Building opportunity
Budaka, Uganda
Ian Seal - Project Coordinator

When our work with four community based organisations in Budaka District, Uganda began in 2009, we provided small budgets that for the first time enabled them to achieve some of their goals. Primary amongst these was the purchase and distribution of scholastic materials such as exercise books, pens, pencils and protractors, for without these many children in Budaka are unable to attend school. The government had made primary education free several years earlier, but families still needed to provide the basic school materials, and for children orphaned or otherwise made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS, school attendance was still a dream.

Each year since 2009, the majority of the money that we have provided has gone to the purchase of these school materials, and this is likely to be the case for some years to come. But as our relationships with our partner organisations have matured and strengthened, and the budgets we provide them have grown, so too has the ambition and sophistication of the groups and their various projects strengthened and grown. Now we have six partner organisations, up from four, and a range of exciting activities are underway.

From uniforms to industry
For the first year of our partnership, our partners purchased and distributed scholastic materials solely with a view to ‘bums on seats’ - that is, providing each child with the absolute minimal needs in order to maximise the number of beneficiaries. This worked well for those children and families who could provide some of the other needs, such as school uniforms. It got many children in to school who would have otherwise not been able to attend, but it didn’t change the fact that needy students were seen as an ‘underclass’, by both teachers and other students, because they wore scruffy old clothes and wrote in tiny letters in order to conserve pages in their exercise books.
used some of the funds we provided to purchase a sewing machine and provide training to a small group of widowed, HIV positive women. These women were able to earn income from sewing uniforms but at the same time produce uniforms at a cheaper unit cost. With the following year’s funds KAGA purchased a second sewing machine, and then a third and fourth, and as well as making uniforms the women took in other tailoring work from around the village. Meanwhile KAGA negotiated with a technical training institution that agreed to pay the salary of qualified sewing teacher, and she is now working with a group of orphaned young people on a six-month tailoring course.

A second of our partner organisations, Trinity Childcare Ministry (TCM), were donated a second-hand knitting machine, and with our funding support purchased wool and the time of a trainer to teach young people to knit with the machine. They’re now producing school jumpers, as well as other knitted products. KAGA and Trinity are negotiating with local schools to become the official providers of school uniforms and jumpers respectively, and, on top of being able to provide low cost uniforms to many of the orphans and other vulnerable children they support, this would provide significant extra income for struggling families in the villages. When our six partner organisations met together recently, they agreed that they would each look to develop different income generating activities and different products so that they would not compete with each other and in fact could use each other as markets for their products.

**Ensuring educational opportunity**

Another way in which our programs to improve access to education have changed since we first began is that we more closely follow the progress of each child through school. While it was pleasingly very rare to hear of any children who received scholastic materials from our partner organisations and then did not attend school, we were concerned that there may be reasons other than lack of such materials that created barriers to school attendance. From 2011 we began a process of registering all the beneficiaries of materials and following up regularly with their schools to ensure their regular attendance. The registration forms have also helped us to identify when students will transition from primary to secondary school and their scholastic needs change, and whether there are any children who need attention for health or other personal issues.

In order to check upon children’s attendance at each school, our community partners needed to build relationships with the principals and teachers. We facilitated this by assisting each school to purchase simple resources such as text books and sports equipment. These relationships help us to understand more about the needs of vulnerable children, and at the same time provide a benefit to all the children in each school.

**Growing trust and strengthening relationships**

These changes in the way our project in Budaka is unfolding have come about partly because the budgets we provide to each of our partner organisations have grown, and partly because we have learnt along the way. They also reflect a growing trust between us and our partners. Small organisations across sub-Saharan Africa are promised funds from government and non-government institutions that often fail to materialise, or are promised on-going funding but only given one-off grants. Initially our partner organisations had no reason to believe that we would behave differently, and when they did receive funds from us they spent the money on items with immediate benefit across the community. Now that they have come to trust that our relationship is real, they are willing to work in more developmental ways, over the longer term, and to risk raising the expectations of their communities for a brighter future. As well as the provision of scholastic materials to orphans and vulnerable children, the groups have purchased and propagated new, more productive strains of cassava and peanuts, have purchased and bred chickens, pigs, turkeys and goats, and even oxen that are used for ploughing.

Purchasing and breeding animals, and distributing the offspring to needy families across the community, requires a level of trust in the community leadership. It takes time to develop viable breeding groups, and some people will benefit much more quickly than others. The committees of our partner organisations have had to develop objective strategies for determining who in the community should benefit first, as well as a communication strategy to explain their process.

Of course trust is a two-way process, and as our project has grown and matured our partner organisations have had to demonstrate their trustworthiness to us. This process received an unintended boost when in 2012 the I was unable to visit Uganda for personal reasons. This tested our processes for funds transfer, accountability and report writing, and, with the very professional assistance of our Liaison Officer in Budaka, Joy Katooko, our partner organisations passed with flying colours. In fact it became clear from this year’s visit that the two-year absence had helped to cement our trust in each other and further strengthen our relationships. The
highlights of 2013’s visit to Budaka, apart from the warm traditional welcomes to each community, were in seeing the confidence of our community partners in the work they are doing and the optimism they have that together we can create real and lasting change for vulnerable children and families.

Club Rafiki
Kigali, Rwanda
‘Using dance among young people to transform a culture of negativity into a culture of pride and achievement.’

Mandy and David Wheen – Project Coordinators

The sentiments above are those of Francis Owusu a Canberra based hip hop artist. They apply with even greater force to Club Rafiki’s urban dance program. A program which attracts young people to its hip hop and contemporary dance classes in Nyamirambo, a particularly disadvantaged area of Kigali, Rwanda’s capital.

Rwanda is a country which only 19 years ago was devastated by genocide. It is now making great progress in establishing itself as a harmonious and prosperous society. Club Rafiki, including through its dance classes, is making a modest but positive contribution to fostering positive attitudes amongst young people in its local community.

Indigo foundation has supported the dance program since it commenced in January 2012. Our support is through our funding and advice about aspects of the development of the dance classes. The support is greatly appreciated by the Club which says it has never had assistance which is ongoing from an organisation outside Rwanda.

Our visit in May this year was our first since the dance school began and was an opportunity to undertake an on the ground evaluation of the program. We came away greatly impressed with what the Club has achieved and with its future prospects.

