



newsletter

June 2010 – issue # 24

India, Uganda, Central Australia, Solomon Islands,
policy think-pieces, and more...

Indigo Foundation is an independent, volunteer run, Australian community development organisation. We work with marginalised communities around the world providing innovative assistance to improve health, education, and human rights.

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, Palestine, India & Thailand.

A trip to India: Successes, Challenges and Dilemmas....

The Program for Education and Awareness Building – working to improved the opportunities for Dalit children in Tamil Nadu

Pat Duggan - Project Manager

As regular readers of this newsletter will know, we are nearing the end of the first phase of support to the Program for Education and Awareness Building (PEAB) to improve education opportunities for Dalit children, through the Pravaham Trust in Tamil Nadu.

To help Indigo to decide what the shape of support from Indigo beyond July 2010 should look like, we reviewed the current project in January 2010. Very luckily for us, Dr Sushila Zeitlyn, an anthropologist with many years experience working on social inclusion and caste issues in development programs in India, volunteered to help us in this endeavour.

So, January found me travelling to the project site in Madhurantakam (Mdtkm) with Sushila and Annie Namala, Indigo's liaison officer. Annie has been a mentor to the project team since 2006 when our funding began. It was to Annie, an old colleague in the Indian Social Action Movement, that Dayalan, our project manager, 'pitched' the PEAB. Annie has worked extensively with Dalit communities in Southern India and with others agencies such as UNICEF to build understandings about the best strategies for addressing caste based discrimination and promoting more inclusive development programs. She has recently

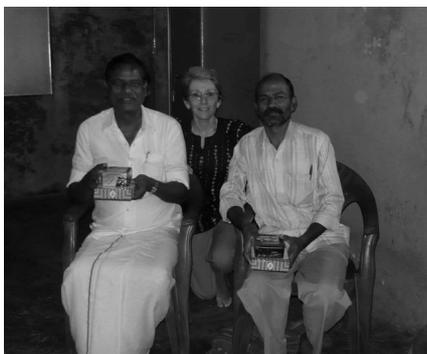
established 'Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion'. We were joined in Mdtkm by Pastor Devadoss, a Board member of the Pravaham Trust, the managing agency of the PEAB, and longstanding supporter to the field team in Mdtkm¹.



Our week of review, in Mdtkm and Chennai, was very intense. Our long discussions into the night with Sushila and Annie, and with our dynamic and engaged project team, Chezhiyan and Dayalan, left my head reeling! This was my third visit to the project, and I am amazed at the progress every time I visit. I always come away from Mdtkm feeling inspired: the determination and resilience of our project team, and the communities they work with, makes me think anything is possible.

I feel inspired, but I also feel humbled. I always learn a great deal from my visits. As someone who has worked in development assistance for over 20 years, it is so good to return to the central questions which are often

overlooked in the rush to convince ourselves that we people with the money are 'achieving results': is our funding helping to achieve real and positive change to the lives of the poorest and most marginalized in a community? How can we know this? How long should it take for real change to occur? What will real change look like? My lesson of the past two decades: success doesn't ever quite look like you think it will, and we always expect it to happen more quickly than it does!



Chezhiyan, Dayalan and Pat.

Chezhiyan and Dayalan

Chezhiyan is our dynamic, very able and committed community leader who runs the year 10 coaching program. Chezhiyan, a Dalit, thanks his mother for the unerring encouragement she gave when he decided to pursue his dream of being a teacher. Chezhiyan was the product of a first generation learner, and fully understands the challenges Dalit children face as (usually) first generation children. Chezhiyan was the first in his village to pass the then Standard Leaving Certificate in 1966. He retired as head master from a nearby Government School in 2007, and wants to use his time now to build an educated Dalit generation which achieves its dreams.

Dayalan has his roots in the Social Action movement of India. It was Dayalan who went to Annie with the idea of PEAB, a coaching program for Year 10. With two grown up daughters of his own, he realized the critical importance of adult support and guidance if first generation learners (most Dalit children) were to do well enough in senior high school to fulfill their dreams of a job in a profession well outside their parents' life experience.

Evaluation

Sushila has now completed her report, and it will be on the Indigo website in a month or so. I highly recommend it to you as a very concise, easy to read, account of the successes of the PEAB, and of the work ahead for Indigo and the project team to turn that success into sustained improvements in the lives of Dalit children in the areas PEAB works. It also includes a very handy summary of the context in which the project operates: social inequity imposed by the caste system in India, and the importance of action to address its crippling impact on the education opportunities of Dalit children.

For me, the most important finding from our week was that the benefits the PEAB can now be seen by

everyone. The Year 10 coaching² built from scratch by Mr Chezhiyan is delivering real results. The significant improvements in school performance for children who attended the coaching last year is starting to have important flow on benefits to the community. These benefits might best be described as 'improved confidence'. Mr Sridar, an illiterate rice mill labourer (the occupation of the majority of the community) described how his daughter, who participated in the year 10 coaching last year had moved from 25th to first position in the class. On a visit to the school after the exam results were published, other parents, who would normally have ignored this Dalit parent and certainly not have 'touched' him, shook his hand in congratulation at his child's result.

Whilst exam results are the most easily seen way the project can help improve the status of Dalits in their community, there are signs that the coaching is also a venue for building more cohesion. A few Year 10 coaching students are not Dalit, but from 'Other Backward Castes' – an Indian Government category which is still low caste but above the untouchable Dalits and in general do not wish to associate with them. The coaching school is also starting to be noticed by Muslims too, with two children now attending the coaching. This is very impressive: a Dalit-run coaching facility is attracting non Dalits.

Sushila's report recommends that Indigo and the Trust need to build alliances for the project to be better linked up to the wider work which is going on in Tamil Nadu to reduce caste discrimination through increasing education opportunities. The Government in Tamil Nadu (TN), teachers, educationalists and other community leaders are potentially very important allies to help build the sustainability of the project. This is a very hard ask of a project team and Trust which is already more than fully occupied in delivering the coaching and the VECs. Without this though, there is little chance for sustainability.



2010 Year 10 coaching class with the project team, Saranya, and Pastor Devadoss, of the Pravaham Trust.

This year's results are certainly encouraging. For example:

- About 30 joined the coaching at the beginning, three have dropped out.

- Of those who continued, 7 are boys and 20 are girls. This is quite remarkable as the coaching is in the evening with the students coming to the centre straight from school and get back home only by about nine pm which is quite late hours for girls in this rural area. Also they travel considerable distance to get back home.
- Four children achieved over 70% in the exams, with the highest being 82%. Another four received between 60-70%. Overall, 15 out of 27 scored over 50%.
- The two students who failed in one subject each will be separately supported to re-write the exam this month. If they are able to get through the exams, they can join class XI like other students.
- The centre is now in the process of helping the students to access admission for grade XI. They advise the parents and children on what are the possible courses and which schools are good. Dayalan supports the parents and the children through the process of admission. In case of any difficulties, Chezhiyan talks to the head teachers.

