



indigo news & knowledge



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from us to you

We are blessed to have the most talented, passionate and committed volunteer Partnership Coordinators (PCs) at indigo foundation. In this edition of indigo ink you'll read updates on our partnerships following visits to Rwanda, Bougainville and Timor Leste. You can read Jenny Clement's piece on the many benefits of Hako Women's Collective's new rooftop solar system in Bougainville. Alice Roughley reflects on how much has been achieved with Club Rafiki in Rwanda, especially the big increase in girls' participation. Heidi Lipson shares the work she did with JDN on becoming active bystanders in response to sexual harrassment and safety of young women in Timor Leste.

We encourage you to read the two think pieces included - one from Dr Susan Engel and Soli Middleby on Australia's new aid policy and another from Dr Ali Reza Yunespour on State ideology and dual education systems in Afghanistan.

It was wonderful to meet in person with our PCs, Board members, staff and supporters at the February 2024 Annual Gathering. We shared updates on our partnerships, reflected on the first year of our 2023-2027 Strategy, reviewed risks and talked about future opportunities. We are grateful that our fundraising has returned to 2020 levels after an unsurprising dip during Covid. With our new strategy our ambition is to continue supporting our existing partners AND extend indigo's support to other communities in the Asia-Pacific region that need support and meet indigo's guiding principles. At the February gathering we committed to identifying and funding new community partners in line with our strategy. And we plan to redouble our fundraising efforts to enable us to support even greater impact by our existing and new partners.

In this edition of indigo INK you will find information on our bequest program. By gifting support through your will, you can leave a lasting legacy with a positive impact on women, children and communities well into the future. Please contact us if you want further information or have any questions.

Thank you for your belief in the power of community led development and indigo foundation's local partnership approach. We are very grateful for your generosity and support.

Lyla and Stav

State ideology and dual education systems in Afghanistan



Girls take centre stage at a school opening in 2020 in Ghazni Province

Dr Ali Reza Yunespour, Partnership Coordinator, Afghanistan Schools Program

The Taliban regime has banned girls and women from attending public and private high schools and higher education institutions in Afghanistan since their return to power in August 2021. Conversely, they have increased the number of registered madrasas from around 1,200 in 2021 to more than 6,000 in 2023. This brief piece provides an overview of how successive state ideology has maintained or limited both or one of these education systems since the introduction of European-style schools in Afghanistan in the early 20th century.

An overview of the dual education systems

Like most Muslim-majority countries, Afghanistan has had a dual education system of the so-called modern schools and traditional madrasas since the introduction of European-style schools in the first years of the 20th century. Since then, successive state rulers in this country have taken different ideological approaches to support or restrict both or one of these education institutions to maintain their socio-political power. For example, as part of his radical modernisation programs in the 1920s, King Amanullah made primary education compulsory for all school-aged children and established the first girls' schools in Kabul. He attempted to extend the control of state on existing madrasas to reduce the historically dominating role of religious Mullahs and ulama (or learned religious scholars) on religious education. In the 1930s to 1970s, the state gradually expanded public education and higher education and expanded the number of government-controlled madrasas. All these government-controlled madrasas taught the Hanafi jurisprudence of Islam as this was the official religion of the state and excluded followers of Shi'a Islam from attending these government-controlled Sunni madrasas. Both

followers of Sunni and Shi'a Islam share the belief on the unity of God; the Prophet Mohammad as the God's messenger; the Quran as the Muslim Holy Book; and the belief in hereafter. However, followers of Sunni Islam, who constitute the majority of Afghanistan's population (around 80 percent), believe that the four rightful Islamic caliphs after the death of the Prophet Mohammad were selected by the community consensus. Whereas most followers of Shi'a Islam believe that Imam Ali (the fourth caliph in Sunni Islam) and his descendants were selected by the Prophet as the rightful leader of the then Islamic community.

