



Partners in Aid
AUSTRALIA

2022 Annual Report

1. Partners in Aid's purpose, objectives/aims and values

Partners in Aid was established in 1962 to support the very poor in India and Bangladesh. This year, we have worked in India, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. We continue to be guided by:

- a **Vision** of enduring, capable communities,
- a **Mission** to partner with local non-government organizations overseas to support sustainable projects that they have selected and are implementing to enable their communities to thrive through better health, education, and livelihood, and
- **Values** of Integrity, Dignity and Effectiveness.

Our **short-term objectives** in 2022 were to promote and assist local community and economic development projects. This work included watershed management, sustainable agriculture, environmental sanitation, job skills training, health education, women's self-help groups, and child education sponsorship.

Our **long-term objectives** are to help NGOs in developing countries to enable rural and urban communities to enhance their quality of life by making sustainable improvements in their environment, health, education, and income generating activities.

2. Partners in Aid's income and expenditure for the financial year 2021-2022 and overall financial health

In the financial year 2021-2022, Partners in Aid's income was \$136,985, which included \$135,838 in direct donations. Inflation, low interest rates, and the longer-term impacts of Covid, made it difficult for some of our donors to continue supporting Partners in Aid projects. As a result, this year our donations dropped 15% –\$24,545. We fully understand the need for some of our regular donors to discontinue donating and really appreciate the help that they have provided our projects throughout the years.

Throughout 2021-2022, our total expenditure was \$131,073 of which \$98,515 was expended on projects in India, \$16,500 in Bangladesh, \$1,537 in the Philippines, and \$5,000 in Sri Lanka. Administration costs (audit fees, ACFID fees, insurance, and accounting fees) totaled \$9,461,

7% of our total income.

Despite our reduced income, we ended up with a surplus in the budget on 30 June 2022. Sadly, however, this has brought us no satisfaction, as, apart from the impact of winding up our support of Symbiosis Bangladesh, the surplus was mainly due to reduced remittances to our project partners because of the restrictions that the pandemic placed on their ability to implement some or most of their planned activities. This was particularly true of the project we support in Philippines, where, apart from extensive lockdowns in the villages participating in the project we support there, the majority of members of the NGO with which we partner, namely the Sinangpad Association, are health workers who were on the frontline with respect to Covid management.

3. Our most significant aid and development activities undertaken during 2021-2022 and their impact

During 2021-2022, Partners in Aid raised funds to support projects run by our partners in India, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. The outline of the key projects and development activities below is based on extracts from annual reports presented at the AGM in November this year. The full, more detailed, reports are currently being uploaded, along with this report, to the website.

All Bengal Women's Union in Kolkata – Through sponsorship, the All Bengal Women's Union (ABWU) provides broad-ranging support for women and girls, generally from abusive and/or extremely destitute backgrounds, who are brought to the ABWU home by court order or by government or non-government aid agencies. The goal of sponsorship is to improve the future wellbeing and independence of the girls, predominantly through education, counselling, and life skills training. ABWU aims to empower the residents and build resilience.

By government order, during the pandemic girls were sent home wherever possible and some did not return. However, three girls completed nursing degrees, one a B.Com., one training as a beautician and two call centre training. These girls are now fully employed. The ABWU girls we now sponsor include a large proportion of new residents, and the emphasis has been on managing this.

In the very early years, the PIA sponsorship program was needed to assist with basic food, clothing and accommodation needs. As ABWU has become increasingly well established and respected, there is increasing support from the local community and growing middle class. As a result, Partners in Aid sponsorship is now used to assist with less basic needs. Partners in Aid support is gradually being phased out.

Social Education and Development Society's Sustainable Agriculture (Natural Resource Management and Livelihoods with Promotion of Farmers Groups) in Andhra Pradesh – The Social Education and Development Society (SEDS) works in the southern part of Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh. This covers an area of approximately 6,700 square kms, with a population of approximately 450,000. Anantapur district is out of the full reach of monsoons.

