

the first thing we offer is respect



# iNK

indigo news & knowledge



DECEMBER 2020

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COVER IMAGE: Opening ceremony of  High School in Behsud, Afghanistan

# from us to you

Each year, from 25 November to Human Rights Day on 10 December, the 16 Days of Activism campaign unites people around the world in calling for action to stop violence against women. At this time – and through the year – we stand with organisations and individuals around the world raising awareness about the high rates and devastating impacts of gender-based violence, challenging discrimination and calling for better laws and more services to support women and children facing violence in their lives.

To mark 16 Days of Activism, we want to honour and congratulate our partner in Bougainville, the Hako Women's Collective, who opened their new and expanded safe house on 14 November this year. Hako have reported that, since the pandemic began, they are seeing increasing numbers of women seeking help from their safe house. We are excited to have just signed our first three-year agreement with Hako to fund staffing and operating costs for the expanded service, so that it can be open 24/7 for women and children escaping family and sexual violence. The Hako women are a major force for change in their community and we look forward to continuing to work with you to get behind their life-changing work.

In this edition of indigo iNK we introduce Winny Rangira, Club Rafiki's first Youth Empowerment and Employment Officer who is leading a new plank of Club Rafiki's work focused on supporting young people into employment. We also share stories that demonstrate just how much our partners are achieving against the odds of this difficult year - from the ever resourceful women of PEKKA NTT in Indonesia and from our education partnerships in Afghanistan.

This year has undoubtedly been a challenging one for our partners overseas as well as for our supporters and team in Australia. As we head into the festive season, we want to say thank you for your support in 2020. You have rallied to help sustain our community partnerships in an extraordinary way. Looking to 2021 and beyond we are enthusiastically planning for some new partnerships in the Asia Pacific. We hope you have a safe and relaxing end of year with friends and loved ones.

*Jemma and Lyla*



# introducing Winny Rangira

Club Rafiki's Youth Empowerment and Employment Officer



CLUB RAFIKI OFFERS YOUNG PEOPLE ACCESS TO COMPUTERS AND INTERNET FOR TRAINING, HOMEWORK AND TO SUPPORT THEIR JOB READINESS PROGRAM, LED BY WINNY

*By Alice Roughley, Rwanda Partnership Coordinator*

It was a lucky day in January 2019 when Winny Rangira came to Club Rafiki on a 12-month internship from the Rwandan Ministry of Youth. With a university degree in international relations, intern experience at Rwanda's National Institute of Statistics, training in labour market assessment and a passion for youth empowerment, Winny was a natural fit for Club Rafiki. She quickly became an asset, driving a new area of focus for Club Rafiki – training young people in computer literacy and job-seeking skills.

With Winny's internship coming to an end at the start of 2020, Club Rafiki feared they would lose this dynamo. They worked with indigo to secure funding for a new role, a Youth Empowerment and Employment Officer, which Winny took on with gusto.

## **skyrocketing youth unemployment**

Club Rafiki's focus on youth employment has turned out to be timely with Covid-19 adding to what was already a crisis in youth unemployment. A report released by the Rwandan Institute of

Statistics found that unemployment increased from 13.1% in February 2020 to 22.1% in May 2020.

Winny works with young people and local youth employment agencies to provide information about job opportunities, employment services, national and international scholarship and internship opportunities. Winny also supports young people to gain job-readiness skills – editing resumes, navigating online application forms, preparing for interviews, running career guidance sessions and providing training on starting or reinforcing a business. Club Rafiki provides free internet and access to computers to search for job announcements and prepare applications.

During the lockdown, Club Rafiki acted quickly to shift job seeker services online to reach young people who would normally use the centre. More than 1300 young people stayed engaged with Club Rafiki through the job desk, WhatsApp group, Facebook, Instagram, phone calls and SMS.

With the Centre now reopen, albeit with social distancing, Club Rafiki's ICT lab continues to

be a hub. Over the 12 months to July 2020, more than 4,000 young people used the ICT lab including participating in computer and social media training, as well as printing, scanning and technical assistance.

