

the first thing we offer is respect



# iNK

indigo news & knowledge



DECEMBER 2021

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COVER IMAGE: Juventude Ba Dezenvolvimentu Nasionál (JDN) - Young People for National Development - held a weekend workshop with the Disability Association of Timor Leste where they discussed sexual harassment and gender equality with young people living with disabilities.

# from us to you

As we head into the festive season, we take a moment to reflect on what has been a challenging year for our local partners, as well as for our supporters and team in Australia. The impact of the pandemic on livelihoods, health and the rights of women and girls continues to play out. We want to thank you for your support in 2021. You have rallied in an extraordinary way to help to sustain our local partners and give them the backing they need to face their challenges and respond to acute needs in their communities.

In this indigo iNK, we include a piece by Ali Reza Yunespour on the status and prospects for girls' education in Afghanistan. We at indigo foundation were profoundly saddened by the fall of the Afghan government on 15 August and we stand in solidarity with our local partners overseas and the Afghan diaspora in Australia. We continue to work closely with our local partners and friends in Afghanistan to understand the immediate and longer-term impacts of the Taliban taking power. Our first priority has been for the safety and security of our local partners and the communities we work with. Much is still unknown but we hope to resume education works in 2022 and in the meantime we continue to work with our partners on the ground and offer practical support in what is a looming humanitarian crisis as the country heads into winter. Over more than two decades our local partners have shown strong resilience and resolve for education and they are determined to continue to educate their children.

We are excited to share two new areas of work. First, we introduce you to our newest partner in Timor-Leste – the youth led organisation JDN, organising in their local community to confront sexual harassment and make public spaces and public transport safe and inclusive. And, closer to home, we introduce you to our new collaboration with Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia, supporting a small network of 'indigo refugee friends' groups that will build relationships with and mentor newly arrived refugee families. We look forward to seeing how these new partnerships develop in 2022.

Again, thank you for your support. We wish you a relaxing and joyful end of year with friends and loved ones.

*Jemma and Lyla*

# Introducing our newest partner, JDN

Timor Leste

By Jemma Bailey, Executive Director

In August, the indigo foundation board approved an important new partnership in Timor-Leste, working with a local organisation called Juventude Ba Dezenvolvimentu Nasionál (JDN) - Young People for National Development. JDN is a dynamic youth-led, community-based organisation. It was established in 2014 when a group of young people aged 17 – 24 years came together to discuss the issues impacting their lives. JDN engages young people in discussion and action on those issues, as well as building the leadership capacity of young people so they can contribute to nation-building in Timor-Leste. We'll be partnering with JDN to help them take action on one of their key priorities – working with young women and men to stand up to sexual harassment and discrimination against women and girls at home, in public spaces and on public transport.

## Meet JDN, a thriving youth-led organisation

JDN has an active membership of over 200 young people and their programs are identified, designed and delivered by young people. They work across a number of issues, including education programs for women on nutrition, vaccine promotion and public health measures to prevent Covid-19, small income generating activities and sexual and reproductive health. JDN writes, *"Everything we do aims to build the skills, knowledge and capacity of JDN members and other young people who participate in projects organised by JDN."*

Timor-Leste has one of the youngest populations in the Asia Pacific and building a strong youth voice is vital to JDN. Despite the country's impressive progress since gaining independence in 2002, Timor-Leste remains one of the most economically disadvantaged countries in South East Asia. According to the most recent census in 2015, 60.7% of the total population is under 25 years.<sup>1</sup> Youth unemployment and disadvantage is a critical issue and there are limited industries in which young people can find employment. The

economic outlook for young people has been challenged further this year by the pandemic and Cyclone Seroja, which caused widespread landslides in April.

One of the key concerns raised by the young people that JDN works with is gender-based violence and harassment. According to the Nabilan Health and Life Experiences Study into intimate partner violence in Timor-Leste, 59% of women aged 15 – 49 who have been in a relationship reported having experienced some form of physical or sexual partner violence.<sup>2</sup> JDN writes, *"In Timor-Leste young women are treated unequally and often discriminated against by men. There are many issues facing young women and sexual harassment is one of those. Here in Timor, people regard sexual harassment as a normal behaviour but in fact it is wrong and it is a disrespectful behaviour towards women and it happens everywhere. As a youth organisation, we want to help and encourage young women to recognise that this issue is a bad action that can affect the woman's rights and life as well."*

Over the past 12 months, JDN has collected case studies from 80 young women to understand the different ways in which they experience violence and harassment, in the home, in public and particularly on Timor Leste's common public transport modes - microlet and taxi.

