



indigo foundation

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Solomon Island, Indonesia, East Timor, Indigo Foundation UK, and more...

### **The latest on our Solomon Islands' Project**

*Zoë Mander-Jones, Management Committee, Solomon Islands*

In September Chris Chevalier of APHEDA, on behalf of IF, visited Turusuala Village Model Training Centre, which is located on the remote Weathercoast of Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands. Since November 2004, IF has been supporting the Centre, which provides vocational education to young people, most of whom have only finished primary school. Support for Turusuala is in line with one of IF's key development areas – **education.**

On this visit, getting to the Centre from Honiara was physically challenging due to poor weather and lack of available canoe transport. IF is extremely grateful for the efforts of Chris and his team who, on the return leg, walked seven hours to Marau before flying back to Honiara. The airport at Avuavu (where the centre is located) should open soon making future visits less arduous.

In line with **our strategic approach**, IF provides **core funding** to the centre (of up to AUD3000 per year), which enables the centre to pay teachers' salaries, buy tools and stationery supplies and cover transport costs. Chris' visit was part of our on-going monitoring and evaluation processes. This was the second visit Chris has made to the Centre on behalf of IF. We are grateful for the on-going support of APHEDA, which assists in making these visits possible.

#### **Key findings from the visit**

Chris and his team found that the centre continues to make progress since it began only three years ago. This is due to the hard work and dedication of the staff, management committee

and students who should be congratulated for their efforts and the contribution they are making to the development of the area. Community feedback about the Centre was found to be consistently positive. For example, the local clinic nurse said she was impressed by the work done by the students in the past and would like them to make some more furniture and help with the patients' vegetable garden.



*Turusuala Community Base Training Centre*

Overall, the evaluation found that Turusuala continues to be **'a very worthwhile project for IF to support'**. Importantly, the evaluation, which followed a process known as **Empowerment Evaluation** (see box), has helped the Centre – its staff and students - articulate areas for improvement.

One area that was identified for improvement related to equity around enrolment. **Equity** is one of IF's Guiding Principles. The review found that equity had deteriorated from last year. This year there were only three female students (two year 1 and one year two) due to a flawed enrolment process at the end of 2005 when existing students were given enrolment forms to take back with them to their villages. It was found that some

students simply filled in forms for other people and hence some students did not arrive when the new year started. Furthermore there was no interviewing or screening process for new students.

While acknowledging the Centre's commitment to equal enrolments and also the considerable cultural barriers to equal opportunities for women, immediate action was recommended. Together, the staff and students at the Centre, identified strategies to improve enrolment and gender balance.

These include:

- aiming for an enrolment target of an equal number of year one female students in 2007.
- improving enrolment procedures and interviews of applicants.
- completing the female dormitory and staff house as soon as possible to allow the full complement of female students to reside at the centre.
- using IF funds to subsidise a reduced fee and/or allowing students to pay for their fees through production or home produce.
- creating opportunities for male and female students to learn a broader range of curriculum subjects
- continuing to give preference to enrolments of primary school leavers.



*Turusuala Community Base Training Centre*

The evaluation found that Turusuala is following and complying with IF's Guiding Principles of **Community Ownership** and **Sustainability**. Compliance with the principle of **Transparency** however, was found not to have significantly increased since 2005 and still needs to be strengthened by:

- more involvement of students in leadership roles, such as the Disciplinary Committee, and

representation of students in meetings with staff and the Management Committee.

- involvement of students in planning and evaluating activities – the Empowerment Evaluation is one mechanism for this but more regular and participatory activities need to be built in. Each course should be evaluated at the end of each term by asking students to brainstorm positive and negative aspects of each course and recommend improvements.

The evaluation also found that IF's funding is much appreciated and provides both moral and financial support. IF has introduced its Principles (Community Ownership, Equity, Transparency, and Sustainability) and helped the centre to take these values on board. IF is increasing the effectiveness of the Centre through funding used for staff salaries, materials for staff houses, food, the piggery project, transport and courses. This is more than 50% of running costs, without which standards of living and training would no doubt be lower.

#### **Where Does Solomon Islands Sit on the United Nations Human Development Index?**

Each year since 1990 the Human Development Report has published the human development index (HDI) that looks beyond GDP to a broader definition of well-being. The HDI provides a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life (measured by life expectancy), being educated (measured by adult literacy and enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary level) and having a decent standard of living (measured by purchasing power parity, PPP, income). The HDI for Solomon Islands is 0.592, which gives **Solomon Islands** a rank of **128th out of 177 countries**. The HDI for **Australia** is 0.957, which gives Australia a rank of **3rd out of 177** countries with data.

#### **Future**

IF is currently discussing the recommendations of the evaluation with the staff of the Centre and looking at ways that we can encourage and support them in moving forward. Key challenges for the Centre over the next 12 months will be to improve the gender balance of its students and to increase the effectiveness of its income generating activities in an effort to work towards increased financial viability. IF will visit Turusuala again towards the end of 2007 (when our current 3-year Commitment to the Centre ends) to discuss progress and possible future support.