### **'educating a female is educating a nation'**

Empowerment of girls and young women is integral to Winny's work. Embracing the sentiment of Rwanda's President, Paul Kagame, that "Educating a female is educating a nation", Club Rafiki's vision is to empower girls, to build financial and emotional independence and to transform community attitudes.

The Covid-19 lock down presented challenges for many girls and young women who had been involved in Winny's programs. As they returned to the centre when restrictions were eased, many girls had unplanned pregnancies and were concerned about an uncertain future. Twenty-year-old Nadia summed up the difficulties girls faced:

*I experienced misfortune caused by the pandemic ... my studies and my social life. Before the outbreak, girls always advise each other on sexual reproductive health and rights.... but from the time Covid-19 erupted those kinds of opportunity was suppress and as a result we start to experience negative impact especially young girls who are exposed to undesirable temptation caused by the pandemic and consequently some end up making wrong choices because of poverty etc. Teenagers pregnancy among families and gender-based violence became common things in community, sexual and physical abuse increased, emotional abuse became familiar to many, alongside an increase in numbers of child labour and many families experienced a big relapse of income.*

During the lockdown, Club Rafiki was a lifeline especially for those with IT access. Through Club Rafiki and Winny's work, a number of these girls were supported, referred to appropriate services and reminded that they should hold fast to their

dream for their future, free from stigma and vulnerability.

### **the power of meeting role models**

For the young people Winny works with, meeting someone who has achieved in their chosen field can be powerful. This year, Winny arranged for Juan Nsabiye, a 25 year old fashion designer, stylist and blogger, to come to the centre to meet with the aspiring fashion students and share his journey.

She also arranged for Sherrie Silver, an international choreographer, dancer and actress, to spend time with students of the Urban Dance School. Silver taught a range of dance styles and encouraged the students to dream big and keep up their hard work.

### **impact and future plans**

During the 2019-2020 year, 428 young people were trained in job-readiness and entrepreneurship, 70% submitted online job applications, 2% completed online courses and 9% received interview preparation training. 60 young people were trained to prepare an on-line job application, six young people have secured permanent jobs and five women achieved professional internships in public institutions.

Winny says the rewards of her work come in the form of seeing young people clarify their goals, develop their skills and of course, attain a qualification or a role. In the coming year, Winny is working to increase the number of girls in the program, run communication training to support job applications and organise more events at the Club, in schools and in the community.

**"Before I came here, I never thought I could learn so many things. I have learned so much and gained so much to share with my fellow girls during this period at home, I am going to increase my confidence. I want other girls to have the same opportunity as me."**



# a spotlight on the Jirghai and Behsud schools project

Afghanistan



A YOUNG STUDENT SPEAKS TO MARK THE OPENING OF [REDACTED] HIGH SCHOOL.

By Ali Reza Yunespour, Partnership Coordinator

## positive results for graduating students

The Kankor exams in Afghanistan, which are the equivalent of Australia's year 12 exams, took place in Afghanistan in June and August this year. Across the country, a reduced number of students sat the exams due to the pandemic. In Ghazni and Maidan Wardak Provinces, where indigo foundation has supported a network of 22 schools and teachers over the past 17 years, the smaller number of students sitting the exam reflected the national trend.

When compared to the nation-wide rates, we are excited to share that our partner high schools in Ghazni and Maidan Wardak Province had both a higher percentage of girls sitting the exams and

a higher percentage of students accepted into state-funded higher education institutions.

For example, 229 students, including 72 girls, graduated from 14 high schools that indigo foundation has supported in the Borjegai and Jirghai communities of Ghazni Province and Behsud community of Maidan Wardak Province in the past 17 years.

According to Afghanistan's higher education law, school graduates have the right to participate three times in the national admission exams (known as Kankor). This year, 140 students, including 52 girls (around 35%), from indigo-supported high schools participated in the Kankor exams.

Around 85 percent of students from our partner high schools were offered courses in state-funded



university and non-university higher education institutions. Of this, around 70 percent of the Kankor participants were accepted into public universities and a further 15 percent in diploma-granting higher education institutions. The majority of the other 15 percent have been found eligible to enrol in private higher education institutions.

