



indigo foundation

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Welcome to the New Year!

An update from the Management Committee...

A (belated) welcome to the New Year! No doubt it has been a busy start for most, as it has for IF. In this first quarter, Sue Cunningham our Project Manager for the Solomon Islands travelled to Honiara to continue our work there, and an IF member, Salman Jan, has left for Afghanistan with the purpose of identifying a project we can support. In March/April, Jenny Spence will head off again to East Timor to assist Centro Feto with strategic planning and fund raising.

Back in Australia, our focus is on fundraising. This next six months will prove important for the achievement of IF's goal of financial sustainability. To that end, we are starting to organise fundraising events in Canberra for East Timor and in Adelaide for Afghanistan. We will also be seeking general organisational support from philanthropic organisations and the corporate worlds. If you have any ideas or would like to assist in this delightful business, please do let us know!

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce Patricia Morton as the newest of the IF Management Committee. Patti has a background in public health, health promotion and population health research. She has worked with Aboriginal people in Australia and with the rural and urban poor in Cambodia and Peru for the Asian Development Bank, International Federation of the Red Cross and local Government and non-Government organisations.

IF seeks to reflect the principles of **equity, responsibility, cooperation** and **mutual learning**. A central focus is **community control** over all decision-making.

Patti currently works as a project manager for ITC International (an Australian Managing contractor), looking after health and community development projects. We all look forward to working with her over the coming year.

For those interested in doing some volunteer work with IF, Sally Blake is the Volunteer Coordinator for 2003. Sally provides regular updates to our pool of volunteers on activities, briefing on IF policy and procedure, and most importantly, ensures volunteers have a full understanding of IF's overall development approach and goals. Sally can be contacted by email sallyblake@apex.net.au for further information.

Finally, our thoughts go to all those people who are struggling to maintain their health, environment, human rights and community in the current world climate of violence and fear. A dimate, that only seems to be getting worse. Whether it be in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Israel, the Solomon Islands or home here in Australia the resilience and optimism of these people is an inspiration. We should ensure we do what we can to assist.

Sally Stevenson
Sally Blake
Susan Engel
Zoe Mander-Jones
Patti Morton
Jennifer Spence

Indigo Foundation Development Praxis Award

At the end of last year we established the *IF Development Praxis Award*. IF is proud to announce the first recipient of this award is **Leanne Black**.

The purpose of the award is to support and promote links between development research and practice. As such, the award of \$500 will be granted annually to a person or organisation undertaking research that IF believes will contribute, in a practical and accessible way, to community development.

IF will also provide non-financial support to award recipients, including access to our organisational experience and contacts and introductions to communities that we are working with. In return we may ask recipients to assist IF by reviewing a project to ensure that we are applying key theoretical principles in our work, submitting research articles to our newsletter or speaking to IF volunteers and the management committee about development research.

Leanne is researching the links between capacity building and poverty reduction in developing countries. She will be working with communities in East Timor to establish what (if any) on-the-ground benefits accrue to communities if a capacity building approach to development is taken. Over the last decade, 'capacity building' has become a key principle in development, and indeed IF's approach is based on providing capacity building support to local NGOs. Yet, whilst the principles of capacity building appear sound, the complexity and dynamics of it are not well understood. Moreover, there is limited systematic evidence that a capacity building approach actually does reduce poverty or contribute to sustainable development. Leanne's research is aimed at determining what the links are, and how they work best.

Leanne recently completed a B.A. (1st class Honours), majoring in Community Development and has worked among nomadic herders in Niger, West Africa using a participatory development approach. Her insights into the practicalities of development and her keen ability to critically analyse and clearly articulate development theory will be of extreme benefit to IF. We are extremely happy to be able to support her work.

If you know of anyone who may be interested in the award for 2003, please ask them to contact Susan Engel at indigo.foundation@bigpond.com

PROJECT UPDATES

Solomon's Time

A report from Sue Cunningham...

After Sunday Mass in early February the community of Tiaro sat together in the shade of the spreading trees to talk about the coming school year. To attract (and keep) a headmaster for the local primary school, they were told, meant they'd have to agree to feed him for the first couple of months until he got his garden established. How did they feel about that?

