

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT

20 years of indigo foundation



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Front cover image: Feasting, playing, sharing together at PEKKA NTT's first Children's Festival in 2019. The festival brought together over 70 children and young people from villages across Adonara Island in Indonesia to celebrate local food and culture and to build awareness about ecological sustainability. © Chris Shorten

Back cover image: Students receiving new textbooks at their school in Afghanistan

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indigo foundation is a child-safe organisation. In this publication, we have not used children's last names and we have changed children's first names to a culturally appropriate pseudonym. Also, in order to safeguard our local partners and the communities we work with in Afghanistan, we have removed the names of specific schools and individuals, and obscured people's faces in photos.



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indigo foundation's commitment to justice, reconciliation and recognition

In the spirit of reconciliation and justice, indigo foundation acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians across this nation and their connections to land, sea and community. We value and honour the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and acknowledge the historical truth that colonisation has led to the ongoing exclusion of our First Nations people from modern Australia.

indigo foundation stands in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for Makarrata – ‘the coming together after a struggle’ – through truth, justice, healing and agreement making, and supports the aims and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for substantive constitutional reform.

To this end, indigo foundation supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart which calls for constitutional reforms to empower First Nations people and allow them to take a rightful place in their own country. This includes support for a First Nations Voice in parliament and a fair and truthful relationship with people of Australia based on justice and self-determination.



[HTTPS://ULURUSTATEMENT.ORG](https://ulurustatement.org)



The women of Hako Women's Collective, Autonomous Region of Bougainville

FOREWORD

Communities are working together to build things once thought impossible

by Libby Lloyd AM, indigo foundation Patron

What a delight it is to be part of celebrating 20 years of the work, the achievements and the many triumphs and wonderful stories of indigo foundation. indigo is truly unique in that it lives its principles – it's no ordinary organisation. It builds genuine, respectful, listening partnerships. It builds relationships. It not only works with, it learns from, and grows along with, all its partners.

indigo foundation became a part of my life, and those of my family and friends, not long after it was so creatively established in 2000 – and it continues to play a major part. Having lived and worked overseas for many years it has always mattered to me that however we connect with others across the world, these connections are important to them, not just to us. I was thrilled when I met indigo foundation – its philosophy and its projects resonated loudly with me.

I became even more convinced when, in early 2008, I had the opportunity to visit a newly established project by the Program for Education and Awareness Building (PEAB) in Maduranthakam, in a quite remote part of Tamil Nadu (see p61). I saw rows of young children sitting attentively on the unpaved road after school, benefiting from homework classes given by young tutors who were being supported through indigo. None



of these children had parents who could read and write, none of their parents had themselves had the opportunity of education. The world was being opened to these kids with the gift of education. There was a thrill and a delight among the whole community.

I love that indigo foundation now helps open educational opportunities and widens horizons for so many, that communities are working together to

build things that may once have been thought impossible. I love that we have such close friendships with so many – with Ali Reza Yunespour and his family (see p13), and with Santino Rang Yuot (see p65), who all came to Australia as refugees. We work with them and their home communities to develop educational opportunities in their countries – in remote parts of Afghanistan and South Sudan. Young Afghan children, girls and boys, are being given additional chances to access education, and can now contemplate new roles they may play in their own society. Teacher education has been greatly strengthened in Wedweil in South Sudan. I love that disadvantaged communities in Tamil Nadu in India, in Indonesia and in Uganda also have new opportunities through education and with employment. indigo has touched so many young people in Rwanda, and their future health outcomes and leadership opportunities have been significantly influenced. And in Indonesia, education, health and food security has become more accessible for many.

I so admire all those who throw their hearts and energy into the organisation. As we each grow to know the communities we partner with, and the Partnership Coordinators, and the dedicated Board Members, and so many marvellous volunteers as well as the extended world of supporters, it becomes understandable that with a will, a vision and so many generous supporters, much can be achieved.

We learn so much from each other, we become stronger ourselves knowing what others are doing. This collection of stories gives us a taste of the wide world of indigo foundation and I'm sure you will enjoy going deeper into the indigo world.

The story of indigo foundation

A profoundly different way of thinking and doing

It has been 20 years since a group of experienced development practitioners – believing in social justice and the power of communities to lead and control their own development – created a pioneering community development organisation. As indigo foundation marks our 20th anniversary, this chapter is dedicated to those who initiated, shaped and worked hard to realise their vision. They could not have imagined their legacy two decades on.

by Lyla Rogan, indigo foundation Chairperson

THE ORIGINAL IDEA

It was Sally Stevenson AM who had the original idea for indigo foundation. Frustrated and deeply disappointed with the inherently disrespectful, controlling and ultimately ineffectual way some of the world's largest aid agencies worked, Sally joined forces with other concerned women and they set up their own organisation. Together, they held a deep belief that it was possible to take a more creative, dynamic and innovative approach to international development, where local community partners were trusted to decide and lead their own development, supported through long-term partnerships. Those involved in the beginning also drew on their experiences working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and community development projects in Australia.

indigo foundation was born out of shared concerns and beliefs, and this remains one of its pivotal strengths today. The shared concerns related



to social, economic and gender inequalities; the concentration of economic and political power globally; environmental degradation; the erosion of diversity; the reluctance or unwillingness of many agencies to listen and engage communities in development processes; and the gaps between development rhetoric and practice. But it was a shared commitment to beliefs and principles – social justice, respectful relationships, community-owned and community-led development, cooperation, and the importance of action research and learning – that guided the founding thinkers in moving indigo foundation from an idea to a powerful reality.

GATHERING IMPETUS

In 1999, Sally brought together around 15 movers and shakers through two workshops to canvas what indigo foundation could be and do as an Australian-based international NGO. Most participants were from inside the aid sector, having worked for the government agency AusAID and other international and national NGOs. They wrestled with the big vision, the foundational principles and ambitions, and the practical realities of starting an organisation. They were both idealistic and pragmatic.

They called themselves ‘possibility explorers’, sharing experiences and readings, critically reflecting on the shortcomings of development practice and institutional aid arrangements, and together imagining a different way of doing development. All along, they firmly believed in the power of communities to achieve real change at a local level and to address systemic barriers to justice and equity over time.

Exploring the idea generated hope, vision and the firm belief that a different NGO could put power back in the hands of local communities, deliver great outcomes with local partners, and be a model of practice, research and learning that would benefit other NGOs and the international development sector.

Management Committee (2000–2001)

Sally Stevenson, Chair

Paula Gleeson, Treasurer

Zoë Mander-Jones, Secretary

Sally Blake, Member

Following the workshops, Sally Stevenson and Sally Blake carried the idea forward, bringing in other women who shared their beliefs and goals – Paula Gleeson, Margaret Easterbrook, Zoë Mander-Jones, Jenny Noble and Susan Engel. In the beginning they

were the committee, the funders, the volunteers, the brains trust and the promoters of indigo foundation. Friendships grew and deepened, but so did the passion for a new way of doing development and the capacity for respectful and, at times, vigorous debate.

The first management committee began its work in May 2000 following indigo foundation's incorporation as an association. The ambitions were big and the hard work had just begun. Importantly, indigo foundation's guiding principles – community ownership, sustainability, transparency and equity (see inside front cover) – were already firmly in place, together with a commitment to respectful relationships and mutual learning.

Those establishing indigo foundation were determined to bridge the 'research–action divide'. This meant ensuring sound research before a project was started, undertaking context-specific analysis based on the community's experience, and drawing on established theories and principles in project design. Part of our radical edge was this dual focus of empowering and listening to communities, and drawing on research and learning from indigo's own projects and development experience more broadly.

In recognising the importance of structural and political change for sustainable development, the early leaders referred to and used international instruments and agreements on human rights, political and civil rights, primary health care and health promotion. This gave greater legitimacy and power to their development objectives and approach. And

We were interested in building more equal partnerships and in understanding how we could support fledgling local organisations to shift the power dynamics embedded in their communities and engage at a structural level to achieve change.

– Sally Stevenson, indigo foundation Founder and Chairperson for over 15 years

it was anticipated that over time the international frameworks could be used by local partners and in Australia to advocate for change.

There was recognition from the very beginning that the organisation's future success and influence would rely on indigo foundation being respected within, grounded in and connected to the Australian context. Although small, indigo set out to create and model a different approach that would influence development practice more widely. Those who led the organisation back then knew this could only be achieved through participation in development discourse, building a network of supporters and believers, and linking to relevant social change movements in Australia.

THE ESTABLISHMENT YEARS

By the end of our first year of operation, indigo had generated \$24,000 in income. During the first few years, those forming the organisation gave a proportion of their consultancy income to support the projects. Sally Stevenson explains:

We believed the very high fees paid to international consultants, and the associated costs of deploying them, were unethical and effectively diverted funds from communities that needed them most. It was important that we practised this belief – putting our money where our mouth was – and so redirected 25 percent of any consultancy earnings to indigo foundation for its direct support of communities.

Income was also raised through membership fees and donations from people who strongly believed in indigo foundation's potential.

The early leaders were successful in bringing others on board with the vision for indigo foundation – both the principles and the possibilities. Being part of something new and quietly radical was an exciting prospect. Our membership grew steadily and individuals, businesses and professionals provided organisational support in development of policies, systems, getting the word out, building relationships and generating income. This was aided by Union Aid Abroad–APHEDA allowing indigo foundation to come under their Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status until it had gained its own. This lent credibility to fundraising efforts and the number of donors grew.

At the time, as a recent AusAID graduate and at 22 years of age, I didn't have much life experience let alone development experience, but I wanted to learn and contribute. indigo foundation trusted, supported and shared with me. I genuinely 'grew up' in the world of international development guided by indigo's principles of respect and partnership which I treasure to this day.

- Jenny Noble was Project Coordinator for Centro Feto, Timor-Leste, one of indigo foundation's first partnerships in Timor-Leste. She has served on the Management Committee and remains a strong supporter of indigo foundation.

indigo foundation's people in Australia, all of whom were volunteers, held to a flat decision-making structure, shared a commitment to social justice, had fun, argued respectfully, undertook multiple roles and always supported each other with kindness. Their motivation came from believing in an idea and forging a shared project together.

From the very beginning, our portfolio of projects was diverse – precisely because they were community led and responsive to local priorities. The aim was to partner with and fund local community-based organisations in marginalised communities, particularly those that had been overlooked by bigger agencies or put in the too-hard basket.

The first project started in early 2001. It came about through a partnership between indigo foundation, Family Planning Australia and communities in the Delha region of Rote Island, Indonesia, focusing initially on health issues, agricultural training and public infrastructure.

Then in late 2001, indigo began supporting the Sherrin Community Organisation in Sydney, a Hazara Afghan organisation offering education and community integration support to refugees on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs). Through this relationship, we joined a campaign to advocate for change in Australian government policies adversely impacting asylum seekers and refugees.

By 2004, indigo foundation was supporting four community partners and had plans to double this. Partnerships had been established with Lua Lemba Education and Community Development Foundation on Rote Island, Indonesia; Centro Feto (Women's Centre) in Oecusse, Timor-Leste; the Archdiocese of Honiara and Communities of Guadalcanal, in the remote Weathercoast of the Solomon Islands; and, a school in Borjegai in the Hazarajhat region, central Afghanistan. Each of these projects tells a different story of relationships, assessment of needs, community priorities, proposals that took shape and the nature of support offered.

indigo foundation offered me more learning about true partnership than I have gained in any other positions – paid or unpaid. The way meetings happened, the way we worked and learned together, and the way projects were supported – it was a profoundly different way of thinking and acting as an aid professional.

– Pat Duggan, first Project Coordinator for Program for Education and Awareness Building (PEAB), India; Development Advisor; Committee Member; and Partnership Coordinator for South Sudan (2018–2020)

Each community partnership was supported by a volunteer Project Coordinator, and early on these were mostly Management Committee members. The Project Coordinators supported the local partner both remotely and through visits to the community. In addition, they worked alongside the partner to build their capacity, and they gathered the information that was required for gaining financial support for the project and for accountability to donors. This model continues up to today.

PIONEERING A DIFFERENT APPROACH

The early projects demonstrated indigo foundation living out its principles and walking the talk of respect. There were big leaps forward and some stumbles in the partnerships that developed. From very early on, our approach was different, as reflected in these key premises:

- **Respectful partnership** – giving time and space to explore and build honest relationships, to develop trust and to reach agreement on the support needed in a given context.
- **Living by principles** – using the guiding principles (community ownership, sustainability, transparency and equity) as an ethical compass, as criteria for project decisions, in monitoring and evaluation and as a framework for collaboration and mutual learning about development practice.
- **Flexibility** – following the community's priorities and allowing partners to make mistakes, adjust activities and develop capabilities over time.
- **Listening, reciprocity and humility** – understanding that learning is necessarily a two-way process and that reciprocity in learning and relationships always has a two-way benefit.

- **Small can be BIG** – believing that small amounts of financial support within a trusted partnership can unleash the potential of local groups and be a powerful catalyst for change.
- **Providing core funding** – running against the trends of the day, being prepared to meet costs that other international development donors rule out through funding guidelines, such as salaries and training. This was based on a belief that most organisations are their people, and people should be paid equitably and their volunteer labour not exploited.
- **Staying the distance** – understanding that a partnership will take a long time to develop and mature and that development is never a tidy or linear process.
- **An eye to sustainability and addressing underlying causes of poverty and marginalisation** – recognising communities' strengths and supporting them to engage with broader structural inequalities.