### What is empowerment evaluation?

Empowerment Evaluation (EE) uses participatory evaluation concepts and techniques to foster improvement and self-determination, help people to help themselves and improve their projects / programs and is based on self-evaluation and reflection

EE derives from collaborative and participatory evaluation. Its roots lie in community psychology, action anthropology and action research. It is explicitly driven by the concept of self-determination. Key features of EE are:

- Program participants conduct their own evaluations through brainstorming, critical review, and consensual agreement.
- Stakeholders establish their own goals, processes and impacts
- Outsider evaluator serves as coach, facilitator and 'critical friend'
- It involves a collaborative and democratic process in an open forum
- It is part of an ongoing process of program improvement
- The emphasis is on program development and capacity building
- It helps to internalise and institutionalise self-evaluation processes and practices
- The goals and outcomes can be defined at different levels of implementation (community, project staff, project management, donors)
- It encourages truth and honesty from multiple views ("speaking your truth")

### Tema ta nai dae bafak; tetu ta nai batu poi

*Perfection is not of this earth; order is not of this world<sup>1</sup>*

#### Latest update from Rote!

*Elizabeth House, Project Manager, Indonesia*

In July 2006, I travelled to Rote for IF's annual monitoring and evaluation visit to our Indonesian partner, *Lua Lemba Education and Community Development Foundation*. While on a personal level I felt people were pleased to see me, the 'work' aspect of my visit definitely was not perceived as a welcome relief for Lua Lemba.

As highlighted in our last Annual Report, 2006 was a difficult year for Lua Lemba. It struggled with a high workload, rapid changes in the social and economic environment and relatively new development concepts such as IF's *Guiding Principles* of **community ownership** and **decision-making transparency**.

In the past, Lua Lemba had maintained an informal intake system for program ideas and this system demonstrably worked – for example in the case of the M'bore water project. The open forum for feeding back decision making processes to the community had collapsed however, and not been replaced. This led to some uncertainty and suspicion in the villages.

IF was also concerned that Lua Lemba was finding it difficult to operate within our *Guiding*

*Principles*. During my previous visit, and subsequently through written correspondence, I had raised IF's concerns about adherence to our *Guiding Principles* and our decision to suspend funds until they were addressed.



*Rotinese children in Nemberala*

On arriving in Nemberala it quickly became apparent that Lua Lemba was under extreme strain. It had lost profile in the community, and this had generated negative rumours about the management and operations of the organisation. Lua Lemba's response to the pressures upon them had been a retreat to a more traditional 'top down' approach with decisions being made only at the executive level. Sadly, this 'closing in' of the executive only served to feed the rumours.

In preliminary discussions, the Chair and the Secretary admitted they had considered resigning from the organisation, as they felt so discouraged. Substantial discussion and problem solving

<sup>1</sup> Rotinese saying

sessions ensued. I made it clear that IF's approach to development included a commitment to work with our partners through difficult times – and to find ways of building capacity that will allow them to manage such times in the future.

The aim of my visit was to find a way forward for IF and Lua Lemba through a community consultation process, based on **Empowerment Evaluation** principles. Firstly, we hoped this process would assist Lua Lemba determine how closely their program was to meeting the community's needs. Secondly, within these consultations, priority-setting exercises for future activities would be undertaken, offering Lua Lemba an effective community based planning tool.

In this situation it was very threatening to Lua Lemba to be asked to participate in open consultations *and* for their activities to be evaluated by their constituents and IF in an open forum. It was also very important that in asking the people of Delha to give time to the consultations that the outcomes clearly reflected the content of the discussions as nobody would be satisfied with self-serving facilitation and evaluation.

It was necessary to design workshops that not only asked participants to reflect on Lua Lemba's past achievements and draw from them ideas for future programs, but also provided a forum to address some of the negative feelings in the community. My concern was also that there was a lack of understanding of the *Guiding Principles*, and that there were people who did not have the capacity to verbally express their needs, and who needed a safe, non-critical environment in which to participate.

With these constraints in mind, a set of rules was established for the workshops, where blame had no place and participation, reflection and revision were encouraged. Rumours were openly discussed and, where possible, documentary evidence was provided to clarify situations.

Initially the workshops were not the number one place to be in Delha, but by the third workshop there was standing room only. Facilitators were recruited and trained so this type of program evaluation can be held whenever they are needed, without external assistance.

In all, five workshops were held. A full meeting of Lua Lemba to hear and discuss the findings and future directions followed these workshops. Mechanisms for feeding back information to the community were put in place at this meeting.

A clear set of priorities emerged from these gatherings. The **overarching concern was the provision of a reliable source of drinking**

**water**. This has been an ongoing problem for many years and Lua Lemba has devoted a lot of energy to finding solutions. At the final meeting it was acknowledged that help from an agency specialising in water technology would need to be sought as continually sinking wells (which is what had been taking place) in the hope of finding drinking water was not an efficient use of resources.

Other key priorities included:

- Access to Health Educators, to provide workshops on sexual and child health;
- A photocopier, which is seen as a vital means of supplying printed matter for schools and health centres; and
- A native speaking English teacher to work with the Delha schools.

It was gratifying for everyone to see that the priorities set by the consultations were largely reflected in Lua Lemba's planned program for the next tranche of IF funding, and to participate in the process of lobbying for and debating those that were not.

Parallel to the workshops, discussions with Lua Lemba resulted in a changed management structure which should prevent the centralisation and concentration of power within the executive again. For example, village activity managers have been recruited to represent the five constituent villages in the decision making process.

The approach we took on this visit was in fact a rigorous test of IF principles: we needed to demonstrate the viability and robustness of the community consultation process and the benefits of transparent decision making. For Lua Lemba, knowing that IF had a commitment to finding a way forward in the situation laid a strong foundation for the success of and, at times, exhausting and confronting process. For the community as a whole, the mutual trust and respect that has been built with IF over the years, gave credibility to the assurances that their input would be handled respectfully and with tact.

