

the first thing we offer is respect



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indigo news & knowledge



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COVER IMAGE: ALI REZA YUNESPOUR MEETING STUDENTS AT SAYED JAMAL SCHOOL IN JIRGHAI, AFGHANISTAN

from us to you

This year we are celebrating 15 years of working in Afghanistan and, in his article, Ali Reza Yunespour reflects on the history of education in Borjegai and the changes he has seen in his home region. The story of this partnership really speaks to indigo foundation’s guiding principles – that sustainable change comes when projects are truly community-led and there is genuine respect in the partnership. At every step, the local community have themselves committed significant amounts of volunteer time and money – and here in Australia the project has been driven and nurtured by former refugees and members of the Afghan community. This year we are celebrating not just the education outcomes in Borjegai and Jirghai – which are significant especially for girls accessing and achieving in school – but also the richness and strength of our relationships, our friendships, with the Afghan community in Australia.

From Indonesia, we share some interviews with bursary recipients and kindergarten teachers from Rote. Over the past 18 months we have supported our three partners to grow their focus on education – launching a bursaries program with PEKKA Lodan Doe and Nefo Ko’u Farmers’ Cooperative and investing in early childhood education. And we couldn’t be happier to hear Yeni’s thoughts, “My favourite part of my school is when my teacher comes into class”.

Community development and supporting local groups to build their capacity and resilience is not a direct path from A to B and we strive to be honest about the challenges we and our partners face. To that end, we include a short update from Namibia. Supporting a fledgling local group through establishing itself, building trust in the community and gaining registration as a non-profit entity has been a longer path than anticipated but step by step our partners at the Otjiwarongo Development Program Fund are gaining momentum.

Finally, we feature a think piece from Luke Fletcher at Jubilee Australia looking outwards at the government’s Australia Infrastructure Investment Fund for the Pacific.

We hope you enjoy the read!

Jemma (General Manager) and Lyla (Chair)

looking back, looking forwards

celebrating 15 years in Afghanistan



GIRLS TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT AN ASSEMBLY TO ACCEPT NEW TEXT BOOKS AT SAYED JAMAL SCHOOL, 2016

Ali Reza Yunespour, Partnership Coordinator

At our Sydney dinner in April, we celebrated 15 years of partnering with schools in Ghazni Province in Afghanistan. It was a fabulous night for our Sydney volunteers and supporters; and a time of personal reflection for me to look back to the emergence of the partnership and the educational and socio-cultural changes in the Borjegai community.

from mosque education to madrasas to the right to education

Mosque education has historically been the dominant form of learning in Borjegai, and indeed throughout Afghanistan. Borjegai villages used to hire Mullahs for community-administered mosques to lead prayers, provide basic religious education for adults (mostly men) and teach the Quran, Hadith, basic Shi'a jurisprudence (Fiqh)

and exegesis of the Quran (Tafseer) to young boys. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the monarchy government established a state-run village school in Borjegai. The teachers, who were from outside of the Borjegai community, worked with the local people to provide a building but the suspicions that this school would push Communist ideology meant many families did not enrol their children. Prominent elders and Mullahs also helped families to get some of the enrolled students out of the school.

Following the 'Coup/Revolution' of 1978, the village school was closed and the 'Holy Wars' against the Soviet Union-backed regime in Kabul introduced the ideology of Jihad in communities like Borjegai. As one elder told me during my E trip to Borjegai in 2016, "It was hard to find any family that did not have guns and were not party to one of the Shi'a Mujahidin groups" in the 1980s and 1990s. Despite the widespread

'gun culture', mosque education continued in this community –local Mujahidin of Borjagai establish a madrasa in the existing village school building. Different factions of the Mujahidin brought in school textbooks, which were produced with the help of US, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and distributed them to Borjagai mosques. As such, in the 1990s, most mosques in Borjagai had a Mullah for basic religious education and a teacher (known as Muallim Kilasi), who taught primary school maths, science, geography, history and Dari language to young boys. The teachers were mostly former students of the village school. The content and quality of education varied significantly in local mosques and were largely dependent on the level of education of the Mullahs and Muallim Kilasi, and the abilities and efforts of each student.

