

# Newsletter

March 2020

## Partners in Aid

Enduring, Capable Communities

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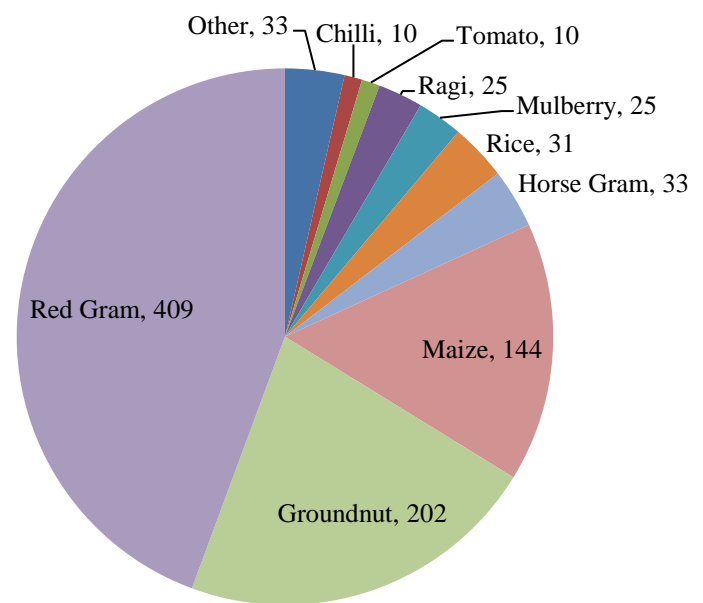
*"The climate showed its ugly face again in 2019. Early rains brought hope for a normal precipitation pattern but the predictions didn't come through. The South West Monsoon started on time but then brought little to no rain. By October the North East Monsoon was stronger but it arrived too late as most plants had withered away. More and more we are observing a shift in the climate characterised by a shorter and later rainfall pattern."* SEDS, February 2020



SEDs' work with farmers in the 25 villages they focus on is increasingly having to adapt to changes in once predictable weather patterns. Less predictable rainfall, and longer periods of drought is exceeding the ability of crops to adapt to changing patterns. Farmers will have to change what they grow and how they grow it. Partners in Aid and SEDs have applied for a DFAT Friendship Grant to support this work and we expect to hear the outcome of that any day. In the meantime, through the long-term work of SEDs, farmers are shifting away from growing ground nuts as their cash crop (for income rather than domestic consumption) which was promoted heavily by state governments in the past. Ground nuts require a lot of water and predictable rainfall.

Red Gram, a form of millet, is increasingly being planted. 126 farmers planted Red Gram on 409.2 acres (see diagram below) in the past 12 months. For a long time SEDs has been promoting the shift from the dominant groundnut cash crop into a diversified mix of trees and plants. In order to encourage the farmers even more, SEDs distributed 250 kg of Foxtail seed among its farmers so they could learn how to grow this plant. One of SEDs strategies to adapt to the changing climate is to focus on crops that grow fast and can handle the heat. Foxtail Millet is exactly such a plant. This indigenous crop that grows from seed to harvest in 3 months had

been replaced by groundnut and rice in recent decades. Now SEDS is promoting this forgotten millet again with other millets and pulses as urban demand is rising for these wholesome foods (see diagram at right).



*Mr. Chenna Reddy from Chinnapareddypalli with Foxtail millet*

## A Fair Price for Farmers

SEDS has been concerned for many years about the ability of farmers to get a fair price for their crops. Without the ability to store dry crops until favourable market conditions, they have relied on getting the best price on the day, usually a low price through a “middle-man” who then on-sells at a profit. This is profit the farmer does not get. The state of Andhra

Pradesh is now guaranteeing minimum prices for more than 20 crops. Fair prices for agricultural produce will take away a major vector and bring more stability to household incomes. In the process it will also eliminate the middleman in the procurement process. SEDS will watch this new development closely, as there may still be a need for further interventions to ensure a fair price for farmers.