At the end of the consultations there was a feeling of exhilaration and a renewed sense of direction, purpose and hope. The feeling of community ownership was high: people wanting to know if their ideas had been put forward at the final meeting frequently stopped me on the street with questions.

This turning point meant that Lua Lemba received the first instalment of new funding (\$2,000) from IF at the end of September. I will travel to Rote at the end of January to evaluate the current situation. While the project is not out of the woods yet, it is certainly far better equipped for the future than it was one year ago.

## 'Australia, the dreamland of every Afghan kid'

### Our first year in Australia

*Ali and Sajjad Yunespour*

*Two of Indigo Foundation's newest supporters, Ali and Sajjad Yunespour, arrived in Australia as refugees a little over a year ago. In this article, they share some of their experiences and impressions of their first year in Australia.*

We, Ali and Sajjad Yunespour, are from the Hazara ethnic group from central Afghanistan. In an unlucky coincidence, we were born in the worst period of Afghanistan's history. The Russian war, civil war, and Talibanisation shaped, reshaped, stole and eventually destroyed our childhood. Like many millions of our countrymen, women and children our family suffered repeated displacement within the country, until finally we were forced to take refuge in Pakistan.

As wartime children we suffered from continuous displacement, fear, and insecurity. Among many other disasters, the turmoil and chaos in the country robbed our generation of the future. Instead of receiving proper schooling and education the children were starved, slaved and scarred. Yet we were lucky enough to survive that brutal era and make it to the safety of the first world. We migrated to Australia, the dreamland of every Afghan kid.

For now we are living and studying in Australia. I, Ali, in recognition of support given to the ideals of the United Nations, participated at the Rotary International District 9680, Model of United Nation Assembly. I was involved in the 'Great Engineering Challenge' at the University of NSW and also talked about 'multiculturalism in school community', in *Marsfest* and also at 'Tolerance Day' held in West Ryde. I have also supported *Life Education NSW* by volunteering my time assisting with Myers' gift-wrapping.

Now I am the vice-captain of Marsden High School for 2007, which has given me the opportunity to participate in several leadership conferences around Sydney. At the end of year 11, I achieved very high academic results in all my subjects, particularly; I came 4<sup>th</sup> in the state in Persian in my HSC exams and achieved 'the

most outstanding yr. 11 student' award from University of Western Sydney.

I, Sajjad, have participated in a number of outer school activities throughout the year. For example, I was involved in the 'Harmony Festival' program that was held in Ryde Council and participated in 'Tournament of Minds' held at UTS. I recently drew a portrait of 'Steve Irwin' the crocodile hunter, to raise funds for the Girls School IF supports in Afghanistan as well as for *Wildlife Warriors*. I put my artworks in an exhibition held by STARTTS and Triumphant International organisation in conjunction with the 2006 Humanitarian Awards. In addition, I participated in Klymax Art Gallery exhibition, which was held in Harris Park. For all of these achievements, we kindly thank all of our teachers in Marsden High School and classmates who kindly offered their support and backing.

Both of us hope to get the best possible HSC results and get into university in the future. I, Ali would like to study Social Inquiry and Sajjad would like to study politics in Uni. We strongly believe that our migration to Australia opened new horizons for a better future. We will undertake and pursue dreams by studying hard because we believe education is the only thing that is able to change our lives and possibly others' lives for the better. We believe in change and will work for it. Despite our disastrous childhood experiences, we have high hopes for the future. In fact our disadvantages provided us with some understanding and we believe we can use that as the capital for social changes wherever we live.

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### East Timor Project Update

*Rachael Reilly, Project Manager, East Timor*

2006 has been a very difficult year for East Timor, and consequently a challenging one for our potential project partners. It is impossible to imagine how hard it must have been for small organisations to continue operating in the midst of so much fear, and with so many of their members displaced.

However after we had been feeling as though one step forward only led to two backwards, we have finally re-established contact with Grupo Feto Foin

Sa'e Lorasa'e Timor (GFFTL), a women's literacy organisation that facilitates community-run literacy programs in a number of villages. As you may remember from our Annual Report, earlier this year we had been discussing with GFFTL potential areas for partnership. However after the political unrest in April GFFTL were forced to suspend their operations for some months. They recently resumed classes and have been busily planning their 2007 program.

In the midst of the uncertainty brought on by the political unrest IF has looked for other ways to provide support to East Timor, exploring a number of additional possibilities to GFFTL. In October this year I had the honour of meeting Kirsty Sword Gusmao (East Timor's First Lady and patron of Alola foundation) at a fundraising event in Melbourne. The Alola Foundation was established in 2001 to raise awareness of and campaign against the sexual and gender-based violence experienced by women and young girls in Timor-Leste.

In response to the needs identified by East Timorese women, the Alola Foundation has grown to provide services and programs in areas such as advocacy, employment, education, maternal and child health and humanitarian assistance. Alola employs strategies in all its programs aimed at increasing the status of women, promoting human rights, strengthening community participation in development and, creating employment opportunities. Alola has a strong support base and receives funding from a range of donors, both individuals and institutions.

