



# QSA Notes

## people, places & projects

### A changing climate for poverty reduction

BY ALETIA DUNDAS | QSA

Although responding to climate change is finally being seen as a national and international priority, the greatest concern to QSA is the impact of climate change on the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. While rich countries are continuing to pollute at an alarming rate, the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions will disproportionately affect those societies who have contributed least to the problem, those living in rural communities at a subsistence level.

Our continued pollution in the West will mean greater shortages of water in African countries, significant loss of arable and habitable land in India and the forced displacement of increasing numbers of people from low-lying states in the Pacific. Archbishop Desmond Tutu argued that this situation was tantamount to 'climate change apartheid'.

By threatening the livelihoods and health of populations across the globe, climate change stands to undermine human development and worsen poverty. It is argued that the key to communities' survival is that they become aware of the gravity of the situation and develop the capacity to adapt. In an increasing movement towards building resilience, a number of case studies of low

technology, grass roots programs to increase food security, water security, local disaster preparedness and emergency response are emerging.

A lesser known case study is QSA's partner, Pitchadikulam Bio-Resource Centre in Tamil Nadu, India. The Centre organises Global Warming Awareness workshops, the first of which was attended by 38 women. Participants were asked to imagine their village 30 years ago and consider what had changed.

According to these women, fresh water could be found 30 feet below the ground 30 years ago, but is now 250 feet down. Where patches of forest used to exist, there are now none. People used to use saris to carry food,

but now plastic bags line the streets. There is an increase in the numbers of mosquitos and people have fewer cattle than they used to. There are fewer fish available, and while traditional grains such as corn, millet, dhal and patty used to be available, now it is only rice and peanuts. The Kaliveli waters are now polluted and undrinkable.

Following a photo presentation on climate change and a showing of the Al Gore movie 'An Inconvenient Truth', participants agreed that air pollution, plastic production, electricity and the use of motor vehicles had all contributed to the changes. They then began to discuss what they could do about climate change. They talked about planting more trees, using less plastic, using less electricity, cycling more and reducing the



**Solar panels**, Pitchandikulam Bio Resource Centre  
**Photo** QSA

QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. The purpose of QSA is to express in a practical way the concern of Australian Quakers for the building of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world. To this end QSA works with communities in need to improve their quality of life with projects which are economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

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use of pesticides. Surely, this is a humbling reminder to the rest of us to do the same.

Pitchandikulam Bio Resource Centre doesn't just talk about responding to climate change. It already models a lighter footprint on the earth in a number of ways, including

the installation of a number of solar panels around the compound. Those who visit for the study tour in September will be staying in eco-dorms and planting indigenous trees from the plant nursery, which is part of a movement to bring back the forest. QSA supporters who bought carbon credits as part

of the 2007 Living Gifts catalogue assisted in the planting of these trees and have therefore contributed in a small way to tipping the balance towards those most affected by climate change.

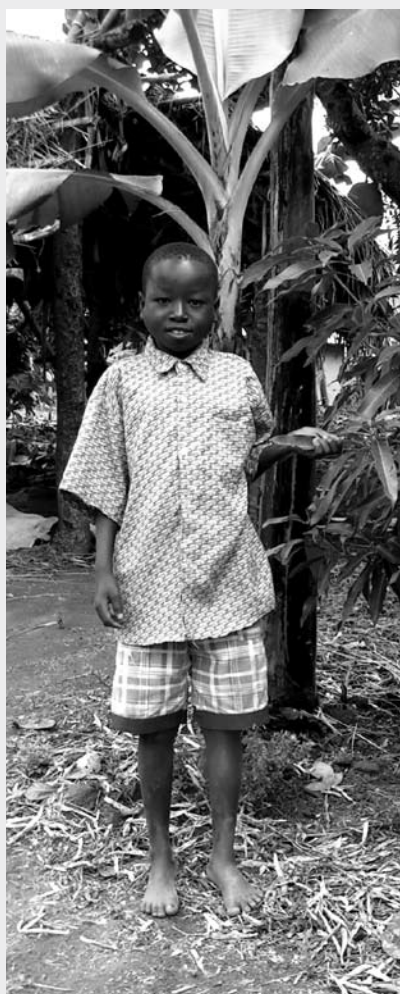
Sources: [www.cana.net.au](http://www.cana.net.au) and [www.civicus.org](http://www.civicus.org).

## AIDS orphans in Uganda

QSA joined the Quaker Mardi Gras stall in Victoria Park, Sydney, in February, to raise awareness about the situation facing HIV/AIDS orphans in Uganda. Our partner organisation, St Jude's Family Project, works with local communities to develop agricultural skills that are sustainable and organic.

They discovered that numerous child-headed orphan households existed in northern Rakai district, and that these households have been receiving little or no support from their extended families or communities. Despite free primary school education offered by the government, some orphans cannot attend school as most of the morning hours are spent in search of food and doing casual work for their upkeep.

An orphan group identified as likely to benefit from sustainable agriculture training was recently able to visit a number of external farms and had the opportunity to learn from the experiences of previous trainees. One of these orphans is Bukenya, whose only relative is his grandmother. The richer variety of food he now grows and eats has made a real difference to his health and wellbeing.



**Bukenya** with his mango  
*Photo* QSA

## Water and sanitation

QSA launched the 2008 Annual Appeal in May. This year QSA is focusing on water and sanitation. The accessibility of safe drinking water is becoming more and more limited. Women are often forced to walk for hours just to collect clean water for daily use. The time taken for this task reduces the time available for domestic and income-generating activities, and educational opportunities for girls.

In many developing countries, people suffer from preventable diseases just because there isn't the infrastructure or knowledge for maintaining personal hygiene. Every 15 seconds a child dies of diarrhoea.

Your donations to this year's Annual Appeal will support water-based activities such as the construction of wells, water tanks, toilet blocks and sanitation education, thereby contributing to the goals of the United Nations' International Year of Water and Sanitation and the relevant Millennium Development Goals.