

Partners in Aid – Annual General Meeting November 2011

AGM Minutes

The Annual General Meeting was held on Thursday November 17 at 7.30 pm, at the home of Ian and Lyn Pickering, Narre Warren.

1. **OPENING & WELCOME**
2. **PRESENT**

Graham Moore, Roger Hughes, Amanda Stone, Chris Pittendrigh, Ian Pickering, Glenys Hughes, Andrea Pickering, Lyn Pickering, Anne-Marie Maltby

1. **APOLOGIES**

Kristin Aitken, Mary Dunne, Joy Handley, Ken Hawkins, Cecily Neil, Brian and Jeannie Boyd

1. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM**

The previous minutes were accepted unanimously.

Lyn/Glenys

1. **REPORTS**

Chairperson's Report – the Chairperson delivered his report, a copy of which will be placed on the PIA website

Treasurer's Report – the Treasurer delivered a verbal report based on financial reports circulated by email previously. Key points included:

- Our income is up 24% this year
- PIA has distributed \$144,000 to our partners in the past 12m months
- we continue to keep our costs low, with administration costs at 8.47%

Appointment of Auditor – the meeting unanimously accepted the re-appointment of Waters Day as auditors. It was also agreed to request the auditors undertake a review of the accounts in 2012, with a view to a full audit on alternate years.

The reports were accepted.

Graham/Anne-Marie

1. **PROJECT REPORTS**

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India – SEDS Amanda provided a report on the Watershed development project– a written copy to be available on the website. Lyn provided a report on the Child Sponsorship programme, highlighting the positive feedback from sponsors about PIA’s work, and the increasing interest from parents of sponsored children in their children’s education

India – ABWU Anne-Marie provided a report in advance of her visit in December with Joy Handley.

Bangladesh – JRDP and TTIS Roger provided a report on the Jamuna River project and the progress of TTIS following his recent visit to Bangladesh. Highlights included the establishment of a new secondary school on the island settlement, the increased energy in the community, and the wide spread of the TTIS programme. A written report will be available on the website.

Philippines – Kalinga Glenys provided the report on this project ahead of her visit in January. Data provided demonstrated the benefits of the project including an increase in health seeking behaviour following training provided.

The reports were unanimously accepted.

Graham/Ian

1. **ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS**

The Chair vacated the chair and Roger Hughes took over for the election of office bearers.

The following were elected unopposed:

Position	Nominee	Nominator	Seconder
Chairperson	Graham Moore	Andrea Pickering	Roger Hughes
Deputy Chair	Anne Marie Maltby	Andrea Pickering	Glenys Hughes
Secretary	Kristin Burdett	Andrea Pickering	Amanda Stone

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Treasurer	Andrea Pickering	Amanda Stone	Mary Dunne
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Board Members

Nominee	Nominator	Second
Roger Hughes	Andrea Pickering	Mary Dunne
Lyn Pickering	Andrea Pickering	Glenys Hughes
Glenys Hughes	Andrea Pickering	Mary Dunne
Amanda Stone	Andrea Pickering	Lyn Pickering
Chris Pittendrigh	Andrea Pickering	Lyn Pickering
Ian Pickering	Andrea Pickering	Glenys Hughes
Mary Dunne	Andrea Pickering	Lyn Pickering

Honorary advisors

Cecily Neil

Morris Lee

Joy Handly

Tom Beer

1. **GENERAL BUSINESS**

Updating of internal governance documents: the meeting's attention was drawn to the internal governance documents previously circulated.

Motion: The two documents entitled "Memorandum of Association" and 'Articles of Association" be adopted at the Constitution of Partners in Aid Ltd.

Carried Unanimously.

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1. **CLOSE**

The Annual General Meeting closed at 10pm.

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Chair's Report

It is with pleasure that I report to the Annual General Meeting of Partners in Aid for 2010/11. First of all please let me acknowledge the previous Chair, Anne-Marie Maltby for her work in steering Partners in Aid into a new era. This year has been one of consolidation of the organization as it gets on with the business of working without partners in helping bring sustainable futures to people in three countries.

At the risk of singling out any particular groups I wish to pay tribute to the tireless efforts of three local groups. Firstly Lyn and Ian Pickering who through their very personal and hands-on approach to working with the organization have overseen a significant growth in the funds raised for the SEDS Child sponsorship program and also in less tangible ways to other projects. A significant bequest was received early in the year which in part is due to the work Lyn and Ian contribute. Secondly to the Alpine Women's Group, which under the guidance of Joy Handley continue diligent fundraising efforts for the ABWU. Finally, to Andrea and Geoff Pickering, whose efforts in organizing the World Food Day Dinner at Bayles plus the invaluable contribution of Andrea as Treasurer are gratefully acknowledged.

