

the first thing we offer is **respect**



# iNK

indigo news & knowledge



APRIL 2023



# contents

<b>PEKKA NTT's</b> in Indonesia the power and potential of organic gardens ....	1
<b>indigo in Afghanistan</b> 20 years working in Afghanistan .....	3
<b>indigo in India</b> program 2022 update .....	5
<b>indigo in the community</b> .....	7
<b>think piece</b> twin clouds on the horizon in the Pacific .....	10

COVER IMAGE: Safrina Thristiawati indigo foundation's new Indonesia Partnership Coordinator with Nela & Dete from PEKKA at an organic garden in Adonara, Indonesia.

# from us to you

In 2023 indigo foundation celebrates 23 years of respectful partnerships with grassroots organisations in some of the most marginalised communities in the world. At our annual gathering of volunteers, staff and board members in February we had an opportunity to reflect on the last 23 years - the challenges and the lasting impact. It was especially exciting to hear Alice Roughley and Susan Engel - our Partnership Coordinators (PCs) for Rwanda and India respectively, talk about the intergenerational change they saw on their recent visit to our community partners Mahalir Sakthi and PEAB in Tamil Nadu and Club Rafiki in Rwanda. It again reinforces our experience that transformative change happens when communities are given the respect and support to generate and implement their own development solutions. And that the impact of their activities is life changing for those involved.

We hope to share our new Strategy with you shortly. It starts with respect for the learnings and achievements of those who paved the way for what is possible now. And it expresses the optimism and excitement about the future felt by our communities in Australia and overseas. It sets a forward path that will grow the impact our partners can achieve while also building our supporter and volunteer base in Australia.

In the past 6 months we are excited to have resumed visits with our local partners to build the relationship, learn about the change they are bringing about and provide support as needed. In this edition of indigo ink Susan Engel and Safrina Thristiawati, our PCs for India and Indonesia respectively, share updates from their recent visits, the first in several years as a result of COVID. We will provide updates from our PC visits to Rwanda, Bougainville and Timor Leste in the next edition.

This year marks 20 years of indigo foundation's education partnership in Afghanistan. We share an update on how we've been able to continue working in Afghanistan despite the ongoing humanitarian crisis, the oppression of women and girls and the significant challenges faced by our partners. We also invite you to a confidential briefing on Afghanistan on 17 April 2023.

Thank you for your committed support and solidarity for the work of indigo and our community partners. With your generous funding we are able to remain committed to partners for the longer term and enable our community partners to achieve significant impacts – in education, health, economic security and in the empowerment of women and girls, that we know has a multiplier effect on positive change.

Lyla and Stav

# PEKKA NTT's

## the power and potential of organic gardens



KAKAK NELA (PETRONELA PENI), THE CHAIR OF PEKKA NTT IN HER GARDEN

*By Safrina Thristiawati, indigo foundation's new Indonesia Partnership Coordinator.*

*Safrina came to indigo foundation with a strong background in research and social policy, with a particular focus on public health. She has worked as a Senior Research Officer with organisations including the Western Sydney Local Health District and as an Advisor evaluating community-based health and social programs at Yogyakarta State University. Safrina has had a continued interest in gender justice throughout her career, including a stint working for the UN Population Fund in Indonesia. She has a Bachelor of Economics from the University of Indonesia, a PHD from ANU and has worked as a researcher for a number of universities across Australia. Safrina is originally from Indonesia and is now based in the Illawarra.*

I visited Indonesia in November 2022 to meet with indigo foundation's partner PEKKA NTT. During 2017-2020, PEKKA NTT delivered the first three-year Commitment Agreement (CA). The current CA is for three years from 01 May 2021 to 30 April 2024. indigo foundation supports PEKKA NTT's activities in two islands in the Province

of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) - Adonara and Lembata.