## Building collectives of young people to make public spaces safer and more inclusive

*"We want women to live in a fairer society where there is no discrimination against them. We also want young women to be safe when using public transportation and walking on the street. We believe that young women can become activists on this issue in Timor-Leste"* - JDN

JDN have put forward a three-year plan to build a movement of young women and men who will take action to make public spaces safer, challenge gender stereotypes and reduce the incidence of sexual harassment. They want to support young women to understand their rights



### Meet Anália, JDN's Sexual Harassment Project Coordinator.

*"Hello, my name is Anália. I'm currently working as a coordinator for our Sexual Harassment project in JDN and I'm a tour guide for the Women of Timor-Leste Tour. Through JDN I want to work with many young women in preventing sexual harassment by doing workshops and giving them courage to say no to sexual harassment in our society. JDN has helped me gain more experience and build my leadership skills to increase my opportunities in the future. I hope my contribution in JDN especially in preventing sexual harassment, will help other young women in Timor-Leste to live in a fairer society."*

and develop skills and confidence to stand up to sexual harassment and discrimination. And they want to advocate for systems change, stronger regulation and training of drivers in public transport. JDN will do this through "education, life skills training, responsive actions and advocacy". In the first year this includes:

- Running 10 workshops and setting up support structures including online chat rooms, WhatsApp groups and face-to-face gatherings to share experiences and take action.
- Establishing a network of Young Women's Advocacy Groups to push for the implementation of a Code of Conduct for microlet drivers.
- Engaging young men as advocates for change.

They expect that running this project in and of itself will build the skills and leadership of the young people involved. We are working with JDN to ensure they have baseline data to track their impact.

Indigo Foundation knows that development and attitude change is never a straight-forward path – it is often messy with diversions and challenges. We commit to our local partners for the long-term, as they face inevitable setbacks and celebrate wins. Our goal is to build capacity to a point they no longer need our support. In line with our usual approach to new partnerships, we've made an initial commitment to JDN for 12 months to test the relationship and build trust. We hope that this work with JDN will develop into a longer-term partnership.

### Looking to the future

In some ways, for us at Indigo Foundation, partnering with JDN feels like we are coming full circle. One of our earliest partnerships from 2002 – 2005 was in Timor-Leste, with a women-led organisation, Centro Feto, that worked in Oecusse enclave to support a refuge and counselling service for women experiencing domestic violence. We are thrilled to be embarking on this new partnership with JDN and are excited about what lies ahead.

*We thank and acknowledge the Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters and Jude Finch, a member of our Development Committee, who introduced us to JDN.*

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1. Timor-Leste Population and Housing Census 2015, Population Distribution by Administrative Area – Volume 2 Population by Age and Sex. Dili, Timor-Leste.
  2. The Asia Foundation (2016) The Nabilan Health and Life Experiences Study. Fact Sheet 1. Women's Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence in Timor-Leste <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/eng-FS1-2016-05-02.pdf>

### Human Rights Day appeal

10 December is Human Rights Day. We are raising funds to support JDN's work in Timor-Leste, as well as the vital work that the Hako Women's Collective are doing to address family and sexual violence in Bougainville. Please consider making a donation before 31 December.

More information here:  
<https://www.indigofoundation.org/hrdappeal-2021>

# The pitfalls and promises of girls' education

Afghanistan



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

*By Ali Reza Yunespour, Partnership Coordinator*

The current academic year in Afghanistan (March–November 2021) has been a challenging time for all, especially for girls' education across the country. However, girls and women have remained determined to maintain their right to education and civic participation amidst the increasing political uncertainty and worsening humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

From March until the fall of the Afghan Government in August 2021, public and private schools were officially open for girls and boys across the country, however most were closed due to the pandemic. The government had attempted to duplicate schooling online however that did not work for the majority of students, especially in rural areas, due to increasing violence and insecurity, deepening poverty and lack of access to electricity and the internet.<sup>1</sup> In addition to more than 3 million school-aged children who were not enrolled in schools, more and more enrolled students withdrew from schooling.

