



newsletter

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indigo foundation is an independent, volunteer run, Australian community development organisation.

We work with marginalised communities providing innovative assistance to improve health, education, and human rights.

What's in this newsletter?

- + Personal insights into our two projects in India supporting Dalits
- + A in depth introduction to one of our new partners, OCCO, in Cambodia
- + 'A day in Budaka', with our six community partners in Uganda
- + The ongoing success of the Women's Empowerment Centre in Afghanistan
- + Our think piece about libraries in Africa, upcoming events...and more!

Building opportunity

India

John Bolger - Project Coordinator

Background

I visited both indigo projects in India during March 2014. The projects are in Tamil Nadu, the southernmost state of the sub-continent. Apart from being in the same state, both share a common focus - to improve the educational lot of Dalits.

Dalits, formerly known as "Untouchables", are outside India's caste system which was officially banished decades ago but is very much alive and influences almost all of the current 1.2 billion population. To be born into a Dalit family means that you face a huge number of challenges right from the start. It means that your parents are very likely to be uneducated and working as casual manual labour. It means that you are likely to be living in an area with other marginalised groups as Dalits and non-Dalits do not live together. It also means that you will be segregated from non-Dalits at school in the classroom, eating areas and playground. You are very unlikely to stay at school beyond Year 8 due to peer/family pressures to start bringing some income into the household. Yielding to this pressure, whilst understandable, virtually assures that the cycle will continue with your own children.

Both projects supported by indigo are focussed on improving the school retention of Dalits to Year 10 and beyond if possible. The first project is called the Project for Education and Awareness Building (PEAB) and is based

around the town of Madhurantakum in a rural area 75km from Chennai. The PEAB has been supported by indigo since 2006, shortly after the local community started the project. The second is called Mahalir Sakthi and operates in several slum areas in Madurai, Tamil Nadu's second city about 500km from Chennai. Mahalir Sakthi started operations in 2006 and has been supported by indigo since 2012.

PEAB Madhurantakum

Even though I have visited India a number of times and retain a great affection for the country, I had not visited Tamil Nadu before and knew that it is a mistake to assume that India operates as one homogenous entity, it is more an extremely diverse group of communities travelling more or less together under the same flag. On arrival in Chennai, I also realised that I had forgotten just how much India immediately assaults the senses. The noise, dust, relentless energy, lack of personal space, apparent chaos (to Westerners) and of course the obvious poverty can be overwhelming and I admit to checking in to the hotel feeling a little overwhelmed. However, after some sleep, shower and South Indian breakfast (the first of many masala dosai) the next morning, normal balance was restored.

Soon after, I left the crowded streets of Chennai behind and travelled about 25km south west to the suburb of Tambaram, home to our in-country representative Semmalar and her family, husband Jeberaj and 5yo son Joe. Semmalar, a Dalit herself, is in the final stages of her PhD at the Indian Institute of Technology in Chennai researching Dalit access to higher education.

Semmalar and Jeberaj took me to Karunguzhi, a village just outside Madhurantakum where most of the Village Education Centres are based. The VECs provide an after school tuition service for children from 5.30 to 8.00pm each school day, which in India is six days a week. Each VEC accommodates approximately 30 children between Years 1 to 9. The VEC tutors assist the younger children (years 1 to 4) with assignments mostly on an as required basis with more structured coaching in Maths, English and Tamil for the older students.



Karunguzhi VEC

At each of the seven VECs run by the PEAB project, the children put on a number of presentations for my benefit which included songs, traditional dances, poetry recitals and several dramas which they had composed themselves. I was shown the results of a recent painting competition (thankfully I didn't have to judge it) and viewed a number of handicraft pieces made with very limited materials but wonderful imaginations!



VEC Drama, about the importance of children attending school regularly!

The VEC tutors have all completed their own education to at least Year 10, most have completed Year 12 and several have teaching qualifications. All are from the communities they are serving, which is a key factor in parental support of the project. The two tutors shown below are typical examples of the community ownership of this project; Solaiyamal (on right) has been involved from the start, firstly as a VEC student and then 10th Standard student and is now tutoring at a VEC during her second year of studying for a Mathematics degree. Sindu (on left) is studying for a Commerce degree after attending the VEC program tutored by her sister and took over VEC role when her sister married. Keeping up the community and family tradition!



Sindu and Solaiyamal, VEC Tutors

Separate coaching classes are held for those students approaching Year 10 exams. Called the Public Exams throughout the country, they are a major educational milestone event in India, similar in focus and anxiety levels to Australian HSC/VCE exams. The exams are set and marked on a centralised basis and the results achieved by each student in the Public Exam essentially determine their available career options.

The PEAB project has operated one 10th Standard Class for several years to good effect but has struggled with a large range of obstacles to start a second Class to meet a growing demand. This year though, a second Class has been commenced using the same tutors, who are all qualified teachers with daytime teaching roles, at each class. The two 10th Standard Classes are held each evening in separate buildings about 3km apart and each provides coaching in English, Tamil, Maths, Science and Social Science for approximately 15 students. Each of the tutors take the same subjects to the after school class that they teach in their respective daytime roles.

A big advantage for a Dalit student attending an after school class is the provision of a distraction free environment in which to study. Almost all of these children live in a home with only one living area, which is shared with the rest of the family. The students pictured below enjoyed another advantage; that several weeks ago the tutor team had arranged an external team to give a presentation on exam techniques and coping with nerves – what a gift for a group of 15yo facing big exams!



10th Standard Class, three weeks before exams and feeling calm.

In Karunguzhi, the Dalit community live literally on the other side of the railway lines that run through the village. The Dalit housing is noticeably smaller and in poorer condition than the houses in the main part of the village.

The notable exception is a tea shop in the main part of the village run by a Dalit woman called Ammu. A widow, Ammu runs the shop to provide for herself and two children, her daughter Nangini is in the final year of an English Literature degree at local Vidyasagar College. What is remarkable about this is that non-Dalits will usually not tolerate a Dalit being involved in the preparation or serving of food. How Ammu managed to start her enterprise is unclear but the business is well patronised by the villagers because she makes good tea. Ammu also makes some of the strongest and best coffee I have tasted in India. Don't go past Karunguzhi without calling in!



Ammu, respected Tea Shop proprietor

The PEAB project consists of a team of dedicated people that are all committed to do whatever they can to give Dalit youth more education opportunities and the vastly increased employment choices that follow a better education. I was delighted to meet them and am grateful for the warm welcome they gave me. The photograph below shows the team after we met on a Sunday morning (their only day off) and shared experiences and also hopes for the future. We also shared food of course, for nothing in India should in the way of the day's main event – lunch!



PEAB Project Team

+ + +

Mahalir Sakthi

Back in Chennai briefly, I had some time to reflect on what I had seen at the PEAB project and also the differences between India today and the mid 1990s, when I spent two years in Goa on an engineering project. The most obvious was the proliferation of mobile phones. Without one in modern India, one is lost – even an auto rickshaw is summoned by them! I am indebted to Semmalar and Jeberaj for lending me a phone when the anticipated co-operation between my Australian mobile and a borrowed Indian SIM card could not be made to work.

