

the first thing we offer is respect



# iNK

indigo news & knowledge



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COVER IMAGE: Text books being distributed at Sayed Jamal High School in 2016, Afghanistan. In this edition, Ali Reza Yunespour reflects on the new school text books and their role in promoting cultural harmony and linguistic diversity

# from us to you

Firstly, we say an enormous thank you for your support. Over the past 12 months, in the face of unprecedented disruption, economic insecurity and collective grief, you have rallied in an extraordinary way to help sustain and grow the impact our partners are achieving. We are grateful that you have stuck with us and that you continue to believe in the pragmatic, empowering and long-term support we provide to grassroots communities.

In this edition we are excited to introduce you to our newest partner, Nanikaai Village Committee in Kiribati. Kiribati experiences some of the highest rates of gender inequality and gender-based violence in the world and this partnership will use sport as a tool to challenge gender stereotypes and build the wellbeing and leadership of women and girls. We are starting slowly, with an initial 12 month agreement to test the partnership, but we are hopeful that this work will develop into a longer-term partnership that facilitates gender justice and expands to other community priorities.

We also share updates from our partners in India, Indonesia and Afghanistan – who are all doing incredible work in the face of recent emergencies. On 4 April, Tropical Cyclone Seroja caused devastating rains and landslides in Eastern Indonesia and our partners are now starting the slow processes of rebuilding. In India, our partners are working hard in the midst of a Covid outbreak to keep students engaged in learning after a year of disrupted schooling. And in Afghanistan, despite an increase in conflict and a return to school closures due to a Covid outbreak, our partners are not only resuming school building works after 12 months but also looking to expand their activities to ensure more girls and women are educated.

Finally, we take a moment to acknowledge the critical work Hako Women's Collective is doing in Bougainville to defend human rights and protect women and children experiencing violence. Right now, a community incident means that the Safe House is stretched to capacity. Hako's women are experienced and trusted in dealing with such crises and they are known as a safe space in times of community unrest.

Enjoy the read - as we share the stories of struggle, hope and impact that are reflected in our community partners' work.

*Jemma and Lyla*

# everybody wins

## gender justice through equal access to sport in Kiribati

By Christina Northey, Development Coordinator

In May, the indigo foundation board approved a new partnership with the Nanikaai Village Committee in Kiribati. *The Everybody Wins* initiative aims to increase the participation of women and girls in sporting activities to build confidence and leadership skills and tackle harmful gender stereotyping. Kiribati experiences some of the highest rates of gender inequality and gender-based violence in the world and we are excited about working with a new partner striving to build more equitable outcomes for women and girls.

### Why Kiribati and why sport?

The Republic of Kiribati is an independent nation located in the central Pacific. Comprising 32 coral atolls and one raised coral island, the country is on the frontline of the impacts of climate change. Kiribati communities are vulnerable to rising sea levels and Kiribati was one of the first nations to raise the alarm about climate change creating mass displacement of people and the potential for 'climate refugees'.

A former British colony, Kiribati gained independence in 1979. It has few natural resources and is one of the least developed Pacific Island countries due to its remoteness from international markets. The capital, Tarawa, hosts over half of the estimated total population of 111,800 with a comparable population density to Singapore or Hong Kong. Much of the country's income is derived from development assistance and remittances from overseas workers. Nearly all essential food is imported which means an abundance of non-perishable and canned products with low nutritional value.

Young people comprise over 50% of the population with the youth unemployment rate at 54% and female youth unemployment 14.2% higher than male rate.<sup>1</sup> The majority of Kiribati youth do not complete junior high-level schooling and teenage pregnancy rates remain high. Due to urban overcrowding, there

are few opportunities for unemployed young people to engage in productive activities where semi-subsistence living is constrained by limited resources.

Non-communicable diseases are a primary healthcare challenge in Kiribati; particularly diseases caused by poor nutrition, smoking and alcohol consumption. Life expectancy is 50-60 years. Kiribati's remoteness, land scarcity and reliance on imported food in urban areas present challenges to reversing the alarming rate of non-communicable diseases.

Kiribati experiences some the highest rates of gender inequality and gender-based violence in the world. There is a generally high tolerance of excessive alcohol consumption and male alcohol use has been found to be positively associated with intimate partner violence. Overall, 73% of women reported experiencing some form of physical or sexual violence. Around 90% of women reported experiencing some form of controlling behaviour<sup>2</sup> which often results in married women or adolescent girls having restricted movement, including inability to participate in sports. Sporting event and facility bookings also tend to favour men's sporting activities. Cultural norms that are enshrined in the legal constitution makes challenging harmful gender norms difficult. This partnership sees sport as a community-based entry point to start confront these gender norms outside of a legal framework.

