



# PARTNERS IN AID

NEWSLETTER  
DECEMBER 2023

## Annual General Meeting

Partners in Aid's Annual General Meeting was held online on Thursday 19 November. For those who were unable to attend, Dr Cecily Neil's Chair's report and the organisation's audited financial statements will be available on our website in December.

After several years leading the organisation as its Chair, Cecily made the decision to stand down this year. We are fortunate that she will continue to be a Director, ensuring the organisation continues to benefit from her wealth of experience and knowledge.

Stepping into the Chair's role is Dan Pagoda who joined the Board in January 2022.

We also welcomed two new Directors in Teena Ingram and John Gougoulis.

Teena is a finance, governance and compliance specialist who has spent 25 years working on the ground in more than 50 countries for businesses big and

small across the globe. She brings to our Board a deep understanding of working and living in a diverse range of cultures and environments, a strong finance and government relations skill set, and experience in governance and compliance for companies, boards and not-for profit (NFP) organisations in all corners of the world.

Teena's true passion is supporting the community through connecting people and purpose – in particular working for and with the children in the communities in which she has lived and worked.

Teena and her family have returned to Australia and are now based on the Sunshine Coast where she is active in the community, volunteering her experience to a number of local and international groups including sitting on several NFP boards. She is delighted with the opportunity to support the work of Partners in Aid, to learn from and with the Board, our partners and members of our

community.

## The passing of Bill Hayden

Eminent Australian Bill Hayden passed away in November. On the occasion of his state funeral, the Devpolicy blog from the Australian National University took a look at Hayden's view on foreign aid and its role as a "two-way street". You can view the article here:

[www.tinyurl.com/pia-billhayden](http://www.tinyurl.com/pia-billhayden).

## Cyber security

We encourage members to be aware of cyber threats and to keep their online lives secure. For up-to-date information, visit the Australian Government's dedicated website, [cyber.gov.au](http://cyber.gov.au).

## Compliments of the season

The Board of Partners in Aid extends the compliments of the season to our donors and supporters. For those celebrating Christmas, may you enjoy special time with loved ones. And to everyone, we wish you a safe and prosperous 2024.

Thank you for your support.



# INDIA: SEDS CHILD SPONSORSHIP

PROJECT COORDINATOR: LYN PICKERING

Another year is fast coming to a close.

I have been reflecting on the child education program which is now about to enter its 30th year. The connection my husband, Ian and I first made with SEDS was way back in 1992, with my first of 20 visits in 1994. Many of our readers know that Ian spent many years as coordinator for the SEDS watershed and sustainable agricultural project, something we shared, along with child education sponsorship. More than 700 young people have attended school, some from age 5 through to those completing Year 10. A small number have continued on with Partners in Aid donor support as we were able to monitor their outcomes.

Child education has not only benefited the students on the program; it has helped families whose existence is a constant daily struggle. The students selected come from small and large villages in this rural area of India. At times, parents or grandparents will seek sponsorship, as too will the teachers or local SEDS workers who live in the villages.

Am I passionate about what I have been doing for 30 years with SEDS with child education and with Ian, the watershed and sustainable agricultural project at SEDS? I guess I am, but I am almost equally passionate, excited and interested in the project work over many years in Bangladesh and the Philippines. Partners in Aid has made a big difference in the lives of so many others, something Ian and I are proud to be a part of.

I have been looking at some of the old records where I have written to sponsors regularly with

reports, Christmas cards and photos of their students. The progress many students have made is excellent and those students have been able to attend college (Years 11 and 12) and then to university. Not all students have been able to attain that, but for many, this was far more than their parents and grandparents had been able to do. In earlier times, we were all very excited when students remained at school to Year 5, then 7, then 10. Now, beyond to college and university is the norm.

The 2022-23 school year saw 12 students sit their Year 10 exams with 3 first division passes from Bhagya, Nani and Arun Kumar, an outstanding result for these students. We also had 3 second division, 3 third division and 3 fails. The students who failed had the opportunity to re-sit failed exams, which some of them did with success.

I noted the 800 immunisations of girls and young women against rubella in the areas, a problem which has had some distressing outcomes for families. At that time, all the older girls on the sponsorship program were given the rubella injection while the remaining younger girls and boys received MMR through the generosity of some of our medical friends in Rotary. The funds to cover this vaccination program were made available by my Rotary Club.

What has this got to do with sponsorship? A great deal because not only has the sponsorship been able to offer an education, but there have been health camps and medical supplies for students. Some of these things were extras on top of the cost of a sponsorship for 12 months.

# INDIA: SEDS CHILD SPONSORSHIP

PROJECT COORDINATOR: LYN PICKERING

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Ian and I have made some wonderful friends in India through SEDS and Rotary and this continues to this day. They shared their culture, their friendship, amazing food and their commitment to those in need in their communities.

