

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER NEWSLETTER



Partners in Aid

Enduring, Capable Communities



Your support is more important than ever

To our Partners in Aid supporters,

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to sweep the globe at an accelerated pace since our last newsletter in June. While some countries have managed to keep the virus under control, many countries are experiencing second waves or continually rising case numbers.

The pandemic is causing severe impacts on people's livelihoods and mental health, with many countries now experiencing deep recession. India, where PIA donates the majority of its funds, has recently reported its economy shrank 24% in the quarter ending in June 2020 compared with the previous year. India's cases have risen from over 1 million in May to over 5 million in September. This will have a profound effect on the poor and vulnerable, many of which have become displaced and dislocated from their family and communities during this time.

Each year Partners in Aid assists disadvantaged people not only in India but also in Bangladesh and the Philippines. The virus has impacted some of our projects and sponsorships as you will read in the project updates included in this newsletter. But despite these set backs, we continue to play an important role ensuring that the people we support have access to health services, education and food and our donations are still required.

We ask our donors and members, if they are able, to continue their support of Partners in Aid, so we can continue to help those most in need. Any contribution no matter how small, will allow us to continue supporting our communities overseas now and through the future. All projects continue to require urgent and significant resources outside the scope of our usual work.

We hope that all our supporters are keeping well during these challenging times. We look forward to re-connecting face-to-face as soon as we are able.

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HOW TO GIVE

HOW TO GIVE:

Because Partners in Aid has no paid staff, our overheads are very low. This means nearly all the money donated goes directly to our partner organisations. All donations are tax deductible. There are a number of ways you can support Partners in Aid's projects, including making a general donation, making a donation directly to one of our projects, buying items from one of our partners or leaving a gift in your will. Please send money via:

- Leave a bequest
- Direct Bank Transfer
- Cheque
- Online at My Cause or GiveNow
- Purchase from one of our partners

BEQUESTS

A gift in your will, no matter what size will make a significant difference to the work of Partners in Aid. You can bequest cash, a percentage of your estate or a residuary gift. All bequests are welcome and there are no fees. We use bequests to assist with the continual development and improvements of all our programs. We recommend that you seek professional advice from your solicitor or financial advisor in planning a bequest. For more information or a confidential conversation please contact Cecily or Lyn on 03 9704 6315 or e-mail admin@partnersinaid.org.au.

BANK TRANSFER OR CHEQUE

Details to donate through bank transfer or cheque can be found on the next page. Please ensure that bank transfers have the details of your name and the direction of your donation. If forwarding a cheque, fill in newsletter page or write a note with name and direction of your donation or email admin@partnersinaid.org.au to advise your payment and where you would like it allocated.

ONLINE AT MY CAUSE / GIVENOW

- You can make a one off or regular tax-deductible donation through platform My Cause or Give Now.
 - My Cause: <https://www.mycause.com.au/charity/25612/PartnersinAidLtd>.
 - Give Now: <https://www.givenow.com.au/partnersinaid>.

GOODWILL WINE PARTNERSHIP

You can also 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. Thinking about giving yourself a treat during lockdown? Goodwill are popping in a roll of Who Gives A Crap toilet paper and a 50ml bottle of hand sanitiser in every order of their Lockdown Mix. You can order wines or buy gift vouchers. Place order here and support Partners in Aid: <http://goodwillwine.com.au/charities/partners-in-aid>



HOW TO GIVE

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

I would like to make a specific donation to one of the below projects (please indicate which project)

India: SEDS Sustainable Agriculture Project

- \$10 could buy 1000 Fish fingerlings to stock tanks
- \$50 could employ a SEDS staff member for 1 month
- \$200 could hire a tractor for 1 week

Bangladesh: Symbiosis Bangladesh

- \$10 could buy school stationary for 1 week
- \$30 could buy tailoring supplies
- \$200 could buy a sewing machine

Philippines: Sinangpad Healthy Village Project

- \$35 could buy materials to enable a family to build a household sanitary toilet
- \$50 could buy health training for communities

CHILD SPONSORSHIP

I would like to begin/continue to sponsor a child at SEDS / All Bengal Women's Union
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.

BANK TRANSFER & CHEQUE

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 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

TOTAL

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).



INDIA: SEDS TANK DESTILTING PROJECT

PROJECT DIRECTOR: AMANDA STONE

Partners in Aid works with the Social Education and Development Society (SEDS) in Andhra Pradesh, India to educate communities and help protect natural resources with water management and reforestation programs. Partners in Aid has funded the de-silting of 3-4 tanks each year since the 1990's.