As IF's mandate is to provide support to new or fledgling NGOs we have not considered providing support to Alola in the past. However, Alola Foundation has been one of few local NGOs in East Timor that has managed to continue operating throughout the unrest and has been instrumental in providing relief to people in Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps. Given Alola's work is strongly aligned with IF's own key development areas and considering the impact of the current crisis on volunteer work in East Timor, the IF Management Committee decided it would be an appropriate and effective use of IF funds to provide a one-off contribution to directly support the ongoing work of Alola, in child and maternal health. These activities are aimed at creating a

supportive environment for improving women and children's health, strengthening community action for women's health, improving basic services and promoting exclusive breastfeeding for first six months. This work is essential as East Timor currently has very high fertility and population growth rates (4% per year) and grossly inadequate public services to meet demands. We will keep you updated on the work of Alola Foundation. For further information please visit [www.alolafoundation.org](http://www.alolafoundation.org).

In December, IF was presented with a proposal to assist the establishment of an anti-tobacco program in East Timor. Whilst in the current crisis this might not appear an urgent priority, good development must take a long-term perspective. Tobacco use is linked to lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic airways disease, premature births and many other disorders. In particular, tobacco use increases the severity and spread of tuberculosis, which is at chronic and dangerous levels in East Timor. One of the key approaches to development for IF is public health – an anti tobacco program is an important component of a health promotion strategy.

In the December Management Committee meeting, it was decided that I would travel to East Timor to a) explore relations with Alola, and the feasibility of an initial one-off donation of (\$2,000) to support some of their activities and b) investigate possibilities for a tobacco project, including a potential partner organisation and the level of support for such a proposal. It is only by going there personally that we will be able to finalise our strategy for support. I look forward to writing about our findings in the next newsletter!

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### **East Timor in crisis 2006 (What is the East-West divide?)**

*Jennifer Spence, Management Committee, East Timor*

Earlier this year a security crisis erupted in East Timor which had wide spread effects: the Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri, resigned; Australian troops were deployed to patrol the streets of Dili; and, some 68,000 people left or were forced from their homes ending up in make shift camps around the city. The events were broadcast in the Australian media and around the world. The UN has once again extended its mandate in East Timor.

On 2 October 2006 the *Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste* was released. The Commission's mandate was to 'establish the facts and circumstances relevant to incidents that took place on 28-29 April and 23-25 May and related events or issues that contributed to the crisis clarify responsibility for those events and recommend measures of accountability for crimes and serious violations of human rights allegedly committed during the mandated period.' A number of recommendations have been made by the Commission relating to specific individual criminal responsibility of those involved in the crisis as well as a full range of recommendations on accountability measures, some of which will take much dedication and many years to fully implement. Overall the Commission found the crisis to be largely the result of the frailty of East Timor's state institutions and weaknesses in the rule of law.

The report points to a long history of violence in East Timor as a means to settle political disputes and suggests many Timorese see the current situation as part of a continuum starting from Portuguese decolonisation in 1974-75 and the subsequent invasion and occupation of Indonesian forces. In response to the invasion a clandestine Timorese resistance began. Under the leadership of Xanana Gusmao a policy of resistance based on national unity was adopted. Timorese society was encouraged to put domestic political differences aside and unite against a common enemy.

In 1999, 78 per cent of the Timorese population voted for emancipation from Indonesian administration in the United Nations-sponsored Popular Consultation. Over the period of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET 1999-2002), party politics returned to the country for the first time in almost 25 years. With Independence many of the 1975 political leaders assumed political prominence. These included Xanana Gusmao (who became President, Head of State and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces), Mari Alkatiri (who became Prime Minister – since resigned - aligned with the police) and Rogerio Lobato (since resigned - who became Minister for Internal Administration with responsibility for the police).

The role and demarcation between the army (F-FDTL) and the police (PNTL) in East Timor has been contentious since Independence in 2002 and is well recognised. What hasn't previously been given much attention is that the discord between the police and the army is based on, and fuels, communal factionalism within East Timor. This factionalism is characterised by what is described as a geographic East-West divide within East Timor (that is towns and villages in the west of the country vs. those from the east of the country). This new phenomenon, which essentially divided the country, took many commentators and donors alike by surprise.

The Commission's report argues the East-West divide is a simplification of more complex issues based around identity: a poorly defined national identity 'particularly in the absence of a common enemy post-1999'. Whatever its origin, the East-West divide has manifested itself in the police and the army as demonstrated by the perceived, or real acts, of discrimination and nepotism against and within the two security services. This has played out most visibly in the army over the last couple of years where the relationship between veterans and new recruits led to significant unrest because veterans (many from the east), were reportedly given preferential treatment for promotions. There are also claims that a lot of the soldiers from the east believe that it was eastern FALINTIL (founded in 1975 as the Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor) guerillas who won independence for East Timor, rather than people from the west. When East Timor became independent soldiers from the east are said to have been awarded the majority of the senior posts in the military and soldiers from the west missed out.

At the beginning of the crisis this year 595 soldiers were sacked. Some of them had signed a petition which had been sent to the President in January 2006, complaining about mismanagement and discrimination within the F-FDTL, others had been chronically absent without leave for months prior to March 2006. Most of them were from the west of the country. Paradoxically, efforts to increase the transparency of promotions and recruitment within the army before the crisis led to more soldiers from the west than the east being promoted. This too was characterised along east-west lines, adding to, rather than minimising

the problem. Finally, when the riots broke out in Dili in March and April, many police from western areas refused to tackle the protesters. What should have been a manageable situation ended up in chaos.