One of the main activities is producing and selling organic vegetables and land clearing. In the last five years, their organic gardens have provided PEKKA women with healthy food, food security and an opportunity to build community. The produce they harvested during the economic hardship caused by COVID19 pandemic, for example, provided evidence to a wider community about the financial and environmental benefits of organic agriculture, about using locally grown produce and locally made organic fertilisers.

The PEKKA women are aware of the benefits of organic agriculture for the grower, the consumer and the environment. PEKKA women and their children continue to plant food organically, which the families consume themselves with some surplus sold/bartered at the local market and some shared with their neighbours. The income from selling the produce provides a modest income for the women's households. This income helps to pay for their family's basic needs and

contributes towards the cost of their children's education.

Organic food in Adonara and Lembata islands are now established in PEKKA NTT gardens and are likely to continue in the long-term. Having organic gardens has been providing PEKKA women, their families and the community with some form of food security. The organic agriculture is also important in continuing the knowledge and skills of the farmers to the next generation. It was very exciting to see the information held by PEKKA women shared with a wider audience.

Spend time with the PEKKA women I could see their determination, resilience and creativity in planning, decision making and implementing their plans as well as responding to setbacks. For example, the devastating Seroja Cyclone and floods in April 2021 wiped out some of PEKKA NTT activities in Lembata and the garden in PEKKA Keru Baki Centre, Lembata was damaged. Fortunately there was not as much disruption in Adonara. It was inspiring to see how the women continue their activities despite the hardships and trauma caused by the natural disasters and COVID-19.

Currently in Adonara, PEKKA women continue to grow organic produce. Generally, the type of organic produce harvested by PEKKA NTT included maize, cassava, sorghum, peanuts, native cotton, bananas, pawpaw, coconut, watermelon and cucumber. Some of the women also grow herbs, ginger, chilli, moringa, star fruit, dragon fruit, even strawberries.

*Kakak Nela (Petronela Peni), the chair of PEKKA NTT, shared her experience growing a new plant, strawberry, in pots in her garden in Adonara. Because Adonara's weather is always hot, Kakak Nela was pleasantly surprised the plant grew well and gave her strawberries, which her neighbours kept pinching from her garden. She told her neighbours it was fine to eat her strawberries, but they should start growing organic strawberries themselves. Since then kakak Nela's strawberry seedlings have been shared and planted both in Adonara and Lembata.*

There is a broad range of vegetables and fruit grown in the PEKKA Lodan Doe Centre garden in Adonara. In Lembata, PEKKA women are also continuing to produce organic food in their own home gardens.

PEKKA NTT's organic farming has positive impacts and is supported by the community. In April 2022, PEKKA NTT championed a barter market called PEKKA MART. The PEKKA Mart is used to exchange produce between PEKKA women and a wider community. Several Village Heads have agreed to support PEKKA Marts. An example is a particular PEKKA Mart in a beautiful location by the sea at Waiwerang, Adonara, where the community exchanged their products in the market without using money. During my visit I met with the Village Head<sup>1</sup> and two village officers of the impact of the Village Head's support and his plan for the market activities.

The barter activities support PEKKA women by enabling them to exchange produce from their organic gardens or their woven textiles for other essentials. Some organic produce, local cotton for example, is a potential commodity to improve local weaving, which helps maintain local cultural heritage (locally grown and spun cotton is culturally important and valuable) and if sold could further strengthen the women's financial security.

The local village administrators in Adonara and Lembata seem to take notice and may promote organic gardens and PEKKA Mart in the future. According to the PEKKA chairperson, the East Flores District government had discussed and showed an interest in promoting organic food farming at district level. The organic farming and PEKKA Mart have been promoted in a PEKKA National Congress in October 2022 to a national level.

PEKKA have a commitment to lifelong learning and sharing resources among themselves and with others.

1. As a Village Head (kepala desa) he is democratically elected. But he is also the local traditional Raja, who has the largest land in Waiwerang area. The land for the PEKKA Mart was the location of a defunct traditional market.