Mama Augustina Adu weeding the shallot crop at the Oebela I women-run cooperative garden, Rote Island, Indonesia

In 2008, our tagline of ‘The first thing we offer is respect’ was coined, but respect has been at the heart of indigo foundation’s identity and approach since the very beginning. In the words of Zoë Mander-Jones, part of the founding group and a long-term Development Advisor to indigo foundation,

offering respect as the very first thing demands one withholds judgement and works towards equal and honest relationships. The tagline so wonderfully captures indigo foundation’s approach. Above all else, we held firm to the primacy of locally led action and partnerships based on genuine respect.

Twenty years on, indigo foundation holds true to the aspirations and principles that guided its establishment, and to the fundamental belief that it is communities who are best placed to understand and act on their own development priorities. Since 2014, Jemma Bailey has held the position of Executive Director and she continues to lead and inspire indigo foundation’s Australian team of staff, volunteers and supporters. Jemma’s leadership has been a major factor in indigo’s continuing success and the quality of support we offer to our community partners.

In total, indigo foundation has supported 27 partnerships in 15 countries, and our longest partnerships have lasted between 15 and 20 years (in Afghanistan and Rote, Indonesia, respectively). And we have steadily built a passionate supporter base who believe in our development approach, see themselves connected to our purpose and value the opportunity to support our community partners.

I conclude by thanking Sally Stevenson, Zoë Mander-Jones, Pat Duggan and Jenny Noble for sharing their experiences for this chapter and for the significant contribution they have each made to indigo foundation. All were involved in the early years and have served in numerous voluntary roles. They would want me to emphasise that they have worked, learned, laughed and shaped the organisation together with many other true believers.



HOW DID INDIGO FOUNDATION GET ITS NAME?

Hope and possibility were significant factors in choosing the name 'indigo foundation'. It lent itself to the acronym 'IF', reflecting the optimism and determination felt by those who were involved from the beginning.

Indigo is a plant cultivated and used by women across South East Asia and in other parts of the world. It produces a rich and beautiful dye that is used to colour cloth and threads for weaving, a predominantly female activity. Indigo dye comes from a scraggly plant that on first glance doesn't look like it will deliver much, but with care and nurture, it produces amazing, vibrant results. The plant's journey mirrors a belief in community-led and -owned development, which can be messy and slow to deliver, but is ultimately transformational in its impact. Choosing the name 'indigo foundation' also reflected a profound commitment to the power and importance of women and girls in development.

The logo – with the hummingbird and book design – came a little later. The book represents education, the bedrock of human development and opportunities. The hummingbird is small, agile and tenacious. Its beauty lifts the spirits and its adaptability is critical to its survival. These attributes speak to indigo foundation as a small, creative organisation that uses a light touch in its partnership and community development approaches.

the first thing we offer is **respect**





'I could not imagine that the day would come when students of our remote community would attend their classes in a proper building. It is so joyful for our students, especially for young girls, to be able to move from the mosque and old tents, and attend their classes in this historic building... I am from Borjegai Community and attended [an indigo-funded high school] ... After completing university, I returned and became the principal in this school... After four years working here, the joy and cheer that I saw today in the eyes of our students in the new classrooms brought tears in my eyes and helped me to understand what we can achieve when we work together for a common purpose.'

- School principal and local community elder

Students and families gather in Ghazni Province to mark the opening of a new school

Schools program, Afghanistan

‘indigo foundation has allowed me to give
back to “my village”

Since 2003, indigo foundation has partnered with shuras (community councils) in rural Ghazni and Maidan Wardak Provinces, improving access to education through teacher training, providing schoolbooks and the construction of school buildings. Ali Reza Yunespour, indigo foundation Partnership Coordinator, grew up in Borjegai and has worked with the shuras and community members to coordinate this project for over 10 years.

by Ali Reza Yunespour, Partnership Coordinator

It has been an honour and privilege for me to volunteer with indigo foundation – as an Advisor for the Borjegai School Project and Partnership Coordinator for the Afghanistan Schools Program – over the past 12 years. During this time, I have seen indigo grow from a very small group of volunteers to a trusted and capable partner organisation, and seen its enormous impacts on the development of primary and secondary education in the Afghan provinces of Ghazni and Maidan Wardak.

Our partnership with Borjegai’s schools began in 2003, one year after the United States attacked Afghanistan and toppled the Taliban regime. As part of ‘rebuilding’ state institutions, the new Afghan government and the international community invested in Afghanistan’s education system to build state institutions, eradicate poverty, and fight extremism and Taliban insurgency. There are no reliable government statistics for enrolment in study, but it is estimated that in 2019, 6–8 million students were enrolled in primary and secondary schools and over 300,000 students in public and private higher-education institutions.



Girls take centre stage at assembly to accept new books at their high school in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan

The Borjegai, Jirghai and Behsud communities have reopened their few existing schools, and established and registered new ones. Borjegai community members approached Salman Jan, a former Afghan refugee to Australia, and asked for school textbooks and a girls' school building. Prior to this, indigo had supported Salman's Sydney-based organisation that provided settlement services for Afghan refugees, most of whom had arrived by boats and held Temporary Protection Visas. Since 2003, the Borjegai-indigo partnership has provided four school buildings and furniture for nine Borjegai schools. It also influenced the neighbouring communities of Jirghai and Behsud, which have worked with indigo foundation since 2013 to improve education facilities and enhance the quality of education in their schools. To date, indigo's partnership with 22 schools in these three communities has transformed the local education landscape and played a significant role in building peace and state institutions in Ghazni Province.

For example, indigo foundation has helped the three communities build 11 school buildings and provide furniture, clean drinking water and toilets for 19 schools. In the past 17 years, these facilities have helped over 8000 students access safe and proper classrooms for the first time in their communities' history. In addition, indigo has provided learning materials, such as maths and science books and children's novels, for 15 schools in Borjegai and Jirghai. It has provided financial and non-financial support for schoolteachers, including supplementary salaries for

'Six years ago, I took my first daughter out of school in Grade 7 because we didn't feel safe for her to study in an open space. It was a common experience in our community ... [However], we have allowed our second daughter to continue her schooling, when she reached Grade 7 two years ago. It was because the new building, and now the new furniture, made us confident she would be safe while she is at school... At the same time, our first daughter encouraged us and asked us to allow her sister to continue her education and complete high school.'

- Parent of high school student

female teachers between 2013 and 2016. As a result, graduates from different Borjagai schools now have an average success rate of over 75% in the national university admission exams, much higher than the national average (around 50%) in public university and non-university higher-education institutions.

Aside from indigo foundation's impacts in our Afghan partner communities, it has become a trusted community development organisation in Australia. We have immensely benefitted from partnering with the Rotary Club of Ryde and Planet Wheeler Foundation, as well as individual supporters and friends in Australia. indigo continues to grow and develop this partnership in Ghazni Province.

At the same time, volunteering with indigo has helped myself and my extended family to settle in Australia. In the initial days of our arrival here as refugees, in 2005, my family and I came to know Sally Stevenson, Sarah Kelly, Susan Engel, Pat Duggan and Libby House. Together with my teachers in Marsden High School, they showed us Australia's beautiful beaches and introduced us to the great culture of volunteering. They visited our homes, shared Afghan and Australian meals, and accepted us the way we were.

My enduring friendships with them and other indigo supporters helped me to complete my schooling, attend university, and work in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and now at Melbourne University. I had the privilege to work at Auburn Diversity Services (2008–11), where I taught maths and English to school students from disadvantaged and culturally diverse backgrounds, and citizenship tests to older refugees and migrants. I helped around 70 families get their Australian citizenship!

More importantly, volunteering with indigo foundation has allowed me to give back to 'my village' and thank the community that played a significant role in my early education. In the 1990s, when I was a



Students enjoy their new classroom and furniture at a school in Ghazni Province, 2018

little child and attended the local mosque in Borjegai, our previous and current financial trustees in Afghanistan and the entire Borjegai community worked hard to hire mullahs to teach us religious texts such as the Qur'an and the Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Mohammad) and an additional teacher every year to teach us basic maths, science, geography and history. When they decided to rebuild the old mosque, they did not ask children like myself to stay home. Rather, they established two tents and did everything to ensure our education wasn't disrupted. As such, the community efforts during my childhood helped me have a stronger education foundation. I later excelled in refugee schools in Pakistan and finished as dux and vice-captain of Marsden High School in Sydney.

I am grateful for the opportunity to volunteer with indigo foundation. indigo's partnership with the schools in Borjegai, Jirghai and Behsud has provided myself and my extended family the rare opportunity to maintain socio-cultural relations with our birth community in Afghanistan, and to share the benefits of the mutual respect that indigo foundation and our partner schools have shown each other. At the same time, volunteering with indigo has given us the strength, resilience and friendships to settle in Australia and to learn about volunteering culture in this great country.

Lua Lemba, Indonesia

Learning, growing and making an impact for 20 years

The Lua Lemba Education and Community Development Foundation was indigo foundation's first partner. It is a volunteer-based community organisation that works to improve the education, health and wellbeing of people living in a network of villages in Delha, on the west coast of Rote Island in eastern Indonesia. Lua Lemba and indigo foundation began their partnership in 2000, and will conclude 21 years of working together in 2021.

Over the past 20 years, Lua Lemba and indigo foundation have worked together to increase opportunities for women and young people in Rote. While their first priority has always been education, the activities supported through this partnership have shifted over time, adapting to changing community needs and priorities. Lua Lemba's work has strengthened food security on Rote Island (see p27), built women's leadership and self-sufficiency, and strengthened community health outcomes. As an example, they have facilitated mother-and-child health workshops and developed a healthy schools program. In 2010, indigo supported Lua Lemba to launch a popular annual festival celebrating traditional Rotinese arts and culture (see p71).

The first initiative between indigo and Lua Lemba was to advocate for a senior high school in the western part of Rote, soon followed by a program which enfranchised women and other marginalised community members by facilitating the certification of births and marriages. This formalisation enabled women to vote, legally own land, attend higher education and inherit property – it brought about profound change in the participants' lives. Since then, indigo foundation has supported educational bursaries to students from kindergarten to university. Many of these bursary recipients have returned to Rote after graduating university to share their knowledge and contribute to the local community. We also supported training for kindergarten teachers and honorariums for trainee kindergarten teachers across 13 schools, to ensure a fair wage and encourage teachers to remain in their roles.



Children at a morning singing session at Sedoen Preschool in Rote, Indonesia. indigo foundation has worked with our partner Lua Lemba to fund training for early childhood teachers and stipends for trainee teachers across a network of kindergartens.

Oniesimus Ndun

*A school that
is now the
pride of the
Delha community*

Oniesmus Ndun, known as Pak Onny, is the current Chair of Lua Lemba, and this interview was translated by Peggy Dano, indigo foundation's Partnership Support Officer for Indonesia.

Tell us about the history of Lua Lemba. How did it begin?

Lua Lemba was formed because of the care and concern of community leaders and educational leaders in the Delha area of southwest Rote Island. Delha is in a remote area that did not have a senior high school before 2000. Many junior high school students could not go on to high school because of the long distance (20–30km) to the nearest school.

In June 2000, several community leaders and education leaders agreed to form the Lua Lemba Education and Community Development Foundation to lobby for a high school in Delha. In 2001, the foundation was launched with a strategy to open a small private high school on the existing junior high school campus, then to lobby for government funding. In 2002, with a small amount of funding from indigo foundation plus student fees of a few dollars to pay the teachers, a senior high school began operations outside of normal school hours.

The school soon outgrew its capacity, and Lua Lemba then successfully lobbied the government to build a public senior high school campus in Delha. This school now has over 600 students and attracts enrolments and teachers from surrounding islands.

After establishing the high school, Lua Lemba developed its health program by building small health outposts (Posyandu). These outposts allowed outreach and private health consultations with travelling nurses, and a revolving pharmacy where tuberculosis medication could be accessed and medicines bought at cost. As civil infrastructure in West Rote improved, Lua Lemba assisted the Delha Health Centre, offering counselling on reproductive health for the community, and providing counselling on HIV/AIDS for young people and high school students in the community.

Since 2005, Lua Lemba has supported vegetable growers and pig farmers with training activities in agriculture and livestock, and helping to provide agricultural equipment and vegetable seeds for farmers. As a result there are several farming groups that are already independent and can farm better. Their agricultural products are now sold at local markets as well as to hotels.

Starting in about 2010, Lua Lemba saw that some graduating high school students who had gone on to higher education could not complete their education because of their families' limited finances. Lua Lemba therefore helps by providing scholarship assistance for students from the elementary school level through to college students.

To preserve local culture, Lua Lemba also began to hold an annual Delha Cultural Festival in 2010 (see p75).

What achievement from the last 20 years are you most proud of?

Although it had very limited staff and financial resources at the time, Lua Lemba was able to establish a school that is now the pride of the Delha community and its surrounding areas. The result is that many graduates from this school are successful people.

Farmers assisted by Lua Lemba have become independent farming groups and operate as modern farmers. They have sold their produce to local markets as well as to hotels, and it can also be exported off Rote Island.

Students no longer drop out of school for economic reasons, and local culture can be preserved with the Cultural Festival.



