

Chair's Report

Graham Moore

It is with pleasure that I report to the Annual General Meeting of Partners in Aid Ltd for 2011/12. The year represented another successful period in the history of the organization in working with grassroots NGOs in India, Bangladesh and the Philippines to bring new opportunities to their communities. We continue to do this with an extraordinarily low level of administrative costs due the dedication of our volunteers and generosity of businesses that support us.

Our program partners continue to be the Social and Economic Development Society (SEDS) who operate in Andhra Pradesh, India, the All Bengal Women's Union, in Calcutta, Symbiosis in Bangladesh and Sinangpad in the Philippines. Through the generosity and hard work of our donors and board members, we were able to record an income of over \$160,000, and during the year disbursed over \$146,000 to our partners. These figures were broadly in line with 2011 figures and are detailed in the financial report.

As has been the case for many years, Lyn and Ian Pickering promoted Partners in Aid through innumerable presentations and personal contact with many donors to ensure the maintenance of a substantial tranche of our income. The efforts of other groups such as the Alpine Women's Group and the World Food Day dinner show how dedicated people can raise money for a good cause and have a rewarding social experience. Individuals contribute anything from a few dollars via our Paypal portal to

tens of thousands of dollars through regular donations; all are important and all make a difference to what we can do.

The unwavering support of Treasurer Andrea Pickering set a standard of accounting and attendance to corporate governance that ensures the organization continues to meet our obligations under the Corporations Act and also our obligations to continue use of the ACFID logo by showing compliance with their Code of Conduct.

I wish to acknowledge the support of the Board in completing the revisions of our policy manual, which was also instrumental in maintaining our ACFID accreditation.

At SEDS, in addition to our continuing activities that support the health and education of over 200 children, and achieve improved watershed management, a new activity of Low Carbon Farming became established with the support of a recent bequest. More details on these projects are contained in the reports by Amanda Stone and Lyn Pickering

The work of the ABWU in assisting some of the most vulnerable children and young women continues through sponsorship of individuals and support of other activities outlined in Anne-Marie Maltby's report.

Our Bangladeshi partner, Symbiosis continues to run worthwhile projects on the sand islands of the Jamuna River and through technical training programs. A number of donors rallied to a call for extra support to rebuild a school that was damaged by a windstorm earlier in the year. Roger Hughes' report will give detail on these projects.

The Sinangpad project in the Philippines has had a smaller level of activity while new funding bases are sought. The continued regular reporting on activities during the year shows that this project has had a very significant impact over a large population. The report presented by Glenys Hughes in concert with Cecily Neil tells the details.

On the home front, Kristin Burdett and Mary Dunne continue with the all-important internal and external communication functions of the Board.

It is with some regret that I give a final word of thanks to two Board members who have indicated their intention to step down from their current roles. Chris Pittendrigh, with a very long service and through his strong links to partner Symbiosis will be sadly missed. Roger Hughes will stand down as Director responsible for the Bangladesh projects, and while that role can be filled, the person who was a walking encyclopedia of the history of the organization will also be missed.

Having spent two years as Chair, I will stand down from that position but have nominated to continue to serve the Board. This will allow for diversity and resilience in the Board as it continues its work into 2013.

Report on Activities in Bangladesh

Roger Hughes

Partners in Aid continues to have two projects in Bangladesh. These projects being the Jamuna River Development Project (JRDP) and the Technical Training and Low Skilled Jobs Information Program (TTIS). Both projects are executed by

Symbiosis Bangladesh on behalf of Partners in Aid, with Partners in Aid monitoring and financing the projects.

The JRDP has seen the successful continuation of the existing primary school on the moving river island. This school, which structurally consists of sheets of corrugated steel on a wooden frame, needed and received substantial repairs after strong winds collapsed part of it. Luckily no one was at the school at the time of the strong winds. This school has now been supplemented by a new primary school further downstream further along the island. The new school is reported to be of a stronger construction and capable of withstanding cyclonic conditions. The schools are now operating with excess of two hundred students. However, this student number represents only of the order of 20% of the primary school aged children on the island. No other primary school currently operates on the island. These schools will be able to leap-frog down the island as the island moves southward downstream although the new more substantial structure will be more difficult to transport. The biggest problem we face concerns the lack of suitable teachers on the island. At the moment both schools operate successfully but they are severely understaffed.