# indigo in Afghanistan

## 20 years working in Afghanistan

*Afghanistan started 2023 facing less armed violence than it has in many years, but nevertheless in a state of crisis. Two thirds of Afghans need humanitarian aid, and with the stricken economy incapable of supporting the majority of the population, threats of famine and civil disorder remain on the horizon. A year and a half after the Taliban came to power, they continue to oppress women, journalists, and political activists and to abuse the local population in areas where anti-Taliban resistance has taken up arms. Rolling back women's rights has been a central focus for the Taliban as they gradually push girls and women out of education, employment, and other activities in public spaces. (International Crisis Group - Watch List 2023)*

This year marks 20 years of indigo foundation working in Afghanistan. Despite the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in August 2021, the erosion of women and girls rights and intensified humanitarian and security challenges, indigo continued to work closely with the Shura and Financial Trustees team. We helped communities to improve education infrastructure in our partner schools, provide learning materials including school textbooks and support local teachers. This gave hundreds of students the ability to continue with their education and find hope.

Indigo's support helped our partner communities to remain resilient and maintain the important role of schools. A large part of the success in our approach is the courage of our partner communities for education, the tireless work of Ali Reza Yunespour, and the loyalty of our supporters in Australia that saw us through the ongoing challenges. Together, they allowed us to scale up our work during a dark time of desperate need as the world looked in horror at the human rights and humanitarian catastrophe unfolding.

A positive impact of the Afghanistan Schools Program is that all of the employed male and female teachers were former graduates of

schools that we supported in the past 20 years. When we initially started our support in Borjagai in 2003, most teachers at the time had equivalent of Grade 6 qualification. However, this year, around 70 percent of male teachers that we supported had university degrees or completed two-year teacher training diplomas. Other male teachers with Grade 12 qualifications had at least two years of prior teaching experience. Amongst female teachers, seven were university graduates and others were mostly girls who were teaching for the first time this year.

On this 20-year anniversary indigo reflected on our work in Afghanistan and how we're working with indigo's 4 core principles:

**Equity** - most of our education programs benefitted boys and girls in the past 20 years including since the return of the Taliban in Kabul in late 2021. The Shura supported female teachers in their communities. Also, our humanitarian assistance benefitted those at most need, particularly women and children. Despite these efforts, the Taliban's restrictions on women and girls- which according to the UN expert is a step toward '[gender apartheid](#)'- remain the main barriers for gender and socio-economic equity in our partner communities. Despite these challenges, our local partners remain committed to support girls' right to education and socio-economic participation.

**Community Ownership** - our partner communities are the owners of their schools and have initiated, managed, and implemented indigo-funded education programs since 2003. The Shura has representatives from all involved schools, and they make decisions collectively. While the return of the Taliban imposed new challenges for education in Afghanistan, our partner schools were open for girls and boys

in primary levels last year and taught boys in secondary levels. They also helped their girls and boys of all ages to study in local mosques during the winter.

**Transparency** - all financial and non-financial decisions are made transparently in our education programs. We have worked closely with other ACFID members in the past 18 months to comply with the UN and Australia's sanctions in Afghanistan.

**Sustainability** - the long-term sustainability of our partner schools depends on political and economic conditions in Afghanistan and our partner communities' desire to educate their children.

Indigo will continue its efforts of support and solidarity with the people of Afghanistan, and we will redouble our efforts to raise funds and awareness to try to ensure that our partner communities maintain their hope for education and community-led development.

*"Hope is not a lottery ticket you can sit on the sofa and clutch, feeling lucky. It is an axe you break down doors with in an emergency. Hope should shove you out the door, because it will take everything you have to steer the future away from endless war, from the annihilation of the earth's treasures and the grinding down of the poor and marginal... To hope is to give yourself to the future - and that commitment to the future is what makes the present inhabitable."*

-- Rebecca Solnit

GIRLS TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT A SCHOOL OPENING IN 2020 IN GHAZNI PROVINCE





# indigo in India

## Program 2022 Update



MAHALIR SAKTHI HOLDING A WORKSHOP WITH THE FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

*By Susan Engel, Semmalar Selvi and Guna Vincent*

In December 2022, indigo foundation partnership coordinator, Susan Engel, undertook her first visit to Tamil Nadu since 2019. She worked with Mahalir Sakthi in Madurai - where Guna is our local partner - and the Program for Education and Awareness Building (PEAB) in Madhurantakam - where Semmalar is our partner. This is a brief update of her visit.

