

# indigofoundation

## Supporting Community Development

Issue 22

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Spotlight on Rote, Congo, Afghanistan, East Timor, Syria, think piece, book review, financial situation and more...

**Indigo Foundation** is an independent, volunteer run, Australian community development organisation. We provide innovative assistance to improve the lives of people in small disadvantaged communities around the world. We work in areas of health, education, environment and advocacy.

**Indigo Foundation** seeks to empower local communities to access resources and have control over the decisions that determine their basic needs and human rights. We do this by providing financial and technical support to local 'not for profit' and community-based organisations, with a particular focus on capacity building.

We currently support community development projects in eight countries: Indonesia, Afghanistan, Solomon Islands, Congo, Uganda, East Timor, India & Thailand.

### SPOTLIGHT ON ROTE, INDONESIA

#### Oehela Farmer's Group, M'bore, Indonesia

*Rachel Kelly - Project Officer*

After a year of working in Australia as a volunteer Project Officer for the Oehela Farmer's Group (OFG) in the village of M'bore, Rote, the opportunity arose for me to visit this special community. The overall aims of the trip were to:

- strengthen my relationship with OFG,
- get to know various members of Lua Lemba's Education & Community Development Foundation with whom Indigo Foundation has worked for many years, and
- develop a greater understanding of the geography of the region and the way of life of its residents.

I spent five days in the region, accompanied by my partner, Josh, and local English student, Bernat, who acted as translator. Familiarization of the area involved formal meetings and discussions with various community members, tours of their extensive vegetable gardens, and general exploration. We were given a tour of the local high school, made a visit to the local markets and of course watched many spectacular sunsets over the ocean from the palm-fringed, white sand beaches.

'Familiarization' of the local surf break was also on the agenda which, to our delight, we had all to ourselves!

#### The M'bore community

The community of M'bore, located a few kilometres from the larger town of Nemberala where I was staying, is a very small community with a population of just 38 families. Owing to its remote location, the community

receives little government or non government development assistance and therefore lacks basic services such as water supply and electricity.



*M'bore children, outside the home of village head, Om Nue*

Indigo Foundation has worked with the M'bore community since 2002 when Lua Lemba identified this sub-village as "high need" but with good development potential because of its water and soil availability, coupled with human capacity to work the land. Subsequently, an income generating agriculture project was set up, which would provide fresh vegetables to the region. The community now specializes in growing red shallots as the main lucrative cash crop while garlic is grown for local consumption. The gardens are 100% organic.

In recent years, the community, with the assistance of Indigo Foundation, has rapidly increased their crop yields through the adoption of organic composting techniques, a water pump for irrigation and raised garden beds.

**CRITICAL:** Indigo Foundation's financial situation .....

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*Rachel on a tour of the OFG's gardens, M'bore with Om Nue and translator, Bernat*

During my time as Project Officer for the OFG, Indigo Foundation has funded two further projects:

- the building of a stone wall to enclose the gardens so crops are protected against damage by farm animals,
- rigid piping to significantly expand the area under irrigation from 1 to 3 hectares.

I was able to view first hand the wall which had been constructed as well as the piping and areas of the garden that could now become productive in the coming season.

### **Permaculture volunteers**

In 2008 the community requested Indigo Foundation's assistance to find a permaculture volunteer who would live in the community and provide workshops and practical training on how to grow different varieties of fruit and vegetables. Whilst the community is skilled in growing its traditional vegetables, they are keen to expand and improve their production in response to market demand from the nearby Nemberala hotel, home stays, foreign residents and the local population.

In the months leading up to my visit, I researched various possibilities for funding an appropriate volunteer. Through my enquiries I (fortunately) became connected with the Permaculture Research Institute (PRI), an Australian based organization with much experience in permaculture community development projects. We now have some promising connections with experienced and willing volunteers.



*Selling vegetables at the market*

It was agreed during my visit to M'bore that I would submit an application to the AusAID-funded 'Youth Ambassadors for Development' program (AYAD) for a 3-

4 month placement of a permaculture volunteer. Since my return, PRI has indicated it would be able to source an experienced volunteer and assist with the technical aspects of the AYAD application. Meeting with the community has given me a clearer picture of what tasks they envisage a volunteer would perform as well as clarify details such as where they could be accommodated, what transport would be available to them and what support the community could provide.

### **Bo'a village**

In addition to meeting with the OFG, I visited the nearby farming village of Bo'a. This community is famous in the region for its huge sweet potatoes, which it devotes most of its gardens to growing each year.



*Farmer at work in the Bo'a gardens tending sweet potato crops for which Bo'a is famous in the region*

I informed the community leaders of OFG's request for further training and education in the field of permaculture. The Bo'a community also expressed great interest in receiving assistance from permaculture volunteers with the aim of increasing their yields and diversifying their crops.



*On a tour of the gardens in Bo'a: Head of farming co-op (far left), Mr Ipu, head of the village (far right), Pak Ferdinand, village priest (second from left), Mr Thomas, head of Lua Lemba (centre), Bernat, translator (second from right)*

### **The importance of water supply**

In discussing the priorities of the M'bore community for their future, it is clear that the most pressing (even

urgent) priority is access to a clean water supply. The pump at the bottom of the 115 metre deep bore, installed by the Indonesian government in 2005, has short circuited and has, consequently, been out of operation for 2 years. The nearest clean water source is 3.5 kilometres away.

Finding a sustainable solution to the water problem in M'bore has many challenges. These include the very high cost of currently needed repairs, the inability of the community to perform even basic maintenance and the needs for future repairs on the pump due to the depth of the bore. Providing assistance to the M'bore community to help them solve their water problems is a daunting task, but is a challenge that I hope Indigo Foundation can meet.

A special thank you to Libby House, Indigo Foundation's Project Manager for Indonesia, for all her support leading up to and since my visit! Thanks to the communities from Nemberala, M'bore and Bo'a for their welcoming hospitality and practical assistance throughout my stay and, in particular, Bernat for his much needed translation skills. Also thanks to the Tamelan family for their hospitable accommodation – those fried bananas and freshly baked cakes are hard to beat.

