A new project in Afghanistan!

Deborah Raphael – Project Manager

‘From little things big things grow’ wrote Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody and that’s what has happened recently at indigo foundation, where we have entered into a new partnership with the recently established Women’s Empowerment Centre at Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education in Kabul. The partnership builds on our long term commitment to the improvement of women’s education empowerment in Afghanistan.

In 2003 we started a partnership with Borjegai Village in the mountainous Hazarajat province to build educational opportunities for the village’s children. There are now nine schools in Borjegai (including a 750 student girls’ high school) and increased community understanding of the value of girls’ education to the extent that many families are encouraging girls to pursue tertiary studies. But here the story always begins with access and most young women in Afghanistan still need to surmount huge financial and cultural barriers to access quality higher education.

Our decision to provide financial and technical support to assist the development of the Women’s Empowerment Centre is based on its own goal of community development, their focus on key development areas of human rights and education and our shared commitment to improve education for women in Afghanistan. The Centre has a specific mandate to support the Institute’s female students and promote women’s access to higher education. Our three year commitment will provide up to AU$10,000 per year and will include additional technical support to build the capacity of the Centre.

Gawharshad Institute is a non-profit coeducational tertiary institute established in 2010, with funding from the Norwegian Government, to provide affordable quality education in law, political science, economics and management; disciplines that are essential to building a modern governance infrastructure in Afghanistan. The Institute was founded by Dr Sima Samar, the well-known human rights activist, Nobel Prize nominee and current head of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. The Director and driving force of the Women’s Empowerment Centre is Nasima Rahmani. Nasima is well known to many of us at indigo foundation as a former UN Women Australia IDP Peace Scholar and women’s rights activist.

Nasima Rahmani (bottom, third from right), Director of the Women’s Empowerment Centre with the first students to receive indigo foundation supported scholarships.
Nasima own story highlights the difficulties young women have faced in obtaining a tertiary education in Afghanistan. She graduated from the Faculty of Law and Political Science in Kabul University in 2003, twelve years after her first admission to the Faculty. She completed her first year of study in 1991 but following the establishment of an Islamic state in Afghanistan in 1992 the university closed until 1995 when reopened by the Taliban. Nasima’s attempt to continue her education was short lived as the Taliban required women to stay behind closed doors, meaning Nasima was unable to attend lectures. After the Taliban fell in 2002 women could once again enrol at university but despite some impressive strides in women’s education since then many long standing obstacles remain for young women seeking a university education.

Gawharshad Institute strongly believes that by implementing positive gender discrimination policies it can make a significant contribution to the empowerment of Afghan women in the social, economic and political spheres. It therefore has a specific mission to foster and encourage young Afghan women into tertiary education. To do this does this, it prioritises opportunities for female applicants and has established the Women's Empowerment Centre.

With many female students facing significant financial and cultural barriers in pursuing higher education, the priority of the Centre is to establish a scholarship program to cover the tuition fees of the many financially disadvantaged female students wishing to enter the Institute. For this reason, the majority of our financial support will initially be directed towards this scholarship program and other activities that directly support female students. Although the scholarship program only focuses on part of the access issue. We envisage that over time and when combined with other forms of support from the Centre, such as counselling, mentoring and tutoring, this will give some young women the opportunity to complete a university degree. At the same time, we are also exploring other ways we can provide technical support to assist the Centre build its capacity and sustainability as a leading centre on women’s issues in a very difficult environment.

Thanks to the efforts of Libby Lloyd and Rosalind Strong, both past presidents of UN Women in Australia (formerly UNIFEM) we already have a group of keen supporters for this very important project. The first tranche of AU$6,000 has been sent and ten young Afghani women have been able to start their tertiary studies at the Institute. Many come from sole parent families or from families where boys’ education is prioritised.

We look forward to building a long and rewarding relationship with Nasima, her colleagues and the students at the Institute - and sharing news of their achievements with indigo foundation supporters.

Partner: Women’s Empowerment Centre, Gawharshad Institute, Kabul
indigo foundation Project Manager: Deborah Raphael
Australian Coordinating committee: Libby Lloyd and Ros Strong

Kindergartens and Festivals:
across the community development spectrum
Rote, Indonesia

Libby House – Project Manager

Early Childhood Education – a priority in Rote

Our partner organisation in Rote, Lua Lemba Community and Education Foundation helped establish the first kindergarten in Delha in 2004 and has always been a strong supporter of early childhood education, well ahead of Government priorities.

The Government is catching up however, and the number of kindergartens in Lua Lemba’s target area has expanded from two to eleven since 2008, with the introduction of community funding programs aimed at assisting Indonesia to achieve its Millennium Development Goals. This expansion coincides with Lua Lemba’s identifying the need for a quality improvement project for kindergarten education in West Rote.

Despiet some exceptions, most kindergartens are well housed but all are poorly resourced, with at least one teacher in each kindergarten being paid only ‘soap money’ of AU$5 per month. None of the kindergartens have running water and one, with a student population of around fifty children, had no toilet.

This year indigo foundation and Lua Lemba were able to meet the community’s request for a kindergarten assistance program thanks to funding from the Illawarra Children’s Services and volunteer trainer Jenny Hopkins. Jenny is the Secretary of Illawarra Children’s Services and Head Teacher, Early Childhood at Illawarra TAFE.

The initial three week pilot was planned for four kindergartens but in early discussions prior to Jenny’s arrival Lua Lemba decided to try to include all the kindergartens in some way, in order for the program to be equitable. This was challenging as three were on an offshore island some two hours away by fishing boat and others were in remote villages inaccessible by public transport. It also meant program design ‘on the run’ for Jenny and Lua Lemba Administrator Merci Kili (who worked as the interpreter); both women worked extraordinarily hard to create a positive and fun learning environment despite the challenges of language and cultural difference. By the end of the program all the kindergartens had benefited from Jenny’s talent as a trainer, we still had our original

Ma Lori and students at Tuaneo Kindergarten

Partner: Women’s Empowerment Centre, Gawharshad Institute, Kabul
indigo foundation Project Manager: Deborah Raphael
Australian Coordinating committee: Libby Lloyd and Ros Strong
complement of teachers, and many were staying after the day’s work was finished to chat and work on.

The program was significant for several reasons.