The success of the coaching is in no small part due to Chezhiyan's own networks. Most importantly, the involvement in the coaching of several retired teachers, colleagues of his. Their involvement has been an enormous benefit to the PEAB. They have also started to provide some technical support to the young tutors of the Village Education Centres (VECs) who are running daily classes with little formal training to do so.

A continuing challenge to the PEAB is its current spread of activities, and the need for more coherence. The VECs are a popular and well attended component of the project, but the "separateness" of this component from the year 10 coaching component, and lack of clarity about what the team wants the VECs to achieve in the longer term, remains issues for resolution in shaping the new phase of Indigo assistance.

Another important challenge is to not forget those who graduate from year 10! PEAB needs to provide follow up support to those who graduate successfully from year 10. As one parent told us, these children will continue to need support in Years 11 and 12 – these are harder years, and it is even more critical that these first generation learners have some good support. This has happened already, with Chezhiyan providing very important advocacy support to ensure students are well placed at schools in year 11. The question for Indigo is now to ensure this longer term support is available to those who achieve success in Year 10.

While the project has succeeded in building a successful model for a Dalit-run, affordable, community coaching program for senior high school, it is very early days. It is also important to remember that on the road ahead for PEAB, dilemmas abound. It is no surprise to find them – development is a heaving pot of contradictions and dilemmas to be resolved! Some of the dilemmas:

Success is a many layered thing: An important insight of Sushila's is the need to balance the enthusiasm generated

by the 'You can do it' philosophy of the coaching and VECs with the continued value of 'lesser' professions. Feeding off the highly competitive Indian education system, children we talked to had very high ambitions to be doctors, teachers and engineers: professions their parents could not have imagined for themselves. Whilst helping children who want this to achieve their dreams is important, it is also important to recognize that not all children can achieve this, and that better school marks could lead simply to better employment choices – nursing, for instance for girls, and to better jobs in factories. These need to be regarded as important achievements too: there is not a zero sum, and it is important not to devalue these other professions in the rush to the top. It may well be that these more modest achievements are more within the family's capacity to support in the longer term. The project team is very mindful of the importance of managing and supporting all levels of success!

Reaching the poorest Dalits: The Dalits we are working with are clearly very poor and amongst the most marginalized of Indian society. But within Dalit communities there are different levels of poverty. Some are much poorer, and much harder to reach. This includes three villages located across a river, which remain inaccessible for three months owing to the rainy season. VECs in these villages no longer operate owing to the difficulties for the project team in providing support to the VECs. Equally, year 10 coaching classes, held in the evenings in the main town of Mdkm, are generally located too far away to make attendance in the evening viable for children from these and other far flung villages. The project team and Indigo are now more cognisant of the need to think through strategies to better reach these children, arguably in more need of PEAB support than those it now reaches. Whatever strategies are developed, however, should not be at the cost of those who are already being reached, and who are also in need!...

VECs versus coaching: A longstanding question for us has been whether or not we have the right balance of resources across the two components of the project, the year 10 coaching and the VECs. The 8 VECs now operating require considerable effort from the project team to make sure they are offering relevant and quality support to the children who attend. To date, it has proven extremely difficult to provide the level of support to the tutors the PEAB would like to, but we know that there is now a plan to build this support better, using capacity in the year 10 coaching. That said, the tutors have remained a very stable force on the PEAB, who continue to grow into their work in supervising these homework centres, providing a quiet and organized space for younger children to come for free to build their capacity. The coaching, however, is gaining momentum and profile in the community, and its potential to succeed is strong.

We met with parents of children attending several VECs. When we asked the parents what was more important, the VECs, or the coaching, they responded 'don't make us choose both are very important to us'.



Sushila debriefing the project team & Annie at the end of her visit.

Perhaps Sushila's most important recommendation is that we need to build more evidence in support of what the project is achieving. We definitely need to be more scientific in gathering evidence for our successes, but we also need to better inform ourselves about the communities we are working with, to make sure our strategies are responding to community needs in a way which has the best chance of building sustainable and positive change. Thus, in support of developing our approach, we have underway already a study of the VECs: how are they helping the community? Is there another approach that would work better for young children's support? Who is not attending the VECs from the community, and why not? We have engaged a young PhD student studying social inclusion and education at Chennai University, and who completed a similar study on the coaching class of last year, to complete this work. This will hopefully feed into the discussions with PEAB, the Trust and Indigo around shaping the new project design.

Indigo has agreed to extend the existing project until March 2010. This will allow the project team, the Pravaham Trust, and Indigo to take a little more time to develop a more informed project design for the coming 3 years, while at the same time allowing the team to continue with important activities – including the commencement of the third group of year 10 coaching students, in August 2010.

We will let you know where that discussion heads in the months ahead.....

A personal story

This visit I was able to meet with some of the students of last year's Year 10 coaching courses that did so well. One of them, Nandini, is the daughter of Ammu, a Dalit single mother who runs the only Dalit tea shop in town in the non Dalit habitation (and perhaps in the region!). Nandini was in fine spirits having gained a very good result in her year 10 exams in May last year. With some help from Chezhiyan she was able to secure a place in Year 11 at once of the regions better schools, and is now on a trajectory to meeting her dreams. I was also able to meet, now for the third time, a group of the young tutors of the 8 Village Education Centres (VECs). This group was much more confident and assured about their role in maintaining the VEC in their community. It is a testament to their determination and talent that they

have largely carried on this work with minimal supervision and technical support from the project.

There is no doubt about it: the PEAB has established a momentum for improving education opportunities for Dalit children. There are lots of challenges for the team to take this momentum forward, but my sense is that we are seeing the birth of a marvelous thing; a Dalit owned and managed initiative to build opportunities for its members.

¹The Pravaham Trust is based two hours from Mdtkm, in Vellore.

Although managing projects like this was not previously an area of the Trust's business, it generously took on the role after urging from Annie, and has played a critical role in making the project happen. We cannot thank it enough for its unwavering support to the project team and to IF over the past 3 years.

²The importance in India for social mobility of doing very well in the Year 10 school exams has been emphasized by teachers, educationalists, the project team, and the parents benefitting from PEAB in all my visits. Results in year 10 will largely determine your profession and your earning capacity beyond.

Partner:	Pravaham Trust
Liaison Officer:	Annie Namala
Indigo Foundation Project Manager:	Pat Duggan
MC Representative:	Stefan Knollmayer

A good news report from Uganda!

An update from the Budaka project for orphans and vulnerable children.