Oniesimus Ndun and indigo's former Development Coordinator Libby House with a new water tank destined for the Oebela II women's cooperative garden, Rote Island, Indonesia

What makes for a strong partnership and collaboration?

Create smooth communication: Communication plays a very important role in strengthening cooperation.

Build trust and transparency: Lua Lemba truly understands that because of our mutual trust and transparency, our cooperation with indigo foundation since 2000 has become stronger. indigo foundation believes that Lua Lemba can manage its own finances appropriately, as per our cooperation agreement, and Lua Lemba is always open in the way we manage the organisation so that this work remains strong.

Appreciate shared commitments: Cooperation will become stronger if all participants respect each other and adhere to mutually agreed commitments.

What lessons have you learned from Lua Lemba's work over the past 20 years?

Hard work: To achieve a goal there must be effort and continuing hard work. Lua Lemba has limited funds and influence, but because of the effort and hard work of Lua Lemba staff, and the help of indigo foundation, Lua Lemba is able to help the community in Delha.

Caring for others: Through the activities carried out by Lua Lemba Foundation, it means that there are still so many people who have shown they need others to care for them.

Improved organisational management: With the cooperation of indigo foundation, we are gaining the ability to manage the organisation better.

What does Lua Lemba hope to achieve in the future?

Lua Lemba hopes to continue to be present in our community so we can continue to help it. We hope for continued support from indigo foundation or any other donors that are willing to help us continue our work. And we hope to expand the region we work in so we can help people outside the Delha area who really need help.

Yuliana Hangge



Image supplied by Yuliana Hangge

*It helped me
buy freedom*

Yuliana Hangge (Julie) graduated from university in 2012, the only person in her family to receive a tertiary education. Her studies were made possible by a bursary from Lua Lemba.

In her final year of study, Yuliana Hangge (Julie) wrote her thesis about the Delha language, spoken only on Rote island's west coast in Indonesia's East Nusa Tenggara Province. Julie, whose native languages are Delha and Indonesian, wrote a syntax analysis of how verbs are constructed in Delha – and she wrote it in English. She completed her four-year degree in linguistics and English literature in 2012 at the Institute of Foreign Language Studies Cakrawala Nusantara Kupang (STIBA CNK). Lua Lemba's bursary helped her buy books and pay the fees of 500,000 rupiah per semester.

Julie grew up in a farming family with four brothers in Nemberala. With the support of a bursary from Lua Lemba and her parents, she was able to stay in school and complete her senior high school certificate. The bursary, she said, 'helped buy me freedom'. Once she graduated, Julie worked for four years at Bank Tabungan Pensiunan Nasional (BTPN), a foreign-exchange bank that supports low-income groups.

Julie then married, and now stays at home to take care of her husband and baby. She sometimes speaks in English to her 2-year-old daughter Lahayroi Ahinoam, whom the family calls 'Oi'.

Yermi Lette



The best part
of my job?
I love teaching
the children!

Yermi Lette has been a kindergarten teacher in Rote since 2006, and her school was one of the first kindergartens to open on this island. In 2018, Yermi participated in one of the teacher trainings supported by Lua Lemba and indigo foundation. Armiyati Kasang from Rote Island interviewed Yermi and translated the text.

Armiyati Kasang: How did you become an early childhood educator here?

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

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

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

recognition, dancing, singing and craft. We also teach social behaviour and basic hygiene.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The best part of my job? I love teaching the children!



Otjiveg's Hendrik Morosi with volunteer gardeners inspecting crops at the Otjiveg gardens in Otjiwarongo, Namibia



SPOTLIGHT

Building food security through cooperative gardens

from little things, big things grow

Food scarcity looms large in many communities where indigo foundation has worked over the past 20 years and, as the devastating impacts of climate change play out, our partners are experiencing worsening dry seasons, water insecurity and extreme weather events. Beginning with our first partnership in Indonesia in 2000, and expanding to partnerships in the Solomon Islands, Namibia, Uganda and South Sudan, we have seen our partners develop and implement locally adapted, climate-smart initiatives to build food security for their families and communities.

Our support for food gardens began in Indonesia in 2000, when Belandina Mesak showed some indigo foundation volunteers her chilli plants growing in the sand. Belandina was a seaweed farmer living in a temporary village on the beach of Rote Island, in East Nusa Tenggara Province. Every year, Rote's inhabitants face a *musim lapar* (hungry season), their food supplies cut off by the monsoon, and Belandina's chillies gave her sparse diet of palm syrup, dried fish and stored grain some much-needed vitamins. With Belandina's community and our local partner Lua Lemba (see p17), we began a conversation about making the sandy soil more fertile, incorporating new crops into food production, and identifying where these crops might grow on an island with limited water. M'bore, a tiny village of 38 families about 4km from the coast but near a small permanent lake, was eager to participate – an Australian Volunteers International worker, Rosie Wheen, had earlier begun work with them by giving villagers 10 small packets of seeds.

After providing some basic permaculture training, indigo and Lua Lemba supported M'bore's food cooperative. Led gamely by the M'bore village head, who actively encouraged women to join the project as

equals, the cooperative fenced their garden, diversified their plantings, sold surplus food on foot then by bicycle, and set up a community bank to share their profits. Co-op members used profits from the gardens to build community sanitation facilities, buy motorbikes, construct permanent houses, send their kids to school and university, and participate in a snake-neck turtle conservation project. Since then, the M'bore cooperative has gone from strength to strength, now selling about 40 tonnes of shallots per year as a cash crop, as well as supplying local markets and a growing Rotinese tourist industry. The garden has been vital to the development of the small village of M'bore, and their example has inspired a further nine community gardens in Rote.

The majority of these Rotinese gardens have been established by, and continue to be led by, women. Our experience has shown that not only do the gardens improve nutrition and health, they build women's leadership and confidence. The gardens also provide a rare source of income which in turn boosts the opportunities and school attendance of local children.

These profound impacts led indigo foundation to support two other local partners in Indonesia to establish a similar network of cooperative food gardens. On the islands of Adonara and Lembata, PEKKA NTT (see p33) has established three new cooperative gardens which now support more than 70 women heads of household. And in the highland village of Apren in West Timor, the Nefo Ko'u Farmers' Cooperative has established a similar network of food gardens for 24 families. These gardens not only grow food for the farmers and their dependents, but produce surplus goods to sell at nearby markets. In July 2018, we brought representatives from each of our Indonesian partners face to face on Rote Island to learn from each other and to participate in a four-day organic-gardening training with a local permaculture worker, Gesti Sino from GS-Organik. Participants were inspired by sessions on compost, hydroponics, seed saving and yield planning, and have been busy putting Gesti's teachings into practice in their own community gardens.

Our local partners in Namibia, Uganda and now South Sudan have also developed creative and locally adapted programs to confront food shortages. In Orwetoveni in Namibia, our partners at the Otjiwarongo Development Program Fund (ODPF) played a significant role in establishing a local market-gardening initiative: Otjiveg, established on a municipal site by Hendrick Morosi with 15 unemployed locals. Hendrick had no experience in vegetable gardening but growing up in a rural vil-



Ibu Sarlipa Adu tending to crops at the Oebela II women's cooperative garden on the outskirts of the small village of Oebela, Rote Island, Indonesia

lage he had always felt a connection with the land. Maize, tomatoes and green peppers were growing before they asked our local partner for assistance with water supply, shading and poultry. Over the next two years, Otjiveg continued to experiment with crops and farming techniques, and a donated drip-irrigation system boosted the spinach harvest so much that several people were employed to sell the produce in town. In addition to providing fresh produce to members, Otjiveg's harvests are sold at the daily market and to local hotels, guesthouses and office centres. The organisation continues to flourish (now without indigo foundation support) and Hendrick and two partners applied for new council land in 2017 to set up a new agricultural project. Hendrick sees the potential to create jobs, teach students on-site, open a campsite and set up a profit-sharing venture. His new endeavour is just one of 19 farming projects that applied for the council land, showing the increased interest in market gardening in the area of Otjiwarongo.

It is an unfortunate truth, though, that not all seeds fall on fertile ground, and so it was with our network of six local partners in Uganda's Budaka District (see p39). The primary focus for our Ugandan partners is ensuring that children and young people impacted by HIV are able to stay in school, access training and confront ongoing stigma and

discrimination in their communities. Over a period of a few years, several of our partners also worked to establish cropping initiatives and animal banks in Budaka. After some experimentation and learning, it became clear that the food initiatives faced a number of hurdles, including a lack of agricultural skills, insecure access to water and tenure of farming land, and uneven sharing of benefits. For indigo foundation's part, we were unable to provide enough support to overcome these obstacles. This experience served as a strong reminder of the importance of building sound relationships and following our guiding principles: community ownership, sustainability, transparency and equity.

As we look to the future, we are excited about the possibility of partnering with a collective of women in Wedweil, South Sudan, who are determined to develop a food garden to confront chronic food shortages in the region. This work is in its early stages but we hope that 'from little things, big things grow'.

From small beginnings in a thatched hut on Rote Island, indigo foundation has been able to support a network of dynamic, varied and creative cooperative food projects in over 20 communities, led largely by collectives of determined and resourceful women. These projects have had far-reaching impacts – providing food and nutrition through lean times, building women's leadership and generating income so the gardens can be self-sustaining. Looking forward, we know that the impacts of climate change will loom large for our local partners, and we are determined to continue supporting their commitment and cooperative action to build long-term food security for themselves – we wish them fertile land and bountiful harvests!

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Theresa Huxtable



Image supplied by Theresa Huxtable

'It's the right thing to do'

Theresa Huxtable has been volunteering with indigo foundation since the early 2000s, mostly as a fundraiser and a connector. Over almost two decades, Theresa has drawn in her network of friends, family and colleagues in the Illawarra region of New South Wales, and organised unique and wonderful events. Among Theresa's events are Wollongong's largest (and most loved!) live-music trivia nights, the most recent of which brought together 500 people to support indigo foundation and our partners.

Theresa Huxtable first learned about indigo foundation when she heard Sally Stevenson, our founding Chair, speak. Theresa liked the simplicity of indigo's work, which is managed on a small scale that is 'more specifically focused, rather than being a big pot of money'. It is important to her that 'the body that's getting the money is in charge of how the money's spent'.

Theresa has organised gatherings like an opera performer singing arias in her garden at a breakfast concert and an outdoor flamenco evening. At these more casual occasions, where entertainment and wine come as part of the ticket, Theresa finds that people are more relaxed – the events are more engaging and raise more money. Theresa says it's important to work on creative ideas that are a bit different, which is why 'the trivia nights

are a real winner! They're fun, they bring in a lot and they're a chance to promote indigo's work'.

Theresa was also responsible for connecting indigo foundation with the advertising firm Saatchi & Saatchi, who donated their time to develop our logo and tagline (see p11).

The partnership that had the biggest impact on Theresa was our work with Lua Lemba in Indonesia (see p17), and in particular their work to enfranchise women and children by ensuring they had formal identity documents issued and registered with the government. Having access to official documents opened government services, like access to subsidised education and health services. For Theresa, the idea that 'you can offer so much to a person just by having a birth certificate was quite mind-blowing'. She says that 'it seemed just a practical, useful thing to do' and showed how 'empowering women is apparent in indigo's work'.

When Theresa isn't fundraising for indigo, she is a 'big climate-change activist' who has long been involved with the Greens. Theresa helped establish a climate-change group in Wollongong which organises letter-writing events and campaigns to shift to renewable energy and stop fossil fuel projects, such as Adani's proposed coal mine in Queensland's Galilee Basin. She also runs the Illawarra Film Society which shows 30 films a year. Theresa retired four years ago from the law school at the University of Wollongong and says her work with indigo is 'the best job she's got!' (She also has a new granddaughter called Quinn, so maybe she's changed her mind on that!)

Theresa summarises her contribution by saying, 'I'm in my 60s now and it's good to give something back. I'm privileged and it's the right thing to do.'

PEKKA NTT, Indonesia, & Hako Women's Collective, Bougainville

'I am motivated by the bonds of love
and the sisterhood'

Gender justice and the empowerment of women and girls have always been core to indigo foundation's work. This commitment can be traced from our earliest partnerships, to our newest ones. Starting in 2002 with Centro Feto (Women's Centre) in Timor-Leste, where we supported a refuge and counselling service for women and children fleeing domestic violence, until our most recent strategic planning in 2017, we have cemented indigo's long-term commitment to the empowerment of women and girls. In the partnerships we have established since then, we have chosen to work with organisations founded, developed and led by women – the Afghan Educated Women's Services Organisation (AEWSO) in Afghanistan (see p45), PEKKA NTT in Indonesia, and the Hako Women's Collective in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea. This article explores indigo's developing relationships with PEKKA NTT and Hako Women's Collective.

The relationship between indigo foundation and PEKKA NTT (formerly known as PEKKA Lodan Doe) began in 2017. Representatives of the World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights connected indigo with PEKKA NTT, and this led to a three-way collaboration supporting the PEKKA Education and Community Development Fund, funded by the World Congress. This fund helped girls and women from female-headed households to further their education into senior high school and university.

