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For Those Who Have Less

Each October, Action Aid Australia holds an Annual General Meeting. The Chairperson and project co-ordinators each present a report to interested parties.

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Honorary Chairman's Report
AGM REPORT 16 October 2008 from Dr Anne-Marie Maltby

It is with great pleasure that I present the Action Aid Australia Honorary Chairman's report for 2008.

It has been another busy but rewarding year. We continue to pursue our goal of empowering disadvantaged communities through community development, education, skills training and enhancing the status of women.

Projects

Our projects are all going well as can be seen from the reports by our project managers.

Our newest project, the Sinangpad Healthy Village project in the northern Philippines aims to enable village communities to improve their environmental sanitation practices. Over the last 12 months, implementation has commenced in 32 villages and we are extremely pleased with the progress.

We have two projects in Bangladesh. This year Action Aid Australia had started funding of the next stage of its involvement in the Technical Training and Information Support (TTIS) project in Bangladesh. This stage builds on and expands the number of training centres and continues with their aim of improving the vocational skills of the participants, empowering them in a general way, and improving the socio-economic and health status all involved.

The *Jamuna River Sandbar Peoples Development Project (JRDP)* also continues to run successfully. The project operates in difficult conditions on a sandbar in Sirajganj and on the adjacent banks of the Jamuna River. It aims to produce cooperation within the community, predominantly through the formation of cooperative groups which also function as savings groups. The overall goal is to improve the educational level and awareness of the community especially in environmental matters.

We also have two main project areas in India.

SEDS (Social and Education Development Society) has continued its work in watershed management and community development. Evidence of their continuing success is obvious in the improved quality of life in the area. The child sponsorship program has been highly successful with 186 village children currently in the program and who are now able, amongst other things, to attend school on a regular basis.

We also run a sponsorship program for the All Bengal Women's Union for their residential children and older girls to assist with their support, rehabilitation and vocational training. This year we have 85 sponsorships and have been able to allocate monies for a number of their requirements in addition to their vocational training projects.

Finances

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

General Activities

Website. The relatively recent addition of Jess Fliegner and Kristin Burdett to the AAA has exponentially increased our computer skills. They have both been involved with updating our website and this will be an ongoing process. The website will be an increasingly valuable source of information and we hope to make it as comprehensive as possible.

Fundraising. Once again, our two main social fundraisers were lunch in Bright run by the indefatigable Joy Handley and the World Food Day dinner held at the home of our treasurer Andrea Pickering in Bayles. Much work goes into each of these very successful events and our thanks go to all concerned.

A new and welcome source of donations was the Employee Donation /Workplace Giving Scheme where companies match employee donations, making them doubly effective. Currently we are registered on the BHP Employee Donation Scheme and hope to have some other workplaces added.

Sponsorship fees have remained at the same level for several years and this, year we have been forced to raise our annual sponsorship fee from \$220 to \$240 pa. This is still considerable lower than similar schemes with other NGOs.

Vale Roger Griffiths

It is with considerable regret and sadness that we note the recent death of our esteemed Board member Roger Griffiths. Roger was a wonderful friend, an enthusiastic participant in the work of Action Aid and a generous donor. The news of his untimely death was received with great sadness. Notwithstanding his failing health over the past two or three years, Roger did not allow his lack of well-being to curtail his attendance at Board meetings, and other AAA activities, including a visit to the SEDS project in India. We will remember Roger for many things and, not least, his warm humanity, wisdom, humility, wit, collegiality, courage in adversity, and his practical concern for the poor and marginalized.

He will be greatly missed.

AAA Board Changes

On a happier note, I would like to welcome our two newest board members, Amanda Stone and Graham Moore. They each bring skills and experience that will be invaluable to AAA.

One other major change to note is that Chris Pittendreagh, although remaining on the board, is stepping down after many years as the AAA secretary. Chris has a great deal of experience and knowledge and we owe him a great debt of gratitude for all his time and effort over these years. The secretary's role is pivotal to the smooth running of any

organization and we have been very lucky to have someone so capable and reliable in the job for so long. Thank-you Chris. We are glad you're remaining on the board so that we continue to get the benefit of your great wisdom and commonsense.

