us know.

Joan Averil REID - Passing of a stalwart of our organisation

Joan passed away on August 24th in Cranbourne where she and the late Len had resided for many years. Len Reid originally set up For Those Who Have Less and was very ably and willingly supported by Joan over a twenty year period, working tirelessly to bring about improvements in the lives of disadvantaged people in third world countries, notably Bangladesh and later India.

The office was run from the Reid family home with a part-time paid office lady for many years before moving to a small office in Dandenong for a number of years with Joy Handley as part-time paid office lady who also gave many more hours of voluntary service and continues to do so. There followed a three and a half year year stint in a church in Hawthorn with a part-time paid office person. The office returned to Narre Warren in June 1996 to the home of the then Chairman, Ian Pickering and wife Lyn, and our organisation has worked on a totally voluntary basis in Australia since that time.

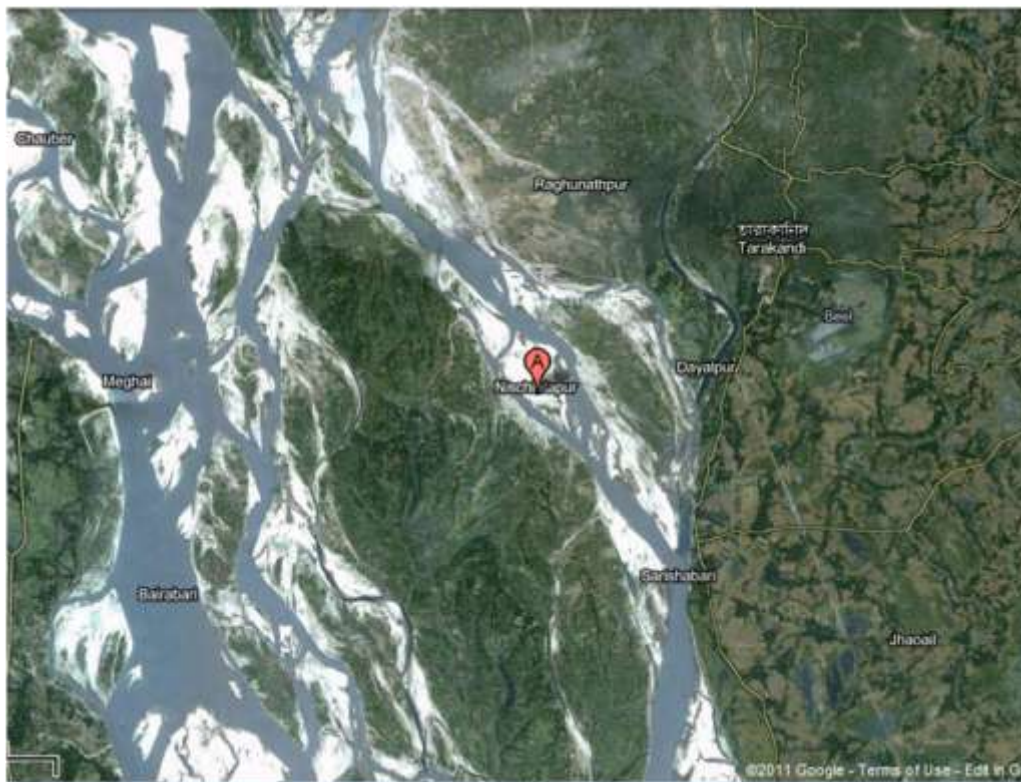
The Sandbar School

Jamuna River Sandbar (Char) Peoples Development Project (JRDP) *Symbiosis Bangladesh*

Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world. The basic needs of food, shelter and health for the most of the peoples in Bangladesh are a daily challenge. The problems of rural Bangladesh are related to over population, poverty, lack of education (particularly amongst rural women) and a social structure which does often not reward activity in a just way. The literacy rate in Bangladesh is very low. The population is always struggling with a lack of economic resources to meet their basic needs.

Many of the poorest live on the most environmentally vulnerable parts of the country. These areas include the riverbanks, the sides of railway lines and unused Government lands. However, the Jamuna River is the largest of many rivers in Bangladesh and divides the country in to east and west. The river changes as the seasons change. It morphs from a raging torrent that takes all before it in the wet season to a series of sand banks surrounded by shallow pools of water in the dry season. Each year the sand banks attract poor people to live there. They try to grow some vegetables, rice or wheat before the wet season comes. Communication and infrastructure are limited. Education facilities for children are very scarce.