The second difference was the increase in obvious wealth of some sectors of the population. For example, it was extremely rare to see imported motor vehicles in the 90s but today they are commonplace. Some things had not changed though; it bemused me to see a very shiny and very loud Lamborghini in Chennai (IPL cricketer perhaps?) being driven through rush hour traffic flanked by auto rickshaws and scooters, all progressing at the same 50kmh. The amount of obvious poor did not seem to have reduced though....

The flight to Madurai from Chennai takes about an hour (warning for travellers through Chennai, the sparkling new domestic terminal has two Gate 3s and also two Gate 4s – almost my undoing) and whilst Madurai is Tamil Nadu's second largest city, it is significantly smaller with a population of about 1 million vs 4.5 million in Chennai. Madurai mainly is an agricultural centre and the land around it produces a large part of Tamil Nadu's food.

Madurai has 208 recognised slum areas and Mahalir Sakthi operates VECs in 10 of them. The students come from slum resident families, typically Dalit, Muslim and Tribal families (all classified as marginalised communities under the caste system). Christian Aid (UK) has supported the VECs for the last two years; this funding is expected to cease shortly.

Mahalir Sakthi also operates tailoring and typing tuition classes, youth life and career guidance programmes, a domestic workers union and an annual summer camp for students. These activities are supported by us.

In addition, SHARE (an Australian health NGO introduced by us) support Mahalir Sakthi initiatives on a series of health lectures for women and youths that are run in conjunction with the above programmes.

As with the PEAB project, the core strength of Mahalir Sakthi is a group of passionate and dedicated people. Two sisters, Guna and Grace, started Mahalir Sakthi in 2006 in a very small way. Grace observed a 10 year old Dalit boy helping his father collecting garbage and later persuaded the boy's parents that the child would be better off by attending school to continue his education. Even though Mahalir Sakthi has since significantly expanded its role and influence, the original theme continues with the communities being combed to identify school dropouts so

that an attempt can be made at persuading a return to school or to take up some vocational training.

After Guna and Grace picked me up at Madurai airport (again a modern new terminal), we went to the Mahalir Sakthi hub, the former family home of the sisters located in Arasaradi slum area. The approximately 30 sqm floor space of this building provides a somewhat cramped venue for one of the VECs, the tailoring and typing classes, health and vocation guidance meetings as well the organisational home for the team. Some of these activities are scheduled at different times but sometimes they happen alongside one another in a good example of how India deals with very limited resources.

One of the things that Mahalir Sakthi has addressed is changing the perception of traditional Dalit drumming. Past custom has seen the drumming only at funerals, so it had an association with death but the MS team has made a point of encouraging the practice of drumming at the start of every festival and pleasant event. Thus the cultural presentations that welcomed me to the centre were preceded by the loud drumming (certainly energised the small space) and were followed by a number of dances and songs, some traditional and some more modern - I was even treated to some Tamil rap music at one point that the children had written themselves to western style recorded music!



Dalit drumming – not just for funerals!

Over the next few days, I was fortunate to see Mahalir Sakthi at work in several areas. For example a new initiative for them is the formation of an organisation for domestic workers to ensure that they are paid an appropriate wage and not exploited by their employers. One of the workers (centre of photo below) came to the centre at the end of her working day. This lady had started at 6.00am, having cleaned three houses and cooked lunch for the third household and was going home at 2.30pm for her own lunch. She was obviously exhausted but still had a warm smile in greeting me. Thanks to Mahalir Sakthi, this woman earned the going rate of Rs 2,000 (A\$36) per month and her work was registered with the government, entitling her to some medical benefits.



Domestic Worker

As part of their reform agenda, Mahalir Sakthi has pledged to refuse to accept or pay wedding dowries. This will be a huge task but some points have been scored already as I met Vijay at the centre, a member of the MS Trust board who is quite a role model for young Dalits. Not only has he achieved a tertiary education, which enabled him to get a paid co-ordinator role at an NGO which is looking after runaway children in three slum areas, he recently refused to accept a dowry in his recent marriage. A move that was widely applauded.



Congratulations Vijay

I was also given a demonstration of (and opportunity to try) flower tying. Used for hair decorations and in garlands for temple offerings, flower tying is a common occupation for Dalit women, who earn Rs 10 (A\$0.18) for tying 1,000 jasmine buds, which is about an hours labour for a competent worker, which does not include your correspondent. Yet another example why education is worth the effort to increase employment options.



Flower tying demonstration

At one of the VEC's I gave the children the opportunity to ask questions of me about any topic they were interested in and, after a slow start, it turned into a lively 30 minute session. Some of the questions asked by these 5 to 15yo were very probing, such as:

- Does Australia have a caste system?
- Do women and children have equal rights in Australia?
- Do children have rights?

- Is there religious discrimination there?
- Is wife beating common in Australia?
- Do many Australians live in huts?
- What is the Australian government doing about Tamil oppression in Sri Lanka?
- Does Australia have after school VECs like Mahalir Sakthi?
- Is there much drug taking and is it tolerated?

The photograph below shows the Mahalir Sakthi team and a very impressive group they are. Not only dedicated to their work, they were very welcoming and inclusive and I was very pleased to meet them. Mahalir Sakthi means “Women’s Power” in Tamil and these ladies live up to their organisation’s name.



Mahalir Sakthi Team

SASY

The third part of my trip was a visit to the Social Awareness Society for Youths (SASY), who are a Dalit Rights organisation with their main office in Tindivanam, about 130 km SW of Chennai. SASY are our partners in co-ordinating both the Tamil Nadu projects. Having Indian Government accreditation for receipt of international funds means that they can be sent support payments from us and distribute those payments in the form of tutor and staff payments and expenses to the PEAB and Mahalir Sakthi projects in an auditable manner. They also arrange the required independent audit.

We are most grateful that SASY offers this financial management service to the projects as it is not part of their usual scope of work. Without SASY in this role, it would be both very difficult and expensive to accomplish our level of support to the projects.

SASY has been operating since 1983 with a mission of protecting and promoting the human rights of Dalits and Adavasis (Tribals, another group marginalised by the caste system). Their core activities are the monitoring of human rights violations against Dalits and Adavasis, legal intervention in those violations and advocacy/lobbying at all levels of Indian government.

Our meeting began with as many of the staff that could be fitted into the meeting room singing a song in Tamil about Dr. Ambedkar, a revered Dalit who drafted the first Indian Constitution at the time of Indian Independence. This was followed by a briefing on SASY activities by the staff and two directors, Ramesh Nathan and Pandiyan. They are a true human rights organisation and we are delighted to be in partnership with them.