Forty four per cent of Rwanda’s population is aged 15 years or less (cf Australia 19%). There is a huge demand for worthwhile activities to meet the needs of youngsters.

Most of the children attend schools which run on two shifts a day. For older youngsters unemployment rates are high therefore young people have a great deal of time on their hands.

Young Rwandans love popular music and dance. They hear a tune and their hips start to sway and the feet to tap!

The Club provides classes for six hours per week, with 30 youngsters, aged 13 to 19, enrolled in each class. Each participant attends three classes per week with some 30% being girls. Sixty children in total attend. However the waiting list was closed when over 100 registered and whenever a class is held there are always many youngsters outside gazing through the windows or watching through the door. The demand to join the classes is great.

We attended numbers of classes and met with many participants, the trainers and Club administrators. The youngster’s consistent message was how happy they were to attend the classes and could they please be run every day of the week. Certainly watching the dancing the young people were full of enthusiasm and developing complex dance skills. Whether they wore no shoes, broken thongs, sandals or sneakers they threw themselves into the activity.

The Club administrators confirmed the benefits that the children were getting from the classes: learning dance skills, but also how to be part of a team, self discipline in turning up to classes regularly, being on time and developing positive relationships with others, particularly some of the older ones who provide support and guidance to younger participants.

We were impressed with the positive relationships which exist between the trainers and Club administrators on the one hand and the participants on the other. It was clear that the trainers are role models and mentors for the dancers. This is valuable as personal interaction between students and teachers at school is difficult with staff/student ratios varying between 1/45 and 1/75 and relationships between parents and children are quite formal with strict discipline the norm.

The Club administrators also exercise an impressive pastoral oversight of the young people. They keep in touch with their personal lives and how they are going at school. This is important as a dance school is an unfamiliar concept for many parents and they have been concerned that attendance may be a detriment to academic progress. Although this is too early to assess the Club believes that any impact will be positive with growth in the confidence, self esteem and physical fitness of participants.

Club Rafiki runs many other programs for its community. For example, a library, family planning education, HIV testing and prevention, adult literacy classes, a kindergarten, karate, basketball and basic outdoor playground activities.
One goal the Club has for the classes is to attract youngsters to some of these programs and it is already showing success. The library, which has electric light, is now being used as place to do school homework in the evening (only 13% of homes in Rwanda are connected to the power grid and most have no facilities to enable effective study). Each Thursday at the end of classes the Club health educator runs a 15 minute education program on sexual health. Teenage pregnancy and the spread of HIV are issues for the community.

A feature of the dance program is that the dancers give public performances from time to time. These range from some for specific audiences eg children with disabilities, for the dancer’s families, to some on more public celebrations eg the international day of the African Child.

These performances are an important part of the dance school. The dancers enjoy preparing for the performances, it encourages them to focus on a specific goal and to work hard to achieve the necessary standard. They told us they enjoy performing and showing their family and friends what they have achieved.

From time to time small numbers of dancers are bussed to rural areas of the country where they set up in a village and start to perform. Villagers quickly congregate and some local children and adults join in the dancing. After some fun the dancers retire and the health educators come forward to talk with the community about sexual and reproductive health issues.

The Club has found this a valuable outreach activity. It would like to be able to give more performances but is constrained by a lack of funds and asked if Indigo could assist with money which would pay for the hire of a bus, costs of refreshments, T shirts and the like.

Two issues were of some concern to us: the numbers of youngsters wanting to join classes and the proportion of girls. After considerable discussion it was agreed that the Club would reduce the number of classes a youngster could attend each week to two and we would fund an increase in the number of classes to eight per week. This would bring the number of participants to 120 per week.

The Club said that it had a target of having 50% of participant’s girls. Their goal was to achieve this by mid 2014. They noted that many parents who had had no experience of an activity such as this were reluctant to have daughters attend. They also noted that the local population contained a significant Muslim minority. Although numbers of girls from Muslim families already attend classes a good deal of confidence building with parents has to take place to achieve this. The Club was continuing to do this.

As a complement to our evaluation a film is being made of the activities of the Club. It will be posted on YouTube. In the interim an extract from earlier filming is at

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjBTOWmgYQ4&feature=youtu.be

This is one of indigo foundation’s newest projects but, working with our partners in Club Rafiki, it is delivering real benefits for a disadvantaged community.

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**Nyirrpi Central Australia: supporting intergenerational cultural maintenance and community vitality**

**Alice Roughley – Project Coordinator**

Indigo foundation has supported an annual bush camp in Nyirrpi, an Aboriginal community, 500 kilometres north west of Alice Springs, for the last three years. In May this year Sally Stevenson and I spent five days in Nyirrpi talking with people in the community about the project over the last three years and asking for their ideas about future camps and their suggestions about other possible cultural activities. Sally introduced me to the people of Nyirrpi and the staff of Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC- formerly Mt Theo Youth Program) and the Nyirrpi youth workers. She has entrusted me as new coordinator, with indigo foundation’s only Australian project; a project Sally has nurtured for more than three years.

My strong impression on this first visit was that Nyirrpi is a vital and vibrant little settlement, in spite of economic disadvantage that is typical of remote Aboriginal communities. Being very remote and with a population of only 200 people, there is a strong sense of community. There is also a desire among elders to ensure that Warlpiri culture is sustained, helping to build a sense of identity, confidence and responsibility for young people.

A painting workshop was in full swing during our visit. We spent a good deal of time sitting with the artists observing their patience and talent as we chatted about the bush camps. This created a colorful and comfortable environment for conversation. Sally’s friendship with the people and the trust and respect she has earned in Nyirrpi also facilitated candid and earnest responses to our evaluation questions.

We were treated to a hunting trip on our last day with four women to dig for honey ants, and were fortunate to find this rare delicacy. After the hunt we were invited to share kangaroo tail for lunch by the campfire before returning to Nyirrpi, serenaded with joyous Indigenous song from the back seat of the troopie.

We also had time with the Nyirrpi youth workers and the outreach worker from WYDAC to reflect on the camps and indigo foundation’s contribution to Nyirrpi. Five days flew by and our time there seemed all too short by the time we had to leave.