For Lua Lemba, it represented their first formal project reaching every population centre across West Rote/N’dao. This was a primary goal for the organisation at its establishment. It is the first project since the establishment of the senior high school that required Lua Lemab to successfully lobby the Government for its co-operation and support. It also demonstrated their ability to affect immediate outcomes for the community. For example, the new kindergarten building in Delha had sat for years waiting for someone important to visit and open it while classroom activities for fifty children were held in the dirty, tiny, leaking building next door. The new building was opened in time for Jenny’s visit. In addition, one kindergarten teacher had her honorarium raised from AU$5 per month to AU$30 per month at the end of the program. Finally, as the program was popular across the community, many Lua Lemba members reported positive feedback and renewed interest in Lua Lemba’s work.

For the kindergartens, the program raised their profile in the community and with the government in a very positive way. Participants learned new skills that they could take back to their villages and gained confidence through validation of the work they were doing. It provided the dedicated teachers with acknowledgment of the quality and importance of their work. Importantly, it also provided a venue for all kindergarten teachers and the trainer to come together to learn, lessen their isolation and share their experiences.

For the community, it crossed religious, geographic and social boundaries by including the kindergarten run by the mosque on N’dao Island and including kindergartens from outside the Delha district. It also provided a positive example of working collaboratively, equitably and transparently.

Evaluation reports from participants are unanimous in wanting the program with Jenny to be extended for at least the next two years. Lua Lemba and the West Rote Education Department are also strongly supportive of continuing the program. As are we! And so, over the next six months we’ll be working towards making that happen.

Oh, and regarding the kindergarten with no toilet - with the very generous (and immediate) support garnered by Jenny and her husband Keith from the teachers and some students of St Mary’s Star of the Sea College in Wollongong. The toilet was completed ready for use at the end of September.

The class of 2011! The kindergarten teacher group in the Lua Lemba office training area after receiving their completion certificates from Pak Ande Ambeneno, Lua Lemba co-treasurer.

The Delha Cultural Festival Expands

Following on the success of last year’s Festival, the anticipation factor for the Delha Cultural Festival this year was palpable. Riders from up to 50 kilometres sent messages of their intent to participate in the horsemanship competitions (over 60 horses participated this year), and nationally known musician and holder of traditional knowledge Pak Esau Mete provided advice and support for the dance and music festivities with Pak Nico Mesak and his wife Yuli. A group of dancers from Flores Island expressed interest in performing at the festival, and a group of tourists took sound and film recordings with the aim of producing a documentary of the event.

Lua Lemba set the theme this year as ‘Go Green’ - it was designed to reflect a larger regional campaign to heighten awareness of the need to care for the environment. Many ideas were put forward by the community - a sculpture competition using rubbish, a ‘Clean-up Delha’ campaign, and a rubbish weigh-in, however due to time constraints and an existing ground swell of support the Committee decided to focus on the Hus (horsemanship) activities, childrens dance and music and to spread the ‘Go Green’ message through drama and a lantern parade with environmental themes. On festival night well thought out drama pieces dealt with re-forestation, littering and climate change. Beautiful lanterns with ocean and sky themes were made from paper, local bamboo, glue and tape. Despite an inadequate sound...
system young dancers and musicians entertained the audience with their talent and traditional clothing.

Bo’a village was the first to take up the idea of the lantern parade and a group of children was transported from there to the office in Nemberala to work on the lanterns while Festival organisation and rehearsal was taking place. Others saw the activities and were drawn in - and so the event grew.

By the time of the Festival there were four main groups working on the lanterns, including two groups of young people who worked late into the night. These young people have become the nucleus of the Lua Lemba Youth Committee, a group which aims to provide activities for young people in Delha.

As Bo’a village is eight kilometres from the evening performances a ‘fringe’ festival was organised as a thank you for their support. The rented pick-up was loaded with lanterns and the excited children paraded their lanterns through the village and on... and on... until they were almost out of sight and the parade had to be chased after and turned around! Afterwards the Bo’a Children’s Dance and Music group performed in the church.

M’bore, Bo’a and Sedoen villages are planning lantern parades over Christmas and Easter.

The Festival was properly funded this year, thanks to efforts in Australia by Rachel Kelly and her family and the Cygnet (Tasmania) arts community. There were also significant local donations from the Nemberala Resort, Lua Lemba, Anugerah Homestay and the Tua Ta’e gardens. Lua Lemba was able to buy a set of traditional hats for future performances, and a pick-up and amplifier for the Sasandos (traditional stringed instruments made from a lontar leaf).

After the Festival we conducted a short survey to get a sense of what the community gains from the Festival. The responses were thoughtful and positive, varying from a simple ‘it’s a fun celebration’ through to ‘it sets our identity – if no identity we are no-one’.

Ideas for the Festival next year include the incorporation of traditional story-telling sessions in the Delha language, organised by Pak Esau and the UNKRIS University of Kupang which has offered to second a staff member to the Festival.

The Flores dancers have also been invited to perform. Pak Esau is working with Lua Lemba and a second group of new young dancers using funding from this year’s Festival. Lua Lemba has formally re-committed to their support of cultural transmission through the festival and following the success of the Bo’a ‘fringe’, next years festival may incorporate more small village based activities.

The 2011 Festival was mentored by Gai Anderson who was funded by Asialink. Merci Killi, the Lua Lemba administrator took the role of Festival Producer, supported by a committee from Lua Lemba and volunteers from the local and tourist communities. Performers included, there were well over two hundred people to co-ordinate as well as official channels to negotiate - a huge endeavour.

In the post-festival debriefings, all key figures agree that with careful management of growth, the event has the potential to become a valuable asset for the community socially, culturally and financially. The first meetings for next year’s event are already being held.

If you would like more information on the festival or would even like to attend, please contact me at libby.house@indigofoundation.org.

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Meeting People from Rote....

Mercy Killi, Administrator, Lua Lemba

I was born here in Nemberala and went to school here until junior high school. I moved to Kupang for senior high school because there was no senior high in West Rote at that time. I went all the way to Kupang in search of the best education I could get. I stayed with my sister in Kupang and sold vegetables in the market to pay for my tuition. I had to work in the house too.

I did business studies at school because I was thinking it was a good way for me to make a lot of money because my family was so poor.

After graduating senior high I moved to Jakarta because I
I didn’t have the money to go to university and I thought living in a big city there could be many opportunities to find work. I was only nineteen years old but I found work doing accounts at a restaurant.

I missed my family badly. It is a hard life in Jakarta. I began to question what is happiness? I decided poverty was not always the problem and happiness is not about money. I enrolled at the Missionaries University in Jakarta and studied outreach work while working at the Soekarno Hatta Airport in Duty Free.