SASY Meeting and Briefing

Orphanage for Cambodian Children Organization (OCCO)

Cambodia

Geoff Berry – Project Coordinator

Last year we provided initial support for 12 months to OCCO. On the basis of the outcomes OCCO achieved over this time, we recently approved another 3 years of support, with funding of approximately \$7,000 per year.

Battambang is one of the larger provinces in Cambodia. Like many rural locations within Cambodia, Battambang has many isolated communities that struggle with socio-economic, education and health issues that hinder equitable and inclusive development. The province is served by a number of domestic and international NGOs.

OCCO is one of these small domestic NGOs committed to community development within the Otaki commune. It is located in Prey Dach village approximately 12km from Battambang town. Access to Battambang is from Phnom Penh (6-7 hours bus trip) or Siem Reap (4 hours). Tuk Tuk, moto or taxi can provide transport to the location of OCCO at Prey Dach village in the Otaki Commune.

OCCO was formally established as an NGO in February 2005 and has maintained a successful and growing community development program with very limited resources and support.

Although initially conceived as an orphanage for neglected children within the Prey Dach community, OCCO’s main purpose now is to provide language, social and personal development for disadvantaged children and young people from three villages (Prey Dach, Prey Torteng and Trang) within the Otaki Commune. Increasingly OCCO also supports youth leadership development and family food

security initiatives in response to community needs. As the only NGO located within these communities and working directly on community support, it is important that OCCO extends its influence to address a broader range of community needs, particularly those associated with education and fostering greater educational opportunities.

Initially OCCO operated in a wooden residence which currently serves as the Executive Director's home. A further wooden classroom was later added as the number of students increased. Chey Siphon, the Executive Director, is a long-standing resident of Battambang and is strongly motivated to maintain the NGO, as she has done under difficult circumstances for nine years. She is supported by a number of local young people in senior secondary school or attending university who work as volunteer teachers.

OCCO has a strong educational focus which incorporates the rights of children to receive an adequate education.

It has demonstrated a long term approach to community development. Relationships initiated with village families in 2005 continue to be maintained, and many children and young people have continued their relationship with the Language Development Program until leaving school and beyond through their work as volunteer teachers.

However, it has only been since 2012 that broader networks and relationships have begun to develop. During 2012-2013 the work of OCCO began to be recognised by provincial and national NGO networks as being highly relevant and valuable. This is when it came to our attention, and we decided to provide initial support to establish and develop the relationship. The success of, and community support for, the language development program over a five year period is testimony to the confidence in, and respect for, the organisation held by the community.

As a result, it is currently facing an increasing demand on its resources, including the:

- The current language development program, in order to serve educational needs in the two adjoining villages of Prey Torteng and Trang; and
- other pressing community needs, particularly associated with family socioeconomic, educational and health support for an increasing number of very poor families.

The poverty level is high in a large number of families within the villages that OCCO serves. Lack of income, no employment prospects, no land, health issues, family size and lack of education are some of the contributing factors. This situation leads to school dropout, family dysfunction, a higher risk of health problems and lack of opportunity to break the poverty cycle. The level of need is therefore high across the three villages in question particularly in relation to education, health and socio-economic development. There are increasing demands on OCCO for educational support to compliment school education, to support youth

development and to work with families to alleviate ongoing poverty cycles that lead to loss of land, assets and basic human needs.

Families who own land exist on the rice they can grow if their land can produce enough rice. Some are able to produce a surplus to sell at the market. Most have chickens and a few fruit trees, and a few of them raise pigs. Many parents and young adults supplement their income by working for large landholders in Battambang province and other provinces during the planting and harvesting season, or try and run a small business in the village or Battambang town. An increasing number go to Thailand for extended periods to work in factories or in the construction industry employed as manual labour under dubious working conditions and wage commitments. During this time their children are left with grandparents or older siblings. There are numerous families who have no land and depend on neighbours, relatives or other village sources for food and other life requirements.

The focus of OCCO, therefore, is on community development though its function as a community education support centre. Community issues are at the heart of the work of OCCO with the Executive Director having an in-depth knowledge of, and involvement in, the community and its needs. The basis of OCCO's work is the relationships formed with village leadership, the children and young people in the language program, and with individual families and their unique circumstances. Currently community support exists through OCCO's two key programs – the Language Development Program and the Family Support Program.

Within the Language Development Program emphasis is placed on building the skills and confidence of the children and young people engaged in this program to be better able to communicate in Khmer and English, to develop interpersonal skills, to build confidence in conversational English with those within and external their community, to raise awareness of safe behaviours and strategies for assertive actions, and more recently, to provide opportunities for self-expression through drama and role play activities. Participation in the Language Development Program is open to any child or young person from Prey Dach, Prey Torteng or Trang villages.

Currently approximately 60% of attendees are female and the large majority of volunteer teachers are female. This program has been sustained and extended over the last nine years and has continued to meet this need without predictable funding from either the children and young people in the program, or from interested visitors who have provided one-off financial or resource support. There is no indication that program's capacity to continue will change in the foreseeable future. During the period July-December 2013 the indigo foundation partnership has resulted in:

- maintaining the involvement the volunteer teacher cohort through providing them with a small monthly

allowance. This allowance also contributed to this group's ability to meet their school or university costs.

- the training of the volunteer teacher group through weekly supervision meetings
- a five-week computer training course for 16 young people at Dewey International University.

Parallel to this program is the recently established Family Support Program which currently provides limited funds to 21 of the poorest families in Prey Dach and Trang Villages. Currently this program provides both financial and material support for these families, and also items to support the education of the children of these families – school supplies and clothing when available. The Executive Director and the experienced volunteer teachers work directly with these families to identify needs and prioritize the distribution of support resources, and serve as advocates for further NGO and government support to alleviate their disadvantage. The intent of this program is to involve, to a greater degree, these community members in the identification of community issues affecting them and in finding of ways to meet these challenges. Finding a donor for the Family Support Program is crucial to the program's sustainability. This is particularly important at the initial phase of the program where communication and trust are being developed and participants in the program are coming together to negotiate how the program will emerge. Lack of trust in government systems, for example, formed during the Khmer Rouge period still exist in some sectors of the community and serve as a barrier to collaborative ventures. The majority of participants do not speak any English, so the Executive Director's ability to communicate in both Khmer and English provides the necessary links with other bodies involved in the program.

Also OCCO's capacity to maintain participant confidence and gradually engage participants in accepting higher degrees of program responsibility will be fundamental to the program's success. A recurring issue has been the socio-economic status of many families who are struggling to make a living, particularly over the last three years where adverse weather conditions have significantly affected their capacity to grow sufficient rice, and other produce, for food and for sale of excess at the market. This difficult socio-economic situation has repercussions for other family-related issues including the capacity of parents to support their children's education, general health, and the ability of the family to stay together as a unit. During March this year family support recipients met with the Executive Director to discuss the outcomes so far and the future of the program.

