

# Partners in Aid – AGM Reports 2009

## Hon. Chairman's Report 2009

It is with great pleasure that I present the Partners in Aid Honorary Chairman's report for 2009. It has been a busy, at times frustrating, but ultimately rewarding year. We continue to pursue our goal of empowering disadvantaged communities through community development, education, skills training and enhancing the status of women.

### Name Change

Much of the last year was spent in lengthy negotiation with Austcare and ActionAid International (AAI) regarding the name Action Aid Australia.

Many of you will know that we have used the name Action Aid Australia since the early 1980s when we entered into a partnership with ActionAid UK. Although the partnership has long finished, we had retained the use of the name since that time.

More recently, ActionAid UK formed partnerships in a number of other countries and eventually several amalgamated to become AAI. Some years ago we were approached by AAI to join the global network. This would have required us to become a larger, more bureaucratic organization with many paid staff and the board took the view that this was not the direction in which we wanted to go, nor the type of organisation that would suit our supporters.

As a result of our decision, AAI approached other Australian NGOs to join them, and Austcare agreed to an affiliation. For this purpose they wished to use the name ActionAid Australia.

As we had been established in Australia under our name for more than twenty years, we were initially extremely reluctant to relinquish the name, but recognised that this would stand in the way of AAI achieving a truly global presence. AAI and ourselves share the same aim – eradicating poverty and improving the lives of others but we work only at the grassroots level with local communities. AAI place more emphasis on influencing governments and international institutions, which we are clearly not in a position to do in any formal way.

We reached an amicable agreement with AAI whereby we gave up the rights to the name based on the 'greater good', rather than our personal attachment to the name.

We then needed to find and implement a new name for our organization, which encompassed our values and goals. The upside to this whole process was that we were able to take on a name that is a true reflection of who we are and what we do. It also removes us from the regular confusion where people associate us with the Action Aid international network, and therefore expect us to be a different type of organization.

We held several discussion groups with supporters with the aim being to understand supporter perceptions and identify related words and names.

In general terms, we found that what appeals to our supporters is that we are small and personal, focused on direct and tangible results and work effectively with our partners at the grassroots in their local communities. Supporters also like the fact that donations go directly to people in need rather than being used in Australia for unnecessary overheads.

The outcome of the process was our new name Partners in Aid which came into effect on 1st July. We have had excellent feedback from our supporters and overseas partners who believe this name reflects who we are and what we do.

We'd like to express our thanks to everyone who provided feedback, whether by attending discussion groups or writing, phoning or emailing with comments and support.

We are in the process of obtaining Trademark Registration for the name and logo.

### New Board Member

Another great outcome from the name change process was the introduction of our newest board member Mary Dunne. Mary is a specialist in marketing and research and initially became involved when she volunteered to help with the name change process. We are immensely grateful for this as we had little expertise in this area. To our great relief, Mary was able to give us guidance and manage the process so that we achieved, not only a successful outcome with the name change, but a clearer understanding of our organisation's strengths and goals.

We have successfully persuaded Mary to remain with us as a board member and I would like to welcome her and look forward to continuing to take advantage of her experience and expertise.

### Projects

Our projects are all going well as can be seen from the reports by our project coordinators. They have all provided their reports for project activities and achievements over the last year but I am including a very brief summary here.

The Sinangpad Healthy Village project in rural northern Philippines continues to assist communities to improve the environmental health conditions in their villages. Since its inception in 2007, 46 villages have taken part and currently 40 villages are successfully involved in the project. As well this year, a schools education program has been introduced to reinforce health messages to school children.

We have two projects in Bangladesh. The Technical Training and Information Support (TTIS) project continues to run very well. The aim of the project involves providing vocational skills (sewing, embroidery or hairdressing skills) to participants, empowering them in general, improving their socio-economic status and health. The emphasis is on providing direct assistance to women but the project is not exclusive to women. The project at the moment is working at encouraging stability in the training centres that already exist but the number of training centres continues to expand in accordance with the plan presented last year.

The Jamuna River Sandbar Peoples Development Project (JRDP ) also continues to run successfully. The project operates in difficult conditions on a moving sandbar island in the Jamuna River with erosion at the upstream end of the island and deposition at the downstream end. The project maintains a relocatable school on the island. It also aims to produce cooperation within the community,

predominantly through the formation of cooperative groups, which also function as savings groups. A TTIS centre operates on the island. Greater efficiency in coverage by the school, and when necessary in its relocation, could be achieved by increasing the number of schools on the island and it is hoped that such an expansion will be achieved in the coming years. During this year both these projects were visited by one of our Board members.

SEDS managed to arrange for 3 tanks to be desilting this year due to high levels of villager support and unexpected rains. They have continued to support women's self help groups and to promote health awareness through these village based organisations. The children sponsorship program is still going well. The project co-ordinators plan to visit SEDS in January 2010.

