



PARTNERS IN AID

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2023

Welcome to our mid-year newsletter for 2023.

This quarter, we're providing a deep dive into the Sinangpad Healthy Living Project in Kalinga. A land-locked province in the northern Philippines, I have had the pleasure of visiting the community many times over the past 20 years in what have always been thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding visits. One of Sinangpad's current endeavours is in the field of soap making in a part of the world where hygiene and cleanliness are often poor due to a lack of basic infrastructure. This report is compiled in part by two of the Sinangpad Association's team on the ground, Valerie Dawaton Pis-O and Rose Alunday.

This edition also features a detailed look at the composting initiative as part of our SEDS Agriculture project. This includes a look at the benefits of composting not just to the locals but to the community in general.

End of financial year

It's almost tax time for another year. As you prepare your annual returns, please do keep Partners in Aid in mind for any last minute donations. As a registered charity, all donations to our organisation of \$2 or more are fully tax deductible. Our Board works hard to consistently keep our operating budget to around 7% of our overall income, meaning your donation goes a long way.

Membership

Speaking of the end of financial year, this also means it is time to renew your annual membership. Our membership fee is a modest \$25 and although it's not tax deductible, it still goes a long way towards supporting the work that we do. To renew (or establish) your membership, please complete the form on the bottom of page 11 of this newsletter.

Our Board

As we have flagged in previous newsletters, we have been searching for some time for additional members of our Board to reinforce the organisation's governance and ensure our work achieves the very best outcomes. While we have had some initial interest and are reviewing potential candidates, the composition of our Board is not at an optimal level. If you or anyone you know has suitable skills and an interest in the work that we do, please do get in touch with me at info@partnersinaid.org.au, if only for an informal chat.

Once again, my fellow Board members join me in thanking you sincerely for your kind support that is having genuine impact for some very needy people.

Dr Cecily Neil
Chair

INDIA: SEDS CHILD SPONSORSHIP

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR: 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 academic year 2022-23 came to an end on 29 April 2023. The start of classes for the next academic year is 12 June 2023. Out of 13 year 10 students, 8 students were successful in passing their final exams. As part of the Second Saturday program, the children created some amazing drawings.

In villages, Nagamani and team have continued to practice sustainable agriculture (see pages 3-6 of this newsletter for further information). A total of 750 loads of silt were transported to the field for the tank desilting this year, with the village tank being the choice. Tanks were filled with rainwater and the team is preparing to desilt more tanks. A news report about the project had been published in a local language.



INDIA: SEDS AGRICULTURE PROJECT

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR: AMANDA STONE

The Sustainable Agriculture program has continued strongly this year with good rain making tank desilting a success in improving water catchments and storage for local communities. Farmers continue to receive training in sustainable agriculture with 30 groups to receive training in June. A leader and innovator, SEDS has been exploring the new dimension of soil quality with farmers, providing education in soil composition, training in composting and permaculture methods and moving into regenerative agriculture. This will see the progress being made as more sustainable in the longer term. The below report comes from Rohith Joshua, manager of the program.

Introduction

Social Education & Development Society (SEDS) partnered with Varanashi Organic Farms to conduct a training program focusing on the importance of microorganisms for soil health. Lead farmers, along with the staff of SEDS and sustainability driven partners from Bangalore, attended a two-day training session followed by a practical demonstration of the composting procedure developed by VDRF (Varanashi Development & Research Foundation). The training was conducted by Partha Varanashi. Varanashi Organic Farms specialises in creating a consortia of microorganisms, including *Trichoderma Harzianum*, *Aspergillus niger*, *Bacillus megaterium*, *Azotobacter chroococcum*, *Pseudomonas fluorescens*, *Azospirillum brasilense* and *Frateriuria aurantia*. These bacteria and fungi play a crucial role in breaking down organic matter, acting as fungicides, protecting crops and enhancing soil health. They work cohesively together and are extremely helpful in developing soil health.



Project activities

The two-day training program aimed to educate participants on the importance of composting and soil health. The training led to the development of a small-scale composting model with plans for a larger, decentralised solution underway among farmer groups. The key importance of composting and the cohesion of microorganisms to maintain soil health and fertility was emphasised and demonstrated.

