



PARTNERS IN AID

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2023

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2023.

This quarter, Lyn Pickering provides a heartening update on our SEDS child sponsorship project. Her report highlights very well the power of the work Partners in Aid is able to undertake because of your support.

Still in India, Dr Anne-Marie Maltby, our coordinator for the All Bengal Women's Union project, paid a visit to the child sponsorship team at SEDS late last year. Partners in Aid endeavours to make at least one visit to each project per year. Although covid has been a hurdle, we are eager to get back to these in-country visits that provide valuable insight in how the organisation's support is utilised. Importantly, all of our visits to projects are entirely funded by our volunteers who make the trips themselves. This approach speaks to both the dedication and commitment of our volunteers and to Partners in Aid's commitment to putting

donations from our supporters to where they are needed most – the projects themselves.

Turkey and Syria

The catastrophic earthquakes in Turkey and Syria in early February have unleashed an extreme humanitarian crisis. As this newsletter goes to press, the death toll stands at 41,000. By the time you read it, the number may well be over 50,000. The scale of human suffering – particularly in a part of the world that is no stranger to it – is especially saddening. While well outside our area of operation, as an aid organisation, it has been impossible not to follow the developments and the international community's response. Australia has so far donated \$18 million in aid,

a reflection not just of our generosity as a nation, but our role as a global middle power.

Our Board

We continue to seek additional members of our Board to reinforce the organisation's governance and ensure our work achieves the very best outcomes. If you know of someone who is interested in volunteering around eight to 10 hours a month and possesses skills that would help further our reach, please be in touch with me at info@partnersinaid.org.au.

Thank you for your kind support. We can't do the great work we do without it.

Dr Cecily Neil
Chair



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 projects, including making a general donation, buying items from one of our partners or leaving a gift in your will. You can donate by:

- Leaving a bequest
- Direct bank transfer
- Cheque
- Online at [Mycause](#) or [GiveNow](#)
- Purchase from our [Goodwill Wine](#) partners

We're also working to make it easier for you to donate directly to a specific project. This month, we're excited to give the option to make a donation to the Sinangpad project in the Philippines (see the link at the bottom of the project page in this newsletter). Over the coming months we hope to roll-out similar functionality for our projects.

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 adviser in planning a bequest. For more information or a confidential conversation, please contact Cecily or Lyn on 03 9704 6315 or email admin@partnersinaid.org.au.

BANK TRANSFER OR CHEQUE

Details of how to donate through bank transfer or cheque can be found on the following page. Please ensure that bank transfers have the details of your name and the direction (i.e. the name of the project) of your donation, if any.

If forwarding a cheque, please complete the short form in this newsletter page or write a note with your name and project of your donation. You can also email admin@partnersinaid.org.au to advise your payment and where you would like it allocated.

ONLINE AT MYCAUSE OR GIVENOW

You can make a one-off or regular tax-deductible donation through the secure platforms Mycause or Give Now. Just click on the link or type the address into your internet browser.

- [Mycause](#)
(www.mycause.com.au/charity/25612/PartnersinAidLtd)
- [GiveNow](#)
(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. You can order individual bottles or corporate and personal gift packs. Order your wines or buy gift vouchers by placing your order [here](#) and support 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 Child Education Program

- Medical fund. Items like reading glasses, eye drops, creams for rashes, toothbrushes and toothpaste.

\$

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.

\$

Philippines: Sinangpad Healthy Village Project

- \$50 could buy materials to enable a family to build a household sanitary toilet.

\$

CHILD SPONSORSHIP

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

The cost is \$260 per child per year, plus and optional annual gift of \$20.

\$

MEMBERSHIP

I would like to begin a membership or continue a membership (please circle) of Partners in Aid.

\$ 25

BANK TRANSFER AND CHEQUE

EFT details: Account name, Partners in Aid; BSB, 033686; account number, 162354. Please include your surname as reference and then 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 payable to Partners in Aid and post to PO Box 42, Narre Warren LPO, Vic 3805.