Indigo Foundation Project Manager:	Libby House
Project Officer:	Rachel Kelly
Project Advisor:	Alberto Vela
MC Representative:	Sally Stevenson

## Bonobo Health Clinic after two years: an evaluation

*Philip Strickland - Project Manager*

The Bonobo Health Clinic operates in Kokolopori in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Kokolopori is situated on the Maringa River in Equateur province – close to the equator. It is strategically located in one of the world's biodiversity hotspots and is surrounded by one of the most pristine wilderness areas on the planet. The region of Kokolopori is home to the most endangered ape on the planet, the Bonobo, man's closest living relative.

Between July 2007 and February 2009, Indigo Foundation has provided US\$30,000 (\$15,000 each year) to Kokolopori's health program. The main emphasis of our support has been malaria prevention and treatment through the distribution of 1200 insecticide treated nets (ITNs) and anti malarial medication, along with education strategies on malaria prevention to be delivered in parallel with ITN distribution. The Project has attempted to focus on the most vulnerable sections of the population – children under 5 years and pregnant women. Funds have also been used for salaries to support two nurses in the Bonobo Health Clinic, along with much-needed medications such as antibiotics, vitamins, and drugs to combat diarrhoea. Some basic medical equipment, including stethoscopes and bandages, has also been provided which has given Dr

Saidi (the only qualified doctor in the region) and the nurses, much needed practical support.



*Dr Saidi and patients at the clinic*

## How funds and materials are delivered

Funds and materials provided by Indigo Foundation are delivered to the Kokolopori community through a local non-government organisation (NGO) called *Vie Sauvage* who is contracted by the Bonobo Conservation Initiative (BCI) to implement community development projects in Kokolopori. BCI has two offices -one based in Kinshasa, DRC and the other in Washington DC. Recently, long-term Indigo Foundation volunteer, Leanne Black, had the chance to meet with the president of Vie Sauvage, Albert Lokasola, on his trip to the United States to report on the work of Vie Sauvage to BCI (in DC). Leanne had the opportunity to ask Albert about the work that Indigo Foundation supports in Kokolopori and was very impressed, not only with Albert's answers but also the vision of sustainable development that Albert has for his homeland. Details of this meeting will appear in Indigo Foundation's Annual Report, due out in October.

## Achievements

Overall, the health project that Indigo Foundation supports has been a qualified success, with major results being:

- A reduction in the incidence of malaria. A survey conducted during the Project indicates that there has been a 22% reduction in malaria between July 2007 and June 2008, including a decrease in the number of children under 5 and pregnant women who have malaria.
- The anti malaria project has raised community awareness of the causes of malaria and methods to prevent it, along with a greater awareness of health and disease prevention. Based on the data of the number of people treated at the Bonobo Health Clinic for diseases, hundreds of people in Kokolopori are using ITNs and/or are being treated for malaria.
- The community has participated actively in the project. For example, where there have been deficiencies in numbers of ITNs, the villagers have

found solutions themselves by organising a random ballot system. They have advocated and arranged for bicycles to distribute medication and ITNs over the 70 kilometre stretch of villages in Kokolopori. They have been active in making suggestions through the project manager about ways to combat malaria recommending that hoes and machetes be provided to clear areas where malaria carrying mosquitoes breed. Villagers have also requested more information and educational programs on malarial prevention and health related issues.



*Transporting ITNs by bicycle*

- The Bonobo Health Clinic can now access basic community education materials from four government-run national health programs. However, as Albert Lokasola has said, "The government has the materials but putting together a strong program and implementing it is a different matter". Albert spoke of the need to resource public health education in the 35 villages that make up Kokolopori - an issue that Indigo Foundation feels is important to address.
- Because a health clinic presence is now in Kokolopori, the villagers now have access to free vaccinations provided by the government's National Health Program.
- The Project has also triggered the employment of Dr Saidi who is the only doctor in the whole region serving approx 23,000 people. Dr Saidi's salary (and the salary of another nurse at the clinic) is funded by the 'Kokolopori-Falls Church Sister City Partnership' (KFCSCP) based in Virginia, USA.

Besides meeting with Albert earlier this month, Leanne also met with KFCSCP, which is the only other organisation supporting health care in Kokolopori. As a result of this meeting, steps are being taken to create a formal collaborative partnership with KFCSCP in order to more effectively coordinate the support of health care projects in the region. The benefits of this are obvious, for example, to avoid duplication and enhance critical information sharing. KFCSCP's director, Ingrid Shulze, is very excited about exploring ways to strengthen our partnership in order to provide optimal benefit to the communities in Kokolopori.



*Leanne Black (Indigo Foundation), Albert Lokasola, (Vie Sauvage) & Ingrid Shulze (KFCSCP)*

### The challenges

This anti malaria project, located in one of the most isolated regions on earth, is not without major challenges:

- The rate at which ITNs have been supplied to Kokolopori is slow and sporadic. The available public health literature recommends that it is better for a whole community to be supplied with ITNs in as short a period of time as possible because the fewer people who have malaria, the lesser chance there is for malarial mosquitoes to become infected with the parasite and thereby infect humans. This has not proved possible in delivering ITNs to Kokolopori because the main mode of transportation in delivering goods is a small pirogue, which has limited carrying capacity.
- To avoid discord in the family, some polygamous husbands in Kokolopori have been storing the randomly distributed ITNs until they have one for each wife.
- The lifespan of the ITNs is shorter than anticipated because a particular type of moth eats the nets, mice nibble holes in them, and they easily rip because the bamboo beds, to which they are attached, tear the fabric.
- There is the pressing issue of the diagnosis of malaria. It is important to properly diagnose malaria because all sorts of illnesses can present themselves as 'malaria', e.g. fevers, chills, headache, and this increases the danger of wrong diagnosis, wrong (and wasteful) treatment and its associated negative side effects. The only laboratory technician qualified to screen malaria - Antoine Salimwamwa - sadly passed away last year and subsequently there is no-one qualified to diagnose malaria (via lab results). Although the clinic has a microscope, a high priority is to obtain malaria diagnostic kits (including slides), along with funds to either train one of the existing nurses or hire an already trained nurse from somewhere else to take Antoine's place.

