indigo foundation is an independent, volunteer run, Australian community development organisation.
We work with marginalised communities providing innovative assistance to improve their health, education, and human rights.

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+ Borjegai students just keep on achieving! And more, from Afghanistan ....
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+ our finances – how you can help, our think piece on accountability, and a new feature: Pat's Picks!

Budaka Project for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Eastern Uganda

Dr Ellen Kraly - Project Coordinator

Eighth January 2015 was an excellent day. On this Thursday, the representatives of the six community organisations of the Budaka (Uganda) Project for Orphans and Vulnerable Children convened for a day long meeting to consider and compare their individual programs, each directed to meeting the needs of HIV orphans and vulnerable youth in the region, and to reveal their commonalities. In this gathering most effectively facilitated by Project Liaison Katooko Joyce, over 60 leaders discussed their problems and successes, and described approaches to problem solving. The long but creative day concluded with imagining shared activities and affirming common commitment to promoting the welfare of vulnerable children in their communities.

indigo foundation has worked with the Budaka Project for Orphans and Vulnerable Children since 2011, providing funds to support the educational engagement of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), encourage health education concerning HIV/AIDS in schools and communities of orphans and vulnerable children, and promote the leadership and administrative capacity of the community based organisations partnering with foundation. The original partnership was forged with four community based organisations (CBO): Galimaagi AIDS and Grieving Orphans; Iki Iki AIDS Community Group; Kakule AIDS and Grieving Families Association and NACOMAS, and recently has been expanded to include two additional organisations, Munaku-Kaama Community Development Initiatives and Trinity Childcare Ministries. These organisations serve well over 2,000 vulnerable youth in the region, a number which is expanding as a result of both HIV-AIDS orphanhood as well as limitations of government special services for the support of disabled children.

As indigo foundation Project Coordinator of the Budaka Project, I had the privilege of witnessing this
exchange of information and generation of new ideas among the six community based organizations on this day in early in the new year. This was my second trip to Budaka, having visited in March 2014 as a visitor on behalf of indigo foundation.

This year, I arrived as ‘project coordinator,’ also a volunteer activity but with the benefit of training by my colleagues at the foundation and guidance by a mentor with several years of experience in serving as a project coordinator with other indigo foundation projects. The support of the foundation is a source of confidence and appreciation for its high standards for preparation and administration.

The four days prior to the group meeting were filled morning to night with individual meetings with each of the six CBOs, scheduled with precision, efficiency and grace by Katooko Joyce, who has served as Project Manager for for the past four years. Joy is an impressive women with a keen administrative sense of what is feasible, what is effective, and what is respectful. She moves among community leaders and within the community with the capacity to take the pulse of the people and monitor their needs.

Throughout my visits, I was impressed with the organizational and administrative savvy of my new colleagues in each of the CBOs, and was inspired by their dedication to their constituencies and the beneficiaries. Their future-sight is truly breathtaking: as they work to address the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children, they anticipate the challenges of supporting the needs and futures of adolescents, young mothers and caregivers. The leadership of the Budaka CBOs understand that they are participating in a process of social change and social and economic development within their communities. They are committed to making sure that change is moving in a positive direction for children and youth in Budaka. Education and health are their accelerators.

The individual meetings with the CBOs often began with engaging performances by youth of the organization. Business began with introductions of persons present, usually members of the CBO leadership teams and in two circumstances, members of the CBO, followed by a report by the leader, usually the chair, or the treasurer or secretary. I expressed greetings and good wishes from the leadership of indigo foundation and described my goals to build productive relationships – to become colleagues and to become friends, to learn from each organization concerning their experience before and after support from the foundation and to listen carefully to the aspirations of the leadership for the future of each organization – in the shorter run and in the longer run. Each of the individual meetings was followed by visits to projects (vocational training workshops and kitchens, goats, pigs and oxen, impressive community gardens) and homes of beneficiaries.

The children of Trinity Childcare Ministry made our morning meeting with songs (“We are happy to receive you…”) which had been customized for Australia. A second song repeated the phrase, “struggling to lead a better life,” in relationship to education. Individual children, girls, came forward during the song to relate what they wanted to be (a principal, policeman, teacher, nurse). Introductions of the members present of the nine member executive committee were followed by a clear and cogent report by Lydia, volunteer project coordinator (studying social work and psychology) on the history and perspective of Trinity.

Through their work on Sunday afternoons with children and youth (since 2000), they have come to understand that orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) need more than spiritual support but face to face issues holistic counselling that covers the social and psychological aspects of their lives. In response they have changed their programs with children and youth by providing a place of personal contact, talk and listening, and a place for children to relax and refresh. Trinity has learned that counselling instills hope in these children, and good performance in school results; counselling helps reduce bad behavior and acting out; counselling, like scholastic materials increases self esteem. Chairperson Naomi says, “children have problems” – not just adults – children have problems; they come to Trinity to relax for a while, for a few minutes, to escape the abuse and poverty, often they don’t have a voice at home.”

Chairperson Michael of Kakule HIV/AIDS and Grieved AIDS Families Association (KAGA) provided his report
on the history of KAGA and expressed, with pride, that KAGA was one of the original CBos in the indigo partnership. The perspective and projects of KAGA have developed from the foundation of the provision of scholastic materials to OVC, which are essential for staying in school and for students to concentrate in their studies. With our support, members of KAGA have received training to counsel HIV+ children, and provide HCT; these volunteers continue to move from household to household to encourage HCT and positive living. In gaining experience, the organization has come to recognize the need for basic care materials such as sanitary pads to prevent girls from dropping out of school due to stigma of not having supplies. KAGA also encourages planting staple foods and have established a mother garden of cassava. Cassava are harvested by KAGA members for distribution to OVC families, and more importantly, cassava stems are also given to OVC households for planting.

