



# Newsletter

June 2015

## Partners in Aid

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### It's June!

Traditionally, the Partners in Aid newsletter for June is chock full of news on our projects and this year is no different. We've two project visit reports to present to you, a report on the ABWU programme, and some news about the SEDS Child Sponsorship programme from the indefatigable Project Director, Lyn Pickering.

As ever, happy reading and thank you so much for continuing to support Partners in Aid! We love hearing from you, so please do feel free to contact us if you have any questions or feedback.

### End of Financial Year

As the end of the financial year approaches, Partners in Aid is urging people to consider a charitable donation that could boost their tax return while supporting our life-changing work.

All donations of \$2 or more to Partners in Aid are tax deductible (and we will send a receipt for your payment), with donation statistics revealing June 30 is traditionally the most popular day of the year to donate to charity. A donation towards any of our projects 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. You can donate using the form on the last page of this newsletter, or make a secure online donation using PayPal (see the website for more details).

#### June 2015

Calendarpedia  
Your source for calendars

Wk	Monday 1	Tuesday 2	Wednesday 3	Thursday 4	Friday 5	Saturday 6	Sunday 7
23							
24	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
25							
26	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
27							
28	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29							
30	29	30					
31							



**Australian Government**  
**Australian Taxation Office**



Our Secretary Graham Moore has recently taken on the role of Project Director for Symbiosis, and has just returned from his first visit to the project.

## **Project status is excellent!**

In March 2015 my wife and I took a holiday in south Asia and spent 1 week visiting our Bangladesh partner Symbiosis Bangladesh. Apart from spending some time in Dhaka at the head office where we spent around one day discussing financial and governance arrangements with Director Dr Rahman, the Chief Financial Officer and Donor Liaison Officer, we visited the Jamuna River project and Mymensingh training centre.

We visited several TTIS (technical training) classes and had a chance to talk with the trainers and participants. These included sewing, computer literacy and hair dressing classes. Of these, Partners in Aid directly support the sewing classes. The interesting things about these classes is that while they look like and feel like a sewing class, they are fundamentally about providing life skills and a way of improving wellbeing and confidence. For example one of the skills learnt is how to transfer and scale a pattern from a pattern book to a sheet of paper. The same skill can be used to scale a recipe when cooking for a large family celebration, or to help with a child's maths homework. The people chosen for these classes often have very limited or no schooling themselves, so an important bridge into educated society is being built. The other extremely important aspect of the classes are that they bring together likeminded people who form a network to help each other save and plan income generating activities.

## Partners in Aid

Without this network of supportive people their innovative ideas would probably wither on the vine if they tried to develop them within conservative grounds of their immediate local community.

We also visited the Jamuna River Development Project, which operates on huge, semi-permanent



*Approaching the Jamuna River sand bar where our project is located. In the annual flood most of this disappears.*

sandbars in the Jamuna River.

To give you some idea of the scale, the river is huge and between 5 and 10 km wide in the dry season and the sandbar we visited was a few km wide and about 15 km long. Of course all these figures are somewhat arbitrary and change with the river level. During times of moderate flood the area of the sandbar might reduce by 90%, while in a large flood would be inundated completely and may be eroded permanently. Such is the lot of the thousands of people who live on this and other sandbars; they have little choice.

While on the sandbar we visited a Functional Education group. This is a group of women who by way of circumstance were illiterate. Most have married at a very young age and have already started a family. Our partner, Symbiosis Bangladesh, employ facilitators to bring this group of likeminded women together to start their journey out of poverty. This means learning the alphabet, some very basic reading and numeracy skills, and also health, hygiene and nutrition knowledge that we take for granted. We chatted with the group via an interpreter for an hour or so to get to know what they were doing and what they had learnt. One woman said that since she has been able to write her name, she has been able open a savings account. What was so important about this to the woman, was not that she could have somewhere safe to save her money, but that she could visit the bank or government offices and command respect because she could sign her name.

So my headline conclusion that the project status is excellent is based on the fact that your donations are being transformed into respect for some of the poorest families in the world. What could be more important than that?