In 2005 I went on a placement from the university. I stayed in a remote village in Kalimantan for one year. I lived on the banks of a big river. People and animals used the river - for transport, washing, catching fish, bathing, drinking and for their toilet. I could not bring myself to wash for three days – it was so dirty. It was brown. I slept upstairs in the house because the river often flooded downstairs. Our toilets were small floating shelters tethered to the river bank. Once I was using the toilet in a flood when the tether broke. The first thing I knew was that the shelter was being carried down the river with me inside! Lucky it hit a jetty downstream a way. Now it is very funny but at first I thought I was going to die there in that river.

When I graduated from university I thought I would like to become a missionary in Korea. I came back to Rote to say goodbye to my family, and decided to stay here. I can still speak some Korean.

Now I have a beautiful daughter, Grace Alexandra and have been working as Administrator for Lua Lemba for nearly two years. Working for Lua Lemba has given me the opportunity to stay near my family while working for the community. Sometimes I worry about the impact the tourists are having on my village. Prices are very high here in Nemberala, much higher than other parts of Rote.

I have learned many new skills while working with Lua Lemba. My hopes for the future are that our community remains a safe and beautiful place to live and that our quality of life will improve.

**Pak Nico, teacher, Bo’a primary School. Lua Lemba Arts Co-ordinator.**

I have lived in Rote for twenty nine years. I was posted here as a teacher when I was twenty one years old. I come from the mountains of West Timor, a remote town called Makun. I went to teachers college in Kupang. I stayed here because it is peaceful and I liked it. I met my wife here in Bo’a village in 1981. I like fishing and gardening and keeping animals. I have thirty cows.

I really love listening to music and dance even though I am not good at it myself.

I started a small group for dancing in my primary school in Bo’a. We had a small amount of funding but it ran out so the group ceased to practice. Then Pak Nico Mesak (a musician and teacher) came to Bo’a so I asked him to start the group. We were volunteers but after a while we just couldn’t keep going as we had no money even to pay for fuel for our generator and transport.

Last year I was excited when Lua Lemba decided to celebrate traditional culture with their festival. I knew my group was out of practice so we asked to participate but just showing two dances. We have the traditional kebelai but it is in Tii language so we are working now on making a kebelai in the Delha language.

I knew (AVI volunteer) Miss Rosie Wheen when she was here in 1999 when she started the Besialu Handicraft Group. I became involved in Bo’a through Miss Rosie. We made small projects – digging wells, making gardens. We made a football team. It was called Rugby. I thought people were very strange using a ball shaped like that. I was involved in getting the senior high school opened here and have been a member of Lua Lemba since it became a fully fledged NGO.

Lua Lemba has helped so many people in the community. So much has happened here in the area of education that is down to Lua Lemba. Lots of wells have been dug using funds from Lua Lemba so we don’t spend hours walking to and from distant wells. This has given us time to do other things like gardening and keeping animals.

Before Lua Lemba helped start the new gardens in M’bore and Tua Ta’e people only ate vegetables occasionally. They ate rice and fish and drank nirah (palm sap). Now every day people eat vegetables. They know it is important for their health. The big thing I notice now is that children in Bo’a suffered consistently with boils. Sometimes big boils all over their bodies, but now they drink water and eat vegetables that has stopped. I think that is the reason. They eat vegetables every day and they drink water.

I am a teacher. I want to help people so I enjoy being a part of Lua Lemba. I believe helping other people is better than helping myself. If I want to help other people it is really good to have Lua Lemba to facilitate helping
people in my community. The negative thing is that in this community people think that I get paid a lot of money to be in Lua Lemba because money comes from foreign donors, but I don’t get paid anything, just petrol money.

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Partner: Lua Lemba Community and Education Foundation
indigo foundation Project Manager: Libby House
MC Representative: Sally Stevenson

Nyirripi - the second cultural bush camp
Sally Stevenson – Project Manager

In mid November 2011, Libby House, my son Alex (8yrs) and I flew into Alice Springs, picked up a 4WD vehicle and went into town to buy supplies. We then headed 300kms west to Yuendemu, along the Tanami Road, where we would overnight before driving the final 150km to the Aboriginal community of Nyirripi. We weren’t entirely sure what lay ahead, but we expected it would be both an adventure and a learning experience. It was.

Nyirripi has many of the usual problems of remote Aboriginal communities: poor health, lack of services, lack of employment opportunities etc. Under the current federal government funding framework, it will receive no increase in funding over the next five to ten years, and community members are expected to use the facilities of Yuendemu –should they need them. Nyirripi receives no government funding for youth development or cultural strengthening activities. Last year we entered a three year agreement with the Mt Theo Program to support cultural strengthening for Nyirripi young people, a high community priority.

We were heading to Nyirripi to participate in the second indigo foundation funded bush camp. The purpose of the camp was for the community to spend time on country, away from the community, and to pass on traditional knowledge that would help young people become strong. In particular, for young men and women to learn and practice ceremony for their skin and ‘Old Nyirripi’.

Preparation for the bush camps had begun some months before, with numerous planning meetings between local elders, Jaru (Mt Theo Program) youth workers and the Nyirripi Youth Subcommittee. Topics for discussion included the primary objective of the camp, the site, who should go, how to spend the budget, what resources should be bought in Alice Springs and/or locally, what resources were needed for cultural events and which vehicles could be used.

Karrku

After arriving in Nyirripi on Thursday afternoon, we were fortunate to be given permission to climb Karrku, an ancient Warlpiri red ochre mine, high on the side of a spectacular flat-topped hill which dominates the southern horizon from Nyirripi. With a group of Nyirripi children and Rennie, (a Mt Theo youth worker) we climbed up and across scree slopes which had been mined for flint for thousands of years, to the mine where the young boys collected red ochre. From a small entrance, only a metre or so across, the mine opens into a large subterranean chamber that follows the ochre seam deep into the hill. ‘Karrku is particularly important in the emerging story of Central Australian prehistory: the ochre has the same chemical signature as ancient ochres found in excavations at Puritjarra rockshelter, 125 km to the southeast. At Puritjarra, people were using Karrku ochre 30,000 years ago, so the mine itself must also have been in use at that time’. To think of this history was something very special, and from the top of this relative mountain we felt like we were flying across the desert landscape. We came back with a bottle full of the beautiful red gold ochre, ready for the camp.