Our four overseas partners continue to do excellent work. At the Social and Economic Development Society (SEDS) under the careful guidance of Manil Jayasena the child sponsorship and watershed development programs continue at full pace. There are currently 201 families receiving assistance via the child sponsorship program which has increasing support from the Women's Self help Groups. We are also seeing a number of the sponsored families continuing to support their children to attend senior high school. In the financial year, three large tanks were desilted in conjunction with local communities providing new opportunities for agricultural production and aquaculture. Demand from communities to participate in, and contribute to tank desilting is currently at a high level, indicating the value and importance of our contribution to the project.

The All Bengal Women's Union (ABWU) celebrated their Diamond Jubilee. With a record of 75 years of rescuing girls from miserable conditions, it is no

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wonder that they command enormous respect in their community. We continue to sponsor around 80 girls and vocational training programs. To assist the health and safety of the refuge a grant was provided for fire fighting equipment.

In Bangladesh, the projects run by Symbiosis on the Jamuna River and environs continue to help in many ways. During the year the 1000th child graduated from a primary school where prior to Symbiosis and PIA intervention there was none. Special thanks go to Mrs Ruby Ashcroft for her continued support.

The first phase of the Sinangpad Healthy Village project in the Philippines is nearly complete. Under the watchful eye of Dr Cecily Neil scores of villages now have improved sanitation practices and health outcomes.

Financially, the year has been sound. The Treasurers report will expand on the highlights of income through donations increasing by 25% excluding a significant bequest. Administrative expenditure for the year was just 5.5% with 94.5% programmed for expenditure with our Partners including project monitoring.

Now that the transition to our new name of Partners in Aid is complete some administrative matters before the Board were continued. The important work of documenting and updating our policies, which was commenced by Amanda Stone with the assistance of Anne Marie Maltby, Kristin Aitken and Andrea Pickering, was continued. While not the most exciting of tasks, it is required so the Board can keep up to date with the changing expectations of government for the NGO sector in general.

Some new initiatives in the on-line world were brought to fruition. With the assistance and persistence of Kristin Burdett, an on-line electronic archive of documents for the organization has been established. This does not entirely replace printed records at the Office, but does represent an offsite backup of important documents that is easily accessible to all Board members.

This year also saw the introduction of a new way of receiving on-line donations. Although we have been able to receive direct bank transfers for

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some time, Partners In Aid now has a PayPal facility established through its web site to allow casual donations from anywhere in the world.

With our Board members becoming more geographically dispersed, on several occasions we used Skype to allow a virtual presence of Kristin and Andrea at several meetings.

The efforts of Mary Dunne continue to be seen in our Newsletter. Careful research by Mary of our past newsletters in the National Library of Australia has unearthed some long forgotten memories. As we move into our 50th Year we will see some interesting historical perspectives delivered to our readers each quarter.

Graham Moore

Chair

SEDS Child Sponsorship, Andhra Pradesh, India

The child sponsorship program at SEDS has grown this year and as at the 30th June, the numbers were 201

Sponsors have continued their support of this program to assist children at the lowest end of society to remain in school. A number of new sponsors throughout the year have joined the program.

It is pleasing to report that I have had very good positive feedback from a number of our sponsors. Those responses usually come after receipt of Report cards, photos, Christmas cards etc., acknowledging the efforts of PIA and the way the program is conducted.

The selection format for child sponsorship has not changed dramatically since the inception of the child sponsorship program in early 1995, although the selection process has become more refined, with more follow up checking on data on each child. This has been as a direct result of the formation of the Women's Self Help Groups and their ongoing empowerment which has been of tremendous benefit to not only the women, but also their families and the environment within their own communities.

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The children and young people have a goal to complete Year 10 with a Pass Certificate now, but until this past year, a Year 10 Fail Certificate was also considered an achievement. Passing Year 10 has now become mandatory for students to obtain a driver's licence. This Government initiative will have a stronger impact on the young men for whom becoming a driver of either a tractor or a car is a sought after occupation.

More girls are now continuing on to Year 11 and 12 and beyond with support from their families, and in many cases with Government support. Students who are classified to be in the lower socio economic bracket, have all their school fees, books and accommodation paid for, and many students are now taking that option.

The girls who do not go beyond Year 10 in their studies, have had the opportunity for some years to join a SEDS Vocational Training program where they learn basic sewing, and in time the use of either a pedal or electric sewing machine.