### Why is gender equity relevant to sport and recreation?

Aside from the physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits, evidence shows that sport fosters increased self-esteem and confidence of participants and, as such, can unlock opportunities for women and girl's leadership and achievement. Because sport builds a strong sense of belonging, facilitates social inclusion and community integration, it can act as a vehicle to promote tolerance and acceptance of gender differences. Sport offers a platform to



MANY THANKS TO MAREBU FLOOD (PICTURED) AND EMMA TIAREE WHO HAVE HELPED FACILITATE THIS NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NANIKAAI VILLAGE ASSOCIATION. (IMAGE BY DFAT)

bring men and women, boys and girls together around common goals requiring teamwork and leadership. With the right mentoring and guidance, well designed sports programs and leaders can challenge harmful gender stereotypes and discrimination that can have positive flow on effects to other aspects of life, including encouraging respectful relationships at home, in the workplace and in communities.

### Meet our newest partner

This initiative will be driven and managed by the Nanikaai Village Committee, representing a small urban village on the main island of Tarawa. Nanikaai Village Committee is an active, transparent and well-organised village association with a track record of encouraging members to participate in and represent their community in local and national sporting events. All villages in Kiribati are registered under the Ministry of Women, Youth and Sports and governed by a community committee with a nominated chairperson as central contact point.

The primary objective of the initiative is to encourage and enable Kiribati women and girls to get active – no matter how well they do it or how they look doing it. The intended impact is that women and girls will have improved health, confidence and wellbeing through their participation in different sporting and recreational opportunities.

Through this initiative, we expect women and girls will eventually have equal access to sports

and recreational facilities and events. We also anticipate women and girls will build confidence and skills to participate in these activities and there will be increasing acceptance for women and girls participating equally with men and boys in sport. Longer term, this work will support communities to increase their knowledge and opportunities to live healthy lifestyles.

### How will we get there?

Volleyball will be the main focus - due to land constraints, volleyball is a practical option, it is the second most popular sport and there is already community acceptance for women to play. We will support the establishment of safe spaces and facilities for all community members to participate in local sporting events and the community will host a series of local tournaments, events or leagues for all genders at all life stages.

Parallel to this, the initiative will undertake action research to better understand the barriers to women and girls participating in sport and test community attitudes towards women in sport. Women and girls will be trained together with men and boys in volleyball skills, including 'soft' skills and life skills training, such as teamwork, communication and leadership. Building and maintaining respectful relationships will be addressed as a critical part of the life skills training. We also hope that, through this process, potential female volleyball coaches will be identified.

Identifying community 'champions' to role model and promote respectful behaviours and tolerance of gender differences in sport will be important to the success of the initiative. Should the 12 month pilot prove successful, we hope to build on this with additional activities already identified by the community including establishing vegetable gardens, securing freshwater supply and healthy eating campaigns.

### We are thrilled to be entering this new partnership with the Nanikaai Village Committee.

1. International Labour Organisation
2. [https://pacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Kiribati-Family-Health-and-Support-Study\\_0.pdf](https://pacific.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Kiribati-Family-Health-and-Support-Study_0.pdf)

# resuming building and focusing on girls' education

## Afghanistan

*This past year has been one of the most challenging to date for our long-standing partnership in Afghanistan. Tragically, over a third of the population is reported to have contracted COVID and, as of June, schools in Ghazni Province have closed again to manage a Covid outbreak. As foreign troops withdraw, there has also been increased fighting and instability. For the first time in over 15 years, our partner, the Jirghai and Behsud Shura, was forced to suspend planned school building works in 2020.*

*In good news, our partners are now resuming school building and infrastructure works across six schools, with over 1500 students. And in May, the indigo foundation board approved two new initiatives aimed at improving access to education for girls and women. The first initiative will provide supplementary salaries for 20 female teachers across a network of Jirghai schools. Our experience in Afghanistan has underlined the importance of having female teachers in the classroom – as role models for girls and to help feel comfortable to keep girls in school through to high school.*