- Insufficient time and financial resources have been devoted to follow up work after the ITNs have been distributed.
- An important issue that Albert brought up to Leanne in their meeting was that more work needs to be done in clearing mosquito breeding grounds. An example of controlling 'mosquito beds' is by continually cutting the tall grass that exists in populated regions so the wet grass and puddles can dry up with increased exposure to sunlight. Community education is the catalyst for this to happen. The funding provided by Indigo Foundation does not cover much, if any, community education on such matters.

Systemic challenges associated with health care in Kokolopori in general are:

- The isolation of Kokolopori and the expense in getting to Kokolopori, makes monitoring and evaluation trips particularly problematic. Photographic evidence, along with videos and reports sent by the Congolese project manager, Bienvenu Mupenda, are the main forms of communication in how the project is going.
- The geographic isolation of Kokolopori means that, in the foreseeable future, the DRC government and other development agencies are unlikely to provide any significant health services to this region.
- There is a swathe of critical health problems in the community, besides malaria, for example, other tropical diseases, malnutrition and the need for reproductive health education, all of which require funding to help the community become educated in adopting preventative health measures.

### The way forward

Indigo Foundation is arranging for a representative to travel to Kokolopori to ensure the funds are being properly allocated, to improve monitoring and evaluation systems and, most importantly, to strengthen relationships between Indigo Foundation, Vie Sauvage (including finding out how we can better support their community development efforts), and the Kokolopori community.

Once this trip has happened, Indigo Foundation will allocate funding where appropriate to the provision of malarial diagnosis kits and the anti-malarial program, including community education concerning the use of ITNs. Indigo Foundation will also explore with its partner organisations how to speed up the transportation of ITNs and ways in which community education to fight malaria at its source – mosquito breeding sites – can be accomplished. Funding will also be allocated specifically for a general training, education and information on health issues including nutrition and sanitation.

It is also essential to improve direct communication between Indigo Foundation and Kokolopori and, given the logistic difficulties because of the region's

remoteness, strategies to achieve this are currently being explored.

Thanks to all those responsible for making this very challenging (and rewarding) project possible!

Indigo Foundation Project Manager: Leanne Hankey  
MC Representative: Phil Strickland

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## Indigo Foundation finances

### Situation – CRITICAL

*Sally Stevenson - Chairperson*

One of the key agenda items at the Management Committee meeting in July was to ratify our budget for the 2009-2010 financial year. Unfortunately, the Committee was obliged to reject the budget as presented: with current expenditure and fundraising estimates, Indigo would **run out of funds in early December**. Let me expand.

#### Last year.....

The 2008-09 draft accounts show that we raised \$86,000. This is about \$16,000 less than last year. At the same time we spent \$150,000, **leaving a loss of \$64,000**. Using up some of our reserve was part of our financial plan, but clearly income was insufficient for our expansion. Why did this happen?

The momentum within Indigo for fundraising was not able to keep pace with expansion. The number of fundraising events we held was less than the average for previous years, and how much each event was able to raise has declined. This is because we have reached the limit of our current networks – we have drawn heavily (and gratefully) upon friends and family to support us, but we must now reach beyond these.

#### This year.....

We require a minimum cash reserve of \$20,000. This, plus operating costs for 2009-10 totals approximately **\$150,000**. Our conservatively projected income over the next year is \$50,000. Therefore, to maintain current activities, **it is urgent we raise at least \$50,000 before December**. What have we done to date?

- **Reduced or delayed costs** within some projects (for example, Thailand, East Timor and Congo).
- **Suspended** supporting new projects until we have (and can maintain) our reserve in the bank, and have some certainty about future income. For example, at the July meeting we received a proposal for a project in Gaza, which in principle we would like to support, but will revisit in January.
- **Developed marketing and fund raising guidelines** for all Indigo volunteers.
- **Initiated** various activities including: working with M&C Saatchi on branding, identifying Rotary Clubs we can speak at and seek support from, organising a signature Indigo evening & auction

(see enclosed leaflet); and launching social a marketing strategy through 'facebook' and 'twitter'.

### Lunchtime seminars

We are also requesting Indigo volunteers and interested supporters to ask their workplace to organise a lunchtime seminar for employees, where we can present the Indigo Foundation. This is a strategy which we believe is full of potential. It is not simply to spin a sales pitch – but can provide an opportunity to raise awareness about international development in general – its successes and challenges. More particularly it gives us an opportunity to highlight the issues facing our beneficiaries – and what marvellous work they do to overcome them. In addition, it fits nicely with Indigo's more personal approach.

### What we ask of our supporters!

We have a clear policy that states we cannot request additional funds from our supporters, believing this 'hassle' factor undermines the integrity of Indigo, and the commitment of our supporters.

However, we are now in a situation where we do need your assistance. What could you do?

- Organise a **lunch time seminar** for an Indigo Representative in your workplace: ask about workplace giving and how Indigo can access this;
- Hold or attend a fundraising event (we provide an Indigo speaker!) – including providing **in-kind donation of goods or services** for our upcoming auction!
- Tell your friends and networks about Indigo - **Don't be shy – we are a great organisation, supporting incredible people. Our story is excellent, and what we achieve is amazing;**
- Order a case of **Indigo wine** (see enclosed) by 24<sup>th</sup> August – the form is also on our website!
- Let us know if you belong to a **Rotary Club**, and would like us to speak at a meeting;
- Join **facebook** and **twitter** and 'get talking' – help us create some 'buzz' within a new and very large audience; and
- Much much more....

**If you would like to assist please do not hesitate to call me on 02 4285 9290, or Sue Cunningham on 0400 7160982 or email us at [indigo.foundation@bigpond.com](mailto:indigo.foundation@bigpond.com)**

Clearly, we are in for a tough year. However, I am confident that we can manage, if we work together. I will, of course keep you updated about our progress, and if you would like to assist in any way, please do contact me.

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## Bread for Borjagai's University Students in Kabul, Afghanistan

*Sarah Kelly - Project Manager*

We are delighted to tell our members and supporters about a new project which will support Hazara students from Borjagai village in Afghanistan to study at Kabul University.