*Life is precarious! A crop is rapidly being eroded into the water as nature takes its course.*



Annual Membership for 2015/16 is now due. Membership is only \$25 a year, and goes a long way in our administrative costs ensuring project donations go to the project not postage stamps! Membership also entitles you to vote at our AGM, or nominate a proxy. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.



*A Function Education Group on the Jamuna River. Learning to write your name brings respect in Bangladeshi society.*





## Partners in Aid



The Sinangpad Association Inc. is based in the Province of Kalinga, in the north of the Philippines. The Association was registered in 2010 in order to expand community health development activities initiated in Kalinga by AusAID in 1998, and subsequently perpetuated by local residents. Association members work with the local provincial and municipal health offices to enable rural communities to build on their available resources, capabilities and skills to make sustainable improvements to health in their village. Partners in Aid has been involved with this project through our former chair, Cecily Neil, who has been the major donor for the project. Glenys Hughes has been the Project Director, and made her first visit to the project a little while ago.

### **Report on the recent visit to the Sinangpad Healthy Village project**

In March 2015, major donor and former chair Cecily Neil together with Roger and myself went to the Philippines to inspect our Partners in Aid Sinangpad project. The project area is located a day's drive (or a long night's bus ride as Cecily had done many times before) to the north of Manila in the mountainous

province of Kalinga. Many of the remote villages that we visited were barely accessible by road, with many requiring walking in.

The Sinangpad Healthy Village Project aims to improve the health (especially the environmental health) of villages at a grass-roots level, by empowering people to identify and make necessary changes. The project is run in close consultation with the Provincial Health Office (PHO). While the focus of Sinangpad is more village-based, the PHO has put considerable effort put into improving the health of the Province as a whole. Malaria has been eradicated and no new case of Dengue Fever has been reported in the past three years, which are very significant achievements.

While living conditions in the villages are variable, most villages visited had need of improved sanitation and other matters relating to hygiene and general well-being. Central to this project, all villages involved have established a prominently displayed village map showing every building in the village and next to each home on the map is a small chart, showing how the

home is fairing in meeting a dozen agreed, aimed-for improvements or indicators. These indicators cover issues such as ensuring the children of the home attend school and have necessary vaccinations, making a plot to grow fresh vegetables and fruit, building a sanitary home toilet, having the pigs confined to pens and paying the required government tax so that health facilities can be accessed. The villagers clearly take great interest in how their home is represented on the map. It is a great motivator for improvement.



*A typical Kalinga village.*

Re the issues noted above, most villagers since having become involved in the project have shown dramatic improvement in most of their indicators. School attendance has greatly improved and vaccination rates are high. Home vegetable gardens are widespread. Interestingly, the campaign for gender equality has led to a more even sharing of tasks, e.g. boys and not just girls husking the rice. The aspired goal of a toilet for each home has dramatically improved hygiene but still has a way to go in many villages. Where toilets had been widely installed the pigs had generally been penned successfully as well. However, in some villages

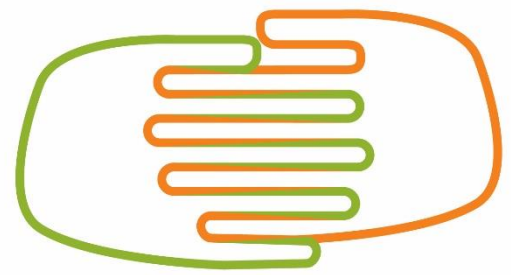
the pigs have been released again because the pigs had become depressed. This depression was because the pigs had been penned individually rather in social groups and so new communal pens are being constructed.

An interesting point raised by the charts on the village maps was that in some villages many households had not paid their taxes and hence were not covered by health insurance to allow access to medical services. When the villages were asked why by Sinangpad staff, the response was that they could not pay because the government did not consider the couples in the village as officially being married. Their marriages years ago had been recorded by witness but no certificates were issued. In response to this problem a mass re-marriage of all couples in the village was being organised.