Ian Seal - Project Manager

Greetings from Budaka, Uganda. I'm in my fourth week here, and have two to go. This is my first visit to Budaka since Indigo formally adopted the project, and since we made the first transfer of funds to the four community based organisations (CBO) we are working with, and I've been met with a gratitude and excitement that is quite overwhelming.

The purpose of my visit is to build on the relationships established with the four CBOs in 2009; to provide training to the CBOs on reporting and submission writing and on supporting grieving and traumatised children; to improve their capacity to provide participatory support programs to families affected by HIV/AIDs; to work with 2-4 local schools on capacity building with a focus on orphans and vulnerable children; to identify and prioritise four water springs for protection and develop a management framework for the protection process; and to assess the viability and community support for the signing of a three year Commitment Agreement between Indigo and the four CBOs.

Partnerships with the CBOs

Meetings with the four CBOs have been very positive, and each organisation has been able to demonstrate its accountability and transparency. An average meeting attendance is about 40 or 50 people, and often begins with a dance or song. Various community members who have benefited from the funds the CBOs received in February (for scholastic materials or chickens, for instance) give

testimonials as to how such resources have been distributed and utilised in the community. Each group is now developing a workplan and a proposed budget for Indigo's support in the year ahead. As part of this process, the groups are being supported to develop submissions and to understand reporting requirements.

Some of the meetings have also been an opportunity for broader community consultation. I've been amazed and humbled by the dignity and strength of some of the women in these consultations who are HIV positive, and who are fearful about what will happen both to their own children and to other children that they care for (usually the orphans of a sibling) once they become ill. The help that they hope for is always very basic – school uniforms and scholastic materials are the most common request. Generally these women are grateful just to have the opportunity to speak; they say that they experience a lot of stigma and that many people just don't want to acknowledge them.

34 volunteers attended training focused on addressing the psychosocial needs of orphans and vulnerable children. We talked about how orphans are perceived in the community and about how grief and trauma, compounded by social and economic disadvantage, impact on the lives of young people. The group estimated that at least 80% of orphans in Budaka experience mistreatment, neglect, stigma and extreme disadvantage. There are at least 6000 orphans in Budaka alone. We identified a number of issues on which further training, and sensitisation for the community, is required – such as will writing, talking to children about death, and developing memory books.

Working in schools

I've been to one of the three schools that have been proposed for me to work with, and will visit the other two this week. I spent half a day with the teachers in a training and planning session, and half a day with a class of students. The teachers were very receptive and keen to work with me. The focus was on building engagement and connection of orphans and vulnerable children to education.

The school was a Primary School, and the students I spent time with were in Grade Six. As children only begin school when they can, and because promotion from one class to the next is not automatic as it is in Australia, Grade Six students can be anywhere from 10 to 16 years old. The students drew pictures of their home and family, brainstormed the things in school that make them feel safe and happy and the things that make them feel unsafe or unhappy, and helped to make a short film which will be used to strengthen a partnership with a school in Australia.

Support program for orphans and vulnerable children

Together with the Kakuli AIDS and Grieving Families Association (KAGA), we have established a group program for twelve orphans. Two day-long sessions of the program ran last weekend, as well as a meeting with the guardians of the children. The program aims to build both peer support and psychosocial skills for dealing with grief loss and trauma. A third session is planned for next weekend,

and the participants will be supported by KAGA to continue meeting after I leave, should they wish to do so. Four volunteers from KAGA are co-facilitating the program with me, thus developing their skills in group work with young people.



Orphans from the group I ran with the Kakule AIDS and Grieving Families Association (KAGA), their guardians, and the four volunteer facilitators from KAGA.

We will use feedback from the participants, observations from the co-facilitators, and the comments of each child's guardian, to evaluate the program. If the response is positive it is hoped the program can be expanded to include other children and young people, and to be run in other parts of the District.

We have used a number of activities to support participants to share their stories and address their sense of loss. The three sessions focus on Past, Present and Future. In the first session participants were supported to draw family trees and to share memories of their parents. We talked about sadness, and what it meant to remember the past. In the second session we walked through the village together, and participants used cameras to share stories of their lives in the present. In the third session we will focus on dreams for the future, and how peer support and working with KAGA can help them to achieve.

Each child has a difficult story to tell. Most shocking to me is how the death of the father of each child leads to immediate and long term economic insecurity and disadvantage, and how simple are the needs in each family – clothes, shoes and school books are highest on the list.

Spring protection

Access to clean water is a major challenge in many parts of Budaka. Most families use spring water, and while the springs are reliable, the water becomes polluted by human and animal traffic as soon as it reaches the surface, and is both clouded and bacterial. Indigo agreed to provide assistance for the protection of four springs. With the support of Local Government, these have been selected and using a simple engineering process, will enable hundreds of families to access clean, safe water. I have visited each spring and seen how well used they are by dozens of women and children for both water collection and washing clothes, and there is great excitement in these communities about the imminent spring protection.

Partner: Four community based organisations, Budaka local government
Indigo Foundation Project Manager: Ian Seal
MC Representative: Mary Mertin-Ryan & Sally Stevenson

The new school in Borjegai, Afghanistan

A photo story....

The Rotary Club of Ryde, in partnership with Indigo and the Borjegai community is providing assistance to build a third school in Borjegai this year. Below is a series of photos that show the progress to date.



1. Classes for a long time have been held in tents. The blistering heat in summer and extreme winter temperatures made lessons at times impossible and the school year was shortened by 2 months.



2. School assembly near the construction site of the third school for Borjegai. Some children have backpacks donated by a local businessman.



3. Construction site: digging the foundations.



4. Construction site: concreting.

Salman Jan is leaving for a monitoring and evaluation trip to Borjegai at the end of this month. We look forward to his report, and many more photos!

Partner: Borjegai School & Borjegai Students Association
Australian partner: Rotary Club Ryde
Indigo Foundation Project Manager: Helen Reynolds
Project Advisors: Salman Jan, Ali Reza Yunespoor
MC Representative: Stefan Knollmayer

Printing on the Solomon Islands

Sally Anne Vincent - Project Manager

On the remote Weathercoast of Guadalcanal, a small school is using Indigo Support to improve the livelihoods and education of young girls.

The Turusuala Community Based Training Centre is located in one of the least developed parts of the Solomon Islands, which was particularly affected by the 1998-2003 ethnic tensions. Turusuala is the only one of its kind in the area providing educational and vocational opportunities for local youth who are excluded from the

education system. Most of the students come to the centre with only a primary school level education.

Turusuala has always had a struggle attracting girls to attend and learn useful and marketable skills like agriculture, joinery, building, sewing, home management, and food and nutrition. Recent linkages to the well established training from Honiara based Kustom Garden have improved the quality of education, but reduced the focus on traditionally women targeted programs, like food and nutrition.

The Turusuala Board were aware of this and in 2009 started implementing training courses that would attract girls. One of these was screen printing.

