



Genevieve and Ann at Lindy's Soiree

Bi-monthly Australian Report– Jeremy Liyanage

1st April to 28th May, 2015

Exposing Bridging Lanka



Steve, Lindy, BL director and Warren, PICCA director

Lindy's Soiree – 50 people gathered on a warm Sunday afternoon to delectable morsels, drinks and a Bridging Lanka presentation. For most this was the first time they had heard about BL and much interest was shown in volunteering in Sri Lanka.

The immediate results? Christine Robinson is undertaking specific secretarial tasks. Ann Houston introduced BL to Kelley and the Global Development Group who may manage our governance and financial accountability roles. Genevieve Golden designed a simple business planning workshop for our war widows' initiatives. Judy Rafferty has provided team building and personality typing resources for BL staff capacity building.





Desley's Dinner with a Difference – Desley Renton, Manager of Community Engagement, Melbourne City Council invited 12 influential guests to a scrumptious dinner at her place and to hear of BL's work. The result? A lot of interest was generated for volunteering in Mannar. Michael, an experienced facilitator, agreed to fly to Brisbane to run a strategic planning session with our directors. Gavin introduced us to his brother, Rob, director of Landcare International who is keen to assist with our saving the kulams (lagoons) project. Rachael agreed to help us develop a communication strategy to woo financial backers.

Castlemaine's Sharing Sri Lanka – a town planner in Castlemaine, Victoria, was impressed with our work in Mannar and agreed to host a fundraiser for us. Ninety people graced the Castlemaine town hall and were treated to one of the finest Sri Lankan dinners I have tasted, cooked by another Burgher town planner, Tracy De Cotta and a Tamil asylum seeker. Our patron, Professor David de Kretser delivered a powerful reconciliation message. He was accompanied by his wife, Jan. Almost \$3,000 was raised towards the proposed children's playground in the village of Santhipuram, Mannar.





Sri Lanka Torres Strait Fusion Dinner & Dance - with some 45 RSVPs received with an actual attendance of 135, the fusion dinner eclipsed all our expectations. A local committee including Lindy and Parathy (BL directors) and family members organised the Brisbane event. The Stafford Salvos and Full Black, a Torres Strait Island group sponsored the event. Popular band CKNU rocked the stadium. We made just shy of \$4,000, with the funds being allocated to our war widows' livelihood projects.



Fusion band CKNU rock the night away

Partners in International Collaborative Community Action (PICCA) – several meetings held with board members and members to promote the Manna Women’s Catering Company for funding. PICCA has agreed to fund the project for \$10,000. A funding agreement is currently being negotiated.

Governance

Director’s Meeting – the second director’s gathering was held on 2nd May in Brisbane and facilitated by Michael O’Hanlon, Eureka Community Development Services. Dave Andrews, community activist, opened the session with a powerful presentation, “Nurturing a culture through a structure” and how governance should serve the work but the other way around. Seven priorities were identified and teased out through short, medium and long term actions: 1) Generate income; 2) Engage the diaspora; 3) Pursue partnerships; 4) Increase volunteers; 5) Influence governments (SL & Ausst); 6) Replicate the BL model; 7) Embrace governance.



Governance & Accountability – significant negotiations have occurred with the staff of the Global Development Group (GDG), an umbrella organisation based in Brisbane which provides governance and accountability to many agencies undertaking international development projects across the globe for 7.5% of income. A decision was made by the directors to partner with GDG to facilitate compliance with Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT), Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), Australian Tax Office (ATO) and the Australian Charities & Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC), also financial accountability through handling all our funds and the provision of Overseas Aid Gift Deductable Status (OAGDS).

Auditing – alas after significant negotiations the accountant who was going to undertake the four-year audit has not responded. Stanley has completed the financial recording and has been trying to contact the auditor without luck. So... we are still on the lookout for a pro bono or reasonably priced auditor.

Monitoring & evaluation – Ranjit and Jeremy have continued to develop an M&E proposal to attract a partner who will assist us to develop an evaluation framework and evaluate two projects – IT Platform and the Volunteer Program. John & Dee organised for us to participate in an ACFID teleconference and the result was assistance from a Uniting Church agency.