## **More barriers for girls' education**

The rapid fall of the Afghan Government shattered many hopes and left school-aged

children and tertiary students in complete disarray. In the initial days of taking control of Kabul, the Taliban once again asked girls and women to stay home. They were told that schools and universities are not safe for girls and women.

Under growing calls for immediate access to education for all, the Taliban interim cabinet, formed on 7 September, allowed primary and secondary schools to reopen for male students. They also allowed girls to attend primary schools in urban and rural areas. While most primary students across the country have attended their classes in October and November, including in indigo foundation's partner schools in Ghazni, Maidan Wardak and Bamyán provinces, some families have not been able to send their children to schools.

In August 2021, International Rescue Committee reported that the number of people internally displaced by conflict in Afghanistan rose by 230,000 people from June to August.<sup>2</sup> Families are among those forced to abandon their homes as we know firsthand from our partners, many of these internally displaced families have not returned to their homes and their children are still out of school. Moreover, the continued political uncertainty, reported fear of the Taliban, targeted suicide attacks and

the worsening humanitarian crisis has forced thousands to flee to neighbouring countries. According to the UNHCR, more than 48,000 Afghan nationals have sought refuge in these countries as of early November 2021.<sup>3</sup>

Public higher education institutions have remained closed for all students mostly because of lack of budget and a shortage of qualified administrative and academic staff. Private higher education institutions have been asked by the Taliban interim cabinet to hold separate classes and, if possible, even separate campuses for male and female students. Despite opening, student enrolment has significantly reduced in the past three months. Apart from resource issues and a lack of qualified female teachers to teach female students, most families have lost income to support their children, especially girls, in these universities. The majority of private higher education institutions have resumed some activities, but are struggling to pay staff salaries and attract new students.

When there is an official ban for girls to attend secondary schools and there are growing economic pressures on their families, girls and women are the first to be denied their right to education. In recent weeks, there have been disturbing reports of early forced marriages for young girls across the country.<sup>4</sup>

## Voices of hope

There are several voices of hope for girls' education in Afghanistan. The first voice, and perhaps the most important one, is the ongoing protests in Kabul, and elsewhere in the country, that are calling for the right to education for girls and the rights of women to work and engage in public debate. According to a recent Human Rights Watch report, 'Women across Afghanistan continue to protest, asking for schools to reopen and for women's right to work'.<sup>5</sup> These ongoing protests show a fundamental social change in Afghanistan, partly arising from increased education and greater connections with the rest of the world in the past two decades. Unlike the Taliban's first time in power in the 1990s, when they faced little social resistance against their education policies towards women and girls.

Voices within Afghanistan are also supported by diplomatic efforts and initiatives from outside calling for gender equity in education. On 27 October, Education Cannot Wait Director

Yasmine Sherif urged the world to support education for girls in Afghanistan, adding that 'Their education cannot wait ... Financing and funding cannot wait. And our own humanity cannot wait'.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, the young Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai is leading the virtual campaign, Stand with Afghan Girls, which has been supported to date by nearly two million signatories from around the world. It calls on the Taliban to reverse their ban on girls' education in secondary schools and looked to wealthy nations and Muslim countries to support girls' education in Afghanistan.

Amidst these political and social pressures, female students have been allowed to return to secondary schools in a few provinces of Afghanistan in recent weeks. However, these schools face acute shortages of resources and primary and secondary teachers have not received any salary in the past several months. With the continued UN and US sanctions on Taliban members and the unlikely recognition of interim cabinet in the near future, UNICEF has taken the lead to start directly providing salaries for teachers in Afghanistan.

Despite these efforts, there are still many political, financial, and socio-cultural challenges for girls' education in Afghanistan. Over the past three months, we have continued to work closely with our local partners to understand the changing situation on the ground and provide support where we can to assist our colleagues and their communities. Our first priority has been the safety and security of the people we work with. We are acutely aware that with winter coming, the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan will deepen and we remain committed to stand with our community partners as they face off these challenges.