*The second initiative put forward by our partners is to work with the newly established Afghanistan Rural Women's Rights Protection Network in Kabul to support literacy and life skills programs for up to 500 adult women who are breadwinners in their families. This program will be led by 20 female instructors across seven centres in areas of Kabul that have strong existing ties to the communities we work with in Ghazni province. We will support initially as a 12 month pilot as we build trust and assess outcomes with the Afghanistan Rural Women's Rights Protection Network.*

### **An analysis of the 'new' school textbooks in Afghanistan**

*By Ali Reza Yunespour, Partnership Coordinator*

I am sharing here a snapshot of my research about the 'new' textbooks for primary schools in Afghanistan, which were written after 2001 and attempt to promote liberal state-building and peace education in Afghanistan's schools. My

preliminary findings suggests that concepts such as human rights, gender equity, civic responsibility and respect have replaced 'Jihad education' in Social Studies. Moreover, the design and delivery of separate textbooks for Shi'a (Jafari) Muslims alongside Sunni (Hanafi) textbooks and production of some school textbooks in the third national languages (alongside Dari and Pashto) are important steps for ensuring socio-cultural diversity in Afghanistan. However, Afghan schools have a long and difficult journey ahead to deliver on the national goals of socio-economic development and peace due to ongoing conflict, widespread poverty, shortage of education resources and poor delivery of textbooks in the classrooms.

### **Two faces of education**

For my research, I have used the seminal work of Kenneth Bush and Diana Saltarelli to examine the two faces of education in ethnic conflicts. As they argue, education is a vital force to build and foster inter-ethnic harmony, inclusive citizenship, socio-cultural diversity and economic development. However, unequal access to education and discriminatory learning materials can also promote and maintain socio-political, historical and linguistic privileges and contribute to the existing factors that drive conflicts. In the context of education in Afghanistan, Craig Davis and Yahia Baiza's book, *Education in Afghanistan: Developments, Influences and Legacies Since 1901*, show how successive ruling elites in Afghanistan used public schools to promote their ideology and maintain their socio-political power throughout the 20th century – making access to education a part of state failures, enduring ethnic tensions and ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan.

As part of the state reconstruction efforts in the past two decades, the international community, UN agencies, NGOs and Afghan Government have expanded access to education and attempted to reform school curriculum and provide new textbooks for primary and secondary students. According to Ministry of Education (MoE) data,

around 9 million students were enrolled in primary and secondary schools in 2019. Moreover, approximately 300,000 and 15,000 students respectively were enrolled in the registered Islamic Education Centres and vocational education and technical high schools. In the same year, around five million school-aged children, especially girls, remained out-of-school because of ongoing conflicts, widespread poverty, male-dominated norms and poor education infrastructure. The ongoing attacks by militant groups have caused temporary and permanent closure of schools particularly in Southern, Eastern and Northern provinces. As late as 2016, only half of public schools in Afghanistan had proper buildings particularly in urban areas while the remaining schools operated under the tents, in mosques or open spaces.

Consequently, access to education has remained highly unequal as more than half of all secondary students were enrolled in six of the 34 provinces and boys are twice more likely to finish high schools than girls in Afghanistan. According to MoE data, the majority of teachers lack sufficient qualifications and around 90% of all female teachers are located in nine major urban centres (Kabul, Herat, Nangrahar, Mazar, Badakhshan, Takhar, Baghlan, Jozjan and Faryab). Moreover, no female student is enrolled in grades 10-12 in 200 of 412 urban and rural districts and 245 out of 412 districts do not have a single qualified female teacher.

As we have reported previously, indigo foundation partnership with 22 rural schools in Borjegai, Jirghai and Behsud community have made significant contributions to improving education infrastructure, access to primary and secondary schools, especially for girls, and enhancing higher education enrolment. In 2019-2020, 229 students, including 72 girls, graduated from 14 high schools that we have supported over more than a decade. Moreover, 140 graduates, including 52 girls, from indigo-supported high schools participated in the national university admission exams known as Kankor. Around 85 percent of the Kankor participants were offered courses in the state-funded university and non-university higher education institutions. However, nationally, around half of all Kankor participants were accepted in the state-funded higher education institutions, including around a quarter in public universities.