For the period 2011-2014 OCCO has placed greater emphasis on the strategic planning process. It has been difficult, however, the set longer term development goals given the lack a predicable source of funding to implement its programs. The Executive Director's leadership and management capacity is being developed through OCCO's recent membership of the Cooperation Committee for

Cambodia, the NGO Education Partnership, the Battambang Education Support Team, and through assistance from the Village Support Group. This is creating opportunities for further training, organizational learning, visits to other NGOs and exposure to good operational practices. Ultimately the sustainability of the organization is dependent on the ongoing commitment and dedication of the OCCO volunteer staff, and these teachers are taking a greater responsibility for elements of the program and manage it successfully when the Executive Director is absent.

Decisions made regarding the work of OCCO are made by the Executive Director in collaboration with commune and village leaders, villagers with an interest on one or both of the OCCO programs, as well as in collaboration with the OCCO Advisory Committee. In most cases the final decisions about OCCO activities are made by the Executive Director. This responsibility seems to be an expectation held by the community, who see the Executive Director as best qualified to make such decisions, and that decisions will be made in the best interest of children, young people and families. It seems to be accepted that the Executive Director will consult with the appropriate people in relation to the particular circumstances. For example, in discussing the potential of the introduction of student mentoring, parents were invited to a meeting to explain what was meant by mentoring and how the students might benefit for such a process. While the Executive Director has indicated that a greater degree of community participation in strategic or project decision making would be a positive step, the building of such a broader process will need to be approached with care and due consideration to community beliefs, expectations and values.

The management systems at OCCO are simple but effective for the current functions of the organization. The Executive Director has undertaken training in governance and financial management but lacks the on-site support to put the results of this training into practice as much as it should be. However, there is continuous improvement taking place particularly that which occurred during 2013, and this system will develop in maturity. The monitoring role of international and local supporters has encouraged, and will continue to encourage, openness and adherence to process.

However, there is a strong need for further capacity building in relation to curriculum, teaching processes, assessment of learning and English language development. There is also a need for the Executive Director to develop advocacy, strategic planning and operational management skills to lead and manage the emerging demands being placed on OCCO regarding community support programs.

At the level of the organisation as a whole, there is a need for more robust management systems to support the anticipated growth in the services offered over the next three years. Ideally, the organisation will aim to achieve

the voluntary NGO quality standards recently established by the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) which relate to good governance and robust management practices.

Future development projects

Infrastructure for teaching and learning: The need for new approaches to teaching and learning is being recognized by OCCO staff as a result of changes in student learning needs, national initiatives for educational change, input from visitors, training attended and through observations of other learning centres. Change towards more student-centred approaches to education is beginning to emerge in Cambodia, particularly in private education. However, students attending public schools, particularly in isolated areas, do not have the benefit of such opportunities. In these communities the physical learning environments are not conducive to innovation, change or student-centred learning, and require infrastructure that can create learning environments that promote study, group work, technology use, individual learning, individual differences and a wholistic approach to learning / teaching activities. As it stands dependence on rote learning still permeates a lot of the teaching learning process. Within OCCO, even though change is occurring, these difficult conditions exist. Students have not experienced the advantages of a learner friendly environment as many of their counterparts have in more affluent circumstances. Improved infrastructure would be the first step in creating a better learning environment. A multipurpose learning centre that can serve as a library, study centre, computer centre, community training centre, performing arts centre and administrative centre. OCCO is hoping to construct a secure brick building with a tiled floor, adequate ventilation, adequate lighting, appropriate furniture, shelving and large enough to enable at least 20 students to work in groups on a variety of learning activities.

Staff support: The Language Development program provides intensive language development for over 200 children and young people from Prey Dach and Trang villages. This program has operated since the commencement of OCCO as a domestic NGO in 2005. The program both extends students' learning in Khmer and English, as well as providing personal development and counseling support for the most at risk children and young people. Since 2005 this program has existed almost completely as a voluntary service to the community through the work of the Executive Director and her volunteer teachers. It was only in 2013 through the funding provided by indigo foundation that some recognition has been provided to the staff, and that their efforts have been recognized. The support provided by indigo not only covers the time that these volunteers put into the program, but assists them to maintain their schooling or university studies, as well as building self-esteem, confidence and a sense of personal achievement. OCCO intends to continue to provide support for volunteer staff in order to maintain this program.

Computer training: Access to computers and computer training is a major obstacle for the children and young people of the villages of Prey Dach and Trang, as it is for many isolated communities in Cambodia. The public school system does not possess such technology, or teach computer skills. Most students complete their schooling without having the advantage of the use of computers as a learning tool. Funding from the indigo foundation in 2013 enabled 16 young people from Prey Dach and Trang villages, eight of whom were volunteer teachers, to complete a five-week computer training course at Dewey International University in Battambang. For most of these young people, aged between 15-23, it was their first experience in the use of computers. As an introductory program it was highly successful, providing participants with basic skills in the use of WORD, EXCEL and PowerPoint as well as an introduction to the internet. The program was particularly valuable for three of the young people who gained scholarships to study at this university after the completion of the program. OCCO hopes to continue the five-week computer training program in 2014 for up to 16 young people from Prey Dach and Trang villages.

University access: Gaining entry to tertiary education is a difficult process for most Cambodian students. To actually reach, and then successfully complete, Year 12 and the accompanying examination is an achievement in itself, particularly for economically disadvantaged and isolated students. The education system disadvantages students whose families are on the poverty line given that "extra" payments for tuition, and therefore completion of each grade, are standard practice. Systems to ensure equity of access to education based on merit are either poor or non-existent. Consequently many capable students from disadvantaged backgrounds miss the opportunity to enter tertiary studies. Although scholarships for entry into university studies do exist, these are only enough to cater for a minority of disadvantaged students. In 2013 OCCO was able to negotiate entry into Dewey International University for three students who completed Year 12. These students were provided a 75% fee reduction to commence Foundation Year. The remainder of the fees was provided by a donor. These students currently need to manage their own transport costs and any additional costs associated with university attendance like text books and participation in university activities. All three students are doing well in their studies and also remain committed to serving as Volunteer Teachers at OCCO, so the benefits are flowing back to the community. In 2014 and beyond OCCO hopes to continue to support students competing Year 12 to attend university.

We are very much looking forward to working with OCCO, a wonderful grassroots organisation that achieves so much with very little.

Grabbing the opportunity to visit OCCO...

Lucinda Wilson – Board member

In March I had the privilege of visiting OCCO, the project indigo foundation supports in Cambodia. Mine was an impromptu visit, the full monitoring and evaluating trip will be conducted by Board Rep for this project, Cressida Hall.

I visited OCCO with project co-ordinator Geoff Berry who was, obviously, in country at the time. He organised for the Director of OCCO to meet us in the nearest town, Battambang.

I was driven by Bunthorn Tha, an ambitious Cambodian man who doubled as my interpreter, and cultural advisor for the trip. Here we are at a café in Battambang after driving over 4 hours on bumpy rough roads from Siem Reap.

Despite growing up in Battambang, Bunthorn had not heard of Prey Dach where the OCCO project operates. It is a very small village, in dusty dry country.