Name for receipt: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Phone number: _____

Email (to receive our newsletter): _____

Gifts of \$2 or more are tax deductible (a receipt will be issued).

TOTAL

\$

INDIA: SEDS CHILD SPONSORSHIP

PROJECT DIRECTOR: LYN PICKERING

SEDS was founded in 1980 by Rajen Joshua and Manil Jayasena as a grassroots development NGO, motivated by the desire to help the poorest of the poor in the drought-prone area of Ananthapur District in Andhra Pradesh.

The December 2022 newsletter was an opportunity to share some of the many successes of students on the child education program at SEDS in central southern India. Thank you for the feedback from sponsors on the achievements of the students.

One young man mentioned was Anil who is now a qualified electrician. Anil commenced in the program in September 2008. His home had become the SEDS campus where he and his mother went to live after his father deserted the family. Anil's mother worked part time at SEDS. I looked back at some of my notes in the early days and noted that Anil struggled at school, but his attendance was excellent.

Over the years, I have watched him on my many visits. I noticed that Anil was very quiet, well-mannered and just went about doing the things which the students who called SEDS home were expected to do each day before and after school. These tasks include sweeping the pathways, picking up rubbish, milking a cow, watering the vegetable garden, as well as feeding the chickens and other animals.

Anil is now in his early 20s and did miss a couple of years due to missing out on earlier schooling or failing some subjects. But – and it is a very big but – he successfully completed a two-year course for engineering trades – electrician, passing all six subjects in his second year of electrical in 2022. He is now a qualified electrician and works at the SEDS campus. Anil's is one of the great success stories. A very mature young man, Partners in Aid is proud to have him feature in this newsletter.

During the recent monthly activity at the SEDS campus, all the sponsored students were given new drink bottles and a new tin plate for their lunches at school which are provided at all government schools in India.

I am waiting for photos of all the students with their gift of new clothes. This photo is provided by an Australian donor and sponsor (thanks Phillip) who prints our newsletter and photos of our students at no cost to PIA. All students on the program receive a new set of clothes in early January. This gift of new clothes is an acceptable gift; however, it is also one way our sponsors can give their student a gift once each year. Thanks as always for that generosity from our sponsors.



Anil with some of his electrical tools of the trade. (Photo by SEDS.)



INDIA: SEDS AGRICULTURE PROJECT

PROJECT VISIT BY DR ANNE-MARIE MALTBY

I visited SEDS for a week in December with my friend, Robyn. This was my second visit and I was just as impressed as the first time. The staff are obviously very competent and have been very carefully selected to be able to work without a great deal of supervision. Manil is needing to do less and less hands-on administration which has been her plan for some time. Despite this, she is always busy. For example, while we were there, a company contacted her asking for help in finding 200 school leavers for a job for which they would provide training. This had great possibilities as there are large numbers of Year 12 graduates each year, partly due to the influence of SEDS in lifting school retention rates.

Two of the newer staff are Ranga and Sy. Both arrived at SEDS as boys needing support and were sponsored by PIA. They completed all of their schooling with SEDS, then tertiary study and are now involved in the SEDS sustainable agriculture programs. You could see that they will be key players in the future.

The seasonal rains had been very heavy and sustained last year, overflowing the tanks which are still totally full. SEDS hope that the tanks can be stocked with fingerling fish to take advantage of the high levels of water. Tank desilting has been delayed until after March at the earliest and is more likely to start in June or July. The tank level won't drop for some time and it will take a while for the soil to be dry enough to move as water logged soil is very heavy and unmanageable.

Rohit (Manil and Rajen's son) took us to see an area which had been totally transformed from a barren, eroded landscape to flourishing and healthy land. He is passionately involved with a group doing research on soil biota. It's a very promising field that is getting a lot of scientific attention worldwide as it works to improve the health of the soil naturally rather than using chemicals.

