

the first thing we offer is respect



# iNK

indigo news & knowledge



JUNE 2022

# contents

JDN: building a movement of young people against gender-based violence .....	1
Timor Leste	
looking back, looking forward: 10 years of working with Club Rafiki .....	4
Rwanda	
Afghanistan - an update .....	7
preparations underway for the PEKKA Children's Festival .....	9
Indonesia	
indigo news .....	10
think piece: five big issues for five years ahead .....	13

COVER IMAGE: Club Rafiki's library and English Corner Workshops are proving vital to support students who are catching up following the disruptions of Covid.

# from us to you

As we embark on the new financial year, we want to say a very heartfelt thanks for your support. Two years into the pandemic, our partner communities are still feeling the impacts, and we know that women and girls have been hit hardest. You have stood with indigo and our local partners in an extraordinary way to help them face the challenges, without losing sight of their longer term development goals. Please know that this has made a significant difference.

In this edition, we feature updates from partners in Afghanistan, Rwanda and Timor-Leste, all of which have equality for women and girls at their heart. Nowhere is gender justice more important in the world right now than in Afghanistan and we urge you to read the extract from Board Member Tamana Mirzada's speech at our recent Sydney dinner. We also reflect on the incredible work that our newest partner JDN is undertaking in Timor-Leste to challenge gender norms and gender-based violence at home and in public spaces.

In June we join with people around Australia to celebrate Refugee Week. We honour the significant contributions that asylum-seekers and refugees make -in their countries of origin and in Australia. At indigo, we especially value the deep learning and friendships we have built through our work in Afghanistan and South Sudan. From the earliest stages, these partnerships have been driven by former refugees in Australia. The strength and impact of this work is testimony to their hard work, tenacity and deep commitment to their home countries.

With their help, indigo foundation has forged a distinctive model of community-led development which leverages the power and knowledge of diaspora communities in Australia and the resilience of local grassroots communities in their countries of origin. Without these relationships, indigo would not be able to operate in some of the remote, highly marginalised and high risk locations that we work in. We see firsthand what these partnerships can deliver in education, gender equity and economic well being in the most difficult of contexts.

Finally, we are excited to let you know that indigo is in the process of developing a new strategy for 2023-27. We will be seeking input from our community partners, volunteers, staff and supporters. We welcome any ideas and input you have about indigo's future development.

*Jemma and Lyla*

# JDN: building a movement of young people against gender-based violence in Timor-Leste



IN MAY, JDN ORGANISED A WORKSHOP FOR 17 SEXUAL HARASSMENT ACTIVISTS TO TALK TOGETHER ABOUT WHAT ACTIONS THEY WOULD TAKE TO STAND UP TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND PUSH FOR A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MICROLET DRIVERS

*By Jemma Bailey, Executive Director*

JDN is our newest partner in Timor-Leste. It is a thriving youth-led organisation based in Dili focused on building the rights and leadership of young people. We have recently received reporting from JDN covering the first six months of our work together – and we are excited by the work they are doing to build a generation of young people standing up to sexual harassment and making public spaces and public transport safe and inclusive.

JDN has engaged with over 800 young people, parents and microlet drivers in workshops and events educating and raising awareness about what sexual harassment looks like, what UN conventions say about gender-based violence and the Timorese Laws are in place to protect women. They have trained 50 people as campaign leaders through train the trainer workshops.

Importantly, recognising the particular vulnerabilities of young women living with disabilities, JDN has reached out to disability advocacy organisations to explore how best to make their campaigns inclusive. Through

these collaborations, JDN has provided tailored workshops to 64 young women living with disabilities. JDN writes *“We worked with six different disability organisations to engage young people with disabilities in this event to educate them about how to prevent sexual harassment and increase gender equality, using reflection on their own experiences, guest speakers, t-shirt design, story corner, photo frame designs, learning sign language, cooking demonstration. From this 18 young women signed up as sexual harassment activists.”*

JDN see the importance of engaging young men in this work, engaging young men in workshops to support them to recognise and call out gender inequality and discrimination in the community and their homes. They have engaged 40 young men in train the trainer workshops across four ‘sucos’ and invited those men to become gender equality ‘influencers’, responsible for changing their own behaviours, taking on household chores, and engaging with their peers about gender equality.