## Tank Desilting

This popular program, funded by PIA donors for many years, is also being affected by unpredictable rainfall. This year the late rains filled up the tanks so tank desilting work will have to begin later in 2020. Three villages have already been selected and contributions from farmers are now being collected. Desilting is a simple low-cost intervention based on local knowledge. Due to erosion, fertile soil gets washed away which fills up the village tanks. Removing the silt increases the storage capacity of the tank and the silt is then deposited in the farmers’ fields to increase soil fertility. This program is very popular among farmers and promotes the ownership of these water bodies to the communities.



Adapting to a changing climate will be an ongoing focus of SEDS work with farmers who face the weather and its impacts every day. PIA's support for this important work will continue to be much needed.



Article in local paper about last year's tank desilting in Suddakutapalli

## SEDS – Child Sponsorship

Report from SEDS – August 2019-January 2020

The Partners in Aid program steadily continued its course in the last six months. Every second Saturday of the month the Partners in Aid sponsored children come to the SEDS campus for their monthly appointment, get measured and weighed and have all sorts of activities and games.

In August the Second Saturday Program focused on the creative side of the children. With the help of some volunteers and staff the children started colouring and drawing away. September was used for measuring the foot size of the sponsored children so SEDS could prepare for the purchase of new shoes for the students. After that it was time



A game of Kabaddi in September

for some village games. Most popular is Kabaddi. Kabaddi is an Indian sport. The name is derived from the Tamil word "kai", "pidi", which is translated into "holding hands". Two teams battle each other by trying to tag members of the opposite team out without getting caught in the process. The team who tags out the all the members of the opposite team wins the game.



In October the children got busy with the Christmas cards. Colourful mandalas and lotuses were the themes this year. The second Saturday of November was used to take measurements of all the sponsored students in preparation for their new outfits. During the last month of the year the staff got busy with taking the last measurements of some absentees in the previous months. After that it was fun and games. Then in January it was the traditional distribution of clothes for all the students.



*Fun and games in December*



*Clothes distribution in January*



*Christmas card preparations in October.*

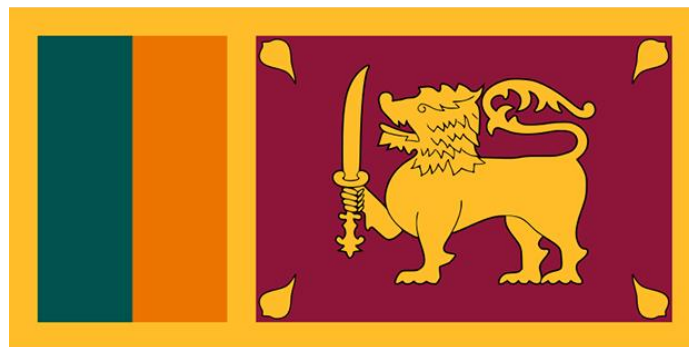
## Potential for a Project in Sri Lanka

Roger Hughes

Over the past couple of years Partners in Aid has been investigating the possibilities available to us should we decide to increase the diversity of our projects by spreading our operations into a new country. Presently, Partners in Aid offers donors the opportunity to support projects in Bangladesh, India and the Philippines. In the past we have had opportunistic projects in countries as diverse as Kenya and Eritrea in Africa, Tonga in the Pacific and Nepal on the Indian subcontinent. However, more strategically, the present search is for a new project either associated with the subcontinent, as is of interest the majority of our donors, or closer to home. Thus, for various reasons, we have been looking at Sri Lanka and Timor Leste.

With its self-imposed maintenance of low overheads, and consequently lack of advertising and hence relatively small budget, Partners in Aid has its budget next to fully committed, albeit very effectively committed. Thus, if we are to expand our offering of projects, we must endeavour to return to a higher level of recognition by DFAT with its greater administrative burden and supplement our income with government grants. It is still unclear whether the administrative effort required is worth it for our organisation. Nevertheless, we are pushing on with our investigation of projects in Sri Lanka and Timor Leste.

