

Monthly Report – Jeremy Liyanage

Sunday 24 August, 2014



'English for All' planning workshop in Brisbane, Australia

Priorities

- Income Generation – procedures, income generation, 500 Club
- Staff cohesion and effectiveness – prevention of 'fall over'
- Governance: registration of Bridging Lanka, financial systems, mirrored subcommittees
- Promotion: website (6 days), newsletter (1 day), presentations (3 days), Facebook (1 day)

Month in review

Mannar staff

- Communication – weekly skype sessions with Kelvin and two other staff member
- Capacity building – encouragement, tackling personality-based issues, responding to issues
- Systems – weekly staff meetings, weekly work plans, monthly calendars, monthly reports - Skype sessions with Kelvin (5), Robin (2), Sinclair (2), James (1), Karnan (1), Quily (1), Grace (1), Al Hathir (1), Majuran (1).

Meetings in Australia

- Steve & Ellen Dunn – Education and Town planning subcommittees
- Saya Lorback – income generation ideas and subcommittee
- John Place – aquaculture project
- Foundation House – annual lecture: *Challenges of global forced displacement*
- MM Business subcommittee – kick-starting the group in Mannar via skype
- Sophie Dunn – exploring volunteerism with a medical focus



- Town planning subcommittee (Steve Dunn – Chair, Saya Lorback (engineer), Rebecca Jerram (landscape Architect), Ted Chen (architect), Neil Hutchinson (town planner), Jeremy (social planner) – next fieldwork excursion, implementation focus, sponsorship, prospectus
- Assoc Prof Anoma Pieris – town planning and donkey welfare discussions
- Jenni Morris – donkey promotion
- Andrew Davison (barrister) – advice on DGR status and Noonga Reconciliation Group
- BL Education for All workshop in Brisbane – Melbourne and Brisbane base volunteers met to develop an education strategy
- Ranjit Bhagwandas – debriefing
- Prof David de Kretser – patron, asylum seeker campaign, launch of 500 Club
- Desh Balasubramaniam – Tamil activist and network-building
- Bridging Lanka income generation subcommittee – fundraising ideas
- Diaspora Action Australia – income generation, financial policies and procedures, DFAT
- Penleigh & Essendon Grammar School – donkey welfare promotion to human rights group
- Danura Miriyagalla (PhD candidate) – Socio-economic regeneration of ex cadres presentation and network building
- Operation Mannar reunion dinner – volunteer planners
- Bridging Lanka income generation meeting – hopper night and other plans
- Stanley Stork – bringing finances up to date with a 10th September deadline
- Rosemary Marquardt (AADO) – DGR status
- Saya Lorback – crowdfunding planning.

Other

- Testimonial for Julia Hurley – town planner for PIA young planner's award

Progress in Sri Lanka

Bridging Lanka office

- The office space is functioning well and is a hive of activity and meetings. Kelvin is the centre coordinator and he has risen to the occasion well. The office is 'anchoring' the work and the staff in ways that I had not imagined. A fridge was purchased to save costs of meeting refreshments. A digital camera is needed badly.

Rice to riches

- A business plan completed but has to be revised due to drought. Currently a 70kg bag of paddy costs Rs 4,000 to purchase for milling as compared with between Rs 1,800 and Rs 2,000 in a good season. 70 kg of paddy becomes 45 kg of milled rice. At current prices only Rs 120 profit per bag which is extremely low.
- 25 target offers distributed by RDS/WRDS to vulnerable widows with 10 applications returned. Interviews held this week with the decision to have the 10 women on a rotational basis of employment until business fortunes improve.
- November is the next harvesting season so hoping for improved conditions.

Women's food business

- Due to changes in government policy regarding overseas NGOs, our local funder our local funder had to seek legal advice for new arrangements, and this has stalled their financial



contribution to the project. As a result we missed out on starting the trial catering service during the Madhu Festival.

- Alternative plans are currently being discussed, to purchase a tent and sell meals at popular spots in Mannar town. The MM22 Women's subcommittee coordinator will meet with the Vicar General, Catholic Church to re-negotiate the Madhu opportunity.

Fishing business for returned asylum seeker

- When Jeremy was last in Mannar, an MOA was signed with the businessman stating the condition of the loan of 70% of the cost of boat, outboard motor, nets and other incidentals. A BL staff person was assigned to him
- The businessman borrowed money and purchased the nets because much preparation/ sewing work was required to make them job-ready. BL has since transferred Rs 70,000 to reimburse the loans. Once this is completed, BL will transfer funds for the other purchases.
- Currently, work has begun on a crowdfunding campaign to raise funds for the fishing business.

Mannarin Marumalarchi Trust

- Two meetings have been held with the Trustees as they slowly increase their awareness of the projects and their role. The registration process is now complete. The next stage is opening a bank account – which is a very complex process. After a year's operation, application will be made for NGO status.

Bridging Lanka

- The registration of Bridging Lanka has stalled in Colombo. We are currently investigating the nature of the hold-up. It is essential that this entity is registered post haste so that financial systems can be established to receive internal funding from sponsors/CSR.

Donkey Management & Welfare Project

- The Donkey Sanctuary UK head office is currently reviewing the draft MOU between themselves, Mannar's Association for Rehabilitation of Differently Abled People (MARDAP) and BL. MARDAP will wait until the MOU is signed before it will commence building the Donkey Assisted Therapy (DAT) Centre. BL has contributed \$5,000 to this project.
- Donkey feeding stations – complaints have been received by locals who do not want the feedlots in their neighbourhoods as it is attracting donkeys and crows. A decision has been made to move those feed lots to open fields.
- The land for the donkey clinic and sanctuary required bulldozer levelling and some weeding as there has been some rain. Rs 10,000 has been provided for this work.
- The 'funky donkey' t-shirts are proving to be a big hit with young people as well as oldies wanting to buy them. Clothing tags were designed and two samples were sent to Australia for reviewing. Production of the t-shirts will start soon.

Community tourism strategy

- The Guesthouse Owners Committee continues to meet monthly. BL arranged for a business awareness workshop centred on effective customer service. The group has decided to clean Kirri Beach and to construct kabanas for tourists.
- BL staff have produced a draft brochure for tours of Mannar.