Mahalir Sakthi's operations are again running full steam ahead. They are tutoring Dalit and Muslim children, helping to make up the lost learning during India's long COVID lockdowns. They have restarted computer classes for the children despite the fact that they only have a couple of computers for the students to use. For women, they've held a whole series of meetings jointly with the Family Planning Association of India not just on health issues but on gender and empowerment.

Mahalir Sakthi celebrated Independence Day in August and invited successful local people working in the police and computing to talk to the children to inspire them about their future opportunities.

The tailoring program was particularly vibrant during this visit despite the fact that Mahalir Sakthi is in desperate need of some new manual sewing machines and a new embroidery machine. Even with regular maintenance their old machines are not working.

Mahalir Sakthi has also increased its work and engagement with the Social Awareness Society for Youth (SASY) and National Dalit Christian Watch to continue the battle to ensure human rights and atrocity prevention against Dalits and other minorities finally come to an end.



PEAB's education centres resumed their work for the academic year in the middle of 2022. Given the high teacher-student ratios and teacher absence rates, the extra support for Dalits and students from other disadvantaged children that

NEWLY GRADUATED TAILORING STUDENTS INSISTED SUSAN JOIN IN THEIR CELEBRATIONS





ANNUAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

this program provides is vital. Susan was excited by her visit as she found that indigo foundation's long-term commitment to PEAB is showing strong benefits.

Susan found a tutor team that now combines some older, experienced tutors along with some young tutors, who were beneficiaries of the program when they were younger. This combination provides a new level of energy to the program. Further, while the COVID lockdowns were very hard on the community, the PEAB coordination team took the opportunity to provide extra tuition and support to the tutors. There have been regular online meetings and an active WhatsApp group to provide additional support to tutors. Expert tutors were pulled in to provide support in areas including child-centric teaching of English, science and maths.

PEAB has also rented a somewhat larger building for their Year 10 coaching classes, and this has allowed them to extend coaching to Years 11 and 12, something they have been wanting to do for a long time. Creating a space for children to study and to finish their school assignments is a very important support in these rural villages, where space in homes is limited.

Classes for the younger children are still held at different village locations across Maduranthakam to ensure they do not have far to walk and are safe.

PEAB continued their focus on girls and young women through International Women's Day activities, self defence classes and sessions on adolescent health and hygiene. The tutors told Susan they were particularly excited about the

self-defence training for girls and that they were also able to attend it. They really noticed an increase in confidence among participants over the three days of this program.

PEAB also promote local culture, dance and other skills for all the children through small celebrations. In May, they conducted a street theatre workshop for the children, which focused on the children's experiences of lockdown allowing them to voice their concerns and hopes in a state-level public hearing held in Chennai

Susan was also able to attend the Winter Camp, held in lieu of the summer one, cancelled due to COVID. Over two days there was a wide-range of activities conducted in two groups (primary and secondary). A highlight was a parade and performance at the end.

PEAB SELF DEFENCE WORKSHOP FOR GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN





# indigo in the community

On the back of two to three years of the global pandemic, international development NGOs and their local partners will continue to face challenging times over the next couple of years as economies stall, natural disasters increase in frequency and conflicts seem unceasing. We have been humbled by the loyalty and commitment shown by our supporters and donors in these difficult times. This support has enabled our community partners to respond positively to the setbacks they have faced and continue their life changing work in communities. We understand our Australian supporter base engages with us and other causes to make the world more equitable and humane. In the global context we face, now and into the future, your commitment to social and economic justice and your support of indigo is more important than ever.

indigo's commitment to our community partners in Afghanistan, Rwanda, India, Indonesia, Timor Leste, Bougainville and Kiribati remains strong. With your help, they will have the means and confidence to continue their community development work and achieve lasting changes in their communities. Thank you!