Our investigation of suitable projects in Timor Leste is being done in partnership with CUFA, the Australia Credit Unions' overseas aid organisation. However, I wish to describe to you the results of an investigative trip to Sri Lanka by a team of three of our members, Cecily Neil (our Chairman, who joined the team at the tail end



of a monitoring visit to the Philippines), Glenys Hughes and myself. Please note that all trips are paid for by the persons making the trip and at no expense to Partners in Aid. (However, should any member of Partners in Aid community be interested in becoming more involved with Partners in Aid, such trips are a wonderful way to gain insight to a country that is not available to the usual tourist!)

Five potentially suitable local NGOs in Sri Lanka were identified by a retired local Anglican Archbishop and using a list of NGOs that had received international prizes. Of these, three were found to warrant further investigation. On visiting these NGOs, as appropriate, one NGO stood out.

### YGRO

This organisation is geographically diverse (within Sri Lanka). Like Partners in Aid, it keeps expenses to an absolute minimum, with minimal office accommodation. Its philosophy states that “Physical wellbeing necessitates having sufficient food, clothing, shelter security, education and healthcare”, and it seeks to fulfil these necessities through providing:

- (1) Financial and academic (esp. mathematics) support for all school needs to children from poor home backgrounds. This project is in some ways similar to ‘child sponsorship’ but is not done by reporting on individual children;
- (2) Microenterprise loans are given to individuals from poor communities to start businesses together with business advice and guidance on sustainability. Thus the

project is like a 'shomati' programme but is supported by experts operating as a friendly, low interest, technically supporting bank, rather than fellow members of a shomati. This programme is chiefly supported by a commercial, wind-turbine company, with the company aims to receive praise rather than criticism from the community as it installs windfarms;

(3) Career guidance is given to those who miss university entrance even though their marks would qualify them for university entrance in many countries. We encountered this lack of university places often in our travels, and it explains in part why Sri Lankan students coming to Australia are anecdotally generally of such a high standard; and

(4) Providing support to poor milk producers to raise their incomes. Presently dairy cattle in Sri Lanka produce only 1 litre of milk per day/dairy head(!) and Sri Lanka imports 60% of its dairy products. Commercial companies, with the expertise of the University of Surrey, are helping large-scale farmers. This programme aims to help the small producers, by helping improve the genetic pool and also assisting with the improvement of the soil, which is cobalt and iodine deficient. The aim of all concerned is to make Sri Lanka self-sufficient in milk production.

Other projects of no interest to us include running a low-cost retreat with education on agroforestry, and support

Membership is only \$25 a year, and goes a long way in our administrative costs, ensuring donated funds go to the projects not postage stamps!!

Membership also entitles you to vote at our AGM or nominate a proxy.

Membership is due on June 1st of each year. Please contact us if you're interested in taking on a membership.

for refugees displaced by the civil war, which would be classified as welfare.

The most likely roles for Partners in Aid would be in supporting the educational project [(1) above] on the Jafna Peninsular, or in providing support to the project to increase milk production [(4) above]. We believe that both would resonate with our donor base. It should be noted that there are political difficulties in working on the Jaffna Peninsula after the civil war. However, the organisation appears to be very well connected politically and operates there comfortably.

If any reader has a comment, positive or negative, on the potential involvement of Partners in Aid with a project as described above, the Projects Subcommittee would very much like to hear from them. There is still a long way to go with this process of adopting another project, if indeed it is to happen, but we are a small group and your opinions would be valued.



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.



## Sinangpad Healthy Village Project

Dr Cecily Neil – Project Director

For a village in the Philippines to be classified as having ‘zero open defecation’ status, all households must have a sanitary toilet, tested for ‘functionality’ by barangay officials and staff from the Rural Health Units. Zero Open Defecation status is only accorded after unannounced spot checks have been made by the Local Government Unit.

