



# QSA Notes

people, places & projects



## Warehouse holds key to development success

A simple warehouse in southern India stores not just silk cotton or kapok, coconuts and cashew nuts, but also the key to development success.

Two of the women who are connected with this achievement stand in front of the building. Vijayarani (pictured left) is a Program Associate at the Vasandham Society, and one of eight community development workers whose salaries are no longer dependant on yearly funding applications, but on a sustainable source of income provided by the warehouse.

The Vasandham Society, which uses non-violent approaches to achieve human rights in the region, has now proved itself to be a shining example of good development practice as well. Its members have been aware for some time of the need to fund community development workers to support small community groups to address their needs. Most importantly, they wanted to be able to run their development programs in a financially independent manner, and not be asking donors for funding each year.

Central to the Vasandham Society's plan was the construction of a warehouse. The idea was to store local produce purchased at a fair price from local women and to sell it again for a profit when the market price was better. They approached QSA in 2006 with a request for funding to implement their plan. They had already begun to act on this concept but had run out of storage space – would QSA help?



**Above L.**  
Vijayarani (left), the Program Associate at the Vasandham Society, and Thangam (right), President of the Vaigai Federation stand in front of the warehouse. **Photo:** QSA  
**Below**  
The warehouse. **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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While there are many ways to approach development, all good projects have some elements in common – they strive for a positive change in the lives of the participants; participation is open to everyone in the community; and they are sustainable. For QSA sustainability is about assisting the community to become financially independent, supporting activities which do not destroy the environment, and building up the capacity of the community.

So QSA agreed to assist, seeing the potential for a sustainable outcome, and very soon construction began. On a monitoring visit in 2007 Jackie Perkins was able to see the building nearing completion, and to meet the women of the Vaigai Federation of women's self-help groups in the area who were managing the program. She has just returned from a second visit and has been able to gauge the impact now that the warehouse is in use.

Thangam (pictured right), who has been President of the Vaigai Federation for five years, was able to show Jackie around the warehouse and explain the changes that have taken place. In the three years since the building was completed and able to be used, they have increased their ability to pay for all costs associated with running the building AND in 2009 paid for staff salaries for eight community development workers! This is a tremendous result and one for which the Vasandham Society can feel justly proud.

### End of Financial Year Appeal

It's almost the end of the financial year, so if you intend to make a tax deductible donation to Quaker Service Australia, there is still time.

And there are lots of ways to give. Donation forms appear at the back of every issue of the *Australian Friend* and brochures are available at every local Quaker meeting. Alternatively, you can download the donation form from our website: [www.qsa.org.au](http://www.qsa.org.au). Simply fill in the donation form together with a cheque or payment details and fax or mail it to our office. Many thanks for your support.

### QSA Education Kit

The QSA Education Kit for 2010 is now available. The theme is 'Food, Water and Land: Fundamental Human Rights' and the kit includes facts and figures about access to resources in different parts of the world, stories about a few of QSA's project partners and how they are accessing the resources they need, and lots of activities and ideas for different age groups to explore this theme.

Hard copies are available at each local meeting and worshipping group – just ask your clerk. To download an electronic version, please go to <http://www.qsa.org.au/Resources/EducationMaterials/tabid/77/Default.aspx>.

### New project in Australia

The QSA Aboriginal Concerns Fund recently entered into a new partnership with the Warburton Remote Aboriginal Community in Western Australia.

Wilurarra Creative (formerly known as Warburton Youth Arts) is a multidisciplinary art centre with an ongoing arts and cultural program for young Indigenous people aged 17 – 30 years from the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. Participation is self-directed and areas of focus include fashion, music, land and cultural practice, literacy, publishing and community development.

A short video about the program can be viewed by going to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and searching for 'Wilurarra'.

QSA has provided financial assistance for Wilurarra Creative to conduct the planning phase of a project entitled 'Digital Assets Management System'. The aim of this project is to enable those who engage regularly with the centre to store, access, publish and sell their digital material. This is an exciting initiative and we will keep you posted.

### !STOP PRESS!

In recent editions of QSA Notes you will have read about the work being supported in Cambodia. Would you like to see this for yourself? Why not join Jackie Perkins and Margaret Bywater on a study tour to Cambodia in February 2011.

For more details please contact Jackie on 02 9698 9103 or email [administration@qsa.org.au](mailto:administration@qsa.org.au)