Nationally, 173,432 students, or around 70 percent of all school graduates, participated in the Kankor exams across the country this year. Among them were 22,220 girls, or around 12 percent of the total. Around half of these Kankor participants were accepted in the state-funded higher education institutions, including around a quarter in public universities.

In the past two decades, the higher education landscape has changed rapidly in Afghanistan. The number of public higher education institutions has grown from seven in 2002 to 38 institutions in 2019 and the number of private higher education institutions has increased from zero in 2005 to 128 in 2019. Since 2018, more than half tertiary students were enrolled in the private higher education institutions.

Nevertheless, the growing insecurity and poverty, as well as male dominated socio-cultural norms, have undermined equitable access

to higher education in Afghanistan. Female students made just over a quarter of the total 424,621 students who were enrolled in the higher education sector in 2019. The majority of these girls are from the urban centres such as Kabul, Herat and Balkh and more secure provinces and districts of the country.

### **positive results for graduating students**

Over the past six months, our partners were forced to suspend school building works because they could not transport building materials into villages due to the pandemic. Now our partners are slowly resuming works – their first priority being to establish a water well at a school that ensures clean water for around 250 students and school personnel and allows use by the wider community during religious and cultural community gatherings.

Despite a difficult six months, one of our partner schools, [redacted] High School, held a formal opening ceremony on 20 September for their new school building. This followed the decision by the Afghan Ministry of Education to allow public schools to reopen for grades 11 and 12 and private schools (mostly based in urban centres) to reopen for all primary and secondary students.

ONE OF THE COMPLETED CLASSROOM AT [redacted] SCHOOL





STUDENTS GATHER FOR THE OPENING CEREMONY OF [REDACTED] HIGH SCHOOL, BEHSUD

The [REDACTED] school building was completed and the school opened in late 2019. However, the ceremony to mark the opening was delayed due to the onset of winter and Covid-19 causing the closure of schools across Afghanistan.

[REDACTED] High School building is the fifth school building indigo foundation has worked on with the Behsud community in the past four years. Our Kabul-based Financial Trustee attended the opening, as did the Director of Behsud District's education department, who delivered a message on behalf of the Afghan government acknowledging the joint program by the Jirghai and Behsud Shura and indigo foundation.

Amidst security, economic and pandemic challenges in Afghanistan, our support for rural education has maintained community harmony and resilience in these rural communities and helped young children and their families remain hopeful for a secure and peaceful future in Afghanistan.

### **an uncertain political climate**

The Afghan Government and the Taliban representatives commenced the intra-Afghan 'peace talks' in Doha, Qatar, in September. This followed the initial agreement between the United States and the Taliban on 29 February this year and the release of prisoners from both sides in the past few months.

Most Afghans (over 80%) and the international community have supported this process and there are hopes that the intra-Afghan negotiations end the 40-year conflict and result in an enduring peace in Afghanistan. However, in the past months, the negotiators have struggled to find common frameworks and negotiation principles ahead of agreeing mutual agenda items. The Taliban has demanded that negotiations should happen based on the Hanafi jurisprudence of Sunni Islam (effectively rejecting the constitutionally-accepted religious right of minority groups such as Shi'a Muslims) and the initial US-Taliban agreement. At the same time, violence has continued in most provinces of the country and has intensified in some districts since the start of intra-Afghan negotiations. Tragically, there have been two incidents in Kabul targeting young students, including students from Borjegai and Jirghai families.

Our partner communities and the majority in Afghanistan are deeply worried about political uncertainties and ongoing violence in their country. In such a challenging environment, we continue to work on a weekly basis with our partners to restart building works and support students get back to school after the interruption of Covid-19.



# the women of PEKKA NTT

Building resilience in a tough year, Indonesia



LEFT: MAKING BULK COMPOST FOR THE GARDENS AND TO SELL AT THE MARKETS.