We were met at the Iki Iki AIDS Community Initiative (IACI) by nearly three dozen committee members as well as a very well disciplined youth committee. The youth presented a program of original songs and poems concerning the scourge of HIV/AIDS, and response, and also the importance of education. A young women, Rosemary, a former participant in the youth programs of IACI led the program; she is now training to be a teacher. The Chairperson, Yusef, provided detailed information on the origins and current programs of IACI which serves the region within Budaka with the highest number and rate of HIV cases. Many IACI members have been trained in HCT to promote awareness and provide support for OVC and youth and continue to participate in refresher courses. Members of IACI recognize a direct relationship among HIV/AIDS in the household, child vulnerability and poor school performance. The members also described the good effects of access to scholastic materials (SM) on school attendance and engagement. Other health issues – TB, epilepsy, also exist. Poor nutrition at home, and lack of food during the school day are considered critical issues. The contact of IACI members with parents and guardians is also considered essential to supporting OVC and youth.

One IACI member, a pastor, appreciated my presence and my hope to build friendship with members of the organizations and communities. He expressed the importance of my understanding of the homes of people with whom I seek to be friends: ‘Friends should know what is taking place in home of their friends, and where they sleep; life here is not easy; visit our homes – see what is on the ground.’

The Galimaagi AIDS and Grieving Orphans (Galimaagi) is characterized by strong community participation and ownership in the mission and activities of the organization. With a member of the police as well as the chairperson of the village present at the meeting, the Chairperson assured me that the meeting was secure. It was a lovely joke on my behalf. The original project supported by the foundation has grown beyond the provision of scholastic materials to include school uniforms, food security projects (cassava, livestock and field cultivation with two oxen and the plough) and music, dance and drama for child and beneficiaries. The members of Galimaagi work closely with the school headmasters concerning the SM who report the importance of the books and pens for the progress of OVC and youth. Changes observed in the community do include a decrease in the number of dropouts from school. Galimaagi leaders work directly with schools to monitor these trends.

The Wednesday morning meeting with Manuka-Kaama Community Development Initiatives (Manuka-Kaama) began with visiting beneficiaries in the nearby neighborhoods and witnessing the progress of their building of the nursery and primary school which they hope to open this coming summer. The nursery and primary school will provide more proximate educational opportunities to the many OVC and youth in the community served by Manuka-Kaama. We walked through the “HIV prevention forest” on the way to visiting families and households with OVC and youth and discussed the problems with the distribution and survival of poultry for food security and also some income generation. One of the members of Manuka-Kaama, Rosemary, had invented a cooking stove which was much more efficient in the consumption and burning of wood. The arrangement
was very impressive and is a striking illustration of innovation poised to make positive and sustainable change in the community.

Leaders articulated the relationship among health status, vulnerability and school progress. Rosemary identified the need for access to medical treatment for OVC and youth. Malnutrition, malaria, cerebral malaria, typhoid fever and epilepsy are cited as key illnesses. The government health center is 2-3 km from the community and is often deficient in supplies and personnel. Beneficiaries lack transportation to health care centers. Bedding for OVCs also emerged as a health issue. The Treasurer, Eunice, described a relatively recent initiative of a finance program for members of Manuka-Kaama and presented to record books showing deposits, withdrawals and savings among members. She noted that most persons (approximately 35) enrolled in the finance program are committed to growing their savings.

During our visit TASO (The AIDS Support Organization) arrived to distribute medication to beneficiaries present for the meeting. The Treasurer was an advocate of positive living and the erosion of stigma associated with positive HIV status: ‘We are living with energy, we are full of energy and can go to garden to dig and to meet our needs.’ She sees clear benefit of empowering individuals and families to live positively.

The meeting with NACOMAS Community Action for Social Development took place at the government school on Wednesday afternoon. Eight members of the NACOMAS executive committee were present for the meeting which was led by Chairperson, Juma, and the Secretary, Jacob. The mission of NACOMAS is to empower members and to promote sustainable social, economic change in the community. The program of scholastic materials now serves over 400 children.

NACOMAS has responded to the influence of proximity to Mbaile and exposure of youth to urban health problems of Mbaile, and HIV in particular by extending its program of counselling. NACOMAS also seeks to promote environmental awareness and has encouraged the community to plant trees for firewood, and to enrich the environment. NACOMAS promotes gender equity and has sought to support the adoption of sanitary napkins among girls; they have also tried to create time and space for girls to discuss these changes in themselves. The organization has also organized an effective drama program for HIV education; in participating in the program, youth imagine consequences and also develop skills and thereby increase confidence. The leaders see big impact of their programs on women in the community and would like to also support more vulnerable in the region. Their aspirations are to ‘see their children smart!’

Throughout these individual meetings, and as we came together on Thursday for the day long planning and visioning session, our hope, of Joy and me, was to create environments of discussion with community leaders which was open and honest, critical and constructive. During the convening of the full partnership questions and comments were indeed forthcoming: Questions about money, variability in exchange rates; interest in ongoing support; frustrations with challenges about increasing needs in the community.

