



indigo foundation

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Update from the Management Committee

We can't believe it is June already!! So much has happened since the last newsletter in February, time has simply flown by.

A big welcome to all new members who have joined over the last couple of months. Also a big welcome to the world to two brand new babies: Asha Reilly, daughter of IF Project Manager for Afghanistan Sarah Kelly, and Alex Reilly and Michael Easterbrook, son of Margaret (our retiring volunteer Accountant) and Geoff Easterbrook. Congratulations to the new parents and a huge thank you to Margaret for all her work, patience and persistence over the last two and a half years.

IF Chairperson, Sally Stevenson, is also expecting a baby in the next few weeks. She will be taking a well deserved break from IF for three months. During this time Jennifer Spence will be acting Chairperson so please don't hesitate to contact her with any questions or suggestions you may have.

In this newsletter we have decided to trial a thematic approach to our articles, to give members a greater understanding of the development context and issues faced by communities in each country where IF works. This newsletter focuses on the situation in Afghanistan and the plight of Afghan refugees in Australia. We hope it will be of interest to you and welcome any feedback. Our next edition will focus on East Timor. As Jennifer Spence is about to travel to Oecussi, East Timor to visit our partners at Centro Feto Women's Organisation it should also be an interesting issue.

End of FY Indigo Foundation Fundraising!

June 30 is fast approaching – if you would like to include IF in your end-of-year tax considerations, we would very much appreciate it. All donations to IF are **tax-deductible**, through the support of APHEDA, the humanitarian aid agency of the ACTU.

Alternatively, if you would like to assist with fundraising, we have also have a number of suggestions!

For example, a simple yet effective fundraising strategy is to encourage your employer to install a 'give as you earn' system of salary deductions. This is an increasingly popular form of contribution (similar to a monthly credit card deduction) and can be arranged with pre-tax benefits. The Charities Aid Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that facilitates this process, and provides assistance to employers to establish simple systems that allow deductions to be made to an employee's choice of charity. The system would not be limited to IF, but IF would be an option the employee could contribute to. This way, IF increases its exposure and income, as would other charities.

Please contact Sally Stevenson if you would like more information (indigo.foundation@bigpond.com).

Volunteer Call

IF Accountant: Only 1-2 days per quarter, using MYOB. If anyone is willing and able to help IF with the books please us give us a call. We would love to hear from you.

English Teacher: Lua Lemba Education and Community Development Foundation (Rote, Indonesia) is looking for a volunteer English teacher. Lua Lemba is one of IF's community development partners and has asked IF to help them find a suitably qualified English teacher to live and work in the community for one year. Lua Lemba will provide free accommodation and food for one year.

If you would like further information about either position please contact IF Volunteer Manager Sally Blake (sallyblake@apex.net.au).

AFGHANISTAN SPECIAL

Following the fall of the Taliban in December 2001, and the installation of the Afghan Transitional Government in June 2002, Afghanistan faces a promising future. However, after more than 20 years of war and human rights abuses, and several years of severe drought, Afghanistan also remains extremely vulnerable.

A Summary of Afghanistan's key challenges

Security and human rights: Security and human rights abuses remain the most serious challenge facing the peace process in Afghanistan. Violent crime, general lawlessness and control of local areas by warlords profoundly threaten all human rights and reconstruction efforts.

Funding: Despite large promises of aid, it is an ongoing battle to get Western countries to honour funding commitments. The new Afghan government is constrained by an extreme lack of funding, and very little rehabilitation and provision of services is taking place.

Infrastructure: Schools, hospitals, roads, farms and water supply systems need to be rebuilt to avoid further health and humanitarian disasters. The infrastructure of government, including a functioning and fair judicial and legal system, requires substantial work and support to ensure all citizens' rights are upheld and protected.

Women and children: Women are re-emerging as a political and economic force. However, women (many of whom are widows) particularly outside Kabul, remain marginalised and oppressed. Human rights protection and opportunities for employment and participation in the political process are key concerns. The education of children is vital to ensuring the country has skilled, informed people able to continue the work of reconstruction and participate in a fair political process. Girls in particular require substantial support for introduction or reintegration into the education system.

Returning Refugees: The unexpectedly large number of refugees returning to Afghanistan has put an extraordinary strain on already fragile infrastructure.