As well as working with young people to raise awareness about gender-based violence and challenge gender stereotypes, JDN are running a

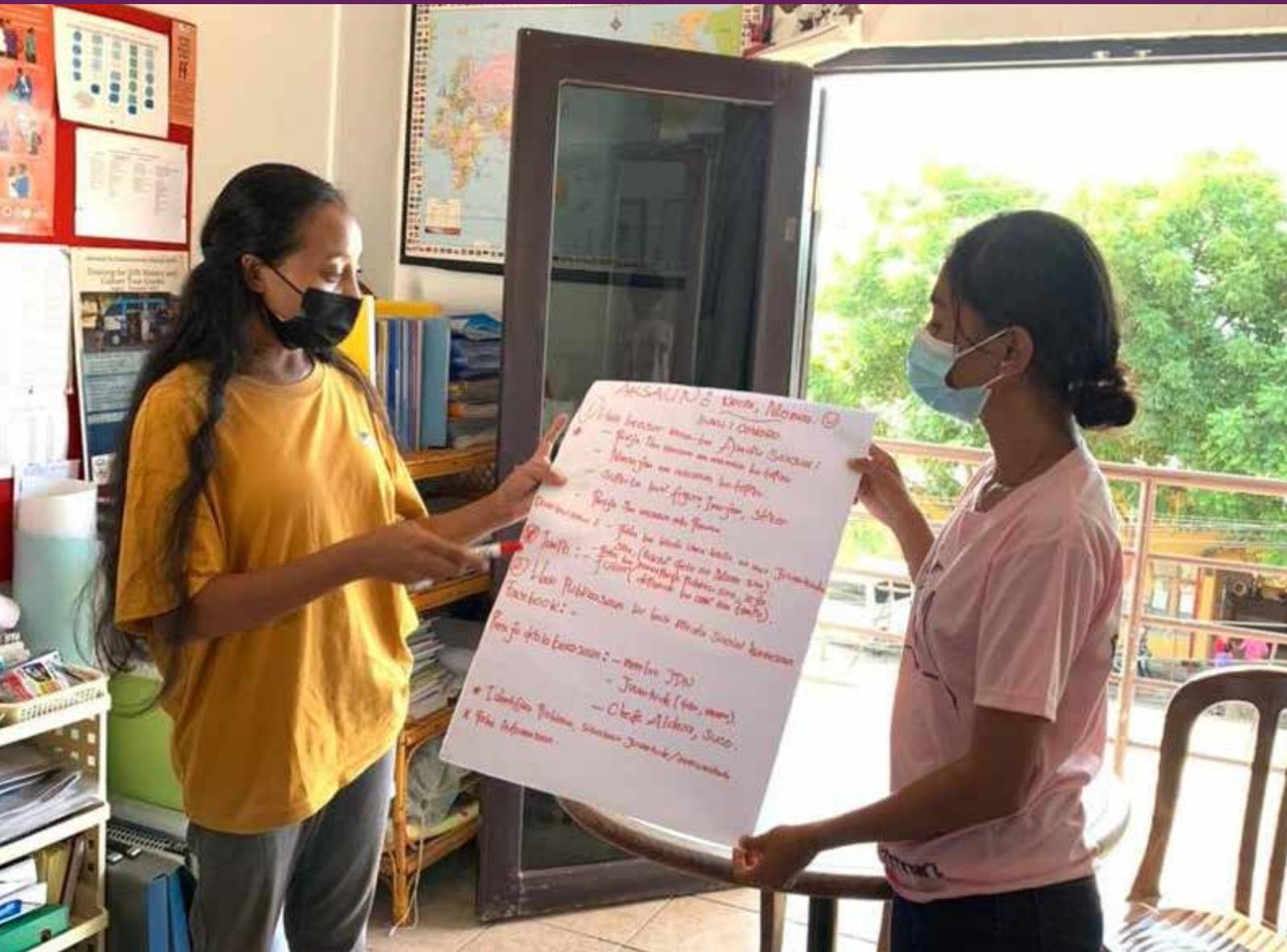
highly targeted campaign focused on improving safety on microlets (small public buses) through implementing a Code of Conduct. JDN have run a workshop with 18 microlet drivers to raise awareness on what sexual harassment looks like and the role of the Code of Conduct, and they are soon to launch a report based on interviews with 25 microlet drivers. Over 50 microlet buses now display anti sexual harassment stickers designed by JDN activists and over the past six months, five young women have become microlet drivers in this notoriously male industry. In March, JDN activists met with the Timorese government's Director-General of Transport to present their report on interviews with microlet drivers and advocate for a Code of Conduct.

Reflecting on the challenges and learnings over the first six months, JDN particularly draws on their work with young men. In their report, they write: "Young male influencers have been

challenged by both family and friends in their communities and it has been difficult to address those challenges. Often young men are referred to as 'gay' if they participate in household chores. There is a lot of difficulty moving to change in this area as many people see the gender role stereotyping as part of their culture and it is not seen as the discrimination of women. Challenging this requires a lot of perseverance and understanding and recognition that change will be slow. We recognise the importance of finding smaller actions that move towards our goal – for example in safe transport we will continue to work towards a code of conduct but we need to find interim actions (eg. the stickers on the microlets) that continue to keep the issue alive in the public space."

It has been an incredibly busy first six months for JDN and we look forward to seeing what the next six months (and beyond!) bring.