Based on Adonara and Lembata Islands in East Flores, Indonesia, PEKKA NTT supports and advocates for over 2600 women-headed households in the region, with a range of programs designed to

educate and empower local girls and women. PEKKA NTT belongs to a nationwide network of women-run collectives under the PEKKA umbrella. While the organisation's activities support economic independence for women-headed households across Indonesia, Nani Zulminarni, PEKKA's National Coordinator, states that its aim is 'to build 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 and belief systems that breed discrimination and poverty'.

PEKKA NTT's work has had a significant impact on its community. Over 19 years with the organisation, Bernadette Deram, Coordinator of PEKKA NTT, has seen 'the increase of self-confidence of PEKKA women and that PEKKA NTT has begun to emerge as a trusted leader in the village'. Ina Dette, as she's also known, reports that the children of PEKKA mothers 'have also started schooling to university, PEKKA women already own their own homes and are recognised [and] trusted to be local leaders in their respective villages'.

indigo foundation supports PEKKA NTT to provide bursaries so girls and young women from female-headed households can attend school and university, as well as establishing a network of women-run organic gardens that provide food and an important source of income for women and their families (see p27). PEKKA NTT also runs an annual children's festival which provides an opportunity for children to learn about local cultures and traditions (see p75).

In 2019, indigo foundation entered into its newest partnership with the Hako Women's Collective, based in Buka in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea. Founded in 2006 by a group of 650 women and 130 girls, Hako Women's Collective brings together women from the Haku language area to work on ending violence against women and children, food security, education, literacy, care for the environment and community development.

Originally from Sydney but with a deep history of engagement with the Bougainville independence movement, indigo foundation's Project Support Officer, Marilyn Havini AM, has worked with the women of Hako to develop and implement their vision since the organisation's inception. As well as promoting community development, Marilyn highlights how the organisation has also helped to strengthen community bonds:



Ina Bolen leads a session with PEKKA NTT's bursary recipients, reflecting on the challenges of schooling and the impact that receiving a bursary has had on their lives, Adonara Island, Indonesia

The women identify as [coming] from specific clans and tribes, various church denominations, and these were all torn apart by war. Our Hako Women's Collective brought them together and the unity and trust we developed to work together is the key to all our success and the changes that have happened for the better across the whole of Haku.

indigo foundation supports staffing and operating costs for Hako's Resource Centre (the Luman Hipakoko or 'a place to care for everyone') and the Women's Safe House (the Meri Seif Haus). The Resource Centre includes a library and literacy program, food security and environment programs as well as a place for women to meet. The Safe House also provides a vital service, where women and children facing family and sexual violence can stay temporarily, while also receiving counselling and referrals for longer-term support alongside interim protection orders or apprehended violence orders.

In the future, Marilyn hopes that the Hako Women's Collective can be a self-sustaining organisation that can be staffed adequately to

provide for 'all the services and programs that will always be needed in any healthy society'. Marilyn says, 'I am hoping that enlightened partnerships can not only assist with funding until we can grow our own economy, but will continue to build our capacity until our dream of self-reliance and Independence is realised.'

Ina Dette also hopes that PEKKA's work will build self-reliance in her community. She says that the dream for PEKKA's operations in the province of East Nusa Tenggara is that women 'can be independent, the children can go to school, have a place to produce threads for weaving, have a garden to grow cotton, and have a source of water to be able to irrigate gardens so that their work is no longer seasonal but can be all year round.'

Through their work, PEKKA NTT and Hako Women's Collective are demonstrating that women's empowerment is about more than just increased economic opportunities for women – it means women working together to build a strong community and address the structural, economic and cultural barriers that fuel inequality. As Marilyn Havini puts it, 'I am motivated by the bonds of love and the sisterhood that has overcome all obstacles and challenges to build and develop community according to our vision for our children and their children. It is really quite exciting to see the impact of our work and our organisation.'



The library at Hako's Resource Centre is a thriving hub, offering literacy programs and supporting local students after school, Autonomous Region of Bougainville



The Budaka coalition of community organisations, in Uganda, supports over 2000 children and young people to stay in school annually, including basic school supplies, after-school activities and access to counselling

Budaka Community Coalition, Uganda

‘They feel we’re a part of them’

Since 2009, indigo foundation has partnered with six small but highly effective community-based organisations in Uganda’s Mount Elgon region. They aim to strengthen the capacity of families and communities to care for over 2000 at-risk children and young people impacted by HIV, many orphaned and from child-headed households. Our partners have supplied education materials to vulnerable children to support them to stay in school, and run programs to reduce the ongoing stigma of HIV. They also provide counselling training for youth leaders and school teachers on how to support vulnerable children and young people (and in particular those grieving or traumatised due to HIV/AIDS), assist HIV-positive people with in-home support, develop vocational training and provide funding for pilot income-generating activities.

Our six partners have been Galimaagi HIV/AIDS and Grieving Orphans Association, Iki Iki AIDS Community Initiative (IACI), Kakule HIV/AIDS and Grieved Families Association (KAGA), Manuka-Kaama Community Development Initiatives (which exited the partnership in 2018), Nasenyi Community Action for Social Development (NACOMAS) and Trinity Childcare Ministry (TCCM).

Joyce Katooko (Joy) has been indigo foundation’s Liaison Officer in Budaka District, Uganda, since 2010. She was first introduced to indigo in 2009, through the Hon. Sam Muloni, a local government representative who has been active in community development. Joy then volunteered to coordinate indigo’s relationships with six small community-based organisations which support orphans and vulnerable children. Joy has found indigo ‘such a great organisation to work with ... it has really taught me a lot about social work.’



Our Liaison Officer Joyce Katooko facilitating a community meeting in Budaka, 2016

Joy has served as advisor, mentor and sometimes Project Manager for our partners, always working with them in their own communities. Joy's commitment and the respect she inspires in indigo, our partners and the Budaka community have been the key to the project's impact and longevity.

In addition to Joy's Bachelor of Social Work and Social Administration, she has completed post-graduate qualifications in management and human resources. Before beginning her profession, Joy had an entertaining stint as a news anchor and receptionist at Faith Radio in M'bale, and worked as a Client Liaison Officer with Marie Stopes Uganda until September 2014. These achievements were not easy to come by – after her father died in 2002, Joy needed support from her older sister to finish senior high school and university. Her mother Janet Kataike was responsible for her own children, nine of her grandchildren orphaned by HIV/AIDS, and other orphaned children. Situations like these are very common in Budaka, and Joy knows her mother is a 'great woman'. Joy herself is now the mother of three-year-old Genesis.

Being a Liaison Officer involves ‘going to the grassroots and really finding out what people are going through’. Joy’s primary task is sharing information and providing funds from indigo to our partners, and sending their plans, budgets and reports back to Australia. But because these are grassroots organisations which are gaining experience in development, Joy often helps them plan their budgets and understand indigo’s reporting needs. Joy and her two co-signatories withdraw and distribute funds according to these budgets, and she then monitors that the money is spent on agreed items and distributed to the correct beneficiaries. Most of the work in Budaka involves distributing supplies so vulnerable children can attend school – uniforms, stationery, mathematical sets, calculators and reusable sanitary pads for the girls. Because of coronavirus, most beneficiaries have been learning at home. Joy also organises joint planning meetings for partners ‘so we meet and share ideas together and organisations can learn from each other.’

In addition, Joy coordinates indigo foundation visits to Uganda, finds the visitors safe accommodation, supports them in monitoring, and interprets for them as they visit our partners and their beneficiaries. Joy knows how important it is to speak to people in their own language: ‘when you find someone who speaks your local language, you really open up – they feel we’re a part of them.’ Joy does her work in Luganda, Lugwere, Lunyole, Lumasaba, Lusoga, a little Swahili and English.

As an orphan herself, Joy says, ‘being part of the children’s success stories makes me feel great. When they’re talking about indigo foundation, definitely I know I am somewhere in their mind.’



Ceremony at camp as kangaroos cook on fire, Nyirripi, Tanami Desert



Practising ceremonial dances and songs was a key part of the cultural camps

Nyirripi, Tanami Desert, Australia

With a renewed sense of pride in their culture

From 2010 to 2016, indigo foundation partnered with the Nyirripi Community and Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC) in the Northern Territory to support an inter-generational cultural knowledge transmission project. The project was established at the request of Elders and Cultural Custodians and took the form of an annual cultural camp. Five cultural camps were held over the six years of the partnership. indigo foundation's Partnership Coordinator Alice Roughley participated in the camp in 2015 and shared her experience.

WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that the following story may contain names and/or photographs of deceased persons.

The Tanami Desert is a vast area of dry, red sandy plain and dunes in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. It's called Chana-mee or 'never die' in Warlpiri, after desert rock holes said never to run dry. Nyirripi, in the Tanami's north west, is home to a small community of about 250 people. Many experience poor health and lack employment opportunities, but Warlpiri culture and traditions remain strong.

The Nyirripi-indigo foundation partnership saw the community spend time on Country in cultural camps, away from the town. 'Old people' came to pass on traditional knowledge that would help the people and community stay strong; young people learnt and practised ceremony for their genders and skin groups. Male and female elders taught ceremonial dances, songs and stories, as well as hunting, collecting bush tucker and digging for water.

At the start of the 2015 camp, elders headed off early to the dry river bed to get a shelter ready, swags were loaded on trailers, men and boys

headed up the mountain for ochre and old ladies scattered in search of crowbars for the hunt.

Hunting was the focus and the highlight of Saturday. The little boys were up at the crack of dawn and two senior men led them off early. To the ladies' delight, they returned with a large roo hanging from the bull bar. With not a moment wasted, the ladies gutted and prepared the kangaroo for the fire.

As she sang Warlpiri songs, Old Alice, a senior Nyirripi Traditional Owner, showed the young girls her great skill in preparing the kangaroo – not a scrap was wasted. Lee cooked damper while the kangaroo cooked in a pit of hot coals. Others collected bush tucker, honey ants and witchetty grubs and seeds for breads, then quickly prepared two more kangaroos that the boys brought back.

On late Saturday afternoon, Lance painted the boys and they danced by the fire as Old Alice sang. We all laughed when the boys decided not to use the ochre they collected as they had 'just bought new sheets'! In a light-hearted moment Alice wondered why she was singing for a male dance, and the women began teaching the young girls traditional dance and song.

After all the hunting and feasting, most were in bed and asleep very early that night, many with a renewed sense of pride in their culture.



Elders at the 2015 cultural camp share knowledge about digging for honey ants

WEC & AEWSO, Afghanistan

‘Education is the first step to empowerment’

The Women’s Empowerment Centre (WEC) was set up within the not-for-profit Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education in Kabul (now Gawharshad University). Its aim is to provide a supportive environment for women to access quality, affordable tertiary education and to participate actively in academic and public life. indigo foundation’s partnership with WEC began at its establishment in 2011, through a connection with WEC director and former UNIFEM/IDP Peace Scholar, Nasima Rahmani. indigo foundation provided seed-funding to help WEC establish a scholarship program for educationally and financially disadvantaged women, helping them access a quality education in law, political science and economics, and to provide capacity-building opportunities for female students. indigo has wound down its support of WEC as the centre progressively attracted other donors following Gawharshad’s promotion to university status.

The Afghan Educated Women’s Services Organisation (AEWSO) is a women-led organisation from Kabul, established to break down barriers for tertiary-educated women finding work in Afghanistan and to defend their rights in both the public and private sphere. It was co-founded in 2017 by Dr Nasima Rahmani (founding Director of WEC). In 2016, we partnered with the University of Technology Sydney to support AEWSO’s first substantive initiative – a research project that sought to identify challenges and opportunities for Afghan graduate women in seeking employment. The research has now concluded and will inform the basis of AEWSO’s future programs.

by Penelope Hanley

Afghanistan has a strong history of social justice campaigns and women’s advocacy, despite the country’s long history of conflict and political instability. One leading activist is the lawyer and academic, Dr Nasima Rahmani, who has made a tremendous contribution to Afghan women’s legal and education opportunities.

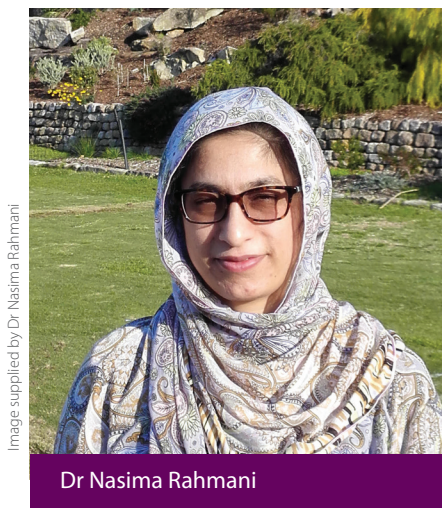


Image supplied by Dr Nasima Rahmani

Dr Nasima Rahmani

Nasima Rahmani is based in Kabul but has lived and studied in Australia. Nasima went to school and university at a time when bombing and rocket attacks in Kabul and other major Afghan cities threatened peace and security. It ultimately took Nasima 12 years to complete her undergraduate law degree, including a five-year hiatus during the early years of the Taliban. Nasima obtained her Bachelor of Laws in 2003 from

Kabul University, and finally gained a Master of Laws from the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) in 2007, achieving outstanding results. Her master's degree was completed with the support of a UNIFEM/IDP Peace Scholarship to UTS.