While their children ran about a number of people spoke and agreement was reached – the community would feed the headmaster taking turns until his garden was ready. In Guadalcanal today many primary school teachers in government schools have not been paid (in some cases for up to a year) but continue to teach anyway. In rural areas they live and work in the community and are provided with housing and a garden plot.

The social unrest in Guadalcanal in the last two years has exacerbated the already high rates of non-attendance at school. Schooling is not compulsory in the Solomons and over half the male and female school age population (5-14) of the island don't attend school. The people of Tiaro seemed to agree that their sacrifice would provide the chance for their children to go to school. With many government services in disarray people turn to their "wantoks" (extended family networks) or to trusted organisations such as the churches.

I was in Tiaro (on the NW tip of Guadalcanal) as part of a needs assessment for IF to investigate options for future support of youth affected by two years of unrest and militant activity.

In 2001/02 IF supported the communities of the isolated Weather Coast by providing funds for counselling of former militants and the provision of sporting equipment for young people to enable them to be active in a positive way in their communities. The funds were channelled through the Chancery of the Archdiocese of Honiara. One well known ex militant visited me in Honiara to say that the sporting equipment funded by IF had been very well used (so much so that some of it was worn out), and helped young people in the Weather Coast villages to come together where they were able to discuss their experiences.

My hosts during my ten days in the Solomons were two Catholic priests, Herman Tiqe and Doni Keli. They had been trained as counsellors and worked in their parishes to debrief former militants and others affected by the conflict to assist them to reintegrate into their communities (IF funds supported this valuable work). It was inspiring to spend time with them as well as Sister Jennifer Vatukubona, one of their colleagues, who is working to develop the leadership skills of young women. They were keen to get started with the year's program in their parishes by organising workshops for young men and women to increase their skills in leadership, conflict resolution and planning for change.



Sue Cunningham with Father Herman Tiqe

IF will continue its support for the communities of the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal for the next three years. In the first year we expect to provide funding for further counselling training, for workshops for young women on self esteem, political and cultural awareness and general workshops for young people on listening skills and resolving conflicts. We also hope to fund the provision of sporting and musical equipment for these young people in isolated communities.

Sherrin Community Organisation

Sarah Kelly reports...

As you may know, IF has been involved in providing support to Sherrin Community Organisation (SCO), an organisation that offers education and community integration services to Hazara (Afghan) refugees. Recently, Hazara holders of temporary protection visas (TPVs) have become very frustrated and depressed about their chances of being accepted into Australia on a permanent basis. Some of them had hoped to receive news of their status when their three year TPVs expired in January this year. Instead, the Immigration Department has simply extended their TPVs, stating that it cannot

say when their applications for permanency will be processed.

This recent news and the general uncertainty surrounding their situations has discouraged the TPV holders from continuing to attend the English classes run by volunteers from SCO, and these have been discontinued for the time being. While SCO continues to provide interpreting services within the local Hazara community, and IF is planning to develop more of an advocacy role within Australia in relation to the TPV regime, the focus of IF and SCO jointly has moved to how they might support a project in Afghanistan.

IF member and SCO Chairperson, Salman Jan, is currently visiting Afghanistan and will be looking to identify activities that may be suitable for IF support. As you may be aware, living conditions in Afghanistan remain chronically unstable, with the population being subjected to threats of violence (especially outside Kabul), a lack of basic infrastructure and housing, poor healthcare and inadequate diet. The continued influence of Islamic fundamentalism and the economic instability make the position of women especially hard. There are reportedly over 50,000 widows in Kabul alone who are struggling to support themselves and their children. Salman will be meeting with non-government organisations in Kabul to explore projects which focus on supporting women, orphans and disadvantaged children through training and education.

We hope to report on further developments as to IF's possible involvement in a project in Afghanistan in the next newsletter.