In the 1980s, the Soviet-backed regime used their Marxist ideology to expand schools and higher education particularly for girls and women and reduce state funding and support for existing government madrasas. Conversely, diverse Afghan 'resistance' forces that were supported by the US and regional countries of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia supported 'Islamic' and 'Jihad education' mostly in rural areas of the country and in refugee camps in Pakistan. When the Taliban took control of Kabul in 1996, they reduced state support for public schools and higher education and expanded madrasa education. As part of their gender segregation ideology, the first Taliban regime prohibited girls above 10 years old from attending schools from 1996 to 2001.

From 2001 to 2021, the Afghan Republic embraced free education up to Grade 9 and recognised 'market economy' as the overarching economic system. It relied on public and private resources to expand both schools and madrasas in urban and rural areas of the country. Accordingly, school enrolment increased from around 1 million in 2001 to 9 million in 2021 and higher education enrolment reached more than 400,000 students. On average, at this time girls and women constituted around 30 percent of students in secondary schools and 25 percent of higher education enrolments. However, access remained unequal across the country, where urban families and students in more secure regions of the country benefited the most from expanding schools and higher education opportunities. Alongside schools, the number

of government-controlled madrasas reached around 1,200 in 2021 that provided religious education to approximately 350,000 mostly male students. At the same time, the Afghan Republic introduced more religious content in the school curriculum and encouraged teaching of subjects such as science and maths in governmentcontrolled madrasas. Despite these efforts, the majority of madrasas operated outside the control of the state until 2021.

Taliban's return to power

Since 15 August 2021, the Taliban regime has banned girls and women from attending public and private high schools and higher education institutions in Afghanistan. Described by some prominent academics and human right activists as gender apartheid, their restrictive gender orders have impacted nearly two million girls who were enrolled in secondary schools in late 2021, and forced out more than 100,000 female students from higher education institutions. They have reportedly attempted to increase 'Islamic' and 'Jihad education' content in school and higher education curriculum and reduce the teaching of what they consider as Western concepts such as human rights, democracy and gender equality. However, until the time of writing of this piece, public and private schools, including in indigo's partner communities, have been using the existing school textbooks from the time of the Afghan Republic. There are anecdotal reports that the Taliban regime will implement their own curriculum from this year. However, the Taliban-controlled Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) lack financial, technical and human resources to implement their reported changes in all schools and higher education institutions. For instance, around 40 percent of qualified academics have left the country since the return of the Taliban to power. Most schools also lack learning spaces and resources to organise separate classes for girls and boys above Grade 3.

Like their first regime in the 1990s, the Talibancontrolled MoE has <u>reportedly</u> increased the number of registered madrasas from around 1,200 in 2021 to more than 6,000 in 2023. They have also stated that girls and women of any age can attend madrasas in urban and rural areas of the country. However, there are some reports that the Taliban-controlled MoE have been using existing and new registered madrasas to expand their 'Islamic ideology' and to <u>recruit</u> young people in their ranks. Unlike their complete restriction of girls and women during their first regime in the late 1990s, the Taliban regime this time have rallied some current and former female students of madrasas in public protests in favour of their regime in the past two years.

In addition to the Taliban-controlled and other Sunni madrasas, Shi'a madrasas have also been providing basic and advanced religious education in urban areas like Kabul City and rural areas with predominantly Shi'a population. For example, six Shi'a madrasas, which belong to the Hazara population of Borjegai community and are mostly funded by religious endowment or waqf in this community, have provided basic religious education to mostly male students. In the past two years, some Shi'a madrasas including those in our partner communities have expanded their education programs for female students, especially for those girls who were banned from secondary schools and higher education institutions by the Taliban regime. They have been teaching these students Quran, Shi'a jurisprudence as well as school textbooks

from the time of the Afghan Republic like math, natural sciences, and Persian language.