The camp

The location for this year’s camp was Ethel Creek outstation, Alice Nampijimpa Henwood’s country about 65km northwest of Nyirripi. Due to bad weather during the week leading up to the camp, the road to Ethel Creek was deemed unsuitable for the bus to travel on. Old Nyirripi, the location of the previous year’s camp, was suggested as a much closer and more accessible alternative. Ned Gallagher, one of the traditional owners for Old Nyirripi, was consulted on the day of the camp and agreed to us holding it there.

The first day was spent preparing for the camp was spent preparing for the camp - picking up the food order from the shop, fuelling up private cars, packing the equipment and collecting people. The first group of people left for Old Nyirripi in the afternoon and helped to set up some of the camping equipment. The children played games in the dry river bed. People set up camp and made their own fires to cook dinner. Kids heard stories, the boys learnt self

Lance Turner painting a young Nyirripi boy

1 Mike Smith, Australian Geographic, Issue 60, Oct-Dec 2000
defence late into the night and people talked story around their fires.

Around 40 people from Nyirrpi attended on that first night. The atmosphere was beautiful, but at 4am a big electrical storm rolled in so there was a mass scramble to pack up camp. People, dogs, equipment were loaded into vehicles to get back to Nyirrpi before the road became impassable.

Due to the previous night’s weather, we weren’t sure if the camp would continue, but from 8am people from community were coming to tell us they intended to go back out and continue the camp. When we arrived groups went hunting whilst others stayed at camp, the kids playing games and the adults cooking lunch. We went with Alice Nampijimpa to look for goanna, and although not lucky this time, we learnt a lot about tracking, and patience!

Back at camp we were treated to BBQ goanna (there was plenty to go around with Margaret Brown having caught 22!), bush tomato and kangaroo tail.

Early afternoon it was time to start painting the children up for dancing. Both boys and girls participated this year with the boys being painted up by the older men and the girls by the older women. For the actual dancing, a barrier of spinifex was placed between the men’s area and women’s area as, whilst we were able to watch each other, males and females had to stay on opposite sides to respect men’s and women’s business.

Three Nyirrpi elders: Alice, Margaret and Jeannie, led the girls (including me!) in their dancing. I didn’t really have much idea about what was going on, the women on the sidelines were laughing and hooting and yelling instructions (not just to me but to the old ladies as well!) and it was all I could do: imitate my heart out. It was great. Two men, Patrick and Lance led the boys, including Alex. The spinifex was then used in a fire dance where the boys had to grab clumps of it and toss and catch it in the air – they had been warned they would need to be brave! I was very proud that my son could participate in such ceremony, in such a place. It was very special.

Due to the dubious weather, we chose not to camp again that night and so headed back to Nyirrpi as the sun was setting at around 7pm. More heavy rain that night proved that this was a wise decision! Over 65 people from Nyirrpi community attended on this day.

Community feedback
Again this year, the community feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. The popularity of the camp was displayed clearly when the camp was resumed on the second day on the insistence of the community. Molly Martin, Nyirrpi elder commented: ‘It was good. We need to teach them young kids traditional way.’

Whilst Lizzie Spencer, 26 said ‘It is good, kardiya [white people] supporting yapa [Walpiri] to teach the kids.’ People have already been discussing and looking forward to next year’s camp.

We returned from Nyirrpi not only with great memories and a sense of a maturing partnership, but a stronger sense of the absolute importance these opportunities for teaching culture, country and ceremony to younger people are.

It must be said too, that we also returned with vastly improved 4 wheel drive skills after more heavy rain had us leaving at short notice to avoid being rained in for an extra week. We travelled in convoy from Nyirrpi to Yuendumu with Rusty Stewart (Mt Theo Outreach Co-ordinator) and then after getting a Police OK, straight on to Alice Springs. Eight hours of hard driving, often through 100s of metres of flooded roads that left car caked with red mud.

Strong relationships were formed over the four days we spent in Nyirrpi and we hope there will be expanded cultural exchange as a result. We look forward to returning next year!

Partner: WYDAC / MT Theo Program
indigo foundation Project Manager: Sally Stevenson
MC Representative: Phil Strickland

Getting ready for the women’s dance, Alice Nampijimpa Henwood, centre and Jennie Naparull.

‘Cobra’ Poulson teaching ceremony to the young boys at Old Nyirrpi

Libby and Sally at the end of a long drive home!
Entering our 6th and final year of support for the Bonobo Health Clinic

Kokolopori, DRC

Jessica Glover - Project Assistant & Leanne Hankey, Project Manager

In November, indigo foundation informed the Bonobo Conservation Initiative (BCI) and Vie Sauvage, our in-country partner that 2012 will be our final year of supporting the Bonobo Health Clinic. Against all odds, the clinic has developed from nothing in 2007 to a point where it is now serving members of the Kokolopori community for such maladies as malaria, respiratory tract infections and gastro-intestinal diseases, as well as reproductive health needs.

After much deliberation, we feel it is time for us to withdraw and for the project to be supported by a larger, better-resourced organisation for the following reasons:

- The project’s distance makes it very difficult for us to actively participate in capacity building and effectively monitor the project.
- Linguistic barriers are an issue whereby communication is mainly conducted with and through (English speaking) Albert Lokasola. While Albert has always conducted himself with utmost integrity, he: (i) lives and works 300 km from Kokolopori, (ii) can only travel there periodically because of the exorbitant cost of transport, and (iii) has many other roles and responsibilities, besides being project manager for the clinic. The clinic really does need an on-site manager as well as the ability to communicate with a support base in a language that key stakeholders understand.
- The project’s ongoing resource requirements (as well as costs associated with monitoring and evaluation) have moved beyond our financial capacity.

In the pipeline

We are fully committed to the project until the end of 2012 and we are in the process of planning a phased exit strategy in collaboration with BCI and Vie Sauvage that will ensure maximisation of our support. BCI is approaching development organisations to garner interest in supporting the clinic. The partnership is also investigating the viability of the clinic being integrated into DRC’s Ministry of Health.

Leanne’s meeting with Sally Coxe (BCI)

Leanne Hankey (Project Manager), met with Sally Coxe, President of BCI to discuss the recently amended Commitment Agreement. Leanne and Sally also went over the medical and drug reporting template that Veronique de Clerck (the project’s technical advisor) helped formulate, so the clinic is more consistent in its data collation and reporting. The meeting was extremely productive, and Sally and Leanne have agreed to meet throughout 2012 to help facilitate the clinic’s transition.