This ongoing project continues to make a positive difference to the lives of the communities in the Province. There are still many more villages that would like to be involved. This project is not about providing material benefit to the communities. Although small amounts of money are provided for materials such as cement or toilets, most of the funds sent to the project are used for supporting a staff member to provide training, monitoring and evaluation of the involved villages. As a measure of their enthusiasm for the project the PHO provides another staff member to work part time with the project.

This provides the local communities with the skills to identify the cause of some health problems and the knowledge and confidence to work out solutions.





We thought you might all look to learn some more about our well-regarded child sponsorship programme at SEDS. Project Director Lyn Pickering has written a report outlining the programme.

### **Child Sponsorship at SEDS**

The students in the SEDS area of developmental work live in small rural villages, in one roomed huts. The area is drought prone, and very dry, although the changes made in the SEDS area over the past 30 years is quite evident compared to areas close by.

Child sponsorship began in early 1995 and enabled SEDS and Partners in Aid to offer a sponsorship program to the villages which were being targeted for watershed management work. The field workers and the health care workers worked alongside one another as a team in the local villages, led by Rajen Joshua. It is Rajen's vision, and his local knowledge together with the administration efforts of Manil which has proved to be a very good partnership over those years.

#### **1. Communication with sponsored children**

Ian or I have conducted almost annual visits since the inception of the child sponsorship program which officially began in 1995.

The process for sponsorship has changed and developed over the past 21 years. Early on, the Health Care workers spoke to Manil about a child requiring support, details of the child would be taken by the Health Care worker and a profile prepared including family details. Profiles and photos of each child are kept in the office. The donor receives some of this

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information but details which could identify the child are removed.

After the formation of the Women's Self Help Groups, the students were recommended by the SHG, with teachers involved on occasion. . The SHG also advised SEDS if a child had dropped out of school or if there were other concerns.

Nowadays a student is still recommended by the SHGs or teachers; however the family now visit SEDS, where the initial notes can be checked by a staff member designated to the sponsorship program. A photo of the child is taken during this visit.



I have been present on three different visits when children have arrived at SEDS with a parent or grandparent for these interviews. It is an opportunity to observe the way the child interacts with the parents/grandparents, and if there are any other family issues going on which may need to be addressed i.e. occasionally a parent/s will decide to go off to a large town many hours away to work and leave the child with a grandparent, who in many instances is the one requiring care. The child may only see the parent/s twice a year. This was stopped, and the word soon went around the villages that this was not acceptable. Monitoring of how we select children to give them the

best possible opportunity to attend and remain in school, is ongoing and changes as needs be.

Prior to a visit, I will request the sponsorship officer, Pallavi, to begin the process in the villages seeking students who may require support to remain in school. The answer is always 'yes'. We support as many children as possible, always dependent on the number of sponsors available.

## **2. What communication do you have with sponsored children and their families during the period of a sponsorship?**

During the sponsorship which can range from a short time to 8 or 9 years, we visit the students at their schools on our regular trips.

We visit the villages to see the Watershed programs of the past, the trees, the low carbon farming, and other project work, and also visit the schools and speak with the Principal, teachers and the students. We are often asked to address an impromptu assembly of students, and occasionally just have a coffee and biscuits with the Principal who arranges for the students to come to us. Walking around a small village also gives us a better perspective of the way the people in the different villages live. Like all communities, there are some very good ones who are active and very productive, and others who are not. Communicating with the local people is always enjoyable, and the children are just as fascinated by us as we are by them.

Whilst we monitor the sponsorship program, visits to the schools are carefully scrutinised by SEDS staff for the protection of the children. Visits by donors or sponsors to the area go through us and SEDS.

Monthly visits by the sponsored students to the SEDS farm have a number of benefits. Children can be

assessed by the staff whilst they are playing games, learning some new skills, or having a health care check-up (at least one health care camp is held each year, supported by our Rotary friends i.e. Doctors, Dentists, Eye specialists etc.).

Our regular visits are always planned around the monthly visit to SEDS by the students. This gives us the opportunity to mingle and observe them. A number of parents/grandparents bring some of the students to SEDS because of the distance required to travel to SEDS for some students.