Moving forward

There are few signs that the Taliban regime will ease their restrictions on women and girls in higher education and secondary schools in the near future. On the contrary, it is a likelihood that they start implementing their ideological curriculum in schools and higher education and further expand madrasa education for boys and girls across the country. In the past five months, they have also ordered all UN agencies and international NGOs to transfer their education programs to local organisations in Afghanistan. With little oversight and control on education programs, some donor countries and international agencies may further reduce their financial support for school education in Afghanistan this year. This grim scenario raises serious challenges about how the Talibancontrolled MoE would provide resources for public schools and pay the salary of existing teachers. We are monitoring closely this developing situation in school education and how it may impact students and teachers in our partner communities.



Girl students at Sayed Jamal High School, Afghanistan.

Transformative power in Bougainville



[Left] Marilyn and Dorcas inspecting the equipment at Buka port. [Right] Dan (the local technician) with help from Vicki, setting up the electrical boar.

The Hako Women's Collective (HWC) in Bougainville now have a reliable and affordable power supply thanks to the recent installation of a new rooftop solar system. It has replaced the old generator that in addition to being noisy, was also proving extremely costly due to on-going maintenance and spiralling diesel costs.

The women are excited that they now have 24hour electricity to run their programs. It has given them renewed enthusiasm as power is available for the administration office, library, resource centre, agricultural hub, women's safe house and the new men's counselling hub. Women and children staying at the safe house have improved security lighting at night, and they are able to pump water to run the toilets on a continuous basis.

In addition to saving them money, the women also see income generation opportunities, as they look to reopen their community canteen. They will now be able to sell cold drinks and ice blocks, kept cold in the fridge. They can also make more income from hiring their rice mill facility out to local farmers. The Resource Centre will be able to become a more central part of local life, as people can use the centre in the evenings.

Getting the solar equipment to this remote corner of Bougainville wasn't easy and required patience and help from lots of supporters. Friends of the women in Australia helped source the quotes in Brisbane and load the equipment onto a ship bound for Lae, PNG. A second (delayed) voyage saw the boxes of freight arrive in Buka port on 11 September. The women met the ship in a hired truck to transport the equipment to the Haku community, where a technician and local volunteers installed the system over two days.

Indigo foundation, with the generous support of the Roberts Pike Foundation, co-funded this initiative in partnership with PiCCA (Partners in International Collaborative Community Aid Ltd).

From little things amazing things happen

Mobilising Girls in Rwanda

Alice Roughley, Partnership Coordinator Club Rafiki, Rwanda

Looking back over indigo foundation's 11-year partnership with Club Rafiki in Rwanda much has been achieved with a small amount of funding. In particular, there's been a big increase in girls participating in the Club's programs. The longterm partnership also offers an opportunity to reflect on indigo's partnership model in practice.

From a once-a-week hip hop dance class at a club in a Moslem area, that was mostly used by boys, the Club has become a humming hub of activity and a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health program for boys and girls. This is in no small part because our partner in Rwanda is incredibly energised and innovative and has done all the hard work to achieve profound impact.

So, what is it about indigo foundation's approach that helps programs like Club Rafiki flourish? Community- led, core funding, and staying the distance are three essential elements of indigo's development model that seem to foster successful development partnership.

Community-led

In Rwanda, people aged 15 to 24 years account for more than 40% of the population. Young people in the Nyamirambo district of Kigali (where Club Rafiki is based) and rural villages surrounding the capital face an uphill battle - they are often the first in the family to try to graduate from high school, there are limited education and vocational opportunities, high rates of teen pregnancy, HIV/STDs and drug use, and few safe, welcoming services. Club Rafiki has become a widely recognised youth centre of excellence, working consistently to improve youth health, education and wellbeing.

The partnership began with Club Rafiki seeking support to run hip-hop dance classes for youth (mostly boys) with few recreational outlets. Hiphop really was a hit! Hundreds of young people attended classes. In time, with encouragement from the Club and indigo foundation, girls joined the classes. Club Rafiki invested time in working with parents of (mostly) Moslem girls to encourage them to allow their daughters to participate in activities at the centre. Gradually, parents reported that after attending the Club for dance lessons, English language and computer/ IT literacy workshops, their daughters were more confident and relaxed. Some reported their relationships with their daughters improved.