## **Analysing the new school text books**

The US government alone has spent more than USD65 million for the print and delivery of school textbooks between 2003 and 2016, which helped the MoE design and 50 new textbooks for primary students (Grades 1-6). In her study of Muslim and Western influences on school curriculum in post-war Afghanistan, Adele Jones in 2007 concluded that the new Civic Studies textbooks (Grades 1-3) are clear of any reference to war and violence unlike the Mujahidin curriculum which encouraged Jihad and violence against the Soviet-backed forces in the 1980s. Words such as respect, happiness, together, share, and rights appear frequently throughout the Civic Studies textbooks. There is a strong emphasis on social cohesion and diversity.

Up until the 1970s, Hanafi jurisprudence of Sunni Islam was the main religion of Afghanistan and was actively promoted in schools and higher education. In the 1980s, the Soviet Union-backed regime used Islam as the official religion without mentioning Sunni or Shi'a. Later, the Taliban used a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam to promote more madrasas and exclude Shi'a followers and females from schools. In contrast, the current Constitution recognises both Sunni (Hanafi) and Shi'a (Jafari) Islam and the MoE has produced separate textbooks for all students in Grades 2-12. Public and private schools have the choice to use Sunni or Shi'a textbooks depending on the majority of students. In rural areas, the choice has been easier for schools because students in most rural schools are the followers of one of the jurisprudence of Islam. However, some students in urban schools have been denied the right to learn about their own jurisprudence of Islam. This gap has largely been filled in with informal religious knowledge teachings and practices in households, mosques and madrasas.

Similarly, the MoE has produced some textbooks in Pamiri, Uzbeki, Turkmeni, Baluchi, Pashaye and Nuristani languages for provinces or regions where the majority of the population speak a language other than Dari or Pashto (the two official languages of Afghanistan). However, the national university admission exams and teaching in most higher education institutions remain in Dari and Pashto. There is a need for more research about the impacts of third national languages on 'national identity' formation in Afghanistan and the advantages and disadvantages of teaching in third national language for students' schooling and post-secondary opportunities in Afghanistan.

# Tamil Nadu partners navigate the latest Covid outbreak

India



OUR PARTNERS IN INDIA ARE SHARING PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION TO LIMIT THE SPREAD OF COVID AND DISTRIBUTING MASKS AND PERSONAL HYGIENE SUPPLIES.

Our partners in Tamil Nadu, India, continue to navigate the latest devastating Covid outbreak. Guna Vincent from Mahalir Sakthi explains that:

*Many many are affected. Friends, family members, neighbours got infected. Facing difficult times and fear to go to Hospitals which are already crowded. Poor people stay at home without sharing that they got affected by COVID and treating themself by buying pills from the local Medical stores".*

A strict lockdown has forced our partners to change the way they are operating over the past month – with activities being either suspended or going ahead with strict number limits and tutors are reaching out to students in their homes. Our partners are doing everything in their power to provide practical support in the form of masks, personal hygiene supplies and health advice.

Our partners explain that a key priority is keeping children and young people engaged with learning. The students they work with have missed out on so much schooling over the past 12 months that they are at a very real risk of dropping out entirely and falling into 'day labouring', with poor pay and dangerous conditions and a common path for Dalit and Adivasi communities. As Semmalar Selvi, PEAB Liaison Officer, explains "Basically we are trying to ensure that the children do not become child labourers.

As of early June, the strict lockdown seems to be working as the rate of Covid cases in Tamil Nadu is starting to drop. Large numbers of people are turning out for Covid vaccinations in Madurai however Tamil Nadu is struggling with insufficient supply and some vaccination centres are currently closed. There is speculation that the lock down may be eased in coming weeks in districts that have reported a fall in cases.

## tax time appeal

You may have received our current appeal in your inbox or postbox. **We need to raise \$95,200** so we can keep supporting our community partners in the coming 12 months to rebuild through the pandemic and defend the rights of women and children to education, health and safety. Our tax time appeal is our biggest and most important fundraiser of the year. It is vital to delivering on the long-term commitments we make to our local partners.

**Your support is more important than ever.**

If you haven't already, **please consider making a donation before 30 June**. There is more information at the link below – including plans to grow our partnership in India and Afghanistan and launch our new partnership in Kiribati.

<https://indigo2021appeal.raisely.com>

# our partners start to rebuild after Cyclone Seroja

Indonesia



LANDSLIDES AND FLOODING DESTROYED HOUSES, INFRASTRUCTURE AND PEKKA NTT'S COMMUNITY CENTRE ON LEMBATA ISLAND.