Project follow up

Social Education & Development Society (SEDS) recently visited Varanashi Organic Farms with the objective of learning about scaling up composting operations to a medium scale and exploring the monetizing aspects of compost production. The visit aimed to gather information on the setup of a medium scale composting operation, focusing on the necessary infrastructure and equipment required for such an endeavour.

INDIA: SEDS AGRICULTURE PROJECT

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR: AMANDA STONE

Continued from previous page



Above: Medium scale composting setup at Varanashi Organics Farms.

During the visit, the SEDS team engaged in discussions with experts at Varanashi Organic Farms to better understand the processes and techniques involved in expanding composting operations. This included understanding the production methodologies, equipment and infrastructure necessary for an 80-tonne-per-year operation.

Key aspects of scaling composting operations

- Site selection and infrastructure: A suitable location with adequate space for composting, curing and storage of raw materials is crucial. Proper drainage and accessibility to water sources should also be considered.
- Equipment and machinery: Scaling up operations requires the use of appropriate equipment and machinery such as compost turners, shredders and front-end loaders to facilitate the efficient handling of raw materials and the composting process.
- Raw material sourcing and management: A consistent supply of high-quality raw materials is essential for a medium-scale operation. This includes coordinating with local suppliers and establishing agreements for a steady supply of organic waste.
- Composting process optimisation: Implementing best practices in composting, such as maintaining optimal carbon-to-nitrogen ratios, moisture levels and aeration, will ensure the production of high-quality compost and improve the efficiency of the operation.
- Quality control and monitoring: Regular monitoring and quality control measures should be put in place to ensure the compost produced meets required standards and is suitable for agricultural use.
- Monetising strategy: Developing a marketing strategy and establishing distribution channels are essential for monetising the compost operation. This may include targeting local farmers, nurseries and urban landscapers or collaborating with agricultural retailers.



INDIA: SEDS AGRICULTURE PROJECT

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR: AMANDA STONE

Continued from previous page

Benefits of composting and its necessity for agriculture

- Improved soil structure: Composting increases soil aggregation and porosity, promoting root growth and water infiltration.
- Enhanced nutrient availability: Compost provides essential nutrients to plants, reducing the need for synthetic fertilisers.
- Increased soil organic matter: Compost adds organic matter to the soil, improving its water-holding capacity and nutrient retention.
- Reduced soil erosion: Composting improves soil stability and reduces erosion.
- Suppression of plant diseases and pests: Compost introduces beneficial microorganisms that suppress harmful pathogens and pests.
- Recycling of organic waste: Composting transforms organic waste into valuable resources, reducing landfill waste and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Biodiversity conservation: Composting supports a diverse soil ecosystem, fostering a healthy environment for plants, animals and microorganisms.
- Economic benefits: Composting saves money for farmers by reducing their dependence on synthetic fertilisers and lowering waste disposal costs.
- Social benefits: Sustainable composting practices contribute to food security and the livelihood of farming communities by improving soil fertility and crop yields.

Conclusion

The partnership between SEDS and Varanashi Organic Farms has successfully introduced a training program that highlights the importance of composting and microorganisms in sustainable agriculture. By promoting these practices, the project aims to improve soil health and contribute to a more sustainable future for the agricultural sector. This initiative showcases the potential of collaboration between organisations and experts to drive change and create lasting positive impacts on farming practices and the environment.

Importance of composting for sustainability

Composting is essential for sustainability in agriculture for several reasons:

- Resource efficiency: Composting recycles organic waste, reducing the need for synthetic fertilisers and minimising waste disposal in landfills.
- Climate change mitigation: Composting reduces greenhouse gas emissions by sequestering carbon in the soil and decreasing the release of methane from organic waste decomposition.



INDIA: SEDS AGRICULTURE PROJECT

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR: AMANDA STONE

Continued from previous page



Above: (1) Organic waste collected.



Above: (2) First stage of the composting process.



Above: (3) Second stage of the composting project.



Above: (4) Finished compost.