I have great memories of travelling around with Rajen and Ian, checking out new sites for tank desilting and getting a much better understanding of the geographic area SEDS operates in. This was not a paid job for either Ian or me, with all our efforts being in a voluntary capacity and paying for our own travel.

I can't forget to mention the outstanding work of Manil Joshua as CEO for the project work and her commitment to the women's groups. Women were being trained in health care and family finances to name a few areas, something Manil was recognised for by the Indian government.

One of the many things which has also sustained my interest for 30 years, apart from the people in the SEDS area of developmental work, is the people I have met around Australia who have become either supporters of project work or sponsors of students. They continue to inspire me. From their notes, letters, emails and phone calls, I do know that they are happy to be able to make a difference as well. So, a very big thank you to all those who support our projects at Partners in Aid, many whom have been involved for a much longer period than me.

At Christmas time, my family celebrates together as is our tradition. This is one of our special times of the year. I know there are many others who have different customs, beliefs and traditions and their celebrations occur at different times of the year. For those of you who celebrate Christmas, have a wonderful time with your family coming together. Ian and I and our family also send best wishes for a healthy and Happy New Year as well to you and yours.



A sponsored child playing badminton.  
(Photo provided by the project.)





## INDIA: SEDS CHILD SPONSORSHIP

PROJECT COORDINATOR: LYN PICKERING

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With so much uncertainty in our world at present, I hope our supporters will be thinking of those around our world for whom life has lost some of its focus. I think of you, I pray for you and recall that well used saying, when people ask what you want: world peace.

We must hope.

Four sponsored girls.  
(Photo provided by the project.)





# INDIA: SEDS AGRICULTURE PROJECT

PROJECT COORDINATOR: MICHAEL OATES

Rainfall for the June to September quarter was deficient, highlighting the need for improved farming practices and optimising water storage and usage. These are all things that PIA continues to support through the Sustainable Agriculture Project.

Monthly training topics include the following.

## Principles of sustainable agriculture

1. Soil and moisture conservation practices.
2. Soil fertility management practices.
3. Good crop management practices.
4. Biomass.
5. Agriculture related activities.

## Soil system

Soil composition, organisms, nutrient cycling, water retention, erosion, conservation and pH are important aspects of the soil system. Understanding them are essential for sustainable agriculture and land management.

A farmer training session.  
(Photo provided by the project.)

One struggling farmer reported great results from participation in training groups. SEDS reports that he "found financial stability and prosperity through SEDS' sustainable agriculture practices. With natural pest control and organic farming methods, he saved 6,000 rupees [approximately AUD110] per crop cycle, reducing chemical inputs and increasing crop yields. Embracing eco-friendly practices transformed his outlook, contributing to a healthier planet. SEDS empowered him and other farmers, inspiring a call for embracing sustainable agriculture for a better future."

Testimonies such as this underline the importance of the SEDS project in improving lives in this very dry and impoverished area. SEDS stands out in the positive impact that it makes in the region.

Anne-Marie Maltby and I are hoping to visit SEDS in February and to see their progress first hand. We will provide a report in a future newsletter.





## INDIA: ALL BENGAL WOMEN'S UNION (ABWU)

PROJECT COORDINATOR: DR ANNE-MARIE MALTBY

Right now, Partners in Aid supporters generously sponsor 41 girls in the All Bengal Women's Union. Thirty-two are in the Children's Welfare Home and a further 9 are in the After Care Home.

Although government regulations require girls to leave the home by the age of 18, ABWU can obtain exemptions on grounds such as completing high school or undertaking tertiary courses. There are, for example, 4 older girls completing nursing training.

As I write this in early November, ABWU has reported that there is great excitement at the moment as the five-day Diwali Festival is about to start. Diwali is the festival of lights and one of the most anticipated festivals of the entire year. Leading up to it, houses and offices are spring cleaned. The festival symbolises the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil, so people are keen to do a big clean and make a fresh start.

Homes and streets are lit up with small oil lamps and candles which make everything glow. People exchange gifts and sweets, enjoy delicious feasts, watch firework displays and wear new clothes. ABWU is lucky to have supporters who organise outings, entertainment and special meals for the resident children so it's no wonder that there is a lot of excitement

surrounding the festival. It is a bit like Christmas for them. Later in November is the Kali Puja, a major festival for West Bengal, although the girls don't get quite as excited about that. It is mainly a night festival which runs through to dawn so there is little opportunity for the girls to take part. It is still a significant festival as Kali is the presiding deity of the city of Kolkata and it is after her the city has been named.

ABWU has asked me to pass on the team's gratitude to the girls' sponsors. Although we have had the sponsorship program for more than 40 years, the use of sponsorship money has changed significantly. In the very early years, sponsorship money 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 the growing middle class. As a result, sponsorship is used to assist with less basic but no less important needs such as counselling, tertiary education, remedial classes etc. This is a very positive outcome from our program and one about which we should all feel very pleased with achieving.