The East-West divide has impacted on, and arguably has also been consolidated by, East Timorese politics and the community more generally. Now fuelled by high-levels of youth unemployment (around 45% in Dili and probably higher in rural areas) especially among young men, mutations of the East-West divide continue to undermine East Timor's ability to return to a sense of normalcy. Armed youths in rival martial arts gangs have committed murder and other atrocities in and outside of Dili, even this month.

The Government, UN and donors alike in East Timor all have an extremely difficult job ahead of them. How to rebuild basic services to keep people fed, healthy and employed both in and outside of Dili, how to bring the security forces back into manageable units, how to deliver justice to those who perpetrated and were the victims of the recent violence, and how to overcome long held beliefs and hostilities and lay the foundations for a new future. All agree that any new assistance must be flexible and adaptable and aimed at empowering individuals to get their lives back on track. From a country already operating from a very low base of both institutional and human capacity, violence will only continue to plague efforts to get East Timor back on track as a stable and peaceful society. New solutions are required.

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### **Congratulations to Indigo Foundation UK: their first project!**

*Sally Stevenson, Management Committee*

We are very pleased to report that Indigo UK has agreed in-principle support for its first project – supporting women's art and craft cooperatives in Kenya through the *Sanaa Africa: Art for Conservation* project. A key reason for supporting these cooperatives is to assist in the preservation of threatened Kenyan wildlife.

Wildlife in eastern Africa is currently under threat – whilst poaching has significantly diminished, whole landscapes are now under extreme pressure as the human population in this relatively

stable region of Africa grows at its highest rate. More and more open land is being lost to farming and housing developments. This land is outside (currently protected) national parks and sustains elephants, rhinoceroses, lions, cheetahs, and the vast herbivore herds—it is land that has been open to migration for millennia across millions of acres of East Africa. Indeed, over 65% of East Africa's wildlife lives outside national parks, on land that is also home to poverty-stricken pastoralists. To these people, for whom feeding their families is a daily challenge, wildlife still too often represents a threat rather than an asset.

Creating new parks from indigenous lands is no longer the answer in post-colonial, democratic East Africa - the key is to win back this vital space for wildlife in innovative ways:

- Turning wildlife into renewable natural assets for communities, by
- Investing in local people, who then build their own conservation projects,
- Doing so in a uniquely African way, using traditional person-to-person social support and learning systems.

A hallmark of a healthy ecosystem is diversity and resilience, which helps sustain life through adversities such as drought, fire, and disease. Likewise, healthy human communities should have diverse income sources so their well-being is not tied to one volatile source such as agriculture, livestock, tourism, or international aid. Whilst the creation of private game reserves and income-generating ecotourism ventures and jobs in game protection and management had increased resilience, there is a need to continue to support diverse economic opportunities. This can be done in two ways:

- Immediate, dependable income from sales of traditional and non-traditional art and bush craft (such as beadwork, leatherwork, basketry, and woodworking); and
- The establishment of a capital fund from the net retail proceeds of art and craft for small grants and micro-loans to support conservation projects and more economic endeavours.

By using this two-step approach, Indigo UK hopes to enhance local economic independence without



charity, and leverage community-generated funds to support further economic and conservation opportunities.

To do this Indigo UK is a member in the *Sanaa Africa: Art for Conservation* project partnership, which was formed by the African Conservation Fund, a non-profit organization jointly founded by Africans, Britons, and Americans, including Dr. David Western, former head of Kenya Wildlife Service and founding director of the 12-year old African Conservation Centre, the partner organisation in Nairobi. The overall goal of the project is to build local capacity and support for conservation in East Africa, by investing in the people who live there: by sourcing funds, providing skills and tools, and creating cultural linkages between communities regionally and internationally.

The development approach used by the project works towards communities building not only the skills but also the confidence necessary to create their own institutions and conservation movements, incorporating their own lifeways and traditions. And most importantly, they learn to choose partners and skills, on their own terms, without creating unsustainable dependence on donors and outside service providers.

Such community-based conservation underscores the nexus between cultural and biological diversity and the importance of local stewardship as an effective tool for conserving large landscapes and weathering environmental, economic, and political change.

The primary focal area is East Africa's Rift Valley, which harbors some of the most significant biological and cultural diversity remaining anywhere on Earth. This dramatic region is home to the famous 'Cradle of Mankind,' as well as the world's most diverse large mammal populations and largest migratory spectacle. Not coincidentally the Rift Valley is the ancestral corridor for a unique assemblage of highly adapted pastoral groups. The relationship between these cultures and the wildlife is inextricable and dynamic, the result of millennia of nomadism and sustainable land management. The importance of this bio-cultural relationship is supported by the fact that over 65% of biodiversity exists outside national reserves, on pastoral lands. But this incredible diversity is threatened by globalization, population

growth, land fragmentation, and poverty. There is an urgent need to foster the indigenous skills necessary to maintain the vital bio-cultural continuum that has preserved the diversity, without creating more exclusive—and ineffective—parks or unsustainable projects.

#### **Taking into account broader social and political change**

Maasai are experiencing rapid social and political change, particularly in the overall transition to a cash/monitored economy. Our recent experience in Indonesia, where this has happened to the community we support, has shown how incredibly stressful this can be on individuals and on community-based, volunteer organisations. For example, whereas once the concept of volunteerism or exchange of labour was integral to the social fabric and community support networks, it is becoming more and more obsolete as people derive greater benefit from working individually on cash based projects. This can leave a volunteer organisation straining to find the both time and labour to fulfill its mandate.