The single part-time kindergarten administered as part of the present project continues to operate smoothly. The government owed secondary school on the island continues to provide an opportunity for our students once they have graduated from primary school. They are no longer required to travel to the 'mainland' to further their education.

Although the JRDP is known for its primary schools, it also provided the framework for the establishment of shomati groups on the island. These groups provide functional educational services to adults, mainly women, assistance with the establishment and running of savings groups, and health checks. Activities (available to all the 520 group members) include classes on environmental awareness and social awareness, tree planting aimed at stabilising the island, and guidance on issues on interest ranging from kitchen gardens to increased income generation. This year the JRDP has seen four new primary shomati groups formed, with an additional 100 members, supplementing the existing 12 groups. Four of these existing groups have now been classified as self-sustaining.

The above JRDP project was completed at the end of the 2011-2012 financial year. However, a new project with the same objectives, but extending its reach within the community, started in July 2012.

The TTIS project is scheduled to be completed in June 2013. It provides empowerment, vocational training and improved socio-economic status and health to women (and a few men) over a wide area of northern Bangladesh although it is centred in Mymensingh. In previous years, up until January 2011, the project provided training in sewing (both for village jobs and factory), embroidery, textile dyeing and hairdressing. However, the contribution that Partners in Aid has been making to hairdressing has now been diverted to sewing. In all approximately 400 trainees received their training in basic (village level) sewing, and another 12 in the vocational sewing

training course for industry, over the year. Sixteen embroidery trainees graduated along with 40 block batic and hand printer trainees. The demand for embroidery training continued to be weak, apparently because of the lack of demand at the village level for the finished produce. The problems associated with unsuitable embroidery being sent to Australia for us to market have been addressed.

As with the JRDP the project is holistic. Over 357 classes were held on women's rights. The existing eighteen peer savings groups, as set up earlier, were increased marginally by one. There are no substantial problems hindering progress in the TTIS project. TTIS training sites pervade the countryside of the region in which the program operates and the training is well received. In summary both projects continue to perform well and we can be pleased with the progress made. During August 2011 for just over three weeks, I visited the region, inspected both the project sites and the records kept. These records had been monitored a few months earlier by a large international NGO that funds Symbiosis as part of its implementing organisational monitoring. I was very pleased with the way the projects were going.

Unfortunately, Symbiosis Bangladesh suffered a great loss and we lost a reliable friend with the death of Symbiosis's founding chairman, Mr Akand. However, his wife is very capably continuing his work and our projects are in safe hands.

With this report, both Rev Chris Pittendrigh and I, being the two current board member who have previously reported on Bangladesh, are stepping down as a board member of Partners in

Aid. I understand that Mary Dunne will become the new Bangladesh coordinator. It is a very rewarding job, Mary, I wish you well with it.

SEDS (Social and Education Development Society), India

Amanda Stone

SEDS has recently undergone some of the most significant changes since Partners in Aid first became involved in its watershed management work and, later, child sponsorship.

The success of the PIA-funded tank desilting, revegetation, women's self help groups and village organisation structures led to SEDS growing and developing more programmes in response to the need and engagement of local communities in Ananthapur region, Andhra Pradesh.

At the same time, they have been aware of the need for sustainability as an organisation and being able to continue their work into the long term. In the past 12 months, the organisation has rationalised some of their programmes, down-sized the staffing structure and made plans to transfer some of the responsibility for managing programmes to the local Mandal Facilitation Centre. This is part of the longer term plan to enable the community to take control of these programmes making them truly sustainable and empowering.

Our visit in July this year provided an excellent insight into how these changes are unfolding.

Tank desilting is continuing with a huge unmet demand. Farmers can see the value of this vital work in recharging the ground

water and providing water storage to cope with increasingly erratic rainfalls. Everywhere we went in July, farmer groups asked for more funds to desilt more tanks. PIA remains committed to funding this work.

The fish fingerlings which PIA has funded to go in the newly dug out tanks, have become an important source of income when large quantities of fully grown fish are harvested. The management of this process can eventually be taken on by the Mandal Facilitation Centre (MFC).