Turusuala funded Mary Teresa, an instructor at Turusuala, to attend a screen printing course in Honiara.

Solomon Islands women are often clothed in beautifully printed and colourful lava-lava's (sarongs). Lava Lavas serve as skirts, dresses, swaddling clothes for children, sheets and bedding. The materials are often made into clothes – island shirts and skirts. Bold frangipani prints and colourful maps of Solomon Islands not only shine in the white heat of a Solomon's day but also show pride in Solomon Islands.

Mary Teresa attended a two week screen printing training at Holy Cross on screen printing in Honiara in August, which was funded via the grant from Indigo Foundation. On her return she conducted three workshops on screen printing in September and October for young girls for three communities that surround Turusuala - Palisae, Longu Avu Avu, Turusuala.

When Indigo Foundation Liaison Officer Doni Keli visited Turusuala in March he saw the results of this training. 'The printing was excellent, made into clothes and displayed with pride', he said. 'They were so good I bought some for my wife as a present!' Doni also pointed out that although the number of women involved in the more traditionally male training areas had not improved, the screen printing outreach program had increased women's numbers by 50%.



Mary Theresa with some of her screen printing

'In my country, where change is slow, this is a good result and shows Turusuala targeting activities to bring girls into education. We're hoping programs like this will help to reduce barriers to girls education, and improve enrolments'.

Partner: Turusuala Community Based Training Centre
Liaison Officer; Doni Keli
Indigo Foundation Project Manager: Sally-Anne Vincent
MC Representative: 'Reiko Take

Nyirripi, Central Australia

An inspiring visit, a project possibility.

*Sally Stevenson - Management Committee with
Libby House - Development Coordinator*

*For a number of years Indigo has been looking for a way to support an Aboriginal community. Trying to find a project where Indigo support can have an important impact (given our relative small amounts of funding), where meaningful relationships can be developed and which is appropriate to the community has proven difficult. In May we were invited by Susie Low CEO of the Mt Theo Program (www.mttheo.org) to discuss and assess the possibilities of working with them to provide support for Walpiri youth. Also known as the **Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation**, Mt Theo is based in Yuendumu, 250kms from Alice Springs, and the largest and closest community to Nyirripi.*

In 1991, I worked in central Australia in a remote community called Nyirripi, about 400km from Alice Springs. My experience in Nyirripi, a community of about 150 people, struggling amongst other things with the devastating consequences of alcohol was both challenging and transformative. I was confronted by the poverty and brutal alcohol induced violence here in Australia. However, I was equally disturbed by the disconnect between what I *thought* I believed, and what I *felt* about Aboriginal people when faced with this situation. I was shocked and very disappointed to learn of my own internalised racism. This realisation – and the imperative for me to address it has informed and driven much of my community development work ever since.

Almost twenty years later, I felt incredibly privileged to have this invitation to return to Nyirripi. Both Libby and I went to Yuendumu and met with the Board and staff of the Mt Theo Program, and community members and youth leaders in Nyirripi. We were both inspired by the program itself and by the concrete opportunity for Indigo to provide assistance to the youth of Nyirripi.

The Mt Theo program

Mt Theo is a very impressive youth program which has three key components: a relief and rehabilitation program for abusers and mis-users of alcohol and drugs (primarily petrol sniffing, when the program was first established 15 years ago) and for court referrals; a youth diversionary program, with activities for children and young people every day; and youth education and leadership program. Initiated and sustained (both financially and culturally) by local elders the program has had remarkable success. Petrol sniffing no longer exists, and 36 young people now have jobs, or career pathways.

Nyirripi

In 2007 the Warlpiri elders of Kurra Aboriginal Corporation requested the Mt Theo Program initiate youth programs in Nyirripi and Lajamanu communities, through the Warlpiri Education Training Trust (funded by mining royalties). As a result, the Nyirripi Youth Program began in 2008, supported by Mt Theo. The

program activities target 4 – 16 year olds, and provide diverse and interesting alternatives to substance abuse and other anti-social behavior. Two full-time workers run activities five days every week, under the direction of a local youth committee. Former members of the Mt Theo Committee and members of WYDAC, who live in Nyirripi, guide program strategy and mentor the youth workers

Regular activities include sports, computers, movie and family nights, arts and craft, and swimming out bush. This program incorporates a partnership with PAW (Pintupi and Walpiri) Media with a particular focus on youth media training. Bush trips are a vital part of the program, and by far the most popular activity.

Nyirripi receives no government funding for youth activities and this will continue under future government funding strategies.

Our discussions in Yuendumu and Nyirripi indicated Indigo may have a role in supporting bush trips which strengthen culture. Bush trips take older men and women and young people to country where stories about country and culture can be told and songs, dances, ceremonies can be taught. They provide a vital opportunity for the transfer of cultural knowledge. As part of our discussion we indicated that in exchange for Indigo support for these trips, we would want to visit at least yearly – and get the opportunity ourselves to learn about Warlpiri country and culture.



A meeting with members of the Nyirripi Youth Committee

Our talks are being followed by a community meeting to confirm the priority for Indigo support, and a formal application to Indigo by the community. This will be discussed at our Management Committee meeting (and AGM) on 22 August. We are certainly hopeful of being able to develop a partnership with Nyirripi and Mt Theo.

End of FINANCIAL YEAR

We'd appreciate your support!

Donations to Indigo Foundation are tax-deductible.

Pls to www.indigofoundation.org homepage and click on the bright red 'donate now' icon. This will transfer you to 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.

Marketing & fundraising – successful events and future plans!

Lucinda Wilson - Marketing & fundraising, Management Committee

Community events and fundraisers 'spread the word' about Indigo Foundation and raise the necessary funds to support communities around the world. Since our last newsletter, our supporters have done an incredible job – please take the time to read below. Our sincere thanks goes to the organisers.

- : **Wendy Slood** held a wonderful accessories swap in April in Sydney and **Heather Yeatman** had a bookswap in Wollongong on the same day. In total not only was almost \$1,500 was raised, but a lot of new people were introduced to Indigo – a great result.



Vanda Allan and Vera Ryan pictured enjoying the accessories swap.

- : **Rieko and Stefan** hosted an intimate dinner in Canberra for the Solomon Islands, where Helen Lucy Moss (our previous PM for Solomon Islands) spoke about the project with Turusuala – a lovely night was had, and about \$500 funds raised.
- : Our **Palestine Project** was launched with the showing of *Paradise Now* at the Randwick Ritz Cinema in March. Although there was only a small attendance, we managed to meet our costs, and the powerful film was appreciated by all who were there.
- : On Sunday 28 March the **Miroslav Bukovsky Quartet** entertained us with great jazz during an afternoon organised by **Pat Duggan**. Over \$1500 was raised, and the music was truly wonderful.
- : And finally **John and Sue Everard** who established the Rosanna Fundraising Group, which had a brilliant morning at a community market raising a total of \$1070, through a second hand stall – all funds going to the **Uganda** project.