For most of their history, Borjagai villages were self-sustaining and autonomous communities. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, ongoing wars forced people to move to major centres or take refuge in neighbouring countries of Iran and Pakistan. Since then, remittances have been integral to the local economy and the Borjagai community has always been a very poor community and subject to systemic discrimination from the central government.

After the toppling of the Taliban regime by the US-led international community in 2001, the new Afghan government, UNESCO and other NGOs made significant efforts to open the existing schools and help communities to establish and register new schools. The Borjagai community registered nine schools between 2001 and 2003. Apart from Borjagai High School, which was established in the same place as the village school of 1960s and 1970s, the other eight schools operated in the UN-provided tents, open spaces, mosques and empty houses. All teachers were male (mostly former students of the village school and then madrasa) and the overwhelming majority had equivalent of Grade 6 qualifications.

from little things ...

The partnership between Borjagai community and indigo foundation launched with small

beginnings in 2003. The partnership came to us through our connection to the Hazara refugee community in Sydney and a man called Salman Jan. Salman, a former refugee from Borjagai living in Sydney, had been approached by Borjagai community elders and asked if he could help with textbooks and a school building for girls. And so, a partnership was born.

From initial funding for textbooks to building the first girls school in Borjagai to training teachers, the program has grown over the past 15 years – initially working with nine schools in Borjagai and, in 2013, branching into neighbouring provinces of Jirghai and Behsud. I took over as Partnership Coordinator from Salman Jan in 2009 and feel privileged to see the changes in my home region:

School buildings and furniture: In Borjagai, we supported four new school buildings for Golbona School, Wali Asr School, Koshkak High School and Salman-e Fars School and renovated the roof of Borjagai High School. Encouraged by these works, the community built new buildings for Sayyid Jamaluddin High School, Abi Talib High School, Abuzar Ghaffari High School and Al-Zahra High School which we supported with doors and windows. We have worked with all nine Borjagai schools to ensure there are desks and chairs and access to clean drinking water and hygiene facilities;

Student enrolments: In the past fifteen years, nearly 6,000 students (35-40% girls) have benefitted from Borjagai schools. The gender ratio in primary levels is nearly 50% in most Borjagai schools (a very high rate for rural Afghan schools). However, girls continue to leave school at a higher rate than boys at secondary levels due to the male-dominated culture and economic difficulties facing families.

Higher education: Borjagai schools graduates have a success rate of over 75% in the annual university admission exams (known as Kankor). A key change is that university and non-university graduates have returned back to the community as school teachers and principals. Since 2010, most Borjagai teachers have higher education degrees; and no teacher is without Grade 12



CEREMONY TO MARK THE OPENING OF KOSHKAK SCHOOL IN BORJEGAI, 2010

qualifications. There are currently 12 female teachers, who are former graduates of Borjegai schools.

Primary centres of learnings: While limited madrasa education still exists in the local mosques (providing religious education to about 100 students), Borjegai schools have become the primary centres of learning and pathways for higher education and employment opportunities. As most Borjegai schools run in double shifts, all madrasa students also attend schools. Enayatullah is one such student, from Golbona village of Borjegai.

Enayatullah simultaneously attended Golbona School and a madrasa in Borjegai. He graduated from Borjegai High School three years ago and participated in the Kankor in 2017 where he got a score of 328 out of 360 – he was amongst the top 10 students of Ghazni Province for that year. He received an offer to study Political Science and Law at Kabul University. In 2018 he secured an Indian-government scholarship and now studies at Goa University.

Changing education norms: There has also been a significant change in socio-cultural norms towards education. Where girls were historically excluded from mosque-based education, it is now a social norm for school-aged girls and boys in Borjegai to attend schools. Resisting the state-run village schools in the 1960s and 1970s, the Borjegai elders, Mullahs and families have embraced the rights of their children

to education and promoted and supported education for boys and girls. These socio-cultural changes have impacted every family in Borjegai – like this example from Rahima.