Thus, the main issue affecting the area is drought – rainfall is highly erratic and untimely. Decades of deforestation have also caused erosion of the topsoil, silting up the traditional village tanks (dams). This project helps fund the machinery to desilt tanks selected in cooperation with local village organisations. The latter are also co-contributors of funds. Farmers apply the silt to local fields to improve productivity. For some years, Partners in Aid has been supporting the desilting of tanks, working towards a sustainable environment and enhanced management of natural resources. It has also funded the establishment of farmers' groups to help promote sustainable livelihoods, management of natural resources, and community owned and managed health and education initiatives.

A new MOU between SEDS and Partners in Aid was signed in August this year, followed by renewal of our Partnership Agreement. Meanwhile, the first half of 2022 saw the completion of the desilting of three tanks in collaboration with local villagers. Training of farmers in sustainable agriculture and low carbon farming also continued, with 14 new farmers groups being formed, farmers trained, and their production monitored and recorded.

SEDS's Child Education in Andhra Pradesh – In conjunction with the above project, we also have a program supporting the education of children living locally, many of whom are disadvantaged with no or little access to education. Partners in Aid donors provide money which is sent to SEDS to pay for the books, school bags and uniforms and fees of sponsored children whose parents cannot afford to give them an education.

Throughout 2021-2022, approximately, 155 children received assistance that provided them with educational opportunities. Despite lockdowns in the early part of the school year, it is very pleasing to be able to report that there were some excellent results among sponsored children right across the school years from Kinder to Year 10. In addition, four older boys have continued with the program beyond Year 10 and to University and received very good results.

Symbiosis Projects in Bangladesh, the Mymensingh and Jamuna River Projects – Partners in Aid has supported projects in Bangladesh for approximately 60 years. Most recently, we have funded two projects: the Garment Training Project and the Jamuna River Development Project. Between them, these two projects have supported women's self-help groups by providing basic literacy and life skills education; provided pre-school education and supported a primary school by providing teachers and education supplies; provided technical training to adults to assist them to develop income-generating sewing and textile activities. Over the last three years, 1,320 people were involved in income-generating activities following training, while diets have improved through the promotion of vegetable growing and nutrition awareness training. These results have evolved from the strong participation by women in around 45 women's self-help groups.

This year saw the end of the three-year project cycle for our Bangladeshi activities, and it was decided to phase out our involvement in Bangladesh. We really admire the development work that Symbiosis Bangladesh has undertaken over the years. However practical considerations have made it increasingly difficult to be involved in Bangladeshi projects, and, in particular, to

carry out any field monitoring of projects there that we support. Since we started working with Symbiosis Bangladesh when it was a very young organization, the organization has grown significantly and now has many donors, so it will be able to continue the variety of projects they are currently undertaking.

When the Covid struck the Mymensingh area and the entire country was put into intermittent lockdowns, PIA agreed that some of the funds we provided for project implementation could be used to pay the ongoing salaries of Symbiosis staff, in the same manner 'Job keeper' was used in Australia, even though they were not always able to carry out their project duties.

Nonetheless, apart from helping to keep Symbiosis Bangladesh's trained and experienced project staff together, significant project achievements were made.

Garment Training in Mymensingh, Bangladesh – Large sections of the population in the Mymensingh area have little or no education and no formal training in marketable skills. Their employment options are extremely limited and income security is poor with a significant number of rural households dependent on day labour. Women's opportunities to contribute to household income are very limited.

The purpose of this project is to provide textile vocational training, primarily in sewing itself, but also in marketing and the other skills that women might need to become self-employed or to start a small business. Training participants are mainly women in impoverished circumstances. *Shomati* groups, self-help groups which generally focusing on savings activities, are also facilitated as part of the project. Members of these groups pool funds to enable loans to group members. The groups also have educational and health elements, with speakers organized by Symbiosis. In addition, general health support is offered to the community.