Symbiosis Bangladesh, with the support of Partners in Aid and the Ashcroft family began the JRDP project on the sandbar in the village of Nischintapur, sub-district of Kazipur, District of Sirajganj. The nearest government school was a long distance away, making it impossible for young children to go to school. The community people were hoping for some assistance to establish a local primary school. Symbiosis Bangladesh with the assistance of a local man (Ali Asraf) who initially donated one third of an acre were able to open a school consisting of four rooms. Because of the shifting nature of the river with consequent erosion of the sandbar, the school has been shifted twice since its establishment (2004 and 2007). The demountable nature of the school building has enabled this.



Nishchintapur
(Image courtesy of Google Maps)

The following is a summary of the history of the school.

Year of establishment: September 2003

Opening students: 50, Teachers: 2 up to class 3.

2004: students 102

2005: School extended up to class five. Total students 150 and 4 teachers.

2006:

Total students 117 and 10 students passed class five government examination. (100% pass)

2007:

Total students 130 and 8 students passed class five government examination. (100% pass)

2008:

Total students 110 and 9 students passed class five government examination. (100% pass)

2009:

Total students 118 and 14 students passed class five government examination. (100% pass)

2010:

Total students 117 and 10 students passed class five government examination. (100% pass)

2011: Total students 141 and 3 teachers (and one teacher is being recruited).

The students who have passed the class five examination have been admitted to the government high school with the assistance of the project staff. Without the primary school run by Symbiosis Bangladesh, these children would never have had the opportunity to gain any education.

Though Symbiosis Bangladesh arranges the funding for the school and provides the staff, a committee with a president, secretary and three general members has been formed. The committee has opened a bank account for the school. Most of the students don't have ability to pay tuition fees, so the community members are grateful to the supporters of the project as without it, their children would remain illiterate.



Local children outside their school



Keen to learn

Low Carbon Farming – the Future at SEDS

SEDS has been promoting and practising sustainable farming for many years. More recently it has formalised the education of farmers in sustainable practices through the Farmers' Field School, which we reported on last year.

However, it hasn't been easy to convince small-holding farmers to change their practices. The lure of artificial fertilisers and pesticides has been attractive, although over time farmers have come to realise the degradation of the land that results, as well as increasing costs. The advent of the carbon market has enabled low carbon farming to compete with non-sustainable alternatives as a viable and profitable method of managing the land.

By adopting sustainable agriculture practices, farmers reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. These reductions can be quantified and sold on the carbon market. The financial benefits have provided the icing on the cake to encourage the changes needed for the long term viability of farming and livelihoods in the region.



Farmers' Field School

Low carbon farming involves reducing or eliminating the production of greenhouse gases such as methane and nitrogen dioxide.

One of the main ways to reduce greenhouse gas is to cease using synthetic fertilisers. Our report on our January trip last year included the experiments being conducted on farms with crops using conventional fertiliser and pesticides planted side by side with a crop using sustainable methods. Farmers could see and measure the increased yield from the crops planted sustainably.

Another measure for farmers was to change the way in which manure has been stored and used to enrich the soil. Manure left in the open produces the harmful greenhouse gas methane. By digging directly into the soil, these effects are reduced. Other methods used include reduced tillage, precision fertilisation, anaerobic composting, organic fertilisers, mulching, intercropping, multi-cropping, irrigation efficiency and a range of techniques specially designed for particular regions and communities. These techniques improve soil carbon at the same time.

SEDS is assisting farmers to take advantage of the carbon market with accurate measurement of landholdings to calculate the precise amount of greenhouse gases saved; scientific measurement of the emission reductions, collection of soil samples and manure, and knowledge of the emissions of chemical fertilisers. SEDS will also execute individual carbon contracts for each farmer.

The long term benefits to farmers of practising low carbon farming and seeing for themselves the increased crop yields are immeasurable. Low carbon farming complements the work that Partners in Aid funds in watershed management and regeneration of the water catchment areas. With large rural development corporations knocking at the door of smaller marginal farmers, the work SEDS does in shoring up farming livelihoods in the Ananthapur District is essential.