On 4 April Tropical Cyclone Seroja hit Indonesia and East Timor. It was a devastating event for our three local partners in Eastern Indonesia – Lua Lemba, PEKKA NTT and the Nefo Ko'u Farmers Cooperative. Torrential rains triggered flash floods and landslides that washed out roads and bridges and damaged infrastructure. Houses were destroyed, as was PEKKA NTT's community centre on Lembata Island. Ibu Dete from PEKKA NTT shared:

*.. flash floods occurred in Adonara and Lembata and the Pekka Lembata centre was buried by rocks and sand. Likewise, the houses of residents and PEKKA women.*

Tragically over 130 people were killed in Indonesia, including one of the women involved in PEKKA NTT's collectives.

The impacts of the cyclone are still being felt today as the communities we work with rebuild. In May, Pak Onny from Lua Lemba shared"

*We are still in a state that is not normal, the electric lights are still out until now, the internet network has not been smooth due to the storm of the scary cyclone. Many houses were damaged. We do not know the*

*conditions in other NTT areas because we are still isolated, there is no reachable means of communication.*

We have remained in close contact with our partners since the cyclone and have passed on the thoughts and solidarity of our team and supporters in Australia. We are also supporting Lua Lemba and PEKKA NTT with additional funding for emergency response and recovery activities.

Lua Lemba is using the additional funds on Rote Island to meet needs of the most vulnerable and impacted community members, including emergency food supplies of rice and sugar, and building materials to repair and rebuild damaged buildings. PEKKA NTT has used additional funds to purchase good quality tents that they have been distributing to women heads of household on Adonara and Lembata Islands as temporary accommodation and for PEKKA NTT collectives to work out of. We are also boosting the funds we are sending to PEKKA NTT to help them repair damage done to the network of women-run cooperative gardens.

# training and building sustainability in Budaka

Uganda



REPRESENTATIVES FROM OUR BUDAKA PARTNERS BACK IN THE CLASSROOM FOR GOVERNANCE AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT TRAINING, APRIL 2021

In early April our local partners in Budaka, Uganda, found themselves back in the classroom, attending an intensive course on governance and program management. This course was chosen by our partners and covered topics including networking, forming partnerships and management roles, as well as program management, starting with proposal design and developing a baseline study, onto implementation and monitoring and evaluation approaches. Our partners report that they really enjoyed the training and learnt new skills and insights.

Our partners have also finished purchasing materials that will shore up their sustainability and capacity to generate an income. For most of our partners, this has meant purchasing equipment which can be rented out to bring in revenue. Iki-Iki, NACOMAS and Gaalimagi all purchased tents and chairs to make available for hire for events in their communities. Kakule purchased six sewing machines and two bicycles, again with the intention of making these available for rent and community training.

As we enter into the final months of this partnership and transition to more informal arrangements, we look forward to staying in contact and seeing how our partners develop and continue to serve their communities. It has been a privilege to work together since 2010 and we are confident our partners will continue to thrive and find new ways to serve their communities.

We would like to acknowledge the tremendous

service, professionalism and integrity of our Liaison Officer, Joy Katooko. Joy has been instrumental in keeping momentum going, even during the hardest of times, over the past decade. In a letter to indigo and our supporters, Joy writes "Kudos to indigo management, staff and volunteers who have made this [project] happen, although 2019/2020 has been one of the toughest years globally due to the prevalence of COVID-19 pandemic. This ten year journey has been very interesting and we have learnt a lot in the partnership ..." Joy's full letter is in our 2020 Annual Report. We wish Joy and her family all the best for the future.

Since 2010, we have partnered with a network of grassroots organisations in the Mount Elgon region to strengthen the capacity of families and communities to support over 2000 children and young people impacted by HIV, many of whom are from child-headed households. We are currently making a phased exit over 18 months and we honour and acknowledge the commitment and impact of our partners: Gaalimagi HIV/AIDS Group, Iki Iki AIDS Community Initiative, Kakule HIV/AIDS and Grieved Families Association, NACOMAS and Trinity Child Care Ministry.

## meet Bakhtawar

Afghan Women's Empowerment Centre scholar



In 2011, indigo foundation helped establish the Women's Empowerment Centre (WEC) under the Directorship of Nasima Rahmani at the Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education in Kabul. The WEC runs a scholarship program and since 2011, the Centre has grown in strength and impact – initiating academic and non-academic courses on gender and peace studies and being an active voice advocating for gender justice. The WEC has recently been subsumed into Gawharshad University and, with the WEC now attracting

funding and recognition from around the world, indigo foundation is in the process of exiting the partnership.

