

Newsletter

March 2018

Partners in Aid

Enduring, Capable Communities

Partners in Aid Ltd
ABN 50 006 946 550
Consumer Affairs Victoria: 11274.13/14334

PO Box 42, Narre Warren LPO
VIC 3805 Australia

Phone: 03 9704 6315
Email: admin@partnersinaid.org.au
Web: www.partnersinaid.org.au

Urgent call for funds

Partners in Aid urgently needs your help to raise funds to continue our Low Carbon Farming project in India. This project has been training farmers to use sustainable farming methods in a drought-stricken area, which is helping farmers repair the land and be able to provide for their families once again.

You can read about the project in this newsletter. If you are reading this online, you can [click this link](#) to be taken to the fundraising page. Alternatively, you can search for Low carbon farming on the mycause website: www.mycause.com.au

Any contribution will make a change.



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URGENT APPEAL

Low Carbon Farming @ SEDS in India

Amanda Stone – Project Co-ordinator

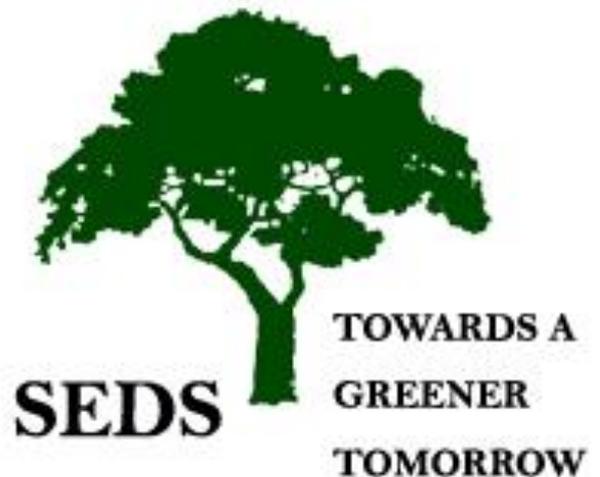
Two days after I arrived at SEDS in August last year, it rained. This was remarkable as the area was experiencing a serious drought with potentially devastating consequences.

The pleasant surprise was as short-lived as the rain unfortunately. It barely touched the soil and the lack of rain continued to be a key topic of conversations during my visit.

The heavy seasonal rains in June/July which are usually sufficient to fill water tanks, replenish ground water and provide for crops grown without irrigation have not occurred in the past 2 years. As a result, tanks are dry, crops have failed or been abandoned, animals are being sold and some farmers are moving to towns for alternative work and income.



Empty water tank in Andhra Pradesh



Despite these trying conditions, the **Low Carbon Farming Project**, funded by Partners in Aid until June 2017, has continued, adding new farmer groups each month, now reaching more than 2000 farming plots. All farmers are supported by SEDS to continue their sustainable farming practices as verified under the Gold Standard accreditation in 2014.

One farmer group I met with remain committed to the programme, despite the hardship from drought, and they reiterated statements I have heard in previous visits about sustainable agricultural practices being “the old ways”, better for them, producing higher yields with lower cost inputs, and better for their land and the environment.

SEDS conduct regular training with farmer groups, helping them to maintain their low carbon techniques, explore new approaches to organic pesticides and fertilisers, maintain their diaries for accreditation, and remain optimistic when times are tough.



Farmers continue to grow and harvest food despite the drought

The shortage of rain is impacting on other SEDS projects. Biogas units rely on both animals for manure and availability of water for mixing. With insufficient water, animals are being sold and so without manure, biogas units are being abandoned. Lack of water was being blamed for other problems which weren't actually related to water but it was a big topic of conversation.



Farmers are skilled in dry land agriculture

During my visit I was able to meet with a group of scientists who have been involved in the Low Carbon Farming accreditation process with the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change

(UNFCCC). The UNFCCC holds the key to farmers

being able to derive a cash income for their carbon emissions reductions. The process for this has been long and there have been many delays. However, the scientists were confident this will occur in about 12 months.

Partners in Aid's funding for Low Carbon Farming ceased 6 months ago and we urgently need to raise \$30,000 to continue the project for the final 12 months until trading can commence.

We have launched a short but urgent campaign to raise these funds during March. Every dollar will help farmers stay on their land and create a sustainable future. Donations can be made any time at this link:

<https://www.mycause.com.au/page/168912/low-carbon-farming-in-southern-india>

As the end of the financial year approaches, I hope some of our donors will consider helping farmers with a tax-deductible donation or can encourage their friends and family to help out.