## Bringing supporters together

From 2020-22 indigo dinners and gatherings were suspended because of COVID and we are excited that we can now bring our friends and supporters together again to celebrate indigo's partnerships and raise much needed funds.

We are very grateful for all the support and funds raised at indigo's very successful Gala Dinner in Canberra on 28 October 2022 at the National Museum of Australia. Over 220 of indigo friends, volunteers and supporters turned out to celebrate our 20th (+2) Anniversary and raised over \$40,000. Huge thanks to everyone who made this event so successful and to all who participated.

## Burgmann College 2022 Equality Prize Recipients

Each year indigo foundation and Bilberry Bluestocking Fund sponsor The Equality Prize and the Emerging Leader Equality Prize, to recognise those that contribute significantly to reducing inequality. This year the selection panel (Acting Justice Richard Refshauge FAAL, Burgmann alumna and Council Member Dr Susanna Price, and Dr Susan Engels) unanimously selected alumna Dr Emma Leslie (1990-1992) as the recipient of the Equality Prize and second year resident Margharita Dall'Occo (2021-) as the recipient of the Emerging Leader Equality Prize. We congratulate these recipients and are proud to continue our association with Burgmann College and the Bilberry Bluestocking Fund. You can read more about the prize winners here <https://burgmann.anu.edu.au/articles/our-2022-equality-prize-recipients>

We would also like to congratulate Robin Brown, indigo Board Secretary, on being recognised with a conferral of an Honorary Fellowship of Burgmann College for his services to the college, to the Australian community and developing countries.

## Grants

indigo has been successful in receiving a new grant of \$50,000 per annum for three years for the Hako Women's Collective in Bougainville. This super generous donation from the Roberts Pike Foundation will enable Hako to:

INDIGO GALA DINNER IN CANBERRA



- Expand services and upgrade their safe house, including food, clothing and essential supplies for clients and a justice referral program
- Fund their library and literacy program for local families and schools, run out of Hako's Resource Centre
- Launch a new 'men's hub' initiative to engage men in preventing gender based violence
- Introduce new food security initiatives to complement Hako's existing cocoa project.

### Community Support 2023

2023 will continue to provide opportunities for you to support our community partners through our regular appeals and our ongoing community fundraising. Look out for our end of financial year appeal! We are hoping to make it our biggest ever.

### Great indigo bike ride



In early May, Ian Wallis (above) will begin the first leg of his incredible journey by bike from Canberra to Singapore. Along the way, Ian will ride through some of the Oceania Region's most remote country, chatting to anyone who will say g'day. Ian rides unaccompanied by any support vehicles or companions.

Ian will stop at Cowra, where with Robin Brown and his team of indigo indefatigables, Ian will meet year 7 students at the local high school and catch up with parents and friends of the local childcare. After the indefatigables head back to Canberra, Ian has only another 3,747kms to go to reach Darwin.

Once in Darwin, Ian will fly to Dili where he will spend a day meeting the team at our local partner JDN (Youth for National Development). There, having abandoned his camping gear in Darwin, Ian will stay at guesthouses and hostels as he rides his bike (across mountains and ferries) the 4,500 kilometres to Singapore, arriving sometime in late August.

You can find out more about this amazing bike ride and help Ian support our community partners at his fundraising page by scanning the QR code or following this link: <https://great-indigo-bike-ride.raisely.com/>

### Rise to Heights for Human Rights

Rise to Heights for Human Rights is indigo's online activity based fundraiser, inspired by Robin Brown and his team of indigo indefatigables who every year raise money for our community partners through their epic Sea to Summit bike rides.