Upon returning to Afghanistan, Nasima continued to raise awareness about women's rights, as well as designing and managing education projects and programs. Nasima and her WEC colleagues also developed training manuals, contributed to legal services and planned legal projects to assist victims of domestic violence. In addition, Nasima wanted to promote gender equality and education for Afghan women in her country's higher-education system, so she and her colleagues designed and opened the first academic program in Gender Studies, offered through Gawharshad University since 2012. Nasima was passionate about doing what she could to broaden the scope of opportunities for women whose education was interrupted by war, cultural factors, poverty or children. 'I believe education is the first step to empowerment,' she said.

Nasima's hard work and commitment to Afghan women's issues saw her win the UTS Alumni Award for Excellence in 2012 for her significant contribution to the human rights and educational opportunities of women in Afghanistan. She was also awarded the UTS Chancellor's Award for Excellence in 2012 and Advance, a group of global industry leaders, awarded her an Advance Global Australian Alumni Award in 2015. More recently, with the financial support of the Max Planck Foundation for International Peace and the Rule of Law, located in

Germany, Nasima undertook a doctorate at UTS on Afghan women's financial rights after divorce.

Nasima's thesis is one of the first attempts to give voice to the divorced women of Afghanistan, who 'have no share in the family assets that are built during the couple's married life'. Nasima added, 'Women make sacrifices for their married life and invest in it by giving their time, energy and money if they have an income. When the marriage breaks down, the husband gets everything, including the children.' Women can claim the children for a limited number of years (boys until the age of seven, and girls to the age of nine) but they have to walk away empty-handed from the marital home. Nasima hopes that her thesis becomes an advocacy tool to allow these women to live more dignified and economically secure lives.

indigo foundation assisted Nasima to initiate a scholarship program for women students in Gawharshad and supported the establishment of the Women's Empowerment Centre (WEC), of which Nasima was the first director, to generate further training programs for female students. Nasima said, 'indigo foundation's initial contribution was of paramount importance. It enabled the centre to build its profile and has attracted four other major organisations so far to fund the initiative.'

Nasima Rahmani says nothing has satisfied her passion for making change in women's lives as much as the outcomes of this scholarship program. She is immensely proud of the young women leaders who have come through: journalists, educators, lawyers, NGO workers and IT professionals are some of those who have received WEC scholarships. They are now great contributors to their family economies and able to play a public role in their society.

Through its partnerships supporting women's education and empowerment in Afghanistan and elsewhere, indigo foundation sees the incredible ripple effect in the development of communities, gender equity and livelihoods. Through the WEC scholarship program, which has received support from indigo foundation and now receives increasing support from local businesses and international donors, WEC is achieving its aim of enabling disadvantaged women to gain access to higher education in law, political science and economics.

For over two decades, women have slowly gained better access to education and the opportunities this opens up. As demonstrated through

WEC and AEWSO, educated women go on to take up leadership roles within their communities and in the institutions that shape and govern Afghan society. Through their efforts, women's empowerment has had a transformative and positive benefit for society as a whole, especially for people who have been traditionally marginalised (both socially and economically).

Note: At the time of publishing, soon after the Taliban's return to power, indigo foundation is gravely concerned that the gains of the last 20 years will unravel to the detriment of women, families and Afghan society at large.



The Women's Empowerment Centre (WEC) scholarship recipients of 2020, in Kabul, Afghanistan

Frishta Matin



Image supplied by Frishta Matin

*I believe
education is
the only way*

Since 2011, the Women's Empowerment Centre has provided scholarships to 259 female students. One of these students, Frishta Matin, shares her story here.

by Frishta Matin

My name is Frishta Matin, and I was born in Ghazni Province in 1992. I have two bachelor's degrees, from Gawharshad University (GU) in law, and the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) in political science and public administration. I also did my minor in gender studies: I am passionate about women's rights with a keen interest in education and gender.

I have also been involved in various leadership and exchange programs. I am a SUSI—Women Leaders alumna, and in 2012 I was an exchange student in the Youth Solidarity and English Language Program. I also was a participant in the Gender, Sustainable Livelihood, Human Rights and Peace capacity-building program organised by Sangat, a feminist network in Nepal. I used to work as Peace and International Relations Manager at GU and Project Manager for the Linda Norgrove Foundation (LNF), based in Scotland; currently I'm the LNF Country Director.

I got a scholarship from the Women's Empowerment Centre (WEC) in 2012 when I was struggling with my GU tuition fees. My father was the only one encouraging me to study and become an independent woman, but it was difficult for him to financially support me. I knew about WEC's scholarships

because Dr Rahmani was my professor. I applied for both a scholarship and volunteer work and I got selected for both. For the first year I had a 50% scholarship, the next year a full scholarship. After a year I became a permanent, salaried staff member at GU.

After graduating from law, I got another scholarship to AUAF. It was difficult to work with GU and LNF and study at the same time, but I have a life partner who has the same attitude towards my studies as my father. In 2018, I started my Master of Public Law at Islamic Azad University Afghanistan. I believe education is the only way girls can change their lives.

Being an educated girl and a financially independent woman helped me find a good life partner and a different life than other Afghan girls. I paid for half of my marriage ceremony and I asked my in-laws to let me decide on my behalf. Many women aren't given the right to divorce, to get an education, to have a job and to have property rights. I owe my life to GU and AUAF.

In April 2019, I got the chance to study at the University of Education in Freiburg, Germany, for a four-month research program. This let me explore new places and improve my skills. In Germany I found time to travel to other countries like France, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Belgium and Poland. For me as an Afghan girl, this was a really different experience which changed my life.

Mahalir Sakthi, India

A small beginning is essential for a greater change in society

Mahalir Sakthi started in 2005, with the aim of empowering the most disadvantaged children and women in the slums of Madurai, Tamil Nadu, to escape from poverty. Mahalir Sakthi aims to achieve this goal by providing educational encouragement, guidance and support to school children and providing vocational training for unemployed youth and women as a means to promote self-employment.

indigo foundation has partnered with Mahalir Sakthi since 2012 to support programs, including a network of after-school tuition centres, a tailoring centre and typing school, a domestic workers' union to push for fair wages and conditions for Dalit women, and a health program including quarterly GP clinics and health lectures.

Gunaseeli (or Guna) Vincent and Grace Ganthimathi are the power-houses behind Mahalir Sakthi, an organisation whose name means 'women's power'. They run empowerment programs for women and children from a small building in Madurai, once their family home. Guna came up with the idea and had the connections for raising initial donations, while her sister Grace has taken care of day-to-day management from the beginning. Guna and Grace's own story is a remarkable one, coming as they did from a large Dalit (formerly 'untouchable') family to now work for Dalit and other disadvantaged communities.

Guna and Grace are two of ten children raised in a small thatched hut on the outskirts of Madurai, in an area that later became a major slum. Their father worked as a low-level employee in the Indian Railways, sometimes borrowing money to meet the family's needs; the monthly



Guna Vincent (far left) and Grace Ganthimathi (far right) at Mahalir Sakthi's anniversary celebrations in Madurai, India, 2018

payments too often left them in a cycle of debt. The children went to local public schools and worked to support the family in the evenings and holidays.

GUNA'S STORY

Guna was a studious and determined child who completed 11th Standard and graduated First Class. With support from her brother, she studied Tamil literature (graduating in the top five), then a local pastor helped her study a postgraduate diploma in social work and community development in Bangalore, Karnataka. She learned both English and Kannada, the local language, to do so, at a time when it was a big deal for a girl to go away to college. On completing her studies, Guna returned to Madurai and became a women's coordinator with the NGO People's Education for Action and Liberation (PEAL). During this time, Guna married Vincent Manoharan – who later became a prominent Dalit human rights activist – and had their daughter Monica. Guna then became a leader in the first campaign in Tamil Nadu to organise quarry workers to fight for better pay and conditions.

In 1977, Guna sat the Central Government competitive exam, and was offered a job in the Bangalore Ministry of Finance. Guna and Vincent decided that she would continue in the Central Government, as her position and salary were better, and Vincent would quit his government job to do social work with PEAL. The family looked after Monica and their second daughter Veronica when she was born five years later. Guna eventually retired in 2008 and threw her energy into Mahalir Sakthi, after serving nearly 30 years in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Delhi. Throughout her career, Guna promoted women's rights in her workplace, and volunteered and held honorary positions with local NGOs, networks and movements.

GRACE'S STORY

Grace completed 10th Standard at school then two years' study as a paramedic nurse. She joined the Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary in Madurai as a social worker in their extension program. For the first four years, she served as a health worker, organising and working in medical camps for the poor and also doing health training for women. For the next 10 years, Grace worked as a community organiser, unionising women, garbage scavengers, rickshaw pullers, cobblers, domestic workers and other groups. She worked to get scavengers basic protective equipment and better pay and conditions. During this time, a protest was held to seek justice for a woman in a rape case. Grace was arrested with other human rights activists; her brother-in-law Vincent, as her lawyer, ensured that she and her fellow activists were released without charge.

While working for the Theological Seminary, Grace married Raju and had two sons, Anbu and Kamalesh. Her husband asked her to stay home with the children, which she did for a few years. Grace says her years with the seminary gave her so much, including great skills, perception, strength and the power of resilience. Grace is a hard-working and assertive person, known for her active work, commitment and kindness in relating to people.

MAHALIR SAKTHI IS BORN

In 2005, Guna saw that NGOs for women in Madurai slums did not adequately address issues facing Dalit or other disadvantaged women, like the dirty, degrading, physically exhausting nature of their work and

the fact that Dalit women were often not allowed into people's houses to do domestic work. Dalit children generally followed their parents into difficult livelihoods and Guna believed that a focus on children's education would offer the next generation the chance for a better life. She knew what an excellent community worker Grace was and thought that together they could set up an organisation. Guna and Grace got the agreement of their family members to use their old family home, and they started raising money from friends and family members. They even took out a bank loan to construct a small building for Mahalir Sakthi to work from.

Guna was connected to Social Awareness Society for Youths (SASY), an organisation which works for Dalit empowerment, and approached them to support Mahalir Sakthi. SASY contacted indigo foundation in 2012 and we have supported Mahalir Sakthi's work ever since. Mahalir Sakthi runs high-impact, community-led programs in the slums of Madurai. Its centre is a hub of activity, welcoming people from all religions and groups, and it has earned deep support and trust in the community. Mahalir Sakthi's work includes after-school tuition; human rights training; capacity building; teaching and celebrating local culture; training in tailoring, typing and other areas for women's empowerment; health clinics and lectures; advocating for access to government programs; legal help; and so much more.

From small beginnings, Mahalir Sakthi has built an active and powerful community hub. In Guna's words:

In [the] Indian context, women are the backbone of every family. Like a candle, they melt [themselves] and help the family, husband, children and society. But they do not realise their power ... Through education we try to empower the young people, to create [a] decent and dignified life and to redeem human dignity. We need 'Women's Power' for this hard task and we are achieving it.

Club Rafiki, Rwanda

'I saw that this program has transformed my daughter completely'

indigo foundation has partnered with Club Rafiki, a local grassroots organisation in Rwanda, since 2012. The club is a not-for-profit youth-focused organisation based in Nyamirambo, a district in Kigali known for its high rates of youth unemployment and poverty. Established in 1974, Club Rafiki works to improve gender justice and health, education and well-being outcomes for young people.

The partnership between indigo foundation and Club Rafiki has been in place for over eight years, but Club Rafiki itself has a much longer history. Founded by the Congregation of Dominican Fathers in Kigali in 1974, the club has long been a place for young people to come together. In 1990, long-existing tensions between the Rwandan government and the opposition Rwandan Patriotic Front erupted into civil war, culminating in the 1994 genocide. Like so many Rwandans, club members were affected by the violence and the club buildings suffered significant damage.

With much hard work, the club was rebuilt by the community and young people returned. With its talented staff, Club Rafiki is now a thriving hub for young people, offering a range of innovative and high-impact programs – from education to sport, drug awareness to sexual and reproductive health services. Club Rafiki's success in supporting young people to have hope for their futures has been formally recognised by the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame.



The relationship between Club Rafiki and indigo foundation began around 10 years ago, when David and Mandy Wheen, while working in Rwanda, learned about the club and its programs. They were keen to make a contribution, so in 2012, through Rwandan Government contacts and with support from indigo foundation, a partnership was established with Club Rafiki.

The first focus of our partnership was supporting Club Rafiki to establish the Urban Dance School, Rwanda's first hip-hop school with dance classes for young people aged between 6 and 18. The program grew quickly and continues to be in high demand – on average over 100 young people per week now participate in free dance classes led by young trainers. The trainers' skills have blossomed to the point where they are recognised in international talent competitions.

Club Rafiki then connected the dance school to their youth sexual and reproductive health programs, using dance to engage young peo-

ple in education about sexual and reproductive health and connect them to counselling and testing. Information sessions on sexual health and drug awareness are regularly given at the end of dance classes and Club Rafiki has trained a cohort of dancers to be peer-to-peer sexual-health educators. Public outreach events featuring Club Rafiki's dancers now attract thousands of young people, who then receive sexual-health and drug-awareness information, counselling and the option of getting tested for pregnancy and HIV. Through the dance classes, and with ever-increasing demand, Club Rafiki has expanded its programs for young people into rural villages around the capital of Kigali.