The sponsorship program continues to grow slowly, and it is pleasing to have so many young people taking the opportunity to study beyond Year 10. More parents have become supportive of their child's education and now are looking for their children to improve their lives through education, something which was denied them.

A good year for SEDS child sponsorship, with some pleasing results from many of the year 10 students.

Lyn Pickering

SEDS Project, Andhra Pradesh, India

Despite increasing costs in fuel, administration and communications, the PIA funded project at SEDS continued this year, with 3 tanks being desilted, 383 villagers benefitting and an increase of around 20 million litres water storage capacity for those communities, their farms and their animals.

The high value of the Australian dollar has allowed the funds to go further than in the past and so the benefits of desilting has continued to be widely

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distributed with increasing interest from villages wanting to participate in the programme and share costs.

Other watershed activities associated with the tank desilting have continued increasing the water table and minimising water run-off and erosion. The watchers who have been employed through PIA funding to protect the newly planted trees are now partly funded through a government programme, bringing this project closer to local self sufficiency.

In addition, the seeding of full water tanks with fish fingerlings has resulted in a blossoming but informal local fishing industry with large numbers of fish being harvested from the tanks. SEDS is looking at registering the fisheries as an independent body under the fisheries co operatives of the state of Andhra Pradesh. A decision will be made about this in 2012.

SEDS is also considering employing a consultant to conduct a formal evaluation of the impact of the watershed work. If that eventuates, PIA will have access to some meaningful data on the value of the funding we provide. One of the challenges this project faces is the effects of unseasonal rains due to climate change. Heavy rain has come both early and late in the past 2 years. This means that SEDS must be flexible and organised, able to change the timing of desilting and capitalise on heavy rains when they come. The increased interest from villages also means SEDS must be able to build on that interest when it exists. PIA has been able to release funds a little early this year to respond to that interest.

In addition to work in community development, health and education, and women's empowerment, SEDS has continued to build on ground breaking work in sustainable agriculture, increasingly important in the face of large agricorporations making inroads into the farming areas of poorer countries. Through the locally based Farmers' Field Schools, a programme of educating and empowering farmers in sustainable practices has resulted in almost twice as many farmers participating in the programme this year – 820 farmers from 30 villages – producing crops without artificial fertilisers and pesticides, increasing their crop yield and costing less to do so.

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SEDS is planning to embark on a Low Carbon Farming project. The project will commence with demographic surveys and education and awareness raising programmes – conducted by local people who will need to be trained. PIA is negotiating with SEDS for seed funding to be used from the bequest to enable this new project to get off the ground. The emission reductions gained from the project will be sold to carbon investors with the benefits going directly to the agricultural labourer/farmer. This is a very new initiative and SEDS as always is keen to lead the way.

SEDS celebrated 30 years of successful and best practice work in environmental and community development this year. It lost some senior and long serving staff during the year for a range of reasons – the low salaries SEDS can pay, travel, changed personal circumstances. However the project is well founded so that new and continuing staff can continue the work done.

Amanda Stone

All Bengal Women's Union, Kolkata, India

It is my pleasure to present the annual report on All Bengal Women's Union in Kolkata.

It was a big year for ABWU as they celebrated their Diamond Jubilee. With a record of 75 years of rescuing girls from miserable conditions, it is no wonder that they command enormous respect in their community.

TAILORING & CUTTING/ MACHINE KNITTING PROJECT

We have been funding this project for 16 years starting it with a bequest from a long time donor who was one of the pioneers of our organisation. It has remained one of the most effective training programs and is considered particularly helpful for girls who are slow-learners or are unable to continue with their studies. It is hoped to enable the trainees to become self sustainable. The Tailoring and Cutting section currently has 20 girls while the Machine Knitting has 6 girls.

At the completion of training, ABWU tries to provide a sewing machine to some girls. By providing them with a sewing machine, these girls can at least take tailoring orders and thereby support themselves.

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This year, two girls were given sewing machines when they left the home - one is a Bangladeshi girl who was brought illegally into India and the Police sent her to ABWU for repatriation to Bangladesh. The procedure takes more than a year. In the meantime, she was trained in the Tailoring Training Centre and, with the permission of Bangladesh Consulate she was given a sewing machine to take back with her.

The other girl married but wanted to do some work from home. She is earning Rs.500-800 a month which is very helpful for the family.

Five girls were sufficiently trained to join ABWU's Production Centre (Tailoring) where they will earn according to their inputs. Two further girls are ready to return back to their respective homes.

All the trainees make different articles and, if sold, they are paid stitching charges for those articles. We plan to continue funding this project as it has proved consistently successful in providing the young women with the means to earn a living after leaving ABWU.