Albert Lokasola’s political aspirations

Albert Lokasola, Vie Sauvage’s Manager recently ran for office in the DRC elections as a member of the country’s Christian Democrat Party. Albert wants to participate in improving the environment in which projects and businesses operate, which is vital to ensure that DRC improves as a nation state, one which is concerned with protecting and serving its citizenry. Albert is highly educated, the son of a major chief, former Secretary General of the DRC Red Cross, well-respected in the community and has a deep passion for the environment, education and development. Albert was instrumental in the creation of his own non-government organization Vie Sauvage, which seeks to enable change and development in his region. Should Albert become an elected official, he will be rewarded with greater leverage to create a more enabling environment for development to ensue. We wish Albert the very best in his pursuit to generate positive change and development in his region. We also commend Albert on his hard work, determination and commitment to the Bonobo Health Clinic.

Ever wondered where the term ‘third world’ came from?


‘Alternative phrase in common use for the developing or underdeveloped parts of the world. It was coined by French economist Alfred Sauvy in an article published in Observateur in 1952 which compared the politically non-aligned countries (i.e. countries that had not taken
a side in the Cold War) to the Third Estate (i.e. peasants and commoners) in France during the Revolution. His point was that like the peasants, the people of the Third World had very little material wealth, but had begun to assert their right to and desire for a better share of global resources. This became manifest as the process of decolonization began in earnest following the end of World War II. At the Bandung conference in 1955, at which the leaders of countries from Africa and Asia met to discuss their collective future, and possible forms of cooperation and collaboration between the 29 participating countries, the notion of the Third World became a rallying cry of solidarity. It was used to signal common cause and as an indictment on the First World (i.e. the former colonial powers, the present-day G8 countries). In more recent times, [the term] has rejected the use of the term Third World for being both too generalizing and too demeaning. The argument against its use points out that countries in the First World have sections in them that are as poor as anywhere in the Third World (such as the garment district, or skid row, in downtown Los Angeles), and Third World countries like India have sections in them every bit as wealthy as First World cities (e.g. Mumbai).’

Upcoming events include:

:  **Chris Murphy** is in the development phase of a exciting partnership for us with Junior Chamber International (a young Chamber of Commerce) to promote our activities and raise funds – which may include a trip for a group of young people to visit (and provide support to) our project in Rote. Exciting stuff.

:  We are been chosen by **Reasonable Cause** – a legal education organisation - as their charity of choice next year which, could raise almost $15,000 for us!

:  Keep an eye out for upcoming events in Wollongong and Canberra!

Join our facebook page and be kept up to date on event details, and

Have a look at our new, updated website!

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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 supporters continue to do a great job. Some of our successes include:

:  **Annual Dinner**  This year’s annual dinner was another outrageous success. It was held in Sydney at the State Library, a stunning location. Cindy Pan did a delightful job MCing and Michael McCaffery drove the auction results faster and higher than ever before. We raised almost AU$15,000 – a new record! Thanks go to Ian Seal for his inspiring talk on Uganda and to Lucinda Wilson for pulling together such a great event.

:  In Melbourne, **Anthony Menherre** cycled around Victoria raising both awareness and funds for our Uganda project as part of his Duke of Edinburgh award. He capped it off with a four day exhibition at the Westfield Shopping Centre in Geelong. Thanks Anthony – a huge dedicated effort!

**indigo foundation Prize for Academic Excellence in Personal and Professional Development**

Our congratulations goes to Sara Arcioni, the inaugural winner of the *indigo foundation Prize for Academic Excellence in Personal and Professional Development*. Sara is studying for her Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery in the Graduate School of Medicine at the University of Wollongong.

The award goes to the student with the highest academic performance in a series of assessment tasks with learning outcomes encouraging the ethical and professional practice of community medicine.

*Sara is presented with her award by Professor Liz Farmer.*
The Bonobo Health Clinic – the problems of not knowing
Phil Strickland – Management Committee

"The way we see things is affected by what we know and what we believe"  

During my visit to Kokolopori in January 2007, my friends, Angus Gemmell, Dr Luke Bennett and I were privileged to witness an initiation ceremony, which involved about two hundred men dancing around a huge circle to the beat of drums with four hundred bare feet beating with perfect rhythm on the ground. Out of the forest came ‘medicine men’ wearing animal skins and fearsome masks. Carrying their spears, they danced right up to us – their masks some 6 inches from our face. It was a mesmerising performance of which Graeme Murphy would have been proud.

After ninety minutes, we three guests were asked to leave the ceremony for reasons unknown. The next day, the village chief came to pay us a visit. We thought we had caused some offence, although we do not know why because we believed we had been invited. The chief sat down and after some small talk asked us politely why we had not worn our ties to the ceremony. We explained that we did bring our ties from Australia, acknowledged the importance of wearing respectful dress, and would do so next time, if invited back.

Reading Conrad’s Heart of Darkness or Barbara Kingsolver’s The Poisonwood Bible, great novels though they are, is no preparation for attempting to understand life in a village in central DRC. Nothing can have prepared me for life in Kokolopori, not because it is mysterious per se, but because I knew almost nothing about the people who live there. I do not speak their language. I do not inhabit their physical world or their mental universe.

At indigo foundation, the main focus of our development assistance is always to seek partnerships with local NGOs and ensure there is ‘real community control over decision making; leadership is local; and the community fully participates in development activities using its own skills, knowledge and resources’.  

The greatest challenge of the Bonobo Health Clinic has been to put into practice that objective. Consider the difficulties. The Bonobo health clinic is located almost dead in the middle of the Democratic Republic of Congo, one of the more difficult regions on earth to get to. I am the only member of indigo foundation’s Management Committee to have visited Kokolopori. During the last four years, Martin Bendeler (BCI Australia, supported by us), Vero de Clerck (in the capacity as technical advisor to indigo foundation) and most recently, Ingrid Schulze from our partner organisation in the USA, Kokolopori-Falls Church Sister City Partnership (KFSCCP), have visited Kokolopori on monitoring and evaluation trips. They have all provided useful information about health needs in the local community, and the operation of the clinic. However, crucially, none of us speak the local language, Lingala, and we could spend only a short time there. We were the classic outsiders.

It is no disrespect to anyone to state the obvious - indigo foundation has only the barest knowledge of our local partner organisation, Vie Sauvage (‘wildlife’) and of the local community in which it operates. We know very little about who are the decision-makers in the community; how decision making works; how those who do not make decisions actually ‘participate’; what level of skills, knowledge and resources are available to people in relation to health matters.

Let me give two examples. First, despite our best efforts to focus on disease prevention and health education, the community and the medical staff appear to be more focussed on dispensing medicine than on disease prevention and health education. Why has indigo foundation been less successful in the public health education aspect of the project?