From its roots as a sports club focused on boys, Club Rafiki now has a deep commitment to gender equity in all programs, promoting – and achieving – equal participation by girls in dance classes and other activities, and running programs specifically focused on girls' leadership, mentoring and skills development. Although the parents of some girls were initially concerned about girls and boys mixing together at the club, over time they felt more relaxed about their daughters attending program activities. Club Rafiki has engaged parents and allayed their anxieties. As the mother of a 17-year-old noted, 'Before I used to refuse my daughter to be part of this dance issue, but nowadays if she is late for practice I would ask her myself, "Why you don't go for practice?", because I saw that this program has transformed my daughter completely.'

In 2018, with support from indigo, the Our Girls program emerged in response to some of the barriers encountered by young Rwandan women, providing space for them to discuss personal and social issues and seek solutions. Practically, the program provides targeted information on sexual and reproductive health, computer literacy, positive social

'I'm very happy, even my mother is so proud of me for receiving a Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Golden certificate, this is the biggest achievement to me. When I started to attend workshop in English Corner I was very shy and I couldn't speak in English or write a story but through more practice and inspiration from my tutors today I have two stories in ECW books and a certificate from England. I believe English Corner has played a big role to develop me and promote my hidden talent of story writing.'

- Mutesi*, aged 16

media engagement and participation in the English Corner Workshop on weekends and during school holidays. As English literacy has improved, two books of local stories, *Rise of Hope* and *Shining Dreams*, have been published.

Our Girls also engages the broader community through dialogue on gender-justice awareness, promoting the rights of girls and celebrating the International Day of the Girl Child each year. This is creating an enabling environment for girls and young women to reach their full potential.

With dedicated and creative staff, Club Rafiki continues to go from strength to strength. The long-term partnership with indigo has provided a strong base from which the club is developing other connections to expand its work. Club Rafiki has an innovative, diverse and vibrant program of activities to support and empower young women and men, and we, at indigo foundation, are proud to be their partner.



Peer-to-peer counsellors trained by Club Rafiki share information on sexual and reproductive health at outreach events, in schools and through Club Rafiki's sexual health clinic, Kigali, Rwanda

Beatrice Uwase



Our dream
will come true

This story and artwork are the work of 18-year-old Beatrice Uwase, a participant in Club Rafiki's English Corner Workshop. This story was published as part of a Club Rafiki anthology.

I am a young girl I study in P5. I wish to be an excellent doctor. Is it possible for me to be a future doctor as I feel it now? Yes I will! Because I have a will there is a way. A wise saying say that Education is a key; When I heard that expression at the first time I was astonished at the meaning of the word, I asked myself what does a key do? the answer is it opens the door! Then I [realised] that the wise word was refer to the fact that education will open so many doors for me and you. When I am in class I follow everything from my teacher, I like to ask questions where I don't understand well, every Friday our teachers give us many different homework that is my occasion to revise my lessons while I am doing them, I can't miss any homework. I do that because I want to be a doctor. Friends and colleagues let us value education because our dream will come true spot on through Education is a first step to the better mind for better life.



A young Dalit student creating a watercolour painting at PEAB's summer camp, Maduranthakam, India

Program for Education and Awareness Building (PEAB), India

The seeds of an education project were planted

The Program for Education and Awareness Building (PEAB) is a community-based initiative which aims to strengthen Dalit children's access to education. Its work is auspiced and supported by an Indian Dalit rights organisation called the Social Awareness Society for Youths (SASY). Over the last 20 years, PEAB has changed the lives of hundreds of marginalised children in a network of rural villages in Tamil Nadu and played a part, alongside many other organisations, in a Dalit rights movement that has seen significant changes in the lives of India's Dalit communities. indigo foundation has partnered with PEAB since 2007.

This article draws on interviews with Annie Namala and Semmalar Selvi, driving forces behind indigo foundation's partnership with PEAB. Annie is the founder and Executive Director of the Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion, and Semmalar is a Dalit woman, human rights activist and an Assistant Professor in Social Work at Loyola College in Chennai. They are community leaders who have spent over 15 years working with Dalit communities to address caste-based discrimination.

The Dalit and Adivasi groups, previously known as 'untouchables' and 'tribals', sit outside India's caste system and yet are considered at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. Dalits are often forcibly assigned the most dirty, menial and hazardous jobs, and have limited access to resources, services and development, which in turn keeps most Dalits in acute poverty. Across India, people from Dalit, Adivasi and other marginalised groups experience human rights abuses from dominant caste members, and Tamil Nadu is no exception.

The Program for Education and Awareness Building (PEAB) was founded in the late 1990s when a priest working in Maduranthakam noticed the high rates of children dropping out of school; he reached out to his friend, Ms Annie Namala, to start a small education project. Maduranthakam, 90km southwest of Tamil Nadu's capital of Chennai,

is a rice-growing area and most members of the Dalit community are engaged as labourers in the rice fields. Lack of resources and the need to spend all day in hard physical labour meant that few families could prioritise education. While children had access to school, they had limited opportunities to study at the end of the school day, few supports to complete the challenging curriculum and they faced discrimination at school because they were Dalits.

And so, the seeds of an education project were planted. Annie and local community member and organiser, Mr C. Gunudayalan, worked with the community to set up Village Education Centres (VECs) in the Dalit areas of Maduranthakam that would provide after-school tuition for children. Classes were run by volunteers from the same villages who had completed enough education to tutor other students. They offered encouragement, support and an incentive to learn.

Reflecting on these early days, Annie remembers some of the challenges. Finding volunteer tutors was difficult as few people from within the villages had completed secondary education, let alone trained as teachers. Qualified teachers from outside the area would not come to these remote villages to tutor Dalit children; if they were prepared to come, they often brought discriminatory attitudes that would not benefit the students. In response, PEAB focused on how the after-school tuition centres could motivate and encourage students, and how tutors could be role models.

Helping the children to go beyond primary education was also a challenge. This began to change once Mr G. Chezhiyan, a retired principal from a government school, joined as a program manager. A Dalit man himself, and the first in his family to get an education, he overcame many challenges to become a teacher and was passionate about Dalit children's education. He guided PEAB to open a centre with skilled teachers in a central location, that would support children through the vital 10th Standard Board Exam. This is the most important exam in India's school system, but in Maduranthakam the majority of children did not pass, or dropped out too early. Those who succeeded were often left unsure of what to do next. As the classes flourished and the exam preparation program bore fruit, PEAB began to see results that they are justly proud of: around 90% of students in the exam-preparation classes passed their examinations.



Students engrossed in learning at one of PEAB's Village Education Centres, Tamil Nadu

Annie Namala also recalls other program successes. For example, the centres' reputation grew so strong that some families from dominant castes wanted to send their children there. While the centres took one or two of them, as Annie points out, 'The fact that they were wanting to come to where children from the Dalit community were, that showed that it was considered an effective program.'

As it grew, PEAB has continued to develop its approach. Since 2010, PEAB has been led by Ms Semmalar Selvi. Under Semmalar's guidance, PEAB has added a focus on personal development and leadership, running summer camps directed at careers, education and creativity, and launching the Ambu Thatha Children's Club to promote reading and social awareness.

Semmalar points to a diverse range of recent achievements. There are academic achievements, like a student at one of the VECs placing first in his school in the 2017–18 academic year, and the achievements of Shobana, a VEC student-turned-volunteer who is now on her way to study social work at university, with the intention of coming back to the community to work for Dalit rights. Semmalar is also proud of PEAB's non-academic wins, like bringing children on their first visit to Chennai and seeing the excitement on their faces.

Semmalar notes how PEAB has continued to strengthen its programming:

Our children's summer camps are conducted in more creative ways to enable children to learn as well as develop life skills. We have more city-based/student volunteers who are supporting the

initiatives of PEAB activities in the community, and we have built a lot of trust among the parents, who support a lot of our initiatives.

In the future, Semmalar hopes to see the Vocational Education Centres become self-sufficient community-owned centres, to achieve zero school drop-out rates in those communities, and to see educational models evolving to be more child-centred.

Today, PEAB is a strong community-led organisation. In 2019, it supported 150 children across seven centres with tuition and support. As PEAB has grown over the last 20 years, much has also changed for Dalit communities in India, who have been fighting against discrimination and oppression for generations. While discrimination remains high and many Dalit people continue to live in extremely vulnerable circumstances, Annie notes,

In many ways the members of the Dalit community and some of the communities themselves have moved forward in education and employment. Political parties have come out of those communities, both in North India and South India... I would say no political party can turn a blind eye to the community today.



PEAB organised an immersive space education session bringing together students across their network of Village Education Centres, Maduranthakam, India, 2018

Wedweil Community Development Fund, South Sudan

‘My hope in the future is to see the children
have a good education’

Since 2013, indigo foundation has partnered with the Wedweil Community Development Fund and leaders from the South Sudanese refugee community in Australia to rebuild education infrastructure and outcomes for children and young people in Aweil State, South Sudan. Steering this program is our Sydney-based Partnership Advisor, Santino Rang Yuot, who grew up in Wedweil and now works in partnership with his community.

Santino Rang Yuot knows the importance of education. Growing up in a farming family in the north-west of pre-independence South Sudan, Santino did not have an opportunity to attend school until he moved to the capital Khartoum at 16. Without relatives to rely on in Sudan's capital, Santino experienced the challenges of putting himself through school: working during the day, attending school in the evenings and eating one meal a day to make ends meet. Today, Santino dedicates himself to putting others through school, working with his community in Wedweil and partners in Australia to ensure that South Sudanese children can access quality education.

After coming to Australia in 2004 as a refugee, Santino founded the Dinka Literacy Association, which works to improve literacy and promote the Dinka language and culture. Returning to his home in Wedweil in 2007, Santino found many children were not attending school. Wedweil School was built prior to 1965 and remained

damaged from the civil war in the 1990s. The school had no windows and its damaged roof was patched with tree branches and grass that let the rain in and provided inadequate protection from the weather on hot days. Santino returned to Australia planning to find a way to rebuild education in his community.

RESTORING THE WEDWEIL SCHOOL

The partnership between indigo foundation and Santino and his community began in 2013 when a chance meeting on a long bus trip with indigo foundation's Sue Cunningham led to a discussion about schools. In June that year, indigo foundation supported Santino to return to Wedweil to consult with the community on the barriers preventing children attending and staying in school. After meeting with over 60 teachers, parents and community leaders, Santino found that the first priority was to renovate four classrooms at the school, then to focus on teacher training.

The local community came together as the Wedweil Community Development Fund to partner with indigo. Building this fledgling community organisation is a difficult and long-term task, but its very existence is a positive step for the community after decades of debilitating conflict. As Santino puts it, 'We are struggling. But we are trying to put the differences away and work together.'

In 2014, indigo foundation supported the community to undertake a renovation and re-roofing program for two of the classrooms. As a result, classes could take place in all weather for the first time in many years. Returning to Wedweil in 2015, Santino saw the new classrooms being used by children of different ages. He met many students, particularly young women, who had now returned to school after missing part of their education. Further work to build the first toilets and ensure a supply of clean water increased the opportunities for girls to attend school.

INVESTING IN TEACHERS

Having a completed school building made a huge difference, but it highlighted the need for teachers with the skills and training to deliver high-quality education. Many teachers are Year 12 school-leavers who have returned from neighbouring countries following South Sudan's independence, with little more than a strong desire to help build their

nation. In 2016, indigo foundation supported Santino and the community to organise the first teacher training in the area, instructing 10 teachers from Wedweil School and 15 from surrounding schools. Following on from this successful training experience, in 2017 the Wedweil Community Development Fund embarked on a three-year program to support an expanded teacher-training course with South Sudan's Ministry of General Education. This course is offered to teachers across three provinces as a one-month intensive each February. In 2018, 60 teachers graduated, with the number of graduates more than doubling in 2019 and 2020.



Santino Rang Yuot speaks about his upbringing in Wedweil, South Sudan, and the partnership with indigo foundation at our annual Melbourne dinner, 2017

Santino notes that soft skills are just as important to cover as subject-matter knowledge:

There are some teachers who teach for the sake of teaching, and others who want to know [the content] is really understood by the students... Are you in the classroom [and] just up at the black-board? Or are you in the class as the friend of the students to teach them what they need?

While the teacher training is an important initiative, challenges remain. Attracting and retaining female teachers is difficult – according to the World Bank, only 15% of teachers in South Sudan are women. Teacher salaries are low and there are often significant delays in receiving payments, if payments are received at all, which leads to the loss of trained teachers to more-secure jobs.

Despite these issues, Santino and his community are continuing to work for a stronger South Sudan. The Wedweil School now educates over 500 children, 30-35% of whom are girls. In recognition of the improvements to the school buildings, as well as its teaching and enrolments, the government converted the school into the area's first secondary school. Santino says, 'My hope in the future is to see the children have a good education in their lives. When they have a good education, they can support themselves, support their families and then support the nation. There is no more than that.'



Teacher training in action at Wedweil School, Aweil State, South Sudan, 2016

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Vaidehi Shah



Image supplied by Vaidehi Shah

'I was looking for ways to meaningfully contribute my skills'

Twice a year, indigo foundation supporters open their mailboxes and inboxes to read indigo iNK, a magazine featuring updates and stories from our projects, our achievements and challenges as an organisation, a think piece looking at thorny issues in development, and profiles of indigo foundation volunteers. Since 2017, our Publication Coordinator Vaidehi Shah has worked behind the scenes to pull this magazine together and, in doing so, bring indigo foundation's partners, supporters and volunteers closer together, too.

by Vaidehi Shah

I have been indigo foundation's volunteer Publication Coordinator since 2017, when I saw the opportunity listed on Ethical Jobs. As I had recently moved to Australia from Singapore, and was working remotely as a journalist covering sustainable development and responsible business, I was looking for ways to meaningfully contribute my skills to a local, for-purpose organisation.