Kristin Burdett has agreed to take over as secretary and her well known abilities in the field of form filling will be put to good use in the role.

I would like to thank all of the board for their hard work over the last year. I know that we all feel that what we do is very worthwhile and this is its own reward. I would also like to thank all of our members and supporters, not only for their donations, which do so much good, but also for their feedback and support.

I continue to be impressed at how much can be 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 and welcome any feedback and suggestions.

Anne-Marie Maltby

Hon. Chairman

**ALL BENGAL WOMEN'S UNION KOLKATA
PROJECT**

AGM REPORT 16 October 2008 from Joy Handley

It has been another busy year at All Bengal Women's Union and I am happy to report that our communications have greatly increased...until recently!! This has been due in the main to huge power cuts lasting days sometimes and this seems to have interfered with email servers so sometimes it is weeks before we have contact. There can also be delays when ABWU members are on holidays or ill.

Due to some interest from donors through the year, we had discussions with ABWU regarding some of their additional needs beyond our current support for vocational training. Donated funds were earmarked for these needs and, as a result, we have been able to provide support above and beyond the usual sponsorships and projects.

Most notably, we have been able to fund repairs/maintenance/renovation for the ACH kitchen. Those of you who had a good look at the photos in the June newsletter would agree that work was urgently needed. Their kitchen was extremely dilapidated and very basic and totally inadequate for their needs. The new kitchen will still be very basic but much more functional. Along with this we have been able to supplement Paul Dowd's work to improve drainage with additional work on the ACH drains. It is hoped that this will result in less standing water during the monsoon period which will reduce mosquito breeding areas and the incidence of malaria in the home.

ABWU also requested assistance with remedial tutoring for ACH girls, many had not had any schooling whatsoever and needed help to achieve even basic levels. Funds have been donated for six months of tutoring. We have also bought two battery power packs to assist with essential power requirements during electricity outages.

The vocational projects that we currently support are going well.

Tailoring and Cutting Project

There are currently 25 girls in this project and they learn to make clothing. The girls must be self-sufficient when they leave the home so their training leans heavily towards this. When they leave, they are given a sewing machine so that they can continue with this work, earn a livelihood and be less prone to exploitation.

Weaving Project

The girls who joined the Project earlier have crossed the primary stage of weaving training. They are now weaving tablemats, napkins, designed bed-covers, designed scarves, etc. With our support, the home has procured a Jacquard Machine for weaving fine articles and fine design. Special training for this is being provided by an outside agency. ABWU are satisfied with the progress of the girls and feel that the girls will be able to earn enough to become self-sufficient. This project requires our support for a further 2 years when it is anticipated it will be self-funded.

Machine Knitting Project

Girls have made pullovers, scarves, cardigans, baby clothes etc. The project also helps to supply school pullovers for children and staff. Many outsiders come to buy these

woollens as they are cheaper and of better quality than the markets. The ABWU report states that next year budget requirements for this project will be much smaller.

We currently have 85 sponsors which is a welcome increase on the previous year.

A great piece of news is that Mita Das, a blind girl, has completed her higher school education and is now studying at a Fine Arts University in Kolkata. Mita is studying Vocal Music which is a 3 year course. This is a great achievement for a girl who was abandoned as a baby and the only home and family she has is ABWU! Sponsors donated money for the purchase of a musical instrument to allow her to pursue her studies. She is a very strong willed and determined girl and I am sure she will get through all of this with flying colours.

Additional sponsorship money was also donated towards a holiday trip so that orphans, with no other family to go to, can experience (usually for the first time) a couple of days outside the Kolkata environment. The medical fund was also supported.

The main annual fundraiser for ABWU is the Luncheon held in Bright each year. Last year's lunch was again a great success raising almost \$2,000 and this year is set for 17 November.