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1. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/18/school-closures-hurt-even-more-afghanistan#>

2. <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/irc-internal-displacement-afghanistan-has-soared-73-june>

3. <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/how-restoring-20000-lost-refugee-visas-could-save-lives-at-risk-in-afghanistan/>

4. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/girls-increasingly-risk-child-marriage-afghanistan>

5. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/31/afghan-girls-education-i-dont-think-i-have-future>

6. <https://www.ipsnews.net/2021/10/education-cannot-wait-urges-urgent-action-worlds-biggest-humanitarian-crisis-afghanistan/>

# Spotlight on education outcomes in Tamil Nadu

India



IN MARCH 2021, PEAB BROUGHT TOGETHER 95 STUDENTS TO MARK INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY BY HONOURING THE CONTRIBUTION OF SAVITRI BHAI PHULE. SAVITRI BHAI PHULE WAS THE FIRST FEMALE INDIAN TEACHER IN COLONIAL INDIA. SHE STARTED THE FIRST SCHOOL FOR GIRLS AND OTHER CHILDREN FROM MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES. ON THE DAY, TUTORS AND STUDENTS DISCUSSED THE TEACHINGS AND LIFE HISTORY OF SAVITHRI BHAI PHULE AND MALE TUTORS WERE ASKED TO REFLECT ON THE CONTRIBUTION AND LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN SOCIETY. THESE CELEBRATIONS REFLECT PEAB'S ENGAGEMENT IN THE INDIA-WIDE MOVEMENT FOR DALIT HUMAN RIGHTS.

*By Susan Engel, Partnership Coordinator*

Globally, the pandemic has caused a massive disruption to education. School closures worldwide have impacted nearly 1.6 billion students, threatening to reverse decades of gains in education outcomes. Our local partners in Tamil Nadu, Mahalir Sakthi and PEAB, work primarily with Dalit and Adivasi communities and have seen how girls and historically marginalised communities are losing the most. With in-person schooling closed for much of the past 18 months our partners report that many of their students, often the first in their families to stay in school beyond primary level, are at risk of dropping out of school. They are turning to work in the informal sector to make up for lost family income.

During the extended lockdowns, our community partners have been at the forefront of keeping their students – and through outreach, their families – engaged in learning

and committed to staying in school. Mahalir Sakthi and PEAB have supported 220 students from year 4 – 12 through a network of 20 tuition centres and education programs in the slum areas of Madurai and rural villages surrounding Maduranthakam. While face to face learning was suspended, the Government of Tamil Nadu telecast educational programs. Follow up by PEAB tutors was vital to learning. Our partners shifted programs online and tutors conducted surveys to ascertain which students had smart phones – the majority did not, nor did they have computers in the home. Tutors relied heavily on WhatsApp to stay in contact and share study resources. They reached out individually to students and their families through home visits and phone calls.

It's been a difficult period and there were some students that the tutors were unable to maintain consistent contact with at the height of the lockdowns. PEAB are now running intensive



## Meet Santhanamari

Santhanamari was brought up by her mother while her father was away working. She dropped out of school in year 10 to earn an income and worked for two years rolling cigarettes by hand. At 19, she married and moved to Madurai – which is where she came in contact with Mahalir Sakthi. Seeing Santhanamari’s potential, Mahalir Sakthi Co-Director Grace offered her a position as an early-years tutor. Although Santhanamari was concerned that she had only completed year 10 schooling, Grace had confidence in her. She took up the challenge and spent eight years working as a tutor, getting great results from many of her students.

After finishing as a tutor, Mahalir Sakthi asked Santhanamari to represent them at an NGO meeting. Based on her contributions in that meeting, Santhanamari was offered a job at the Family

Planning Association of India (FPAI). With encouragement from Mahalir Sakthi, Santhanamari finished year 12 and, via correspondence, completed a degree in social work. She worked in water and sanitation for two years and has now returned to Family Planning India, leading an education program for 24 schools in Madurai. Thanks to Mahalir Sakthi support, Santhanamari now earns a living wage and is respected with her work – she believes her involvement with Mahalir Sakthi has changed her life.

sessions in Maths, Science and English to help students catch up, although these have recently been interrupted by flooding. Despite the challenges, our partners are reporting positive outcomes. For example, in 2020-21 of Mahalir Sakthi’s students, 41 were admitted to tertiary institutions and 19 were admitted to colleges. Mahalir Sakthi supported 27 students to apply for scholarships and raised funds to help with school fees and uniforms. Student numbers in the tuition centres are growing again.