THE PHILIPPINES: SINANGPAD HEALTHY LIVING PROJECT

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR: DR CECILY NEIL

The Sinangpad Healthy Village Project seeks to improve community health in isolated rural communities in Kalinga. To achieve this, Sinangpad members work closely with communities by:

- Providing them with training in community health development.
- Facilitating the residents' development of action plans to reduce local risks to health.
- Providing the necessary funds to purchase materials to enable residents to remove physical barriers to changing behaviour that is detrimental to health.
- Mentoring ongoing change.

Many of the barriers are lack of simple infrastructure such as sanitary toilets, pig pens, means of solid waste disposal, vegetable gardens etc.

However, Sinangpad Association adopts a holistic approach. The indigenous community of Barangay Wagud, Pinukpuk, Kalinga is one among the remote villages recently covered under our Sinangpad Healthy Village Project. As part of the community mobilisation activities, training in community health development (CHD) was conducted. This training provided an opportunity for the villagers to become more aware of the community problems affecting their health and to identify practical interventions to address them. Various priority health indicators that needed to be addressed were then identified, along with a corresponding timetable to accomplish improvement. Aside from the use of sanitary toilets, one priority intervention identified was the need for proper hygiene in order to prevent waterborne/environmental related diseases such as diarrhea and skin diseases. Community members estimated that some 75% of the

approximately 200 households in the community had at least one member who suffers from skin problems.

As an emulsifier that allows water and oil to mix, soap not only is a useful aid in maintaining good health and hygiene every day, but it can also help keep the skin feeling soft, looking better and healthier. However, not everyone in Barangay Wagud can afford to purchase soap and of those who can, not everyone has a regular income which can allow them to do so whenever needed. Further contributing to the lack of affordability of soap is the fact that village supplies have to be purchased in Tabuk City, the capital of the province some 50 kilometres from the village.



Photo provided by the Sinangpad Healthy Living Project.



THE PHILIPPINES: SINANGPAD HEALTHY LIVING PROJECT

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR: DR CECILY NEIL

Continued from previous page

Community members therefore asked for assistance in the form of skills training on home natural soap making. The training that the Sinangpad Healthy Village Project accordingly planned was designed to familiarise the participants with the different types of soap, their criteria and their benefits, including the health benefits of soap made with certain types of natural ingredients. It was also to include information about the ingredients they needed to make soaps (detailed below), the skills to make customised soap with the minimum equipment and tools, how to discover the range of oils and colours they can use and how to mould soap into different colours and shapes. The importance of adding perfume was highlighted. As elsewhere, when children were asked what they liked about having clean hands, the answer was invariably that they 'smelt nice'. Perfume in soap can thus be a good motivator for getting children to wash their hands regularly. The training planned was also to teach participants to create their own recipe and brand and skills they need to make their specialty soap. To top it all, the trainees were also to be taught to make use of locally available raw ingredients or materials in their area (e.g. coconut oil, herbal plants, other lathering ingredients (plants, or the old remedies, being used in the olden days by the elders when no soap was available in the area)). As one of the participants mentioned, they use the rice stalk as shampoo and some other roots which may still be available in their forest.

Since soap making in the community needs to be a group activity, training was also planned that would provide an understanding of how to establish a soap making business. Training plans also included education in simple business skills,

such as issuing of receipts, bookkeeping, profit sharing etc. In addition, it was agreed that part of the training would involve establishing an effective working group with elected office bearers, by-laws etc. These issues became an integral part of the proposed training agenda. Information was also included regarding safety measures needed with respect to the use of lye, including the wearing of protective gear and ensuring that the lye was kept safely locked away when soap making was not taking place.

The proposed training was conducted on April 3-5, after all the materials needed were all ready. Before



Photo provided by the Sinangpad Healthy Living Project.



THE PHILIPPINES: SINANGPAD HEALTHY LIVING PROJECT

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR: DR CECILY NEIL

Continued from previous page

the training was scheduled, the different types of soap making were explained and participants chose the cold process using indigenous herbs and fruits available in the village. Provision of the available herbs and fruits was to be participants' initial counterpart during the training, with the equipment and all other needed ingredients needed being purchased through the Sinangpad fund provided by Partners in Aid.