He has been adding biota to selected plots at SEDS and is getting very good results – including his mother's flourishing pot plants! He hopes to be able to use the technology with farmers' groups in the future.

Robyn and I met with three farmers' groups; all were formed in the last year and all very keen on improving their farms. We asked what prompted them to join and they were unanimous that they were worried about the chemicals in the soil and wanted to move to more natural and organic techniques. They were worried about their children's health and their children's future if the situation didn't improve. One of the ladies in one group had been experimenting with chilli/garlic pest spray on her fruit trees and was getting such good results that she was particularly enthusiastic, adding encouragement to the rest of the group.

Although farming is traditionally a male profession, there were at least three women in each of the groups who had their own farms and several women attended who represented their family because the husband was working in the field. The number of women landholders is increasing. The state government rules that daughters must be included in the inheritance of land and SEDS has been influential in changing general attitudes.

The farmers' groups are fully supported by SEDS with monthly documented meetings. The group size is limited to 15 to 25 people, preferably starting small. If a larger group is required, another group is started. The group members each contribute Rs100 (~\$2) per month to a small cash reserve for the group.

We attended two farmers' group meetings and a training session and there was obvious commitment and a sense of purpose. Two staff from SEDS, Mani and her assistant Sy, fielded our questions to the group and interpreted.

INDIA: SEDS AGRICULTURE PROJECT

PROJECT VISIT BY DR ANNE-MARIE MALTBY

Continued from previous page

We particularly enjoyed their demonstration of making an organic pesticide spray to prevent a type of destructive caterpillar. The demonstration started with lighting kindling and then boiling up leaves of a local plant for 30 minutes to produce the extract. Other lessons are given in crop rotation, care of the soil, differentiating different crop pests and their life cycles and alternative pesticides. Lessons may be given using audio-visuals projected onto a wall.

We visited schools attended by sponsored children – the SEDS school and two external schools attended, both of which had new principals. The principals noted that there was a very low absenteeism rate at their schools, again an influence of SEDS. They had the usual problems with Covid but also with high numbers of malaria and dengue fever due to the months of heavy rain. The state government provides lunch daily with a rotating menu which always includes rice, vegetable/dal and a boiled egg each.

The food looked delicious and was clearly enjoyed by the children. Back at SEDS we visited the production centre started by Rashna and which, amongst other things, makes the clothes given to each sponsored child annually.

This was a great trip for both Robyn and me. A visit to SEDS makes it easy to see why PIA has supported and partnered with the organisation for more than 30 years.



Left: SEDS farmers' group. Right: boiling leaves for crop spray. (Photos by Dr Anne-Marie Maltby.)



THE PHILIPPINES: SINANGPAD HEALTHY LIVING PROJECT

PROJECT DIRECTOR: DR CECILY NEIL

Up-to-date details of the Sinangpad Healthy Village Project (SHVP) were provided in the Project Annual Report. I thought, therefore, I might take the opportunity in this newsletter to illustrate why, when work with a community, the SHVP places so much attention on a combination of the provision of relevant participative training and working with community members to help them decide their priorities and come up with solutions acceptable to them on how local environmental risks to health can be minimised.

This particular incident occurred in the course of the AusAID project which preceded the PIA funding of the Healthy Village Project. At the time, in many of the villages in Kalinga, self-foraging pigs roaming free in the village exacerbated the incidence of skin diseases and parasitism, especially among young children. In one Kalingan village meeting therefore, there was a discussion between villagers and a local community mobiliser from outside the village relating to the penning of pigs.

Pigs were part of any of feast that occurred in the village to mark spiritual occasions such as funerals etc. and villagers expressed concern that because this role of pigs on such occasions, depriving them of their freedom might upset the spirits. Ultimately, a decision was reached. The pigs would be penned, but once a month there would be 'Pig Freedom Day', in which pigs would be allowed to roam free. This was considered to be sufficient to avoid offending the spirits.