Our visit was toward the end of the dry season so there was no water and very, very, very hot. Here you can see the primary aged kids walking home after school for the day, at the hottest time of the day.

The local people are poor. Very poor. Some families have upward of 10 children, and some cannot care for them all. Here is the underneath of one of the local families' homes. When we visited we met 6 of the children who live here, some of whom attend OCCO.



A bit of background to OCCO. The Director Sipho initially established the Orphanage for Cambodian Children Organization to care for local children whose parents could not care for them, or who had no parents. She initially took 32 children, 16 boys and 16 girls, into her care. However soon she realized it was not feasible to single-handedly care for 32 young children, especially in the same house in a culture where, traditionally, children of opposite sex (other than siblings) do not sleep in the same room. So Sipho decided she needed to find another way to support the needy children in Pray Dech. She therefore turned OCCO into a learning centre to encourage children to continue their studies well into high school, hopefully to the final year. In addition she would teach English to drastically improve the children's job prospects. Finally, she has recently financially supported graduating students to attend university. This is a huge achievement for the three current tertiary students supported by OCCO. Without OCCO, these students would certainly not have attended university, and would most likely have been sent across the boarder to Thailand to work (illegally) in rice fields or as domestic aids, when 12 or 13, to send the money home to their families. It goes without saying, these young workers are in precarious positions across the boarder. Less obvious is that their future employment prospects remain at the level of unskilled labourer, leaving them in a cycle of poverty that OCCO is seeking to avoid for their students.



Despite the fact that over 100 local children, from 5 to 15 years old, study English and some Khmer, at OCCO, Sipho and Geoff believe the main benefactors of OCCO's work are the volunteer teachers. These young men and women were the exceptional OCCO students. Having excelled in their own studies, Sipho offers them the opportunity to teach the younger years. There are currently 12 such volunteer teachers, ranging in age from 11 to mid 20's (one of the supported university students).

Geoff and Sipho have witnessed the increased confidence and skills these teachers have developed from their roles. Much of the funds provided by indigo foundation to OCCO funds the volunteer teachers; a contribution to their travel costs, training, etc.

After school, the younger children started rolling into OCCO. It was clear they felt comfortable and happy in OCCO's (very basic) grounds. They played hide and seek

and tip and other games while waiting for the classes to commence. By the time we left OCCO, shortly before the classes started, there were dozens of children eagerly awaiting their lessons. Their humour, spirit and drive were infectious. I LOVED visiting and meeting the founder and director of this worthwhile project, Sipho, who lives in OCCO's office, far away from her own sons (now married with children of their own).



The classrooms are also very basic and for me, way too hot. Until recently they were all open to the elements. Now three of them have walls. Personally I would prefer the open classroom!



The large pots you see in the photos are water jugs that contain water from the wet season (roughly May to Oct).

Before I came to Cambodia I did not appreciate the benefit that speaking English brings in this country. As my driver /interpreter/ guide explained to me, without English, a Cambodian's job opportunities are limited to physical work. One cannot get a job in a school, university, business, hotel, tourist venture, basically anything that

could hope to bring them enough income to ensure they are not gripped by poverty.

The most common thing to do for families in this area, is to send their children to work across the boarder in Thailand, so that they can send money back to the family. Education has not been a priority, for a number of reasons. Firstly, the parents have not been educated themselves so generally do not appreciate what benefits it can bring. Secondly, the parents cannot afford to have all their children in school and not in the workforce. Thirdly, the parents cannot afford to support their children to attend tertiary education so they have considered finishing high school pointless.

Therefore OCCO has been working with the families of the students to get them behind education. They recently held a meeting which dozens of parents attended, to explain the benefits of keeping their children in school rather than having them enter the workforce. In addition, now that OCCO can support talented children to attend university, there is an incentive to have their children finish high school and go well in their studies.



This is my favourite photo. Upon arriving at OCCO three young students ran to the smallest (and stuffiest) classroom and threw their bags on the table to 'bags' their spots for the coming class. I loved the enthusiasm encapsulated in this picture.

In a country capable of the most wonderful and spectacular achievements and the most horrific crimes against humanity I have no doubt that OCCO is improving the future of dozens of children, which in turn will improve the lives of hundreds of Cambodians, who have already endured so much.

A Day in Budaka

Professor Ellen Percy Kraly
Colgate University, New York, USA

February of this year brought me to Uganda to conduct monitoring research Bwindi Community Hospital in far southwest corner of the country. Friends at Indigo Foundation thought my presence in the region offered an opportunity for a new vantage on the several projects serving vulnerable children in Budaka near Mbale and the Mt. Elgon region in eastern Uganda. Six community-based-organizations (CBOs) in and around Budaka have been supported by Indigo Foundation for projects which focus first on children, all poor, many orphaned, many HIV-positive and many disabled, by providing educational supplies (books, writing instruments and uniforms) and

counseling, and second, on schemes for production and income generation to promote sustainable communities.

My visit was most efficiently facilitated by Joy Katooka, Indigo's Liason Officer for the projects. Spinning some organizational magic, Joy managed to arrange meetings with each of the six CBOs during the one day available for our tour of community. The extreme heat and aridity, heading towards drought and a hungry season, contrasted with the cool, rainy climate of the mountains from which I had just come. Joy's positive, and productive resourcefulness, however, kept energies high. There was much to absorb during the course of that informative day.

Each CBO meeting engaged large numbers of people from the nearby community. Hundreds of people convened including community leaders, elders, parents and children. Formal remarks were shared and children and youth sang and danced. At Iki-Iki AIDS Community Initiative (IACA) teenage youth (two boys and two girls) read poems they had written concerning vigilance about HIV transmission. Wearing the attire provided with the support of Indigo, the theatre troupe of Gallimagi performed an intricate choral and dance production. As much as I admired the singing and dancing of the troupe, I was even more inspired in observing the admiration of the community for the talents, preparation and pride of their youth.

Each organization had a unique character reflected in the choice of projects being pursued. As school books, pens and pencils were distributed among the children of Munaku Kaama, the pride and engagement of parents was clearly evident; order and discipline seemed to be an operating principle (photo, below).



At Trinity, I was deeply moved by the senior women, former teachers, leading the program: their compassion, affection and commitment to individual children was personal, apparent and loving. The people of Kakule AIDS and Grieved Families Association (KAGA) brought joy and much energy to their very large gathering; the leaders of Gaalimagi expressed vision and focus in their presentations of their projects and also demonstrated their coordination with head master of the school in the community. The gathering of NACOMAS suggested to me the potential of youth to emerge as leaders within the CBO and the community; the gathering of Iki-Iki AIDS

Community Initiative (IACI) was impressive in the demands among senior women for both high aspirations as well as achievement among the children of the community.

The programs and assets of each organization are indeed unique, but it is also my sense there is good potential for collaboration among the CBOs in Budaka. There may be effective opportunities to share trainings regarding strategic planning and evaluation of programs, and down the road, perhaps pooling of some administrative activities and responsibilities.