IN MAY, JDN ORGANISED A WORKSHOP FOR 17 SEXUAL HARASSMENT ACTIVISTS TO TALK TOGETHER ABOUT WHAT ACTIONS THEY WOULD TAKE TO STAND UP TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND PUSH FOR A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MICROLET DRIVERS



## Meet some of JDN's sexual harassment activists



### **Novita Odelia Reis Gonçalves**

*"What I did since signing the declaration to become a sexual harassment activist was, to find out from the young people I know if they know what sexual harassment is. Therefore, in the institution where I teach 11 students (4 women & 7 men), I give them the topic "what is sexual harassment?" and most of them didn't know about sexual harassment. So, I try to explain and ask them to have a discussion. Most of the students are men and they acknowledge that they often practice this behaviour called sexual harassment and this is a crime. Furthermore, they said that they would not repeat this and they will change this behaviour. My message to other women is that don't be afraid to be an activist because women have to be strong to defend the right thing, and the small actions that we do can have big impact to us, our family and our neighbourhood."*



### **Sriliala Tilman Cardoso**

*"As a sexual harassment activist I talked to a microlet driver about his knowledge of what sexual harassment is. He said he didn't know, then I explained to him what sexual harassment is and gave the examples of touching women's bodies. And he said this behaviour is common and he didn't feel this was a problem and sometimes he indirectly contributes to this such as when he stops the microlet suddenly so that the passenger's body could touch each other. I said to him that behaviour could make the passengers feel uncomfortable and not safe. From that discussion I invite him to sit with JDN Sexual Harassment Activist together with other public transport drivers to ask their opinion of sexual harassment in public transportation and the need for a code of conduct for public transport drivers."*



### **Olimpia Soares Pereira**

*"I am a sexual harassment activist and a student in one of the journalist courses in Dili. I raised the topic in my class "do young people feel safe when walking alone at night time or when using public transportation because they might get sexually harassed". I discussed it with my colleagues and teacher. Then I explained to them the knowledge and information about sexual harassment and the laws that protects the rights of women that I learnt at the JDN workshop. During this discussion my teacher and colleagues said that the word "sexual harassment" was new for them. From that discussion, I plan to interview young people, public transport drivers and the police regarding this topic."*

The JDN Sexual Harassment Executive decided to advocate for a Code of Conduct for microlet drivers because young women often experience sexual harassment when they are travelling on microlets. In case studies of 80 young women that JDN collected, young women reported experiences of physical and verbal harassment on public transport. One young woman said: "It makes us feel very uncomfortable and happens every day when we are going to school or university or anywhere else on the microlet".

# looking back, looking forward:

10 years of working with Club Rafiki in Rwanda



CLUB RAFIKI'S ENGLISH CORNER WORKSHOPS RUNS EVERY SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS AND CREATIVE WRITING.

*"As a participant of English corner, I want to use this opportunity, to thank a partner of this program, when I join this I was fallen in the school but today I'm in the first students in my school because I have a capacity to understand and speak even write English."*

Grace\*, 15 years old

*By Alice Roughley, Partnership Coordinator*

This year marks 10 years of working with Club Rafiki in Rwanda - a moment to celebrate, a moment to reflect on how the partnership has made a difference, and a moment for deep conversations about how to strengthen our work together as we look forward. Club Rafiki is an independent youth-led organisation that works to improve education, health and well-being outcomes for young people in Kigali and surrounding rural villages. They run programs including a sexual and reproductive health clinic, an Urban Dance School, English language classes and the 'Our Girls' program focused on building leadership skills and defending the rights of girls and young women.

We recently embarked on a review process with Club Rafiki as our current Commitment Agreement was coming to an end. indigo is committed to participatory monitoring and evaluation - working with our partners as part of a continuous process of learning and planning where we reflect on expected and unexpected outcomes. We ask, "What has changed", "What's working to make the difference we seek" and "What is most likely to be needed in future?" Normally we would do this as part of a field visit but pandemic travel restrictions have forced us to adapt and develop stronger practices for doing this remotely.

Club Rafiki, as always, rose to the challenge of a remote review and reflection.

Over several months the Club engaged in a thoughtful process that included Club Rafiki's team, participants and Indigo Foundation jointly establishing and responding to evaluation questions. For example, they convened two different groups of youth participants in a round table format to discuss questions about achievements and future priorities. Discussions were conducted in English and recorded on video, an initiative led by the young people themselves. Questions and discussions were based on Indigo Foundation responsibilities, Club Rafiki responsibilities and the quality of the partnership and drew on sources including our 2017-2022 Commitment Agreement with Club Rafiki, Club Rafiki's aims and strategic plan and Indigo's guiding principles. Together, separately, and then together again we reflected on the responses.

So, did the review uncover any exciting findings? Well, yes it did, and while the achievements and areas for further development are too many to expand upon here, a few are noted below.