**Sustainable farming—
experimental and control crops
side by side**

Ritchies IGA Supermarkets

If you shop at Ritchies IGA stores each week for your groceries, you may already know about community benefit cards. These cards or key rings give you 'in store' discounts each week, BUT more importantly, if you nominate **PARTNERS IN AID - P. O. Box 42 Narre Warren LPO, VIC 3805** as your recipient, we receive **0.5 of a cent in every dollar** you spend in a Ritchies store.

This may not sound like a lot, but the more people who nominate Partners in Aid, the more money we make, and the more children and their families we are able to support in developing countries. This is a nice way to support your chosen charity, and will not cost you anything.

Forms are available at the Ritchies stores. Simply fill in your name and Partners In Aid details, and hand this to the check out staff who will pass it on to Head Office. Ritchies will swipe the small tag each time you shop, and Partners in Aid receive a cheque each month. How easy is that!!

NEWS



Annual Lunch in Bright for All Bengal Women's Union, Kolkata

This wonderful event is on again for the 11th year!! Delicious pasta is being donated by Simone's Restaurant.

The lunch will be held on Monday 14 November from 12 noon at Ellenvale Holiday Units, 68 Delaney Ave, Bright.

Cost: Donation \$25

To book, please contact Joy Handley direct (03) 5755 1344 or email partnersinaid@lizzy.com.au.

2011 Annual General Meeting

The 2011 AGM will be held at 8pm on **Thursday 17 November** in Narre Warren. For more details and to register your attendance please contact the office on 03 9704 6315 or email us: admin@partnersinaid.org.au.

World Food Day 2011

World Food Day takes place annually on 16 October, and the objectives of the day include encouraging the participation of rural people, particularly women and the least privileged categories, in decisions and activities influencing their living conditions.

The day presents a great opportunity to fundraise for Partners in Aid. Why not organise a morning tea, lunch or dinner to get people involved? If you are having an event we can provide some additional copies of newsletters to help spread the word.



PayPal

Partners in Aid has now registered with PayPal, meaning we can accept one-off donations online. We would still prefer regular donations and child sponsorships to be paid by EFT into our bank account. To make an online payment, go to the 'How you can help' link on our homepage at www.partnersinaid.org.au.



Spreading the Word

Board members are available for talks about Partners in Aid, so if you are involved with a church, community group or school which would be interested in finding out more about our work, then please get in touch.

Congratulations!

.....to Andrea and Geoff Pickering on the birth of Samuel Max and Mitchell Meint on 6 June. The boys arrived 8 weeks early, but both are remarkably well as is Andrea.

Planning ahead for Christmas



We know it's only September, but if you are one of the organised ones who is already thinking ahead, why not consider making a donation to one of our projects as an alternative to buying a traditional Christmas gift? You'll be making a positive difference to the lives and prospects of disadvantaged and vulnerable people. You can also make a general project donation if you prefer, or set up a child sponsorship at ABWU or SEDS.

We are happy to provide a gift certificate on request; simply tick the relevant box on the donation form.

Here are some ideas for each of our project areas:

ABWU, Kolkata

A donation of any amount towards:

- **The orphans' holiday fund**
- **Text books for senior students**
- **School uniforms**

SEDS

- **Fish fingerlings \$10 per 1000**
- **Trees \$10 each**

Sinangpad Healthy Villages, Philippines

- **Materials to construct a household sanitary latrine \$22**
- **Materials to construct a pig pen \$15**
(The labour is provided by the villagers)

Symbiosis, Bangladesh

- **Writing materials and books for school \$15 per set**
- **Tree planting and care \$50 per 100**

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

Gift cert
required?

I would like to make a general donation to Partners in Aid	\$	☐
I would like to make a donation to a project:		
ABWU (orphans trip/school uniforms/project support)	\$	☐
SEDS (fish fingerlings/trees/project support)	\$	☐
Sinangpad Healthy Villages (materials for latrine /pig pen)	\$	☐
Symbiosis Bangladesh (books & writing materials/trees/ project support)	\$	☐

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