Scholarship holders are selected by the Gawharshad Scholarship Committee on the basis of financial need and school scores, as well as home visits and interviews with family. Bakhtawar is one of the five current scholarship recipients. The Gawharshad Scholarship Committee writes:

*Bakhtawar lives in a big family; she has 7 sisters, two brothers and her parents. She is the eldest of all her siblings in the house. Her father is a common worker, he does not have regular job, and if one day he finds the job the other day he may not find it. Since her father has very low income, he cannot support her daughter's higher education. Furthermore he hardly provides the food for his children in the current satiation. According to Bakhtawar, if she does not get the scholarship she would remain uneducated, she may get married and become a house wife with a dark future. The Gawharshad Scholarship Committee has recognised her as neediest students after visiting her family.*

## Celebrating International Women's Day with PEAB

Tamil Nadu, India

To mark International Women's Day, Advocate Thilagavathi, from the Chennai High Court, met with Dalit mothers and children involved with the PEAB's Village Education Centres that we support in Madhurantakum, Tamil Nadu. They discussed domestic violence and other protection laws for women, children and Dalits. It wasn't all business, there were games and fun too.





THE TUESDAY TRAMPERS WALKING GROUP HAVE RAISED OVER \$1000 FOR INDIGO

## Rise to heights for human rights

Huge thanks to the indigo indefatigables – our strong-legged, hard-working bike riders and support crew consisting of Robin Brown, Ben Loudon, Ian Robinson, Jarrah Chapman and Philip Henty, with transport support from Lew Rushbrook and Matt Kelso. The indefatigables took on not one, but two riding challenges in April – firstly a Sea to Summit ride from Pambula on the NSW South Coast to the summit of Mount Kosciuszko, and secondly the 5 (+ 1) Peaks Challenge in Canberra. Together they raised almost \$8,500 – what a huge effort!

Inspired by the indefatigables, Heather Chapman organised her regular walking group into a crack fundraising team. Heather writes:

*...after hearing what Robin Brown was doing with his bike rides I thought I could do something with my Tuesday Trampers*

*walking group. So, after discussing the idea with a few of the regular walkers, we decided that each of us would donate \$2 for each walk we do together and that we would do fundraising over three months. It was suggested that dogs would contribute \$1 for each walk they do. We hope to raise over \$500 for indigo's partnerships. Some of our walkers have just made generous donations even when they can't make it to the walks.*

Heather and the Tuesday Trampers have now raised over \$1000 – thanks so much! We'd love it if you want to take on your own challenge or organise a group, like Heather has, to raise funds for indigo. We have a website set up so it is easy to make your own site <https://rise-to-heights-for-human-rights.raisely.com/> or get in contact with us on [info@indigofoundation.org](mailto:info@indigofoundation.org) for support and ideas.



THE INDIGO INDEFATIGABLES 'RODE TO HEIGHTS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS' IN APRIL

**Anna Brown, Joe Thwaites and Robin Brown**, as well as to **Di Van Meegan, Paul Cowan, Alex Sloan** and **Christina Richardson** who wrapped up the evening with words of appreciation about indigo's development approach. Thanks as well to our incredible and hard-working Canberra organising group – **Heather Chapman, Robin, Di, Alice, Christina** and **Lyla**.

### indigo people

We are delighted to welcome three new board members – **Megan Chisholm, Alison Martin** and **Tamana Mirzada**. See the Q&A below to get to know Tamana. Megan brings over 20 years' experience in the humanitarian and development sector. She has led humanitarian operations in the Middle East, Asia, Pacific and Latin America and most recently she was CARE International's Country Director in Vanuatu and Director of its Pacific Regional Team.

Similarly, Alison brings extensive experience in senior policy, media and campaigning roles. Most recently she was Policy and Campaigns Manager with Oxfam, based in Jerusalem and working across the West Bank and Gaza. Previously she led Advocacy and Campaigns in South Sudan for Oxfam. Alison was also a Communications Advisor with the European Climate Foundation and an Advisor to Australian Members of Parliament.

In welcoming new board members, we want to again thank **Gwyneth Graham** and **Shirley Randell** AO who stepped down from the board in November (see indigo iNK December 2020), and say a very big thank you to **Christine Edwards** who is stepping off the board after six years. While on the board, Christine made a significant contribution to indigo's sustainability and organisational capacity. We thank her for her wisdom, her grace and her friendship.