The Everard market stall



Maintaining the fundraising momentum we have developed is a priority, and will always be a key concern of ours. If you are able to join us at any of the following, pls do!

Upcoming events include:

- : **MASH** – our favourite cafe in Glenbrook is holding another fundraising event for Indigo’s **Palestine** project on 18th June. Organised by **Cecily Michaels**, there will be a delicious lunch, great wine, some books to swap – and an excellent project to support.
- : **Rachel Reilly** has kindly accepted an invitation by the **Rotary Club of Central Melbourne** to speak about Indigo. Rachel will focus her talk on Afghanistan – and there are no doubts she will impress the audience – Rachel is an excellent public speaker!
- : Through the University of Wollongong’s Care Giving Program, on the 24th June Sally Stevenson will be speaking as part of its series of ‘speaker spotlight sessions’ open to the University’s staff and student population. The topic will be **Community-led development: how principles made a difference in Afghanistan**. We hope this opportunity will encourage more UOW staff to donate through the payroll salary sacrifice facility.
- : On 26th June **Vicki Crinis** has organised a cocktail evening at Wollongong’s premier beach cafe – **Diggies** (which is owned by her sons). 100% of ticket proceeds will go to Indigo, as Diggies is very kindly donating everything - food, staff time and the premises, as well as organising donations from local suppliers **Bacchus Wine Merchants, Crown West Cellars** and **Brendan Bate Wine Agencies**. We expect it will be a fantastic evening.
- : On the 27th June, **Lisa Addison and Mary-Lou Nugent** are holding in Canberra, what will no doubt be, a riotous fashion swap!
- : **Libby Lloyd** is organising a dinner in September for 200 people at the **Turkish Pide House**, with the MC being Virginia Haussegger (ABC news reader in the ACT). It’s going to be a great night - if you are in Canberra pls come along (tickets \$55 including drinks).
- : Finally, **David Marr** has agreed to be our guest speaker in August at a fundraising dinner in Wollongong. He will be talking about the current refugee situation – including the policy environment. We hope to get a large attendance at what will prove a powerful night of advocacy on behalf of asylum seekers. More details soon!

*** **Wine sales: IT’S ON AGAIN!** ***

With our own Indigo label, we have a great range of value for money wines from Prospect Wines. We encourage you to support this wine fundraiser - every carton of wine you order generates funds for us, so please take orders from your family and friends.

This time we have a much easier and convenient **on-line system** for ordering. **Placing your order is very simple**. Click on the link to go directly to our fundraiser page on the Prospect Wines web site:

<http://www.prospectwines.com.au/?k1111&R7G&v1n>

Please ensure that all orders are for a minimum of 12 bottles. Your dozen can be a straight dozen of all one wine, or you can select different wines to make up your own mixed dozen.

You will be charged a delivery fee for direct delivery to your nominated address.

If you want to order wine but don't like to purchase via the internet, there is a downloadable order form on the website. You can print the order form, and send it direct to Prospect Wines. This order form is also great if you want to take orders from your friends, work mates or neighbours."

For every dozen wines – Indigo makes \$48!!

Indigo think pieces

Policy challenges in international development

Our experience in Indigo is that sometimes the public believes the process of supporting communities to be relatively simple. This is rarely the case. There are always complexities and challenges that dominate discussion and decision making regarding policy, projects, and process. As part of our think piece series we would like to highlight two such debates we are currently engaged in. One, within Indigo itself regarding the types of organisations we should be supporting (not for profit vs. for-profit social entrepreneur organisations). The other, with our partner in the Congo Vie Sauvage, about the application of user fees to health services. Here, we present some of the arguments around these debates.

1. Kokolopori, Congo - a debate over user fees

Below is an extract from a research paper on the efficacy and impact of user fees in a health context. A summary of Indigo’s response to this follows. Both documents will be taken to Kokolopori for further discussion (and hopefully resolution) when Indigo’s Technical Advisor for this project, Veronique de Clerk, travels there in July.

Background

It was recently brought to the attention of Indigo Foundation that it has been regular practice for the Bonobo Health Clinic in Kokolopori, Democratic Republic of Congo, to charge a \$1 per patient consulting fee and, for

surgeries, patients were charged between \$10 and \$40. The total amount of service fees collected by the clinic since its inception is not known; neither is the amount that the salaries of donor-funded staff were subsidized by these funds (a common practice) because there appears not to be any clear, consistent and verifiable records.

The debate

Indigo Foundation, a supporter of the clinic since 2006, is strongly opposed to service fees being charged, a major concern being that such fees exclude the poorest, particularly women and children, who cannot afford to pay. Indigo's conviction about free medical services is supported by a large number of non-government organizations. On the other hand, local non-government organization, Vie Sauvage, responsible for the management of medical staff at the Bonobo Health Clinic and representing their interests/concerns to donors, supports the charging of a nominal fee from people seeking medical services. A major concern fueling this stance is the (growing) resource needs of the clinic and the substantial shortfall in donor funding to meet these needs, along with the desire to make the clinic a self-sustaining entity that serves as a model for other clinics in a region where adequate state and/or donor funding is extremely difficult to secure.

This research was commissioned by Indigo Foundation in response to the difference of opinion about medical service fees being charged by the Bonobo Health Clinic.

Vie Sauvage's case for clinic service fees

The stated purpose of service fees is to:

- Enable a fund that replenishes medical and pharmacy supplies (including transport costs), along with infrastructure and administrative items not provided in donor budgets;
- Pay the salaries of clinic staff not supported by donors;
- Supplement the salaries of clinic staff who are not satisfied with their existing donor-supported salaries; and
- Help pay for transportation of clinic staff to and from their homes, sometimes a long distance away.

Clinic staff and Vie Sauvage believe that without health care fees, several problems are likely to arise that could threaten the future of clinic operations if nothing is done to solve them. These problems include:

- A noticeable lack of basic equipment and technical materials, especially for emergency and surgery rooms;
- The low medicines' stock level to face the upsurge of patients from local and surrounding areas to receive free medical treatment,
- The instability of clinic technicians (e.g. nurses from Kisangani were often on strike during the first quarter of 2010). The service fees being paid by

patients acted as a motivating element in the performance of the doctor and nurses at the clinic.

The research

To investigate this debate, existing studies and commentaries were reviewed. The purpose of the research was to investigate the validity of both Indigo Foundation and Vie Sauvage's claims in order to inform discussions and decision-making on this issue among the partnership.

This paper does not cover every aspect of the debate, a debate that is a hot topic in both developing and developed countries. There are undoubtedly other arguments both for and against the use of service fees. But the arguments, summarized below, were largely repeated in the different documents read. It is important to note that many conclusions in these documents favored the abolition of service fees if the poor and most vulnerable had any chance of accessing health care.