I suggest one of the reasons is our lack of knowledge of our partner organisation and the local community. The head of Vie Sauvage, Albert Lokasola wrote to us in late 2010 reporting on the public health campaign that we fund. He said that ‘we’ made site visits to teach people about the ‘anti vector’ approach to fighting malaria. Efforts included leading health education, classes in every village to educate the people about malaria. Topics covered included:

- difference between prevention and cures;
- difference between epidemic and endemic diseases;
- how to prevent malaria; and
- what tools can be used to prevent malaria.

He reported that during the entire project some 1,500 insecticide treated nets had been distributed throughout Kokolopori – this is undoubtedly one area where malaria prevention has been successful. In relation to reproductive health services Albert reported that nurses provided pre-natal consultations with the objective of training at least one midwife per village in order to reduce the number of at risk deliveries. Albert commented on the lack of resources available on mother and infant health, gynaecology and obstetrics. Early in 2011 this problem was rectified with the provision of various Medecins sans Frontieres publications. Albert also suggested midwives or nurses do not have any birthing kits.

This 2010 report is is the most detailed one we have received from Vie Sauvage on this topic. We do not know how many people attended the classes; how many villages were visited. We know little about the knowledge or skills of the persons imparting the ‘lessons’. We do not know the format of the campaign; what follow through was undertaken; whether or how those who attended the ‘classes’ participated; whether they have applied or followed any of the ‘lessons’ etc.

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2 John Berger Ways of Seeing

3 indigo foundation Development Assistance Strategy.
Secondly, there has been the issue of ‘user fees’: charging the patients of the Bonobo health clinic a fee for provision of health services. In the January 2011 Commitment Agreement, after extensive consultation between all the parties, it was agreed that:

1. All parties agree that user fees including ‘informal’ (unofficial) payment will not be charged for the provision of medical services provided under this Agreement for women over 15 years of age, all antenatal and postnatal care, children under 5 years of age (or under 110 cm) and men deemed over 60 years of age; and

2. This is an interim measure until a finance scheme is designed and implemented to ensure that women, children and those most vulnerable are not excluded from receiving medical care and treatment free of charge.

No issue has been more contentious with our local partner. Albert Lokosola, Bienvenu Mupenda (the previous manager of the Bonobo Health Clinic) and the doctor who currently heads the health clinic, Dr Saidi, have with differing degrees of emphasis, argued that user fees are important or essential to the continued success of the project. Ingrid Schulze in discussions in early 2011 was told ‘The loss of user fees may be one of the reasons for the clinic’s current troubles in that too many people come in for free medications and then they’re [the medicines] gone when people who are really sick need them’.

It is not my purpose to debate the pros and cons of user fees – I support the terms of the Commitment Agreement. However, from my perspective, the issue of user fees illustrates how little we know about the local community. How much money, if any, can different members of the community afford to spend on essential medicines? What is the consensus, if any, in the community about paying for medicines or certain services such as life saving surgery? Has there been any consultation with the community on this issue? If so, what is the form and content of that consultation?

Contrast the Bonobo health clinic with the workings of an NGO in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which was set up to try and deal with health care for poor children in the slums. The NGO was set up by Vera Cordierio, who was a physician in Rio. She enlisted doctors, nurses and social workers at a local hospital to identify poor children who were about to be discharged. Having identified those children she then recruited the children’s mothers to work with her NGO and she did so by offering an incentive: three nutritional supplements and medicine for six months. In exchange she did so by offering an incentive: three nutritional supplements and medicine for six months. In exchange

For the next six months, the NGO team worked with the mothers one on one. In conjunction with social workers and nutritionists, they sketched out treatment plans and set specific time bound goals such as fixing a roof, modifying a child’s diet, getting into the habit of boiling water, getting a bed for a child, or acquiring the documentation to be eligible for Government assistance. The objective of NGO was to help the family gain control of their own health. This was able to be accomplished by a deep knowledge of the community’s own local needs.

At indigo foundation we are a long way from having that deep knowledge of the local needs in Kokolopori. I do not suggest that we know nothing about the level of participation in the community. We know that there is a governing board for the Kokolopori reserve comprising seven elders/notables and chiefs. They meet and decide key issues. There are also regular ‘town hall’ type meetings in the church. I attended one – it was rowdy, very well attended and people certainly appeared to speak their minds. (I had a translator). In February 2011, the governing board and interested locals met to decide the Bonobo clinic’s opening hours. There is overwhelming evidence that Vie Sauvage is a genuine local based community organisation that has significant support within the community. The people who run Vie Sauvage are not charlatans or rip off merchants. The funds allocated to Vie Sauvage for the Bonobo Health Clinic is not diverted into their own pockets. It is spent on medical supplies, medicine, and salaries for Dr Saidi and other health professionals.

Having said all this, the Bonobo health clinic project has most certainly been worthwhile. It has made a significant positive impact on the health of people living in Kokolopori. Lives have been saved. People’s health has improved. Modern health care is on that community’s agenda now when prior to indigo foundation’s involvement, it was not at all. We anticipate that the health clinic will be officially registered, which should then attract some regional funding and provision of medication and equipment. Vero de Clerck, a registered nurse and experienced worker at Medecins sans Frontieres, wrote in her exceptionally useful review of the project in August 2010: Taking into account the small indigo foundation funding, the limited local resources, the challenging logistical context, the severe geographical access barriers and the hands off development approach one should acknowledge the achievements that have been made in only five years. Definite credit should be given to those local partners and the community itself.

Ingrid Schulze in her recent report sent to indigo foundation, having attended community meetings about the Bonobo health clinic wrote: ‘It was very clear that people really appreciate the clinic and want it to function optimally.’

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4 David Bornstein, How to Change the World: Social Entrepreneurs and the Power of Ideas (Oxford University Press 2007 pages 130-150)
My point is that, like Socrates berating his accusers in ancient Greece before he was put to death, we must acknowledge what we do not know. It is so important to visit our partners regularly, speak to them, exchange ideas and get to know them, and try to inhabit, if only for a while their physical and mental world.

+++ In response – Sally Stevenson, Chairperson

One of the principles of indigo foundation is transparency. It is also characteristic of our management committee where meetings regularly involve robust debate and discussion about anything from the philosophical basis of development and our role in it, to the ways and means on internal communication. One of the things I love about the organisation is that these debates are always undertaken with respect, passion and a genuinely open mind. It is what energises us and keeps us a healthy thinking organisation.