Through longer-term investment and broad-scale engagement with young people in voluntary counselling, HIV and pregnancy testing and a range of programs to increase self-confidence, there have been some very real and significant changes. For instance, many thousands of young people are now educated about safe sexual practices to avoid unwanted pregnancy, HIV/STDs, and also about the dangers of illicit drug use. Through involvement in the Club's programs, young people feel that they have more control over their future. It's inspiring to hear girls say they are no longer shy but can speak and debate in public. It is also fantastic to see girls' participation growing over time and to see boys increasingly accepting girls as equal participants in programs and activities.

Many young people gained English speaking and writing skills, published books and won awards. Others have increased their employability and accessed employment opportunities and gained paid through work Club Rafiki's programs and support.

On an organisational level, Club Rafiki is now recognised by the Rwandan Government as a model for other youth centres. In 2018 and again this year, the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, visited the Club to open new basketball

facilities. On his visit, President Kagame publicly commended the Club for the opportunities it provides to young Rwandans. His visit and comments are significant in building the pride of young people engaged with Club Rafiki and raising the Club's standing within the Rwandan community.

During the pandemic, Club Rafiki has been responsive, adaptive and resilient. Club Rafiki developed much stronger working relationships with local and central authorities including the Ministry of Youth and Culture and the Ministry of Health in response to Covid-19, including hosting community hand-washing facilities, a Covid testing hub and a Covid vaccination clinic for young people with Club participants assisting as volunteers.

The Club's responsiveness to at-risk young people, especially young women, was vital during the pandemic. They organised young people to deliver government-issued food packages to vulnerable families, conducting home visits and providing support, particularly to vulnerable girls. The Club also established collaborations with media outlets and facilitated special youth education broadcasts during the lockdown.

While these outcomes represent a great many ingredients and contributions to Club Rafiki's work, there is a strong indication that the values and principles Indigo brings to the partnership, including longer-term support, trust and friendship and allowing the Club to determine its own development pathway, contributes significantly to the achievement of these outcomes. These values hold strong in this context.

The review found that there are several important practical and values-based elements that contribute to the success of this partnership. Of note, core funding that allows Club Rafiki to innovate, pilot new projects and determine its own development pathway, as well as flexibility, allows Club Rafiki to make changes and respond to new needs such as during the pandemic. Club Rafiki also noted the importance of having a partner commit long-term stable funding, giving them a secure base from which to build their capacity. There are of course also learnings and areas we will continue to work on together, including helping Club Rafiki to strengthen its financial reporting capacity and its long-term strategic planning.

Looking to the future, the partnership between indigo foundation and Club Rafiki remains strong. Their programs and outreach activities continue to be in high demand and through participation in Club Rafiki, young people feel part of a supportive peer group and develop a sense of social responsibility. The review found that the Club's work and its people reach greater heights every year. Both we and Club Rafiki have learned and experienced much that gives us confidence that the partnership is well on track as we look to the future together.

*This new opportunity is incredible to me because it helped me increased my knowledge and skills on how to use ICT tools through online job searching and even chatting properly with friend on social media. Besides this, with internet connectivity, I will be able to ask my facilitator some questions and even help where get any problem and I will receive help/ answer quickly."*

**Clara\*, 16 years old from Mageragere Sector**

THROUGH THE 'OUR GIRLS' PROGRAM, CLUB RAFIKI HAVE BEEN WORKING TO IMPROVE ICT SKILLS FOR GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN



## Afghanistan - an update



GIRLS TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT THE OPENING OF A NEW SCHOOL BUILDING IN 2020  
STUDENTS SETTLE DOWN IN THEIR NEW CLASSROOM IN ONE OF INDIGO'S PARTNER SCHOOLS

*By indigo's Afghanistan team (Ali Reza Yunespour, Nuran Higgins, Jemma Bailey)*

As we head toward the one-year mark after the fall of the Afghan government, the humanitarian outlook in Afghanistan is sadly worsening. A collapsing economy, drought and conflict have contributed to a situation where over half of Afghanistan's population faced acute hunger and food insecurity between March and May 2022, according to World Food Program. Tragically, this number is expected to rise even further between June and November. According to a survey by the World Food Program in February, 95% of Afghans face insufficient food consumption, including 100% of female-headed households, and 81% of income-earning households have experienced a significant decrease in income since January 2022. It is hard to gather accurate data in the absence of credible population surveys in Afghanistan, but the reported statistics from UN and other agencies accord with the reports we are receiving from our community partners about the growing humanitarian need, unemployment and forced migration to the neighbouring countries.

The rapid reduction in international financial assistance has caused a major shock in the economy and weakened public institutions. Since the Taliban gained power in August 2021,

donor funding for development programs has been withdrawn, which has resulted in health workers not being paid for months and clinics and hospitals running short on critical drugs and supplies. The World Health Organisation warns that more than two-thirds of the population requires health assistance from a health system that is on the verge of collapse.