Indigo Foundation has been supporting education in the village of Borjagai since 2003. We have contributed funds for teachers' salaries, a co-educational school building and the first girls' high school in the region. During that time, the dedication of the teachers and students has resulted in some impressive achievements.

Last year 19 of the 20 high school graduates who sat the national exams were accepted into university (an unheard of success rate in the regions). A Provincial survey rated the Borjagai high school as first in Nawor Province.

This success has prompted the community to discuss with Indigo Foundation ways in which the students might be assisted to complete their university education in the face of many obstacles they encounter when they move to the 'big smoke' of Kabul.

### School graduates living in Kabul

Currently, there are about 90 students from Borjagai studying at university. About 30 have been there for 2 or 3 years and have managed to find part time jobs (with non government organisations or teaching English) to support themselves. A few students come from families that can support them. This leaves about 50 students who have not yet found jobs and are finding it very hard to support themselves. Most of them took a year off after school to teach at the Borjagai school which helped them save some money, although not enough.



*Kabul, Afghanistan*

Many of the students live together in a large house which is used during the day as an 'office' of the small Association that they have set up. Initially the students found it difficult to agree on how they could help each

other through the Association and how Indigo Foundation might assist them. Interestingly, one of the avenues they used to help sort out their differences was to include some of the tribal elders, who are living in Kabul, as members of the Association. By the time of Salman Jan conducted his monitoring and evaluation visit in mid 2008, the level of cooperation had improved and the Association was operating more smoothly. Salman was able to consult closely and effectively with the students about what they needed.

Students find it hard to get affordable accommodation in Kabul because they have very little money. Under the previous Soviet system, students who successfully passed the entrance exams were automatically given funds to cover their living expenses. This is no longer the case. Students who pass the exams have only their education paid for and they must support themselves. The cost of living for a student per year is approximately \$A500. The Kabul students find it easier to support themselves both because they have family to live with and because they have better English skills and can often teach English as a part time job. The Borjegai students can take up to two years to find a job, for example, in a hotel, because they do not even know the Kabul dialect when they arrive.

**Assistance with bread**

The students proposed that a small contribution to the more needy among them, to cover the cost of bread for a few months, would make a significant difference in helping them cope in Kabul while they settled in and looked for work. Bread is the staple for most people in Kabul, since meat and vegetables are so expensive. Three serves of bread costs about 30 Afghanis a day (roughly 80 Australian cents). Only two years ago the same amount of bread cost 10 Afghanis. This cost increase makes it very hard for the students to feed themselves on this most basic diet.



*Man selling bread*

The older students with part time jobs explained to Salman that learning English is an important way to get

part time work. They suggested that the students receiving a small stipend for bread could perhaps be encouraged to take English classes, which the older students would be happy to teach them. This would be a way of improving the ability of the new arrivals to get part time work as quickly as possible so that they don't need the stipend any more.

**Giving back to the Borjegai community**

In addition, the newer students that Salman spoke to said they would like to contribute something back to the community in return for receiving the bread stipend (even though Salman did not suggest this would be necessary). They have proposed that when they return home for 4 months during winter, they could teach courses in the Mosque (which is one of the few heated meeting places). The Mosque is the centre of activity where people go to pass the time, given the harsh conditions during winter. They have suggested they could teach basic literacy and numeracy courses to adults. They could also teach material they learned at university to the teachers who live in Borjegai. They are confident there is enough interest for them to try this project next winter.

**A three year commitment agreement**

As a result of the consultation, Indigo Foundation has entered into an agreement with the Association to provide \$6,000 per year for 3 years for the university students. The Association will identify the students who need help. This will be based on those students who have recently arrived at university, their lack of employment, and their lack of financial support from their families. There is no obligation on the students to undertake the extra activities that were suggested, but we understand they are going to experiment with these anyway.

Thanks to the support of two generous Indigo Foundation donors committed to 'kick starting' this project, the first annual payment has been made. Indigo Foundation volunteers are already planning fundraising events in preparation for next year's funding.

As with all Indigo Foundation's commitment agreements, we require regular updates and feedback from our community partners. We look forward to reporting on the progress of this committed and courageous group of young people.

Indigo Foundation Project Manager:	Sarah Kelly
Project Advisor:	Salman Jan
MC Representative:	Sue Cunningham

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## East Timor Tobacco Project

*Rowena Ivers - Project Advisor*

Investing in effective international development means accepting that certain risks must be assumed. These can be identified, managed and minimized, but nonetheless exist if real change and progress are going to take place. Indigo Foundation supports calculated risk taking where it has a strong chance of a) supporting a community's development priorities, and b) will lead to positive results. Often in small organisations, or small projects there is a heavy reliance on individuals. This is neither ideal nor always avoidable. In these cases, Indigo Foundation does its best to facilitate the establishment of support structures, safety nets and a broader distribution of knowledge and responsibilities.

Unfortunately, we have encountered some difficulties with our East Timor project, which we reflect on below. They are not insurmountable, but do represent challenges that are 'typical' in development.

Indigo Foundation initiated and funds an anti tobacco project in East Timor through Caritas Dili, a not-for-profit organisation. The project focuses on the implementation of the country's first tobacco control program and, to date, has involved:

- specialist training in tobacco control for the project worker Atanasio De Jesus;
- development of a training package in tobacco control in the Tetum language;
- delivery of training to health professionals in two regional areas, urban health centres and university students;
- collaborating with the Ministry of Health and staff from the World Health Organisation who also have responsibility for tobacco control in public events, such as *World No Tobacco Day*;
- working with the media; and the
- implementation of a smoke-free health facilities policy.

In May, we received a report from Caritas' auditor (including a statement from Caritas's Director) that the project worker had misappropriated \$US1,754 of project funds. In addition, recent communications revealed that the project worker has been working on other health projects (for example in TB and HIV control) since June, rather than solely on the tobacco projects for which he was being paid (and which we are funding).

We are endeavouring to work closely with Caritas on these financial and management issues. The need for good communication in these situations cannot be underestimated. Yet, even this is challenging as there is limited access to email by project staff and the country

has a highly inefficient phone service. Nonetheless the following actions have been taken.