Funding for the construction of pig pens was provided and all appeared well. However, I was working in Manila at the time and I started to get phone calls about the penned pigs being

depressed. I was wondering whether there was the equivalent of Prozac for pigs, but fortunately the cause of some of the pigs' depression came to light: they were not being adequately fed - they had always been self-foraging in the past.

The fault was ours: when the decision was made to pen the pigs, we did not bring in someone from the Agriculture Department to provide advice on how to care for the pigs once they had been put in pens.

The lesson was clear. It is important that communities should make the decisions on how to tackle community problems, but they should always be put in a position first by appropriate participative training to enable them to make informed decisions. This principle underpins SHVP involvement in communities.





INDIA: ALL BENGAL WOMEN'S UNION

PROJECT DIRECTOR: DR ANNE-MARIE MALTBY

The All Bengal Women's Union (ABWU) home in Calcutta has been operating for over 70 years and supported by Partners in Aid for more than 40 years.

I visited ABWU in December where it was lovely to have the opportunity to see that everything is going well. Most of the volunteers that I had met over many previous visits were still there and we talked about the difficulties with covid and lockdowns. The few girls with covid were managed with a well thought out segregation plan rotating through rooms for different levels of illness before returning safely to the common areas.

There have been a number of new girls which has been an adjustment to all parties. It really struck me how well the volunteer ladies know every girl and there is obvious affection on both sides. I am always impressed at their efforts to give the girls every opportunity to overcome whatever difficulties they have experienced and to succeed in life. Their approach is tailored to each girl and is very genuine, thoughtful and realistic.

A friend, Robyn, travelled with me and we met with many of the sponsored girls. English is a compulsory subject and the ladies push the girls to talk to us which seems hard. However, it's felt that it's a good experience for them to have to speak to someone without being able to resort to Bengali or Hindi. The

ladies help out where it's absolutely necessary, particularly with the younger ones or those who haven't been learning English for long. It's surprising how much even the youngest girls know.

We also realised that talking to us breaks the ice for them. The girls that we had talked to often approached us later in the playground to chat and ask us questions. It was often hard to get away as it would be very easy to spend all day talking to them.

ABWU were very proud of their Christmas cake which they have been making in a wood fired oven since 1980. They made more than 400 last Christmas and say that they are the best in India. Many of the sponsored girls help with making the cakes and we were shown the production centre where they were made. Profits go into the savings accounts of the girls who are involved the baking program in a similar way that profits from handicrafts (block printing, etc).

The commitment of the volunteer ladies is admirable, it being a full-time job for most of them. They are very grateful for the support of PIA sponsors and it was very rewarding to visit and see how well the money is spent.



Left: ABWU children on a tram excursion. Right: ABWU kitchen production. (Photos by Dr Anne-Marie Maltby.)



A NOTE ABOUT OUR IMAGES

Wherever possible, we include images of our projects that are taken by our Board members on their self-funded visits to sites or photos taken by our partners themselves. However, we are particularly conscious of the need to respect the privacy of others, especially children. Accordingly, some images in our newsletters are sourced from free online photo sharing websites like Unsplash.

DO YOU NEED TO UPDATE YOUR DETAILS?

If your postal address has changed, please email admin@partnersinaid.org.au or call 0477 743 053 and we'll update our records. Similarly, if you'd instead like to receive our newsletter by email, please get in touch. Receiving the newsletter electronically allows us to save on the cost of postage. We are, of course, very happy to continue mailing the newsletter to you in the traditional way and are grateful to our printer for the continued donation of his time and resources. And if you'd like to discontinue receiving our updates, please get in touch by phone or email and we'll remove your details from our database.

OUR COMPLAINTS POLICY

Any complaints should be addressed to the Board Chair via email or regular mail at the details found at the bottom of this page. All complaints will be treated seriously, acknowledged promptly and resolved within two months. Details of our Complaints and Whistleblower Policy can be found on our website: <https://partnersinaid.org.au/resources/>.

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. Its 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.

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.