A Just Australia

IF has recently joined a coalition of organisations and individuals running a campaign called **A Just Australia**. **A Just Australia** brings together 97 NGOs and over 8,500 individuals to campaign for improved policies and practices towards asylum seekers and refugees. It aims for policies that show 'respect, decency and traditional Australian generosity to those in need'. **A Just Australia** aims to achieve just and compassionate treatment of refugees, consistent with the human rights standards which Australia has developed and endorsed. Its patrons include: Rev Tim Costello, Robert Manne, Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE, Rev Bill Crews AM, Malcolm Fraser AC, Barry Jones AO, Neville Roach AO, Dr John Yu AC, Hon Justice Marcus Einfeld AO and Hon Nick Greiner AC. Information on this campaign, and current refugee issues and events can be found at <http://www.ajustaustralia.com/>.

IF will work with A Just Australia to improve the conditions and treatment of refugees on Temporary Protection Visas. We see this as a way to enhance the support we provide to Sherrin Community Organisation whilst attempting to change the policy environment, so that this kind of support will no longer be necessary. Published below are the 12 fundamental principles that A Just Australia proposes as good policy and practice towards asylum seekers, for your consideration.

A better way for Australia and for asylum seekers

- Australia has a legal responsibility to regulate and decide the entry of people into Australia. This responsibility must be exercised in accordance with its other legal responsibilities and standards of fundamental decency, including its human rights obligations.
- Australia will accord to refugees and asylum seekers all their rights and entitlements under relevant international laws, including under the Refugee Convention, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Torture Convention. It expects no less from other countries.
- No refugee or asylum seeker will be subjected to punishment, mistreatment or other human rights violation in order to deter others from seeking asylum in Australia.
- Refugees and asylum seekers who are intercepted on their way to Australia will be treated with respect for their dignity and not be subjected to physical violence or threats of physical violence.
- Refugees and asylum seekers who are intercepted on their way to Australia will not be diverted forcibly to a third country but brought to Australia to have their claims processed in accordance with the law. Under no circumstances will refugees or asylum seekers be diverted forcibly to a country that is not a party to the Refugee Convention or to the major human rights treaties.
- Australian aid funds will not be diverted from development projects to bargain for the detention and processing of refugees and asylum seekers in other countries.
- Refugees and asylum seekers will not be detained arbitrarily, and will not be detained indefinitely. No refugee or asylum seeker should be detained beyond an initial processing period unless individually assessed, subject to judicial review, as requiring to be detained on grounds of public health, public safety or public security. Standards for this initial processing time must be established, with government officials responsible for meeting these standards, and subject to judicial monitoring and review.
- No refugee or asylum seeker child will be detained except as a last resort and then for the shortest possible period of time. The parents and siblings of a child, or in their absence other family members who may be with the child, will ordinarily be released with the child to provide for the child's care and well-being, unless their release would raise significant risks in relation to public health, public safety or public security.
- In all decisions affecting a child the best interests of the individual child shall be a paramount consideration. Children are entitled to have their views heard and taken into account, according to their ages and maturity, in all decisions affecting them.
- Any refugee or asylum seeker in detention is entitled to be treated humanely with respect for his or her human dignity. The circumstances of detention should at all times take into account the trauma of the refugee experience, reflect a humanitarian approach to their care and well being, and reflect Australian standards of hospitality. Access to qualified legal advice will be assured, and the period and continuance of detention will be subject to regular judicial review.
- Asylum seekers who are accepted as refugees within the Refugee Convention are entitled to family reunion. Family reunion entitlements will extend at least to spouses and children and to parents and siblings who are dependent on the refugee. In the case of a refugee child, family reunion will extend without qualification to the child's parents or, if the child has no parent, then to adult family members or others who might have responsibility for the care of the child.
- Asylum seekers who arrive without authorization, but who are accepted as refugees, will be entitled to the same benefits as other refugees. Asylum seekers who are found not to be refugees, will be removed in a humane way when it is safe to do so, and when their rights to judicial review have been exercised. Individual assessments will be made of the circumstances of those who are not able to return safely, and determinations made on the basis of law, safety and common sense. Assessments will be made of the circumstances of those who are not able to return safely, and determinations made on the basis of law, safety and common sense