To illustrate, there was common recognition of the increasing numbers of children in need of support and services in the communities of Budaka, particularly numbers of HIV orphans and HIV positive children. The secretary of the Gaalimagi CBO articulated a prioritized set of challenges and solutions for the community, a plan which seemed to me to have been carefully developed among the organization's leadership. The secretary's statement identified the importance of increased funding for services and expansion of income generation projects, continuation of training for the provision of counseling and more contact with the leadership of Indigo Foundation. Similar ideas were expressed by leaders of the other CBOs, but more implicitly and with less formality. This set of objectives for the future could serve as a basis for collaborative planning among the CBOs and the establishment among the organizations of priorities for requesting external funding more generally.

Persistent increase in numbers of vulnerable children was also articulated among the CBOs as a challenge to maintaining their programs and making progress for children the community. The organizations could work together during a dedicated period of time to implement a simple research design to generate some measures of growth in the population at risk. The metrics produced could be used both for planning as well as for communicating need in the region to government officials at the national and district levels, as well as to nongovernmental organizations.

Each of the CBOs take pride in the various projects promoting community sustainability and income



generation. The members of Munaku Kaama organization have developed an organized system for the distribution of goats; the knitting and jewelry production of members of the Trinity organization has emerged as a presence in the village economy of Budaka (Photo 2).

The Chairperson of the Gaalimagi organization was most disappointed that I was not able to observe their oxen project, the outcomes of which he clearly was most proud. The chair rental enterprise of Iki-Iki (IACO) was truly impressive – innovative, and ‘owned’ by the community as represented in photo below (Photo 3).



There was productive energy circulating around these projects among the leadership of the CBOs. With further encouragement for collaboration among the CBOs there is good potential for synergy among the projects to emerge. Management of resources, inputs, costs and profits, could be shared. Perhaps a CBO ‘enterprise zone’ might be formed in Budaka, emerging from a shared vision for serving vulnerable children through productive activities which are educational, social and economic.

Each of the organizations received me as a representative of Indigo Foundation. I did my best to communicate greetings and appreciation from Indigo in a manner consistent with the mission and values of the foundation. My comments expressed Indigo’s commitment to learning and listening, responsiveness to community needs, respect for self determination, and commitment to supporting the initiative, creativity and leadership of youth in Budaka.

I thank Indigo Foundation for allowing me this opportunity to meet the people of Budaka and gain some initial insight to the work of these dedicated community organizations. The CBOs understand the challenges before them as they seek to provide a better future for the at risk and vulnerable children in their communities. The leadership of these organizations also have insight into effective strategies to meet those challenges. Support for coordination and collaboration among this energetic collective of CBOs would seem to be a good investment to benefit children in need in Budaka.

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Women’s Empowerment Centre

Kabul, Afghanistan

Deborah Raphael – Project Coordinator

The Women’s Empowerment Centre (WEC) at Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education (GIHE) is blooming thanks to indigo foundation support.

‘indigo foundation has played a significant role in the development of the Women’s Empowerment Centre at GIHE. The foundation was the first organisation to offer technical and financial support to the WEC when we were a very young department within the structure of GIHE. The Centre is now implementing many projects with support from other organisations as well and we are blooming as we enter our third year of establishment. We would like to note with great pleasure that we owe this success to the indigo foundation’s leadership and management team. We are especially appreciative of the timely support that was extended to us and the confidence you placed in us from the beginning. We hope that this fruitful partnership will continue in the future.’

Letter from GIHE signed by Nasima Rahami, Director of WEC
received February 2014.

We are proud of our association with the staff and students at GIHE and congratulate them on their considerable achievements since a modest beginning with 120 students in 2010. GIHE is about to commence its 8th semester in April 2014 with more than 1600 students providing a stronger and more positive financial base for its long term sustainability and that of WEC.

The capacity and profile of the WEC has continued to grow during 2013 with the establishment of new international linkages, a busy work program and the expansion of the scholarship program. WEC’s director Nasima Rahmani’s extraordinary determination in a very difficult working environment continues to drive its agenda. Nasima has used her well established networks of local and international experts judiciously to provide input into WEC’s activities and development as there is little spare funding to buy in expertise.

The tuition fees of over 140 female students are now funded through the scholarship program administered by WEC. Major donors apart from indigo foundation are Culture of Resistance Foundation, Canadian Federation of University Women and Linda Norgrove Foundation. Most importantly with a memorandum of understanding for cooperation with University of Technology Sydney signed in June 2013 GIHE/WEC looks forward to substantial benefits improving the quality of its educational output.

2013 was a successful year for students. The examination results and retention rates have been impressive. Students have participated in English and computer classes and many have undertaken the Gender Studies Program which offers introductory

courses on gender and women's issues. Others have been active in youth and cultural associations, undertaken volunteer work and participated in the GIHE internship program to gain work experience. A female football team has been formed. One high achieving student Razia Sofizada (law) was nominated for the Linda Norgrove Prize for excellence amongst female students. Three scholarship holders are expected to graduate in law in 2nd semester 2014.

However, the tuition scholarship program and other WEC activities can focus on only part of the access issues these girls face. As another student wrote recently "A girl faces too many problems in college life in Afghanistan. Her relatives and her people don't want her to have a higher education: they tease her in different ways to make her stop studying; there is a lack of up to date textbooks and few affordable TOEFL courses to obtain English qualifications. But security problems is the biggest concern of each Afghan girl."

It is clear that WEC's work in fostering opportunities for women to pursue higher education is of vital importance in a country with a long history of female exclusion from the sector particularly at a time of economic and political transition. Education boosts women's participation in the labour force, an outcome greatly needed in Afghanistan. The next challenge for these girls will be to find a place in that workforce in a country where traditional beliefs about a woman's role still prevail and where there is a highly competitive job market, difficult economic conditions and a worsening security situation.

We extended our current commitment to GIHE until October 2015. Funding supports the tuition scholarship program and various WEC activities including gender and women's studies, English and computer classes, development of resource materials and administrative support.

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Celebrate autumn with amazingly good value wine!

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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Staying in touch with what we do.....

We are guided by the principles of community ownership, transparency and innovative work. We work with the community, listen to their needs and engage community members to develop our programs.

We would like to keep you up to date with our programs, and we are keen to hear your feedback and suggestions. To talk to us and to find out about all our latest news, views, interviews and project updates:



and



indigo foundation think piece

Libraries in Namibia and the Otjiwarongo Youth Centre

Diane Fraser

indigo foundation aims to ensure we informed about the latest outcomes in research. With this in mind and a new project starting in Namibia, we asked our internship student from the University of Wollongong, Diane Fraser, to complete a report on key ideas about constructing and using libraries. We were really pleased with her report and here is an extract of some of her key findings.