“I, Rahima, completed my primary school (Grade 6) in 2007. My family took me out of the school at the time because of fear for my safety and economic difficulties. Our school at the time didn’t have a building and most families were not happy to send their girls to attend high schools in open spaces. I regret how I and many girls at my age were denied the opportunity to attend high schools. However, I have worked hard and convinced my family that the same thing does not happen to my younger sister, Jamila. She was partly lucky because she got to high school when indigo foundation provided a building for our school. Despite that, my family really wanted to take Jamila out of school when she got to Grade 10. I opposed their decision and encouraged my sister to complete her high school and attend Kankor. I am so happy because Jamila attended Kankor this year, and we’re waiting for her Kankor results.”

The success of this partnership in Borjegai can also be seen in the influence it has had in neighbouring communities. Since 2013, we have worked with the Jirghai and Behsud community to train teachers, build four school buildings and provide furniture for seven schools. Thanks to support from our partners and volunteers in Australia, we are working to extend our support to eight new schools in rural Afghanistan by the end of 2019.

With many thanks to our donors who have given generously to this project for over 15 years - your ongoing commitment has created a stable base for the project to grow and match the community’s ambitions. Thanks as well to the Rotary Club of Ryde, a significant funder in the early years of the Borjegai schools project, and to the Planet Wheeler Foundation who currently give their generous support.

“education is the most important thing for improving our lives”

perspectives from Indonesia

Eastern Indonesia has the highest rate of poverty in Indonesia . Our partner organisations work in areas that are isolated, with little infrastructure and high numbers of female-headed households. Most of the adult beneficiaries our partners work with are not educated past primary school. Despite these conditions, our partners highly value education and the opportunity it brings for their children and community.

In the last 18 months, thanks to the support of the Nadia and Alf Taylor Foundation, we have expanded our work to education programs with our partners. Nefo Ko’u in West Timor and PEKKA Lodan Doe in Adonara have launched new bursary programs, based on the bursary model that Lua Lemba has used for many years in Rote. Nefo Ko’u offered 14 bursaries and PEKKA Lodan Doe supported 42 bursaries for girls and young women from primary school to university. Lua Lemba have invested in early childhood education in Rote – funding a teacher training program across 13 kindergartens and supporting honorariums for 19 trainee teachers who were being paid only a ‘soap wage’ of \$10 per month.



YENI SELLA RECEIVED A BURSARY IN 2017, SHE IS NOW IN YEAR 11

interview with Yeni Sella by Armiyati Kasang

Yeni is in year 11 at school. She studies food technology at the vocational high school in Oengaut village. Yeni and her 7 siblings lost their parents and now Yeni lives with her extended

family who are subsistence farmers in Sedoen village, West Rote.

AK: When did you first receive the bursary from Lua Lemba and how did it affect your ability to go to school?

YS: I first received the bursary in 2017. It is 240,000 rupiah per semester [approx. AUD24]. The bursary lightened up my stress about paying school levies and books. I am so happy to continue my education.

AK: What is an average school day like for you?

YS: I wake up at 5am and help clean and get the younger children ready. I have two younger siblings aged 10 and 2 and a baby cousin. I cook breakfast, and then leave for school at 6.45am. School is a 3km walk away and finishes at midday. When I get home from school I have lunch and help in the house. We all have a nap for half an hour in the hottest part of the day then I clean the yard, feed the pigs, bathe the babies and after dinner I do my homework. Sometimes I help harvest the gardens, now we are harvesting the ground nut crop. We do not have TV.

AK: What is your favourite part of school? What activities or subjects do you enjoy the most?

YS: My favourite part of my school is when my teacher comes into class and starts teaching. I love science.

AK: What do you want to be when you grow up?

YS: I want to be a teacher.

interview with Ms Victoria Fu’a by Libby House

Ms Fu’a is a Roti resident whose son, Sadrak, received a bursary to attend university in Java three years ago.

LH: When did your family receive a bursary?

VF: We first received a bursary three years ago. My son received a scholarship to university in Java, He is the first of our family to go to

university. He trained to be a teacher and although he didn't have to pay for tuition, we had to pay for everything else. It was very hard especially since I am a widow.