**The bush camps**

With indigo foundation funds of $10,000 per year and the wonderful support of WYDAC and the Nyirrpi youth workers there have been five bush camps since 2010. Bush
camps were held in May 2010, November 2011 and March 2013. These events ran for between 1 and 3 days with the later camps being more organized and running for a longer duration. The camp was not held in 2012 due to other activities and priorities taking place in the community. Instead, the community organised two small bush camps in 2012 using some left over funds from the 2011 bush camp. All of the camps were held at Old Nyirripi and were well attended by a large percentage of the community with equal access to and participation amongst men and women, old and young. Activities at the camps included the passing of traditional knowledge through Story. The old people taught young ones to hunt for goanna, bush turkey, witchetty grub, bush tucker tomato and sultana. Each camp culminated in a traditional ceremony where elders taught ceremonial dances, songs and stories to their respective genders and skin groups.

Boys were painted up with ochre by the elders, and dressed in traditional attire. The old women played clapsticks and chanted their songs as camp fires gave a lovely glow in the night sky. Young women learnt some of the old Warlpiri songs and chants. After the ceremony, people sat quietly around their fires talking about the camp. Elders taught ceremonial dances, songs and stories to their respective genders and skin groups.

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Reviewing the project

The review of these camps is largely based on feedback from people in the community, the youth workers and Sally, the project coordinator who attended the 2011 camp. While located at the other end of Australia, Sally maintained contact with project partners in Yuendumu and Nyirripi over the past three years through regular emails and phone calls, especially in the period leading up to the annual camp.

To evaluate the project we spoke with 23 people in Nyirripi including senior and junior men and women, youth workers and non-Indigenous community members about the camps over the last three years. We had some semi-structured questions based on the guiding principles of indigo foundation: community ownership, sustainability, transparency and equity.

So, are these camps a worthwhile investment for indigo foundation? Is the project successful? In answering these questions it is essential to acknowledge that the Nyirripi/indigo foundation bush camp project is one small contribution among many efforts and initiatives by a range of organisations to support the Nyirripi community and cultural sustainability. The impact of a single social program on individuals/communities is always difficult to measure as there are so many other influences. Consequently, evidence of impact is always partial.

Evaluation must acknowledge that culture is a complex mix of practices, symbols, languages, ideas and codes of conduct. There are no absolute answers to questions of what constitutes cultural sustainability, how it can be measured and who should measure it. We do know however that there is evidence that immersion in cultural activities on Country can contribute to cultural strengthening that can lead to community health and well-being more generally.

Background Research on Aboriginal camps on Country has shown that these types of projects can have beneficial outcomes for individuals and communities. For instance, immersion in culture on-country has contributed to positive social outcomes that have helped form and reform peoples’ identity, helped peoples’ confidence and sense of how they function within their communities, assisted challenged young people and reduced mental illness and suicide. Indigenous people with a stronger attachment to their culture have also been found to be more likely to achieve higher levels of education.

Strengths of the project

According to the recent camp report written by the community, the camp was a time of ‘...pride, joy, strong kinship, solidarity and awe’. Nyirripi residents said that the rapport and sense of kinship was getting stronger and ‘Nyirripi more happy place now’.

According to the community, ‘the camp is a rare whole community event. Men’s business is often undertaken in neighbouring communities. Nyirripi is too small to hold a sports weekend annually and therefore occasions like this, which involve the whole community, are special. It is therefore an investment not just in cultural knowledge but of social capital’.

Community ownership of the camps is increasing as the number of people involved in the organisation and delivery of the camps increases and becomes more structured with substantial camping equipment. The 2013 camp was extended from one to two nights in 2013 and the women started to talk about and plan the event months in advance.

Elders spoke of the importance of young people knowing their country and the associated stories. They said it was important for young people to know how to hunt and also important for them to be involved in ceremony. One very
senior woman said ‘Showing kids culture makes them stronger ... show country for hunting honey ants, witchetty grubs and show water holes. Show body paint and dance’. Another was very excited as she explained that children as young as 2.5-3 years were dancing at the ceremony at the bush camp. She said, ‘...the kids were learning the country and singing the country but there’s still lots to learn on other parts of the country’. Many would like future camps to be held in other sacred areas to teach different dreaming stories.

A senior man said, ‘...on camp kids hear old Walpiri language, not the one used in community that’s all mixed up with pigeon’. Warlpiri language is spoken by older people because of their status.

Likewise, young people talked about the ceremonial dance being a lot of fun. They also talked about learning stories and learning to hunt and their respect for the old people, in very positive terms. People were especially impressed with the shady bower house that was built for the camp this year.

The bower house built by the young men for the 2013 camp.

With each bush camp people are developing skills in the planning and execution of a large community event. They must take into account issues such as budgeting, safety, transport and catering. Young people have also gained skills in using video technology and media through involvement in the camp. Having knowledge of and experience in using these tools will increasingly enable the community to record and share their culture.

Everyone we spoke with expressed a strong desire for the camps to continue and had many suggestions to further strengthen and to extend the project. Ideas to build on the project included taking a group of dancers to the Laura Dance Festival in Cape York Peninsula, working with Batchelor College to have spinifex-wax making activities on country for traditional making of boomerangs and spears, holding a couple of smaller camps – one for women and one for men and purchasing less food to encourage more hunting during and in the lead up to the camp, thus making the funding stretch for other activities.

Community ownership of the bush camp is strong because the event is community-led. It is likely to contribute to cultural sustainability as the community is not only learning skills in community event organisation but is also building networks around the camps. Promotion of the camps can have the impact of increasing community pride and confidence to gradually undertake more community projects independently of youth workers.

Recording of the camp activities also contributes to the sustainability of the project. Students at school wrote and illustrated the story of the history of Old Nyirrpi, in Walpiri and English following the 2011 camp. One young person is working with the youth workers to produce a book about the 2013 camp in Walpiri and English languages. The book may also become a school project and will provide the community with a reminder of the importance of keeping Walpiri culture strong.

PAW media also contributed $5000 to support media training and record the camps. PAW provides training to young people in film making and production. Videos were taken on all three camps. Many interviewees mentioned the 2013 video and were excitedly awaiting the first viewing. The video may be very useful promotional material for WYDAC and indigo foundation.