The number of girls now attending the club is reaching fifty per cent. In addition to the above classes, girls participate in the new tailoring program, learning dressmaking and crafts. The Club also runs popular "Our Girl" groups weekly where girls can discuss issues that affect them, build peer support relationships, learn leadership skills and receive feminine hygiene products. A girls' basketball team was recently launched and they are determined to "go professional". The Club also facilitates the girls to organise community celebrations/campaigns supporting "The Day of the Girl", International Womens' Day and "Stop violence against women and girls protests. Girls now feel confident to speak in public, dance and perform in public.

To help address the issues of unplanned teenage pregnancy (a big issue in Rwanda) and HIV/ STDs Club Rafiki established the Family Friendly Clinic in May 2010 and together with medical staff have trained 102 girls and boys as peer educators to provide young people with sexual and reproductive health education, practical information and support. The current team of 102 peer educators is involved in outreach into the broader youth community. Community events are staged at markets, concerts and schools. Thousands of youth are attracted to the dancing and music at the start of an event. The sexual and reproductive health education follows once youth are engaged; a truly innovative approach to engaging young people in these important issues that impact their life and future.

This is what community-led development can look like.

Core Funding

Indigo's approach to community-led development recognises that communities, rather than development organisations, know what is needed by who and how programs should be delivered in culturally appropriate ways. Many development agencies establish funding criteria that are not based on communities' expressed needs. Many agencies provide infrastructure grants. Fewer development agencies offer core funding (salaries and operational costs). Providing funds for these core costs is central to indigo foundation's development model. The model acknowledges that marginal, remote communities often do not have access to the core funding that is essential to establish and grow a sustainable community program.

Partnering for the longer term

A third string to the bow of indigo foundation's development model is longer term investment in partnership. So many development organisations limit the term of their support (often 1-3 years). With no certainty of continuity, it's hard for community groups to make longer term plans and can hinder motivation and innovation. The mobilisation of girls, the attention to teen pregnancy, girls' intellectual, practical and social development may not have occurred had Club Rafiki and indigo foundation not worked together over many years, providing core funds, enabling the community to move forward at its own pace and its own ways of working.



Becoming active bystanders in Timor Leste

A story of JDN, youth activism and the ongoing work to address sexual harassment



JDN Sexual Harrassment Activist Collective..

Heidi Lipson, Partnership Coordinator for Timor Leste

Juventude ba Dezenvolvimentu (JDN) is one of Timor Lestes' busiest not-for-profits. JDN is a youth run organisation combatting sexual harassment and challenging harmful gender norms in the small capital city of Dili. Indigo partnered with JDN in 2021 to support their project, the Sexual Harassment Activist Collective. This impressive Collective is now made up of more than 200 young women and men who champion the rights of young women to be safe in public spaces. Sexual harassment is a significant and common problem in Timor Leste. For young women and people with disabilities, being sexually and verbally harassed is so frequent that the JDN team are never short for stories on their Facebook page.

JDN was already running a broad range of youth programs when they approached indigo foundation about the Sexual Harassment Activist Collective. It would be a project to teach young women and men that sexual harassment is not ok, that gender equality is a human rights issue, and how to be Activists (for young women) and Influencers (young men) in their homes, places of study, and in public places like on public transport.

Over the last 2 years, the work of JDN has included training young people, meeting with Government Ministers to champion a Code of Conduct for the country's minibuses, and establishing a campaign about safety for women in share houses. JDN has created a groundswell of commitment to and action for gender equality amongst Timorese youth.

With the enormous energy for addressing sexual harassment has come an urgency from young people to step in and stop harassment when and where they see it. As anyone who has witnessed public sexual harassment knows, what to do in that moment is often murky. We want to step in, and sometimes we do. We want to do so safely and carefully, but to ultimately help the person being harassed to get out of the situation.