Indigo UK will work with already formed cooperatives. The project partnership undertook a scoping exercise visiting six cooperatives within Kenya and three within Tanzania. Discussions were undertaken with the women's groups, and community leaders about their goals, needs for assistance, and understanding of tourist and international markets. Key observations included:

- Each group's primary reason for coming together was to improve their economic situation, through beadwork as well as other endeavours such as building and running campsites or guest houses; beekeeping; or building and running a cultural centre.
- In general, the closer the group's location to Nairobi or a main tourist road or town, the more sophisticated the members and their products. A corollary to this was that the more remote the group, the more traditional the beadwork (i.e.:made for themselves or for the Maasai women they trade with) and the lower the quality seen through the 'western' benchmark of saleability.
- Similarly, the closer the group's location to urban areas or tourist locales, the more they have been exposed to the realities of a market with a lot of competition; the more remote groups have unrealistic expectations about 'if we make beadwork, we'll sell it all and make lots of money' (with no planning or understanding of whom they'll sell to or how).

- None understand the wholesale market, and there will be a learning curve for the fact that we'll need to be buying their work (for the international market) at slightly less than what they could get (in theory, if the competition and marketing were not so difficult) in East Africa.
- Women's groups represent a powerful way to improve economic situations and to affect conservation projects in Maasailand because traditionally women have always come together in various informal coalitions (within families, between families or even communities) to lessen their own workloads; thus, they have a long history of working together and do so with a high degree of effectiveness with fewer apparent problems than, say, equivalent men's committees.
- There is saturation in the East African tourist market for traditional beadwork as well as too much competition for fashion beadwork in the local citizen market.

For the project to be effective, a focus on starting small and building up is necessary. Initially four groups will be chosen to work with. Each group will be provided with training in business and development of products. Markets will be development in the US, Canada, and UK. Indigo UK is responsible for business training workshops; product development and product sales.

We wish Indigo UK all the best in this challenging and ambitious project!

### **Why specifically empower women economically, and encourage their involvement in conservation?**

*Most women in Africa are directly dependent on their local environment and sustainable natural systems for their own and their families' survival. They spend the greater part of their time tending, gathering, conserving and using natural resources. As daily managers of the living environment, they are experienced in the management of agriculture and food production, fisheries, forests, soil, energy and water resources.*

*Women have developed skills in conservation which are built into their traditional subsistence activities. At the local level, cooperative action taken by women demonstrate that by sharing their knowledge and experience they can improve the environment and also promote sustainable development.* British Commonwealth Secretariat

The Secretariat went on to recommend that non-profit and government organisations continue 'providing women with education and training.' In Agenda 21, the Earth Summit Program of Action on Environment and Development (one of IF's Guiding Documents), governments agreed that it was essential to mainstream the concerns of women throughout sectoral and cross-sectoral areas for action.

The UN Fourth World Conference on Women also urged governments to involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels and to facilitate and increase their access to information and education. Also, 'women are rarely involved in traditional leadership and decision-making roles.' But 'women, as well as men, are involved in a range of activities, some of which will affect and be affected by the surrounding natural resources. Thus women need to know about their local environment, for instance as they collect water and firewood, or gather fodder or medicinal wild plants. If we do not talk with these women, we will miss the opportunity to learn from their knowledge.

### **Benefits linked to art/craft based women's groups**

The use (and perpetuation) of traditional skills can be an important empowerment tool for women in a community. Craft based women groups can also be a forum of cultural identity and pride that is independent of economic benefit.

In many cultures and communities there are limited avenues for women to make their own decisions and have access to resources that meet their own needs. Craft groups, however limited, may offer some way of addressing this.

Art groups not only allow women to undertake activities in their own time and space (structured in and around the usual care giving, small scale farming etc), but are also a way of getting together with other women who have similar experiences and stresses in a non-threatening environment. Experience has shown community groups such as artisan groups can have a profound effect on the lives of participants by forming a social structure that allows discussions around difficult gender issues (such as domestic violence) to emerge - and subsequent internal support to be provided. At the same time, these groups also provide a relaxed environment for women to problem solve and problem share about regular daily issues.

## **The Popularity of Capacity Building as a 'Strategic' Approach to Development**

*Leanne Black*

Coca-Cola, McDonalds, **Capacity Building**, Nike, Google, **Capacity Building**, War on Terror, Global Warming, **Capacity Building**... How did these products and concepts become so popular? More to the point, how did capacity building become so popular and how popular *is* capacity building anyway?

### **The popularity of capacity building**

Since the 1990s, the aid and development literature has been inundated with books and articles about 'capacity building'. Conceptual frameworks are always evolving to aid our understanding of individual, organisational, and systemic capacity issues. Publications and evaluation reports on 'best practice' and 'lessons learned' are continually being generated. The topic has received increasing attention in high-level donor meetings on development cooperation. For example, the Paris High Level Forum on aid effectiveness, held in February 2005, reached a clear conclusion that capacity building was one of the most critical issues for both donors and partner countries (Manning 2005).<sup>1</sup> High-level donor and government forums are not the only arenas in which the importance of capacity building is being touted. Northern and southern non-government organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), and the private sector are all on the capacity building 'band wagon'. NGO support organisations have carved out a niche in the development market place, offering services and support to help strengthen the capacities of northern and southern NGOs and CSOs. Some of these are active contributors to the capacity building discourse through research and knowledge-generation<sup>2</sup>

So how did capacity building become so popular? This article is divided into two sections which will span the next two IF newsletters. In part one we look at the rise to popularity of the concept, particularly during the 1990s until now. Part two takes a closer look at different claims and interests that are fuelling the popularization of a capacity building agenda.