All respondents to interviews in 2013 talked about learning cultural stories and skills such as hunting, body painting and dance. This transfer of knowledge and skills from elders to young people is important to sustain strong connections to country and culture.

Activities beyond the bush camps

The involvement of indigo foundation in Nyirrpi has seeded an artist in residency project which brought six Nyirrpi artists to the University of Wollongong in June 2013 to further advance their skills and promote their culture through art. The project has been possible with much support from the University of Wollongong and the broader community in central Australia and beyond. Not only have the talents of the Nyirrpi artists been showcased and celebrated publicly but the project promoted the value of investing in cultural strengthening. The event has also led to financial benefits for both the artists and indigo foundation fundraising.

Opportunities

To promote community ownership, sustainability transparency and equity in the project, responsibility for the camp and its delivery should continue to be focused on empowerment of Warlpiri decision making and execution of ideas.

The momentum for the bush camp is now maintained by a core group of young people and elders in Nyirrpi and the longer-term staff of the WYDAC in conjunction with indigo foundation. This is fortunate as frequent staff movements are common in remote Australian communities. Over the last three years there have been a number of changes in WYDAC personnel. Unfortunately, the two current youth workers in Nyirrpi have recently moved on. It will be important that WYDAC staff refer to past reports and liaise closely with community members and staff from indigo foundation to support the momentum the project has built to date.
In sum

So, are these camps a worthwhile investment for indigo foundation? Is the project successful? As noted earlier, indigo foundation’s investment in Nyirrpi is a small contribution among many. It is therefore not possible to quantify the extent to which cultural sustainability occurs as a direct result of this investment. It is however possible to see that the bush trips are viewed and experienced by the community as important cultural activities that build individual skills and confidence as well as social capital more broadly. The community is increasingly interested in inter-generational knowledge transfer and in promoting the strength of its culture.

Ongoing funding of the bush camps is totally dependent on indigo foundation and it unlikely that any alternative funding would be found if we ceased providing support. Determining whether our money is well spent must take into consideration the very high costs of working in such an environment and the need to ensure the principle of equitable access to resources is supported.

The bush trips have gathered momentum and the community want them to continue. Each year the camp has built on the learnings of the previous year. Each year the extent of cultural activities seems to have increased and the community has enthusiastically suggested even more activities and arrangements for future bush camps, including ideas to spread the funding to include additional cultural activities.

Finally, I look forward, as an indigo foundation member to maintaining the relationship with the people of Nyirrpi and supporting their aspirations for future cultural sustainability developments.

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Nyirrpi Artists in Residence  
University of Wollongong  
Sally Stevenson

When we first started talking to Nyirrpi community elders and leaders about what support indigo foundation might be able to bring to the community, they identified one of the most important priorities for their development is the teaching and strengthening of culture amongst young people. This lead to us supporting the bush camps (as noted above), and also agreeing to support and promote other cultural strengthening opportunities that may arise.

During our 2011 trip to Nyirrpi, the community asked if we could support a group of artists to come to Wollongong. We subsequently had discussions with the Faculty of Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong (UOW) and they offered to host a group of visual artists for a week, giving the opportunity for Faculty, staff, students and the broader Wollongong community to come and meet them, watch them work and learn about the oldest continuous culture on the planet.

That week came to be this year, in June.

And what a tremendous and delightful week it was. The visit of Freda Jurrah, Gayle, Kathleen and Angarrad Gibson and Kumanjay generated was a masterclass is how to generate goodwill. New relationships were made, old friendships renewed, beautiful paintings enjoyed, appreciated (and bought!), and the richness of Warlpiri culture valued anew.

The week began on Monday morning, with the artists off to a cracking start, painting within 15 mins of walking into the UOW studio. An atmosphere of work, culture and relationship was established quickly and effortlessly. At midday we went to the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre (WIC) for a beautiful Welcome to Country by local Dharawal woman Jodi Edwards. This was followed by warm and generous speeches by Michelle Rush (WIC), Sarah Miller (UOW Creative Arts) and Kumanjay. Jane Noel-Strang from WIC made a spectacular bush tucker morning tea, including lemon myrtle cheese cake and walnut and quandong loaf. The afternoon was spent painting and being photographed by the Illawarra Mercury and the day finished with fish and chips down at Belmore Basin.

The artists stayed as guests of UOW’s International House, where the student managers and staff were incredibly helpful and accommodating - nothing was too much trouble, and the artists felt very welcomed.


which generated many many calls to UOW about the exhibition of Nyirrpi works which was being held in the UOW Art Gallery. During the day the
As the artists flew out of Sydney at 930am on Saturday morning, I couldn’t for the life of me think how the week could have gone better. We advertised this project as a ‘special week where the traditional artists of Nyirrripi will come to the University of Wollongong to create, engage and inspire’. And that is exactly what happened.

Angared Napurrurla Gibson, Shelley O’Neil and Kathleen Napurrurla Gibson at Sandon Point.

My thanks to all who so generously supported the project through Pozible, to those who came to the studio, those who bought paintings and all those who worked hard to make it happen, in particular: the UOW team who made everything run so smoothly - Madeleine Kelly, Shelley O’Neil, Sarah Miller, Tim Beniuk, Victoria Demise, Laura Potter, Jacinta Landon, Agnieszka Golda, Didier Balez and Diana Conroy-Wood from the Faculty of Creative Arts, Allison Hemsley, Emma Pickford and the wonderfully accommodating and hospitable UOW International House, and Michelle Rush and Jane Noel Strang from the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre, who were so kind and generous in their support. In addition to the names above our thanks to Cecilia Alfonso, Gloria Morales, Hannah Quinlivan and Sarah from Wurukurlangu Artists cooperative who have been absolutely wonderful in their support of the trip, Susie Low, Jenny and Allen Minnicom and Nikki Kuper from WYDAC (Mt Theo Program) in Yuendumu for their ongoing and generous support and the wonderfully present and constantly kind indigo foundation team - Susan Engel, Alice Roughley, Libby Lloyd and Amy Ward.

And finally I would like to thank the artists. It was indeed, a very special week.

My trip to Borjegai

Reflections on a decade of Borjegai-indigo partnership and its implications for community development beyond Borjegai.