The head of UN Women Sima Sami Bahous has expressed grave concern for the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. This extends to girls being shut out of high school education and, more recently, requirements that all women must cover their faces in public and should only leave their homes in cases of necessity. Any deviation from this will result in male relatives being punished. This latest directive is a further escalation of restrictions on women and girls. While women have been at the forefront of sporadic demonstrations on the streets of major city centres such as Kabul in the past nine months, it's clear that they face an uphill battle in challenging the Taliban without adequate support from the international community and the wider society in Afghanistan.

Since the Taliban took power, we have redoubled our focus on Afghanistan, listening to and being led by our community partners. Over winter in Afghanistan, with many thanks to donors in Australia, we were able to support

more than 300 families from our partner communities with direct cash transfers to meet urgent needs, with a particular focus on female-headed households. We also helped our partner communities provide co-education classes for secondary girls and boys in a few of the local mosques. At the time, our partner communities like the majority of the country were hopeful that the Taliban 'interim government' would allow girls and women to attend all levels of education. We are now assisting a further 250 teachers across 30 schools so they can provide for their families and resume teaching.

Like the rest of the country, our partner schools have reopened for girls and boys in the primary levels and boys only in the secondary levels

since late March this year. Male and female students have also returned to public and private universities. Extreme drought, financial hardship, growing poverty and restrictions on girls and women in education and work have contributed to reduced school and university enrolments across the country. With credit to the communities we support, in our partner schools, both numbers of students and teachers remained comparatively strong, including girls' attendance in primary schools. In good news, UNESCO are now providing a basic wage to teachers across schools in Afghanistan who had not been paid since August 2021. In the provinces where we work, this does not extend to all of the teachers and we hope to step up and help fill that education gap.

**Below is an extract from a speech given by Tamana Mirzada speech at our recent Sydney dinner. Tamana is an indigo Board member and an Afghan Australian youth advocate who is passionate about supporting newly arrived migrants and refugees in their settlement journey. She arrived in Australia in 2007 from Germany. Tamana has held roles with the Afghan Women's Educational Centre in Kabul and in Sydney with the Lebanese Muslim Association and the Community Migrant Resource Centre. She currently works with the Jesuit Refugee Service. In 2019, she was awarded the Refugee Council of Australia and STARTTS Humanitarian Youth Award.**

*"When I was in Afghanistan I had the opportunity to witness first-hand the significant contributions and achievements of Afghan women. Prior to the 15th of August, women were leading many positions across the country, from business owners to parliamentarians. Women participated in many aspects of public life, entering professions including journalism, politics, health care, law enforcement and business. It has been nearly 10 months since the fall of the Afghan government and we are witnessing great atrocities happening to their lives. From banning education at high school, to limiting employment, to rules being imposed on how to dress and*

*participate in public life.*

*"In May, Taliban authorities issued edicts requiring women to cover their faces except for their eyes and the orders are to be enforced by punishing the closest male relatives of women who do not comply. This extends to female reporters on TV and we have seen recent footage of Afghan news presenters veiling their face. Women are being erased from public life. On top of this, Afghanistan is dealing with a growing humanitarian crisis and continues to face the rampant effects of the pandemic, leaving nearly 23 million people facing acute food insecurity.*

*"indigo foundation is nearing nearly two decades of engagement in Afghanistan. Despite being a small organisation, at our core we are driven by community-led development. ... As part of our Afghanistan response, we remain committed to the people of Afghanistan and since last year we have supported families and teachers with their livelihood as they face the unfolding humanitarian crisis. ... For indigo, engaging with the diaspora is another very important element of our work. It is important to listen to the voices and concerns of those with lived experience, particularly those affected by the recent crisis. Tonight as you look around the room you will see community leaders, and members of the Afghan community who have joined us."*

# preparations underway for the PEKKA Children's Festival

Indonesia



PREPARING FOOD TOGETHER AT THE 2019 CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

PEKKA Lodan Doe, our local partner in Eastern Indonesia, is led and run by women heads of household. Translating from Bahasa Indonesia as 'Empowerment for Women Headed Households', Pemberdayaan Perempuan Kepala Keluarga', PEKKA Lodan Doe coordinates a thriving network of local women's collectives with a base of over 2,600 women spread across the islands of Adonara, Lembata and East Flores in Eastern Indonesia. We support PEKKA to run a large-scale bursary program for girls from women-headed households, that runs from primary to university level, as well as a network of women-run organic food gardens that build women's leadership, generate income and provide food security in a region feeling the impacts of climate change.

Right now, we are sending best wishes to Ina Dete and the team at PEKKA as they prepare for

the upcoming Children's Festival - the first they have been able to hold since the pandemic. Our partners recognise education is not only about sitting in a classroom and taking exams; children should also be given the opportunity to put into practice what they learn, to work with others, to appreciate and respect their culture and to have fun. The last festival, held on Lembata Island in November 2019, brought together over a hundred children and their families to participate in diverse activities, like learning yarn spinning and weaving, traditional dancing competitions, agricultural and art competitions. Care and concern for the environment was the central theme of the festival with waste recycling competitions and workshops on protecting the environment and environmental restoration drawing crowds. We can't wait to hear how the upcoming festival goes!