More importantly, the CBO leadership posed questions and offered comments to each other: they were curious about successes and the problem solving strategies of each other; they reflected on their common goals and dreams for projects; they lingered with each other discussing the details of administering their programs, listening and learning from one another, expressing respect for one another.

Thursday was a day of creative and constructive conversation among the community leaders.

It was a privilege to be present.

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Borjegai Schools Excelled in Kankor!

Borjegahi, Afghanistan

Ali Reza Yunespour - Project Coordinator

The 21st of March, which is the Afghan New Year (Nawruz) and the first day of spring season, also marks the day on which schools commence every year in Afghanistan. The country's President Mr Ashraf Ghani rang the first school bell for the solar Year of 1394 in Amani High School in Kabul on 19 March 2015.

Nawruz is an exciting time and an important celebration in the Afghan culture. This year’s Nawruz was more special for me as it corresponded to the day that I received the results of the national university entrance exams (known as Kankor) for nationwide and Borjegai students who participated in this increasingly competitive test.

It is so encouraging to know that around 117,000 new students have successfully made it to the public or private higher education institutions this year. According to the country’s Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), the total number of Kankor participants were 219,145 students.
It is reported that nationally around 30 percent of students, who successful passed the test, were girls this year. If true, this reflects a major improvement for female tertiary students, as currently 18 percent of enrolled tertiary students are girls in Afghanistan.

Once again, Borjegai schools have excelled in Kankor. Of the 113 Borjegai students, 56 boys and 32 girls have been offered courses in tertiary institutions. The Borjegai Kankor results represent a success rate of over 75 percent, which is much higher than the national average of just over 50 percent.

Nematullah and Seemagul, both from Golbona village, respectively have received 332 and 330 points, representing the highest score amongst the Borjegai male and female participants of Kankor. Nematullah and Semagul will study Information Technology (IT) and Pharmacy at Kabul University for the next 4 years.

### Borjegai Kankor Results 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School</th>
<th>Kankor Participants</th>
<th>Kankor Results By Institution</th>
<th>By Gender</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
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<td>Public universities/HE institutions</td>
<td>Private Higher Education Institutions</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>113</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
</tr>
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The Kankor results for Borjegai schools came just a few months after a graduation ceremony, which was jointly organised by the Borjegai and Jirghai communities in Kabul for their 130 new university graduates. At the time I was in Kabul for my field work, and had the honour to participate in the ceremony. It was extremely pleasing for me to see that 86 new graduates and seven Master degrees attended the ceremony.

The joint ceremony was a success in itself, and another demonstration of Borjegai and Jirghai communities’ commitment to education and community development. Around 1500 members of the community attended the program, including a large number of girls and women.

A large number of community members gathered to celebrate the achievements of their university students.
Kankor Process and Issues

Like the previous years, Kankor was held province by province in winter (December-February). It contained 160 multiple-choice questions from all subjects of the last three years of the high school (Years 10-12), in which the correct answers were given 1 to 3 points.

Kankor, however, is more than a multiple choice test because it decides the fate of a student to receive ‘free’, ‘for-fee’, or no tertiary education. For example, almost half of the total students who received marks below 177 (up around 10 points from that of last year) have missed on their first chance to study in tertiary education, particularly in public institutions, this year. These students have two more chances to sit for Kankor in coming years. However, it is becoming much harder every year for Kankor participants to get into public tertiary institutions due to the rapid increase of year twelve graduates.

Getting into one of the 33 public tertiary institutions, particularly in one of the four public universities located in Kabul, is crucial for the Kankor participants. It is because they are more likely to study their courses together with students from various ethnic and sectarian groups. More importantly, the MoHE has an absolute monopoly over the distribution of government and foreign scholarships in Afghanistan, which means that students of public universities are more likely to study abroad. For example, around 9000 Afghan students from the public universities and government departments have received scholarships from Indian universities in the past decade.

Due to their limited capacity, the public universities were able to offer courses for a quarter of Kankor participants this year, which shows a decrease of around 10 percent than their intakes in previous Kankor. The result for Borjegai students was better as over 50 percent of them were accepted in public universities.

Despite the encouraging Kankor results, Kankor regretfully was not without its difficulties. The winter’s cold winter, MoHE mismanagement, ongoing interference by powerful politicians, and reported fraudulent practices once again undermined the credibility and transparency of this year’s Kankor.

Moreover, the structural problems are still in place in Afghanistan. For instance, the public tertiary education are still entirely dependent on foreign aid, and they have been already suffering from inadequate resources, over-crowdedness, and heavy reliance on teaching at the expense of research.

More importantly, the employment opportunities are very limited for new university graduates, and there seems to be a huge gulf between tertiary education courses and the social and economic realities of Afghanistan.

The above structural problems have a detrimental affect on the quality of education in tertiary institutions. If not addressed now, they have the potential to undermine the future success and role of university graduates in this country.

The future of Borjegai School Project

We in indigo foundation would like to congratulate the Borjegai and Jirghai students for their recent achievements. We are extremely proud of our support for those students, and the exemplary commitment of Borjegai and Jirghai communities to education and community development.

With the generous support of the Rotary Club of Ryde, we were able to provide furniture for two more schools (Sayed Jamaluddin High School and Salam-e Fars School) in 2014. With the completion of the furniture projects late last year, the Borjegai School Project has assisted the community with the construction of four school buildings, and provided furniture, safe drinking water, and hygiene facilities for six schools in the past decade.