Projects and the child sponsorship program for the All Bengal Women's Union are doing well. They provide substantial assistance for the support, rehabilitation and vocational training of residential children and older girls. This year we have 86 sponsorships and, from this income and other donations, have been able to allocate monies for a number of their requirements in addition to their vocational training projects. In particular, we are pleased to have provided funding for a remedial teacher and for a professional trainer for the bakery project. Joy Handley will visit ABWU in March 2010.

#### Finances

We maintain a healthy and well monitored financial position which can be seen in the Treasurer's report.

#### General Activities

Website. To go with our new name, we have a new website which will be an increasingly valuable source of information and we hope to make it as comprehensive as possible. Our old website is maintained as a redirection site for us and the new ActionAid Australia. I would like to thank our board member, Kristin Burdett, for the enormous amount of work that she does with this on top of her position as our secretary.

Fundraising. Our main social fundraiser this year was the annual lunch in Bright run by Joy Handley which was again very successful and raised almost \$2,000. The World Food Day dinner has been postponed until March next year due to the arrival of Andrea and Geoff Pickering's new baby girl. I would like to congratulate them on the birth of Jasmine and thank them for bringing a second Partners in Aid member into the world. Given the amount of work required for the treasurer's position, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to Andrea for doing this on top of running a business and caring for two young children.

#### Joy Handley

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 an Honorary Advisor.

Joy has been a tireless worker for us and for ABWU where she regards all and sundry as 'her girls' and it is obvious that she has also inspired much love, affection and gratitude from them. She 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 well deserved Rotary 'Caring and Sharing' award for her many years of devotion to helping others.

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

### Board Changes

I have already mentioned Mary's appointment. Jess Fliegner has recently moved to the UK for a year with her new husband and, as result, has tendered her resignation. I would like to thank Jess for all of her hard work with the website and producing the newsletter and wish her all the best for her time overseas.

### Thanks to All

I would also like to thank the many people who have helped us this year, whether it be folding newsletters, stuffing envelopes, donating their professional services or providing them at preferential rates. Without this support, it would be very difficult for our organisation to make such a positive impact in the overseas communities where our projects are located.

Given that the global financial situation has put many Australians' finances under pressure, I would particularly like to thank all of our members and supporters for their continued loyal support.

I would also like to thank all of the board for their hard work over the last year. I know that we all feel rewarded by how much is achieved by a small group of volunteers and their supporters, despite little corporate or government support.

I look forward to working with you all in the coming year.

### ABWU Project Report

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.

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. There is a strong awareness that there is no point in 'rescuing' these girls if they can't be given prospects for the future. It is hoped that we will be able to continue to provide funding for this and we have asked for donations for this.

We were also 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.

The vocational training projects that we currently fund are going well.

### 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 in this field.

#### Sponsorships

There has been an increase in sponsorships to 86 and ABWU has increased the number of resident children. Only girls from the most destitute or desperate circumstances are admitted so it is pleasing that we have been able to contribute to the number of children that can be 'rescued'.

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.

#### Other donations

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.

#### Fundraising

The annual Bright lunch raised almost \$2,000. This was the eighth year that the renowned two chef's hats restaurant, Simone's of Bright, has supplied the food. We are very grateful to them and to the Alpine Women's group for their enormous support of this extremely successful event. This lunch will be held again on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November this year.

#### Joy's award.

We cannot finish this report without mentioning that this is Joy's 25<sup>th</sup> year of work with this organisation. She has been an integral part of the success of Partners in Aid and was honoured with a Rotary 'Caring and Sharing' award for her many years of devotion to helping others. ABWU have sent enthusiastic congratulations and endorsed Joy's worthiness of the award.

#### SEDS – Project Report

PIA has continued to support SEDS in the areas of 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.

#### **Water Shed 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 that water catchment areas and prevent top soil erosion included fire tracing to protect against forest fires. The higher rainfall allowed more trees to be planted in the 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 work 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 programme is that now some are investing in seeds and raising nurseries to sell nursery plants of vegetables for kitchen gardens.

### **SEDS Profile**

SEDS was nominated for the BBC World Challenge contest this year and was a finalist. It was good to know their unique and successful long-term project has been recognized at an international level. SEDS is also still awaiting Gold Standard Accreditation for the Clean Development Mechanism reported on at last year's AGM. This is a lengthy process but the accreditation will be valuable when it arrives.

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.

Amanda Stone

### **SEDS - Child Sponsorship**

Our sponsorship program which began in 1995 has consolidated this year, and on paper we do not appear to have grown, but remain at 186. This can be explained partly due to a number of children commencing on the program, prior to sponsors being found for them. Early commencement allows SEDS to monitor the children over the first few months to determine whether the children are keen to attend school, and if the parents are willing to support them. This has proven to be a good process, but we cannot guarantee that it will work every time. Occasionally, parents will just pack their few meager belongings and take their family to a larger city in the hope of gaining more regular employment.