Our partners have also launched new initiatives during the lockdowns. PEAB invested in professional education for their tutors, holding a series of zoom workshops on child-centric Maths,

English and Science tuition. And Mahalir Sakthi is piloting new vocational education classes in IT skills. Our local partners have seen the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on girls and young women and know their education, safety and wellbeing is at greater risk. In response, PEAB held a series of workshops with female students, and their mothers, on topics including leadership and motivation, domestic violence and how to seek legal assistance and human rights. They also ran a two-day self-defence camp for 16 year 10 students.

*Enormous thanks to the Navitas Education Trust for supporting this work in Tamil Nadu.*

PEAB HAVE BEEN RUNNING ADDITIONAL DEDICATED SESSIONS WITH THEIR YEAR 10 STUDENTS



## A new collaboration to support refugee resettlement



THE RANDWICK INDIGO REFUGEE FRIENDS GROUP HELD A 'SPRING BREAKOUT PICNIC' IN RANDWICK IN NOVEMBER

indigo foundation has a long history of supporting refugee rights and resettlement in Australia. From day one, our long-standing partnerships in Afghanistan and South Sudan have been driven by leaders of diaspora communities in Australia, themselves former refugees. We are committed to continuing to do work on this issue and, over the past year, have worked on a collaboration with a relatively new organisation in Australia, Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia (CRSA). There is already a strong connection between indigo and CRSA – our Patron Libby Lloyd AM is CRSA's Chair and Ali Reza Yunespour is on CRSA's Steering Committee.

CRSA is leading civil society efforts to introduce a community refugee sponsorship program in Australia, similar to the model in Canada, to increase Australia's intake of refugees and build

strong and supportive connections between newly arrived refugees and communities in Australia. While they are advocating to government on this issue, CRSA have set up a group mentorship program where small local groups are linked with newly-arrived refugee households to provide practical support and friendship. indigo foundation has signed on to be a 'Supporting Community Organisation', which means we will trial supporting a small number of mentoring groups. At the moment, we have two local groups in Sydney and one in Wollongong.

You can find out more about CRSA's work here: <https://refugeesponsorship.org.au/>. If you want to get involved, you can contact CRSA directly or if you might be interested in helping to form an indigo refugee friends group, please get in touch with us on [info@indigofoundation.org](mailto:info@indigofoundation.org).

## Meet the Coogee and Randwick Indigo Refugee Friends groups

Leah convenes the Coogee group and Judy convenes the Randwick group

### 1. Can you tell us a bit about the indigo refugee friends groups?

Leah: The Coogee group has nine members, spanning three generations. We connected with CRSA through Libby Lloyd and Deborah Raphael, both long-time indigo supporters, so it was natural for us to look to indigo as a supportive community organisation. Several of us have adult children and grandchildren and have left full time work but are not ready to settle quietly into retirement. Several of us work and have young families. Several of us have professional experience relevant to human rights/refugee needs, but we think that the first thing that is needed is an open mind, a warm heart and willingness to respond to the family's needs as they emerge.

Judy: The Randwick group has eight members with a mix of backgrounds. We have current and retired lawyers, academics, workers from the not-for-profit sector and a student. Group members share a commitment to human rights and each has their own history of volunteering and/or working with refugees. We are all eager to play our part in smoothing the settlement process for a refugee family: to help them feel a part of their new community.

### 2. What has been the process so far to set up your group?

Leah: The first step was to apply to CRSA, by collating information about ourselves: our background, interests, motivation, availability etc. This process helped us begin to gel as a group: at that stage, most of us had not met. The second step was doing the training, which presented challenging scenarios, designed to prompt discussion about how we might interact with a refugee family. These helped us to clarify shared beliefs and values, to decide roles and responsibilities, availability, and to sketch out a plan. We have very recently been matched with a family and are looking forward to working with them.

Judy: The thoroughness of the application process inspired confidence. Each member of the group was required to have police and working with children checks. The training sessions prompted us to imagine ways we might assist a newly-arrived refugee family cope with the challenges of settling into a new culture. We were encouraged to think about roles and responsibilities and imagine the experience from the perspective of the family themselves, remaining mindful of the need to guide rather than direct.