The opportunity to put *indigo iNK* together every few months was a perfect fit. It gave me the opportunity to put my journalism skills and my

Gender and International Development Master's degree to use, and to work with incredible people around the country.

For the past three years, I have been privileged to collaborate with indigo foundation's wide range of Partnership Coordinators, Board Members and staff to tell the stories of indigo projects around the world.

As I have worked with indigo foundation's Executive Director Jemma Bailey to plan the content for each issue of *indigo iNK*, and worked with the various contributors to draft, edit and publish their pieces, I have been consistently amazed by the thoughtfulness, care and commitment to respect that underpins every initiative and project that indigo foundation undertakes.

From initiatives like Club Rafiki's dance classes in Rwanda (see p55) to community development in Indonesia, every indigo project I help feature in the magazine is creative, impactful and led by local groups. This is unfortunately not always the case with international development projects, so it has been an honour to learn about and showcase indigo foundation's unique and important work.

As a part of the Indian diaspora, indigo foundation's programme to work with Dalit, Adivasi and other tribal groups experiencing caste discrimination in Tamil Nadu is particularly close to my heart (see p51 and p61). This is such a devastating problem throughout the country, and the success of indigo foundation's collaboration with local partners to promote education, student development and women's empowerment gives me hope.

Working with Partnership Coordinators on their articles has taught me so much about the unique development challenges and opportunities in countries across continents. I have also learned so much from editing the thoughtful opinion pieces about global development issues, penned by various experts in the field.

It has been wonderful to meet in person the people I've collaborated with online at annual dinners in Sydney, and I always leave these events feeling re-energised and inspired.

I'm grateful to have this opportunity to contribute to the valuable, powerful work that indigo foundation does.

SPOTLIGHT

Building pride in culture

The freedom for communities and individuals to practise their local culture is a fundamental human right, and indigo foundation has long seen safeguarding and building pride in culture as a powerful part of community development. This is particularly true for community partners who experience discrimination or whose traditional cultural practices have been devalued and are in danger of being lost. Our partners in India and Indonesia have put activities that reclaim, teach and celebrate community traditions at the heart of their work, knowing that this will develop belonging, pride and well-being in their children and young people.

In India, Dalit and Adivasi communities, formerly known as 'untouchables' in the caste system, continue to experience discrimination and violence despite national laws making caste-based discrimination illegal. Tamil Nadu has one of the highest rates of atrocities committed against Dalit, Adivasi and other tribal groups by dominant caste groups, and historically there has been little space to celebrate the rich cultural traditions of those communities.

Our partners at Mahalir Sakthi (see p51) and the Program for Education and Awareness Building (PEAB; see p61) work to share and celebrate Dalit literature, music, dance and culture. Mahalir Sakthi organises community cultural events which showcase traditional dancing and singing throughout the year, such as their celebration to mark International Women's Day. And for PEAB, their annual summer camp is an opportunity for children to learn and practise Dalit dance and song with awards given out for the best performance. Both partners support their young people to become leaders and role models in sharing and promoting Dalit culture. Cultural events are a



Celebrating traditional dance and music at the 2016 Delha Cultural Festival, Rote Island, Indonesia

magnet for children, young people and their parents, building community connection and pride and encouraging attendees to participate in other activities.

In Indonesia in 2010, Lua Lemba (see p71) and indigo foundation launched the inaugural Delha Cultural Festival to preserve and celebrate the unique cultural history of the community on Rote Island. From small beginnings, this festival has become an annual fixture in the Rote calendar, attracting hundreds of people from a network of Rotinese villages to celebrate traditional dance, music, food, costume and sports. Young people are at the heart of the festival, with schools preparing and showcasing traditional art against a backdrop of singing, sasando music and foti dancing.

The tightly contested crowd favourites are a canoe tug-of-war and a slippery-pole competition, testing skills honed over generations of climbing palm trees to tap their sap. And the highlight each year is the display of traditional Rotinese horsemanship, a cultural practice that had been devalued and was fading out. Riders in traditional costume first parade their Rotinese ponies to the crowd, then race around the field with riders swinging down from the horse's saddle (with the horse still in full flight) to collect a small ball from the ground. It really is something to behold.

As well as valuing Rotinese culture, the festival has been an important mechanism to raise Lua Lemba's profile in the community and, more recently, to draw in financial support from local small businesses. This then strengthens Lua Lemba's self-sufficiency as an organisation.

Inspired by stories of the Delha Cultural Festival, our partners at PEKKA NTT on Adonara Island, Indonesia (see p33) launched a Children's Festival in 2019, hoping it would become an annual event to teach and build pride in local cultural traditions. This first festival brought together over 70 children who took part by preparing and serving food, and showcasing dances and traditional dress unique to their village. PEKKA NTT has since held a second Children's Festival, with the location to rotate through different villages each year.

In the closing remarks of the festival in 2019, the Coordinator of PEKKA NTT, Bernadette Deram, captured the sentiment of the festivities by observing that we all become better versions of ourselves when we are open to learning from anyone, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity. Ina Dette, as she's also known, concluded her speech by commenting that in the end, the most valuable 'teacher' for all of us is life itself.



The Otjiwarongo Development Program Fund leading community consultations at Tsaraxaaibes about priorities for youth activities and a proposed multipurpose youth centre, Namibia

SPOTLIGHT

Learning as we grow

Six lessons taken from 20 years' work



Jemma Bailey

*by Jemma Bailey,
indigo foundation Executive Director*

Since our establishment 20 years ago, indigo foundation and our local partners have faced challenges and made mistakes. Community development is not a neat and predictable path from A to B – it is complex, takes time and is different in each community. indigo foundation recognises that our model of community partnership comes with particular risks: we often work in remote communities, support small and newly establishing local organisations, and provide untied core funding for our partners to use as needed across their programs. At each step we have tried to be honest and transparent with our supporters, not just about the wins but also about the difficulties and internal debates we've had along the way.

Here we reflect on just a few of the challenges and questions that we and our partners have grappled with over the years.

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 all of our partnerships. A partner being a legally constituted, community organisation with a governing body and formal membership structure is one marker of community ownership, but over time we have learned that our partners can come in many shapes. The

important ingredient is demonstrating meaningful community investment and participation in decision-making, and a high level of transparency and accountability. Some of our most successful partnerships have been with local leaders or collectives that use less formal models of organising. In Afghanistan, for example, we partner with shuras (see p13) – a traditional community council or grouping of religious and community leaders, school teachers and principals – while Nefo Ko’u in Indonesia (see p27) 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, as these are sometimes the most powerful. In Rote in Indonesia, for example, one of the first things our partner Lua Lemba (see p17) asked of us was to support a mass wedding. Promoting marriages was not what we had expected to do, nor was it immediately clear why this was the community priority. We put trust in our partner and ultimately learned that formalising marriage was a key step to enfranchising women and children. Once issued with official marriage certificates, women were more able to obtain birth certificates, and in turn the rights to vote, to inherit land and to access tertiary education. In Borjegai in Afghanistan (see p13), we entered a schools-based partnership assuming the outcomes would be about education. After a few years we learned from the community that the partnership 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 to advocate for their communities, but there is also an inherent weakness in relying too heavily on one or two people. We are vigilant about managing this risk, but we have sometimes found it difficult to shift the dynamic, especially in remote communities where there are poor communications and little English is spoken. Learning from our experience in South Sudan (see p65) and the highlands of West



High school students settle into their new classroom in Ghazni Province, 2016

Timor in Indonesia, we actively support our partner organisations to put succession plans in place. Where appropriate, we also have established an additional role of ‘in-country Liaison Officer’ to broaden our connection points in the community. Dependency on key individuals remains a live issue that we continue to address in some community partnerships.

Building peer-to-peer networks between partners is powerful

We know there is huge value in connecting our partners to each other for peer-to-peer learning but, with limited resources, we have struggled over the years to invest in this work. In 2017, we made an explicit goal in our *Strategy 2017 – 2022*: we would cluster our partnerships geographically and connect our partners to each other. In 2018 we brought three Indonesian partners face-to-face to exchange information and participate in joint training on organic food production. Our partners embraced this opportunity to share challenges and ideas, which they then took back to their own communities. These included new techniques for thatching roofs and new ways of selling produce from the cooperative gardens.

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 of our collaboration. 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 decision on when to exit more uncertain. In some of our partnerships, the exit point is clearly defined from the beginning. For example, our support for the Women's Empowerment Centre in Afghanistan (see p45) was planned as a catalyst to get a new women-led 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 though, our exit was less defined. 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 own work.

Holding on to our essence as we grow and build capacity

Over 20 years we have grown from a group of friends deeply 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. While we have strived to remain lean and volunteer-based, 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 professionalise and comply with standards of best practice, while still remaining flexible, creative and able to take risks? Through a series of reviews, and ongoing questioning, we have tried to deal honestly and openly with these issues as they arise, for example, ensuring transparent recruitment, introducing additional face-to-face meetings for our team and strengthening our complaints mechanisms. We recognise that this will be an ongoing tension for us 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. As an organisation and as a partner, we are proud to commit to this path of critical and creative development.

AFTERWORD

Respectful relationships are core to who we are

by Lyla Rogan, indigo foundation Chairperson

What a journey the first 20 years has been! Thank you to our community partners and to everyone in Australia and overseas who have been part of indigo foundation's amazing journey so far. Here I highlight four threads that substantively and artfully weave their way through the stories captured here in *The Power of Community-Led Development*.

The first thread is *relationships*. From the beginning, respectful and authentic long-term relationships have been integral to indigo foundation's development approach, to building and maintaining our supporter base, and to attracting committed long-term volunteers. All of our partnerships began with relationships – between people in the project community and people in Australia. Our model of liaising through volunteer Partnership Coordinators endures. They are the face of our community partnerships in Australia and, with our partners, they shape the respectful relationships that are core to who we are.

The second is *belief in the capabilities and integrity of our community partners*. Our partners know their context, are driven by the hopes and aspirations of their communities and are best placed to address the challenges they face. This requires that we, as indigo foundation, show humility and sensitivity to the power dynamics inherent in



Lyla Rogan,
indigo foundation Chairperson

development partnerships and within communities. Our experience over the years confirms that we stand to learn and gain from the partnership experience as much as our community partners.

The third thread is *trust*. indigo foundation's supporters believe in and feel connected to the way we support community partners. They see the possibilities for big change through small contributions en-

abling community-owned development. indigo trusts our partners to lead the development process and responsibly manage the financial support they receive, with an eye to equity, sustainability and transparency. Their stumbles and mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning in the development process, for them and for us.

Finally, I lift up our unapologetic *focus on women and girls*. The path to gender equity and justice is slow and bumpy in many countries, including in Australia. We support and encourage our partners to pursue gender equity in their areas of focus and to more systematically include women in leadership and decision-making. In many cases this runs contrary to the local cultural norms. Women and girls obviously benefit from participating in and leading development activities. Importantly, investment in women's education, health and well-being has been clearly demonstrated to have a multiplier effect on long-term development outcomes for the entire community.

Looking ahead, indigo foundation enters the next decade with confidence in our development approach, a firm commitment to our guiding principles, and awareness of the strong threads woven into the fabric of our organisation. With a valued community of supporters and volunteers in Australia, we remain ambitious for the potential impact, influence and sustainability of indigo foundation. We will be guided by the priorities of our community partners and we will do everything in our power to learn and improve how we go about development, partnership and supporter relations. And we are committed to continuing our work as a lean and agile organisation.

In the coming years, we have three goals: expanding the impact of our work in communities; strengthening support of partners and generating a solid evidence base for our work; and continuing to develop as a sustainable, effective and visible development organisation – in Australia and in the region. Four focus areas will guide decisions on new partnerships: empowering women and girls; links with refugee communities in Australia; a geographic-cluster approach that creates possibilities for learning exchange among partners; and supporting advocacy for systemic change.

Our success will continue to be measured by the progress our partners achieve in their community context. Look out for the stories and lessons we share over the coming years to demonstrate the change that is possible at an individual, community and societal level, and to show how these changes are being achieved. We hope you will celebrate 30 years with us in 2030.

indigo foundation Board Members (as at June 2020)

Lyla Rogan, Chair (2017–) • Robin Brown • Bianca Crocker • Leigh Cupitt • Christine Edwards • Gwyneth Graham • Shirley Randell AO • Fyfe Strachan • Ron Switzer

indigo foundation has been proudly volunteer-based for 20 years. We have benefited enormously from the hard work, skills and experience of our staff and volunteers, many of whom have remained at the heart of our organisation for over a decade. There are too many people to name individually here. We thank and acknowledge our indigo community in Australia.

indigo foundation

A timeline of 20 years of grassroots partnerships

Lua Lemba Education and Community Development Foundation, Indonesia (2000–2021)

Lua Lemba Education and Community Development Foundation works to increase opportunities for women and young people on the remote, arid island of Rote in eastern Indonesia (see p17). Our 20-year partnership has supported activities to improve education access and quality from early childhood to university, as well as health programs and a network of food gardens to improve Rotinese people's access to adequate nutritious food and provide a source of income. We have also supported Lua Lemba to hold an annual festival that has helped to foster a greater appreciation for Delha culture.