I am hoping to visit Kolkata in February and will be able to provide a more comprehensive update then.



## THE PHILIPPINES: SINANGPAD HEALTHY VILLAGE PROJECT (SHVP)

PROJECT COORDINATOR: DR CECILY NEIL

Although the pandemic is now generally considered to have ended, some implementation challenges for the Sinangpad Association members have continued throughout this year. Heavy professional commitments of health professionals – who comprise most of the Sinangpad membership – have continued to slow down SHVP progress. However, Sinangpad members anticipate this will change in 2024: the professional workload of members is gradually becoming less as the impact of the pandemic subsides and the Association is the process of recruiting more volunteers with a number of retired health professionals having already recently agreed to join Sinangpad.

Another challenge this year has been that people in the barangays in this post-pandemic era are very eager to do many things and a lot of activities are currently being funded by government units to provide the indigenous communities with medical and other assistance. However, these interventions often do not involve support for the basic environmental health and sanitation needs which are critical to the well-being of the communities. This has led to some issues with respect to the implementation of the Sinangpad Association initiatives. Association members have been attempting to overcome this by facilitating frequent visits of barangay people to its office and talking to people or scheduling small group sessions in the barangays whenever they get the opportunities.

Additional challenges have arisen from the fact that in both 2022 and 2023, typhoons and continuous heavy rains caused destruction of

household sanitary toilets, some village canals, data boards, school and multi-purpose buildings, and some houses. It has been estimated that in late 2022 and the first part of this year (2023), a total of 90 household sanitary toilets in the municipalities of Balaban and Pasil alone were destroyed in major typhoons. SHVP has agreed to help residents to replace these by providing funds for the purchase of the necessary hardware materials, with the households/community undertaking the construction and providing any locally available materials like logs, some aggregates and bamboo for walls and ceilings. In an effort to avoid the same loss of toilets in future typhoons, Sinangpad is equipping households with additional re-enforcement bars and encouraging them not to build the toilets in the parts of their land most vulnerable to landslides. Previously, any toilets – usually pit latrines – were built as far away from the house as possible because of the smell. This habit is only slowly dying, despite the fact that the current pour flush toilets do not smell.

Despite this setback, Sinangpad's zero open defecation campaign is still continuing, although fewer toilets have been built recently. The Sinangpad members also have started organising some communities in a third municipality (Rizal) with a view to initiating the campaign there.

Notwithstanding the challenges it is experiencing, in 2023, Sinangpad members managed to incorporate another two barangays into the SHVP: Wagud Barangay (Pinupuk municipality) and two sites in the more spread-out Dupligan Barangay (Tanudan). In each location, Sinangpad Association members worked with community leaders to carry out





# THE PHILIPPINES: SINANGPAD HEALTHY LIVING PROJECT (SHVP)

PROJECT COORDINATOR: DR CECILY NEIL

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preliminary assessments of the local environmental issues potentially affecting community health, undertook in-village community health development and leadership training. Subsequently, the organisation assisted the communities to develop an action plan based on residents' priorities and to organise a core community group to help ensure that the plan was implemented.

Barangay Dupligan community leaders still require some more technical assistance from Sinangpad members in determining what will be required to undertake the first of the community activities they are planning. At the time of writing, this is about to be provided. However, as discussed in an earlier newsletter, following the community health development training, Barangay Wagud subsequently submitted a proposal for help to establish a small local soap-making enterprise – an activity not undertaken as part of the SHVP for some years, but one in which there has been renewed interest following the pandemic.

In response to the community request, a group of 23 residents were trained in soap making. Prior to the training on how to actually make soap, the group was familiarised with different types of soap and their benefits, including the health benefits of soap made with certain types of natural ingredients. It was agreed that the trainees would make use of any locally available raw ingredients or materials in their area (e.g. coconut oil, herbal plants and other lathering ingredients). They were then taught the skills needed to make soap with the minimum

equipment and tools and how to mould soap into different colours, shapes and sizes. As mentioned in our previous newsletter article on soap-making activities, adding perfume is considered particularly important 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 children to wash their hands regularly.

All the necessary equipment (moulds etc.) and ingredients such as lye (usage of which required special safety precautions), which are not available locally, were provided to the group. Follow-up training in business management was subsequently undertaken. Ongoing mentoring indicated that this was necessary if the soap-making activities were to be sustainable.