From time to time we bring these debates to the newsletters, and it is in this spirit that I respond to Phil’s article, above.

Whilst I fully agree with Phil that the DRC project is a worthwhile one – and has brought significant benefits to the Kokolopori community, there are a number of points within his article that I would like to address.

Firstly, all of the difficulties Phil describes are true – but it is the existence of these concerns that makes the DRC project a worthwhile and appropriate one for us to have supported. Distance, lack of access, language barriers are the very reasons that so many grass roots, local organisations do not receive international support – it is ‘too difficult’ and because of the cost of distance and marginalisation considered not ‘economically efficient’ to provide support. It is exactly these kinds of barriers we seek to overcome, recognising that whilst the absolute cost of providing support, including monitoring and evaluation trips may appear expensive, what cannot be overestimated is the value of our support, which has been significant.

Secondly, I think we need to be very careful about wanting to know everything about our communities, and assuming that it is only when we ‘know’ that we can be of assistance. It is of course important to understand what we are committing to, and why: but the principle behind why we support local organisations is because we acknowledge that we can’t – and indeed don’t need to know everything. The local organisations are the ones who will know their communities best and if we can build strong relationships with transparent communication and trust then this provides us with a level of certainty that is sufficient.

I sense that Phil is making an implicit (or unconscious?) link between knowledge and control – or indeed lack of knowledge with lack of control: if we don’t know, we can’t control, and then project risks are elevated to unacceptable levels. This is dangerous ground. The need for donors to know and control development is one of the more counterproductive and insidious characteristics of current development practice. It is another reason why we partner with local organisations, investing our trust in the power of the community to know and control their own development process. The consequence of this is that we have to accept the uneasiness of surrendering control of the project to the community but this is what will result in ownership and ultimately empowerment.

This understanding that we can’t know (and could spend a long time and many resources trying to know) is why we select, monitor and evaluate our projects according to our Guiding Principles. Applying the concepts of sustainability, community ownership, transparency and equity to our partners and ourselves allows us to have a meaningful framework around which we can communicate and negotiate. It avoids a managerial or technocratic approach to development by giving us flexible boundaries that allow for innovation, different processes and timelines, diversity in identity – and ultimately (hopefully) empowerment. Indeed our relationships with communities can be manifest in many and varied ways, but they are grounded (and monitored) by this set of simple, clear and constructive principles, which keep us all ‘on-track’. This principles-based approach allows for, but militates the risk of ‘not knowing’. It respects that fact that the local people are the ones who can best understand and generate their own development solutions. Our role is as a partner, not a director, of development.

At the same time, we also know that Kokolopori is not entirely unique. Many of the health problems there are typical of remote, marginalised African settings - of which we as an organisation and as individuals have some experience. Both Vero (as a nurse and midwife and now as medical coordinator) and I (as Head of Mission) have had worked for many years with Medecins sans Frontieres managing various health care programs in Africa. We both have Masters in Public Health. There are generalisations we can safely make, and experiences that we can bring to bear (and indeed have) on our project. For example our input into the medical supply and logistic system at the clinic has, over time, resulted in the dramatically improved management of medical supplies. Another example is the issue of user fees. International research and practice consistently confirms that when user fees are introduced, access to health care becomes prohibitive to the poor. A combination of a pragmatic but principled user fees approach, coupled with an improved management system for drugs and medical materials means the Bonobo Health clinic is functioning in a more equitable and efficient manner. We can bring these positive changes to Kokolopori without having to know ‘everything’ about the community.

That we don’t have the detailed information regarding health education that Phil suggests we need, can be easily overcome – we simply ask for it. But before we do that, we need to know that the information is useful and not fall
into the trap of creating reporting procedures and requirements for the sake of reporting and nothing else. Just knowing how many workshops were held does not tell us much in terms of outcomes. And particularly with health education and behaviour change campaigns we would expect any outcomes to take time.

But more importantly, our role as I see it would be to discuss health education methodology. For example, we know one off workshops are one of the least successful training methods and that ongoing, resourced and on the job training is the most efficient. Yet even the best of resourced organisations do not always provide this. Workshops are a chronic ‘problem’ in developing countries: their value to participants is often separate to the content of the workshop itself: the opportunity to travel, to do something different and to receive a per diem is often more important. Workshops seem to continue because of this demand, but also because they are easily accounted for, and donors can tick some boxes in terms of supporting ‘training’.

Thirdly, compounding this sense of ‘not knowing’ is that we don’t know the language and that, as Phil notes, we are ‘classic outsiders’. That is the case. We are, and will forever be just that in all the communities we work. But that does not preclude us from forming meaningful partnerships. Again, this is why we rely on our local partners. I disagree with Phil and believe we do not need the deep local knowledge that he claims. Instead, we need to have partners who we can trust and who trust us, that represent and have the support of their communities and with whom we have a constructive dialogue about the project. As Phil states there is overwhelming evidence that the Vie Sauvage has the support of the community and strong evidence to indicate it encourages community input and debate about its activities. This is important. We also know that our funds are not diverted, and this is an incredible strength in the DRC, a country where corruption is endemic.

However, it is here that I think Phil’s concerns are most valid. We don’t know (or didn’t know) a lot or enough about either Vie Sauvage or the Bonobo Conservation Initiative and nor did they know enough about us when we began. This has, perhaps, been our greatest weakness. One of our selection criteria when we start a project is that there is a pre existing relationship with either the community or the local partners. In this case the relationship was only very new, and it is my view that many of the tensions in the project have resulted from this.

At the same time, one of the reasons we commit ourselves to longer term relationships is that it allows us time to learn about communities and our partner organisations and vice versa. We recognise it is a learning process for all of us, and I think it would be fair to say that we do have much better understanding now of the level of skills knowledge and resources that are available to people of Kokolopori in relationship to health matters.

Phil is also right in that distance has proven a challenge for us in getting to know the community and the partner. But not just distance. Whilst both he and Vero have travelled there, and we have had reports from Ingrid and Martin, it is also because we didn’t have the human resources to send, monitoring and evaluation trips have been postponed or delayed because of constraints on our side. Noting that it takes six weeks to get to Kokolopori, and the methods are arduous proximity would certainly have made things easier.

Fourthly, Phil states that we have been relatively unsuccessful in terms of health education. I disagree, and I do this less because of what we have done, and much more because I know just how difficult health education is. To expect any more change in Kokolopori that what has been achieved with the limited resources we have available to us as well as the vastly different cultural perspective on health and medicine, is to be unrealistic.