In yet another twist to 2020, SEDS experienced rare good rain in June. Fortunately the SEDS team had been able to desilt a tank at Cholemarri a few weeks earlier, with 32 families benefitting from silt being placed on their farms to enhance crop production, and increasing the tank's water holding capacity by 2,835,000 litres. The photos illustrate just how dry the land has been and how welcome the June rain has been. Despite the constraints of COVID-19, other SEDS work has continued in an adapted form.

SEDS pioneered the use of biogas units in 2010. Households are taught to produce biogas using manure from their domestic animals mixed with water in a concrete tank. The gas is used for domestic cooking instead of smoky woodfire, improving indoor air quality and children's health and reducing the need to cut down vegetation for fuel. In addition, it reduces the production of greenhouse gases and villages can exchange these measurable emission reductions (CERs) for additional income. The biogas project is accredited with the UN Clean Development Mechanism and needs to be verified on a regular basis.

What is the clean development mechanism?

The CDM allows emission-reduction projects in developing countries to earn certified emission reduction (CER) credits, each equivalent to one tonne of CO2. These CERs can be traded and sold and used by industrialized countries to meet a part of their emission reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol. The mechanism stimulates sustainable development and emission reductions, while giving industrialized countries some flexibility in how they meet their emission reduction limitation targets.

"SEDS experienced rare good rain in June."

COVID STATS

INDIA

- 5.9MILLION CASES
- 4.9MILLION RECOVERED CASES
- 93,000 DEATHS

As at 25 Sept 2020, Wiki, WHO

Biogas





In July SEDS received a remote verification for its CDM biogas project. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, travel to villages was heavily restricted and the audit was conducted through Skype and phone calls with the beneficiaries. Everything went well and SEDS passed the verification.

Other SEDS work has been more difficult to continue. With restrictions on gathering and movement, training for sustainable agriculture has paused. All educational facilities have been closed since March. COVID-19 has exposed the inequalities of Indian society. Families with higher incomes can provide their children with laptops and they continue their education virtually. Meanwhile millions of poor children in villages lack the capacity to join in educational programs. SEDS is trying to adapt to the situation as best as possible. Students are provided small tasks and exercises distributed over WhatsApp, often relying on neighbours and friends when the family doesn't have a smartphone.

Schools are expected to open again in September for the start of a new school year. Now that India is opening up SEDS is also getting ready to move back in to work. As many villages are still fearful and prefer to keep things closed and limit gatherings of people, SEDS will first revamp its agricultural program by giving extensive training to staff on sustainable agriculture. Then, hopefully, around November they can again start visiting villages and connect with farmer families.

SEDS CEO Manil Jayasena has recently arrived home in India after being trapped visiting family in Malaysia in March when travel restrictions were introduced. A 3 weeks trip turned into a 5 ½ months stopover. The fact that some SEDS work could continue during that time illustrates the strong foundation laid by Manil and Rajen Joshua, and the effective teamwork that has developed within the SEDS staff. Partners in Aid knows we have a strong partner in SEDS and that the funding support we provide goes to those who need it and really does change lives. We thank our donors to SEDS projects for their ongoing, invaluable support



Cholermarri before



Biogas



INDIA: SEDS CHILD EDUCATION SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

PROJECT DIRECTOR: LYN PICKERING

In addition to the tank de-silting project, a child sponsorship program was set up with SEDS in late 1994, when visiting board members recognised that the majority of the children in the area did not attend School. Sponsorship of a child covers expenses including books, uniforms, shoes, school fees, monthly visits to SEDS for cultural and sporting activities, and health checks.

A message from Filip from SEDS in India.

"India seems to be moving to a more open model as the socio-economic situation of millions of people was getting precarious. Nevertheless it is still difficult. The economy shrank by a quarter in the last month. Millions are unemployed and some say the worst is yet to come. As for the schools, every day the situation changes.

Let me give you a few details.

The pandemic has impacted the education sector dramatically. There is a distinctive rise of e-learning where teaching is done remotely and on digital platforms. This sudden shift away from the classroom has also brought to the fore the economical divide showing that not all of the children have access to computers or other digital services.

Following the release of GO390 envisaging guidelines for the Unlock 4.0, the authorities in the State decided to reopen schools from September 21st, but only for students of classes 9 to 12. Regular classes will remain closed till September 30th.

They want to reopen schools tentatively on October 5th. No news on which classes exactly and the final decision will be arrived at depending on the pandemic conditions and the guidelines. The Government is determined to demonstrate that education should continue, however parents are anxious and many are reluctant to send their children back to school. The main victims are the children. Students have already lost precious academic time. There is a risk of young learners completely losing interest in classroom lessons if there is a further gap, and the children return to just playing."

"Not all of the children have access to computers or other digital services."