Given the lockdowns and staff mobility difficulties, some components of the project had to be discontinued during the pandemic. Those parts that were dropped related mainly to the running of the *shomati* groups. This year, the savings aspects of the *shomati* groups worked extremely well. Despite the hardship caused by the lockdowns and the virus, savings have accumulated strongly during the pandemic. However, the educational aspects of the *shomati* groups suffered, as speakers and coordinators could not always access the project areas. Similarly, health support could not always be provided as needed. It is expected that there be increased activity in these educational aspects during the 2022-23 financial year to compensate. Any deficit in the target for the year 2021-22 in textile training is also expected to be made good.

Jamuna River Development Project, Bangladesh - The project is located on a sandbar island in the middle of the Jamuna River. The island is vulnerable to inundation by flood waters and in danger of river erosion. Frequent flooding of large portions of the island and erosion of the riverbanks as the river changes course are common, resulting in the island very slowly moving downstream. Infrastructure on the island is poor.

The purpose of the project is to provide both primary school education and preschool education to students on the island, along with a holistic life skills program of savings groups, adult support, and health support similar to that of the Garment Training Project. In 2021-2022, the staff of Symbiosis Bangladesh on the mainland had very little access to the island.

However, the island community managed to stay sufficiently isolated that it did not suffer from Covid in during this time, apart from being subject to nationwide lockdowns, which meant that some schooling was missed. Similarly, some of the adult classes in life skills could not go ahead. Otherwise, for the main part, the Jamuna River Development Project has been able to proceed as planned.

At every stage of our projects on the island the support for the primary school has been the main focus of the project with the other activities needed to make the project holistic. As our activity on the island finishes, it is noted that island life now is very different to it was when Partners in Aid originally became involved. At that time there were no schools, primary or secondary, and no preschool on the island. Now there are numerous primary schools and a government secondary school. Symbiosis Bangladesh's activity, funded entirely by Partners in Aid, has shown schooling on the island is workable and opened the island to it.

Sinangpad Association's Healthy Village Project, Kalinga in Philippines – Kalinga is a mountainous province in the north of Luzon. It is subject to frequent typhoons and associated landslides. The Sinangpad Healthy Village project works in small remote disadvantaged communities, most of which have or have had serious environmental sanitation problems which affect the health status of the communities. A significant number of households in many, for example, lack household toilets and use a hectare of land set aside outside the village for open defecation.

The Sinangpad Healthy Village is about to enter its third phase, each phase incorporating learnings from earlier implementation. The overall goal of the Sinangpad Healthy Village Project is achieving sustained health improvement in remote Kalinga barangays by enabling the residents **themselves** to identify and resolve the local risks to health and well-being that they consider to be priorities. The process involves the provision of community development training in the community, followed by facilitating the formation of a community group and helping that group develop an action plan based on the particular community's priorities. Plans most commonly include the household construction of pig pens, household toilets, improved drainage, better solid waste disposal, and vegetable gardens. Community members construct these facilities, with technical advice and overview. Small grants are made to the communities to enable the purchase of materials necessary to construct this simple infrastructure, thus removing barriers to behavioral change. Mentoring and monitoring follows the allocation of grants.

2021-2022 has been a dreadful year for the Sinangpad Association. Most members are professional health workers, and have since the pandemic began, been on the frontline with respect to vaccination and community Covid education. Communities were locked down, preventing visits from Sinangpad. Key members of the Association contracted Covid, and tragically the President's husband died from Covid complications. Then in July, an earthquake in the neighboring Province caused damage to the Kalingan area on its border. More recently, the province has been affected by strong typhoons.

It proved impossible to implement the proposal that Partners in Aid approved in 2020, and it was agreed that money for the project would be retained in our bank until project activities could get underway again.