Arguments for charging service fees

- The primary argument in favour of user fees is based on the belief that people should pay for medical services if they can afford to do so (especially if they are the only ones to benefit from that service).
- With careful design and implementation, user fees can be associated with better quality services, increased utilization and improved access to those services.
- For those who cannot afford to pay for medical services, exemption and waiver schemes can be funded.
- Where states and systems are dysfunctional, user fees may be the only way of getting resources to medical practitioners at the facility level.
- Although service fees raise relatively little revenue in the overall scheme of medical resourcing, the flexible funds they do provide can be quite large in a given context. Such revenue, for example, can help fund non-salary expenditure and can be instrumental in ensuring that at least a basic level of service is provided.
- Service fees provide incentives for health workers and can cover recurrent costs at facility levels.

Arguments against charging service fees

- Service fees are one of the main barriers to healthcare for women and children. According to ongoing research conducted by the World Bank, service fees have been found to limit the uptake of services by poor and rural populations, and particularly women and children, contributing to high rates of infant, child and maternal mortality. These are the very people who suffer the greatest burden of disease, and who need to be reached if global targets like the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are to be met.
- A research report, published by a group of 62 NGOs and health unions, found that failure to provide

free public healthcare in poor countries meant that millions of people were paying with their lives, especially women and children.

- Where countries have removed service fees, many lives have been saved. For example in Uganda, the number of patients accessing healthcare has more than doubled in some clinics, with an 84% increase in attendance countrywide. But most importantly, the number of mothers dying in childbirth has finally started to fall.
- Service fees are often associated with reduced utilization of services especially by the poor and vulnerable (resulting in greater reliance on often inappropriate forms of self treatment), a failure to complete treatment (resulting in problems of drug resistance) and delays in seeking treatment (resulting in worse health outcomes).
- In practice, service fees contribute only marginally to overall health expenditure, often require costly administration systems and rarely meet their stated efficiency and equity goals.
- A consensus in the international development community has emerged that removing service fees is an essential step towards ensuring universal access to healthcare. This consensus has led to a number of sub-Saharan African countries removing fees over the last decade. Several development partners, including the UK Department for International Development and the World Bank, have committed to extending technical and financial support to countries that develop policies for removing user fees, and that request such support.

In 1987 the **World Bank** argued that user fees would:

- improve efficiency and equity by increasing health revenues
- Increase quality and coverage by reducing frivolous demand, and
- Shift patterns of care away from costly in-patient to low-cost primary healthcare services while protecting the poor through exemptions

Just over ten years later (1998), the World Bank began conducting research and found that user fees had not fulfilled the expectations set for them when they were established. Consequently, the Bank began the push for the abolition of user fees, which continues today. In 2000, the World Health Report agreed with the conclusion that "Out of pocket payments are usually the most regressive way to pay for health and the way that most exposes people to catastrophic financial risks."

Conclusion

Service fees can have two simultaneous impacts on service delivery. They can depress demand for care, especially among the poorest, while they can stimulate and sustain the supply of pharmaceuticals and

potentially the services of health workers. While service fees appear to benefit clinic operations, there is overwhelming evidence they are not 'pro-poor'.

Leading NGOs including Action Aid, Merlin, Medicin Sans Frontiers, Oxfam, Save the Children, and White Ribbon Alliance believe that the initiative to end service fees must be the start of a solid commitment to financial and technical support and be extended universally to all poor countries.

Our debate can be thus summarized: Charging user fees (which has been suspended at the request of Indigo Foundation) has negative implications for the poor, especially women and children, who cannot afford to pay. Not charging user fees is having negative implications on the operational budget of the clinic, along with staff discipline and morale.

Lauren Riley and Leanne Black

References available on request

Indigo Foundation response

Indigo Foundation agrees with and supports the international position on user fees: they clearly disadvantage the poor. Agreeing with this position and implementing a 'non user fee' policy means we are adhering not just to our own principle of equity but also to international best practice.

It is the poorest population quintiles that will not be served when user fees are implemented. This counteracts one of Indigo's main objectives: supporting women and children who are often the most vulnerable community members. Increasing Indigo Foundation's support to the clinic and community health program while not serving those most in need, is incompatible with Indigo Foundation's *raison d'être*.

Some examples of concern

1. A possible implication of user fees in this situation is that local people needing money to pay for health care will allow, even participate in logging and poaching in the surrounding nature reserves to pay for it. This would be counteract the forest, wildlife and Bonobo protection goals that underpin this program: the Kokolopori community entered an agreement to protect/manage the Bonobo Reserve in exchange for healthcare services.

2. Relatively, user fees of \$1 per visit or \$20 to \$40 per surgery are especially prohibitive in this environment, which is extremely poor (and has a very limited cash economy). This is exacerbated through high fertility rates and the likelihood that illnesses will affect not one, but multiple children.

4. We do not support 'fee waiver' mechanisms because although they might sound practical and equitable in theory, it is often a very different story in practice. Whilst the community usually knows who is poor and who is not, a waiver system needs one or more 'gatekeepers'. Power issues are endemic in developing

countries (indeed everywhere) and there are insufficient structures in place to create and maintain a waiver system that is truly equitable. There is a high potential for corruption in the administrative side of waiver systems.

4. Clinic staff are an educated elite compared to the local community, and they may subscribe to power and entitlement beliefs about the poor. If the staff feel undervalued and discontent because they are working with people who are not paying, this could have negative implications on those seeking medical help. In agreeing to user fees, Indigo could be contributing to the reinforcement of inequality which creates and maintains poverty.

Recommendations

1. Critically review the program's structure and existing resources to identify the strengths and limitations of providing basic medical care to the Kokolopori community. Taking into account:
 - a. Medical service provision needs to stay realistic and affordable for both the clinic and the community. This means medical staff should not conduct more expensive technical interventions (minor surgery) which is not linked to high morbidity and mortality. Rather, they should focus on the basic concerns (e.g. managing severe diarrhoea with Oral Rehydration Salts) and other illnesses that are major causes of mortality.
 - b. More generally, it is well proven that funds invested in primary health and prevention have a far greater impact on long term health of a community than more expensive curative treatments. As with any health system, there is a balance, but with limited resources there should be a clear preference for primary health care and only life saving surgery.
 - c. The clinic users, as stakeholders, should have their voices heard on the matter of user fees, not just Vie Sauvage, the medical staff and Indigo Foundation. Decisions about what health services to provide should take into account community preferences. However, they should not be completely dictated by the community. One reason is that many misconceptions and misunderstandings exist in developing countries about the efficacy and power of western medicine.
2. Financing options to consider include a) a not-for-profit revolving pharmacy and b) the establishment of a community financing scheme set up to help staff with their transport needs for travelling to and from community treatment and education assignments.
 - a. If possible, find out how much was being collected in clinic user fees and how it was

allocated. This is a significant piece of information we need before we look at solutions.