BANGLADESH: SYMBIOSIS PROJECT

PROJECT DIRECTOR: ROGER HUGHES

Partners in Aid works with Symbiosis in Bangladesh on two projects which aim to build the capacity, resilience and socio-economic status of impoverished communities. The Bangladesh Technical Training and Information Support (TTIS) Program provides vocational training in sewing, with the majority of participants being women. The Jamuna River Development Project (JRDP) aims to help communities living on islands in the Jamuna River through education, improved literacy, micro-finance and health projects.

Although our projects in Bangladesh go back to the early 1960s, since 1993 we have been working with Symbiosis Bangladesh to implement many of our projects in that country, and at present Symbiosis is our sole implementation partner. Our connection with Symbiosis Bangladesh dates to its founding, when one of our board members suggested that we work with the fledgling organisation.

Under the guidance of its founder Morris Lee, who had lived in Bangladesh for 14 years previously and is fluent in Bengali, Symbiosis Bangladesh has grown into a very large and successful organisation doing extremely useful work for the poor of Bangladesh. Now, 27 years on, Morris has stepped down as its CEO effective 1st July 2020. He will continue in an advisory role for another two years before retiring. He has handed over to the new CEO, Lisa West-Newman. Despite the present difficult times caused by the corona virus sweeping the world, he leaves the organisation in overall fine shape.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Morris for all the help including both project and cultural advice that he has given to me over the years. He guided and helped me on logistical problems, advised me on reading material eg Lapierre's 'City of Joy' (India rather than Bangladesh) and been a good supportive friend. Thanks Morris.

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Concerning projects, the government imposed lockdown is now over. I am told that our two projects have both restarted. At present, I do not have any information that is likely to be of interest. However, I understand that a full report is presently being written in Bangladesh that will indicate how our projects have fared. I shall relay its contents to you in our next newsletter.



Morris Lee



## PHILIPPINES: SINANGPAD HEALTHY VILLAGE PROJECT

PROJECT DIRECTOR: CECILY NEIL

The Sinangpad Healthy Village Project has been ongoing now for nearly twelve years. Located in the Kalinga Province, a mountainous province in the north of the Philippine's main island, Luzon. The project helps enable poor, remote communities to make the most of their human potential, capabilities and resources by promoting behavioural changes intended to reduce the incidence of environment-related food, water-borne and vector-borne diseases, especially those affecting infants.

Ensuring that money donated goes exactly where a donor specifies is a principle that is strongly adhered to by Partners in Aid. However, with the donor's written consent, very willingly given, the Sinangpad Association has been given permission to spend part of the latest donation we received on PPE equipment, rather than on the Sinangpad Healthy Village Project. Despite all efforts to keep the virus out, COVID-19 cases are now emerging in Kalinga. In a recent communication, we were informed that there is a shortage of PPE equipment there, and although it is possible to purchase it, there has not been sufficient money for this to happen on the scale needed.

A significant number of volunteers who have given time over the last 10+ years to improve the health in rural communities are health workers and hence in the front line in the fight against the pandemic. The approval to use a donation for PPE equipment will not only contribute to the protection of a population in a province inadequately equipped to cope with a major outbreak should it occur, but serve as a token of respect to the Sinangpad Association members who have put so much time and effort into keeping others safe.



### COVID STATS

#### PHILLIPINES

- 301K CASES
- 322K RECOVERED
- 5,284 DEATHS

#### BANGLADESH

- 359K CASES
- 269K RECOVERED
- 5,129 DEATHS

As at 25 Sept 2020, Wiki, WHO





## INDIA: ALL BENGAL WOMEN'S UNION

PROJECT DIRECTOR: ANNE-MARIE MALTBY

The All Bengal Women's Union (ABWU) of Kolkata has been operating for over 70 years. Partners in Aid has been supporting the ABWU for more than 40 years. The ABWU is an NGO run entirely by volunteer women to rescue abused, at risk, destitute, abandoned and orphaned girls.

India is still suffering badly with the pandemic with more than five million cases of COVID -19. Although they went into a very severe lockdown very early, they are one of many developing nations where leaders feel they have no choice but to prioritize re-openings and accept the risks of surging coronavirus infections. Yet its public health system is severely strained, and experts believe it is likely to reach a breaking point as the government continues to ease a nationwide lockdown.

The new daily cases have reached nearly 100,000 which is a mind boggling figure, particularly given that Australia has had less than a third that in total through the pandemic. The southern states including Andhra Pradesh (SEDS) have some of the worst statistics while West Bengal (ABWU) has fared much better.

It's not all bad news. There is a feeling that there are early signs of a plateau in numbers. India has also had much lower reported death rates than many other countries, although this may be partly due to poor reporting. Even during normal times most deaths are not recorded as most people die at home with no doctor present. On the bright side, much of the low death rate can also be explained to the young population – median age of 25 compared to Australia's 37.