In the machine knitting section, the girls are school-going. They attend morning school and this training may help them to get an additional income in their family life in the future.

GENERAL

We currently have 79 girls being sponsored. Quite remarkably, four girls in After Care are studying at University level. Three have completed their 2nd year of B.A., and Mita, a blind girl who has been sponsored for many years, has completed her 3 years at University of fine arts and has been accepted to another University for a Masters Degree. It is very rewarding to see these achievements by girls from such unlikely backgrounds.

Due to the lack of certainty relating to other vocational projects plus the limitations of our funding, it was decided not to support any projects other than the tailoring and cutting/weaving project however we are very happy with the overall care and training provided to the girls at ABWU.

FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT

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A major fire in the neighborhood more than a year ago made ABWU realize that they urgently needed to improve their fire readiness. Our Lady of the Snows parishioners in Bright raised over \$900 to buy fire extinguishers and other firefighting equipment for ABWU.

FUNDRAISING

The annual luncheon in Bright was a huge success – again due to the hard work of Joy with the support of the Alpine Women's Group. The community in Bright continues to be very supportive of ABWU.

PROJECT VISIT

We (Joy and Anne-Marie) are both planning to visit ABWU for several days over Dec/Jan. We are greatly looking forward to it and feel that we will be able to achieve much more as a team than is possible solo.

THANKS

We would like to thank all of our supporters and friends for their generosity and encouragement. Their efforts in assisting ABWU make an enormous difference in the lives of these severely disadvantaged girls.

TTIS and JRDP Projects in Bangladesh

In May of this year the National Geographic produced an article entitled 'The Coming Storm', in which is described how Bangladesh has become a leader in the low level technology necessary to live with environmental change. Much of the article describes the problems and solutions that we have faced in the Jamuna River Development Project, JRDP, with its shifting silt and annual flooding. The JDRP is a project that is aimed at providing necessary social infrastructure to those people living on an island of size approximately 15km by 10 km, in the north of Bangladesh, as it is both washed downstream throughout the year and inundated during the wet season. The aims of the project are to increase cooperation in the community, raise educational standards by providing primary school education, create an awareness of the issues of environmental importance, seek to improve the mental and physical health in the community, and to improve food security of all those living on the island.

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The project is progressing extremely well. The movable primary school that we have established and run through our partner organization, Symbiosis Bangladesh, currently has 110 students and a second movable school is planned and pending approval from the Partners in Aid Board. The presence of a second school, located at half an island length downstream of the first school, will enable the schools to leapfrog each other as the island moves southward and hence both provide better continuity of education and will enable the schools to be moved larger distances. The government of Bangladesh has recently established a solid permanent secondary school half way between the proposed new and original JRDP primary schools. With Partners in Aid, support through Symbiosis, a new preschool has opened at approximately the same distance down the island as the secondary school. This new preschool, for 30 students, has been enthusiastically received by the community. Adult functional education classes have also been well received by the older community with 40 women being trained in functional literacy during the year.

A feeling of permanence has not only been fostered by the presence of the new government school but also by our planting of 270 additional trees, often shade trees, over much of the inhabited parts of the island. These trees are also intended to provide some stabilisation of the island against floods. However, to be of great use in stabilisation, flood tolerant trees need to be planted more widely. Over three hundred classes to increase environmental awareness have been given to both adults and children. Also over two hundred classes have been given on social awareness issues to the women of the community. Associated with these classes, 480 women have been incorporated into successful savings groups and numerous classes in agriculture and kitchen gardens have been given and illustrated with 15 demonstration plots.

Over 400 members of the community have received training in good hygiene. This training has involved over 200 health awareness classes, a similar number of trainees in arsenic poisoning awareness and over 100 in AIDS awareness. However, the tests done on the local tubewells indicated that arsenic is not a health issue in the area at present.

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There is a strong feeling of permanency emerging in the community. Unfortunately, this feeling of permanency involves trust and while trust in those providing the infrastructure to the island is to be encouraged, it is worrying what the reaction will be when it is realised that there is no permanency on this and other islands. The relocatable nature of our school(s) must provide some reminder to the local community of what is to come. Our other project the Technical Training Program, TTIS, provides technical training in various fields mainly but not exclusively to women. The objectives of the program are the empowerment of the women and men who do this training, the imparting of the vocational skills, and improvement in the socio-economic and health status of participants and their families.