Three separate batches of soap have been produced since the training. These batches included two types of soap: 'beauty' soap, the equivalent to what is sold in the barangay shops and herbal soap that incorporates herbs that the Provincial Health Office has designated as having medicinal properties with respect to treating skin diseases (some 70% of the population report having skin problems). The 'beauty' soap sells for 5 to 10 pesos (less than AUD0.30) a bar and is less than the equivalent in the local shops. Herbal soap, not otherwise available in the barangay, sells for 15 pesos. So far, the production has produced 2,500 pesos in income (approximately AUD700) – much less than the 8,388 pesos (approximately AUD233) cost of training, equipment and ingredients. However, the group plans to continue producing



# THE PHILIPPINES: SINANGPAD HEALTHY LIVING PROJECT (SHVP)

PROJECT COORDINATOR: DR CECILY NEIL

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appreciably more batches. It is hoped that some of the women themselves will function as trainer for nearby new groups, thus significantly reducing the initial setup costs for a group, especially the transport costs for bringing in a trainer. Moreover, a local children's day centre opened in August and it is planned that when the next batch of soap is made, the scraps of soap that are left over after the remainder has been placed in the moulds will be given to this group for the children's use. In addition to their activities within communities, Sinangpad members have continued to attend local health board, municipal government units and the provincial government unit meetings to discuss the Sinangpad model and to encourage collaboration between government and Sinangpad activities. One of Sinangpad's activities designed to help enable communities to themselves reduce local environmental risks to health is the training of one or more local residents as volunteer barangay sanitary inspectors. These people can monitor environmental sanitation in their barangay and offer advice whenever requested. This year, in conjunction with the Provincial Health Office, which funded the training, Sinangpad undertook refresher training of 30 volunteer inspectors from different municipalities, including some new inspectors. The training of inspectors in

Kalinga is an activity originally initiated by the SHVP. It is part of Sinangpad's efforts to facilitate sustainability by slowly transferring activities to the provincial or municipal authorities.

Sinangpad members deserve our recognition for their great ongoing efforts to improve the health in rural communities of Kalinga, despite the challenges of the last few years.



Soap making training.  
(Photo provided by the project.)



# SRI LANKA: OUR PROJECT TO ASSIST WAR WIDOWS OF THE JAFFNA

REPORT BY: DR ROGER HUGHES

Most readers will be aware that Partners in Aid, with its implementing Partner Organisation Y Gro, had a single-year pilot project on the Jaffna Peninsula in the north-west of Sri Lanka. The aim of the project was to help war widows (from the civil war of a decade earlier) establish themselves as small-scale dairy farmers, thereby giving them an income. The pilot project, under the watchful eye of Partners in Aid's Jacquie O'Brien, worked well with approximately 90% of the war widows who took part achieving success with the venture. However, we did learn a few things:

- It is necessary to have the more successful widows mentor the group.
- The extremely poor members of the group do not have the financial resilience to take even minor setbacks.
- There is a need to develop some means of spreading the benefit of being in the project to other war widows not directly in the project, possibly by having participating war widows distribute to others some fraction of the calves born in the project.

Given the success of this pilot project, Partners in Aid decided that the pilot project should be extended to a three-year project involving a larger group of war widows. Y Gro put together a proposal to this effect. However, its implementation was thrown into chaos by dramatic inflation in Sri Lanka, reaching 67.4% in September 2022 with high inflation for much of the year before and months after then. Fortunately, inflation in Sri Lanka has now returned to being similar to inflation in Australia. Concerned about this inflation at its peak, Y Gro asked that our financial support not be transferred at that time and the planned three-year project was delayed.

During this financial turmoil, the Sri Lankan rupee declined against the Australian dollar dramatically – by over 50%. Although still very weak, the rupee has since recovered slightly. This decline in the rupee has restored much of the purchasing power of our Australian donations to the project. Hence, with this recovery, the original project proposal is being rapidly revised with an aim to see its implementation initiated in 2024.

In the meantime, an external report into the dairy industry has been prepared by other donors to Y Gro. Some of that report is leading to some revision of the plan for our project. However, the emphasis in that report is on increasing milk production for the benefit of the nation of Sri Lanka, which involves making more resources available to the most efficient farmers. Such an aim is distinct from our aim of enabling the poorest members of society to increase their income, even though our beneficiaries are not necessarily the most efficient dairy farmers.

If any reader is interested in seeing this project area on the Jaffna Peninsula and what has been done, I am planning a trip to the project area later this year. If you would like to join me and possibly see the SEDS project area, please contact me or the office.



Photo by [Jahzan Ahamed](#) on [Unsplash](#).



# 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](mailto: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 [info@partnersinaid.org.au](mailto:info@partnersinaid.org.au) to advise us of 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](http://www.mycause.com.au/charity/25612/PartnersinAidLtd))
- [GiveNow](#)  
([www.givenow.com.au/partnersinaid](http://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. Goodwill Wine



# 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 [info@partnersinaid.org.au](mailto:info@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

\$



## A NOTE ABOUT OUR IMAGES

Wherever possible, we include images of our projects that have been 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](mailto: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.