Problems faced by Libraries in Africa

Libraries in Africa face many problems. These include the high US dollar which affects the purchasing of equipment and materials for libraries, the heavy reliance on books from developed countries, lack of locally published books, multiple languages in use by the local community, copyright restrictions, and educational systems which do not promote individual research. The libraries in Africa also suffer from a poor quality of information services, lack of facilities, poor management and out-dated and unsuitable resource materials. A survey conducted last year on users of libraries in six African countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Uganda) found that 58% of respondents noted their dissatisfaction in their local library was due to a poor range of books, while a further 48% said they did not like the books on offer.¹ Other reasons for their dissatisfaction listed were: lack of computers, short length of

¹ Monika Elbert, David Fuegi, and Ugne Lipeikaite, 'Public Libraries in Africa', p. 158

borrowing times, poor disabled access, the unhelpfulness of staff, not enough seats and not enough activities/courses on offer.

As a result of their colonial history, library systems in Africa have been based on the Anglo-American model and have not been adapted to local situations. According to Mostert, this library model is completely inappropriate and is the result of expatriate librarians, who are only trained in serving well-educated urban clients, being sent to run these libraries.² The colonial past of Africa is also reflected in the languages that most of the books are published in – English and French –for most African people these are not their first language and therefore they are not literate in them. This is further complicated by the fact that over 1200 languages are spoken in Africa but only 600 have written texts.

Another legacy of the colonial past is the book industry in Africa. Most books that are published are from the local agencies of international publishing companies which leave little room in the industry for local publishers to compete.³ Local publishers who would provide suitable resources in most cases do not have the funds required to publish on a scale large enough to support local libraries and schools.⁴ The cost of paper is high and needs to be paid in advance. This is partly why donors and development organisations source their resources from developed countries where they can buy them cheaper and they are more available. If more development organisations support and partly fund local publishers this problem may be overcome.

The globalisation of information has led to increased problems for libraries in Africa by having a multitude of resources from developed countries, which are less relevant to their communities and hardly any indigenous or locally published resources.⁵ Full library shelves are usually stocked with inappropriate books from developed nations that seldom reflect the African viewpoint or provide bibliographic information.⁶ When unsuitable resources are given to libraries in developing countries, staff operating the library are unlikely to weed out this inappropriate material for fear of offending the donors and the development organisations who donated these resources and out of fear of donations being stopped.⁷ The continuing reliance on the donations from developed countries has led to a decline in the local publishing industry and

could lead to a loss of indigenous culture.⁸ These inappropriate resources consequently lead to the libraries being seldom used by the community. The opposite also happens in libraries; many library shelves in Africa are bare due to the lack of books available to the library due to cost. This is evident in the amount of children's books that are available in African libraries. The cost of buying children's books including locally published texts is too expensive for most libraries to acquire.

Common mistakes made by development organisations

A common mistake made by development organisations is the lack of consultation with those who will be using the library. This can result in services and resources which are unsuitable and inappropriate for the information needs of the community. It is essential to facilitate communication between indigo foundation and the Orwetoveni youth so as to address the needs of the community in the planning of the youth centre. Another common mistake involves the resources donated by donors. Many times libraries and publishing companies in developed countries have donated surplus materials which are completely unsuitable for the intended recipients in Africa. These donors and development organisations have not taken into account the suitability of the language or the context of the material that they are donating to their recipient countries and not consulting with the representatives of their intended generosity as to what resources they would like. This leads to the resources not being used by the recipients. In some cases, donors and development organisations have known of the unsuitability of the resources that they are donating yet do so anyway because they believe that any books are better than none but the opposite is actually the case as full library shelves filled with unsuitable resources discourages community use of libraries.⁹ This spoils the objectives of the donor, the development organisation and the community in creating a community library.

Recommendations

The information given to the youth centre in Orwetoveni must be applicable to their needs and relatable to their daily life covering health, nutrition, careers and occupations, sanitation, education, legal issues, technology, sport, science and culture. Some recommendations for the acquisition of library materials are:

- Buy locally published books in indigenous languages thereby supporting local publishers and providing suitable resources for the library.
- Approach local organisations for donations.

² B.J. Mostert, 'African Public Library Systems: A Literature Survey'

³ Ibid.

⁴ A. Curry, T. Thiessen and L. Kelley, 'Library Aid to Developing Countries in Times of Globalisation: A Literature Review', http://www.worlib.org/vol12no2/curry_v12n2.shtml, [date of visit, 10 October 2013]

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ B.J. Mostert, 'African Public Library Systems'.

⁷ A. Curry, T. Thiessen and L. Kelley, 'Library Aid to Developing Countries in Times of Globalisation'.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid.

- Investigate a cooperative library sharing scheme with other libraries.
- Investigate using the African Digital Library which is a collection of e-books that are available to any resident in Africa free of charge.¹⁰
- Investigate contacting the Room to Read Organisation which has been successful in establishing libraries in schools in developing countries.¹¹

African culture is mostly based on oral information therefore the use of audiotape, video, film and other media should be used to record stories and cultural history rather than print materials to access information which is more a Western tradition.¹² Since most of the Orwetoveni community will most likely have some difficulties with literacy, it would be worthwhile providing a variety of formats for both the literate and the semi-literate. The result will be a less formal, less book-orientated information services and more resembling African indigenous information systems. This will provide suitable and appropriate information to the community.

Other recommendations:

- Regular visits to the youth centre library by a local professional librarian.
- Youth should be able and encouraged to take books home, as this fosters a love of reading and a feeling of trust between those running the youth centre and the youth.
- The library can help preserve local history and culture by recording interviews with local people, record stories, festivals, holidays, ceremonies, music, dances, and other important cultural events.
- To spread knowledge of events occurring throughout the community and Namibia, display boards could be set up and display artwork, photos, brochures, pamphlets, and sport results.
- Investigate the affordability and appropriateness of having computers for the youth to use. There are many problems that are associated with computers such as sensitivity to dust, heat, and humidity. They can also break easily, are expensive to repair, and need a reliable electricity source. Most libraries in developing countries (and most probably this youth centre) use second-hand machines which are hard to have repaired and are more likely to break sooner than modern computers. Software is also a problem

as it can be expensive. Although there are quite a number of problems associated with using computers at the youth centre library at Otjiwarongo, there would be a great deal of benefit to the community if the youth had access to computers. Computer literacy classes could be taught and internet educational databases could be accessed.

Recommendations on how to engage the youth in using the youth centre library:

- Reading or telling stories to the youth on regular days or times are a great way of engaging them in using the library whilst accommodating for differing literacy levels.
- To foster reading and writing for pleasure, competitions for the best essay, story, illustration, book report, or most books read may help and also engage the youth in using the library.
- The library could also hold discussion groups, television and radio broadcasts, and information on job opportunities, training programs, universities, and distance learning. Other ideas are book clubs, literacy classes, educational games and quiz shows, poetry or song recitals, puppet shows, drama, music and dance performances.

our people

Jemma Bailey – General Manager



I started as General Manager at indigo foundation in late January and what a fantastic, hectic and inspiring two months it has been! Thank you to those supporters, volunteers and board members who have welcomed me to the organisation.