### 3. We are living through difficult times. What draws you to indigo foundation and to this work to support newly arrived families?

Leah: We all know the psychological and practical value of forming good community connections. Some of us have a work history in international aid; some are longstanding donors to international aid organisations. Some have friends and family who arrived as refugees in the past (in kinder times) as well as more recently. Some have experienced living in communities with unfamiliar languages and customs. We may be living through difficult times but all in our group are comfortably able to look beyond our own needs, to offer friendship and support to people who need it. We are pleased to be taken under indigo's umbrella.

Judy: We each have a history of volunteer work and a commitment to social justice. indigo's work and values make it well-suited to be our auspicing body. Getting to know a refugee family, learning their story and playing a role in their successful settlement, is a special privilege and one the Randwick group embraces. We are looking forward to feeling connected and helping others to feel welcome. It is a celebration of our diversity and the ways our community is strengthened through friendships and networks of support.

# A report from Club Rafiki's jobs desk

Rwanda



CLUB RAFIKI'S JOBS DESK OFFERS CAREER GUIDANCE, SUPPORT WITH PREPARING CV'S AND FOR INTERVIEWS AND ACCESS TO FREE INTERNET TO FIND AND COMPLETE JOB APPLICATIONS

Over the past 18 months we have supported Club Rafiki in Rwanda to host a Jobs Desk, with a Youth Empowerment and Employment Officer in place to assist young people to gain employment through career guidance, support with online applications and CV writing and interview tips. The Jobs Desk has faced challenges during repeated lockdowns and the number of young people participating in trainings fell however their work remained vital

In their 2021 Annual Report, Club Rafiki shares a story of how 37 finance and accounting undergraduate students who had been struggling to find work came together with the help of the Jobs Desk to improve their skills and chances in the job market. They write "Those youth after analysing that the knowledge from Universities are not enough to competent with experienced people who worked in this sphere many years. They decided themselves to create a group of 37

people with aim to share practical experiences among them and invite skilled people for gained the reality from the field. ... the Club provided a space to them and some materials and technical supports for them. 6 of these members have found work in public and private institutions and the remainder continue to apply.

***"I used to go to do writing exams and reach some interview step but I was not able to get a job due to lack of some knowledge of technical world. but the day I joined this group of study I realized that this is what I needed to reach my goals because now I am confident to say that the next exams I will do I will be the one who will get the job because I testified my fellow who had the same issue and they already have a job. Thank Club Rafiki for this and for what you continue to do for the youth."*** - Emmanuel

# indigo in the community

## Launch of book marking our 20th anniversary

To mark indigo foundation's 20th anniversary, we have produced a book that brings together reflections and stories from our indigo team in Australia and local partners overseas. *The Power of Community-led Development: 20 years of indigo foundation* tells the story of how indigo was formed, draws on interviews with local partners, community members and volunteers and reflects on lessons we and our partners have learned along the way. We give huge thanks to all those who wrote chapters and generously shared their stories – and to those that edited, fact-checked and dug through old photos archives. Enormous thanks goes to **Jodie Lea Matire**, our Managing Editor, for her incredible expertise and patience and for seeing through huge project that grew as stories were uncovered. Find out more and purchase the book on our website. [www.indigofoundation.org/20stories](http://www.indigofoundation.org/20stories)

## indigo conversations: spotlight on Afghanistan

We launched our 'indigo conversations' series with two zoom forums in August and October focused on Afghanistan. Both forums featured **Ali Reza Yunespour** (Afghanistan Partnership Coordinator) and **Tamana Mirzada** (indigo Board Member) sharing insights and reflections on the shifting political context following the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban. We are gravely concerned about the reversal of two decades of incremental progress made on the rights of women and minority groups in Afghanistan. We thank everyone who joined us over zoom for these thought-provoking discussions. You can find the recordings of the forums on our Facebook page.

## The e-trivia challenge

Thank you to everyone who joined us over a quiet weekend in August for the inaugural indigo foundation e-quiz. Competition was fierce from the comfort of loungerooms as participants battled it out to answer 68 trivia questions in 20 minutes. Congratulations to our winner, **Sally Stevenson**, and thank you to all who took part and put their wits to the test. Many thanks to **Rob Mitchell** and **David James** for their work on the quiz. Start studying now for the next round of e-trivia in the first half of 2022!