Ali Reza Yunespour – Project Advisor

I was deeply honoured to represent indigo foundation during my recent trip to Borjegai community located in Nahur District of Ghazni Province of Afghanistan. I was
there in mid May, around the end of Borjegai’s spring and beginning of its beautiful summer.

After being personally involved in the Borjegai School Project for many years and seeing the schools during my trip, followings are some of the reasons why I think Borjegai community and their ongoing support for education present a potential role model for other disadvantaged communities in Afghanistan and around the world.

As a result of the fall of the Taliban regime in 2002, the Borjegai community found an opportunity to pave the way for their children to have a better life: a life filled with education, community harmony and free of guns and war. Everyone in the community - elders, Mullahs and ordinary people - came together and decided that the best way to alleviate poverty and to ensure a healthy community is to educate their boys and girls.

Thankful to the Afghanistan’s central government to register their schools, the Borjegai boys and girls showed enormous courage to attend one of the nine schools under the tents or in the local mosques. It was the courage of those boys and girls as early as 2002 that formed the very first stones for the foundation of a successful community development in Borjegai.

The community at large celebrated their young generation’s courage and wholeheartedly supported quality education for their community. Unlike many other communities, the Borjegai community did not wait for others to make decisions about their community and they did not ask from a poor central government to do more for the education of their children.

Rather, the Borjegai people themselves decided to do something to provide quality education for their children. They made some important decisions in 2003: they said no to war and yes to pen to decide the future of their community, they chose to educate their girls, and they identified the educational needs of their nine schools (which were lack of school text books, qualified teachers, school buildings and furniture) and finally those chose to end their geographical and historical isolation by seeking outside help.

It was these decisions that encouraged indigo foundation to begin a partnership with the Borjegai community and the Borjegai-indigo foundation partnership began with the Salman Jan’s visit to Borjegai in 2003.

In the past decade, the partnership has led to significant achievements for the Borjegai community and its schools. In 2003, only one of Borjegai’s nine schools, Borjegai High School, had a school building which was constructed by the Afghan central government in the 1960s and maintained through the efforts of Borjegai community over the decades of conflicts and wars.

Today, all nine Borjegai schools have useable school buildings thanks to indigo foundation’s support for the construction of four school buildings and Borjegai community’s own initiatives to build another four school buildings (whilst still contributing the building projects supported by indigo foundation). Five of the nine Borjegai schools have proper furniture and access to safe drinking water and hygiene. These education facilities provide safe places for Borjegai students and teachers.

There is no doubt that safe school buildings and proper furniture are important for a quality education. It was not the school buildings and colourful furniture, but witnessing firsthand the personal sacrifices and collective efforts within and between Borjegai schools that made me to realise the true meanings of Borjegai’s ongoing support for education and indigo foundation’s contributions to the lives of Borjegai children and community.

Followings are some of the examples that represent a successful model of community-based development within and outside the borders of Afghanistan.

**Example 1: Borjegai female teachers**

In 2004, indigo foundation supported the Borjegai community to build Golbona School, the first ever girls’ school in the entire history of the community. At the time, the community elders and Mullahs decided to build a girls’ school to encourage more families to send their daughters to school.

Since 2010, Borjegai’s education landscape has changed significantly, with the increasing number of female graduates from its various schools. Living in a traditional society, a number of them have decided to have their own
families and, as such, have married. Around 40 girls have successfully passed their university entrance exams and now study in various university courses including 10 female university students that I had the privilege to meet them in Kabul.

Most importantly, I met with nine female teachers who completed year 12 and work in various Borjegai schools as teachers. Their families are fully supportive and the Borjegai community collectively decided to support them in their teaching role to ensure more girls continue their schooling as they get older.

In my meeting with these female teachers, they told me they decided not to go to university because of financial difficulties but also, they wanted to be role models for other girls in their community. They added that what they are doing is a challenge to themselves and perhaps to their community. But, they decided to accept the teaching role to break the cultural taboo around girls’ participation in jobs like teaching.

The local female teachers have worked as a catalyst for Borjegai families to choose their children’s school on the basis of geographic proximity of the school to their home. As such, more and more girls have been attending co-ed schools in the past few years, and this has encouraged the Borjegai community to also change the Golbona Girls’ School to a co-ed school in 2013.

In 2003, the construction of Golbona School for girls was a historical event. After a decade, the gradual changes in Borjegai community’s mentality to hire local female teachers and to prefer co-ed education for their girls and boys are signs of a community’s resilience to not only accept the course of history but to build and re-build their community’s fate and future.

Example 2: Return of university graduates to Borjegai community

Kashakak High School (KHS) was constructed and furnished with the support of indigo foundation and its partner organisation, Rotary Club of Ryde, between 2009 and 2011. After only three years access to safe school building, this school was ranked one of the best schools in Nahur district by the District government for its building and its high quality education.

With the fall of the Taliban regime in 2002, the Kashkak villages of Borjegai decided to register their school with the Afghanistan’s Ministry of Education (MoE). They succeeded in registration and opened their school under tents. They expanded the school enrolment by allowing girls to attend school and hired some local teachers most of whom completed the equivalent of year 10 and two qualified teachers from other parts of Ghazni Province.

During my visit to KHS, I met the school teachers and students. I learnt that nine teachers (out of a total 12) and the school Principal are former graduates of KHS.

In the 1990s, the current KHS staff used to only study religious subjects and basic mathematics and science up to primary level in the local mosques. In addition to allowing girls to attend school, KHS decided to also enroll students who had studied primarily religious subjects in various classes, according to their age.

It was such a wise decision by the community that then allowed the current KHS staff to enroll themselves in mid-secondary classes (Year 7, 8 and 9). They continued their studies for a number of years (ranging between 4-6 years) in KHS and completed their year 12.

After completing year 12, they all participated in the national university entrance exam known as Kankoor. They did not only succeed in their exams but have completed their university degrees (generally four years) from various university courses in major cities like Kabul, Mazar and Heart in the past three years. With a university degree in their hands, they have returned to their community to work as school teachers and Principal in KHS.

At a time of rapid urbanisation in Afghanistan in the past decade, the return of these university graduates to their community represent an enormous courage and sacrifice in the parts of these young people. They easily could have stayed in major city centers and enjoyed its relative luxury over a rural lifestyle. However, these young people have given up on their personal luxury to ensure quality education for the younger generation of Borjegai.