We are currently raising the final funds to support the Borjegai community with the maintenance and upgrading of the Borjegai High School in 2015. The Rotary Club of Burley Griffin has kindly donated $2,000 for this project. We expect all nine Borjegai schools will be self-sustaining by next year. A wonderful achievement.

Jirghai School Project

We have recently established the Jirghai School Project on our development model with the Borjegai community. The JSP aims to expand our school project in rural Afghanistan to include an additional 21 schools in Jirghai area. This is a new milestone for indigo foundation, and we believe we can assist the Jirghai schools with your ongoing support and dedication of our members and volunteers.

We have raised funds for the furniture of Imam Hussien High School in Jirghai, and this project will commence in early May. The project will assist around 650 students, of which around 30 percent are girls.

In addition, we are looking for your kind support to help the Jirghai community with the construction of Shebar High School this year. This is a co-ed school
Club Rafiki: Using the power of dance to connect with and help young people.

Kigali, Rwanda

Mandy and David Wheen - Project Coordinators

Club Rafiki’s hip hop dance school in Rwanda is using dance and popular music to provide an activity for young people which gives them fun and a vigorous physical activity, but also is a vehicle for the dancers to develop valuable life skills.

We have supported the dance school since 2012 and in late 2014 we made our second visit to observe the school operations.

We were greatly impressed with what the school has achieved and were encouraged to learn of their plans for the future. We learnt from members of the local community that the dance school is not only a valuable contributor to the welfare of local youngsters but also assists the Club in other linkages it has with its community. For example the Club’s sound system, provided by indigo, is used by other organisations, and monthly dance performances put on by the youngsters are events keenly anticipated and attended by the local populous.

There are virtually no local social and recreational facilities for young people, and especially girls. The Club’s facilities are therefore in great demand.

Currently the Club offers eight dance classes each week with a total of 120 participants. Each dancer attends two classes a week.

Initially the Club struggled to attract girls to the classes. A dance school was not an activity with which parents were familiar and they were reluctant to allow their daughters to attend. That the dance classes now have at least 50% girls is a credit to the persistence of the Club’s administration and the reputation the dance school has established within the community.

The Club also operates a Friendly Centre with HIV testing and prevention programs and family planning education. Early on the Club saw the opportunity to include within the dance classes information sessions on sexual health. They went even further and saw that the dancers could be conduits to take the sexual health messages to other communities. They therefore commenced regular visits to rural areas where small numbers of dancers are bussed to villages. There they set up in a market place and start to perform. Villagers quickly congregate and local children and adults join the dancing. After some fun the dancers retire and health educators step forward to talk with the community about sexual health and reproductive health issues.

The Club regards this as a most valuable outreach and would like to do more but is constrained by the funds available to it. We need to find more funds to do this.

My Talent My Health Program

In 2013 one of the young dancers died of AIDS. 3 percent of the Rwandan population is HIV positive.

The death of their friend shocked the dancers and provoked them to want to do something to help others. Together with the Club Administrators they developed a plan to train dancers as educators so that they would be able to work with their peers to raise their awareness of HIV and of how it can be prevented. They presented indigo foundation with their plan and sought assistance to obtain the necessary funding.

With the help of an Australian family planning educator we were was able to provide the Club with advice on strategy and subsequently we raised the necessary funds via an internet based crowd funding appeal.

In November 2014 the program commenced with 35 young dancers aged 14-19 completing a five day training workshop. The training focussed on awareness and prevention of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections and family planning. The workshop dealt not only with knowledge about health but with also communication and life skills. As the young people move into their advocacy roles they will be mentored and supported by the health professionals from the Club’s Friendly Centre.
At the end of the training fifteen year old Amza wrote: “I am happy that I was trained on my health especially sexual infections and it was amazing for me to know more about HIV, and reproductive health. Now I’m ... ready to help my colleagues.”

To enable the young dancers to reach other youngsters the Club has planned a series of events during 2015 to reach out into the community. These will include dance performances, dance competitions, debates, drawing, poetry and singing events and football and basketball competitions.

The first of these events was held on World AIDS Day (1 December 2014) where 800 attended. There were dance and football competitions, quizzes on AIDS and sexual health and testing of young people for HIV and pregnancy. In addition there were many informal opportunities for the dancers to talk with their friends about positive sexual behaviour.

One unanticipated outcome of the success of this event was that a major Rwandan NGO the Imbuto Foundation (the Chairperson is the wife of the President of Rwanda) has approached the Club to cooperate with them in staging two future events and has provided Club Rafiki with a contribution towards the costs. Imbuto has a mission to fight HIV/AIDS in Rwanda and to empower girls and women.

We are confident that over 2015 the Club will continue to actively engage and empower the dance school participants. The girls and boys will not only have fun and enhance their dance skills but will have the confidence and knowledge to reach out to their peers promoting awareness of HIV and of how to live healthy lives.

Reproductive health sessions, as part of the Club Rafiki outreach program.

**our finances**

Since 2008, when we last issued a request in this newsletter for support, we have been extremely fortunate with the generous and consistent financial support provided by our donors. However, over the last two years, you may have noticed our financial statements reflect a decrease in reserves. This has been a managed decrease - based on bringing on new projects in Afghanistan, Namibia, Cambodia and South Sudan and on upscaling existing projects to meet community needs. To date, we have been reluctant to hold funds that can have an impact in countries needing resources - but decreasing our reserves is unsustainable.