This year the team will be riding from Canberra to Corowa and back again to support Ian and the great indigo bike ride.

You can sponsor them by scanning the QR code above or follow the link below to sign up to run, walk, ride, swim or climb and raise funds to support our community partners by asking friends and family to sponsor you for every meter/kilometer you achieve: <https://rise-to-heights-for-human-rights-2023.raisely.com/>

What are you waiting for?







ENSURING ACCESS TO EDUCATION IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FOCUSES OF OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

### indigo changemakers

For over 20 years, indigo has supported grassroots organisations in some of the most disadvantaged communities around the world. With a belief in long-term partnerships, we're not afraid to go beyond project funding, often investing in much-needed capacity building and operational costs. This approach is important because continuing, reliable funding strengthens community organisations so they can ensure the most sustainable change into the future.

With one of our four Guiding Principles being sustainability, we understand that good investments in community development create change that has long-lasting and positive impact.

If you are already a regular donor, thank you and you will receive an email about indigo changemakers shortly. If not, please consider becoming one today.

From just \$20 per month, you can become an indigo changemaker, and together we can continue to empower women and girls, improve education and health outcomes and defend human rights.

indigo changemakers will have an opportunity to participate in an exclusive, indigo insider virtual briefing event, where they will be able to hear from our leadership team, Partnership Coordinators or Community Partners to learn first-hand about how their monthly donations make a difference. Current regular donors will be recognised as founding members of indigo changemakers

*"Change must always be made with a view to supporting the capabilities, opportunities and potential of future generations"*

For more information on how you can become an indigo changemaker, please contact:

[jackie.evans@indigofoundation.org](mailto:jackie.evans@indigofoundation.org)

### message from stav

I've now been in the role of Executive Director for 3 months and I am truly impressed with the positive impact that indigo is having. Being able to directly support emerging and small scale community partners is rare in the development world, of which I've been part of for 25 years. The small amounts of flexible and long term funds indigo provides seeds so much in terms of development activities but also organisational capacity development and growth. And in the case of Hako in Bougainville indigo's support has led to a significant new donor that will see Hako scaling up its services and impact significantly over the next three years. Wow!

I want to thank everyone in the indigo network for the very warm welcome, phenomenal support and for making my experience so positive and inspiring.

Stav

## Think piece twin clouds on the horizon in the Pacific

By Fyfe Strachan

*Fyfe has been a member of the indigo foundation board since 2019. She is also the Policy Director at Jubilee Australia Research Centre, a research and advocacy centre focused on economic justice and accountability in the Asia-Pacific region.*

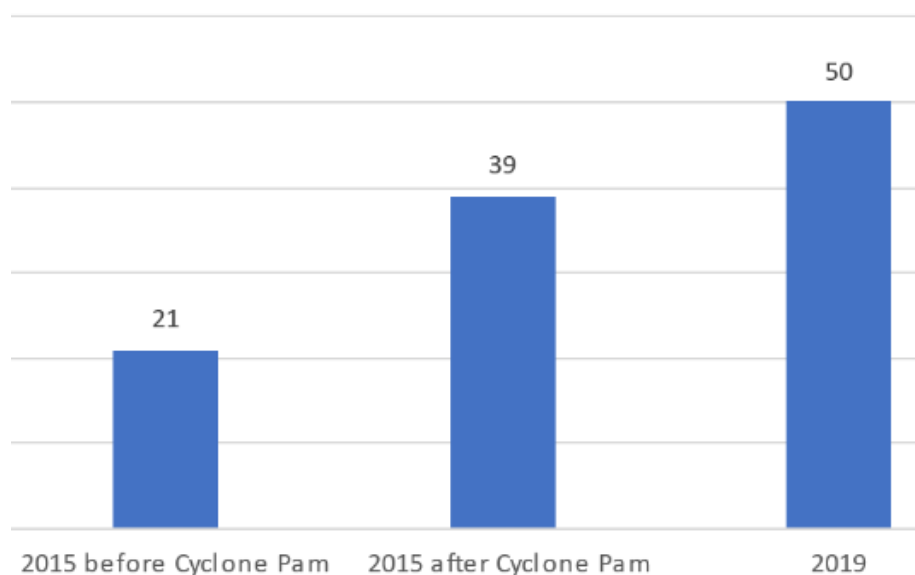
The Pacific Islands region is at the frontline of the global climate crisis, disproportionately experiencing the impacts of rising sea levels, increased temperatures, ocean acidification and extreme weather events, including cyclones, king tides and tropical storms. The 'large ocean states' of the Pacific, whose people have been stewards over vast stretches of the Pacific Ocean for generations, have done little to cause the climate crisis. But they live with its impacts every day.