LH: How did the bursary change your ability to support your son in education?

VF: The bursary was 750,000 [approx. AUD75] rupiah per semester. This was enough to pay for most of his accommodation. It took away some of my stress that I could rely on having that money available. Many nights I couldn't sleep worrying about how I would find the money to send my children to school. In 2009 until 2011 I carted truckloads of building sand by bucket. I would be paid 250,000 rupiah [approx. AUD25] per truck. My son has graduated and come home now but there are no paying teaching jobs for him. He is working in a local hotel but he is using the knowledge he gained at university.

LH: Your granddaughter Delstin has started university this year, hasn't she?

VF: Yes she is studying in Kupang to be a dental nurse. She will come back to Rote to work once she graduates.

LH: Does she receive a bursary?

VF: Bursaries are different now. She received a one-off grant to help her get established in Kupang. This was very helpful for us as her mother is on her own like me and my granddaughter was able to use the 1,000,000 rupiah [approx. AUD100] to buy some pots and a kerosene stove so she can cook rice at her boarding house and also pay her accommodation for one semester. I hope life will be very different for this generation and they won't have to struggle like I did.

LH: Do you see education as being important for bringing about that change?

VF: Education is the most important thing for improving our lives.

interview with Yermi Lette by Armiyati Kasang

Ms Lette has been a kindergarten teacher in Rote since 2006 and her school is one of the first kindergartens to open in Rote. In 2018, she participated in teacher training for early childhood educators.

AK: How did you become an early childhood educator here?

YL: My husband was transferred from Kupang to a school in Rote. I was already a qualified kindergarten teacher and was offered a position in one of the first kindergartens in Rote in 2006. It was run by the church in Nemberala. Very few people here understood the importance of early childhood education then.

AK: What is an average workday like for you? What sort of activities do you do with the children?

YL: I come to the kindergarten about 7am to prepare the class room with my colleagues. We set out the resources and set up the classroom. Classes start at 8am and finish at 10.30am. Mostly children walk to school with their friends. We have an Indonesian curriculum and we teach counting and letter recognition, dancing, singing and craft. We also teach social behaviour and basic hygiene.

AK: How do you think access to early childhood education benefits children in your school?

YL: The benefit is that the children learn many things: they learn how to go to school. They gain some independence, self-discipline and some early skills so when they continue to primary school they are already socialised for school.,

AK: And how do you think it benefits their families and the wider community?

YL: Through the kindergarten children have the opportunity to learn positive things from their teachers so when they go home, they are already shaped by the school with basic discipline and that is helpful for the parents and for the community.

AK: What are the best parts of your job – and the challenges?

YL: The challenges are that parents don't understand the importance of regular attendance. Also, our grounds are not fenced so pigs and goats forage there, contaminating the playgrounds with faeces which becomes a health hazard, especially when it turns to dust in the dry season. We lack educational aids also. The best part of my job? I love teaching the children!

a dance class with a difference

Rwanda



DANCERS PERFORMING AT THE OPENING OF A MATERNAL AND CHILD CENTRE IN KIGALI, RWANDA

In 2012 we supported our partner Club Rafiki to launch Kigali's first urban dance school. As the classes have grown in popularity, so too has Club Rafiki's ambition to integrate the dance classes with their sexual and reproductive health programs. Now, over 120 young people attend free dance classes every week in Kigali and two outlying rural villages. A cohort of dancers have been trained as peer-to-peer educators and engage with young people at Club Rafiki and at public dance performances. And, once a month, the dance classes end with a facilitated conversation by peer educators on positive health choices, sexual and reproductive health and issues that matter in their lives. **This is an insight into one of those classes attended by our Partnership Coordinators David When and Mandy When.**

YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE OUTLYING VILLAGE OF KANINYA NOW ENJOY CLUB RAFIKI'S WEEKLY DANCE CLASSE



The music bounced off the walls and the footsteps of the young dancers pounded on the floor. But despite the party-like atmosphere, this was a dance class with a difference.