Our new project, Low Carbon Farming, is one of the most exciting aspects of the SEDS project work. Farmers who understand the importance of farming in more traditional low carbon and increasingly organic methods are willingly involved in the process of verification and validation in order to be able to accrue and sell their greenhouse gas reductions and earn additional cash income. As more and more countries implement Carbon Emission Trading Schemes, there will be ready markets for these credits and farmers' livelihoods will be more assured.

The vocational tailoring training programme, another new project, has also produced early successes with women successfully completing the training, ready to purchase their own machines and start earning an income from home. PIA is funding the room rent and trainer and there is an opportunity for members to help with funding individual sewing machines.

While ongoing funding from PIA, and oversight by SEDS is needed for these projects, the day to day management on the ground is increasingly being taken on by the local community via the MFC.

There are always hazards in transition periods such as this, but it's a very positive, intelligent and well thought out approach to ensuring that the fantastic work done over 3 decades by SEDS and funded by PIA can continue into the future, with ownership of the projects by the local community which is our ultimate goal.

Child Sponsorship at SEDS

Lyn Pickering

This year has been a good year for child sponsorship with a small growth in numbers, finishing the year just under 200. We appear to have reversed the trend of the years before where we lost a number of older donors who were not replaced. A small number have again not continued this past year, but there is a good balance now with some new donors gained for Partners in Aid, always a welcome sign.

We are extremely grateful to a major donor who sponsors many children, a couple who visit India regularly and who really do understand the hardships of many Indian families. There are other donors with more than one child, however I do sincerely thank everyone who has taken up the challenge to sponsor a child at SEDS. Each child sponsored is very special, and I do know that the children and the families do appreciate this support.

The children appear to be very happy to attend the second Saturday activities which are held monthly at the SEDS campus. SEDS is such a clean and green environment and for many of the children, coming from such poor homes with very few facilities and a harsh environment, it could be likened to going on a special trip somewhere for a picnic and activities, something to

be really appreciated. All the children receive a substantial lunch before heading home which they all enjoy. It is sometimes hard to explain, but, it is a very special day to be part of.

Since the sponsorship's inception in early 1995, the focus of the Child sponsorship program has been strongly based on the girl child. This remains today, however there are also a number of boys who have been on our program since the beginning.

Twenty three of our Year 10 students sat their final exams with three failures. One girl re-sat the exam and has now passed. She, along with nineteen other students have all gone on to further study. An excellent result for the students most of whom were girls this year. One girl who lives at the SEDS campus, her home for many years, has continued on with her Year 11 studies with SEDS and her Donor's support. The decision was made by SEDS not to have children sponsored beyond Year 10, because it was harder to monitor their progress at the Colleges. The main exceptions are students who may have been living at the SEDS campus for some years, like Roja. Occasionally a village child may be supported.

A further eight students left the program for various reasons, five of them were Year 10 girls who are now studying in a Government Hostel to complete their Year 10, with full Government support and with the support of their families. The remaining children and their families relocated to the cities for work.

My visit to India in late July early August, re-affirmed my positive thoughts about the program, with success rates amongst the Year

10 students excellent this year. Close to 500 children have either passed through the program or remain since early 1995.

There have been some very significant changes to the administration of SEDS and the projects and programs they operate overall, but this has not really impacted on the Child Sponsorship program, as there was a designated person assigned to the role of Sponsorship in the SEDS office and this remains. Prasanth has been an excellent communicator during his time at SEDS, and has now made the decision to return to University to do a Masters Degree. We wish him well. Prasanth has been training his replacement for the past two months, so I would not expect any problems in the foreseeable future. Manil Joshua continues to monitor the program.

Child sponsorship is something people enjoy doing. From the regular feedback from letters, notes and emails I get, I can report that we are running a program whilst having a significant impact on the lives of the children being sponsored and their families, it also brings a great degree of enjoyment and happiness to their donors in Australia.

Sinangpad Report

Glenys Hughes

For the past 5 years, the Sinangpad Healthy Village Project, in partnership with Kalinga Provincial Health Office, has been working successfully with villagers in northern Philippines to assist communities to improve their health status through making changes to their environmental sanitation practices.