RIGHT: PEKKA NTT HAVE STARTED HYDROPONIC GROWING FOR THE COOPERATIVE GARDENS, WITH GREAT RESULTS'

*By Jacqui Fidler, Partnership Coordinator*

It has been a challenging year for the women of PEKKA NTT on the islands of Adonara and Lembata in East Flores, Indonesia. In the face of Covid-19 and government restrictions, the women of PEKKA NTT have proven themselves to be a powerful and resilient collective of women with strength in spades. Covid-19 forced PEKKA centres to temporarily close but we are pleased to share that they are now almost back to full operating capacity.

The Indonesian Bureau of Statistics estimates that out of 65 million households, approximately 9 million are headed by women. This includes women who have been widowed, abandoned and divorced, or who are primary carers of family members. Women-headed households are too often seen as invisible; the Marriage Law of 1974 that dictates that only a man can be legally considered a head of household. Female heads of households face multidimensional social and economic problems, not only related to the fulfilment of basic needs but also to their social status in the community.

PEKKA has worked hard over for two decades to transform the lives of women heads of households. The ultimate goal is to develop a

grassroots movement of women-led economic cooperatives that empower women individually and collectively to transform their lives and their communities, and challenge the structures that breed discrimination and poverty.

## **a focus on food security**

Over the past three years, indigo foundation has partnered with PEKKA NTT to establish three women-run cooperative food gardens, which support a network of over 70 women and their dependents. While women were largely excluded from the gardens at the height of the lockdown, the gardens continuing producing and PEKKA NTT was able to deliver produce to women in the community, and with the income generated from selling the excess, PEKKA NTT purchased and distributed face masks.

Purchasing farming equipment has also been a priority of PEKKA over the past 12 months with the aim of improving productivity and reducing the amount of time women spend on manual labour. PEKKA NTT now have a coffee and coconut milling machine which shreds and grinds, as well as a milling machine for corn. They have also purchased two mulchers and infrastructure to establish three new hydroponic systems – one



each for the gardens at Adonara, Lembata and Lanantuka.

Following an organic food growing workshop in 2018 that brought together our three Indonesian partners, PEKKA NTT have focused on improving their facilities to make organic compost and fertiliser to improve the harvests from the gardens. The women are now bulk producing compost, which they use on their own gardens and sell at the local markets.

The gardens produce a range of fruits and vegetables – and, now that restrictions have eased again in Indonesia, there are over 70 women visiting and working in the gardens on a daily basis. The fruit and vegetables they harvest are shared between the women at the PEKKA Centres, as well as being sold at the local markets and directly from the gardens.

PEKKA have also established a reading area in the garden at their Adonara centre, where children have access to books about agriculture and gardening, and the chance to learn about sustainable farming.

### PEKKA's theory of change

PEKKA NTT, supported by the National PEKKA body led by renowned feminist Ibu Nani Zulminarni, has a clear 'theory of change' that underpins the work they do to transform lives and communities.

PEKKA's theory of change identifies the importance of changing community and individual values, attitudes and beliefs that perpetrate inequality, discrimination and poverty, along with changes in policies and power structures that negatively impact women-headed households. The PEKKA community works to change formal structures (visible power), values and beliefs (invisible power), and informal structures (hidden power), by promoting access and control over resources and decision-making (change in policy), and internalisation of new values (attitude change). As such, it seeks to influence economic, political, juridical, social and cultural dimensions of power.

In Adonara and Lembata Islands and in East Flores, PEKKA NTT has built and supports a network of local collectives with an active base of over 2,600 women heads of household. This

structure empowers women individually and collectively to achieve positive change and challenge typical stereotypes and beliefs found in remote and marginalised communities in Indonesia. As well as the education and food security initiatives supported by indigo, PEKKA NTT runs a range of programs, including a savings and loan initiative, training for women leaders and weaving collectives.

We are proud to be a part of supporting this creative and resilient organisation, run by and for women from female-headed households. And we are currently working closely with PEKKA NTT to sign a second three year commitment agreement so we can continue building on their remarkable achievements.