Firstly, steps were immediately put in place to recover the money from the project worker. Whilst the auditor's recommendation was to dismiss him, Caritas chose to receive a letter of acknowledgment and apology and to garnishee his wages. The full amount is expected to be recovered by December.

Secondly, we have requested a report from Caritas by the end of July that outlines the revised work program of work until the end of the year – assuring us the worker will be employed full time on the original aims of the tobacco project unless otherwise negotiated.

Thirdly, and most importantly, we have an Indigo Foundation representative meeting with Caritas management in Dili over the next few weeks to outline our deep concern about the direction the project has taken, and to discuss ways in which it can be turned around. Our representative will also ask to review all financial documents relating this project.

Next, to reduce the concentration of information we have requested increased information sharing sessions be implemented, preparing other Caritas and government health workers to undertake aspects of the program if these issues cannot be resolved to our satisfaction.

We are also working with Caritas to submit a funding application to the Global Tobacco Fund. If successful, this will provide substantial and ongoing funding for a national anti-tobacco program, jointly managed by Caritas and the Ministry of Health. As Indigo Foundation funding is due to finish early in 2010, this has always been part of the action plan for the project: to catalyse international attention and funding. That this application can be submitted is encouraging – it indicates East Timor's fledgling tobacco control program is at a point where it *can* compete for global funding.

Finally, we have indicated to Caritas that in the worst case scenario, we will suspend our funding. This is, of course, the last thing we want to do.

The above-mentioned challenges should not detract from the fact that tobacco use in East Timor is excessively high and this, obviously, has serious implications for the health and wellbeing of the population. Nor should it take away from the success of project activities to date.

We remain optimistic that the project will continue well, and will keep you informed of the outcomes.

Indigo Foundation Project Manager:	Rachel Reilly
Project Advisor:	Rowena Ivers
MC Representative:	Sally Stevenson

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## Colours of the Sun!

### Small stitches from Syria create joy & optimism

*Lisa Addison*



An exhibition of contemporary hand embroidered panels from Syria was held at 'the Q' exhibition Space, Queanbeyan in January 2009. The embroideries in the 'Colours of the Sun' exhibition were the work of artists of the Jabal Al Hoss women's cooperative, located in rural Syria. The exhibition was very successful with all the works in the show being sold to benefit the children of Jabal Al Hoss, by providing a bus service for children of high school age to attend school 20km away.

Syria is a country that has an outstanding textile tradition. Older women in the rural areas are still practicing much of the old textile techniques for themselves, as they used to when they were young.

Jabal Al Hoss is one of the poorest areas in Syria, and is located 15 km southeast of Aleppo. Aleppo is one of the world's oldest continually inhabited cities and used to be a major destination on the ancient 'Silk Route'.



The distinctive architecture of the Jabal AL Hoss area is the 'bee-hive' shaped mud-brick houses. Agriculture

and livestock are the dominant means of income generation, although the soil is poor and there is very little water. Much of the work is done by women in addition to raising children and household responsibilities. In the afternoon, when their housework is finished, the women work on their embroideries for a few hours. All embroidery is done by hand. Raising money through the sale of handicrafts and investing it into the community is an example of sustainable cultural development – harnessing culture to improve quality of life and keep cultural heritage alive and evolving.



*Housing in Jabal Al Hoss*

The 'Colours of the Sun' exhibition and opening event, which featured a fashion parade of contemporary Syrian embroidery and Syrian food provided by the Syrian Embassy, promoted the link between culture and development. Pat Duggan, an Indigo Foundation volunteer briefly talked about Indigo's work and guiding principles.



*Pat Duggan (Indigo Foundation), Lisa Addison & Tammam Suliaman (Syrian Ambassador to Australia) speaking at the exhibition.*

Lisa returned to Syria in May to take the proceeds of the exhibition to the Jabal Al Hoss community and to investigate the potential for an Indigo Foundation project. Lisa travelled with Heike Weber who works with the women of Jabal Al Hoss (see think piece for details) and observed the dynamics of the cooperative 'in action'.

This initial survey gave some fresh insight into the capacity and needs of the community. A major resource needed is access to water (currently it must be bought in at a cost of approximately 2 weeks wages for a month's supply of water, more if you need to water animals or crops), however a smaller project is required at the early stages to test and build capacity of the community. Other important needs to build capacity include adult literacy and numeracy (the majority of women cannot read or write or add up), and access to medical care, for example via a

travelling clinic or weekly clinic in the village. The implications of supporting such a project are being explored by Lisa and Indigo Foundation.



*See Lisa's excellent article on handicrafts and development next....*

## THINK PIECE

### Handicraft trade for poverty alleviation and cultural development – is it sustainable?

*Lisa Addison*

The handicraft industry appears to be successful and prolific when seen for sale in copious quantities at tourist outlets, fair trade shops and online catalogues or sold as utilitarian goods. However, what are the effects of the 'industry' on the artisans, and their cultures? This article investigates the mechanisms of the handicraft industry and discusses the benefits and problems of handicraft production for artisans and their communities, particularly in relation to sustainability.

#### What characterises the handicraft industry?

The handicrafts industry is generally characterised as small to medium scale, home production. It is labour intensive, may supply the local market (for everyday goods), local tourist markets, and international export markets. Often this work is done by the 'poorest of the poor', people from marginal rural areas where agriculture is not enough to sustain a living. Handicraft work provides additional income and can be done at home, in most cases by women.

Sales of handicrafts may occur directly between producer and consumer (via handicraft markets, local supply to residents, or tourist visits to workshops). However, the general pattern within the small scale handicraft industry is that 'middlemen' (sometimes 'middlewomen') who have access to trade networks, benefit the most – buying pieces from artisans at low prices, and selling to the market with a large mark-up (Oakes, 2002; Pande, 2008). In response to such exploitation, fair trade networks have emerged as a relatively large market for handicraft products and the internet is opening up further opportunities for direct trade between producer and consumer.