In addition to KHS staff, I met many other school teachers and at least three other Principals who are graduates of various Borjegai schools and returned to serve their community after completing their university degrees.
Example 3: The construction of Salman-e Fars School (SeF) building

SeF was established in 2005. It is a co-ed mid-secondary school located in the Kamrak valley of Borjegai. Kamrak is home to a number of sub-villages and has two schools, SeF and Abuzar Ghafari High School (AGHS) because of its large population and widespread geography.

While Borjegai is one of the most remote communities in Ghazni Province, SeF is the most geographically isolated and remote school in Borjegai. Around ten sub-villages of Kamrak valley send their children to SeF. After completing their year 9, the students of SeF go to AGHS to complete their year 12.

The composition of SeF students and teachers is also very unique amongst Borjegai schools. They belong to Hazara ethnic group and also to a very small population of Borjegai’s Sayyed who believe to be the descendents of Prophet Mohammad. The latter group makes around 40 percent of the SeF population.

Until the end of 2012, SeF used to operate under tents. Influenced by the works of indigo foundation in other parts of Borjegai, SeF Shura (school council) decided to build their school building in 2010. indigo foundation and Rotary Club of Ryde provided financial assistance for SeF and the community made an enormous effort to build their school building last year.

During the completion of the SeF building, many personal and collective sacrifices were made. Water is a precious commodity for every Borjegai family. In the course of the construction of SeF building, one of the elders offered his entire share of water to the school building.

Another elder voluntarily slept every night in the sight of the school building to protect the construction materials. Amongst his other sacrifices, the school Principal cancelled his personal trip to Kabul where he had to attend his younger brother’s wedding that coincided with the time of the opening ceremony of SeF building. He told me that he preferred to stay in school to ensure a quality celebration of the school building for the community and indigo team.

In the opening ceremony of SeF school building, the SeF school Shura invited all nine Borjegai schools, their Shura members and the elders and Principals of Jirghai schools which is the nearby community to Borjegai.

I witnessed firsthand the completion of this school during my visit to Borjegai and had the privilege to participate in the opening ceremony of the school building.

SeF welcomes the indigo foundation team and other guests to the opening ceremony of their school building.

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Development lessons and implications for other communities

There are at least three important development lessons that could be learnt from the Borjegai-indigo foundation partnership. Firstly, it is important not to underestimate the role and resilience of the local community in development projects. There is a misleading perception amongst some groups of development scholars and policy makers that a community that has been historically disadvantaged and experienced war and conflict is not really able to understand and prioritise their needs and make informed decisions about the fate of their community.

However, the partnership challenges such perception and reminds us that working with a community and respecting their ideas, initiatives and cultural norms is necessary to ensure the intended outcomes of any development project.

Secondly, a community development project can only succeed if it is inclusive. Every single decision that has been made for the Borjegai School Project has involved the schools, the community and indigo foundation (and its organisational partners). As a result, significant initial and ongoing contributions have been made by the Borjegai schools (students, Principals and teachers) to show the courage to attend the schools and by the Borjegai elders, Mullahs and ordinary community members to allow and to provide ongoing support for their schools operations.

There is no doubt that the Borjegai people have been influenced by the historical neglect of their community by the successive Afghan central government and decades of conflict and wars. The timely financial and technical supports from indigo foundation and its partners have given hope to and strengthened the resolve of Borjegai community to educate their children.

More importantly, indigo foundation supported projects have brought this community together in such a way that they have found the capacity to overcome their internal conflicts while making decisions about the fate and future of their children. They have shown such a capacity during the development, implementation and sustainable use of every single project in the past decade.

Finally, the partnership highlights that a community development project succeeds more because of the individual leadership, personal sacrifices and collective efforts of those involved in the project than the amount of money spent. In a place where historically girls’ education and teaching role for females have been regarded as cultural taboos, the personal sacrifices and collective efforts made by the Borjegai girls to attend school, to become school teachers and/or to continue their studies at tertiary level have made the real foundations for successful development of Borjegai schools.

In addition, the sacrifices and collective efforts of many volunteers, builders and community elders in Afghanistan to play a role in the making of their country and history are the real driving forces for initiating and sustaining Borjegai community-led development model.

The success of this model has encouraged other neighbouring communities of Borjegai, particularly Jirghai and Khawat, to also provide quality education for their children. They have witnessed firsthand the achievements made by the project to the lives of Borjegai community and their children. As such, they are keen and have the commitment to make their community’s fate and future with the help of indigo foundation.

The future of Borjegai School Project

While significant achievements have been made in Borjegai schools in the past decade, there are still many areas that require further support from indigo foundation and its partner organisations to ensure they are sustainable in the future. For example, three of the nine Borjegai schools require assistance for refurbishment, enlargement and maintenance of their buildings.

![Borjegai High School, damaged due to heavy rain and snow in 2012, needs assistance for the refurbishment and maintenance of its classrooms.](image)

Four of the nine Borjegai schools need assistance with the furniture for their offices and classrooms.

![Ali-ibn Abi Talib School which needs assistance with its building and furniture, Borjegai.](image)

In addition to Borjegai schools, there are twenty schools in Jirghai that have asked for assistance from indigo foundation since 2010 particularly during my trip to Kabul in 2012 and my meetings with the Jirghai elders and school
Principals this year. All the Jirghai schools are registered with the Ministry of Education and only four schools have useable school building thanks to peoples’ own efforts and a small assistance that they have received from the Afghan government since 2002.

As a result of my visit last year, and as a first step in developing a indigo foundation-Jirghai partnership a Commitment Agreement was signed in June for an initial first year of support. Subsequently $5,000 was transferred for the community to implement a teacher training program. Both partners hope this is the beginning of new and productive partnership.

In addition, given the widespread educational needs in the area, the Jirghai community has decided the construction of Shebar High School building, which is located in one of the most populated areas of Jirghai, as one of their priorities for next year. This school is currently operating under the tents and a number of damaged shops nearby the central market in Jirghai.

My strong hope is that the current relative security will and should remain in Afghanistan beyond 2014. It will remain because of the improved capacity of the Afghan security forces and the ease of mobilising young Afghan people by the country’s various political parties and ethnic groups for peace rather than war.