The earlier part of this year was a devastating one in Victoria with bushfires which claimed many lives and destroyed much property, bush and wildlife. Ian and I were involved in some extra voluntary work through Rotary to assist where we could, like so many other people. For twelve months, we were also supporting a dear friend who died of cancer in June. Due to these events, I have not devoted as much time as usual to the program.

We have also lost a number of our donors during the past year, and are aware that in several cases these decisions were based on cutting back on expenses for some of them. Three of our long time supporters died during the year, and their support commenced for this program back in 1995/96, but their support for the organisation dated back further than that. Finding replacement sponsors for these children has been more difficult because of the economic situation this past year.

At the end of the school year in India, we expect to have from ten to fifteen children exit our program, most of them complete Year 10 at school, with a number of them leaving the area with their parents

One of our lovely success stories is Maruthi who is in his final year of University. He lives in a Government Hostel and is now fully funded by the Government. Maruthi has polio in both legs and is unable to walk. Several of our former students are now attending Higher Education ie. Year 11 and 12, and also university and this is being funded by the Government, a new initiative for children from disadvantaged situations. Education beyond Year 10 applies to a small number of children.

We rely very much on the continued generosity of our sponsors who allow the remaining young people the opportunity to attend school up until Year 10. .

Our contact with the wider community comes about in different ways.

- Quarterly newsletters have highlighted specific children requiring sponsorship
- Articles on children and the process of selection, has generated interest.
- Speaking engagements by both Lyn and Ian Pickering continue to gain support for children and the Watershed projects.
- Word of mouth
- Annual World Food Day dinner at Bayles

Letters and telephone calls to the office confirm the choice we made with this program, and it has been very pleasing to receive such positive feedback from donors.

Since 1995, the associated projects in schools include clean drinking water, toilets, woodlot or fruit trees, horticultural plots and further school development. A medical fund set up for the sponsored children on our program assists with some of the costs associated with health care which is not able to be met by the sponsorship payments. Doctors give their time for the majority of health care provided, but extras like glasses and more specialised medical attention must be paid for, in part at least.

Sponsorship of children relates directly to the Watershed Management project which has been ongoing for many years. When new villages are selected for a Watershed project, children will often come to the attention of the Health Care workers as the local Village Organisation, and Womens Self

Help Group participants begin the process of collaboration with SEDS to become involved in this much needed work.

During the course of the year our donors receive at least three communications.

1. A Christmas card made by the students, and a letter.
2. A letter and photo of the children with their new clothes.
3. Copy of school report and a letter.

This year I have been fortunate to receive great hands on support from Cheryl and Bec Reeves. Cheryl in particular has helped at the very busy times ie.Christmas cards and letters, Photos of children wearing the new clothes they receive at Christmas from their donors and again at School Reports and letter distribution to donors. Checking the reports, and making sure everything is in order and that every child is covered in all of these areas, takes considerable time and effort.

Very special thanks to Robin and Liz Zlonzak who fold our newsletters and prepare them for mailout four times per year.

Whilst this year was slower in terms of growth, many children are attending school, and gaining an important education. In the majority of cases, this is something their parents were unable to achieve. Thanks again everyone.

Lyn Pickering

### [Sinangpad Healthy Village Project Report](#)

The project is a partnership of Partners in Aid and the Provincial Health Office, Province of Kalinga, Philippines. The Sinangpad Healthy Village Project (SHVP) officially started on January 2007 but the ground works started in 2006 and shall culminate on December 2009, depending on the availability of fund.

The following are the project output:

#### COMPONENTS:

##### I. TRAINING

- a. Organizing and training of pool of trainers on Community Health Development (CHD) for the whole province of Kalinga. It composed of the following entities: 5 from the Provincial Health Office (PHO); 6 from the Municipal Health Offices (MHO); 2 from committed individuals and the 3 trainers based at the PHO, MHO and a representative of Sinangpad.
- b. Training on Community Health Development conducted in the 46 different villages, 37 areas were covered by the SHVP and the 9 areas were covered by other fund sources (Local Government Units and the Integrated Community Health Services Project: ADB & Aus AID funding)
- c. Training Workshop on Community Income Enhancement on Soap Making covering 2 villages

## II. HEALTH PROMOTION/ IEC

- a. School based health IEC activities
  - i. Seminar workshop Orientation on SHVP School Based Health Promotion Initiatives for Teachers – conducted 7 sessions in 3 municipalities, covering 13 schools which caters to 13 villages
  - ii. Hand Washing Demonstration to School Children undertaken in 10 schools covering 14 barangays
  - iii. IEC Materials: Board Games (Snakes and Ladders, Consequence and jigsaw Puzzle) and 5 Story Books
    1. With workshop and distribution done in 14 schools which covers 17 villages
- b. Community based IEC activities:
  - i. Hand washing demonstration done in 5 barangays
  - ii. Conducted Parents' Class in 2 barangays/ villages focused on Environmental Sanitation and other health programs