IF to provide support to Hazara in Afghanistan

IF will soon be supporting a non-government organisation in Afghanistan. As we wrote in our last newsletter, IF member Salman Jan recently visited Kabul with the purpose of identifying an NGO we could support from Australia (his report follows). There are over 1,000 local NGOs registered with the Ministry of Planning in Kabul, however there are substantial concerns about the effectiveness and corruption of many NGOs. Salman has recommended further discussion with the NGO ERC - Establishment Rehabilitation Centre - which is located in Western Kabul and provides community development services to the predominantly Hazara population there. ERC was established, and is managed by Dr Khadiji Bahari. Dr Bahari is a very well respected woman who returned to Afghanistan when the Taliban were overthrown. She is known personally to Salman, which aligns with IF's philosophy to initiate support through existing relationships and contacts.

ERC has two programs that are of specific interest:

- **Free schooling for Hazara girls and boys:** During the Taliban regime girls were prevented from publicly accessing education services. There is now incredible demand and enthusiasm for education by the Afghan population. The government, which has virtually no funding is unable to respond to the demand or provide adequate salaries or education supplies to schools.
- **Vocational education and training for women:** To provide skills which will allow women to earn money and develop forms of economic independence.

We are currently in discussion with Dr Bahari to ensure that IF support to ERC will satisfy our criteria for assistance. The four key criteria are:

- Community (or NGO) capacity to manage support provided by IF and implement change.
- Potential impact IF support can have on the NGO's capacity and on community development
- Alignment with IF key development areas, and Guiding Principles (equity, sustainability, transparency and community ownership).
- IF's human and financial capacity to provide adequate support.

Telecommunication infrastructure in Kabul is virtually non-existent. Therefore, contacting people outside of international organisations is extremely difficult. We expect discussions and potential negotiations with ERC to take a couple of months, and hope to have an outcome by August. In August, IF member Kawa Moballigh will be travelling to Kabul, and will be able to follow-up any outstanding issues, or ensure the establishment of a relationship, in person.

Fundraising in Adelaide

To support this project we held a wonderful fundraising event in Adelaide. With the help of Helen Reilly who generously organised a morning tea at her home, Sarah Kelly and Sally Stevenson presented information on the current situation in Afghanistan; opportunities to provide support in Afghanistan (through IF) and also on Indigo Foundation itself. We are thrilled to report the morning raised over \$4,000. We are extremely touched by this and our sincere thanks is extended to Helen and Peter Reilly and everyone who attended and gave so generously.

Fundraising in Sydney

Encouraged by this success, we are now planning a similar event in Sydney, most likely in early August, and will be sending invitations out mid July. It would, of course, be great to see you there.

Salman Jan came to Australia seven years ago as a refugee. He recently returned to Kabul. Here he shares with us his experience...

In March this year I was in Quetta Pakistan, which is a close neighbouring city of Kandahar, the former stronghold of the Taliban. The Afghan calendar's New Year was to be celebrated on the 21st march. Times were running out for me and I couldn't wait to be in such an exciting occasion in my country of birth. Finally after many years of travelling from countries to countries I put my feet on the troubled land of my dreams. It was 19th March. I was totally overjoyed and couldn't stop my emotions. It was an unforgettable moment that I'd waited for many years to come and a truly sensational experience.

Next day I was in Kabul. You asked me to describe the city that I have seen it with that sensation and excitement. But HOW? There are things in this world that I wish for everyone not to see and experience...they are the destruction of the whole city that you have memories, friends and loved ones, from buildings and roads, from energy stations to drinking water systems, from schools to play grounds that have turned to 'emergency graveyards'. This city is KABUL. It is sad for everyone to see Kabul now, but it is more sad for those who have memories of pre-war Kabul when their dreams were able to give them some joy and it is even more sad walking on the rubble streets with out meeting many of the old friends and loved ones.

The post-war Kabul is so sad and the Kabulies are even more sad, depressed and worried and are all struggling in a harsh-cold life to avoid starvation. Hunger, poverty and hopelessness are the words that Kabul residences have learnt so far, not in the classrooms, as there was not one during the war, but in their day-to-day life miseries.

It is now two years that war is over. Taliban and Al-Qaieda are defeated by the American lead coalition. The new Afghan administration backed by the International Peace keepers came on power. But what has changed on the ground? Things didn't change very much. The country is still run by very corrupt officials. Reconstruction and rehabilitation are the words heard a lot but haven't seen in action yet. Other cities and countryside are much the same as Kabul, if not worse. I personally saw Kandahar and Jalalabad too.