As the class ended and the music stopped, dance students dragged chairs into a circle and gathered together in the middle of the room. The nineteen-year-old dance teacher took centre stage with the words “taking drugs is a naked lie”. In Kigali, there is an abundance of cheaply available marijuana and other drugs and many young people, lacking social and recreational activities, are vulnerable to drug-taking.

Without concern for our presence the young people launched into the discussion.

“Drugs destroy your brain, let you do bad things without being scared, and make you do things you can’t remember.”

“Drugs make you feel you are dancing well. But you are confident enough and dance well, you don’t need drugs. You will have natural confidence.”

“Drugs make you do things you can’t remember. If you take drugs you can’t be a responsible parent. They distort your mind, destroy your career and create false thinking.”

“We all desire to be stars. If you have a responsible position how do you deal with yourself if you take drugs.”

Around the circle for 30 minutes, the young people spoke with feeling.

The discussion was concluded by the dance teacher. “We don’t want dancers to take drugs and degrade themselves. We need discipline. Know who you really are. Protect your lives and your future and your future study. Feel free and cherish your lives.”

As the discussion concluded, the students bid each other goodbye. They would see each other again soon at the next dance class.

A DANCE CLASS IN FULL SWING AT CLUB RAFIKI



step by step to a community's vision

Namibia

Deborah Raphael, Partnership Coordinator

Community development is rarely a fast or linear path and when indigo foundation partnered with the Macquarie Park Rotary Club in 2013 to support a community to build a youth centre in the informal settlements of Otjiwarongo, we knew this may be a challenging project.

Our first step, in July 2014, was a joint feasibility study and community consultation to identify a local partner and continue the discussions that Rotary had started regarding the lease of Council land. Through this study, it became clear that there was no suitable local organisation to partner with and a grassroots committee called the Otjiwarongo Development Program Fund (ODPF) was set up to work with us and take on negotiations with Council about the lease for a potential youth centre.

In those early stages, we and ODPF appreciated that it was important for this new community organisation to gain experience and build cohesion and community trust before taking on an ambitious project. ODPF began to support a series of small local community development activities, such as the OtjiVeg Cooperative Garden, the Fat Cakes Women's Cooperative and a number of sporting activities.

The small activities program continued to operate with varying degrees of success while ODPF started down the long and difficult road of obtaining registration as a not for profit organisation under Namibian law. With much

excitement, ODPF was registered as a not-for-profit under Namibian law in 2017.

With ODPF finally registered, a formal request for the lease was made to the Council. Our expectations rose that the community's vision for a youth centre would soon become a reality but again the process of approving the lease was slow. Finally, on 11 April this year, we received an excited message from our Liaison Officer in Namibia, Monica Tjehiua, that ODPF's lease application had been approved.

Our Australia-based Partnership Coordinator is now on a field visit in Namibia working with ODPF and the local council on the lease conditions. We are also assessing the future feasibility of the partnership and the ability of our partner and the project, as it stands, to fulfil the initial vision of building a youth centre. During this visit we will also meet with other local NGOs who may be able to strengthen the partnership .

Meanwhile with lots of patience and with minimal financial support, the team at ODPF has continued to build its role in the community. Recently, after an outbreak of disease including hepatitis E, ODPF led a community wide clean-up campaign targeting the informal settlements, Orwetoveni residential area and the state hospital.

The development journey has not been a straightforward one for this partnership but ODPF's hard work to establish itself as a viable local organisation and the community activities it has supported along its path is no small feat for a fledgling organisation.

ODPF LEADING COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS AT TSARAXA-AIBES INFORMAL SETTLEMENT ABOUT THE PROPOSED MULTIPURPOSE YOUTH CENTRE



our people

Firstly, welcome to our newest board member **Fyfe Strachan**. Fyfe has worked in policy, advocacy and advisory roles for NGOs in Australia and overseas, including Oxfam and ActionAid. She comes to us with a focus on advocacy and systemic change and has facilitated training workshops in over 10 countries on advocacy program design, implementation and evaluation. Fyfe has recently returned to Australia after working with ActionAid Vietnam and we look forward to her contribution.