At the same time, another cloud is gathering on the horizon in the form of growing public debt. Several countries in the Pacific went into the COVID-19 pandemic carrying high levels of debt.

The impact of the pandemic – including the halt in international travel and tourism and the need for more spending on healthcare and economic stimulus - hit country bottom lines hard, and global economic pressures have continued.<sup>1</sup> The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has now classified seven Pacific countries (Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu) at high risk of debt distress.<sup>2</sup>

What does this mean in real terms? Debt is not always a bad thing and loans can help countries finance essential public infrastructure and services. But loans also require regular repayments – and these repayments take money away from spending on healthcare, social policies and adapting to climate change. During the COVID-19 pandemic, 64 lower-income countries spent more on debt repayments than healthcare.<sup>3</sup> Recent data shows that PNG is spending nearly 30 cents of every dollar of government revenue on debt repayments, with Fiji not far behind.<sup>4</sup>

Vanuatu's Debt as % of GDP



*Vanuatu's debt to GDP ratio, before and after cyclone Pam. Source: Iolanda Fresnillo (2020), 'A tale of two emergencies: The interplay of sovereign debt and climate crises in the global south', Brussels: Eurodad*



## Climate change and debt – a vicious cycle

Vulnerability to climate change also increases vulnerability to debt, as the costs of natural disasters cause countries to borrow for repair and reconstruction. Vanuatu's Cyclone Pam in 2015 provides an example. After the cyclone, government debt almost doubled, from 21% of GDP before to 39% afterwards. Four years after that, government debt to GDP was over 50%, largely due to lending for reconstruction.<sup>5</sup> This left the country in a vulnerable position, with little space in the national budget to address another disaster, in a region where natural disasters are becoming more and more common.

## The importance of climate finance and debt relief

All this points to the need for a better international system for debt relief. While there are some limited existing debt relief options, these fall well short. Restructuring and cancelling debts now would free up the money that is currently being sent offshore to cover debt repayments – making it available for climate adaptation and recovery from disasters.

Climate finance also plays a vital role. 'Climate finance' is the term used to refer to the money that wealthy nations provide to lower-income nations to fund actions to adapt to the impacts of climate change (like building seawalls), or to mitigate future climate change (like installing solar panels). It can be considered a form of reparations – paid from the countries whose actions caused the climate crisis, to the countries feeling its worst impacts.

The IMF has estimated that Pacific Island countries need almost US\$1 billion per year in climate finance just for the costs of adaptation. The amount they receive now is much less than this. And on top of this, finance is needed to pay for loss and damage – like the cost of replacing the infrastructure lost during a disaster. While countries like Australia are contributing to climate finance, including to our neighbours in the Pacific, we need to do much more.

It is also important to look at where climate finance is being spent. Last year, Caritas and Jubilee Australia conducted interviews with civil society groups around the Pacific to seek their views on whether climate finance is getting where it's needed, and what changes they think are required. Groups told us that many of the funds received are directed to large-scale initiatives rather than projects undertaken by communities most in need, that there is limited data and information to monitor how climate funds are used, and that there are very few financing mechanisms specifically focused on local solutions to climate change. In particular, we heard that grassroots, local community groups lack awareness about what climate finance might be available or how to apply for it – this is particularly the case for women and vulnerable groups. In short, there is more international financing around for building climate-proofed highways than for building community storm shelters or planting mangroves.