More details on the UNFCCC accreditation process can be found here:

<http://newsroom.unfccc.int/climate-action/new-standard-for-measuring-sustainable-development-and-climate-targets/>

Child Sponsorship @ SEDS in India

Lyn Pickering – Sponsorship Co-ordinator

The summer holiday period in Australia is over and students have returned for the new school year. Students in India are in their last semester or term, and the weather is heating up in Andhra Pradesh as they approach summer.

Thank you to our sponsorship donors who either wrote, emailed or phoned me saying how much they enjoyed the short updates of students on the SEDS India program in our December newsletter.

The program is now in its 23rd year, and the changes have been obvious to Ian and I due in part to the 20 visits we have made since 1992. Our long-term donors would be aware of many of the changes through my twice-yearly letters giving updates of the academic progress of students, and the Christmas cards which are prepared at one of the monthly craft days. Being a sponsored student has some requirements placed on the student and their families. Like all students and families, our success is entirely dependent on how the family view education.

The positive has been a greater awareness from the parents to give their children, and especially girls, opportunities which were denied them, and the Indian Government has increased its support for disadvantaged students.

SEDS

SOCIAL EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

The system in India works differently to our education system in Australia, as is their, and our right. We can however request that the students and parents understand our requirements, the two main areas being

- * Regular attendance at school
- * Attendance at SEDS for a once per month activity which include, arts and crafts, sport, and health care, and school preparedness ie school uniforms, books for each level etc.

The program continues to be successful. It is the donors who give the opportunity to a student, and then it is up to the student to “make it happen”.

Thanks again,

Lyn

Bangladesh News

Graham Moore - Project Director

Sewing Training in the technical training project in Bangladesh.

When you are from a very poor family in Bangladesh opportunities to gain employment are very infrequent. The only work that one is likely to get is as a day labourer, where each day you go to do known location in your area and hope to get chosen to do some work for a day. If you are lucky you might own a hand tool like a shovel that you can take along which would make you more employable. Many however will not get a job. If it is special day, such as a festival day, there may be no work, and therefore no pay for anyone.

One way to help break the cycle of poverty is to get some training in a skill that not too many other

symbiosis

working together for good

people have, but this is often expensive to obtain, and you have no way of paying for it. This is where the Symbiosis TTIS project comes in. Supported by Partners in Aid, Symbiosis hires teachers and selects candidates (mostly women) from very poor backgrounds to train in sewing, textile printing and machine embroidery. In a course that might last for a few months they learn the basic skills to machine sew simple garments. It starts with being able to measure and transfer a pattern to fabric, to cutting, pinning, sewing and finishing. During their course, they may learn to sew 10 to 20 different patterns.

Usually the women are married, so it is important to have the support of their husband and other family members so they can attend the course,

which is provided for free. The course usually covers some other basic skills to enable women to earn some money from their skill.

Women who successfully complete the course maybe be able to obtain a loan through a micro credit scheme to buy a manual sewing machine, or they might be able to access a Symbiosis machine for a while after completing the



Please help us spread the word about Partners in Aid by passing this newsletter on to family, friends and colleagues once you have read it.

Thank you.

course to practice and make their first few garments for sale. Thus, with hard work and perseverance, plus the support of Symbiosis, the poverty cycle can be broken.

It all starts with your help. It costs about \$1000 to employ a sewing trainer and supply the materials for one course of around 10 to 20 women. Can you help this happen? Symbiosis has women waiting to do these courses. Please help now to break the poverty cycle. In 2017, 92 cents of every dollar donated to Partners in Aid went to project expenditure. You will be hard pressed to find a more efficient way of using your aid donations.

Please donate now.



ABWU

Anne-Marie Maltby - Project
Director

Project Visit December 2017



My husband and I were invited to a wedding in India which was something that had been on my bucket list for a long time. It was in Tamil Nadu at the beginning of January which gave me the perfect opportunity to visit ABWU, go to SEDS (my first visit) for Christmas and then meet up with friends and go on to the wedding. That is my idea of a great holiday!

It is a great time to go to India as it's their winter, so the weather is lovely for us – high 20s most days in Kolkata and not too humid. I was looking forward to meeting the ladies who have taken over most of the sponsorship management - Mrs Susmita Mitter and Ms Nilanjana (photo attached). As usual, the ladies at ABWU were extremely welcoming and attempted to introduce me to every sponsored girl plus a few more. They even organised for me to speak on the phone to one of the girls who had just finished one of her university exams. She was excited about how things were going, very positive about the future and very grateful to Partners in Aid for their assistance with further education.

The karate program is still going well, and they feel that it contributes a great deal to the girls' health and general physical and mental wellbeing. Two of the girls are now full qualified as trainers and

ABWU are trying to find them some outside work which would earn them around 500 rupees (\$10) per day.