The idea of being an 'Active Bystander' is one that has gained some prominence in recent years in Australia alongside the #MeToo movement. An Active Bystander means taking indirect action to help deescalate situations. In this way, the person being harassed is helped while risks are reduced (risks are less than with Direct action). American organisation Right To Be coined the <u>5Ds of</u> <u>being an Active Bystander</u>. They are DISTRACT, DELEGATE, DOCUMENT, DELAY and DIRECT action when it is safe to do so.

I visited JDN last year. We spent two weeks together learning about each others'

organisations, discussing ways of working well together, and exchanging knowledge and skills. A group of Activists and trainers were interested in understanding more about how other countries are dealing with sexual harassment, and so we met to talk about being an Active Bystander. The topic was already generating interest at JDN thanks to the work of the <u>German Development</u> <u>Fund</u> (GIZ) in Timor Leste. GIZ produced a series of videos about how to be an Active Bystander when witnessing sexual harassment.

In August, JDN held a one-day workshop for 17 Activists, Influencers and other young people about being an Active Bystander. The workshop also involved a session held by the national Taekwondo association teaching 10 basic selfdefence moves. The workshop was well received and JDN are talking about holding another in 2024.

Standing against sexual harassment across Timor Leste is a crucial part of the picture when it comes to gender equality broadly. Until young women, people with disabilities and others are free to travel safely and easily in their daily lives, they face barriers to education and work in an already challenging social and economic context.

Indigo foundation applauds the work that JDN does in Timor Leste. The staff, volunteers, Activists, Influencers and community members all play an integral part of challenging the behaviours and norms that underpin gender inequality.

[Left] Young people act out a drama about how to use one of the 5Ds 'distract' when witnessing sexual harassment. [Right] 17 young people, JDN staff cross arms in a position of standing against sexual harassment at the completion of training.



Australia's new aid policy

Susan Engel, Associate Professor, University of Wollongong, indigo foundation volunteer.

Soli Middleby, CEO Australia Pacific Training Coalition, PhD candidate, University of Adelaide.

On 8 August 2023, Australia released a new International Development Policy and accepted all the recommendations of the Development Finance Review, released on the same day. This brief article starts by summarising the arguments we made in a piece for the Lowy Institute's Interpreter in August last year called: <u>Does</u> <u>Australia lack strategic imagination on aid and</u> <u>development?</u>. If you've read that piece, skip to the second part of this article, which focuses on the rapid growth of lending mechanisms in the Australian aid program, that is the Development Finance Review.

We wrote the paper after a chance meeting at a conference because of a shared concern that the policy lacked ambition and we were genuinely surprised at the lack of critical commentary.

Critical commentary is often self-silenced. The private firms who win government aid contracts (Australian managing contractors) have no interest in rocking the boat and many NGOs are highly reliant on DFAT NGO funding. Even in universities, the desire to win research or consultant funding can shape people's thinking and analysis. There is also a genuine concern that substantive critique will lead to calls to reduce the already meagre aid budget below its current level of 0.19% of Gross National Income.

We called the new policy 'both banal and arrogant.' We said that it repeated the 'failed whole of government approach to assist with the development of '"our" region,' and offered no reflexivity about how Australian actions impact the region and planet. We identified three areas where critical debate is needed.

1. Who does our aid benefit?

Here we highlighted the role of Australian Managing Contractors in the program - the top four private firms, Abt, Palladium, DT Global, and TetraTech saw their share of the aid dollar <u>more</u> than double. With portfolios <u>reaching \$2 billion</u>, you can make your own guess at their taxpayerfunded profits. Contractors employ development professionals whose high salaries were at least for a time governed by an <u>Advisor Remuneration</u> <u>Framework</u>, but that was terminated in 2020. Ten years or so ago the <u>wage gap</u> between international and local practitioners was 7-1, this may have worsened despite the growth in local expertise.