It has been very satisfying to be able to support ABWU in these additional areas and it has overall been a very rewarding year.

My thanks to Anne-Marie Maltby for all her work in looking after the sponsorship payments. This has taken a huge load off me and I am extremely grateful to her.

JOY HANDLEY
HON.SECRETARY ABWU KOLKATA INDIA

SINANGPAD HEALTHY VILLAGE PROJECT
AGM REPORT 16 October 2008 from Glenys Hughes

This is our newest project, which commenced in 2007. Over the past year, this community health development in the rural province of Kalinga, in northern Philippines has gathered momentum, with implementation in 32 villages, with plans for another 13 villages to participate. This will make a total of 45 villages (out of 153 in the province), which can be assisted with current available funds.

The goal of the project is to assist rural villages to diagnose their environmental sanitation problems, which are affecting their health & to find low cost but effective solutions. Participation is voluntary.

The two key project workers – Val Pis-O & Rose Alunday - work closely with staff at the Provincial Health Office & the Department of Agriculture. In August, Rose & Val visited Melbourne. They met AAA Board members & gave a presentation to update the Board on progress of the project. They also took back some new ideas to trial:

-training teachers & rural health workers in the low-cost SODIS technique to disinfect water

-more effective management of pigs kept in pens

On Rose's return to Kalinga, she was asked to give a presentation on the project to a Forum of Governors from the six northern provinces in the Philippines. The project is being viewed as one of the local projects adopting best practices. Rose & Val have been working on a replication manual, which can be given to any Governor interested in using this approach in their province.

Future prospects:

In addition to the ongoing core work of the project, plans for the coming months include:

- training of volunteers from participating villages as 'village sanitary inspectors'
- approaching the Department of Education with the plan to provide a package of games, stories & activities to be used in local schools which encourages children to practise good hygiene & environmentally-sound behaviour.

Glenys Hughes
Project Coordinator

SEDS Projects

AGM REPORT 16 October 2008 from Amanda Stone

SEDS (Social and Education Development Society) has continued its work in watershed management and community development with funds from AAA during 2007-2008.

AAA provided funds of \$28,795.50 for 2007-2008, which was used for water tank desilting in 5 communities, providing 100,000 fish fingerlings to these tanks and setting up tank users associations in these villages. Also funded were salaries for 8 watchers for tamarind groves, a feasibility study for a Women's Income Generating activity involving seed collection, oil extraction and marketing of by-products, support for village health workers and capacity building programmes for village organisations.

Amanda Stone visited SEDS in November/December 2007 and was able to observe all these projects in action and all nearing completion. Tank desilting was delayed at various points due to rain but had otherwise proceeded as expected.

A feasibility study was being conducted at this time by a British volunteer with an economics background and consideration was given by SEDS to establishing a biofuel production enterprise. The study was to establish the availability of seed material, economic viability and willingness of the women to undertake such a program and to be completed by July this year.

The 2008-2009 funding application proposed to continue this study and set up an oil crushing unit to be run by the women of Self Help Groups in selected areas. Funds for this undertaking were also being sought from other donors with a plan to use the revolving money available in the Self Help Groups as seed capital for purchase of Neem, Derris, Indica and other oil producing seeds. The project would enable women in the Village Self Help Groups to have ownership of fixing rates of the purchase of seeds and sale of the oil extracted and pesticides made from the waste.

However while funding was being considered by AAA, it was decided by SEDS that this project was not feasible, and the proposal abandoned. In its place, SEDS has developed a Clean Development Mechanism proposal, in line with the Kyoto protocol, to be financed in large part by sale of CER credits to a carbon investor. This requires Gold Standard accreditation and the AAA Board was able to write a letter of support to facilitate that accreditation. At this stage, AAA funds are not involved in this project, although it has our full support as it fulfils all the criteria for a community development, environmentally sustainable project which will improve the lives of the very poor in the 5 mandals where SEDS works.