Over the past 12 months, working in 42 villages, some of the achievements include

- improved health and general cleanliness of communities
- improved participation rates by villagers in community activities to achieve health goals
- more people accessing health services such as children's vaccinations programs
- people are more accepting of their role in promoting their own health, rather than relying on outside assistance

eg. 40 out of 42 villages where project is working have a health plan and of these, 81% are implementing at least 50% of their plan

Factors assisting the project:

- cash incentives from the national government to some families has relieved some financial pressure & given them the opportunity to participate in community activities
- support of local government units providing training, supplementary resources, monitoring & addressing some concerns
- a large NGO working in remote areas has provided more infrastructure.

Negative outcomes & challenges:

- 50% of communities regress to some unhealthy practices eg despite having pig pens, some people are letting pigs roam free & causing destruction of gardens of neighbours still doing the right thing

- some villages (12 - 20) miss out on technical support and monitoring from their government health unit as it is not functioning optimally
- changes to village leadership sometimes had a negative impact on community initiatives as they often lacked CHD training
- follow up in remote communities are difficult due to limited staff

Sinangpad is continually trying to find & involve more health personnel in the healthy village project

-financial constraints: Sinangpad is trying to find new sources of funding to assist with its work

Project Visit

My proposed visit to the project in early 2012, with major donor Cecily was postponed, due to Cecily's work commitments.

I am hoping to reschedule the visit to the first half of 2013.

ALL BENGAL WOMEN'S UNION Report

Anne-Marie Maltby

The trip that Joy Handley and I made to ABWU at the beginning of the year has clarified many things for us, not least because it was the first time that both of us have been able to be there together. It was a great benefit at the end of each day to be able to discuss what had and hadn't been achieved. I really appreciated having the benefit of Joy's experience and knowledge to put things into perspective.

Vocational Training Projects

There have been very few negatives. It is gratifying to report that, after support from Partners in Aid, the block printing program is now self sufficient and the weaving program nearly so. We have not provided any funding this year and do not anticipate doing so in the future. Both programs provide training as well as work for longer term residents such as two hearing impaired weavers.

Our main project support is for the sewing and machine knitting training as this has proved the most useful to provide skills for those leaving the home and to give the girls skills that are useful for their families as well as to become more economically self sustainable. We have been funding this for 17 years and it is considered particularly helpful for girls who are slow-learners or are unable to continue with their studies.

There are fifteen girls in the tailoring section, two have returned home to their families and three have transferred to ABWU's production centre where they can make some money from the sale of their products.

ABWU General

We have been able to fund two lots of remedial teacher training workshops provided by another NGO. These are invaluable to the teachers who find many of the children virtually impossible to teach. The teachers feel that these training improve their ability to teach the children and both sides find the process much more approachable and enjoyable.

The summer holidays saw the counsellors holding workshops for the children who remain in the shelter home. Games, craftwork,

drawing competition, cookery classes and interactive sessions were successfully conducted. The primary school also held a summer workshop dealing with the “Go Green Movement”. The kids were enthusiastic about reducing usage of plastic bags, planting medicinal shrubs, and recycling paper. We hope this is a sign of things to come.

The Children’s home has been having quite a few problems this year mainly due to staff shortages, both voluntary and paid, and difficulty in recruiting replacements. A very hot June was also associated with a lot of illness with one girl dying of meningoencephalitis. All of ABWU was very upset over this tragic event.

Sponsorship

Our sponsorship numbers are holding fairly steady with 78 sponsored girls. This figure seems to be a good balance of maximising our support and of ABWU’s ability to manage the admin requirements of sponsorship.

Funding and the Future

We are fortunate in that ABWU directed donations easily cover our disbursements, particularly now that we only fund one project. This is largely due to the generosity of our donors, particularly the Bright community and other child sponsors and we do not need to top up with general PIA funds. Unfortunately, this situation is not sustainable indefinitely. Joy has been fundraising for many years and is finding these activities to be increasingly tiring. We also cannot count on the Australian dollar maintaining its strength against the Indian rupee.

ABWU have been informed that we regard the Cutting, Tailoring and Knitting Project as very worthwhile and that, while we hope to continue funding it, we may not be always able fund at current levels. As India's middle class is becoming more prosperous and ABWU is a very highly regarded NGO, it is hoped that any reduction in funding from PIA could be offset by increasing support from the local community.

Overall, ABWU has made effective use of our funds and we are happy with the outcomes achieved.