I have long been passionate about global justice and community development. A winding path led me from my economics and law degree to Mallesons Law Firm to the community legal sector, including working at the National Childrens' and Youth Law Centre and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. After internships overseas with Oxfam in Peru and CARE in Burma, I took on the role of Coordinator of the Australian Fair Trade & Network (AFTINET) and later sat on the board and was Chair of AID/WATCH. Most recently, I was the senior strategy and communications advisor to Greens Senator Lee Rhiannon, with particular responsibility for the aid and development portfolio.

I feel like I have spent a lot of time looking critically at where aid money goes and what makes (and does not make) best practice aid. It is a real privilege to now work for an organisation that 'walks the talk' – an organisation that builds respectful relationships with communities, that

¹⁰ Joseph M. Kavulya, 'Digital Libraries and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A review of Challenges and Strategies', *The Electronic Library*, Vol. 25 No. 3, 2007, p. 307

¹¹ Sara Bernard, 'Room to Read: Building Libraries, Schools, and Computer Labs in Developing Countries', *Edutopia*, 1 November 2008, <http://www.edutopia.org/global-education-libraries-developing-countries>, [date of visit, 10 October 2013]

¹² Ann Curry, Tanya Thiessen, and Lorraine Kelley, 'Library Aid to Developing Countries in Times of Globalisation'

provides sustainable and community-driven assistance and that produces impressive project results.

I am very excited to join the indigo foundation community!

When I step out of the indigo foundation 'virtual' office, you can find me wrangling three small children through the streets of Coogee and growing garlic on a farm that we share with friends near the Barrington Tops.

I am keen to get to know the supporters and friends of indigo foundation so please contact me if you have any questions or suggestions or just to say hello on jemma.bailey@indigofoundation.org or 0401 666 434.

Thank you!

Board update

Sally Stevenson – *Chairperson*

With very positive visits to India by John Bolger, Cambodia by Lucinda Wilson and Geoff Berry and Uganda by Ellen Kraly we started off this, our 13th year, very well indeed. And, with new General Manager **Jemma Bailey** on board we are all feeling optimistic about 2014. We are thrilled to have **Jemma**, as she brings great experience and depth within the NGO and social justice sector, including as Chair of Aid Watch. She also has a great deal of experience and many skills in communications, which we need (and intend to maximise) Welcome Jemma!

I'd also like to warmly welcome two new Project Managers to indigo foundation. We are very happy that **Tracey Peters** and **Carroll Graham** have joined us to manage, respectively, the Namibia project and a new partnership in Solomon Islands. Tracey brings a passion and commitment to the project second to none. She and our Development Coordinator Libby House will be travelling to Namibia in July, and we eagerly anticipate signing a commitment agreement with the community as a result of this visit. Carroll is travelling to the Solomon Island with Board member Rob Mitchell in April to develop a project on leadership for young women with the Solomon Islands Girls Guides. Carroll with her long involvement in the Girls Guides movement, and her sector experience will bring the necessary insight, understanding and relationship depth to the role. Also, joining us is **Hadi Zaher** on the project team for Namibia and as our social media expert, managing our twitter account. Hadi comes with a strong belief in social justice and has established and managed his own organisation that provides development support. We are very much looking forward to work with you!

In February we held our annual 'get together' and this year a large amount of time was spent on training for child protection. Over the last six months the Board has renewed its commitment to making indigo foundation a child safe organisation, and one component of this is that any indigo foundation representative visiting a community organisation working with children must undergo child

protection training. This includes what is and isn't appropriate behaviour, how to identify it in others and how to respond. The training, given by Childwise, generated a number of interesting and challenging discussions about how to manage these risks within the cross cultural context that we work. We are also implementing a continuous improvement process for our child protection policies and procedures and are currently reviewing and refreshing these.

In addition to this, we are undertaking an operational review with a focus on communication and volunteer management and support. We are most appreciative of **Gwyneth Graham**, who is doing this for us, using her expertise and long and successful history managing people in the private sector, often in cross cultural contexts. Having grown fairly substantially over the last few years, and with very limited resources, the review will assist us in improving areas of critical importance to both our operations and our volunteer and virtual organisational model.

In April we are holding our three year strategic planning workshop, facilitated by Gwyneth. I look forward to reporting on the possible new directions that discussions may generate during the day.

And finally thank *you* for supporting us. Once again we will keep you updated on our activities throughout the year: the operational review, the strategic plan and visits to Namibia, the Solomon Islands and Rote all in the next newsletter!

Successful events!

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:

- ⇒ **Peter and Helen Reilly**, who hosted our inaugural **Adelaide gathering** for our wonderful network of Afghanistan project supporters. And to **Sarah Kelly** for organising the lovely afternoon tea, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all!
- ⇒ **Ali Reza Yunespoor, Cynthia Grant** and **Talal Al-Amein**, (owner of, Sahra By the River Restaurant at Parramatta) for a hosting a wonderful lunch which raised awareness and funds for our Borjagai project.
- ⇒ **Lucinda Wilson** for organising a great introductory get together for staff at the DPP Office in Campbelltown to introduce them to our work.
- ⇒ **Rowena Ivers** for holding (yet another!) Fabulous Fundraising Clothes Swap at her home in Wombarra. Rowena's band Misty Hill played some great funky music, and we traded no-longer-loved clothes for new stylish ones, all in a good cause!

Come along to some wonderful upcoming events!!

⇒ **Flamenco and Fire!**

A fiery flamenco fundraising evening is on in Wollongong on 2 May! With April Kelly and her wonderful band and dance troupe performing flamenco dance for us, and Michele Kenworthy singing some great jazz throughout the night, it promises to be an excellent night! If you are from the Gong – do come along! Book at:

<http://www.trybooking.com/Booking/BookingEventSummary.aspx?eid=78427>



⇒ **A MAMILs event!**

On 7 May 2014 half a dozen (middle aged men in lycra) are riding 1,000 kilometres from Canberra to Melbourne - from Lake Burley Griffin to Port Philip Bay to support a leadership program to for young women in the Solomon Islands we are developing with the **Solomon Islands Girl Guide Association**, the Canberra based BillBerry Blue Stocking Fund, Foundation for Effective Markets and Governance (FEMAG) and the Australian National University's (ANU) Regulatory Institutions Network (RegNet). The ride will be launched by Virginia Haussegger and for more details on how you can support the riders go to www.billberryride.com

Good cycling gentlemen!

⇒ Our annual **Canberra dinner** is coming soon! **Hold the date! Saturday, 21st June**

With a focus on our Africa projects this year, and with the generous support of the National Press Club and (again!) Virginia Haussegger as MC, the night will no doubt prove to be another fun filled fantastic evening!

Would you like to receive this newsletter as an email? Please let us know at info@indigofoundation.org



Geoff Berry, Cambodia Project Manager and Lucinda Wilson, Board member with children supported by OCCO.

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