AAA funding of \$31,750 was sought and granted for 2008 -2009. This will cover the cost of continuing the projects funded in 2007-2008 with major costs being

- Managerial staff
- Trainers
- Support staff

- Travel costs
- Resources – Fish and Watchers for the tamarind groves.

The first instalment of \$28,795 was forwarded in April 2008 and a second instalment of \$2954.50 will be forwarded in October, pending receipt of a progress report from SEDS. We have been informed that tank desilting has again been delayed due to rain but will have commenced now.

SEDS has continued to be managed under often trying conditions by Manil Joshua (CEO) and Rajen Joshua, Project Manager. They have been supported by a number of administrative staff and field workers, many of whom have been part of a stable workforce for some years. Volunteers from Europe continue to provide support both administratively and in the school, but their stays are short (usually less than 6 months) and continuity of their work is interrupted.

However, the success of their ongoing work in improving water availability for the 350,000 people in their region, and regenerating the landscape for farming and animals through raising the water table is continuous and very evident. Village organisations established by SEDS are highly organised and financially well-managed. These are the backbone of the work that SEDS undertakes, providing lasting improvements to quality of life for local villagers, and made possible through the continual funding from, and long association with, Action Aid Australia (the real one).

Amanda Stone
Project Coordinator

SEDS Child Sponsorship

AGM REPORT 16 October 2008 from Lyn Pickering

The child sponsorship program began in early 1995 and we are now in our fourteenth year of a program which started out to help a small number of children who had previously not been attending school regularly because of family circumstances, or general lack of interest, or even teachers not turning up to teach in their schools.

Child sponsorship payments remained at \$220 per annum for many years, until this year when our Board agreed to a raise it to \$240 per annum per child. No donor with SEDS has made a negative comment, and they are all very pleased also to pay a further \$20 which covers the cost of a new set of clothes for the children at Christmas time.

The past year has shown growth again in the number of children being sponsored. Currently there are 180 children on our sponsorship program. Figures given on a 1st July to 30th June basis are always difficult. The school year in India finishes in late April, with school resuming in July. With advice from SEDS I am able to come up with a figure of exit children. This is based on the number of Year 10 students, or students at higher levels who are exiting the program. Over the summer months, a number of families relocate to larger cities. School reports are not released by the majority of the schools until the commencement of the new school year. This makes the process of the exit child, thank your letters, new profiles and photos of a replacement child offered to the donor, and the paperwork, stretch out for a number of months.

This year Maruthi, a young man with very badly deformed legs caused by polio is at a Government Hostel doing 2nd year Engineering at University. A small number of students continued on with Year 11 and 12 with some good successes. The students did not all pass, but they have gained so much from the experience of a higher education.

This continued growth in the child sponsorship program has come about through various ways

- Quarterly newsletters have highlighted specific children requiring sponsorship
- Articles on children, and why people sponsor has generated interest.
- Speaking engagements by both Lyn and Ian Pickering continue to gain support for children.
- 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.

During the fourteen years of the program, projects in schools include clean drinking water, toilets where there is an adequate water supply, woodlot or fruit trees and further school development. A medical fund was set up for the sponsored children on our program to help with some of the costs associated with the health care which is not able to be met by the sponsorship payments. Local Doctors give their time for the majority of

the 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 projects which have 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 begin the process of collaboration with SEDS to become involved in this much needed work.

As of today, our AGM, I have 186 children on the program.

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

1. A Christmas card made by the students, and a letter from Lyn
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.

This year we have donors who have come back and been prepared to sponsor more than one child.

Thank you to our volunteers – in the office

Cheryl Reeves

Bec Reeves

Elise Shutt

Kirra Pickering

Robin and Liz Zlonzak

- For folding the newsletters and getting them ready for the mailout four times a year.

Lyn Pickering

Project Coordinator

Bangladesh Projects

AGM REPORT 16 October 2008 from Roger Hughes

In Bangladesh, Action Aid Australia works in conjunction with another organisation called Symbiosis. We have two long term projects with this group.