THE INDIGO INDEFATIGABLES ALONG THE SEA TO SUMMIT TRAIL

## Rise to heights for human rights

In April, our intrepid Board Member Robin Brown and his team of indigo indefatigables rode their bicycles from the sea level to Charlotte's Pass. Numbers swelled along the way at various points and for the final walk to the summit of Mt Kunama Namadgi (Kosciuszko). Being gluttons for punishment, many of the team turned around the next week and rode in Woden Rotary's 5 (+ 1) Peaks Challenge. This is the sixth time the indigo indefatigable have ridden for indigo and this year they raised \$13,000 to support the work of our community partners - a fantastic effort and we are so grateful. If you are looking to challenge yourself or get a group of friends or colleagues together to do something amazing, visit our Rise to Heights for Human Rights page <https://rise-to-heights-for-human-rights-2022.raisely.com/>.

## eQuiz - trivia in your PJs

In April we held our second eQuiz, an online trivia event that spans a weekend! indigo's eQuiz is put together each year by Rob Mitchell and David James. The 2022 crowning champion and winner of a gift voucher at Gould's Book Store in Sydney was Amanda J from Victoria. Congratulations Amanda!

## Canberra dinner - a spotlight on Afghanistan

Our awesome Canberra Committee put together a very successful dinner at The Hellenic Club in late May. The dinner featured Ali Reza Yunespour as the main speaker, the wonderful Dianne van Meegen as MC and soulful tunes from our very own Mood Indigo. A warm and generous crowd raised over \$15,000 on the night to support the work of our local partners working to end gender-based violence and discrimination. Thank you to all who attended and to the Committee who organised it. If you were unable to make it, don't despair. There will be another opportunity to let your hair down, have a wonderful time and raise money for our community partners in October 2022, when indigo takes over the National Museum for an evening of fun, feasting and philanthropy!

## Sydney jazz dinner

Not to be outdone, our amazing Sydney (and surrounds) Committee held a Sydney Jazz Dinner, at the Sybil Centre at Women's College on Saturday 4 June. While Verity Firth was unable to MC the event, at the last minute Mary Waterford stepped up and did an amazing job. Ali Reza



ALI REZA YUNESPOUR IN A Q&A WITH OUR MC MARY WATERFORD AT THE SYDNEY JAZZ DINNER  
OUR INTREPID TREKKERS TAKING ON THE LARAPINTA TRAIL, JUNE

Yunespour was again the guest speaker and renowned Sydney five-piece jazz outfit, The Minellies, got people up on the dancefloor. Overall the night raised almost \$20,000! A huge thank you to everyone in the room and all those behind the scenes who made the evening such a great success.

### Larapinta Trek for change

Sunday 5th of June saw the long-awaited first day of indigo's Larapinta Trek for Change begin with a Welcome to Country in the amazing Olive Pink Botanic Gardens in Mparntwe (Alice Springs). A highlight of the trip was the trek to watch the sunrise at the summit of Rwetyepme (Mount Sonder). This adventure challenge has been in development for 18 months or more. We are so grateful to the 18 trekkers and their wonderful supporters who, together, raised over \$40,000 to support our community partners.

### indigo people

Over the past few months, we have had some changes in our team of Partnership Coordinators. Our Partnership Coordinators are all highly-skilled volunteers that sit at the heart of our team in Australia. With a new partnership in Timor-Leste we are excited to welcome both **Heidi Lipson** and **Domingas Alice Soares Gama**. Heidi is our new Partnership Coordinator and comes to us with deep experience in community development. She founded 'Cooking Circles', a grassroots network connecting women in Australia and Timor-Leste through cooking, she works with the Nusa Tenggara Association and has been a Board Director at YWCA Canberra.

Domingas is a young woman originally from Timor-Leste, now living in the Blue Mountains and studying a Bachelor of Humanitarian and Development studies. Domingas will be assisting Heidi as part of the JDN project team.

There have also been some changes to our Bougainville team working with the Hako Women's Collective. We say an enormous thank you to **Lyndene Wan** who is stepping down as our Partnership Coordinator. Lyn has been a huge asset in the role, bringing a deep commitment to community-led development and gender justice and extensive experience working in the Pacific. Taking on the Partnership Coordinator role, we welcome the wonderful **Jenny Clements**. Jenny comes with a long history of working in gender justice programming and in the Pacific, having worked across government and NGOs large and small.

We are also saying a huge thank you to **Jacqueline Fidler** who is stepping down from the Indonesia Partnership Coordinator role. I know Jacqui will be greatly missed by the women of PEKKA - and by indigo. Jacqui came into the role just before the pandemic and, despite not being able to visit Indonesia due the travel restrictions, she has built strong relationships and seen in a new three year agreement with PEKKA Lodan Doe. We are in the process of recruiting for a new Indonesia Partnership Coordinator.