**Global tourism and trade** are the obvious catalysts for the handicraft industry to expand its reach beyond local sales and domestic use. Handicrafts in all their forms can be powerful mediums for communication between people living different lives and in different countries; we respond to the various textures, symbols and forms of handicrafts that express different cultural traditions. Consumers from affluent nations seek out exotic and unique objects of handicraft production, and often want to learn more about the producers and their culture (Nash, 1993, cited in Scrase, 2004). Globalisation improves cultural understanding, and facilitates cross pollination of influences, which can help evolve the handicrafts and designs, particularly via technological improvements and exposure to other materials.

For artisans – most often from poorer nations – selling their handicrafts supplies income, retains and develops traditional skills, and maintains cultural integrity. At the margins of the mainstream economy, continuing craft

production by a community of artisans can also be a form of resistance and struggle in a rapidly changing global society, providing producers with a sense of symbolic power in maintaining their cultural identity (Scrase 2003).

On the downside of globalisation, there are risks that need to be mitigated such as: the commodification of cultures and subsequent devaluation, popularity generating fakes, increased global demand leading to lower quality of products, and exploitation of artisans.

#### Home based production

Women in developing countries tend to be the main producers of handicrafts from the home. Skills and cultural knowledge are generally passed down through generations, such as women learning needlework skills from their mothers, or through training within families, communities, or artisan schools, such as wood carving, metalwork and glassblowing.

Handicraft production and sales are important for earning supplementary income, which is significant in families headed by women who have limited employment opportunities outside the home. The home based work can fit in with other duties and is rewarding in expressing artistic skill and cultural pride, while the additional income provides self esteem and certain empowerment of women.

Sometimes entrepreneurial women start up handicraft businesses themselves without formal financing, or with sponsorship from NGOs, government grants, or microcredit loans. For example, women living in one of the poorest rural areas of Syria, Jabal al Hoss, have benefited in the start-up and marketing of needlework through microfinance and technical support from the United Nations Development Project, and from the design and marketing assistance of the Syrian-based Anat Workshop for Arabian Handicrafts. Some changes in social and gender dynamics has occurred in Jabal Al-Hoss where some men are gaining new respect for women's skills and business activities (Hegeland, nd, Weber pc 2006, 2009)..

Home based handicraft production has some problematic aspects however, including a high risk of exploitation through middlemen/women who pay very low prices for labour intensive and skilled work, lack of collective bargaining power through isolation in the home, and reinforcement of gender segregation. For example, in Shidong, China, due to commercialisation of embroidery, high product demand and extreme poverty of people living there, women embroiderers work for almost nothing. The main beneficiaries in many cases are, yet again, the middlemen/women, particularly where cultural hierarchies limit power (Oakes, 2002). With home based work, children often also assist their mothers with their handicraft work which, in an example from Hyderabad, India, saw many girls quitting school at high school entry age to work at home with their mothers making bangles (Pande, 2008).

## **Fair trade networks**

Fair Trade organisations such as Oxfam, Ten Thousand Villages and Community Aid Abroad are probably the most prominent sites bringing our attention to handicrafts for sale to support development aid. Fair Trade organisations began in the 1940's with charity groups such as the Mennonites in North America selling goods from poor regions through their church networks. These NGOs developed Alternative Trade Organisations and initiated the import and sale of fair trade handicrafts through mail order and church groups (Fridell, 2004). The first Fair Trade certification label, 'Max Havelaar' was launched in the Netherlands in 1988 and Fair trade Labelling Organisations International (FLOI) has established common guarantees of fairness.

Although handicrafts represent only a small percentage of all fair trade sales (most of it is in cocoa, coffee, bananas), these networks have opened up much wider markets for artisans. Unfortunately what has emerged is a high level of competition between producers, saturation of the market with particular products, and in some cases a sense of hopelessness from artisan communities about their position and inability to compete in the global market, despite the good intentions of the NGOs (Scrase, 2003). To counter some of these problems of oversupply, market saturation and market fickleness, many of the NGOs employ product designers to assist communities adapt their products to suit the market fashions, aesthetics, improve production qualities, within the framework of sensitivity and appropriateness for the culture. It has also been reported that Fair trade sales have not proven profitable for some NGOs, and some have subsequently scaled back trade and orders to artisans because there is reduced demand. Fair trade organisations recognise many of the problems with the handicraft industry, and work is being done to continually improve products, market goods appropriately and sustain markets for artisans (Littrell and Dickson 1999).

## **Tourist demand**

Tourism is responsible for the development of a global handicraft industry, and the continuation and expansion of such tourist demand has seen benefits and problems emerge for handicraft producers. Contact with outsiders – from sailors to officials and tourists – and their interest in the different culture and aesthetics of the producer's society has created a wider market for handicrafts. Also, handicrafts seen 'in context' of where they originate is a very powerful motivator for purchase by tourists. Selling handicrafts to tourists can provide additional income for the families of the producers, but research in this areas has highlighted the risks of this including exploitation of small scale producers via middlemen, commodification of the craft, and in some cases decline in quality due to increased demand can be problematic, as is the risk of a market vanishing if tourism trends change (Oakes, 2002). The authentic product can sometimes be overtaken by the market being flooded with cheaper articles imitating the handmade products which inspired them (Markwick, 2001).

## **Artisan cooperatives**

With the technical, advisory, and sometimes financial assistance of NGOs, artisans are encouraged to work together and achieve some economies of scale in purchasing, marketing and trading handicraft products. These coops and the individuals within are sometimes funded through microfinance schemes. In some communities where cooperatives operate, a proportion of the sale price is factored in to go into a village/community fund to be used for community projects. For example, in Syria since 2006, the Jebel Al Hoss cooperative collectively have invested profits, from sales of their embroideries at international exhibitions, in infrastructure for high school age children to access education (Weber, 2006a), while in Morocco, the weavers of N'kob and Ben Smim villages invest a percentage of the sales of each piece into village associations (Davis, 2004)

## **Internet marketing**

Internet marketing has emerged as a significant outlet for handicraft sales, at least in terms of internet presence; the most numerous of these outlets are the alternative/fair trade organisations such as on-line sales pioneers PEOPLink, Oxfam, and Ten Thousand Villages. However, at this time, the available literature reviewing the impact of the internet as a vehicle for selling handicrafts concluded there was little evidence to suggest that these operations are selling a significant amount of craft goods direct to consumers and therefore producers will continue to be vulnerable to market trends and remain among the poorest in society.