## III. FUND AUGMENTATION:

- a. Provision of funds for 32 barangays
- b. Focus of funding is on health and environmental sanitation: provision of funds for the following items:
  - i. Construction materials for sanitary toilets for individual households, neighborhood/ communal, and for schools and health/ community structures
  - ii. Construction materials for village drainage systems, pig management initiatives
  - iii. Community-based health promotion/ IEC activities; like parents/ mothers' classes, children health movement initiatives
  - iv. Other identified health and environmental sanitation needs in the community

## IV. MONITORING AND EVALUATION: This covered the 46 barangays/ villages

- a. Organized Health Core groups/ Task forces in the community regularly conduct monitoring activities in the area in monthly, bi-monthly and quarterly bases
- b. The Municipal and Provincial Teams usually undertake monitoring and evaluation activities in a quarterly and bi-annual bases
- c. Consultative meetings/ workshops were done at the barangay and municipal levels

## V. SUSTAINABILITY ACTIVITIES:

- a. Established Community Data Monitoring Boards to guide and motivate the community in improving their health and environmental sanitation condition–
- b. Planning and revisiting of plans is done in the project areas in 3 to 6-monthly bases depending on the pace of the community and/or per recommendation of the Municipal Health Office.
- c. The CHD training Pool meet regularly to feedback and assess the development of the different project areas. Each point persons in the area provide their observation, assessment results as they visit their respective area of coverage. Planning is also done where tasking and activities are drawn up from the CHD team members.
- d. Organizing of community health task forces/ core groups to initiate and monitor health and related activities in the project areas.

- e. Integration/ adoption of the SHVP initiatives and schemes to the Inter Local Health Zones Health Plans. This is an opportunity for expanding the SHVP schemes to the different villages with the support of the Local Government Units (LGU) and the Department of Health.

VI. Organizing of the Sinangpad Association, Inc. This organization shall ensure that the initiatives introduced through the SHVP is maintained and sustained. This organization can also assist the LGU in expanding/ replicating the SHVP initiatives to other villages.

## Symbiosis Annual Report

We are fortunate to have Dr Morris Lee visiting us from Symbiosis today. The information below is intended as background material to his discussion with those attending the Partners in Aid AGM.

### **Technical Training and Low Skills Jobs Training Program (TTIS)**

The TTIS project provides training mainly to women of little economic means in sewing, embroidery or hairdressing. 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 training is general training in life skills. So that the objectives of the project may be stated as

1. Empower women and med in selected areas of ...
2. Impart vocational skills in sewing, embroidery, hairdressing and beauty treatment;
3. Improve the socio-economic and health status of the participants and their family members.

On a trip to Bangladesh in February of this year I saw how pervasive this program is. Small centres were located in the most unusual places, often unknown to my guide. An income of \$10,000 to \$20,000/annum derivable can be realistically be obtained from working in the area after training. The demand for graduates appears to be high.

Although I was able to visit these projects during February of this year and saw the work being undertaken, as noted above, we are fortunate to have at this AGM, Morris Lee visiting from Symbiosis, who will discuss the achievements of the program.

### **Jumana River Sandbar People Development Project (JRDP)**

This project is novel in its structure and it is worth noting the setting in which the project 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 river, 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 the rivers to widen dramatically. This widening of the rivers has rendered 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 within these rivers, especially the in Jumana River, see Fig. 1. These islands have become places where those persons 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.



**Fig 1. Google Earth image showing the Jamuna River (flowing from the north) during the dry season. Note the many sand islands within the river.**

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, Figs 2 and 3, in a manner very similar to the early inhabitants of Holland before their mounds were joined to dykes. However unlike the Dutch, the Bengalis on these islands must contend with the islands being slowly washed downstream by the river at a rate of several kilometres a year.



**Fig. 2. Photograph of the terrain on the sand island. Note the built-up mounds with trees and housing.**

As members and donors will be aware Partners In Aid has been working through the Bangladeshi local NGO Symbiosis has been working on an ambitious plan to assist communal development and cooperation by the poor, Fig.3, living on the sandbar islands of the rivers of Bangladesh. This project is the *Jumana River Sandbar Peoples Development Project (A)* , JRDP-A, located south-west of Jamalpur and north –west of Tangail.



**Fig 3. 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.**

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 the order of 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.

Again, we are fortunate to have Morris Lee from Symbiosis visiting for this AGM. Morris knows both of these projects thoroughly and will give an account of how these aims have been met.

Roger Hughes