In contrast to the popularity of the karate program, there has been waning interest in the sewing and knitting vocational projects. The ladies said that, although they felt that sewing skills were worthwhile, there were a few reasons for the reduction in interest. As it wasn't part of the school program, the girls receive no marks or recognition for the training. Also, the availability of cheap, mass produced clothing together with the very poor wages in the clothing industry meant that many of the girls didn't feel that there was a lot of point. Joy and I had been wondering about this and whether it was worth continuing support for the project. There is enough money remaining from our funding to continue some minimal training but, after some discussion, it was agreed that we wouldn't provide anything further. This is the end of an era for us but also quite a positive sign of the direction in which ABWU is going.

I met a few of the girls in the 'Education for All' remedial training program. There were different age groups and different abilities. Some had difficulty learning due to emotional trauma and some had

never had any sort of schooling. Despite this, they were all learning a little English and were encouraged to answer questions from us about their age and class. Needless to say, some of this didn't really work!

It was interesting to find that so many of the older girls could speak a reasonable amount of English. There is a conscious effort to look forward and English is clearly one of the paths to the future in their minds. If you want to get a better paying job in India, some English language skills are a big asset.



Nursing is a very popular choice for girls who have done well at English at school. The salary is around 32,000 rupees per month (\$640) or \$7,600 per annum. This is regarded as an extremely good salary and definitely part of the attraction. They must be pretty motivated though as the course is completely in English including all of their textbooks. Such an amazing achievement for girls with such poor beginnings.

The other popular choice is hotel housekeeping. To many Australians, this would be regarded as a lower level job but, in India, it is respected and extremely in demand. It requires a six-month course and the second half is on the job training in all aspects of housekeeping from room cleaning to food service. I said that that sounded like unpaid labour and the ladies laughed and said that it was seen differently there. It is extremely difficult to get into and relatively expensive but, as it provides a good living and job security for the girls, they make great efforts to try and assist any girl that wants to do it.

We had a lunch at the ABWU restaurant, Suruchi. The food there is traditional Bengali and really delicious. There was a lot of discussion about the food and banter with the serving ladies – all are ex-ABWU residents who weren't able to live independently or couldn't be rehomed after they turned 18 and still live in the grounds. This is also true of many of the other ABWU staff like the house mothers and creche attendants. All of these women have now lived together for many years. They function totally as a family with the usual laughs

and squabbles. Apparently, their living quarters are very lively...

As usual, I wasn't able leave without being dragged up for a visit to the creche for some 'cuddle time'. ABWU haven't ever asked for funding for this as they have much less difficulty raising money for these very cute children than for the older girls. This isn't surprising as these little children would melt anyone's heart – rushing up to us and clutching legs and reaching to be picked up while I was being told about some of their backgrounds. Although the older girls' backgrounds are just as awful, it somehow seems worse when they are so small. One child was abandoned by being thrown out of a train and another child's widowed mother was dying of AIDS.

Things have changed enormously in ABWU over the years. In the past, sponsorship money was needed to assist in providing the very basics to house, feed and provide basic education. Now the money is used to pay for things that will improve the girls' futures rather than just help pay for their 'keep'. There is a sense that much more is achievable than before. ABWU is very much a 'success story' for Partners in Aid and we should all be proud that our support has enabled so much to be achieved.

We often get letters from our supporters thanking our staff for the great job they are doing. As many are already aware, Partners in Aid is run almost totally by unpaid volunteers. The only exception that comes to mind is we pay for the services of an auditor to audit our annual financial returns. The organisation runs through the input of the voluntary members of Board and project committees. So whether it be operating our financial system and transactions, keeping our many sponsors informed, or trawling through government red tape to keep us compliant with laws of the land, there are some dedicated volunteers at work making it happen.

If you want to help, the very best thing you could do is convince another person or group who is not currently a donor, to become a donor to Partners in Aid. This is something everyone can do. We could slash our administrative costs if we had a pro-bono financial auditor to oversee our annual returns, so if you know such a person, put them in touch with us.

Sinangpad Healthy Village Project

Dr Cecily Neil – Project Director

Although it provides communities with funding for materials to enable residents to construct basic health-related infrastructure, such as household sanitary toilets, the Sinangpad Association's primary commitment is to generate behavioural change, rather than financing construction. Recently, however, the Association was very appreciative of receiving funding from the Rotary Club of Hawthorn for the construction of sanitary facilities in the elementary school at Pantikian, one of the communities that has recently become involved in the Sinangpad Healthy Village Project. Lack of proper school sanitary facilities makes it more difficult for a community to reap the full benefits that can come from the construction of household toilets and hand washing stations.