The relative security should remain because of the high costs of another civil war to Afghanistan’s economy, society and educated youth; and to protect and sustain the various achievements made in Afghanistan in the areas of education, health, road infrastructure and exponential growth of civil society and media in the past decade. Finally, the relative security should continue in Afghanistan to reinforce the existing but recently receding hope of the Afghan people for a better life beyond 2014.

In any case, the partnership with indigo foundation provides tangible, positive and ongoing support to the hopes of the communities of Borjegai and Jirghai.

Guna Vincent, Founder of Mahalir Sakthi, visits Australia

Sally Stevenson - Chairperson

Guna Vincent, Founder of Mahalir Sakthi, one of our partners in India came to Australia in June. It was a wonderful opportunity for many indigo foundation supporters to meet Guna, a truly inspiring woman, and learn more of the incredible work Mahalir Sakthi does with Dalit and other marginalised women and children in the slums of Madurai.

Guna’s trip was sponsored by the One Just World Program and was a guest speaker in its series of public meetings on Child Rights and Development. Guna spoke to over 600 people in Sydney and Wollongong in these free, Q&A style forums aimed at involving the community in conversation and debate on key international development. World Vision implements the forums in partnership with AusAID and the International Women's Development Agency, indigo foundation and the University of Wollongong were also supporting partners for the forum in Wollongong.

Nigel Spence, CEO of ChildFund Australia, Guna Vincent, and Justin Dillon, Founder and CEO of Made In A Free World at the One Just World Forum in Wollongong.

These forums were however, just the beginning of Guna’s visit here. During her time in Wollongong, Guna also spoke to schoolchildren at Keira High School and Coledale Public
School, was interviewed on ABC Illawarra Radio and by The Illawarra Mercury (http://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/1571625/activist-makes-plea-for-indias-untouchables?cs=300), speaking eloquently about the plight of Dalit children and their continuing struggle for dignity, education and good health. Guna also met with the Illawarra Women’s Health Centre in Warilla, human rights academics at Wollongong University and was guest speaker at a fundraising event very generously hosted by Carol Berry in her home. From Wollongong, Guna travelled to Melbourne, met with indigo foundation project coordinators John Bolger and Libby House and then spent time at WaterAid, with the support of Rosie Wheen, WaterAid’s International Program Director. Back to Sydney, Guna met fellow Mahalir Sakthi supporters, SHARE, and caught up with our General Manager Rob Mitchell and Management Committee member Deborah Raphael. And finally to Canberra, where Guna had meetings with ANU, more interviews by the ABC and the grand finale – where she blew our supporters away with a heartfelt, informative and inspiring talk as guest speaker at our annual Canberra dinner at the National Press Club.

I can’t emphasise enough how important this opportunity was for us. For me, meeting Guna was an absolute privilege. I learnt more about the struggles of Dalits, about Mahalir Sakthi many achievements, about Guna’s absolute dedication to her work and her people, and how she does it which such grace, integrity and humility. Indigo foundation was established because we believed in the power of relationships in development, and Guna’s visit absolutely confirmed this: Guna and Mahalir Sakthi are exactly who we had hoped to work with when we first imagined indigo foundation twelve years ago.

Thank you Guna.

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**General Manager: comments and thoughts**

Rob Mitchell

The way we work at indigo foundation: our ‘respectful partnership paradigm’ is what makes us different, and special.

This has been recognised recently by the inclusion of an indigo foundation case study in a new book about “complex project management”. How we coordinate our projects, and the procedures and policies which underpin our operations, have been diligently (and favourably) reviewed by our peers in the world of project development and management.

The validity of our approach has also been recognised by the individuals and organisations actively seeking to engage with us as partners to implement community development projects.

A particularly significant factor in our operations is our reliance on a strong group of volunteers to do so much of the work supporting particular projects, and the organisation as a whole. THANK YOU to all of those project team members, fundraisers, event organisers, and committee members.

We could achieve very little, of course, without funds, and, with that in mind, will be promoting some additional funding initiatives in coming months. These will include:

- Workplace giving;
- Corporate sponsorship;
- Grant applications; and
- Promotion of projects by project team members.

We particularly need introductions to organisations which may be open to the possibilities of workplace giving and general sponsorship, so if you feel you can help with such an introduction, please let us know.

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**marketing & fundraising**

**Successful events and future plans!**

Community and fundraising events are critical in helping ‘spread the word’ about our work, as well raising the necessary funds to support communities around the world. Our thanks for some great recent events go to:

- **Carol Berry** for hosting a wonderfully warm, generous, fun and financially successful evening in June, raising funds for Mahalir Sakthi. Warmest thanks also to **Deb and Jim Ravensthorpe** for catering for the evening with such spectacular curries (and all donated!), **Malika Elizabeth, Ann Lehmann, Kaya and Lilli Rodrigues-Pang** for the stunning entertainment (all donated!), **Mignon Steele** for creating such a beautiful atmosphere with her paintings.

- **Libby Lloyd and Virginia Haussegger** for coordinating with such energy and determination our annual Canberra dinner. What a fantastic night it was! In support of Mahalir Sakthi and raising over $13,000 we were inspired by the remarkable Guna Vincent, entertained by the fabulous Virginia and humbled by the generosity and goodwill from all the indigo foundation supporters who came along. Our sincerest thanks to all those who contributed so generously - the National Press Club, the auction prize donors, **Kelly Charls and Bearcage** for the fabulous video, Canberra Bollywood and Hollywood Dimensions for the incredible dancing, and **Tritia, Doreen, Helen, Heather, Margaret, Chris, Di, Jenny and Elicia.**

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MC, Virginia Haussegger with Bollywood dancers.
Upcoming events include:

- **Rowena Ivers** is holding (another) Fabulous Fundraising Clothes Swap in August at her home in Wombarra. Rowena’s band Misty Hill will be playing and so it promises to be a cool evening of funky music, and trading of no-longer-loved clothes for new stylish ones just as spring approaches, all in a good cause!

- Our annual **Sydney dinner** is coming soon! Book now!

  We invite you to share in a fun-filled night of food, wine and celebration! The evening begins with music, wine, and canapés, then progresses to dinner in the **Grand Ballroom of the Kirribilli Club** to hear about our outstanding achievements during 2013, and be entertained by our MC, music man and YouTube star, Stefan Sojka.