We approach Kokolopori with a western, molecular view of medicine and disease, a radically different way to the Congolese of understanding health and wellbeing. When we ask people to change their health behaviours – we are asking them in the first instance to change the way the view the world, to understand the western medical model and to adapt accordingly. Further, experience shows us that the introduction of western medicine in such settings nearly always presents significant challenges. In many cultures there is an almost mythical belief (and consequent misunderstanding) in the powers of western medicine. Many people will argue and argue with health care providers that they and their children need tablets or preferably an injection to cure them. This has resulted amongst other things in a vast black market of antibiotics with significant levels of self medication and self injecting. Counter-intuitively, western medicine is often used a ‘last resort’ with any manner of traditional remedies and use of traditional healers being used first. The problems from both situations are obvious.

It should also not come as a surprise that people are ‘more focused on taking medicine’ than pursuing preventative health measures. This is the case pretty much anywhere around the world. In Australia cure is also preferred to prevention, one need only look at where our public health resources go, which is, overwhelmingly to the curative part of the system.

Then there is the nature of human behaviour change. We know from experience changing people’s health behaviours is incredibly hard, and can take a combination of push / pull strategies, such as legislation, social and peer pressure, and financial incentives and disincentives. Let us not underestimate how long it takes people to change in Australia. For example, behaviour change related to drink driving or smoking have taken years and years of sustained action, significant resources and government funded campaigns. And despite thirty years of campaigning and
millions of dollars spent on educating the public, too many Australians still die every year from smoking or drink driving related events.

That insecticide treated nets have been distributed and are being used properly is a huge step in Kokolopori. To my mind to expect much more than what has happened or to expect it to happen at a greater pace is, perhaps, to expect too much. To say Vie Sauvage and indigo foundation have been unsuccessful at health prevention is to not understand the essential processes and timelines off effective health promotion and health education anywhere in the world.

Fifthly, comparing the example of the NGO in Brazil to Kokolopori is to compare apples with oranges. Brazil is a wonderful example of where the public health system has a very high level of political commitment and is provided with significant resources that are underpinned by a stable and rapidly growing economy. In Rio, where access to cheap medicine and public health institutions is possible, logistics are not an issue, and the growing middle and professional class provides well trained human resources. In contrast, it is very difficult to get doctors, nurses and social workers to work in Kokolopori, and when they are there, they have limited skills limited access to supplies and can be overwhelmed with demand. A team that can work with mothers one-on one: what a luxury! Yes the practitioners know well their country’s own needs, but the difference here is not knowledge. It is that they are also very well resourced, led by a team of highly trained professionals in a country where the public health system is genuinely valued and supported from the top of the political pyramid.

To conclude, I agree that we should acknowledge what we do not know – but I also think we should acknowledge what we do know. More importantly, we need to understand that we do not need to know everything. Instead, we need to shift away from our own cultural need to know and hence control activities and allow others to make their own choices. We can do this by providing support through access to resources, including information and experiences that amongst other things come from being ‘outsiders’.

I also agree that the more we interact and talk to the communities we support the better and being closer to those communities facilitates that.

So in the end, what prevents other organisations from working in such places as Kokolopori, and what makes it difficult for us here at indigo foundation is precisely why we are there. It is our ability to recognise and take and moderate risks that allows us to support such communities. If it was easy – someone else would have done it! Let’s not be too critical of ourselves....we took a calculated risk with Kokolopori, our support has not been perfect, and it may not have achieved all we have hoped for, but it has under the circumstances achieved a great deal. One hundred percent more than would have been achieved had we not been there.

To summarise my background, after a 40 year career and senior executive roles in the electric energy industry working in Australia and overseas, I’ve remained actively engaged in the Engineering profession as Founding Chairman of the Sydney Chapter of the Institution of Engineers’ Centre for Engineering Leadership and Management, and as a lecturer in the University of Adelaide’s Master of Project Management program, teaching in Sydney, Adelaide and Singapore until retirement in 2010.

I am married to Judy, a Pharmacist, and we have three children, Alex (40), Elizabeth (38) and David (33), and three grandchildren, Benjamin (9), Luke (5) and Samantha (born 23/1/11).

I’ve been very actively involved in Rotary for many years, and have occupied a fairly wide range of roles at both club and district level.

Flying, sailing and a country property in the southern tablelands have been major extra-curricular interest at various times over the past 50 years.

I look forward to meeting and working with you all.

Management Committee update
Sally Stevenson – Chairperson

To begin, I am very happy to announce two new projects. As you would have read on our front page we are now supporting the Women’s Education Centre at the Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education in Kabul, an extension of our support for education in Borjegai. We have also agreed to support another organisation in India – Mahalir Sakthi. Mahalir Sakthi is a community-based NGO, which emerged out of the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in the city of Madurai. Founded by committed and experienced people and managed by members of its target communities, Mahalir Sakthi works towards empowering children and women who are socially
ostracised and economically exploited. Education is the key focus for Mahalir Sakthi. Libby House and Deb Raphael will be visiting them in March, and you can read about it in the next newsletter.

We are very happy that Rob Mitchell has accepted the position of General Manager. We know Rob from his position as Projects Director at Rotary Club of Ryde, where he was the driving force behind our excellent collaboration on the Borjegai project. Rob has an engineering and business background which includes extensive international work, he has lectured at tertiary level both in Australia and overseas on project management and his Rotary work has covered a wide range of roles at both club and district level.

We would also like to extend a very warm welcome Anna-Karina Hermkens and her husband Jaap. Anna is our new research co-ordinator and a cultural anthropologist by trade having worked in the Solomon Islands, Indonesia and PNG. With this position we hope to have a more cohesive and strategic approach to our research.

We are looking forward to another full and productive year. As always, to kick it off we will be celebrating Australia Day with our Afghan friends. The annual picnic (now in its eight year!) will be held at Lake Parramatta Reserve, on the corner of Bourke and Lackey Streets, North Parramatta. It starts at 11am and is fully catered with delicious Afghan food. If you can make it – we’d love to see you there! Please RSVP to info@indigofoundation.org

This will be followed in February by our annual project management workshop. All project manager’s, the full management committee, staff and our key volunteers will come together to learn, reflect and socialise. It is always a motivating and interesting time.

And that’s it for now! Please feel free to contact us if you’d like to talk about the work we do - we’d love to hear from you.

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Traditional Rotinese horsemen at the annual Delha Cultural Festival, 2011.

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