Many thanks are due to **John Bolger**, who has resigned as our India Partnership Coordinator after six years in the role. John is highly valued by our team in Australia and our partners in India and we thank John for his hard work, integrity and deep commitment to community-led development – not to mention his never-ending patience and good humour. The India partnership will remain in good hands, with **Susan Engel** taking on the role of Partnership Coordinator. Susan has been an important part of our team for over a decade, as a Board Member and driver of research among many other talents.

We are excited to welcome two new people to the Board's Panel of Advisors. **Murray Procter** is a consultant on global health financing and part time Executive Director of the Foundation for Effective Markets and Governance. He was a senior executive in the Australian Government's aid program for 20 years, responsible for development cooperation in Papua New Guinea and led sectoral policy development in health and education. **Anna Whelan** is a Conjoint Associate Professor at the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at UNSW, with a research interest in health system responses to vulnerable groups. Anna has been the Regional Director for the International Planned Parenthood Federation in Malaysia and most recently was the Deputy Team Leader for the Australia Timor-Leste Partnership for Human Development. Welcome Anna and Murray – we are grateful for your

expertise and input.

Finally, a big thank you to our University of Wollongong interns who are working with us this semester – **Kate Elliot-Rudder, Tahlya Smith** and **Hayley Hocking**.



introducing Leigh Cupitt – board member

Leigh Cupitt joined our Board in 2017 – and we are indeed lucky to have her. With more than 30 years' experience across international development and indigenous health, Leigh brings a wealth of knowledge, strategic planning and organisational development skills to our work. Here's a little bit more about Leigh in her own words.

Tell us a little about yourself and how you first got involved with indigo foundation.

I come from a background of government, nongovernment and international work. In the last 10 years, I have worked in Papua New Guinea, Bougainville and the Solomon Islands to build the capacity of government agencies and individual staff in planning, monitoring and evaluation and performance management. My

last placement was as the Gender Advisor in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Prior to my international role I worked for most of my career with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues, particularly with Aboriginal controlled Medical Services .

My interest in the work of indigo foundation came from the current Chair Lyla Rogan, who is always on the lookout for colleagues to support the foundation's work. Having worked in international development, and seeing first-hand how some of the approaches had little hope of creating significant change, I was attracted by the foundation's values and to their genuine commitment to partnerships initiated from local organisations that are already working toward a goal they see as important for their community.

What has your experience with indigo foundation been like so far?

I have been on the Board for about 18 months and find the work that is achieved inspiring. I have been particularly attracted to the enormous dedication by all of those involved. I have sat on interviews for Partnership Coordinators with large roles on a voluntary basis and also been inspired by the dedication and talents of younger people in the organisation. I have enjoyed learning in more depth about community partnerships in countries I haven't worked in, and am able to

draw on my own experience to contribute to issues which need to be addressed. So many of the issues are similar to what I have experienced in my work with Indigenous communities and internationally.

I found my time as a committee member to organise the Sydney Dinner a particularly memorable and meaningful experience. The small group worked very hard to pull off a very successful dinner, and raised a significant amount of money. This was a first for me. I learnt a lot about fundraising and found the dedication and hard work amazing. Meetings were very regular, decisions were made, and activities always completed by the next meeting.

What are you most excited about for your time as an indigo foundation board member?

I am the Convenor of the Development Committee of the Board (a two-year term) and I am excited about contributing and learning even more about our partnerships. I am also excited about working with the committee to assess and develop new partnerships – like the one we are currently looking at in Bougainville. I am interested in assisting with developing our strategies for monitoring and evaluation as an integrated part of the planning process and assisting our partners with this work on the ground.

think piece: Australia, China and the New Pacific Development Agenda

Australia is traditionally the largest aid donor in the Pacific region. Despite an increasing amount of Chinese aid to the region in recent years, Australia still gives as much as all other bilateral and multilateral donors combined – approaching \$1.3 billion for 2018/19.