On a recent visit to the Sinangpad Healthy Village Project in Kalinga (northern Luzon, Philippines), my Sinangpad colleagues and I were able to visit a village which, with the assistance of Partners in Aid funding to help purchase the necessary construction materials to build toilets, has now achieved the coveted zero open defecation status.

Improvement in the health status of the community is the main reason Sinangpad is seeking to eliminate open defecation. However, when we asked residents what they saw as the advantages of having a sanitary toilet, other reasons also emerged. Talking to residents who had had a sanitary toilet for some time, they now saw the main advantages to be not only the reduction in stomach problems but the improved smell in the village. For those who had more recently acquired a household toilet, the main advantage was accessibility - an advantage compounded by the fact that seeking a place for open defecation could result in coming home with leaches attached or in having to fight off the free roaming pigs. Those with newly constructed sanitary toilets also talked about the fact that they no longer experienced

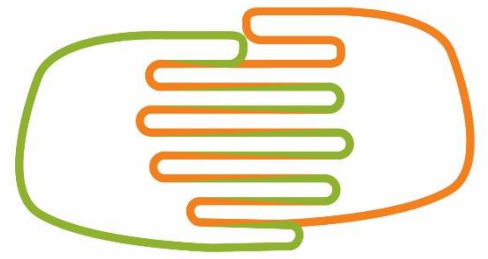


the shame they had previously experienced when they had visitors who wished to use a toilet. There was general agreement on the part of both groups of respondents that now that they had become accustomed to having a household toilet, they would make sure that they always had one in the future.

Sinangpad is hoping that by the end of 2020, the whole of the Municipality of Pasil will be open defecation free. This involves not only mobilizing the community to ensure, with the aid of external funding to buy construction materials, all households build a toilet, or, if physically unable to do so, receive construction help from neighbours or others in the village, but ensuring that construction of any new house in the community also includes the construction of a toilet. To this end, Sinangpad members are working hard with barangay officials to have ordinances passed that require all new house building permits to include a toilet.



*Children dancing to celebrate the school toilet opening (funded by Hawthorn Rotary Club) in Pasil*



## Meet busy entrepreneur Shahanaz!

## Partners in Aid

Symbiosis International

Deserted by her husband after he took another wife and moved out of the area, Shahanaz was left with two daughters to raise alone.

After joining a Symbiosis Group - where she learnt to read, write and save - she took her first loan of 4000 taka (\$60) from her group and bought a female goat. After breeding goats for a few seasons, she took the profits and bought a cow for 22,000 taka (\$400) so she could sell the milk. Around the same time, she borrowed another 4000 taka from her Symbiosis Group and bought a sewing machine. After that she leased some cropland. She receives half the rice crop and now keeps bulls, chickens and ducks also!

Her daughters are being educated and the eldest is currently doing her HSC in science. Shahanaz was recently inspired to start another new group of 20 women, who will become part of her existing Community Based Organisation (CBO).



Shahanaz at work. Photo thanks to Symbiosis International  
<https://www.facebook.com/SymbiosisInt/photos/a.1588032831440409/2372923326284685/?type=3&theater>

You can read more Symbiosis success stories on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SymbiosisInt/>

### Complaints Policy

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

*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.*



# Bangladeshi Projects

Roger Hughes – Project Director

We have recently received progress reports on our two projects in Bangladesh: the Garment Training Project; and the Jamalpur and Sherpur Development Project (Jamuna River Development Project).

## The Garment Training Project

Sewing and garment making courses continue to be very popular amongst the poor. Consistent with the target number, a total of 36 students successfully completed the sewing course during the quarter, and 12 additional former students have purchased their own sewing machines during the past three months. Five trainees have undergone the more advanced garment-manufacturing course, up on the estimated 3 students. However, the embroidery course has only seen a further 5 graduates, compared with an anticipated 10 graduates, this quarter. This shortfall in numbers tends to be a recurring theme in embroidery, as the course does not carry the same job prospects as sewing.