We are also excited to welcome a new Advisor to our board, **Saba Vasefi**. Saba is an award-winning artist, filmmaker and poet - and a fierce advocate for asylum-seekers and displaced women and children. She is researching her PhD on Exilic Feminist Cinema Studies, teaching at Macquarie University and is regularly published in *The Guardian* and *Women's Agenda*. We look forward to working with and learning from Saba.



THANKS TO ALL WHO JOINED US AT SAFFRON MEZZE HOUSE IN CANBERRA FOR A NIGHT OF MUSIC, FOOD AND FRIENDSHIP

### A night to reconnect and celebrate in Canberra

Many thanks to indigo supporters in Canberra who gathered together for a night of delicious food, music and friendship at the Saffron Mezza House in April. It was a fantastic chance to reconnect with friends old and new and share updates from some of our community partners. **Alice Roughley** shared an update from Club Rafiki in Rwanda and Development Coordinator **Chris Northey** spoke on indigo's commitment to gender justice, our work with the Hako Women's Collective in Bougainville and our new partner in Kiribati. Many thanks to musos **Ben Loudon**,



## Meet Tamana Mirzada, board member

Tamana joined the indigo foundation board in February 2021. She is an Afghan Australian youth advocate who is passionate about creating spaces that support newly arrived communities in their settlement journey. Tamana arrived in Australia in 2007 from Germany, making it her final settlement country. In the past, Tamana has worked with the Afghan Women Educational Centre in Kabul, the Lebanese Muslim Association, the Community Migrant Resource Centre, The Refugee Council of Australia and Shakti NSW Refugee and Migrant Women Support Group on various initiatives including education, employment and health. In 2019, Tamana was awarded the Refugee Council of Australia and STARTTS Humanitarian Youth Award. We're really excited to have her expertise and experience as part of our board.

### 1. What led you to this role with indigo?

After returning from Afghanistan last year during COVID-19, I was looking for ways to continue to be involved in international development and the humanitarian sector. My previous role was at the Afghan Women Educational Centre in Kabul, Afghanistan. As the program manager I focused mainly on gender transformative change and capacity building for communities in rural Afghanistan. Through this experience I learned a lot about the different dynamics that are in play in the intervention process of development.

When I come back to Australia, I wanted to continue to learn more about the field whilst at the same time extend my leadership skills.

### 2. Your life and work has exposed you to issues of inequality and social change across different countries and communities. What is one of the most valuable lessons you have learned?

There are many ways I could answer this question, but I believe what stood out for me during my experience is to listen more and then act. By this I mean it is so important for any development work and intervention process to acknowledge the needs of local communities. More often I see in the sector lots of desk-based research undertaken to deliver projects and programs for communities. This often fails to acknowledge the different needs of communities and without consultation how can you assess what needs to be solved? In all my work I always like to emphasise a localised approach to development. It's really important to think about how your intervention will affect the lives of those you are serving. Making assumptions and using desk-based research to develop an initiative is not sustainable.

### 3. In your experience, what is one of the biggest challenges facing global development today?

Definitely gender equality and the intersection of poverty. It is obvious that, for an economy to thrive, all members of a society ought to be given opportunities to participate in employment. From access to education to human rights, more often gender plays a significant role distinguishing those with and without access. Despite some progress in recent years, in no country have women achieved economic equality compared to men.

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

I am thrilled to be part of the important work indigo undertakes with communities abroad. And, at the same time, I look forward to sharing my learning experience working in international development and in the settlement sector here in Australia with newly arrived communities. I see a lot of potential in growing Indigo's engagement with diaspora communities in Australia and I am excited to be part of this important work.

# think piece: the migration-development nexus

a hollow triple win

By *Sanushka Mudaliar*

*Sanushka is a labour migration and human rights advocate, participatory action-research specialist, policy consultant and government advisor with two decades of experience working for NGOs, academic institutes and as a consultant to the United Nations International Labour Organisation and International Organisation for Migration.*

The release of the 2003 edition of the World Bank's annual Global Development Finance report was a watershed moment for international debate on migration. The report contained a chapter identifying money (remittances) sent by migrants to their countries of origin as a significant source of funding for economic development. It also contained a set of policy prescriptions that it argued would enable developing countries to 'harness' migrants' financial assets as well as their skills, networks, and knowledge. The report was part of a broader push in policy circles to promote migration as a tool to achieve international development outcomes; a process that has been dubbed the 'migration-development nexus'.<sup>1</sup>