### our partnership with PEKKA NTT

The partnership focuses on empowering female heads of household through:

- **Women-run food gardens:** PEKKA NTT is on the frontline of the impacts of climate change. The partnership supports a network of women-run food gardens to overcome food shortages and provide a rare opportunity to generate income.
- **Bursaries and high school bridging courses:** Girls and young women from female-headed households are particularly vulnerable to dropping out of school and, if they do finish high school, the costs of attending university are often prohibitive. The partnership has supported women who have dropped out of school to return to complete their diplomas, and ongoing bursaries for girls and young women to access education from primary school to university.
- **Children's festival:** In 2019, PEKKA NTT organised their inaugural Children's Festival, bringing together 70 children for a day of activities to celebrate and learn about local traditions in cooking, dancing and weaving. A second festival was held soon after focusing on a neighbouring network of villages. Planning for the next Children's Festival is suspended pending Covid-19 but the women of PEKKA NTT look forward to involving children in the planning and delivery the next festival when restrictions allow.

## meet

### Afghan Women's Empowerment Centre scholar

In 2011, indigo foundation provided seed funding to 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 for educationally and financially disadvantaged Afghan women and provide capacity building opportunities for female students. Since 2011, the Centre has gone from strength to strength – initiating academic and non-academic courses on gender, peace and women's studies and becoming an active voice in campaigns and networks addressing the many life challenges that Afghan women face. The WEC has also recently been subsumed into what is now the 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.

The latest round of scholarships, supported by indigo foundation, was awarded in September after universities reopened following the lock down. The Gawharshad Scholarship Committee

selects students on the basis of financial need and school scores, as well as home visits and interviews with family. *Ms. S. S.* is one of the five most recent scholarship recipients.

The WEC writes

*"Ms. S. S. comes from a poor family. She has two sisters who are school students and one brother who is jobless. Her mother is a guard in Gawharshad University and her father is sick. Her mother's income is not for all expense of their life. [Ms. S. S. was already on a 50% scholarship but] ... because Ms. S. S.'s family has been faced more difficulties since spread of Covid-19 in Afghanistan and now her family is not able to pay the half of Ms. S. S.'s tuition fee ... Considering all her problems in the current situation the scholarship committee decided 50% more scholarship to her. Ms. S. S. studies economy and she is in her fourth semester."*

THE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT CENTRE'S MOST RECENTLY AWARDED SCHOLARSHIP HOLDERS, S

ON THE LEFT





# schools supplies reach over 2000 students in Budaka

Uganda



OUR PARTNERS IN BUDAKA, UGANDA WORKED ALONGSIDE TEACHERS TO DISTRIBUTE SCHOOL SUPPLIES TO STUDENTS WHILE CLASSROOM TEACHING WAS SUSPENDED DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

In the Budaka region of Uganda, the government closed schools in March and imposed a strict lockdown to manage the pandemic. With classroom teaching suspended in, students began studying at home. This brought an additional set of challenges for the young people that our five partners work with who are already disadvantaged and facing stigma

due to HIV/AIDS. Despite the challenges of Covid-19, our community partners, working with a group of determined teachers, distributed school supplies (pencils, pens and exercise books) to over 2000 students impacted by HIV.

After ten years of working with our partners in Budaka, Uganda, we are in a process of exiting that began in July 2019. As part of this exit we are providing resources to our community partners to strengthen their internal operations and sustainability. In keeping with our community-led approach, the partners have determined how to utilise these funds. Nearly all have chosen to purchase equipment which they can hire out, others are considering leadership training for their volunteers or the purchase of sewing machines to provide work and generate some income.



#### INGREDIENTS

FISH (500 GRAM), TOMATO (1/4 KG), ONION (1/4 KG), GARLIC (20 CLOVES), GINGER (ONE FINGER SIZE), VEGETABLE OIL (50 ML), CHILLI POWDER (2 TABLESPOON), CORIANDER POWDER (4 TABLESPOON), TURMERIC POWDER (1 TEASPOON), CURRY LEAVES (20 LEAVES), CORIANDER LEAVES (OPTIONAL), TAMARIND (50 GRAMS), GREEN CHILLY – 4 NOS, MUSTARD SEEDS (1/4 TEA SPOON), FENUGREEK (1/4 TEA SPOON)