Some of the problems of internet marketing identified in a study funded by the UK Government Department for International Development, include:

- The virtual nature of shopping on-line and inability to touch, feel or smell the items may deter sales
- Digital photos may be of various quality and are often not colour accurate, particularly an issue for retail buyers
- Consumers expect high service standards such as rapid delivery, warranty on items, and high quality workmanship, which may be difficult to achieve for some artisans in developing countries who sell direct to Western consumers
- Trusting in a company or brand, and financial security concerns shopping on-line with a credit card to smaller operators are concerns for many consumers.

Although this does not sound promising for artisans, the study also gave recommendations of where the Internet and other related technologies could assist in creating new approaches to selling handicrafts for example: participating more actively in global communications, like using the internet for advocacy, cultural understanding and educating the public about the conditions that handicraft workers live in and lead to improvement of

conditions, encouraging direct longer term contact and trust in the internet sales.

## Conclusion

The problems and limitations of handicraft production and trade have been well documented, with the main concern, from a development or poverty alleviation perspective, being the nature of production, along with the small amounts received in small scale, labour intensive handicraft enterprises which are not substantial enough to make a living from it. At best the work can only provide supplementary income. Therefore, for artisans, the ability for social and economic development to be generated purely from the handicraft production industry is very limited – on the periphery of solid, sustainable development.

Nonetheless, in very poor communities, small amounts of money *can* make a difference, and if the supplementary income is reinvested into infrastructure for the business or improving health or education there will be multiplying effects in the future, albeit more slowly than some other enterprises. Despite its problems and limitations, handicraft production is a very important, valuable industry because cultural identity and skills survive through this medium in the face of rapid global change.

**Editor's note:** Lisa Addison has written an excellent essay which, due to the word limit of our newsletter, had to be significantly reduced. The whole 10 page version of this essay, including full footnotes, references and two very interesting case studies (Anat Workshop for Arabian Handicrafts and *Marrakesh Express* website for Moroccan rugs) is available on request at [indig.foundation@bigpond.com](mailto:indig.foundation@bigpond.com)

**About the author:** Lisa is an Indigo Foundation supporter who works as an art conservator at the National Art Gallery. Lisa recently completed a postgraduate degree in sustainable heritage development at the Australian National University.

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## Indigo Foundation People

*Sue Cunningham - Interim Development Coordinator*



I discovered Indigo Foundation in 2003 when I was doing my Masters in Social Change and Development at the University of Wollongong. I met Susan Engel in one of my classes and she told me Indigo Foundation was looking for someone to be Project Manager for a project in the Solomons. I jumped at the

chance of working with a small, relationship based community development organisation and was impressed that the founding members were funding Indigo Foundation themselves. My enthusiasm for Indigo has grown over the years as we are finding new ways to support communities and learn as we do it.

Going to the Solomons to review Indigo's support for peace building activities on the isolated Weathercoast convinced me that this was the part of the country that

was in need of continued support. The Weathercoast had been badly affected during the 2000 coup and subsequent fighting with many people living in fear and their lives and livelihoods disrupted. On my second trip I met a young man who showed me a hand written prospectus for the training centre they wanted to set up, with backing from the local community. The dream of community leaders to set up the Turusuala Community Based Training Centre was in its infant stages and Indigo Foundation agreed to support the centre as it grew. We have been supporting Turusuala for four years and I was lucky to be at the graduation ceremony of the first students to graduate in late 2007.

I've had a wide range of work experience, starting out as a teacher of primary and secondary students and more recently working in adult education. I was the Development Education Coordinator for Community Aid Abroad (now Oxfam) for six years, during which time I coordinated visits for CAA's project partners, organised conferences and helped build CAA's community base. I also led a study tour to Thailand to speak to CAA's project partners and learn about their experiences.

I was a Senior Education Officer for the Environment Protection Authority and more recently a Principal Consultant for RPR Consulting. Education has been the theme in this work and I am passionate about the role education can play in improving people's lives in developing countries and in Australia. Since moving to the Blue Mountains a year ago I have been teaching unemployed women through TAFE Outreach and inmates at Bathurst goal.

Most recently my husband and I have just bought a bookshop and internet café in Katoomba, a new adventure for both of us. I hope to establish it as a place we can run talks as well as sell books. I'm looking forward to my six months as Indigo Foundation's Development Coordinator and to getting to work with our many Indigo Foundation volunteers and supporters.

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## Recent Events & fundraisers!

*Community events and fundraisers 'spread the word' about Indigo Foundation and raise the necessary funds to support communities around the world.*

### More Swaps!

#### One....fabulous fashion swap

*Rowena Ivers writes:* Continuing in the Indigo Foundation tradition, helping the environment and helping to fund Indigo Foundation projects at the same time, I held a fashion swap in the Northern Suburbs of Wollongong on Sunday May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009. We raised over \$550. Compared to other fundraisers I have been involved in, in the past, this was a relatively low effort, high enjoyment event. If anyone would like advice on how to host a fashion (or book or toy) swap to raise funds for Indigo Foundation, feel free to email me at [RowenaIvers@bigpond.com](mailto:RowenaIvers@bigpond.com).

## Two....amazing accessories swap

In June, Jill Stevenson and Dell Shaw held a fun filled accessories swap. A house full of high quality accessories (hats, bags, scarves, jewellery...), high quality women (of course!) and lots of delicious food meant a fabulous and fruitful afternoon was had by all - and over \$1200 raised for Indigo.

## Three....bountiful book swap

Also in June, Sally Stevenson held a bookswap in Wollongong. With so many good books on offer, the dilemma was which ones to take home! Another easily organised, low stress, enjoyable afternoon that raised funds for Indigo, as well as informing guests of what we do, how we do it, and why we are good at it!

Many thanks to Rowena, Jill, Dell and Sally for their tireless commitment to supporting Indigo. Their efforts are very much appreciated.