In response to increased Chinese aid and 'soft power' and an alleged need for infrastructure, in November 2018 the Morrison Government proposed a new Australian loan fund as the flagship of a renewed commitment to the Pacific, otherwise known as the 'Pacific step up'. The **Australian Infrastructure Investment Fund for the Pacific**

(**AIFFP**) is a \$2 billion facility that would combine \$500 million of aid grants with \$1.5 billion of loans.

Legislation to make the fund possible was snuck through parliament late at night on the 2 April, the day after the budget was presented and on the second last sitting day before the election was called. The grant portion of the AIFFP will only be possible by cuts to countries outside the Pacific, such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Nepal. Significantly, around one eighth of the Australian bilateral aid program would be shifted from grants to loans.

Although China has long been active in the

Pacific, since 2011, it has increased its aid and investment in the region, including significant amounts of aid to Fiji and to PNG. A good portion of Chinese aid has been for infrastructure purposes, but China has also engaged in other priorities such as agriculture, health and education.

A kind of financial tug-of-war has broken out in the region. The Pacific 'step up' program appears to be predicated on countering growing Chinese influence. Chinese aid has been criticised by other donors as serving political purposes, as building white elephants that may not lead to development, and as being substantially loan-based rather than grant-based, thus leading Pacific nations into debt traps. Yet, part of the reason why Chinese aid and investment have been able to gain traction in the Pacific stems from perceptions of Australian 'neo-colonialism' and 'interference' in the domestic affairs of these Pacific Island nations on the one hand, and of strategic neglect on the other.

Moreover, in its response to these alleged shortcomings in the Chinese aid offensive, Australia is replicating many of the mechanisms that it and other donors seek to criticise China for. Indeed, there are flaws in the apparent purpose, mechanism and development philosophy of the AIFFP. We might consider each of them in turn.

=The purpose of the AIFFP is infrastructure, and the supposed lack of it. However, despite calls from some Pacific leaders and outside actors for more Pacific infrastructure, there is no detailed or context-specific assessment of the infrastructure needs of Pacific island nations. The one assessment that has been done by the Asian Development Bank (the ADB) estimates Pacific infrastructure needs from a model developed for mainland Asia.

Institutionally, the body set up to administer the AIFFP is Efic—Australia's Export Credit Agency. Efic is a taxpayer-backed investment bank, designed to promote Australian business interests. It is not a development agency and has no expertise in development – a complex issue at the best of times. Moreover, Efic suffers serious deficiencies when it comes to oversight, transparency and accountability. This does not bode well for the program.

It appears that the AIFFP will mix the \$500 million in grant money from the aid program with \$1.5 billion borrowed by Efic on capital markets to create concessional loans – i.e. loans at lower than market interest rates and other easy repayment terms. If so, this would be a recreation of the Development Import Finance Facility scheme, whose main years

of operation were from 1983 to 1996. The scheme was abandoned in the mid-1990s because it was associated with: a supply-driven approval process, a bias for large infrastructure projects, a preference for middle-income countries, and a tendency for debt creation.

Finally, and probably most importantly, the development philosophy on which the AIFFP is premised is flawed. Most Pacific nations are already in moderate or severe risk of debt distress. There are very few Pacific nations that can afford to take on even a small amount of new debt without putting severe pressure on foreign exchange to repay debts.

The growing debt problems are linked to the already unfolding climate and ecological crises. The growing severity of storms, floods, and rising waters due to climate change further contribute to sovereign debt distress in vulnerable island nations in the Pacific and the Caribbean. Countries may well be required to engage in practices harmful to the ecological balance both on land and in Pacific waters in order to pay back debt: unsustainable forestry, mining, and fisheries practices may increase, putting even more strain on already fragile ecosystems.

The AIFFP is premised upon a growth-based development model, at a time when there is considerable evidence to show how no clear, 'one-size-fits-all' recipe for creating economic growth exists, especially for the small-island nations of the Pacific. There is, however, a great deal of evidence on how to reduce poverty, but the AIFFP is not designed for this purpose. Support for the Pacific needs to focus on livelihoods and resilience.