Nonetheless, although Sinangpad Association's activities were heavily curtailed during the pandemic, not all activities ceased. Just before the pandemic took a grip, a number of communities had been allocated grant money for the purchase of materials to construct water-pour household toilets with septic tanks. Construction of these toilets by householders continued during the pandemic. The most exciting development in 2022, from Sinangpad Association's perspective, was the Provincial Government's awarding of Zero Open Defecation Status, Level 1, to two of Kalinga's seven municipalities, Pasil (population - 2024 households) and Balbalan (population – 2,538). Level 1 is awarded when each household either has their own sanitary toilet or shares a toilet with no more than one other household. These are two municipalities in which Sinangpad has put a lot of effort, both advocating for the construction of household toilets, and funding cement and re-enforcement bars to enable householders to construct their own household toilets. Before Sinangpad began working in these municipalities, less than 50% of these households had sanitary toilets, the rest using the hectare of land set aside for this purpose, or in the case of children, relieving themselves under houses on stilts or other locations within the village. In 2021-2022, despite the pandemic, Pasil residents managed to build 90 toilets and Balbalan residents, 58, thus contributing to the zero open defecation status.

The most obvious desired outcome of improved sanitation is a reduction in the incidence of diseases. Data is currently being sought to enable the Sinangpad Association to determine whether the construction of sanitary toilets is related to a drop in certain environmentally related illnesses. It has become clear that construction of toilets has, however, had other outcomes associated with residents' quality of life. Talking to residents, first and foremost is the improved smell of the community and the household living area. Important also is the convenience of not having to venture out to the designated hectare, often pursued by pigs before they were required to be penned. Venturing out into the field at night can be extra difficult, and some women felt a little dangerous. You could also come back home with leaches attached to your legs. Another outcome valued by some was that they no longer had the embarrassment of having to direct visitors from the city who wanted to go to the toilet to the hectare set aside for this purpose. The combination of these factors has led to householders becoming accustomed to the convenience of having a household toilet, and not wanting to go back to foregoing this in the future. This has important implications for sustainability.

Sinangpad Association members were also able to participate in several Municipal and Provincial Health Board meetings this year. This was important to maintain the momentum towards achieving one of their goals, the institutionalization of community health development and other trainings as part of the Municipal and Provincial Health Boards' regular activities.

Attempts were also made to continue the monitoring and evaluating, started before lockdown, of outputs and outcomes that the Sinangpad Association has achieved since its inception in 2007. It has been possible to assemble much of this data despite the pandemic, but key health outcome data are still in the process of being gathered and collated. It is hoped that a full report will be available by the middle of 2023.

The Partners in Aid Project Coordinator was finally able to visit Kalinga in November 2022, and it is clear that the project is now getting up and running again.

Empowering War Widows and Women-Headed Families Economically Through Sustainable Dairy YGro's Farming Initiatives Project in Jaffna, Sri Lanka – It is more than a decade since the war ended in the North and East of Sri Lanka, but many of those affected and their families are still reaping some of the after-effects of the war. Single mothers and other women who head households struggle to make ends meet as their income is not steady. They remain in a state of poverty, often unable to meet the basic needs of the family. In addition to the existing state of poverty, the current economic crisis in Sri Lanka has greatly impacted the livelihoods of families. Due to the sudden ban on chemical fertilizers, farmers have not been able to engage in routine agricultural activities. In addition, the shortage of fuel in the country has meant that farmers have not been able to market their produce.

Commencing in July 2021, this one-year program undertaken by YGro Pty (Ltd) aimed to support war widows and female-headed households in Sri Lanka gain a sustainable income whilst contributing to the economic success of the nation. It was Partners in Aid's first venture into community development in Sri Lanka and it was hoped that if all went well the project would lead to a Partnership Agreement and new projects in the future.

Most women who do earn a wage do so through home agriculture activities, day to day labor jobs, home tailoring, etc., but some are involved in dairy farming. Building the capacity of the dairy farmers and providing the necessary basics to empower them further will address the livelihood and income challenges within their family.