  Its starts at 6.30pm, Saturday 12 October 2013 and the cost is $110 per person, and covers canapés, dinner and unlimited beverages.

  Book now at: http://www.trybooking.com/DABC

- Our inaugural **Adelaide gathering** is also coming soon!

  We have such a wonderful network of supporters in Adelaide that we can’t wait to get you all together for a terrific evening!

- and….. coming up in November is an evening for our Afghanistan project supporters – a dinner at the renowned Lebanese restaurant: **Sahra By the River**, in Parramatta.

Please contact us if you would like to attend any (or all!) of these events! info@indigofoundation.org

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**Celebrate spring with amazingly good value champagne!**

**Give it a try – it’ll surprise you!**

*Every dozen bottles of indigo foundation wine sold will contribute $48 towards our projects!*

We encourage you to personally support this wine fundraiser, as well as ask your family, friends, and other potential supporters to do so.

Placing an online order is very simple: just go to indigofoundation.org and click on the link on the top right hand side of the homepage.

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Don’t forget! ‘Like’ us on **facebook** for all the latest news and events...and please contact us if you would like to support our fundraising efforts! We’d love to hear from you!

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I think we need to look critically at the inclusion of CLTS under the umbrella of participatory development, its effectiveness in achieving latrine construction and use and its impact on the poor. In my own research, with Anggun Susilo (forthcoming), we have shown that CLTS based interventions in Indonesia effectively end up targeting and humiliating the poorest of the poor, who simply cannot afford to construct latrines. The so-called social-marketing campaigns used in CLTS portray the poor as dirty, smelly and even disfigured.

In terms of latrine construction, CLTS performs well but there have been many schemes historically going back to the 1920s where construction has not been matched by long-term use. The issue here is that once the pit latrines are full most people do not have the commitment or funds to have the latrine emptied or to construct a new one. Sometimes this can be as basic as lack of access to land, in other words not having space to dig another pit. Equally lack of (environmentally sound) pit emptying services or the funds to use them is a major constraint. Here, government support and services are often key yet along with its hostility to subsidies, CLTS fundamentally underemphasises the role of local government in sanitation, thus there is no support for building up local services.

CLTS is, in many ways, another example of an attempt to find magic bullet cures to development changes. It is looking for a quick fix in an area that requires long-term engagement with local sanitation practices and a range of related spatial, economic, cultural and even psychological factors (making sanitation something people want). It also, and somewhat surprisingly, reflects an ongoing hostility to government’s role in sustainable development. My conclusion is that without both of these factors – local participation and local government – we will likely see ongoing failure to produce inclusive, holistic and sustainable local sanitation systems and equally importantly ones that do not rely on humiliating people in order to function.

**Bibliography**


**our people**

**Ron Switzer – Treasurer**

I was privileged to join indigo in early 2013, so still a relative newcomer. I have been very impressed with the passion, commitment and talents of the entire team and the great programs underway in many countries. I was attracted to an organisation that can make a sustainable difference working directly with local communities. It shows that with the right people and processes, even very limited funds can be very effective.

Briefly by way of personal background.

Professionally, I am a Chartered Accountant, CPA and AICD member. I have been in public accounting practice, a former partner of KPMG, held corporate CFO roles and until my ‘semi-retirement’, was the General Manager (NSW) of CPA Australia. I currently teach at the University of Sydney, consult to the not-for-profit sector and hold some audit committee appointments. I advocate strong financial management and good governance in any organisation, business or arm of government as a significant component of success.

With my wife of over 40 years, Kathy, we have three adult children all married and three grandchildren. We very much enjoy travelling (two of our children live overseas). I am an avid amateur photographer, enjoy the outdoors and have an interest in agro forestry.

I contend that is vital that those who can, help lift the living standards of others, enabling a better and more stable world community for us all.
Management Committee update

Sally Stevenson – Chairperson

As I read through this newsletter I can’t help but feel excited and satisfied with the work indigo foundation is doing. Each unique project tells a rich story - when communities are supported in their development priorities, good things can happen. It’s not always easy, but it’s certainly worthwhile, and as always I’d like to thank our volunteers for all the unseen (and often tedious) work they do to support our partners.

The months ahead provide no relief to the activity of the last six months! In addition to our current projects, at our most recent Management Committee meeting we agreed to support two new projects, one in Namibia and one in Cambodia. We’ll be working on establishing these as well as our support in South Sudan after Santino Yuot’s recent visit to Wedwil to discuss with the community how we can work together. Details in our next newsletter!

On the people front, I would like to thank Phil Strickland SC who recently stood down from the Management Committee after five years. Phil’s contribution to indigo foundation has been marked by his humour, sharp and pragmatic intelligence, honesty, and great fundraising skills. Phil also initiated our Congo health project and saw it through to its logical conclusion – it was a project which taught us much, and produced some great outcomes for the people of Kokolopori. It is our good fortune that Phil has agreed to stay on as an indigo foundation Ambassador, and we are certainly looking forward to working with him in this capacity.

I like to extend a very warm welcome to John Bolger, who has taken on the role of Project Coordinator for both of our projects in India. John’s many years of professional project management experience will be very helpful in guiding both of these well-established projects, and will provide a single point of contact for our Indian counterparts. At the same time a sincere thank you to Nicole Moore for all her wonderful work on our Madhuratankam (India) project over the last four years. Nicole’s professionalism, development insights and engaging manner enabled her to ably steer this project through some challenges periods, and alongside our liaison officer Semmalar Jebraj build it into one we are proud to support. Our thanks also to Caitlin Winter and Naaman Kranz for their excellent work establishing our partnership with Mahalir Sakthi – a partnership that has already brought us rich rewards. I also, sincerely welcome Alice Roughley, our new Nyirripi Project Coordinator. Alice’s previous experience in working with indigenous communities will be very valuable, particularly in relationship building and monitoring and evaluation.

I’d also like to make special mention and say thank you to Libby Lloyd, our extraordinary patron. Libby with her eternal optimism, constant hard work and ongoing generosity is a role model to me, and for this I am most grateful.

And thank you. Once again we finished the financial year in a healthy and happy position and we can move ahead with confidence in the knowledge that we have a wonderful community of supporters.