3. Conduct a review of salary grids in different areas of DRC among government and non-government health clinics/programs to get a more realistic picture of staff expectations and negotiate salaries accordingly.
4. The cost and difficulty of getting supplies and infrastructure to their destination is *always* part of doing business in isolated places in Africa like Kokolopori. This is something that needs to be more seriously factored in by donors in their/our support.

Conclusion

Indigo Foundation does not want to underestimate the problems that the clinic, medical staff and Vie Sauvage face or the pressures they are under concerning the abolition of user fees. However, our underlying principle is 'do no harm' to the poor and vulnerable, which is potentially what user fees do.

In response to some indications that Indigo is being too controlling in this matter, it is important to note that, compared to most donors Indigo Foundation provides a great degree of autonomy to its project partners. This is evidenced by the increasing degree of independence Vie Sauvage and the clinic has with the allocation of funds released under the latest Commitment Agreement.

One of the advantages of Indigo is that we are able to bring in international health professionals and draw on their experience. This experience clearly supports the abolition of user fees.

Leanne Black, Phil Strickland, Veronique de Clerk, Libby House and Sally Stevenson.



2. For profit – or not for profit??

In May, the Management Committee was asked to consider a proposal by the Circle of Cambodia (CC) a for-profit enterprise founded in Phnom Penh in November 2009.

CC states the following:

- It was established in response to exploitative business practices in the tailoring industry in Cambodia. It creates fashion garments from traditional fabrics. In January 2010 a shop front was opened in Siem Riep and orders have been obtained from retail outlets in Melbourne.
- It currently employs six people and provides a fair wage, free on-site housing, food, a safe and healthy workplace and daily Khmer and English literacy classes to its employees. The organisation employs young rural women who come to the city seeking to

earn money. Employees are encouraged to participate in design as well as production.

CC sought capital input from Indigo to develop its business. The Management Committee differed in its opinions on the policy of supporting for-profit organisations, and deferred a decision on funding until this was resolved. Below are arguments for and against by Management Committee members Stefan Knollmayer and Susan Engel respectively, and a submission by Nicole Moore, Circle of Cambodia.

Thinking outside the box: looking for different funding mechanisms and creative ways of support

It is now acknowledged broadly that addressing the power imbalance between donors and recipients helps to promote real partnerships between development organisations and communities. Effective poverty reduction requires making trust and accountability real within and between organisations, at all levels and between all actors. While aid agencies today are attempting to emphasis more equitable power relationships, these agencies continue to support traditional projects and service delivery activities that often reinforce donor-recipient conditionalities. Small organisations, like Indigo Foundation, challenge the traditional donor-recipient dynamics by supporting communities and individuals to develop their opportunities and choices that will assist people to lift themselves out of poverty. They also have the flexibility to support communities and people in different ways to larger institutional organisations, and have the potential to support both non-profit and for-profit enterprises as part of an alternative take on funding.

Issues of poverty have increasingly been seen as issues of social and financial exclusion. These issues go to the heart of being a member of a society. Financial exclusion is most prominently illustrated by the relatively large percentage of people who do not have access to bank accounts, collateral for loans, insurance, savings and fund transfers. Therefore, the provision of financial services to a low income population, including consumers and the self-employed who traditionally lack access to banking and related services is one potentially effective approach to development. Underpinning microfinance initiatives is the aim of providing greater financial choice to those who are marginalised. Identifying the ways in which microfinance initiatives contribute to providing greater freedoms for people, allows for a more grass roots understanding of the scope of financial inclusion. In the development and microfinance arenas, Amartya Sen argues that the main aim of development is to develop the freedoms of those who are disadvantaged. Utilising Amartya Sen's broader framework of development freedoms allows us to incorporate development strategies such as microfinance and asset accumulation as a means, along with income transfers, to help address systemic poverty.

Entrepreneurs exist in all societies and are the champions of community-driven enterprises that can often develop the lives of those living in poverty by providing them greater financial choice. The benefits of access to finance are not constrained to merely economic development, but also tie into other aspects of life such as encouraging greater social inclusion. If enterprises (both community and non-community based) work as a collaborative with their employees deciding how the money is used (if and when there is a profit), what the working conditions should be, provide employees the opportunity to input into design of products and work to create a social enterprise, with profits used to partly to improve the lives of its employees – then such enterprises work very similarly to the not-for-profit community-based organisations traditional aid agencies seek to support. Crucially, however, they provide a great deal of autonomy for individuals and communities to utilise their financial freedoms how they see fit.

Poverty is not only about the income levels of individuals, but about their ability to make informed choices. If commercial enterprises are committed to these principles and attempt to give their employees skills and a chance to earn an income so they can afford food, clean water, proper shelter and an education for their children, and also align with the guiding principles of Indigo Foundation, are they also not worthy of the support other more traditional community-based organisations receive? Such enterprises have the potential to empower individuals to make independent choices about their future.

Stefan Knollmayer

Indigo and Funding Social Enterprise – the case for caution

Enterprise and employment have been a key to raising the living standards of working people over the past two hundred years and I am quite convinced they remain so today; however, they have not been the only, or indeed, main reason for such improvements. Living in the midst of the industrial might of the West, it can be easy to forget that it was as much social services and programs funded through taxation programs that effectively redistributed wealth that not just mitigated poverty but brought the majority of the population to living standards that are celebrated today.

Development of sustainable and profitable enterprises in developing countries is an important but quite complex and fraught challenge. There are examples where carefully considered trade strategies focused on productive efficiency and sometimes on niche markets that have improved people's financial and human capital. But for every success story there is a failure often linked to things like:

- Insufficient human and financial capital to compete with producers in the first world;

- Poor infrastructure reducing competitiveness;
- Production for 'niche' markets that very quickly became flooded as donors encouraged producers from many different countries into these areas; and
- Large investment in sectors where developing countries supposedly had comparative advantages only to see global market prices fall – those areas were often around raw material and the prices these goods compared to the prices of treated and fabricated materials fall by about 50% from 1960.

All in all there have been many people and communities saddled with negative consequences such as debt, loss of land, loss of traditional support systems and social disruption by well intentioned but poorly conceived business development and social enterprise projects.

Given Indigo Foundation's commitment to the 'do no harm' principle we would have to develop substantial skills and expertise in business management, marketing and market analysis just to name a few but there are already organisations who have the necessary skills and expertise. Indeed, the number of development organisations focused on supporting business – whether they are informal and micro-businesses, social enterprises or more traditional small and medium enterprises – has exploded since the 1980s with the rise of neoliberalism and the domination of self-help agendas in development. There are now an estimated 7,000 microfinance institutions across the globe!