FLAVOURS OF  
INDIGO  
PEAB, MADHURANTHAGAM (SASY)

#### METHOD

- STEP 1  
SOAK TAMARIND IN 2 CUPS OF WATER, EXTRACT THE JUICE OF IT (KEEP IT ASIDE)
- STEP 2  
CHOP ONION AND TOMATOES (SEPARATELY) SET IT ASIDE
- STEP 3  
POUR OIL INTO THE EARTHEN POT, ADD MUSTARD SEEDS AND FENUGREEK
- STEP 4  
AFTER IT SPLUTTERS, ADD ONION, CURRY LEAVES, GREEN CHILLIES AND FRY.
- STEP 5  
AFTER SOMETIME ADD CRUSHED GARLIC CLOVES AND GINGER INTO IT.
- STEP 6  
LET THE ONIONS TURN GOLDEN BROWN, ADD CHOPPED TOMATOES AND KEEP FRYING IN SIMMER
- STEP 7  
ADD CHILLI POWDER, CORIANDER POWDER, TURMERIC POWDER AND SALT TO TASTE & CLOSE THE LID
- STEP 8  
ENSURE THE RAW SMELL HAS GONE, ADD THE TAMARIND WATER INTO IT AND CLOSE THE LID FOR SOME TIME (LEAVE IT IN MEDIUM FLAME FOR 5 MINS)
- STEP 9  
OPEN THE LID AND ADD THE CLEANED FISH INTO THE CURRY
- STEP 10  
CLOSE THE LID AND AFTER 5 MINS, SWITCH IT OFF

TASTE THE DELICIOUS INDIAN FISH CURRY

With Covid-19 limiting our usual mix of events big and small, our team of creative and talented volunteer fundraisers came up with a new idea, flavours of indigo, which we launched in November. We invited supporters to host an event and come together in houses and restaurants and parks around the country to help us celebrate indigo foundation's 20th anniversary. Many thanks to our community of supporters around Australia who hosted picnics and dinners and lunches of varying sizes.

And thanks of course to our community partners in India, Indonesia and Afghanistan who got behind the event and shared recipes and cooking tutorials. If you didn't get a chance to host or attend an event, you can still jump in the kitchen and try them out. Like this delicious meal - a South Indian fish curry prepared by Ms Devi, a tutor in one of the village education centres run by our partner in Tamil Nadu, the Program for Education and Awareness Building (PEAB). Enjoy!

# covid-19: in their words

Rwanda

Club Rafiki has been supporting young people to record their experiences of Covid-19 and government lockdown. Led by two young people involved in the English Corner Workshops, Club Rafiki have produced a booklet sharing 13 short stories from people aged 15 – 20 years. Here are just two of the stories.

## 'Home, a Safe Place'

by Dinah, aged 15

In 2020 March, the Ministry of Education ordered all schools to shut down until unknown time. The announcement was published when I was at school in another district far from home. It was my first time to hear about pandemic disease. Parents had to go pick their children who have been studying in boarding school meanwhile public and private transports offered assistance to transport students across the country.

My dad came to pick me at school on Sunday; he brought for me some protective masks and gloves to wear. Everything was quite dreadful when I reached home. I couldn't grasp the idea that everything was going to be closed in order to prevent the spread of corona virus. I worried how people will survive without working because some people have to work regularly to support their family.

Nowadays I am at home, I can't even visit my friends or family. However, I am able to spend more time with my parents and siblings because we are all at home. I am learning many things from my siblings, I also revising my lessons. I thank Club Rafiki for the safety information they provide to me about Covid-19.

I would like to acknowledge the effort of doctors who take the risk and try their best to save lives of many people who were exposed to covid19. I thank also Club Rafiki as my inspiring place.



## indigo foundation's Larapinta Trek for Change

Join indigo foundation on the iconic Larapinta trail and trek to support powerful grassroots change for women and girls

Looking for adventure with a purpose in 2021? **Please join indigo foundation to walk the iconic Larapinta trail from 29 August - 4 September 2021** and, in the process, raise funds to support the rights, safety and health of women and children in our partnerships in Bougainville, India and Indonesia.