Unfortunately, the not for profit sector has become increasingly competitive and difficult to raise funds in. We have done an enormous amount of work in the last 12 months, improving our marketing approach and developing our systems to attract new donors and funding. This has included a new, flexible and tailored database that will help us work more efficiently and strategically; a new look website - professional, clean and clear about what we do and how we do it; submission of a range of grants applications; maintenance of our event based fundraising efforts; and the development of a sustainability strategy.

These strategies are working, but slowly, and in the meantime we are faced with a difficult financial situation for 2014-15. We need to raise $50,000 before the end of June.

We ask you to consider becoming a monthly donor, increasing your monthly donation or making a one-off donation. Your assistance at this time will be very much appreciated.

And have a look at the end of this newsletter for some great fundraising events you can attend!
indigo foundation think piece

Accountability – at the heart of inclusive and effective community development

Lyla Rogan

In this presentation I offer some thoughts around accountability and how the practice of accountability plays out in a small community development organisation like indigo that has big aspirations, small resources and a very clear and well-articulated philosophy and approach assisting marginalised communities and building capacity of local community organisations.

I draw on my experience as a consultant with the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International (HAP) over four years. HAP was formed in 2003 in response to international exposure of widespread abuse and corruption in the humanitarian system. The push for higher standards was very much spearheaded by NGOs. HAP’s membership comprises humanitarian and development NGOs from the north and south, big and small.

My role involved designing a baseline analysis to review and strengthen accountability practices based on the HAP Standard in Quality and Accountability. The baseline analysis assisted organisations identify how to improve and institutionalise good accountability practices.

My belief is that HAP’s framework of accountability has strong applicability for small and larger development NGOs and is a different window on participatory community development practice. My talk aims to stimulate discussion about how indigo meets its commitment to accountability and the challenges associated with building capacity of local CBOs to be accountable in their communities based on standards that come from the outside.

Over the past few years there have been efforts to harmonise the many different standards and codes that international NGOs are required to relate to. A new Core Humanitarian Standard in Quality and Accountability has just been released and HAP has merged with People in Aid to form a new entity. For this talk I am going to stay with the HAP benchmarks for accountability which are fully reflected in the new core standard. Locally, the ACFID Code of Conduct is centrally about transparency and accountability and incorporates most aspects of the HAP Standard.

How is accountability defined? What does a culture of accountability look like?

HAP defines accountability as the means through which power is used responsibly.

For me this definition provides a fresh lens for thinking about accountability because power exists within communities, between local CBOs and community members, between partner organisations and ultimately between those delivering programs and donors.

HAP sees accountability is a critical consideration in every phase, decision, and action of organisations, be it to mitigate emergencies or address development challenges and poverty. The HAP Standard is seen to apply to a wide range of organisations:

- single or multi-mandate organisations working in humanitarian assistance, development and advocacy
- organisations involved in disaster preparedness and recovery and building community capacities in this areas
- organisations delivering programs directly or working with partners.

How to encourage, equip and require local partners to be accountable based on the standard is a major area of discussion and contention – and one of particular pertinence to indigo foundation given its approach of community led development.

The HAP standard included six benchmarks each with a number of requirements and the means of verification. The requirements unpack what the benchmark means in practice. Here are the six benchmarks and comment on their primary focus.
The baseline analysis involved an assessment at headquarters and in one or two field sites depending on the size of the organisation. Where programs were delivered through local partners it involved partners as well as the organisation undertaking the baseline. It always included community input as well as information from staff and volunteers. The process was intended to engender learning and build organisational capacity. Often it meant helping organisations identify their commitments and plan how they could implement them more effectively. Over a number of years I was involved with NGOs whose HQ were in Europe, UK, USA, Africa, Australia, India and Pakistan.

**The weakest areas of practice across NGOs**

*Making accountability commitments* known - Many organisations had not clearly articulated what they would be accountable for to communities and how communities and partners would get to know and understand what those commitments meant. For an organisation seeking to strengthen a culture of accountability to communities, this is a first step.

For indigo foundation, it would include respect for the four principles – *community ownership, transparency, sustainability and equity*. But it might also include commitments around your code of conduct, child protection and sexual exploitation and abuse, gender justice and inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised people. How the organisations policies apply at the community level is a critical consideration.

On the indigo foundation website it states: We commit ourselves to follow these four principles in our work. In turn, we ask that all the communities we work with abide by these principles. We will work with communities to ensure these principles are upheld. If a community cannot follow these principles, we will cease working with that community. These expectations are built into indigo foundation’s partner commitment agreements. In practice where an NGO is working through relationships with small groups of people and local community based organisations delivering on your accountability commitments is far from easy.

*Transparency and information sharing* – Across the HAP baseline analyses I conducted this was the most surprising weakness. Without exception transparency and accountability were held up as organisational values but few organisations had a clear view of the information that should be routinely available to communities and how this information would be made available in accessible, relevant and timely ways.

Communities cannot hold their leaders or community organisations accountable unless they know what they can hold them to account for. They need to understand what they should be able to expect around entitlements, policies, behaviours and performance. (e.g. Code of Conduct). Further, active engagement and community ownership
presumes communities are kept informed about what is happening and understand how they can have input.