### **The term's rise to popularity**

Although the term has only featured prominently in the aid and development arena in the past ten years, the concept of capacity building is certainly not new (Morgan 1999a; Harrow 2001). Morgan suggests we can trace the concept, within international development, back to the reconstruction days of post-World War 2, whereby resources, infrastructure, and expertise were transferred from donor countries, e.g. the United States, to war ravaged and developing countries, in an effort to (re)build their basic institutions and organisations (Morgan 1999a). Morgan, and others, point out the conceptual evolution of capacity building can be followed by looking at the subtle changes in key terms used within the aid and development discourse over the past fifty years. For example, the term 'institution building' was changed to 'institutional development', and then became 'institutional strengthening'. This was in line with improved procedures, systems, and personnel performance in developing countries, along with growing acceptance that capacities existed *prior* to the input of externally-led development interventions (ibid).

Coverage of this evolution in thinking from the 1950s to the 1990s can be found in Morgan (1999a), Lusthaus, Adrien, et al. (1999), and Fukuda-Parr, Lopes, et al. (2002). These accounts are predominantly Eurocentric. Yet, as Jacques Boulet points out, 'capacitacion' has been around in South and Latin American contexts since the 1960s *at least* (Boulet 1999, Personal communication). Capacitacion was connected with another term 'conscientization', a term Paulo Freire referred to as: a process whereby ordinary people become aware of the realities around them, the reasons why things might be that way and their own capacities to instigate change (see Eade 1997, pp. 10-12).

### **The 1990s and beyond**

We now skip forward a few decades to the late 1990s where the terms 'capacity building' and 'capacity development' rose to a prominent place in the aid and development literature (Black 2000; Schacter 2000). Development agencies and think tanks produced a plethora of publications on the topic. There was hardly a working paper, priority list, tender agreement, or evaluation report that did not highlight the need for capacity building.

The popularity of a capacity building approach to development during the 1990s can be attributed in part to complex issues that were, and still are, challenging the nature, tenure and direction of 'aid and development'. Some of these are: globalization, increasing poverty, tensions between social, economic and environmental interests and concerns, poor track record of previous development efforts, a decreasing resource base for development assistance, the spread of conflict zones, human displacement, the multiple demands of post-conflict reconstruction, and the rise of the knowledge economy.

The development 'problem' was increasingly diagnosed as a lack of capacity at individual, community, organisational, institutional and national levels to meet such challenges. Armed with different perspectives on the what, who, where, and why of capacity deficits, many development actors, ranging from multilateral development banks and agencies to southern NGOs, focused on strengthening human and organisational capacities at different levels of society in developing countries (Fukuda-Parr et al. 2002; Banerjee 2003). An implicit assumption underlying many of these capacity building efforts was that strengthening the capacities of the state, private sector and civil society will, over a period of time, generate an 'enabling environment', thus giving poverty reduction (and other development) strategies more chance of success (UNDP 1997; Binger et al. 2002). However, there are different views about what *constitutes* an 'enabling environment', along with the role of capacity building in generating the circumstances deemed necessary to implement these ideas at local, national and regional levels. We will take a closer look at this issue in part two for, as Mackey and Horton aptly note, 'How we choose to think about development cooperation influences how we conduct and evaluate it' (Mackey and Horton 2002, p. 7).

### **Complex systems thinking**

Another influence in the popularization of capacity building within the development industry was 'complex systems thinking', particularly from the fields of organisational management and development, biology, and environmental science. Social change interventions became increasingly viewed as just one of many players in a dynamic

ebb and flow of social interaction and change (Kaplan 1999). The focus of capacity building expanded from strengthening functional capacities within single organisational entities to strengthening collaborative partnerships within, and between organisations, institutions and sectors. Systems thinking led to a greater emphasis being placed on understanding and addressing internal and external dynamics that affect development processes and outcomes. An example is the need to factor in 'hidden mechanisms' of change, i.e. intangible dynamics like attitudes, motivations, incentives, values, path dependencies, and relationships that enable and/or inhibit the development and utilization of capacity (Land 1999; Fowler 2000). Strengthening the capacities of communities, organizations, and countries to achieve their *own* development goals became increasingly important. Concepts such as 'ownership', 'empowerment' and social and organisational 'learning' (re)appeared on the development agenda, although the forms and meanings these concepts took varied considerably. The transfer of development resources and knowledge moved from 'supply-driven' status to 'demand-driven', in theory if not in practice (Morgan).

### **Adaptive capacity and poverty reduction**

In response to increasing risk and uncertainty in the world, the prevalence of 'fragile states', the rapid pace of technological change, environmental disasters and degradation, and growing interest in the study of 'complex systems', the aid and development spotlight is beginning to focus on the question of 'how to sustain and enhance *adaptive capacity* in a complex world of rapid transformations' (Salafsky, et al. 2001; Folke and Carpenter et al. 2002; Rihani 2003; Groves and Hinton 2004; Morgan 2005; Sorgenfrei and Wrigley 2005). Since the turn of the millennium, 'poverty reduction' has been placed at centre-stage in the aid and development arena (Jerve 2001) with 'capacity building' viewed as essential to ensure its sustainable success (Ubels 2005). The concern driving my thesis is whether the poor are, or are likely to benefit from all this 'capacity building' that is going on in the aid and development industry. The issue I particularly focus on is 'how can we tell' since capacity building and poverty reduction are such complex and dynamic issues.