Afghan refugees in Australia – an ongoing battle

Closer to home, refugees in mandatory detention and on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) continue to live in a chronic state of uncertainty and anxiety about their future. A recent report, by Zachary Steel from The School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales titled 'The Politics of Exclusion and Denial: the Mental Health costs of Australia's refugee policy' provides a disturbing if sadly predictable insight into the devastating effects the Australian government mandatory detention and TPV policies have on refugees. Although there are some limitations to the study (such as sample size), key excerpts from the report include:

Mandatory Detention

Children reported being distressed by witnessing the frequent acts of self-harm and suicide by other detainees. All of the children witnessed the same act of self-harm by an adult detainee who repeatedly mutilated himself with a razor in the main compound of the detention centre. Children also described having witnessed detainees who had slashed their wrists, jumped from buildings, resulting in broken legs, and detainees attempting to strangle or hang themselves with electric cords. At times, children witnessed their parents suicide attempts, or saw their parents hit with batons by officers.

A number of families reported enforced periods of separation from each other during detention, often when a parent was taken to solitary confinement either as punishment or in response to self-harm attempts. There were a number of incidents where children, including those under 10 years of age, were separated from their primary care giver(s) for extended periods of time.

At assessment, every adult was diagnosed with a major depressive disorder and the majority (86%) were also diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) representing a 3-fold increase in psychopathology subsequent to detention. The increase in suicidal ideation was substantial: none of the adults had experienced persistent suicidal ideation prior to detention. At the time of assessment, almost all adults (93%) thought persistently of killing themselves. A third of the adults had self-harmed.

Lifetime assessment of psychiatric morbidity indicated that there was little psychopathology amongst the children prior to arrival in Australia. In contrast, at the time of assessment, after having spent in excess of two years in detention, all children were diagnosed with at least one psychiatric disorder and most (80%) were diagnosed with multiple disorders, representing a 10-fold increase in the total number of diagnoses identified. Two children were diagnosed with all five of the psychiatric disorders assessed. All but one child received a diagnosis of major depressive disorder and half were diagnosed with PTSD.

Temporary Protection Visa Holders

TPV holders in the study reported exposure to an average of 5 of the 16 trauma categories assessed, with 71% reporting being close to death, 50% reporting the murder of family or friends, 23% reporting imprisonment and 20% torture.

There was a higher level of trauma exposure amongst TPV holders (as opposed to permanent visa holders) and this is consistent with previous studies suggesting that 'unauthorised asylum seekers' often have a more significant trauma history than authorised refugees.

There is *prima facie* evidence that temporary protection status may be associated with the maintenance of posttraumatic stress reactions.

There are clinically significant levels of anticipatory traumatic stress (expectation of future trauma). This represents a 16-fold increase in risk and provides evidence to support the argument that TPV holders are kept in a chronic state of anticipatory stress.

The heightened level of anticipatory stress may account for the observation by torture and trauma services throughout Australia, that TPV holders are non-responsive to standard treatment interventions. For example, standard treatments such as imaginal exposure or testimony therapy appear to have a core assumption of safety as a necessary precondition for treatment, with exposure leading to a form of habituation to salient trauma cues. With TPVs, however, the future threat they face is real and represents a likely outcome

IF Comments

Repeated research undertaken amongst asylum seekers, detainees, TPV holders and authorised refugees, has indicated that all of these populations are highly traumatised and at risk to ongoing mental illness. The evidence presented in the report further indicates that key government initiatives used to manage and indeed deter some of these groups, particularly long-term detention and the issuing of temporary protection visas leads to the continuation and further exacerbation of mental illness.

The full report can be found at: <http://www.ajustaustralia.com/news/speechesandpapers/docs/103.doc>

This is an issue that IF believes requires continued advocacy. As the report's author states: 'if the suffering of one group can be so easily dismissed, then who knows what group will be next'. As part of our advocacy strategy, we have enclosed a pro-forma letter to the Minister for Immigration and Indigenous Affairs, Mr. Phillip Ruddock that we urge you to complete and send. We also recommend that you write a similar letter to your local member, or better yet make an appointment with them to discuss their position and ways we can move beyond the current government policies for asylum seekers.

Remember! One letter is considered to be worth 10 votes!

IF you would like more information on advocacy strategies please contact indigo.foundation@bigpond.com