Finally we are excited to welcome two interns from the University of Wollongong who will be working with us in the second half of the year - **Esmeralda Gerges** and **Zinah Salah Hasan**.



### **Meet Domingas**

Domingas Alice Soares Gama is joining our Australia-based partnership team supporting the work of our partner JDN in Timor-Leste.

### **Tell us a little about yourself and how you get involved with indigo foundation**

My name is Domingas Alice Soares Gama, I am 21 years old, from Timor-Leste and currently living in the Blue Mountains and studying a Bachelor of Humanitarian and Development Studies at Western Sydney University. I hear about Indigo foundation through Jude Finch and the Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters group. After speaking to her, I was very excited to read about indigo on the website and their collaboration with local community partners worldwide to empower women and girls, enhance education and health outcomes, and protect human rights. When I read about this, I was very excited to get involved because I believe that the areas need more attention and need people to work together to address these issues.

### **What most excites you about the work JDN are doing and what are you looking most forward to as part of indigo's Timor partnership team?**

I could not list everything that JDN are doing in Timor-Leste because there are so many but what I could say is, I was very fortunate to go to indigo's recent team gathering and meet Mana Analia and Elga in Timor-Leste through zoom conference. One thing I took away from that meeting is how JDN members and activists have been working on strategies to prevent sexual harassment by advocating for their rights every day and confronting sexual harassment and sexual violence when it occurs. There has been a lot of work done by amazing young women and what I am most looking forward is to learn about these issues and see what I can contribute to both indigo and JDN. I am also most looking forward to strengthening the relationship between indigo and JDN. I believe that building trust is fundamental.

### **Your life and studies have exposed you to issues of inequality and social change in Australia and in Timor-Leste. What issues are most passionate about and what do you see as the role of young people leading change?**

As young women from Timor-Leste and living abroad to study, I see that In Timor-Leste women and girls face difficult situations and circumstances. This is due to the country's strong patriarchal culture and traditional customs which reinforce strict gender roles, deny women a say in decision making and render them more exposed to frightening rates of violence. For this to change for women and girls, the government has to step in and take actions and also support programs like JDN to address these issues.

## Think piece five big issues for five years ahead



IN MAY, THE INDIGO TEAM OF VOLUNTEERS, BOARD AND STAFF CAME TOGETHER FOR A FACE TO FACE WEEKEND OF PLANNING AND RECONNECTING. An important focus of the meeting was to start discussions on our next Strategy 2023 - 2028, including reflecting on emerging issues in aid and geopolitics. The ideas in this think piece were presented by Megan Chisholm and Susan Engel as a discussion starter during our weekend together.

*By Megan Chisholm*

The indigo Board is starting work on our next five-year strategy. Here are five big issues that are front of mind for us.

### **1. What do our partnerships look like in the context of calls for localisation and decolonisation?**

Localisation and decolonisation of aid agendas advocate for the shifting power, funding and control of aid to local actors and dismantling racist and discriminatory structures in the global aid system. They are at the forefront of challenges to global cooperation. Local

actors seek to genuinely control development efforts. International actors have been forced to undertake critical self-reflection about how we use our power and indeed why we exist. International actors must ask what is the role and value of international partnerships, and what form should they take to ensure true local leadership and equal power? o 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.

In many ways, indigo was ahead of the curve on this one – we were formed out of a desire to create an organisation that would unequivocally put respect first in partnerships, and stand firmly

behind local leadership. That doesn't mean we can rest on our laurels. As global conversations around these issues mature and evolve, we must continue to ask ourselves – and, more importantly, our partners – what is our role as a partner? What value do we add beyond money? How do the ways in which we work contribute positively or negatively to local leadership and decolonisation? How can we continue to evolve our approaches, systems and ways of working for continually better partnerships?

## **2. As disasters increase, how do we stand by our partners in good times and bad?**

Reflecting on what has been happening for our partners in recent years reveals a striking commonality – they have almost all faced recent and significant crises. South Sudan has faced political change, conflict and drought. Our partners in Indonesia were hit by Cyclone Seroja. Hako in Bougainville have been grappling with the outbreak of violence. In Afghanistan, our partners have faced the unimaginable return to power of the Taliban. All of our partners faced the pandemic. Complex and volatile conditions compound the growing global risk of disaster thanks to climate change.

indigo identifies as an organisation that works towards long-term sustainable development and not as a humanitarian or emergency response organisation (which responds to immediate and short term acute needs). This can lead to angst when our partners find themselves in a humanitarian crisis. How do we respond if we are not a humanitarian organisation? In my experience so far, indigo has stood in solidarity with its partners in good times and bad, but not without some concern of whether we are crossing the invisible humanitarian line and thus straying from longer term development goals.