With so much of development activity focused on promoting efficiency, the space to fund programs that are simply **good for community well-being** has been diminished. Yet that is what Indigo Foundation does and does well – we support local community reflection and action in public education, public health, rural development and so on. This grassroots approach has direct and profound results such as literate girls in rural Afghanistan and access to basic medical services in a remote community in the Democratic Republic of Congo. While actions in these areas are not without risk, our expertise, understanding and monitoring help us to work with communities to minimise dangers and to exemplify good social development – as was central to our own community's experience.

Susan Engel

Social enterprise - an acceptable for profit business structure?

The past decade has seen a shift in the focus of international aid programs from the provision of vital goods and services to the provision of support structures aimed at encouraging sustainability and self sufficiency into the future. It is believed that those people living in poverty are best served by the opportunity to improve their capacity to provide for themselves rather than becoming trapped in a cycle of dependency and ultimate despair.

Not for profit programs and organisations that have traditionally provided international aid are now more frequently joined by social enterprise and other business models, aimed at increasing the capacity for programs and organisations to develop the mechanisms to earn a profit that can be utilised to support the social objectives upon which they were founded.

One such social enterprise is the Circle Cambodia organisation operating out of Siam Reap. This program currently employs, houses and trains women from rural areas who previously had no way of earning an income. The group share responsibility over all business decisions, including the spending of any profits earned through the sales of their tailored clothing range. In addition, the small group have indicated the desire to expand the operation so that they can provide training and employment to more Cambodian women who would otherwise be forced into terrible conditions in factory warehouses throughout the country.

Circle Cambodia profits provide far more than employment for otherwise poverty stricken women. Circle Cambodia profits provide housing, English language training, business training, and professional design training to those involved in the program.

The question then arises that if a program is established to deliver social objectives that support capacity building and sustainability, and if that program sets forth to earn a profit for the sole purpose of redistributing benefits back to the workers who earn it, should we not consider the funding required to assist such a program to provide more opportunities to more women, worthy of consideration?

Of course there are some for profit programs and organisations that clearly do not set out to support the social objectives that organisations like Circle Cambodia do and fairly enough, funding such programs would seem largely beyond the scope of an organisation such as the Indigo Foundation which aims to support local programs and initiatives that deliver real benefits to communities. But can consideration be given to supporting social enterprises with clear objectives and accountability functions that ensure that funding is contributing to local people in need? Such programs require funding to expand into sustainable and self sufficient entities that can ultimately support themselves.

Being poor should not restrict your right to work towards a better future. Being poor should not prevent you from dreaming big and seeking help to get you started. If all they need is a leg up so that more women can benefit from a proven model of success, shouldn't we support them in their dreams and encourage their innovations? After all from the smallest of seeds, a forest large enough to support the billions of entities that reside within it can grow. Likewise, from the smallest of organisations, a program can blossom forth to support many more than can be imagined!

Nicole Moore

Indigo Foundation People



*Libby House -
Development
Coordinator & project
manager for
Indonesia.*

I was born and educated in Tasmania before moving to Sydney and taking a job at the Australian Museum. During my time there I was fascinated by the anthropology collections and so began a life-long love of South East Asian Arts, especially metal-smithing and textile art. I was involved in the anti Vietnam war movement at this time, both in Sydney and Hobart, and subsequent long periods of travel through South East Asia studying weaving consolidated my commitment to human rights and social justice.

For many years I worked in the Domestic Violence sector in Tasmania and took leave in Eastern Indonesia, accompanied by my children. I had been visiting Bali, Rote and Sabu islands for several years, working with traditional weavers and dyers when I was introduced to Sally Stevenson, who came to Nemberala with my good friend, AVI worker Rosie Wheen in 2000. Indigo's ability to apply their philosophy and guiding principles in Rote was impressive, and I was very happy to follow on from Sally in the role of Project Manager in 2003.

Since then, Indigo has taken on an increasingly important role in my life, and I am currently working in the position of Development Coordinator while studying an Associate diploma of Languages part time at the Tasmanian University School of Asian Studies.

I am passionate about the empowerment of marginalised communities and the disenfranchised. Indigo achieves this work intelligently, quietly and with very few resources and I am looking forward to seeing what the future holds for us and the communities who partner with us.

Management Committee Update

Sally Stevenson – Chairperson

Welcome to winter! Indigo has certainly been active since our last newsletter, and I hope you find the articles and discussions in this one interesting, and inspiring.

Over the last eighteen months we have been working on a growth strategy for Indigo. This has proven to be successful, with a number of new projects taken up, and more proposals in the pipeline. At our Management

Committee meeting in May, we looked at how we were faring and whether we needed to revise our existing plan and possible future directions. There was a wide-ranging discussion of Indigo's strengths, weaknesses and actions needed. Overall, we concluded that for the next twelve months, we needed to consolidate our development program (although continue to pursue a project in Aboriginal Australia), and focus our attention on marketing and fundraising, and governance strengthening. In February 2011 we will undergo a comprehensive strategic planning process to prepare for the next five years.

Now, onto the comings and goings of Indigo people. Firstly, a thank you and good bye to **Sarah Kelly**, who for the last six years has been project manager for Afghanistan – and to welcome Helen Reynolds to the position. As Salman Jan so eloquently put it: 'Sarah, thank you for everything you did on and with the School Project. I guess no amount of thanking will do justice here. We all in Indigo, especially myself, as well as, the Borjagai kids and community will always cherish your great contributions. Had it not been for your contributions and continued efforts, the School Project would not have been where it is today and the kids of Borjagai and their community could have experienced life but other than what they are doing now. Instead of thanking you here, I'd rather congratulate you on your achievements'.

At the same time, we are thrilled that **Helen Reynolds** has agreed to take up the position. Helen is a lawyer, due to complete her Education Master of Arts at University of Sydney, with a major on international human rights. She has worked in law, social policy and social justice since leaving university and is currently a Senior Policy Officer for Housing NSW with a general focus on homelessness and community regeneration. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to **Alice Davies**, who has joined our Management Committee whilst Reiko goes on maternity leave. Alice most recently employed as Marketing Manager for Medecins sans Frontiers (Doctors without Borders), has been a quiet supporter of, and advisor to, Indigo for some time. We are now very fortunate that she will be bringing her marketing skills and humanitarian experience to Indigo more formally.

Over the next months, we'll be welcoming Ian back from Uganda, and farewelling Libby to Rote, Veronique to the Congo, Salman to Afghanistan and Cecily to Palestine. Our AGM will be held on 22nd August and our Annual Report will be distributed soon thereafter. Much to do!

And to conclude, on behalf of Indigo, I'd like to offer our warmest congratulations to Reiko and Stefan, both on our Management Committee, who were married in April.

the first thing we offer is  respect

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