With the help of the money provided by Hawthorn Rotary Club to purchase materials and contract skilled



Before the planting of the surrounds



labour where necessary, the Sinangpad Association was able to help the community turn the construction into a communal affair.

- The Barangay (Village) Local Government Unit, acting as project implementers, organized the purchase and transshipment of construction supplies to the project site (3 hours on a very rough road from Tabuk where the materials had to be purchased);
- The Kalinga Provincial Health Unit contributed free toilet bowls.
- Male members of the Parents and Teachers Association provided the unskilled labour and took turns in working with the skilled laborers (as a means of supervision) to ensure that the project was implemented according to specification and (almost) accomplished on time.
- The Local Municipal Unit engineer, who had drawn up the building plans, closely monitored every step of the construction -
- Female parents took turns in cooking lunch and serving snacks for the laborers.
- Barangay (Village) Health Workers planted flowers around the latrine project site to beautify and make it eco-friendly.

Pantikian Elementary School now has a three-cubicle toilet with wash basins, designed and constructed with materials selected first with sustainability and safety in

mind, and secondly with a view to easy cleaning. One cubicle has been fitted with railings to make it easy for children with disabilities to use. To encourage the children to take a pride in the building, they were allowed to choose the colour for the painting of the facilities, Games and activities to encourage children in the proper use of the toilet and in hand washing are being carried out.

Training for teachers and residents on the operation and maintenance is scheduled for March. As part of the

training, an action plan for the regular cleaning and maintenance of the toilet will be prepared.

Sinnangpad has now established a School Sanitation Project to run in parallel with their Healthy Village Project and are hoping that they might be able to get funding for further school sanitary facilities to help make more Kalingan villages truly open defecation free.



Working on construction

Complaints Policy

All complaints should be addressed to the Board Chair and will be treated seriously, acknowledged promptly and resolved within two months.



Partners in Aid is proud to be registered with the ACNC, a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, and registered with Consumer Affairs Victoria. Whilst compliance is an onerous task for a volunteer organisation, we are committed to maintaining transparency, in which you can be confident your funds are going to where they are needed most – to those in India, Bangladesh and the Philippines.



ACFID
CODE

ACFID Code of Conduct

The ACFID Code of Conduct is a voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing transparency and accountability of signatory organisations. Partners in Aid is committed to the Code, of which we are a signatory and have been for many years.

If you feel Partners in Aid has breached the ACFID Code of conduct you can visit <http://www.acfid.asn.au/code-of-conduct/complaints> to make a complaint directly to ACFID.



GiveNow is an initiative of the Our Community Foundation, a not-for-profit program established through the financial support of www.ourcommunity.com.au and Westpac. Their manifesto is:

"You have the power to make a difference, to build a better community, to shape our country, our world."

Partners in Aid is registered with them, which means you can make a donation using their secure, online portal at this link:

<https://www.givenow.com.au/partnersinaid>

As we have noted in earlier newsletters, you can enjoy quality wine and support Partners in Aid projects at the same time. For every case of wine sold, a proportion goes directly to Partners in Aid, with no overhead costs.

For further detail, go to:

<http://www.goodwillwine.com.au/charities/partners-in-aid>

You can order wines or buy gift vouchers.

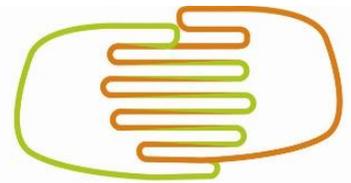


You can make a donation to Partners in Aid through PayPal. You can select a specific item, such as fish fingerlings for tanks in India, or a general donation. Making a general donation gives the Board of Partners in Aid the greatest flexibility in using your contribution. Please use the comment field in the Paypal form if you would like your general donation to go to a project or item not listed on our donation page, at this link:

<http://partnersinaid.org.au/how-to-help/>

The PayPal logo, featuring the word "PayPal" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font with a trademark symbol (TM) to the right.

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 (books/self-defense training support)

SEDS (Low Carbon Farming)

Symbiosis Bangladesh (stationery/garden/sewing machine/women's group support)

Sinangpad Healthy Village Project (toilets, vegetable patches, community health)

Child Sponsorship

I would like to begin/continue (please circle) to sponsor a child at ABWU/SEDS (Cost is \$260 per child per year, + optional annual gift \$20)

Membership

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

Total amount enclosed (donations and child sponsorship)

If paying by EFT please email 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 newsletters and occasional updates): _____

Gifts of \$2.00 and over are tax deductible (receipt will be issued)

Thank you for your support

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Thank you.