Other studies have found that women and girls find it particularly hard to access climate finance. A study in Tuvalu and the Federated States of Micronesia, for example, found that the women they interviewed were largely unaware of climate change initiatives being implemented in their communities and gendered community roles (like being required to organise food for community consultations) hindered their participation.<sup>6</sup>

We also heard positive examples of projects in Tonga and Fiji where women were leading the way in developing local climate resilience initiatives, supported by funding from local and international sources. In November 2022, civil society groups from around the Pacific also pledged to develop a new climate finance mechanism to help connect local communities with the funding they need for their own climate resilience projects.<sup>7</sup> They are calling for recognition and support of this initiative at national and international levels.

Climate finance is, at its heart, the repayment of a debt owed by countries that caused climate

change to those that experience its worst effects. It is essential that high-income countries do not shirk that debt, but instead stand in solidarity with the front lines of climate change. Communities are already putting in place locally-appropriate solutions to cope with climate change, from mangrove planting and building seawalls to rebuilding homes and repurposing cyclone debris. It is essential that those communities (including their most marginalised members) can access climate finance for that work, and that communities and the civil society groups that represent their interests are part of decision-making on how climate finance is spent.

*This piece summarises findings from the report [Twin clouds on the horizon: Averting a combined climate and debt crisis in the Pacific through locally-delivered climate finance](#), published by Jubilee Australia and Caritas Oceania in October 2022.*

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1. Roland Rajah and Alexandre Dayant (2022), 'Pacific Islands' debt: financing post-COVID-19 recovery amid precarious sustainability' in Benno Ferrarini, Marcelo Giugale and Juan J. Pradelli (eds), *The Sustainability of Asia's Debt: Problems, Policies and Practices*, UK, US and Philippines: Asian Development Bank and Edward Elgar Publishing, page 136.
  2. IMF (2022) 'List of LIC DSAs for PRGT-Eligible Countries - as of 29 August 2022', <https://www.imf.org/external/Pubs/ft/dsa/DSAlist.pdf>
  3. Debt Justice UK (2020) "Sixty-four countries spend more on debt payments than health" <https://debtjustice.org.uk/press-release/sixty-four-countries-spend-more-on-debt-payments-than-health>
  4. UNCTAD (2022) *Trade and Development Report 2022: Development prospects in a fractured world*, available at: <https://unctad.org/tdr2022>
  5. Iolanda Fresnillo (2020), 'A tale of two emergencies: The interplay of sovereign debt and climate crises in the global south south', Brussels: Eurodad, available at: [https://cisp.cachefly.net/assets/articles/attachments/84266\\_debt-and-climate-briefing-dec17.pdf](https://cisp.cachefly.net/assets/articles/attachments/84266_debt-and-climate-briefing-dec17.pdf) at p., page
  6. Jale Samuwai and Eliala Fihaki (2019), 'Making Climate Finance Work for Women: Voices from Polynesian and Micronesian Communities', Oxfam in the Pacific, [https://www.pasifikarising.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Making\\_climate\\_finance\\_work\\_for\\_women.pdf](https://www.pasifikarising.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Making_climate_finance_work_for_women.pdf), page 22
  7. See the Kioa Pledge, Annex 1 of the Kioa Climate Emergency Declaration, 19 October 2022, available at: <https://www.caritas.org.au/media/kxck0z0g/kioa-climate-emergency-declaration-docx.pdf>



## support our work

We only exist as a result of the generosity of a huge range of supporters.

Whether it is by making a small donation every month, volunteering your time or expertise, or by helping us raise funds and awareness about our projects, it is all critical to our objective of improving the lives of those in marginalised communities and building the power of small grassroots organisations.

No matter how big or small your contribution might be, every little bit counts.

On behalf of everyone we work with, thank you for your ongoing support.



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