In the baselines we found a big discrepancy between what staff said communities knew about the organisation and program activities – i.e. what information communities supposedly had access to and what members of communities actually knew. Sometimes community leaders and CBOs had a level of information that did not extend to others in the community. Mostly when we spoke to people in the community – even those apparently closely associated with the program - the level of understanding of the auspice organisation – who it was, what it stood for, how to be in touch with it - was surprisingly limited. Without this kind of information communities cannot really hold anyone accountable for what is and isn’t happening.

Giving information was often tied to a project cycle and consultation on the activities of the program – meaning it was less about dialogue, listening and engagement over time around ways of working and whether the organisation was living up to its commitments. I’ll say more on monitoring and evaluation later, but invariably where monitoring processes were in place these generally focused on project activities and the technical aspects of delivering a program and who was benefiting.

Complaints processes – This was universally a weak area with all sorts of reasons given about why it was hard and why complaints mechanisms were not in place. Cultural factors, costs and concerns about trivial complaints were often cited but some agencies also had reservations about whether there was much to learn through complaints. It was not uncommon to be directed to a staff grievance policy as evidence of a process for handling complaints. But this is very different from a process that enables community members to raise complaints or concerns.

The most effective complaints processes were designed in consultation with communities and improved over time as members of the community got more confidence in the processes and trusted they would get a response. Getting communities to understand the value of complaints as a way of improving the effectiveness of programs was itself a challenge. Organisations were often confronted with cultural barriers and the communities’ past experiences of development agencies or community based organisations was often itself a barrier. Invariably communities were used to being consulted about what they needed and how this might be best delivered, almost always within already defined parameters of what could be funded or offered. They were not used to contributing or directing decisions at other levels. They did not expect to be able to raise a concern or generally know who they could raise a concern with – even on simple concerns. Discussing the possibility of more serious breaches of trust by program staff, volunteers or community leaders was very difficult and often a no go area.

Monitoring, reporting and evaluation processes – These generally focused on project activities rather than impact or whether an organisation lives up to its policies, principles, values and commitments. In work done by ACFID involving sector case studies of accountability practices, this was referred to as the first loop of accountability (accountability for actions). Organisations with a culture of accountability use monitoring and evaluation processes to review adherence to key policies and organisational values. (see diagram below)
Working with local partners – The trend in international development is to increased delivery with and through local partners. This requires both recognition of local capacities, respect for context and ways of operating and where there are deficits, a role in building capacities. In this context NGOs often require partners to adopt and meet policies and standards that come from elsewhere as part of their contract or agreement. For example, this is what indigo foundation does with its child protection policy and code of conduct.

At the end of the day working with partners to understand and implement participatory and rights based approaches to community development and accountability involves learning, change and investment in building capacity. Project coordinators working with partners need to be able to clearly communicate the policy and why it matters, help local leaders and staff interpret what the policy means and how it would look if implemented in their context. Then it means supporting community leaders and staff live by the policy or standards in a way that is relevant in that context.

When the HAP standard was reviewed in 2010 – working with partners was a major focus and the revised standard includes additional requirements for the relationship and processes of NGOs working with local partners.

Other important factors

There was generally stronger practice in benchmarks relating to participation and learning linked to monitoring and evaluation. However a couple of reflections on these areas.

Participation - Even where organisations had a core commitment to participation the practice was not even, nor did it always come with any power or influence over decisions. In many cases there was a pattern of strong participation at the front end of projects and less engagement as the project/program was rolled out. In the main, the level and nature of participation was determined more by the attitudes and capacities of staff than by organisational philosophy and policy.

Ongoing dialogue and discussion throughout program implementation is a good basis for accountability but it does not assure there is a systematic way for communities to hold agencies to account. In some contexts, communities were the barrier in the first instance to a participatory, rights based and inclusive approach. Their expectations were shaped by culture, politics and past experience of development. In these cases, it can take a very long time to build trust and create a different expectation around community participation and ownership of development activities.

Communicating with and listening to communities - especially community members who don’t hold political or social power - is a major element of accountability and it would appear to be a strength of indigo. It is important to ensure the voices and opinions of ordinary people are heard, that the processes go beyond community leaders.

Further, strengthening the voice and capacity of community members in specific projects can potentially have wider benefit whereby citizens become better equipped to exact greater accountability from public officials and service providers. Understanding and addressing in some way the power relations inherent in any development context and relationships is a prerequisite to enabling this change.

Tension between compliance focus and realisation of mutual accountability and learning - The baselines found monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes, in general, were not designed to support learning and accountability. The tools and templates had often become ends in themselves and the mechanics of meeting reporting requirements becomes all consuming. The burden of these processes often shifts attention away from learning with and from communities and being answerable back to communities for results and processes for engagement and accountability.

In the past and today, the aid system architecture and regulatory environments distort accountability of NGO’s, CBOs and governments to donors and away from citizens and those who are meant to benefit from development. Refocusing accountability downwards is not an easy task when many of the tools and approaches are designed to suit donor accountability and reporting.