## **3. What communication do you have with sponsored children and their families after the sponsorship program has finished?**

I prepare an exit form for each child which indicates the level of schooling they have reached, and whether they have passed or failed year 10. This data is on our system. I am also advised if they go onto College, either supported by their parents or by the Government.

I receive information about exit students who withdraw prior to Year 10

The students all write a thank you letter to their donors, with help from SEDS staff, as their levels of English are very basic. They all indicate a desire to continue on with their schooling. The majority of them will now

continue to do this, many with Government support because they fall into the low socio economic group of families.

Former students come back to SEDS during some of our visits to say “hello” and tell us what they are doing.

### **The Good Work at SEDS**

I do not know the stories of each and every child who has left our sponsorship program, but I’ve shared some of them. We have had 500+ students through the program. It is always lovely to have someone come up to you in a village and say “I remember you....”

A special story regarding a new child coming onto the program: a very young mother came to the SEDS office to give further details for her daughter. She had advised previously that she was 21 and her daughter was 8. I queried this with Prasanth as we sat in the shade at a table with the mother and child. The mother told us that she was married at 12, and gave birth to her daughter at 13. My question was “will you allow.....to remain on the child sponsorship program until Year 10? At that she burst into tears and said that she was denied an education, but wanted to ensure that her daughter had the opportunity to attend school and remain until at least Year 10. Four years later her daughter is still at school. There are various reasons for children leaving the program before Year 10 which include:

- re-location by the family to an area outside the SEDS area of work;
- the child does not wish to remain in school ( this happens only rarely now as the selection process has improved);
- a child is married (again, have not had this happen in the past 8 years because the education of the girl has been given more importance by the families and the Government;
- death - in 20 years two children have died of snake bite, one as recently as last year for which I received photos.

### **Some sponsored children stories**

- Maruthi has polio, he has very badly deformed legs and is unable to stand up. Maruthi completed Year 12 and went on to do a degree, away from SEDS.
- Pallavi whose mother had deserted her and her younger sister has lived at SEDS since she was about 7 years old. She completed her schooling, studied computers, and now runs the Sponsorship program for SEDS. Pallavi is a lovely young lady, and very articulate. She travelled with us last year to the project sites and the schools.
- Manju, her husband was also a sponsored child, he moved away from the area after he completed year 10, and only recently returned, met Pallavi and they married.
- Gopal – the youngest of five boys, mother had died, and he was living in the house with an alcoholic father and his brothers. We managed to get him into the SEDS hostel for six months, where





his health improved, and he was going to school each day. He went back home and subsequently dropped out of school and is now working as a day labourer in the local agricultural fields.

- Sravanthi – has just completed her Engineering degree, and comes back to visit her family, and see us when possible.

Sponsors may choose to sponsor a specific child. If they are not sure, I might forward two profiles, minus specific details which would identify the child. The majority however ask me to make the selection for them, as all the children for whom case studies are sent, are in need of support to remain in school.

There are sad stories, life is very tough. India is a place of severe hardship for many hundreds of thousands of families, but there is hope, and things are improving.

We are planning our next trip in the coming months, and as always view these visits with optimism. There is so much to share, to enjoy, and to be proud of.

*Editor's Note – all images in this newsletter are of the projects. Most are taken by the board of Partners in Aid, but some come from the SEDS online blog. A great read if you're so inclined!*





Report by Anne-Marie Maltby

The latest news from ABWU is that it is extremely hot and humid making them all very tired and finding it difficult to work. To top it all they have been experiencing tremors over the last month due to the proximity to the epicentre of the earth quakes taking place in Nepal. So far no great damage but several cracks in buildings all over.

ABWU often ask us to pass on their thanks to our supporters; in their most recent email, they have said “without the help and support of Partners in Aid, it would have been next to impossible to run our training programs as well as provide higher education to these disadvantaged girls who have been placed in our care and shelter”.