We could better stand in solidarity with our partners by reframing this dilemma, not seeing it in terms of the humanitarian-development dichotomy but rather understanding the one life that our partners and their communities live – full of ups, downs, progress, setbacks, disasters, recovery, instability, growth and so on. It's now widely recognised that sustainable development doesn't happen on a parallel track to humanitarian crises, rather the development path

is punctuated by risk and crisis. Any investments in development must be prepared for this fact or risk losing all gains when disasters strike. This reframing means we ask: how do we best support our partners through good times and bad? How do we adapt to the circumstances that arise from increasing disasters and crises?

## **3. How will geopolitical shifts in our region impact our partners?**

There are fundamental geopolitical shifts afoot. In our region, the Pacific Ocean and Pacific Island Countries are taking on increased strategic importance, with China, Australia and the US manoeuvring for influence and power. Russia's invasion of the Ukraine and the US withdrawal from Afghanistan also indicate shifts of seismic proportions.

We can see these global dynamics playing out on the foreign policy stage with high profile visits from the new Australian Foreign Minister to Pacific countries on the nightly news, while her Chinese counterpart does the same; or in the commitment to increased official aid flows to the Pacific. But what about for the local communities and partners with whom we work – what particular geopolitical power plays are impacting their daily lives? Are changes improving or reducing their security? Are they seeing more or less support for their communities coming in from old and new donors? Are there new actors seeking partnership?

Only history will tell what the long-term impacts will be, but as we go into our strategy process we must monitor these shifts and listen to our partners about the impacts they are seeing – economic, cultural, political and otherwise, on then and on our position as their Australian partner.

## **4. The gender space is transforming. How do we catch up, keep up and ensure we are current?**

Gender equity approaches are in a period of rapid transformation right now. We need to ensure we work with the best gender equality lens to ensure we are supporting equal human rights for everyone. indigo is strongly committed to gender equality, and recognises the extreme discrimination and inequality that women and

girls face globally. Work to unpack and challenge the gendered drivers of inequality is complex and always evolving. Like any technical area, keeping pace with new thinking in the gender space can be challenging– and at this particular time, there are big shifts.

The aid sector’s understanding of the dimensions of gender inequality has expanded from the traditional binary male/female analysis. Better awareness of the diversity of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) and of the inequality and denial of rights experienced by people because of their SOGIESC, means the need to shake up the way we analyse, monitor and approach work to address gender inequality. At a local level, every country is at a different place in terms of their social and legal acceptance of more diverse concepts of gender.

Most aid agencies are working through how to approach gender equality in a more inclusive, less binary way that understands the gendered drivers of inequality and the intersectionality with other forms of discrimination. indigo must make sure we are keeping up with the transformations happening in the gender space. Our model is entirely led and defined by our partners experiences and engagement with gender equality in their own contexts. Thus, we must ask what does this conversation look like in each context, and consider whether there is scope for increased dialogue with and among partners for us to learn and stay current in this space.

## **5. Travel is back, but can we afford and justify it in the ongoing context of COVID and climate change?**

Lastly, the question of travel. Oh, how we have missed it these last couple of years! There is truly nothing so powerful as face-to-face interaction. The strength and quality of our relationships with partners grows exponentially when our Partnership Coordinators are able to visit partners in person.

Travel is back but it is not what it used to be and potentially never will be – due to the three Cs: Covid, Costs and Climate Change. Covid is still here, costs for travel have skyrocketed and our understanding of the contribution of travel to climate change inducing emissions is clearer. With those big 3Cs hanging over travel for the foreseeable future, how much travel can we justify? How else can we continue to build relationships of trust from afar? Would we limit travel or new partnerships? Do we focus in closer to home where costs, and emissions, are less? How does this relate back to the questions asked at the start of this piece – what forms do our partnerships take in this changed context? These are big questions to which none of us have easy answers, but I’m looking forward to working through them with our partners and our team as we look to our 2023-2028 Strategy.

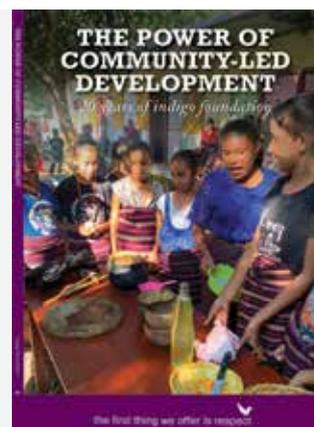
*Megan Chisholm is an indigo Board Member. She has over 20 years experience in the humanitarian and development sector and most recently was CARE International’s Country Director in Vanuatu and Director of the Pacific Regional Team. She has now returned to live in Australia and is the Regional Operations Director with the Australian Red Cross.*

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.



### DONATE ONLINE

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



### DONATE VIA MAIL

Post your contribution to  
PO Box 362, Figtree, NSW 2325  
Australia



### CONTACT US

Email us for more information  
[info@indigofoundation.org](mailto:info@indigofoundation.org)



PO Box 362

Figtree NSW 2525

AUSTRALIA



[info@indigofoundation.org](mailto:info@indigofoundation.org)



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