*Block-batik training*

As usual special training sessions on tailoring and block batik have been given to willing disabled students with their parents' involvement. In total 21 such students have received instruction.

In all 74 have taken the training sessions on health awareness, a fine result, and there is hope that the number for the full year will be more than double the number originally planned.

Concerning the youngest beneficiaries, it is reported that all 100 new preschool students admitted at the beginning of the school year are still regularly attending one of the four preschools involved in the project. The staff continue to monitor and discuss with the parents the progress of these young students.

In support of these classes there has been the usual staff training on issues relating to the parting of information to the women involved in these courses and their shomati groups, as well as interaction with government officials.

In short the project is generally on track to fulfil its targets, and our Projects Committee is happy with the progress being made.

## Jamalpur and Sherpur Development Project (The Jamuna River Project)



*Feeding cattle*

Earlier this project was extended to the mainland, combining this project with the project of another NGO, as well as maintaining its presence on the river island. As a consequence of the increased population served by this project, it now reports that overall the project has 10,850 primary savings groups with a total of 210,564 members.

However, growth has slowed with members dropping out of the scheme, when they move to a different location, becoming comparable, although still less than, new recruits to the project. At present 162 members from 20 of these groups are receiving training in their chosen business venture, including such things as cattle rearing

Healthcare remains an important part of this project. During the quarter 20 further groups were trained in health care including eye healthcare, maternal child

health care and sanitation. An emphasis has been put on making participants aware of the benefits that they can obtain from using hospitals. Progress in changing patterns of behaviour is slow. Many members for instance still use unsafe latrine practices. Similarly, attitudes towards child marriage are slow in changing. However, the mentality of group members is gradually changing, and more and more members are showing interest. A lot of discussion is conducted with community groups to achieve such social changes. Our preschool activity and school teaching continues as in earlier reports.

As always there has been a lot of emphasis on monitoring and assessing the impact of various aspects of the project on those receiving it and the community as a whole. As for the Garment Training Project, this project continues to perform as expected, and our Project Committee remains happy with it.



Monthly Staff Meeting. JRDP Primary School Annual Sports.



School committee and Parents meeting. JRDPnew School parents meeting.

*Images from Symbiosis report of activities on site*



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.

## Who is ACFID?

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) unites Australia's non-government aid and international development organisations to strengthen their collective impact against poverty. Their vision is of a world where gross inequality within societies and between nations is reversed and extreme poverty is eradicated. Partners in Aid is proud to be associated with such an organization, the peak body for the not-for-profit aid and development sector in Australia.



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/>



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.



**Make a  
Donation**



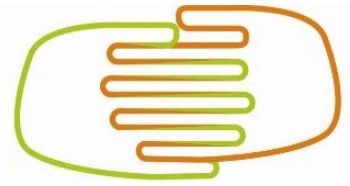
Using the  
secure engine of  
[GivNow.com.au](http://GivNow.com.au)

GiveNow is an initiative of the Our Community Foundation, a not-for-profit program established through the financial support of [www.ourcommunity.com.au](http://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>



## Partners in Aid Donation Form

## Partners in Aid

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

\$

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

SEDS (Sustainable Agriculture)

\$

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

\$

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

\$

### SEDS Low Carbon Farming Committed Donor

I wish to pledge \$200 /\$500 /\$1000 per year for 1/2/3/4/5 years

### Child Sponsorship

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

\_\_\_ children

x

\$260/280

=

\$

### Membership

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

\$ 25

**Total amount enclosed (donations and child sponsorship)**

\$

EFT details: Partners in Aid, BSB/Acct: 033686/162354, with your surname as reference. Please email [admin@partnersinaid.org.au](mailto:admin@partnersinaid.org.au) to arrange a receipt and confirm where you would like the donation directed.

If paying by cheque, please make it out to Partners in Aid, and post 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 or more are tax deductible (a receipt will be issued)

***Thank you for your support!  
Your contributions really help make a  
change in the lives of others.***