Regretfully, the Department of Foreign Affairs, supported by both major parties, motivated by the fear of a loss of influence in 'our region' and wrong-headed development logic, have chosen a different course.

Luke Fletcher is the Executive Director of the Jubilee Australia Research Centre and a Visiting Fellow at the UNSW School of Social Sciences. This article is based on a report by Jubilee Australia, in association with Caritas Australian and UNSW academic Pichamon Yeophantong, '[Enter the Dragon: Australia, China, and the New Pacific Development Agenda](#)'.

indigo foundation in the community



MC ALEX SLOAN WITH REBECCA MCCORMACK OF THE INDIGO RETREAT AT OUR CANBERRA DINNER/TREAT

as the sun sets over Canberra

Over 260 people brought their generosity and good will to the National Arboretum for our 9th annual Canberra dinner – and what a night it was! Dancers from the Fresh Funk Dance Group entertained us as the sun set over Canberra, our MC's Virginia Haussegger AM and Alex Sloan AM made the night with their passion and humour and Santino Yuot, having just stepped off the plane from South Sudan, spoke from the heart about the impact our education partnership is having in Wedweil. Many thanks as well to Janet Jeffs and Ginger Catering for their generous hosting and delicious food. We raised almost \$30,000 on the night – our biggest dinner in Canberra yet!

folding and stuffing with IAG

Many thanks to Insurance Australia Group (IAG) and their wonderful staff who dedicated a half a day to printing, folding and envelope stuffing our November 2018 indigo iNK. Thank you especially to Milena Marcetic who helped organise the day

and to Craig who encouraged his whole team to join – John, Douglas, Akshat, Eden, Moustafa, Christine, Nancy, Varuni, Daniel, Felix, Oscar and Gurjot. What an effort! IAG have been long-standing supporters of indigo foundation, making a significant contribution to the first round of teacher training in South Sudan and continuing to support us through workplace giving and volunteer hours.

Sydney celebrates 15 years partnering Afghanistan

Our annual Sydney dinner was held in March at the Moore Park Golf House and this year we had the privilege of celebrating 15 years of partnering in Afghanistan. Thanks to everyone who came and made it such a fabulous evening, raising over \$20,000. The highlight of the evening was hearing from Ali Reza Yunespour who shared his first-hand stories of the change he has witnessed in his home region in Borjagai. Thanks to our wonderful MC, Verity Firth, to Salima, Fatima and Khadija for sharing Afghan dancing (and

their patience in teaching the moves), to our fast-talking big-hearted auctioneer, Michael McCaffary, and to our incredible team of volunteers who worked furiously behind the scenes – Ingrid Radford, Libby Lloyd, Deb Raphael, Louise Coutts and May-Ann Wan.

bollywood meers 1960s crooners

It was Bollywood meets 1960s crooners as 115 people gathered on the sidewalk at the Spices of Melacca restaurant in Mawson in February for an evening of delicious food, entertainment and fun. Huge thanks to Robert Wong of Spices of Melacca and to Nina and Johnson Pearce of JP International College for their support in organising the evening. The dinner raised over \$4000 and introduced many new faces to indigo foundation.

from sea to summit

The good people at Bilberry Bluestocking Fund organised the 4th annual Sea to Summit bike ride in March. A team of dedicated riders rode from sea level in Nowra to the peak of Mt Kosciuszko – no small feat. Our thanks to Ben Loudon, Ian Robinson, Robin Brown, Matt Kelso, Karin Laird and Allan Asher - and the generous people who supported them - who raised \$7,806. Next March the team are going to take on the 480km Tasmanian Trail from Bass Strait to the Southern Ocean. Why not join them for the challenge in 2020?



THE IAG TEAM HARD AT WORK PRINTING, FOLDING AND STUFFING ENVELOPES FOR INDIGO INK



PARTNERSHIP COORDINATOR ALI REZA YUNESPOUR AND MEMBERS OF THE AFGHAN COMMUNITY AT OUR SYDNEY DINNER



SEA TO SUMMIT RIDERS REACH THE PEAK OF MT KOSCIUSKZO

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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