Volunteers

The following volunteers will be heading for Mannarin the next three months - Saya (Melbourne), Margaret (Brisbane), Rushil (India), Mary (Melbourne), Alannah (Melbourne), Tharani (Sydney), Meagan (Sydney), Steve & Ellen (Melbourne), Graham & Angela (Brisbane), Ranjit (Melbourne), Nigel, Rob & Cheryl (Melbourne),

Monash University – a mature-aged student, Maria Saltapidas, will test drive a potential masters of international development fieldwork placement program in Mannar in July. Meetings have been held with the Manager of Student Placements at Monash and Maria to discuss the relevant requirements. She will be involved in the Manna Women’s Catering Company – analysis of current program; review of similar programs for comparative analysis; write up of ‘second Phase’ proposal with recommendations and building the capacity of the BL staff and office administration.



Volunteer training - a weekend preparation workshop for volunteers wishing to participate in our urban improvement projects in Mannar, was organised for three volunteers (two from NSW and one from Victoria). Past volunteers Saya and Neil, and Steve Dunn, Prabakaran Ponnuthurai and Jeremy (BL directors), led the sessions. Cultural awareness, project planning and team building activities were undertaken. The volunteers will focus on the kulam project and possibly the Mannar town plan. Steve Dunn (BL director and town planner) will be working with the team.



ESL program – Ellen Dunn travelled to Brisbane from Melbourne to meet with Margaret Bornhorst to plan a month’s ESL program in Mannar which they will run. A weekend English camp, teacher training in a variety of teaching methods and English for tourism will be some of the components.

Life Matters in Mannar – a planning session was held with Nivanka, Nigel Heywood, Rob & Cheryl Wood and Jeremy in Melbourne to work on the content of a month’s program which aims to build a reflective moral consciousness in people involved in community rebuilding efforts. Past efforts have demonstrated that without a moral and ethical foundation, the most promising change initiatives are frequently undermined and wrecked.



Staff team building – currently our Mannar staff require team building and leadership development. Saya Lorback from Melbourne and Rushil Palavajjhala from India will join Jeremy in conducting a weekend retreat for the staff.

Meetings

- Thirteen Skype calls with BL staff – Kelvin, Grace, Sinclair, Robin, Quily, Karnan and James
- Larry Marshall & Cynthia McKenzie – discussions about the Uniting Journeys 8 day donkey tour to Mannar;
- Arbana Raj, Founding Director Palmyra – two meetings to explore a working partnership between Palmyra and BL on either women’s livelihood or education projects;
- Christine Robinson – identified secretarial tasks which she could undertake;
- Ellen Dunn – identified relevant ESL focus areas for the Mannar teaching program;
- Lionel Bopage & Siraj Perera – strategies to engage the Tamil diaspora;
- Jeff Jarvis, Head of Sustainable Tourism Masters’ Program, Monash University – seed planting for future masters of tourism fieldwork placements;
- Rob Youl and Horrie Poussard, International Landcare – exploring ways the Landcare movement could assist the kulam project;
- Brisbane Urban Improvement Group – three meetings with Deb Males, Graham Burgdorf, Marc Dubost and Angela Wright to continue planning work on the Santhipuram projects, particularly the children’s playground. Expert playground designer, Tobias Volbert of Playscape Creations, contributed innovative ideas;
- Lisa Krynen and Mark Allen – discussions on undertaking an ecological survey of the Mannar kulams;
- Wendy Pullan – agreed to start formalising our volunteer program procedures;
- Michael O’Hanlon, Eureka Community Development Services – two meetings to discuss strategic planning workshop and also to explore the 3 year proposal to stage Bizet’s opera, ‘Pearl Fishers’ in Mannar as an international fundraiser;
- Trish Ferrier, Richard Rawlings and Anna Heriot – exploration of what BL needs and how the BrisWest community group could respond;



Super Sri Larry & Cynthia



Rob Youl & Horrie Poussard, Landcare



Brisbane urban improvement group

- Heike Mack-Behle – gained advice and resources on donkey taming and rearing
- Zazie Tolmer, Principal Consultant, Clear Horizons – Ranjit and Jeremy met to discuss their possible assistance with evaluation and also to conduct a program logic workshop for BL directors in September;
- Mihiran de Silva – discussions over establishing a Teach Sri Lanka program and also for Mihi to be a volunteer teacher in Mannar;
- Kelley Chisholm, Global Development Group – introduction to GDG which could possibly undertake BL’s governance and financial accountability roles;
- Karen Mitchell accountant – discussion over setting up a proper financial system for BL on MYOB;
- Jordan Brayley, Asst Project Officer, Fe Luscombe, Manager Project Department, Craig Tunney, Project Officer and Will Skadden, Compliance Officer from GDG – a four hour meeting to nut out what a partnership with BL may entail;



Two visits to the donkey sanctuary at Boonah, Qld

Jeremy Liyanage
CEO