## Equality Prize

On 24 November, the inaugural *Burgmann College – indigo foundation Equality Prize* was awarded at a college dinner at Canberra's National Arboretum. This prize was established earlier this year, to be awarded annually to a Burgmann College student or alumni member who studied at the Australian National University and has made a significant contribution to reducing inequality. Many thanks to **Robin Brown** for leading this initiative and the **BillBerry Bluestocking Fund** for contributing the prize money. Prize winners were selected by a panel including **The Hon Dr Meredith Burgmann AM**, **The Hon Justice Richard Refshauge FAAL** and **Dr Ali Reza Yunespour**. The prize for a longstanding and significant contribution was awarded to **Louisa Yasukawa** for her work on refugee rights and displacement of people, and the emerging leader prize went to **Rosie Proctor**, for her work to build safe, fair and inclusive workplaces.

## Spring into flavours of indigo

This year we are again holding Flavours of Indigo, our annual celebration of food and friendship where we invite you to bring friends and family together to share a meal, share some stories and raise funds for indigo foundation. This year our partners at Club Rafiki in Rwanda and PEKKA in Indonesia have shared recipes for you to try out. We know that Covid-19 continues to impact how

OVER 100 PEOPLE JOINED US FOR INDIGO CONVERSATIONS





THE CANBERRA SWAP DON'T SHOP EVENT RAISED OVER \$1000 AND AMASSED OVER 70KG OF CLOTHES

we can gather across Australia, so you can make this event your own. It could be as simple as a dinner at home with your household, a zoom dinner party with friends or an outdoor picnic. Huge thanks to those of you who have already organised events. We want to say a huge thank you to indigo refugee friends' groups in Coogee and Randwick who held a really special 'spring breakout picnic' in Randwick.

### **The indigo Canberra dinner returns!**

Please save the date for the return of our annual Canberra dinner to be held at the National Museum of Australia on Friday 25th March. We are very excited that the dinner will be hosted by the dynamic duo of **Virginia Haussegger AM** and **Alex Sloan AM**. After having to suspend the dinner due to Covid-19 for the past two years, we are looking forward to coming together again, this year with a special focus on Afghanistan and featuring **Ali Reza Yunespour**. We'd love you to help us make this the best dinner ever. Get together a table of ten friends or colleagues, or just come along and celebrate our partners' achievements with other friends of indigo.

### **Swap don't shop on black friday**

Huge thanks to **Alice Roughley** and **Christina Richards** who organised a clothes swap in November. The clothes swap was a part of Eco-Age & Global Fashion Exchange's global campaign to #TakebackBlackFriday, centring on the anniversary of the 2013 Rana Plaza factory collapse, which killed 1138 people. The event raised over \$1000 for indigo's local partners and highlighted sustainable fashion and human rights abuses in the fashion supply chain.

### **Welcome Nuran and Kate, thank you Christina!**

We want to say an enormous thank you to **Christina Northey** who stepped down as Development Coordinator in July. We have benefited enormously from Christina's experience and skills and her unwavering commitment to our guiding principles. In her place we warmly welcome **Nuran Higgins**. We also welcome **Kate Wilson** who has been appointed as an Honorary Advisor (Gender).

By Lyla Rogan, *indigo foundation Chair*

indigo foundation turned 20 last year. To celebrate this milestone, we are launching “The power of community led development”, a book that captures two decades of indigo. Respectful partnership has been a central tenet of indigo foundation from the beginning. Here I offer some reflections on our approach to community partnership, drawing on indigo’s experience and work I have done evaluating development partnerships in PNG.

indigo foundation was founded as a community development organisation working with grassroots partners overseas. We work in partnership with communities through respectful relationships and shared principles – community ownership, equity, transparency and sustainability.

The literature shows there is a wide range of partnership types, sometimes presented as a continuum:

- the charitable model - where “gifts” (money, goods, services) are provided in response to need - funding agreements may exist usually limited purpose of funds
- the transactional model - where funding is more rigorously defined by activity or program, contracts exist, reporting/ accountability is expected and roles are defined broadly as funder and implementer
- collaborative partnerships - based on notions of shared value, co-design and joint planning; partners retain a high level of autonomy and exchange of funds might or might not be involved
- transformational partnerships - strategically designed to achieve shared goals and have a catalytic or long-term impact.

indigo foundation’s community partnerships can be considered transformational at a grassroots

level. indigo operates with a principled, supportive and hands-off approach described in more detail below.