ABWU has reported that everyone is keeping well but many people are finding it difficult to handle the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. People are very disturbed and demoralized about it. They don't know exactly how they will be impacted, how long it will last, or how bad things might get. 61 girls have stayed at the home, nearly all are at the Children's Home with 14 staff members and 6 volunteers.

They are conducting school online through Zoom App at ABWU and WhatsApp video call to girls outside the home. Mobile phones are very cheap in India and even very poor people have access so that has made things easier. It has been difficult to keep the girls entertained but the house mothers have incorporated an activity routine during the lock down period.



"61 girls have stayed at the home, nearly all are at the Children's Home with 14 staff and 6 volunteers."



### A message from ABWU: Daily life in the Children's Home:

Our Superintendent and House Mothers create a flexible and consistent daily routine for children that have time for structured activities as well as free time. Every morning and evening the children sit with their school books and do revision work, practice hand writing and spelling. Younger children between 6 -8 years play with their dolls and toys. They also have physical activities like exercises in the play ground. They also practice their singing and dancing and love watching TV in the evening and this is done under house mothers supervision. Non residential staff like Child Welfare Officer also comes to CH (Children's Home) thrice a week to support and help the children to deal with this stressful event such as:

1. Give children opportunity to talk about what they are feeling.
2. Encourage them to share concerns and ask questions.
3. Use simple tools to comfort and calm children for e.g. telling stories.
4. Praise them frequently for their strengths, such as showing courage, compassion and helpfulness.
5. Provide them correct information through valid sources.

We include following immunity boosting foods for increasing immunity against COVID-19.

- We are boiling aqua guards water at Children's Home, residents and staff members are using it
- We are using turmeric, cumin, coriander, ginger and garlic paste as ingredients in any preparation.
- During the corona virus pandemic we increased the source of protein, vitamins and minerals in daily diet chart such as, we provide spinach, green leafy vegetable, tomato, khichuri, soya beans curry seasonal vegetables & fruit or mixed vegetable curry and nuts.
- We provide Chicken twice a month, fish once a week and eggs every alternate day and
- Every day we provide lemon at lunch time.
- Occasionally we provide special meals to our children of Children's Home.

### General health conditions of children and staff:

- Good, no complains so far. As per the guidelines no children and housemothers are allowed to go out. In case of any emergency, as per doctor's advice we will take them (Residents and Staffs) to Government Hospitals as and when required. Both children and staff members are using mask, washing their hands. For children it is checked by housemothers if they are doing properly or not.
- We are taking body temperature of all children and staff members of ABWU-Children's Home and keeping record of the same.
- All the residents and caregiver are instructed to wash their accessories (Mobile for staff members) and hands repeatedly by using Soap, Dettol, liquid hand wash and hand sanitizers and clothes of residents and caregivers are washed properly and dried in sunlight.
- We are aware how important it is to give counselling support to all our children during this trying time when they are cut off from their family and us, the members. These children feel isolated, anxious, bored and uncertain. They are overcome with fear, and grief, over the impact of the virus. Our counselors are constantly taking counseling sessions through Whatsapp video calls. From September, 2020, 3 counselors are scheduled to come once a week.
- General physicians and psychiatrist are on call.

We celebrated our our Independence Day on 15th August, and and Foundation Day of ABWU on 29th August, 2020, where children and our residential staff (Superintendent and House Mothers) arranged an entire programme by themselves to celebrate Independence Day and Foundation Day.



## AGM IN NOVEMBER

The date for our Annual General Meeting is still being confirmed, however it will be held virtually in November. Once the date is confirmed we will send a note to all members and guests who are invited and encouraged to attend the meeting to hear about our progress over the last year and understand our vision for the future.

## OIL PAINTING LIMITED OFFER

We currently have a limited offer from our board member Roger Hughes who is offering to paint oil portraits of our sponsored children. If you would like an oil painting of your sponsored child please contact us at [admin@partnersinaid.com.au](mailto:admin@partnersinaid.com.au) or e-mail Roger directly at [Wongarra@hotmail.com](mailto:Wongarra@hotmail.com) to request your oil painting.

We ask that you make a donation (however much you'd like) to PIA in exchange for the oil painting.

## OTHER FUNDRAISING OPPORTUNITIES

Although challenging with the current COVID-19 restrictions, at least in Melbourne, we encourage our supporters and members to undertake their own fundraising activities.

Please contact us at [admin@partnersinaid.com.au](mailto:admin@partnersinaid.com.au) if you have any ideas and we can see how we can support you. Some ideas include:

- Virtual trivia
- Virtual dinners or morning teas
- Raffles

## ACFID



### 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.

### Complaints Policy

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

### 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.