This is the first time we've organised a trip like this and we are really excited about the opportunity to bring a group of supporters together for the adventure of a lifetime in the rugged beauty of the West MacDonnell Ranges on Arrernte Country. The Larapinta Trail is one of the most popular walks in Australia. Known for its breathtaking landscape and mountainous terrain, the trail's rocky outcrops form a striking backdrop to scenic paths that cut passages through awe-inspiring gorges and expansive plains. A National Geographic favourite, this world-renowned trek is a must on any hiking enthusiasts bucket list.

Numbers are limited on the trek. We will be launching more details and a call for registrations with Soulful Concepts in January. In the meantime, please save the date, gather your best adventuring partners and email [info@indigofoundation.org](mailto:info@indigofoundation.org) if you have questions or would like to register your interest early.



# think piece: 20 years of learning together

**This year marks indigo foundation's 20th anniversary. We are in the final stages of a book bringing together some of the stories from our partners overseas and supporters in Australia. As well as celebrating powerful stories of change and honouring key people, we wanted to make sure the book captured some of the challenges and learnings along the way – this article is an edited extract from the book.**

Over the past 20 years, indigo foundation and our local partners have faced challenges, learned together and made mistakes. Community development is not a direct and predictable path from A to B – it is complex, takes time and is different in each community. And we know that our model comes with risks: we often work in remote communities, supporting small and newly establishing organisations and provide flexibility for our partners to direct funding across their programs. We have always tried to be honest with our supporters, not just about the wins but also about the difficulties and debates we've had along the way. Here are just a few of those challenges and questions that we and our partners have grappled with.

## **community ownership does not always come in the form of an NGO**

Community ownership is one of our guiding principles and a core tenet that we look for in our partnerships. An organisation that is formally constituted with a governing body and membership structure, for example, is one marker of community ownership. But over time we have learned that our partners can come in many shapes. The important ingredient is meaningful community participation, and a high level of transparency and accountability. Some of our most successful partnerships have been with local groups that use traditional forms of

organising. In Afghanistan, for example, we partner with Shuras – a traditional grouping of religious and community leaders, school teachers and principals, while in Indonesia, Nefo Ko'u is a collective of local farming families.

## **unplanned outcomes are sometimes the most powerful**

From our earliest days, we learned the importance of making room in our planning and evaluation work for unexpected outcomes. In Rote in Indonesia, for example, one of the first things our partner Lua Lemba asked of us was to fund a mass wedding for locals. Promoting marriages was not what we had expected to do, not was it immediately clear why this was the community priority. We put trust in our partner and ultimately learned that formalising marriage was key to enfranchising women who, once issued with a marriage certificate, were able access to rights and government services. In Borjagai in Afghanistan, we entered a schools-based partnership assuming the outcomes would be about education. After a few years we learned from the community that the work was as much about peacebuilding as school-building, bringing together religious elders and community leaders across villages.

## **over reliance on one or two individuals is risky**

One of the things that sets indigo foundation apart is our willingness to work with emerging organisations and to act as a catalyst to get new ideas off the ground. This often means that communication with our partner, particularly in the early stages, can be highly dependent on one or two local people. This can be a strength, with committed champions stepping forward, but there is also a weakness in overreliance on one person. We are vigilant about managing this risk but it can be difficult to shift this dynamic, especially in remote communities where there are poor communications and little English. Learning from our experience in South Sudan and the highlands of West Timor in Indonesia, we actively work to support our partner organisations to have strong succession plans and, where appropriate, we have established an additional role of 'in-country Liaison Officer' to broaden our connection points in the community.

## **exits should be a part of the conversation from the start**

Sustainability is one of our four guiding principles, and we actively work with partners to think about exits from the early stages. The nature of our model, however – committing to long-term relationships and being flexible in supporting activities that change over time with community needs – can make the exit point more grey. For example, our support for the Women's Empowerment Centre (WEC) in Afghanistan had a clear exit point from the start – to be a catalyst to get a new organisation off the ground and support it to a point that it was able to attract funding from larger donors. With our partner Lua Lemba however, the exit point was less clear. It is only this year, after 20 years, that we are exiting. Over that time, our support has shifted through

many phases, including bursaries, art in schools, cultural strengthening and food security. We are exiting the partnership through a respectful, planned transition, leaving behind a strong community-based organisation to continue its work.