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**Pat’s Picks**

*Pat Duggan is a long term indigo foundation supporter (in fact her membership card is #1!) and an experienced (and highly regarded) development practitioner. Over the last 30 years Pat has worked for the UN, DFAT, Care Australia and most recently was responsible for managing Australian Government’s development cooperation to ASEAN, delivered through its Secretariat in Indonesia. To our great delight, Pat has offered to write us a regular column: ‘Pat’s Picks’, her selection from recent international development blogs. So if you, like most of us, don’t have time to research, but want to be kept informed about global developments in development – Pats Picks is for you!*

While much of the global discourse is a long way away from the community focus of our work, readers might be interested in global dynamics, which ultimately, no matter how indirect, affect the opportunities in the communities we work with. But it’s a headsman, the internet. Where should you start? I’ve pulled out some blogs below, I thought might stimulate your own thoughts, and introduce the debate on some 2015 global development issues/events. My career in Government and the UN is reflected in what I’ve selected.

I’ve briefly summarised the content of each article I’ve given the link for, so you can decide if you want to go further. The links take you to the website of each organisation/blogsite - and there, you can be linked a world of words on development...

**Blog 1: This year’s development summits have many mountains to climb**

This year sees three international summits, the first being the *Financing For Development Conference* in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July. Next, in New York, a global meeting decides the post 2015 development agenda: targets to replace the Millennium Development Goals. The third, in Paris in December, will attempt to come up with a new Climate Change agreement. What is missing, apart from clarity of purpose, is a focus on inequality. It’s hard to exaggerate the importance of that question. The central goal of the summits is to chart a course towards the eradication of extreme poverty, more equitable globalisation, and climate stability. The summits provide an opportunity to restore the credibility of multilateralism.


**Blog 2: Let’s get real in Addis: The high cost of people-centered development**

The Addis Ababa conference in July on Financing for Development provides an opportunity to strengthen the world’s commitment to sustainable development. Let’s take a hard look at the dilemma of how to pay for modern institutions in poor countries and recognize the critical need for ODA to build public institutions and encourage difficult reforms. (Article, and the one immediately under it, note the need to be sceptical about relying too much on the private sector to close the development gap…)


**Blog 3: We leave Sendai with a new global deal on disaster risk, but does it go far enough?**

The 2010 Hyogo Agreement on Disaster Risk was a watershed: in the past five years we have seen Disaster Risk reduction (or DRR) move from its marginal place in the development discourse to a more central one. The Sendai meeting, held in March, was to be the place where the post-Hyogo framework was agreed. This is the report of one participant, from ODI, in the meeting. It sounds like it’s achieved less than hoped, as the question of disaster risk is central to the global discussion of inequality, financing for development, and climate change.

**http://www.trust.org/item/20150320095427-g4krc**

**Blog 4: Dividing the West: China’s new investment bank and America’s diplomatic failure**

China’s new bank, the AIIB, announced in mid 2013, is getting legs. The Bank will likely become a key tool of China’s new international strategy, and others—including Japan, which is the main country behind the Asian Development Bank—will have no choice but to accept it. The risk of growing irrelevance for the ADB as the lender of choice in Asia, is real.


**Blog 5: What Ebola tells us about how to do state-building**

The article doesn’t really answer this question but does highlight the importance of attitudes of state services - in this case, of a health service provider -
to its constituency in determining the success or otherwise of a crisis response. Seems obvious? Yes, but in practice, crisis response is invariably the default position than the alternative: building sustainable partnerships with community to reduce the risk of crisis in the first place...

http://www.ids.ac.uk/opinion/what-ebola-tells-us-about-how-to-do-state-building

Blog 6: Julia Gillard on the power of universal education (for the fans...)

“The forces of darkness, the terrorists, know that education is a powerful change agent,” says former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard in this podcast about her commitment to global education. Ms. Gillard, now a distinguished fellow with the Center for Universal Education at Brookings and chair of the Global Partnership for Education, discusses a variety of topics, including her path to becoming Australia’s 27th Prime Minister; overcoming barriers to achieving universal education; why quality of education matters as much, or more, than getting children into school; and what needs to be done in the post-2015 development agenda to achieve gender equity in education.

http://www.brookings.edu/research/podcasts/2015/03/julia-gillard-on-power-of-universal-education

Blog 7: Local from DevPolicy at ANU: Snakes and ladders: development NGOs in tough times

How have Australian NGOs fared in attracting funds, relative to each other, and overall, in recent years? Is increased competition for the Australian public’s aid dollar a good or a bad thing overall? The fact that some very large NGOs are charging ahead with their fundraising in an environment where the “giving” dollar is flatlining "does not necessarily mean that those who are thriving are doing so at the expense of those who are struggling, but this must certainly be a risk…”


Blog 8: Pacific and Stabilising Missions: finding the road to peace and reconciliation

An old post: thought provoking about stability missions in post conflict settings (which Australia has involved itself in significantly recent years). This post is from July 2013, the 10th anniversary of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) - and the beginning of RAMSI’s transition out of Solomon Islands. As the Solomon Islands moves towards a post-RAMSI future, reconciliation and peacebuilding need to continue in ways that are meaningful to Solomon Islanders.


Blog 9: A virtual trip down memory lane: accessing AusAID’s old website

It is now possible to access the old AusAID website through a web archiving service. All you need to do is go to this website and type AusAID’s old web address – www.ausaid.gov.au – into the search engine. You can find out about topics of interest between 2000 and 2012.


our people

Libby House – Development Coordinator

I was born and educated in Hobart, Tasmania. My first job, at the Australian Museum in Sydney, brought about my lifelong interest in the worlds of social anthropology and the environment. I was politicised by the Vietnam War debate and the feminist movement of the 1970s. My passion for social justice and human rights has been reflected in a career working in the fields of domestic violence and community development and my strong interest in traditional textiles and metal smithing has guided me travels through Indonesia and India over a period of more than 40 years.