Peacebuilding partnership, Solomon Islands (2001–2003)

indigo foundation partnered with the Catholic Church in a locally run program assisting local volunteers to deliver trauma and stress counselling. The partnership also provided basic sporting equipment to communities to support the rehabilitation of ex-militants.

Centro Feto, Timor-Leste (2002–2005)

Centro Feto (Women's Centre) is a small non-government organisation in the Oecusse enclave that works to combat domestic violence and advocate for the empowerment of women. indigo foundation supported Centro Feto's refuge and counselling service for women and children experiencing domestic violence, and its work to develop strategies to overcome domestic violence and promote gender equality.

www.facebook.com/centrofeto.enclaveoecusse

Sherrin Community Organisation (SCO), Australia (2002–2003)

indigo foundation provided financial and moral support for the incorporation and establishment of the Western Sydney-based Sherrin Community Organisation, which provided services to Hazara refugees who had come to Australia from Afghanistan. SCO provided English classes to Hazara on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs); community liaison services to assist with access to mainstream services for non-English-speaking Hazara people, particularly women; and homework assistance classes to Hazara children. Connected to this work, indigo foundation undertook advocacy with A Just Australia, working to improve Australian policies and practices towards asylum seekers and refugees.

Borjagai community, Afghanistan (2003–2015)

indigo foundation partnered with the Borjagai community (see p13), located in a mountainous area of Ghazni Province, to support educational outcomes across a network of nine schools with nearly 6000 students (35–40% girls). Together, indigo and the Borjagai community managed school building and renovation works, trained teachers and supplied school furniture and textbooks. Borjagai schools now consistently perform better than the Afghan average in both the Kankor (the equivalent of Australia's year 12 exams) and in the percentage of girls enrolled in school.

Turusuala Community Based Training Centre, Solomon Islands (2004–2013)

Turusuala Community Based Training Centre is a small community development organisation located on the Weathercoast. The partnership supported organisational strengthening for Turusuala, as well as vocational training and education opportunities for young people in agriculture, joinery, building, mechanics, sewing, home management, food, nutrition and literacy. The partnership also supported Turusuala's work to build food security, including through a community garden.

Program for Education and Awareness Building (PEAB), India (2006–current)

PEAB is a grassroots project in Maduranthakam (see p61), a small town about 90km from Chennai, Tamil Nadu. Driven by the local Dalit community, PEAB supports highly marginalised children and youth through a network of eight Village Education Centres (VEC) which provide tutoring, exam coaching and support to students throughout the school system.

Alola Foundation, Timor-Leste (2007)

During 2007, indigo foundation provided one-off funding to Alola Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation founded by Kirsty Sword Gusmão AO, the former First Lady of Timor-Leste. Funding helped with Alola Foundation's breastfeeding-support project and the publication of a war widow's memory book.

<https://alolafoundation.org>



Dressmaking with the Turusuala Community Based Training Centre, Solomon Islands

Timor-Leste Ministry of Health and Caritas, Timor-Leste (2007–2009)

indigo foundation provided support to a tobacco-control program in partnership with the Timor-Leste Ministry of Health and Caritas (Dili). The partnership focused on supporting a Timorese professional to develop policy and programming approaches to reduce smoking and smoking-related illness and death in Timor-Leste. The project included public education, policy development and community awareness raising.
<http://timor-leste.gov.tl> | www.caritas.asia



Staff from the Bonobo Health Clinic at work, Kokolopori, Democratic Republic of Congo

Vie Sauvage and Bonobo Conservation Initiative, Democratic Republic of Congo (2007–2012)

indigo foundation partnered with the Bonobo Conservation Initiative and local Congolese organisation Vie Sauvage to support the Bonobo Health Clinic in Kokolopori. Linked to an integrated community-led conservation program for bonobos (a species of ape), the clinic provided vital health services to the local community. Our contribution focused on the clinic's malaria-prevention work and its health and sanitation education, and supported nurses' salaries along with basic pharmaceuticals and medical supplies. We also assisted with organisational capacity building aimed at transitioning the Bonobo Health Clinic to a government registered health centre. In 2020, Vie Sauvage won the UN Equator Prize for innovative community-based conservation of bonobos and rainforest. www.bonobo.org

Ayui Foundation, Thailand (2008)

Based in Chiang Rai, the Ayui Foundation provides practical support, educational opportunities and a safe environment for young people from the Akha hill tribe. indigo foundation provided one year of core funding and technical support to help the foundation strengthen its governance, strategic planning and risk management, as well as supporting the costs of its hostel for disadvantaged Akha young people.

www.ayuifoundation.org

Budaka Community Coalition, Uganda (2009–2021)

indigo partnered with six small but highly effective community-based organisations in the Mount Elgon region, working to support families and communities who care for over 2000 children and young people impacted by HIV, many coming from child-headed households (see p 39). The project supports educational supplies, counselling training for peers and school teachers to help overcome HIV-related stigma, vocational training and pilot income-generation activities. Our partners have been: Kakule HIV/AIDS and Grieved Families Association, Galimaagi HIV/AIDS and Orphans Association, Trin-ity Child Care Ministry, Iki-Iki Aids Initiative, Manuka-Kaama Community Development Initiatives and Nasenyi Community Action for Social Development.

Yarundo, Indonesia (2009)

Yarundo, based on Sabu Island, partnered with indigo foundation for 12 months on a program focusing on education bursaries and training in potable water provision through building simple water-purification devices.

Nyirripi community and Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC), Australia (2010–2016)

Nyirripi is a small remote community of approximately 150–300 people located 500km west of Alice Springs. indigo foundation partnered with the Nyirripi community (see p43) and WYDAC (formerly the Mt Theo Program) to support an intergenerational cultural knowledge transmission project. The project took the form of an annual cultural camp, at which elders and young people spent time together on Country, sharing stories about Country and culture, and teaching dances and ceremonies. <https://www.centraldesert.nt.gov.au/nyirripi>

Iskaka Women's Charitable Society, Occupied Palestinian Territories (2010–2011)

indigo foundation partnered with Iskaka Women's Charitable Society, a women-led community organisation working to serve vulnerable members of the local community, in particular children, women and the elderly. The partnership trained 15 families in three villages on issues of sexual and domestic violence, rape and child abuse, and strengthened the community's understanding of local legislation, human rights and how to access relevant services. It also provided support and resources to enable these families to raise broader awareness of these issues in their own community.

Women's Empowerment Centre (WEC), Afghanistan (2011–current)

The Women's Empowerment Centre (see p45) was set up within the not-for-profit Gawharshad Institute of Higher Education in Kabul (now Gawharshad University). The WEC runs a scholarship program for educationally and financially disadvantaged Afghan women and provides capacity-building opportunities for female students. WEC has also initiated academic and non-academic courses on gender, peace and women's studies and been an active voice in addressing the many life challenges that Afghan women face. indigo foundation provided seed funding for the centre, which now attracts international collaboration. <https://gawharshad.edu.af/en/students/departments/gwec>



Students and parents at one of SASY's children's resource centres in Cuddalore District, India

Social Awareness Society for Youths (SASY), India (2012–current)

SASY is a human rights organisation which is actively engaged in promoting and protecting the rights of Dalit communities, as well as women, children and other vulnerable groups in Tamil Nadu, India. SASY's projects include human rights monitoring, women's leadership and child rights initiatives. SASY manages indigo foundation's partnerships with PEAB (see p61) and Mahalir Sakthi (see p51).

<http://sasy.net.in>

Mahalir Sakthi, India (2012–current)

Based in the slums of Madurai in Tamil Nadu, Mahalir Sakthi ('women power' in Tamil) is a women-led organisation that works to empower women, children and young people from Dalit, Adivasi and other marginalised groups (see p51). These groups suffer discrimination and violence in India because of their caste, ethnicity or religion. Through the partnership, indigo foundation has supported Mahalir Sakthi's education, health and vocational-training programs for children, young people and women. We have also supported Mahalir Sakthi to develop a Domestic Workers Union to support women to fight for better pay, conditions and rights at work.

www.mahalirsakthi.org

Club Rafiki, Rwanda (2012–current)

Club Rafiki works in Kigali and surrounding rural villages to promote youth inclusion and development, striving to contribute to a better future for the youth of Rwanda (see p55). It offers support, outreach and a safe place for young people, many from extremely poor families. It is increasingly prioritising the inclusion of girls and women. The partnership with indigo foundation has supported the club's sexual and reproductive health clinic as well as activities such as dance classes, English classes, a jobs desk and the Our Girls' mentoring and skills program.

<https://clubrafiki.com> | facebook.com/Urbandanceandfashionschool

Wedweil Community Development Fund (WCDF), South Sudan (2013–current)

indigo foundation partners with the WCDF (see p65) to build education opportunities in the extremely poor, food-insecure and remote communities of Aweil and Lol States. In partnership with indigo foundation, WCDF has improved vital infrastructure in Wedweil Primary School, runs a small teacher-training program and is supporting an emerging women-led cooperative food garden. Since 2018, we have also partnered with WCDF and the South Sudan Ministry of Education to support an expanded annual teacher-training program.

Otjiwarongo Development Program Fund (ODPF), Namibia (2014–2021)

ODPF is a volunteer-run, grassroots organisation on the periphery of Otjiwarongo in Namibia's central highlands (see p27). ODPF formed in 2015 to partner with indigo foundation with the aim of addressing the increasing social vulnerability of young people in the marginalised and fast-growing township of Orwetoveni. Through our partnership, ODPF has overseen a small activities program to seed-fund and support other local groups working on food security, empowerment of women, income generation and youth-focused sporting activities. It has also focused on building its organisational capacity and developing plans to build a community centre for young people.

www.facebook.com/Otji-Developmant-program-fund-1655839158021666

Jirghai and Behsud Shura, Afghanistan (2015–current)

indigo foundation partners with the Jirghai and Behsud Shura (community council) to increase access to quality education (see p13). Our partnership has built schools and improved infrastructure, such as classrooms, toilets and wells for seven schools. It has also provided furniture, textbooks and school supplies, and trained teachers. The improved infrastructure has already benefited more than 5500 students, including 2000 girls.

PEKKA Education and Community Development Fund, Indonesia (2015–2016)

PEKKA is an Indonesian civil society organisation that supports and empowers women heads of household in over 20 provinces (see p33). It offers programs aimed at education, health, access to justice, livelihood, microfinance and women's leadership in the community. indigo foundation partnered with the World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights in 2015 and 2016 to help facilitate the PEKKA Education and Community Development Fund, supporting scholarships for girls and young women from women-headed households to continue their senior high school and university education.

<https://pekka.or.id>

Orphanage for Cambodian Children Organisation (OCCO), Cambodia (2015–2017)

OCCO is a small NGO operating in Prey Dach Village, approximately 12km from Battambang. It was established as an NGO in 2005 to support children in the Battambang area. Here, many children are heads of household, due to the town's proximity to the Thai border and the many local adults who are undocumented migrants working in the Thai construction industry. During our partnership, OCCO provided English and Khmer language development for approximately 200 children and young people through its Language Development Program. <https://occoschool.org>

Afghan Educated Women's Service Organisation (AEWSO), Afghanistan (2016–2021)

AEWSO is a women-led organisation in Kabul, established to break down barriers for tertiary-educated women finding work and to defend their rights in the public and private spheres (see p45). It was co-founded in 2017 by Dr Nasima Rahmani (Founding Director of the WEC). indigo foundation has supported the establishment of the organisation and a research project, with the University of Technology Sydney, to identify challenges and opportunities for Afghan graduate women in seeking employment.



Anna, Bridgette, Judy and Clara, members of Hako Women's Collective,
Autonomous Region of Bougainville

Nefo Ko'u Farmers' Cooperative, Indonesia (2016–current)

The Nefo Ko'u Farmers' Cooperative is a small organisation of 24 families based in Apren Village in the high mountains of Amarasi in West Timor (see p28). We have partnered with Nefo Ko'u to support education bursaries, food gardens and development of an open-air reading room to improve literacy and education outcomes for children and young people in Apren.

PEKKA Education and Community Development Fund: NTT, Indonesia (2017–current)

PEKKA NTT is a thriving grassroots network of local women's collectives with an active base of over 2600 women spread across the islands of Adonara, Lembata and East Flores in eastern Indonesia (see p33). Women from PEKKA run programs and undertake advocacy work aimed at empowering women heads of household, including rural widows, divorced women, those whose husbands have left and women caring for relatives. The partnership with indigo foundation is supporting high school bridging courses, a network of cooperative food gardens, and a bursaries program for girls and young women attending primary school through to tertiary studies.

Hako Women's Collective, Bougainville (2019–current)

The Hako Women's Collective is an umbrella organisation for all women in the Haku community in Buka, in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea (see p33). A committed and dynamic volunteer-run organisation, Hako Women's Collective provides education opportunities, improves health outcomes and advocates for the rights of women and children. indigo foundation's partnership supports core costs for its Resource Centre, including a library and an emergency safe house and referral service (the Meri Seif Haus), for women escaping family and sexual violence.

www.hakowomen.org | www.facebook.com/HakoWomen