## **holding on to our essence as we grow**

Over 20 years we have grown from a group of friends committed to community-led development, to an organisation that works across eight countries. As our community partnerships have grown in number, so too has the size of our team in Australia. We strive to remain lean and volunteer-based but there have been growing pains along the way. With an expanding team spread throughout Australia, how do we ensure our staff and volunteers retain a connection to each other and to our principles? How do we move beyond personal connections to make sure we are recruiting transparently for a diverse team? How do we comply with best practice standards while still remaining flexible, creative and open to risks? Through a series of reviews, and ongoing questioning, we deal with these issues as they arise, for example, ensuring transparent recruitment and strengthening our complaints mechanisms. We recognise that this will be an ongoing tension to manage into the future.

**In the next 20 years, indigo foundation will continue to question, learn and adapt. It is only by honest reflection on our processes and our impact that we can build on what is working, strengthen our approach and increase our impact.**



We are excited to welcome **Lyndene Wan** as our inaugural Bougainville Partnership Coordinator. Lyn comes to us with a fantastic depth of experience in community development, gender justice and social inclusion. She has worked extensively in the Pacific, including in Bougainville, most recently as a consultant and as the Pacific Regional Manager for Plan International Australia. Previous to that, Lyn's experience includes working in Timor-Leste and Afghanistan and in Australia in the refugee rights sector. She's passionate about gender equity and building the power of grassroots organisations and is excited about starting work with our partners at the Hako Women's Collective.

While on Bougainville, we send congratulations to our Bougainville Support Officer **Marilyn Havini** who was awarded an AM in the 2020 Queen's Birthday Honours. Marilyn is a founding member of the HAKO Women's Collective, a long-term activist for peace, justice and women's rights in Bougainville and a renowned artist. Marilyn worked alongside her late husband and political leader **Moses Havini** and the community to rebuild peace and a just and safe society during and after the Bougainville crisis. This is much deserved recognition for Marilyn's passion and commitment to improving the lives of the people of Bougainville.

We also want to send many thanks to **Gwyneth Graham** and **Shirley Randell AO** who are both stepping down after long and productive terms on the indigo foundation board. Their commitment to gender justice, our guiding principles and building strong and sustainable governance has left indigo foundation a better organisation. We are advertising for two new board members and look forward to introducing them to you in the next indigo iNK.

## Meet Ian, long-term supporter and passionate recycler!

Just over two years ago at a Canberra 'friends of indigo' event Ian Robinson shared his idea to recycle plastics, bottles and cans and donate the

proceeds to indigo foundation. The indefatigable Ian has been quietly and enthusiastically collecting, recycling, collecting the cash and donating since then.

And he has cleverly drawn others into this initiative. They drop the items to be recycled to his Yarralumla home and Ian takes them to the recycling depot every month or so. In early December he hit a new high of \$75.80 on one such delivery. At 10 cents an item that's a mighty collection of empties!

Ian has been a supporter of indigo foundation for many years and is part of the Bilberry Bluestocking cycling group that lead an annual long-distance bike ride, raising vital funds over the years for indigo in support of women and girls.

Ian's recycling initiative is a win-win – great for the environment and a fantastic way to raise funds for indigo. If you are in Canberra and would like to be part of this, do what others do – drop your recyclables to Ian and know that small contributions go a long way in the communities we support.

With friends like Ian, indigo foundation can continue to support our community partners achieve lasting changes in their communities. Thank You!

If you are in Canberra and interested in supporting Ian's initiative, send an email to [info@indigofoundation.org](mailto:info@indigofoundation.org) and we'll put you in contact with Ian.



## 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.



### DONATE ONLINE

Follow the links on our website  
[www.indigofoundation.org](http://www.indigofoundation.org)



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