I joined indigo foundation in 2000 after being introduced to the organisation in Rote. I became Project Co-ordinator for Rote in 2004. With the exception of 2013, I have been our Development Co-ordinator since 2010.

Our partner organisations inspire me: their resilience, resourcefulness and commitment. There is a universal consciousness among them that the support we provide, however small and in whatever form, is a precious opportunity. We have a great team at indigo.

I live in rural Victoria.
This dynamic and optimistic little organisation of ours has hit the ground running in 2015. Our new projects in Namibia and Jirghai are gaining momentum. Already this year, Ali has visited Kabul and attended a graduation of Borjegai students and Ellen has visited our six partner organisations in Uganda. At the moment, Cressida is in Cambodia meeting with Sipho at OCCO and Santino has now landed in South Sudan. We wish him safe and productive travels to Wedweil for discussions about the next stages of our education project there.

We have also had our project in Nyrrippi firmly in mind with West Australian government plans to close up to 150 of the state’s 274 remote communities. This move shows an appalling lack of understanding and respect for the connection between Aboriginal people, their culture and their land.

Looking internally, we held our annual indigo foundation gathering in February in Wollongong. As a virtual organisation with staff and project coordinators spread around Australia, this annual event is an important one to come together, discuss challenges and learnings from our projects, examine our approach to development and have fun. One highlight was Lyla Rogan’s presentation, reproduced on page 9.

And in exciting news, we launched our new website in February. Many thanks to Natalie Lowrey for her wonderful design work. If you haven’t already, please have a look around www.indigofoundation.org. Your feedback is very welcome.

We are excited to welcome Monica Kandje Tjehiu to indigo foundation. Monica has taken on the role of Liaison Officer for our Orwetoveni Community Project in Namibia. Monica is an experienced and respected community worker in the township of Orwetoveni and she will play a crucial role as we develop this project. We would also like to welcome and send a huge thank you to Tajeen Huque, our fabulous intern who worked her graphic design magic on our 2014 annual report.

We have a number of events coming up: our annual Canberra dinner, our inaugural dinner in Melbourne, a virtual golf day, and we are already preparing for the return of our Sydney dinner. Please do come along, have a great time, and support a great cause!

Until June, warmest wishes and thanks again for your support!

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WIN TWO business class Etihad return tickets to Abu Dhabi!

We are thrilled to announce that Etihad Airways has very generously donated to us TWO business class Etihad return tickets to Abu Dhabi, which will our top prize in our coming Super Raffle.

Stay closely tuned to indigofoundation.org and our facebook page for more details about the launch of the raffle (and how you can help!).
Come along to some wonderful events!

Community and fundraising events are critical in helping ‘spread the word’ about our work, as well raising the necessary funds to support communities we work with.

The classic Canberra Dinner

The extraordinary volunteer team that makes our annual Canberra dinner a wonderful success are at it again – with our fifth Canberra dinner on 30 May. Please join us at the National Press Club, it is always a great night. For more information and to book tickets: http://indigodinner.floktu.com/. And please share with your Canberra friends!

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The Ryde e-Cup. Golf in Your Pyjamas - Save the Date!!

Yes, Friday May 15th is the date for our 2015 Charity Golf Experience ... a golf tournament with a difference.

The Rotary Satellite e-Club of Ryde is heading for a fundraising-first. The Ryde e-Cup. Golf in Your Pyjamas.

Yes, an opportunity to help our beneficiaries without leaving your computer. You’ll have fun playing 18 holes of virtual golf, played with your mouse, and the opportunity to win some great prizes. The tournament ‘mascot’ is Rory Mackelmouse. In virtual golfing circles, Rory is currently the top-ranked golfing mouse.

His career started as a thought bubble in the minds of a couple of frustrated human golfers who felt they would probably be better “playing with their mouse”. Since that first moment of clarity, Rory has been the inspiration for the development of our virtual golf experience, and, with many of his rodent colleagues, has provided hours of challenging fun for humans seeking 18 holes in 45 minutes.

It won’t be like a traditional golf experience. No need to get up at 4am. Weather conditions will be immaterial, you can have breakfast, lunch and dinner when you want and you can drink whatever you want from your own ‘fridge. What’s more, the cost of a game will be about ¼ that of a regular golf-day fundraiser.

All the proceeds will go to Rotary Satellite e-Club of Ryde beneficiaries, including indigo foundation, because there will not be the usual overheads experienced in running a golf day on real grass.

How can you take part?

- Register now to play. Game cost is $30 (you can play as many games as you like) and there’s a practice day on Thursday 14th May. Closer to the day you will receive an e-mail with directions.
- **Sponsorship.** We’re inviting tournament sponsorship at $100. You receive a banner in these mailouts, a banner on the game page and a banner plus 50 words on our sponsor’s web page. All these with a link to your website.
- **Donations** of cash or prizes - please contact us.


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**The inaugural Melbourne Dinner – 26th June!**

We are very excited to announce the very first Melbourne Dinner! Details are currently being finalised – but you can expect some great food from the **Sorghum Sisters** (a wonderful business born in the kitchen of Carlton Primary School in 2005 out of the need expressed by the African community in Carlton Housing Estate to find creative ways of surmounting their barriers to employment and social engagement), **great entertainment** and lots of plain **good fun**! Watch our website and facebook for details BUT save the date now!

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