Our December newsletter reported on one of the ABWU girls getting married (this is her in the photo above). This girl had needed a lot of counselling and had struggled with schooling and has since written a note (translated) to us and her sponsor “I do not remember my own family but I am happy that I now have a family which I can call my own. They are very good to me and care for me. It will take some time for me to get used to a family life since I stayed in All Bengal for a long time and it was a different kind of a

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set up. Everybody at All Bengal helped in making my marriage a very memorable one and I am grateful to each one for everything that they did to make me feel special. Whatever I have achieved today is because of the help and co-operation of everybody, for which I will always remain grateful to you as well as to .... Partners in Aid. I pray that God will bless you all with good health and long life.”

I think this is a great example of the typical outcome that the ABWU ladies achieve. Although they are delighted with the increasing numbers of ABWU girls that have been able study to levels that will qualify them for professional employment, most of the girls are not capable of this. A life with family and some feeling of security is a great aim and ABWU work very hard to help the girls transition into a happy but often simple lives outside the home.

The sewing/knitting program which is the main vocational training that we support is going well. Twenty girls are in

the project which aims to give them the skills to eventually earn a living as well as being able to make clothes for their own family. They regard this as particularly important for the Bangladeshi girls who need as much assistance as possible to allow them to earn a living when they are eventually returned to Bangladesh. They hope to provide a sewing machine for the current Bangladeshi girl to take with her.





The Tailoring Trainer and a few girls have been learning more advanced/fine methods of quilting from an experienced quilter so this is adding another string to their bow. Quilts sell well at their annual sales.

The knitting section is pleased to have an efficient and regular teacher and they have been able to make jumpers for the crèche children and also school jumpers for the primary school children. They are also getting orders from outside ABWU.

Two further lots of Life Skills Training sessions have been run which we again funded. One (two days) was for staff – teachers and house mothers – and concentrated on helping improve communication, collaboration and understanding between themselves, reduce conflict and better enable them to manage traumatized children who often display challenging behaviour. A second four day program was run for 50 adolescent girls included improving interpersonal relationship skills, resolving conflict, avoiding risky activities and exploitation (these are particularly vulnerable girls) and the sessions finished with dance therapy.

ABWU are very grateful for our support to be able to participate in these programs which they have found to be very valuable for everyone involved.



*The bride after the ceremony at ABWU.*



## **Breaking News**

As everyone has no doubt heard, there have been some terrible events in Nepal over the past weeks. Whilst we do not operate in Nepal, and are not involved in disaster relief, as the ABWU report shows, many in the region are impacted and our thoughts are with them. As many of you are aware, Lyn and Ian Pickering are involved with Rotary. Their club is currently collecting money for Disaster Aid Australia. DAA is operated by members of the Endeavour Hills Rotary Club, and donations are tax deductible.





## GOODWILL WINE

As we have noted in earlier newsletters, you can now enjoy quality wine and support Partners in Aid projects at the same time.

We have joined Goodwill Wine, who offer high quality wines at excellent prices. For every case of wine sold, a proportion goes directly to Partners in Aid, with no overhead costs.

Goodwill Wine has been established to support charities and not-for-profit organisations.

For further details go to <http://www.goodwillwine.com.au/charities/partners-in-aid> – you can order wines or buy gift vouchers.



“These are seriously good wines, sold in six or 12 bottle cases at below retail prices.”

Sue Green (Epicure - The Age)

“The wine arrived today. Thank you so much. I have chilled a bottle and having a glass - it is really yummy. Thank you for your generous organisation.”

Louissa. R (customer)

“I have been purchasing a case or two of wine every Xmas for the past few years now and I just wanted to say what an amazing job you guys do for charities across Australia and your wine is always superb. xx

Kim G (customer)

### Keep in Touch

 [www.partnersinaid.org.au](http://www.partnersinaid.org.au)

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# Partners in Aid Donation Form



## Partners in Aid

### Donations

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

I would like to make a donation to (circle/note where applicable):

ABWU (orphan trip/sewing supplies/books/project support)

SEDS (stationery/school bag/check-up/sewing machines/project support)

Symbiosis Bangladesh (stationery/garden/teacher/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 ☐ onths = \$120 12 mont ☐ \$240

☐

### Membership

I would like to begin/continue (please circle) to be a member of Partners in Aid

Total amount enclosed

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*