## A shift in the discourse on aid and development

The prominent position the term 'capacity building' holds in contemporary narratives on aid and development suggests it is a 'nodal point' or 'marker' signifying a shift in the discourse from a mechanistic resource-transfer mentality to a systemic understanding of, and approach to, human development and change (Kaplan 1999). About discourse change, David Howarth writes, 'Moments of choices between discourses occur when our conceptual frameworks are no longer able to provide reasonable answers to questions that are posed when they are challenged from other perspectives. Thus it is the *failure* of a particular form of rationality which requires us to reconstitute our discourses along different lines' (Marsh and Stoker eds. 1995). Capacity building rose to popularity in the 1990s largely due to the limited success, some would say 'failure', of technical and externally-induced development efforts to bring about sustainable development outcomes (see Ubels et al. 2005). Given that 'capacity building' is a nodal point in the aid and development discourse, and given that discourse change does not happen independently from interests that are driving it (Oyen 2002), serious analysis entails moving the spotlight from the generic and abstract to the discursive arena, bringing into clearer focus the different concerns and claims that fuel the popularization of capacity building as a 'strategic' approach to development. This will be the focus of the next article.

Ok, I need to finish here and run down to **McDonalds** in my **Nikes** to get a **Coke** before I get online and search **Google** for references to George Dubya's **capacity building** strategies to fight the war on terror and divert our attention from global warming!

Leanne (IF's correspondent in the United States!)

*Footnotes available on request*

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### IF Management Committee Update

We wish everyone a very happy New Year in 2007. We often hope activities will slow down at IF, but we always seem to be as busy as ever. The last quarter of 2006 was no exception.

Firstly, we received good news from the Australian Tax Office – Indigo Foundation has

officially been recognised as a Deductible Gift Recipient. This means IF can now offer tax deductions to donors in our own right, no longer needing to rely on APHEDA. For one-off donations we started doing this immediately, and for monthly donations we are working with the Commonwealth Bank (a slow process) to establish our own electronic processing system. This should be up and running in the first months of this year, with much thanks to our invaluable accountant Margaret Easterbrook. The support APHEDA has provided over the last 6 years to IF can not be underestimated.

In late November we held our annual Project Management Workshop, followed by our bi-annual IF Review. The workshop was attended by project managers, key volunteers and the Management Committee. It focused on IF's approach to:

a) **Participatory development** and included a discussion on the perceived advantages and disadvantages of participation. We were fortunate to have Beth Rushton, our 2006 Development Praxis Award Winner, whose PhD is on participation in Cambodia's health care system present her thoughts on participation, and IF's approach to it. There was much lively discussion. Moving away from the industry 'standard' of instrumental and prescriptive guidelines to participation, the workshop resulted in IF developing an approach to participation that is based on key principles – much the same as we have with our *Guiding Principles*, which have served us so well. Despite the apparent simplicity of our *Guiding Principles*, they consistently highlight the complexity of development work whilst providing us with a solid and workable development framework. We expect the participation principles to be the same.

b) The vital links between international, regional and national politics and social change and local level development.

The IF review was a day of reflection and planning which was wonderfully facilitated by Sandy Wright. Sandy was both insightful and provocative in her facilitation, causing Management Committee members to assess the integrity of IF as well as the long term viability, credibility and impact of our work. We especially focused on IF's adherence to our *Guiding Principles* as well as our management structure and systems. We also discussed organisational lifecycles and where IF was in terms of its establishment, maturation and longevity. The

result of these discussions will be in the next newsletter.

Many thanks to the considerable time and effort given to IF by both Ruth and Sandy. Also thanks to Macquarie Bank, through Anne Cummins, for the use of their conference facilities over the weekend.



*From left: Susan Engel, Sue Cunningham, Anne Cummins, Selman Jan, Philip Strickland, Sally Stevenson, Beth Ruston and Elizabeth House at the Project Management Workshop*

In September and October we had two wonderful fundraising events, organised by Theresa Huxtable, our coordinator. IF supporters, Angela & Mike Gaffikin and Marina & Peter McGlenn offered their time, homes and very generous

hospitality to allow us to present our work on Afghanistan, Solomon Islands and Indonesia to interested circles of friends and colleagues. The level of discussion and debate that ensued was inspiring. Our thanks to the McGlinns and Gaffikins. This personal approach and support to our fundraising efforts is extremely meaningful to IF.

Briefly, other project related events since our last newsletter have included: the signing of our first Commitment Agreement in India (the project was detailed in the August newsletter) and recruitment of Annie Namala as our IF Liaison Officer in Delhi (welcome Annie!); the departure of Phillip Strickland our project manager for the Democratic Republic of Congo on an assessment mission. Phil returned safely from Kokolopori mid January and we look forward to reporting on his visit. Finally, we are discussing with the University of Wollongong and the South East Sydney and Illawarra Area Health Service about how IF can provide support to an innovative Aboriginal Scholarship program in Population Health.

On that note – we look forward to bringing you more IF news throughout 2007!

if

indigo foundation

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