## **indigo foundation - a leader in “localisation” of international aid**

Despite the global agenda of localisation in humanitarian response and international development, local partnerships for development often remain a transactional relationship between donor and local partners, with international NGOs as intermediaries in many cases.

indigo foundation has always practiced a localised partnership model. We believe in the capabilities and integrity of our community partners. They know their context, are driven by their community’s needs and aspirations and are best placed to develop solutions to the challenges they face. In short, we in the “developed world” do not have the answers to their problems. But we can support their development and advocacy efforts.

The strength of this approach has been recently demonstrated during the Pandemic. When COVID hit our local partners were ready to respond to new needs and, as soon as practicable, resume their longer-term development efforts. Other international organisations were forced to withdraw staff or find new ways to direct support to local partners.

## **What is distinctive about our partnership approach and what value does indigo foundation bring?**

- We stand alongside our community partner, allowing them to take the lead on solutions and priorities - the community’s goals become our goals.
- We are flexible in who we partner with – for example, a local Shura in Afghanistan, a community coop and more established community-based organisations.
- We recognise development is a long-term process with small wins along the

way that can have a multiplier effect for sustained change.

- Our people show humility and sensitivity to the power dynamics inherent in development partnerships and within communities.
- We understand that handing over power and control comes with risk. We encourage partners to think beyond specific activities and lift their sights to longer-term changes. We stand with them in their ups and downs, and give them space to address the setbacks they encounter.
- We reject the analysis that individuals are responsible for their circumstances and always have the means for self-improvement. Transformational change (in communities and society) takes collective effort and requires structural reform of policies, systems and institutions that reinforce inequality and discrimination.
- We recognise that community needs and priorities change over time. For example, in Indonesia our partner Lua Lemba initially prioritised education and went on to focus on food security, sexual and reproductive health and celebrating culture.
- indigo foundation stands ready to fund core operating costs, which remains rare in international development. While we expect accountability and transparency,

we allow flexibility in the way funds are used and focus on the impact of support provided.

### **What is challenging in this model of partnership?**

Our learning over the years suggests this approach to partnership is not always straightforward. Local community-based organisations do not always reflect their community and the concept of community ownership may be culturally unfamiliar. Our belief in the principles of gender equity and transparency are not always shared by the local partner, especially in the early stages.

For our volunteer Partnership Coordinators, it takes time to assess and form a shared view of when an issue becomes a serious concern and decide whether corrective action is needed (for example: misuse of finance, over reliance on one community member and sexual harassment toward community members).

Inevitably, being the “funder” can distort power in the relationship. It is critical to acknowledge this and remain attentive to honouring community decision making and priorities. There is often a fine line between capacity building, encouraging accountability and leaning in too far with advice or direction.

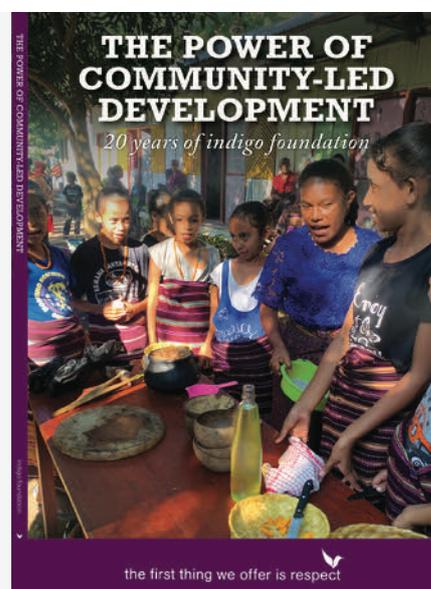
This list could be longer. However, we have seen indigo’s approach bear fruit in the communities we support and the risks and challenges we each encounter are a part of that story.

indigo foundation’s 20th anniversary book

## ***The Power of Community-led Development: 20 years of indigo foundation***

Find out more and purchase the book on our website:

[www.indigofoundation.org/20stories](http://www.indigofoundation.org/20stories)



## 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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