In the midst of the current economic challenges, Y Gro has been able to work around available resources and carry on the dairy project with a few delays and alterations. At the same time, they have also provided a short-term relief grant for families who have been highly impacted and given them home gardening packages to start vegetable cultivation.

With the rising cost of living for the families and unavailability of cow nutrients, YGro has also had to support some of the farmers' dairy activities more than initially planned. It was necessary to provide some of them with a sustainable method to produce cow nutrients at home. During this period, subsidies were provided for lactating and underweight cows on 6 dairy farms. To combat the current shortage in cow nutrients, 4 azola tanks were constructed and azola plants (aquatic ferns) were provided for the farmers. In the long term, homegrown azola will be an easy and cheaper basic nutrient for cows. This will help the farmers save on the amount spent on cow nutrients.

Across the two communities in which the project is being implemented, 7 farmers have been provided with a cow and three cattle sheds constructed. One vet clinic was conducted. Due to the fuel crisis, another scheduled vet clinic was not conducted, and no artificial insemination could be done as the vet doctors could not move about. Depending on the need, more clinics will be facilitated shortly. In one of the villages, the dairy farmers have been connected with the government vet clinics and now they independently access the vet clinics without the involvement of YGro. Due to the current crisis, the involvement of the government vet surgeons was less than planned and it was a challenge to facilitate trainings. However, one member of Y Gro staff who is well experienced in dairy farming and is taking a lead role in conducting the training instead of depending on veterinary surgeons.

Given the fuel crisis and high transport cost, YGro has decided to identify a small number of dairy farmers who have had a good track record as potential trainers and provide them with certification by the NGO, endorsed by an authorized government officer, as 'Community Level Trainers of Dairy Farmers'. By acknowledging them as potential model farmers, they will play a leadership role to train the other dairy farmers in the village. Depending on the location of the other farmers, they will be grouped and assigned to one of these model farmers as their trainer. The farmers within the group will visit the assigned trainer's dairy farm as an exposure visit and the group will continue to support each other in sharing experience and knowledge. This will be a benefit in sharing excess resources with each other as well. YGro has also helped facilitate the marketing of milk.

Amidst the most challenging time, it has been possible to observe the strengths of the field staff and they have stepped in beyond their work role to ensure that the project continues. The resilience of the dairy farmers and the YGro field staff is noteworthy at this given point of time. While this initial partnership with YGro is coming to an end, the Board of Partners in Aid Board is in ongoing discussions with the organisation to support a new, similar project and a Partnership Agreement.

4. Evaluation into the effectiveness of and the learning from aid and development activity

The aim of Partners in Aid is to have a Partners in Aid Project Coordinator visit on-ground activities on a regular basis. In the visits both project monitoring and evaluation is undertaken as well as discussions on new project directions. However, Covid made overseas visits impossible for much of the last year. Visits to the Philippines and India resumed in November-December, and it is hoped that Sri Lanka will be visited relatively soon. Meanwhile, we have received narrative and financial reports from our Partner Organizations.

5. Financial statements prepared in accordance with the requirements of the ACFID Code

Audited financial statements have been downloaded onto the Partners in Aid website.

6. A statement of commitment to full adherence to the Code

Partners in Aid is a member of ACFID – the Australian Council for International Development –

and is committed to fully adhering with its Code of Conduct.

7. Identification of the ability to lodge a complaint against Partners in Aid and a point of contact

Complaints about the organization or board can be directed to the Chair and details of this are also on the website: <http://partnersinaid.org.au/contact-us/>

8. Identification of the ability to lodge a complaint for breach of the Code of Conduct

If anyone wishes to lodge a complaint for breach of the Code of Conduct, they are advised on our website that this can be done directly to ACFID. <http://partnersinaid.org.au/contact-us/>

Dr. Cecily Neil
Chair

21/12/2022