Technical Training and Information Support Project

This project was temporarily suspended for the financial year 2007-2008. However, it is now fully functional again, its progress will be reported in next year.

Jumuna River Sandbar Peoples Development Project (A)

During the period 2007-8 the main project of Action Aid Australia in Bangladesh was the Jamuna River Sandbar Peoples Development Project. The current stage of this project is proposed to run from 2007-10. The project concentrates on those living in the area of Kazipur especially those living on islands in the Jamuna River. The project aims to encourage community cooperation through the development of groups, which are broadly designed to encourage communal activities and awareness, increase functional literacy and numeracy, promote health within the community and promote business enterprises by members of the groups.

As the people being helped are generally of an initially very low educational level and have low self-esteem, it is necessary to conduct these activities in stages. Initially Primary Groups are formed in which the main focus is on literacy and numeracy in association with the development of self esteem. Such groups consist of maybe twenty persons of the same gender. The groups receive considerable supervision and stay in this form for between one and two years. In the current project five or six new groups of this type are being formed each year. During this past year five new groups (target 5 groups) were formed. There are presently 300 members of groups many of which date back to the previous project.

On completion of the training within a primary group participants are encouraged, on graduation, to join a Secondary Group. As Primary Groups have been running during earlier stages of the JRDP there is a small graduation pool ready for the formation of these groups now. However, no such group (target one group) formed this past year. Three potential groups are in active discussion about formation. Once formed these groups are on-going. Associated with these groups is the expectation of group savings schemes, which are to be used as a form of micro-credit but remain independent of a large collecting organisation. However, in addition to improving the financial position of the members of the group, the groups' function is to develop the community. They are to be the support groups through which many of the projects aims are implemented or encouraged. These groups are also to send representatives to a Tertiary Group which is to function as a regional forum exchanging ideas and holding the greater community together.

The activities that are to spring from these Secondary Groups, or with the encouragement of these groups, include further functional education, community libraries, and primary

level schooling and preschool training for the little ones. Primary schools often, but not always, exist within a couple of kilometres of a village but this distance is often a hindrance to children getting to school. The development of more local preschool training centres appears to provide the encouragement to children to make the effort to attend schools even if they are more remote. No new preschool was opened during the year, however, five tutors (target five tutors) were given training. During 2007-8 a total of 175 students (target 50 students) were assisted with their schooling.

Social awareness was raised through a series of talks to 175 members (target 150 members) of the Primary Groups. Environmental awareness was also raised through three lectures to 160 people (target 150 members) predominantly members of Primary Groups. Similar talks were given to 250 school children (target 150 children) and 500 trees (target 300 trees) were planted predominantly on public land. Such activities have been an important part of many Action Aid activities going back to our roadside tree planting projects in Bagha Rajshahi. In addition to the tree planting approximately 10 kitchen garden demonstration plots (target 10 plots) have been setup by the groups.

By its nature the project is very concerned with the health of the community. Approximately 375 persons (target 500 persons) have been trained in basic health awareness over the year with just under a tenth of this number going on to receive more specialised primary health training and five women (target 10 women) were trained for home delivery of babies. Essential to the health of infants and others is the containment and treatment of excrement. During the year the latrine installation programme did not install any latrines in the area but preparations were made for 60 installations over the life of the three year project (with recipients required to contribute one of the three rings of the septic tank).

Arsenic continues to be a problem in the ground water of Bangladesh although it is not an acute problem in the project area. As a result monitoring of water from tube wells has been performed with of the order of 40 wells tested (target 80 wells). Unfortunately, HIV/AIDS is a growing problem in Bangladesh. Presently, about one percent of the population of the project area suffer but this figure is thought to be growing. Plans exist for a community education programme in association with this problem. To this end 21 classes were conducted (target 27 classes).

During the year the Jamuna River Sandbar Peoples Development Project has delivered generally what it set out to do. It is an excellent project but it is being implemented in extremely difficult conditions and as a result some of the target achievements for the first year have been put off until the second year.

Roger Hughes
Project Coordinator