2. Is our aid sector racist?

We need a brave conversation about power imbalances, racial injustice and poverty. The UK and US have made a start on this in their aid programs, but Australia has not. The claims to a First Nations perspective in our aid program seem vapid in the wake of the failure of the Voice referendum. Still, that does not mean that NGOs and individuals should not demand Australia's aid program get beyond a <u>White-</u> <u>Saviour Industrial Complex</u>. Genuinely doing development differently, based on respect and local priorities is core to indigo foundation's mission - demonstrating how development can be done better.

The new aid policy has a lot of positive language around respect, listening and partnership, but it still sees aid as a 'tool of statecraft' to shape the region we want. We highlight how the aid policy and development finance review are full of 'images of smiling brown faces, predominately in rural and semi-skilled settings... [thus] disregarding urban complexities and diverse aid recipients' capabilities. The imagery, like the policy and review, conceal the industry itself, with its focus on infrastructure, technical assistance and finance projects all implemented by (predominately white) managers and firms.

3. What is 'development' anyway?

Two key issues are important here. First, the discrepancy between Australia's actions: having now overshot three of our planetary boundaries, the meaning of terms like sustainability and development in the aid policy are questionable. Equally, the impacts of Australian policies on trade, tax and security are not mentioned and are as, or more important, to the well-being of people in the Global South. Second, the policies and programs continue to promote linear economic growth through 'structural reforms' that 'improve economic performance' for development partners when such 'reform' has increased inequality over the past 30 years. This issue of development models is particularly pertinent when it comes to the increased number of aid programs based on loans, not grants, that are part of the Australian aid program.

Development Finance

One of the strengths of Australian aid has been that it has been predominately grant-based, but that has been changing with a take-off in lending programs designed to finance infrastructure and the private sector. Under the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) definition of Official Development Assistance, this counts as aid. Indeed, the OECD further broadened its definition of ODA in 2023, such that from our view the term is close to meaningless.

The Development Finance Review identified that the country has seven different loan funds and to that, we can add Australia's involvement in the multilateral development banks like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank and Australia's export-import bank, Export Finance Australia as it predominantly lends to countries in the Global South. There are quite a few concerns with these loan institutions, here are a few key ones:

- Citing commercial-in-confidence issues, they lack transparency despite the fact these are public funds.
- Infrastructure projects push the publicprivate partnership model which as Murray and Fritjers show in their 2022 book, *Rigged: How Networks* of Powerful Mates Rip Off Everyday Australians, double the cost of infrastructure projects in Australia.
- Some lending focuses on growing financial intermediaries, which prioritise short-term profits, charge high fees, and drive public service privatisation (Mazzucato has written powerfully on this).
- Support for micro, small and medium enterprises mostly comes in the form of microfinance, which, as I wrote in a much earlier piece for this newsletter, leaves as many people worse off as it does better off. Microfinance is not a development strategy as much as one to replace welfare with 'debtfare' (Soderberg 2014).

If you wondering what you can do (apart from supporting indigo foundation of course), the next time you bump into your local Federal MP let them know you want Australian aid to be grant-based and to focus on local leadership and genuine partnerships.

the first thing we offer is respect



"What is a legacy? It's planting seeds in a garden that you will never see."

Lin-Manuel Miranda, Hamilton



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If you include indigo foundation in your Will, we would be honoured if you let us know. This allows us to thank you during your lifetime, better plan our future partnerships and, with your permission, recognise your foresight and generosity.

If you have any questions, would like to discuss your giving or have specific wishes for your gift, we'd love to talk with you further. Please get in touch or click on the 'More info: Gifts in Will' button opposite for more details and to download our full brochure.

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More info: Gifts in Will

support our work

We only exist as a result of the generosity of a huge range of supporters.

Whether it is by making a small donation every month, volunteering your time or expertise, or by helping us raise funds and awareness about our projects, it is all critical to our objective of improving the lives of those in marginalised communities and building the power of small grassroots organisations.

No matter how big or small your contribution might be, every little bit counts.

On behalf of everyone we work with, thank you for your ongoing support.