Training participants included 21 women and five men. The training was conducted in two phases: didactic and actual application. Aside from the main topics on how to make soap, financial management was also discussed especially on simple recording and bookkeeping – the participants organised themselves to establish a homemade soap business. Officers were elected as part of the training culmination on the last day. A meeting was scheduled for two weeks after the completion of training, by which time the treatment period for the soap produced would be complete. At that meeting, further agreements were reached, including that the initial products produced during the training would be sold to form part of the initial business capital. The equipment purchased by Sinangpad was turned over to the organisation.

After the training, the participants realize that the process is not easy, but it can be a bonding moment for the organised team and shall be an avenue for further learning. This training is different from what is traditionally given in the area. Participants claimed it was practical and addressed the immediate needs of the families in the village, especially given that skin disease is rampant in the area. (The health station's data does not reflect the residents' level of concern,

believed to be because most afflicted are ashamed to talk about their condition and opt to self-medicate or just leave it be, behaviour that may eventually infect other members of the family. It was mentioned during the CHD training that skin problems are persistent over time.)

Trainees intend to use the soap produced initially for their families and later for sale in the village when production increases. The price of their soap will be 3–10 pesos (8–26 Australian cents) cheaper than shop-bought soap (depending on the size and the type of soap produced). It will save the more significant cost of having to obtain it from shops in Tabuk City. Moreover, the soap making group will be prepared to offer credit to those whose income does not come flow at regular intervals. They have also agreed to provide soap free to those with serious skin problems for as long as the problems last. If profits are made, it has been decided that half will go back into the soap making organisation and half will be shared as income for the group participants.

At this point, the success of the training motivates the participants to do more and they will be given funding for their initial materials. The challenge, though, will be its sustainability and the financial aspect of this endeavour. However, while this program is still starting, Sinangpad shall be closely monitoring its progress.

The procedure and needed materials in the making of homemade, safe, herbal soap are detailed below.

Utensils

- Plastic pail and basin.
- Wooden ladle or bamboo stick.
- 500mL glass or cup.
- Mortar and pestle.
- Strainer and net to squeeze.

THE PHILIPPINES: SINANGPAD HEALTHY LIVING PROJECT

PROJECT CO-ORDINATOR: DR CECILY NEIL

Continued from previous page

- Knife.
- Chopping board.
- Plastic or plywood moulder.

How to prepare decoction

- Wash the leaves and chop or cut into pieces.
- Pound any herbs with mortar and pestle.
- Measure 3 cups (1.5L total) of water and add to the grounded herbs.
- Squeeze the decoction and strain.

Materials

- 1 cup (500mL) caustic soda (NaOH) (less than 10% of chemical).
- 3 cups (1.5L total) of herbal decoction.
- 22mL of water.
- 5 cups vegetable cooking oil or coconut oil.
- 5mL colour.
- 5mL scent.

Procedure

- Prepare the materials and utensils needed.
- Measure 1 cup (500mL) of caustic soda and 3 cups (1.5L total) herbal decoction and pour the caustic soda in 3 cups (1.5L total) of water.
- Mix well by stirring continuously using wooden or bamboo ladle. Use only one direction in mixing the
- mixture. Stir until the caustic soda is dissolved and until it is cooled.
- Pour the mixture into the 22mL of water in the basin and continuously stir in one direction.
- Pour the 5 cups (2.5L total) cooking oil or coconut oil, then the colour and scent, while continuously stirring in one direction until the mixture is of a similar consistency to condensed milk.

Pour the soap mixture into desired plastic or plywood moulder, set aside and allow to cool and harden.

- After 4-5, remove the soap from the moulder
- Allow at least 14 days before packaging and using the soap.
- Label the soap.

Indications

Akapulko leaves – anti-fungal.

Guava leaves – antiseptic for wounds.

Kamias fruit extract or juice – bleaching soap.

Calamansi fruit extract or juice – bleaching soap.

Cucumber fruit or juice-moisturiser.

Papaya extract or juice – cleanser and skin lightening.

Rice stalk extract – skin moisturiser and reduction of the impact of aging.

Sunflower extract – skin moisturising and protects skin from sun damage, as well as against dermatitis and acne.

Note: Coconut or vegetable oil is used rather than palm oil.



Photo provided by the Sinangpad Healthy Living Project.

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 an 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

\$



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 us on 0477 743 053 or email info@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.



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 info@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.