The seductive power of the 'nexus' has translated into widespread international support for increased temporary labour migration from relatively poorer countries of origin to fill low-wage jobs in wealthier countries of destination. This type of migration has been styled as a 'triple win' solution: destination countries can meet labour market needs in low-wage sectors and fuel their economies; origin countries benefit from remittances; and individual migrants gain access to income and job opportunities that are not available at home.<sup>2</sup> The 'triple win' dramatically reassesses the role of migration in development which, as recently as the 1990s, was characterised as a 'brain drain' to be discouraged.<sup>3</sup> While it is clear that migration enables low-wage workers to send remittances to their families back home, there is little, if any, concrete evidence that policies designed to capitalise on the 'migration-development nexus'

result in net positive benefits for countries of origin.<sup>4</sup>

One of the biggest stumbling blocks to the realisation of the 'triple-win' and benefits of the 'nexus' is the reams of historical and contemporary evidence of the exploitative conditions experienced by low-wage migrant workers.<sup>5</sup> Migrant workers are often excluded from labour laws that protect citizen workers and immigration conditions routinely restrict them to employment in particular industries, place limitations on free choice of employer, and prohibit access to non-contributory social security and other employment benefits. Even in countries like Australia where migrant workers have the same labour rights as citizens, these types of visa restrictions reduce migrant workers' access to these rights.<sup>6</sup> Differential laws and visa restrictions also violate fundamental principles articulated in international labour rights standards, including the right to non-discrimination and equality of treatment for all workers engaged in the same employment.<sup>7</sup>

Over the same period that 'triple win' and 'nexus' were being eagerly embraced by the global policy community, attempts to embed a system for the governance of migration and the protection of the human rights of migrant workers within the United Nations failed to take hold. In response to ongoing resistance by powerful countries of destination in 2007 Kofi Annan (the former UN Secretary-General) supported an alternative to a UN governance of migration: the Global Forum on Migration and Development ('the GFMD'). This is an informal and non-binding state-led and controlled consultative process that is held annually. It could be argued that the GFMD achieved its goal of bringing states to the table to discuss migration and thus laid the groundwork for the 2018 United Nations Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration ('the GCM') – the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement focused on international cooperation in the field of migration – to be negotiated and agreed. However, the GCM is an

explicitly non-binding agreement, that provides a 'menu of options for States from which they can select policy options.'<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile binding international treaties specifically dedicated to migrant worker rights such as the *International Convention on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers* (1990) and the *ILO Migration for Employment Convention* (Revised) are extremely poorly ratified by major countries of destination. Efforts to incorporate labour mobility (and related protection clauses) into World Trade Organisation or regional trade agreements failed to garner the support of powerful states.<sup>9</sup> Some regions have developed migrant worker protection systems, but these are of variable practical effect and their impact is heavily dependent on the coherence of the regional institutions.

The implications of this failure of global migration governance were starkly revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Migrant workers employed in precarious conditions suffered sudden and unexpected job losses worldwide. Many of these workers were stranded in their countries of destination without incomes and barred from the social protection support available to nationals. While some countries eased restrictions, many borders remain closed. Migrant workers who attempted to return home at land borders found themselves forced to stay in border towns or camp at crossings in conditions dangerous to health and safety.<sup>10</sup>

None of this supports an argument for halting low-wage labour migration. In a context where decent work at home is scarce and jobs limited and poorly paid, the potential benefits of this type of migration cannot be ignored. This explains why hundreds of thousands of migrant workers embark on migration journeys with the knowledge that exploitation, rather than economic opportunity, is a distinct possibility. However, the 'migration-development nexus' and 'triple win' discourses shift attention away from structural causes of poverty and global inequality, and from the reality of the exploitative, often life-threatening, employment conditions experienced by many of the world's low-wage migrant workers. Development policies based on these discourses render invisible the hardship associated with years and even decades long separation experienced by families and communities. Perhaps most troublingly, these

discourses position workers from countries of origin as the lucky recipients of migration opportunities while downplaying the reality that, in the absence of binding systems of migration governance and accountability of stakeholders, labour migration has become a cash cow for countries of origin and takes place on terms dictated by countries of destination. These discourses need to be urgently revised to acknowledge that the long-term benefits of low-wage labour migration for migrant workers, their families and their communities, can only be realised if the human and labour rights of workers are recognised, codified and enforced at home and abroad.

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