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### ONLINE DONATIONS

We are able to receive **on-line donations!**

Go to **[www.indigofoundation.org](http://www.indigofoundation.org)** and you'll see the bright red 'donate now' icon on our homepage. This will transfer you to [ourcommunity.com.au](http://ourcommunity.com.au). This is a secure site, supported by Westpac, for not-for-profit donations. Receipts will be issued at the end of the month.

**Donations to Indigo Foundation are tax-deductible**

### Book Review

*By Dr Susan Park*

#### **Greening Aid? Understanding the Environmental Impact of Development Assistance**

Hicks, Robert L., Parks, Bradley C., Roberts, J. Timmons and Michael J. Tierney, 2008, Oxford, Oxford University Press

What do we know about how governments deliver aid? Who do governments choose to give aid to and why? For too long there has been relatively little scholarly examination of trends in the different types of aid given, especially concerning environmental issues.

Many of us are aware of the triage we encounter in getting aid projects going at the expense of others. But what we often lack is a good understanding of why governments choose to lend, to whom and why they choose to do so over time.

For anyone wanting to understand these issues, the book *Greening Aid?* is an invaluable resource. This treasure trove of information examines the trend in environmental aid from 1980 to 1999. It collates data from the largest lenders during this period, both bilateral and multilateral,

and explores why, and to what extent, donors gave loans and grants for environmental purposes.

The book is evidence of painstaking quantitative research. The authors compiled a database of official development assistance which they categorized into *brown* and *green* lending, according to the extent that the loan might negatively impact the environment over the long term. They further distinguish between *environmental* versus *dirty* loans (defined both broadly and narrowly). The raw data, the PLAID database, is available on their website; in addition to their detailed appendix.

The book can be read in couplets. Prefacing itself on examining why governments have not met the promises they gave in 1992, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro, it tests our assumptions on why states give environmental loans (chapters one and two). Chapter three details which states receive the most aid (currently China, India, Brazil, Kenya and Egypt), followed by chapter four which examines why these states are at the top of the list. Yes, China and India will have the most impact on global environmental trends; Brazil and Kenya have the most environmental hotspots and "megafauna"; while Egypt is pure geopolitics.

The next two chapters (five and six) examine which are the greenest donors. Denmark tops the list followed by Germany, Britain, the United States and Japan. While Denmark has been proportionately the strongest and most consistent 'green donor', the US was the earliest and Japan the most recent and, in terms of dollars spent, the largest (though this was offset by equal amounts of "dirty" lending during this period). Why? Domestic voter preferences matter; although environmental lending tends to correlate more to perceptions of international environmental behaviour (through signing treaties) than a donor's domestic environmental activities.

Chapters seven and eight examine the extent that multilateral development lending has been greened, offering an accurate, though truncated, account that lacks detailed sources. Most multilaterals now include environmental procedures in their operations, although most donors continue to channel their environmental loans bilaterally. The qualitative analysis offsets the real value of this volume - the sheer amassing of data on the volume, type and cause of environmental lending from 1980-1999. Although a decade old, this information is critical to building an accurate account of donor lending for specific purposes. For these reasons alone, I recommend *'Greening Aid? Understanding the Environmental Impact of Development Assistance'* to the aid community.

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## Management Committee Update

*Sally Stevenson - Chairperson*

It never fails to amaze me how much there is to say, when I come to write this column!

To start at the best place: people news. We warmly congratulate Phil Strickland and Kate Weir (both Management Committee members) on the safe arrival of their new daughter Claudia Charlotte. Welcome Claudia!

Being such a fertile organisation (!) we farewell Jenny Noble from the Management Committee, as she prepares for the arrival of her first child in early September. Jenny has been a key member of the Committee since 2002 – seven years! In this time she has been project manager for East Timor, MC Representative for East Timor, Chair (2003) and co-Chair (2008). Her thoughtful and provocative comments on the Committee (she's a great devil's advocate!) have been vital for the integrity of the organisation. Her sincerity, generosity and commitment vital to the social cohesion (and pleasure) of Indigo. Thanks for everything Jenny!

At the same time, the wonderful Sue Cunningham steps down from her position on the Committee to take up as Development Coordinator. Sue started with Indigo in 2003, has been project manager and MC Rep. for the Solomon Islands as well as MC Rep. for Thailand and Afghanistan. Her breadth and depth of development knowledge and experience is inspiring. Sue's specialty is monitoring and evaluation and the application of her skills across our development program will be much appreciated.

To replace Jenny we are very happy to welcome Stefan Knollmayer onto the Committee, just as he returns from three months in Afghanistan as the Australian Government Development Representative in Oruzgan Province. Stefan has worked for AusAID since 2003 and is currently the

Program Engagement Manager for the humanitarian section. He has a Masters in Development Administration from ANU. With this background, we certainly look forward to working him, as he becomes on MC Representative for both Afghanistan and India.

We also congratulate Mary Mertin Ryan (MC member) on gaining her Masters in Applied Anthropology and Participatory Development (specializing in Gender and Development). You couldn't say our Committee is under-qualified!

Libby House and Ian Seal are currently in Savu, our new project in Indonesia and will continue to Rote to work on our reproductive health program there. Mary is preparing to visit our partner Ayui Foundation in Chang Rai, Thailand to provide governance and management technical support.

Finally, we say goodbye to Kieran who has been our coordinator for the past 18 months. Kieran decided not to return from maternity leave, but rather to focus on her chosen career of life coaching. Kieran was our inaugural coordinator, and we were thrilled to have her on board – her unwavering enthusiasm and motivation were just what we needed. Her commitment to Indigo continues as a volunteer/supporter (on fundraising of all things!), and this we very much appreciate. All the best Kieran – we'll miss you!

To finish off, we are very pleased to announce that we approved a new project in Uganda for HIV/AIDs orphans and vulnerable children (as outlined in the May newsletter). A very challenging project, but one with so much potential – and need.

As always, thanks for your continued support and interest.

### Pass it along!

Once you have read the newsletter, why not pass it along to someone who you believe would be interested in supporting the work of Indigo Foundation.

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