Courses to the very poor are subsidised by the provision of classes at a price to those a little better off. The training in sewing for both home and cottage industry is proceeding very well with 343 persons being trained during the year. Graduates of these classes are now having little trouble acquiring a sewing machine through membership of savings groups. Thus an earlier problem has been relieved. By contrast to this cottage industry training, training in sewing to equip graduates to work in garment factories, often away from home, has been unpopular and undersubscribed. Presumably the idea of working away from home, especially for women and girls, is not appealing. Classes in embroidery have also been slightly undersubscribed. Embroidery is seen as something for the overseas market rather than the local market. As such it seems to lack the appeal of immediacy that sewing has. Various items of embroidery generated by the classes have been sent to Australia. Because the dyes used in the material have not been well fixed properly and because of the nature of what has been sent here, these items have not sold well. The group in Bangladesh have been informed of the problems and shall attempt to correct them. However, for the classes, training rather than producing goods that are saleable in Australia remains the primary focus of these classes. Classes in block printing, Batik printing and hand painting of material have now started. It is early days and the quality of what is being produced by the trainees is not especially good at the moment. However, the classes are

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popular and it is hoped that this new field of training will develop well. In the year covered by this report there were 32 graduates.

As of the beginning of the present calendar year, PIA ceased to fund the training of hairdressers in Bangladesh. However, this program has been extremely successful and, under the training of a dedicated group of volunteer hairdressers from Australia (mainly Perth and Brisbane), graduates have now been trained to Certificate Level Three. These graduates are now training their own students with accreditation standard being ensured by the Australian volunteers. The graduates have been described to me as 'possibly the most highly trained hairdressers in Bangladesh'!

Associated with the above training courses, is the establishment of savings groups, which are often necessary for the provision to graduates of the equipment required e.g. sewing machines. There are also, for the women, classes in women's rights. There were 416 such classes this last year. Both the JRDP and the TTIS programs are going very well. Not all ideas followed work smoothly but the ideas are modified in the wake of experience. I believe that the above two projects are fulfilling their aims and that Partners in Aid can be pleased with the outcomes that are being achieved under the stewardship of Symbiosis.

Roger Hughes

Sinangpad Healthy Village Project

Highlights

- Staff have been working solidly to assist communities to achieve their community health targets. They are continuing their close affiliation with health workers at the Provincial, Municipal & Barangay levels, to improve the environmental health of people in Kalinga Province, northern Philippines.
- So far 48 communities have received the required training, & 40 have developed their Community Health Plan & are working on it. Of these, 87% (35 communities) are on schedule to have at least 50% of their plan implemented (at time of monitoring)

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- Village health workers report that the health seeking behaviour of people after undergoing training is evident: eg there are increased numbers of parents bringing children for immunization & the general health & sanitation status of the communities involved have improved significantly

Challenges: There are many challenges which can slow progress, including

- Political turnover at the Barangay level (after elections in 2010) requires more training of new village political leaders
- Some health core groups need leadership skills training or team building activities to improve confidence or motivation
- Scheduling of visits is sometimes difficult due to conflicting schedules of Provincial Health Office staff, and fitting in around the agricultural and cultural activities of villagers
- Some household members are so involved with trying to provide basic sustenance for their families that they are unable to engage fully with the process

Despite the obstacles mentioned, the project is progressing and most challenges can be slowly overcome by continuing to work hand-in-hand with project partners. It is predictable that people in new project areas may resist sudden change of old habits and those already making changes may have difficulty sustaining new hygienic practices. Eventually with persistence, the majority of people in the project areas recognize the benefits to themselves and their communities of adopting & maintaining the sanitation and health initiatives.

Financial Report

This year we saw income up 25% on the previous year, which was very satisfying, given we had a decrease last year. Added to this we were very fortunate to receive a bequest of \$99637, which your board has determined to spend over the next 5 years. Project co-ordinators are currently working with partner NGO's to determine if they would like these funds as a top up to

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existing programs or if they have a special short term project that the funds would be beneficial for.

During this 2010/2011 period we have sent off \$144048 to our partners to continue our projects and sponsorship programs, and this continues to make a big difference to the life of people in India, Bangladesh and Philippines.

Your board and small group of volunteers continue to work very hard to reduce costs. We have some unavoidable expenses, such as audit fees and ACFID membership costs, but continue to endeavour to keep other costs to a minimum. I would like to thank those who deal with the administration of our projects/programs and of PIA as an organization. Not only do these people donate their time, but also personally absorb some of the costs of doing so. I am very proud to say that our administration % this year was 8.47%, which is something we should all be very pleased with.

As always, travel costs are a grey area, as they are felt to really be a project cost, rather than an administration cost. As well, your board members reimburse to PIA the cost of their travel. In light of this, if we were to remove travel costs from our accounts; our administration percentage for this year would be 5.5% of donated funds.

We again thank our supporters and donors for their continued support in our work.

Andrea Pickering