



QSA Notes

people, places & projects

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Tamil Nadu school children learning about their environment and how to care for it in the future.
Photo: QSA

Sustainability

What makes a project sustainable? What do we mean by sustainability? QSA has been talking about the concept of sustainability for many years, and with each of its project partners, because it is a very important concept. Sustainability means that a project is able to stand on its own, with the benefits to the community extending beyond the life of the project and without the on-going support of the project partner. For many project partners, support to strengthen their organisational skills is important for their future sustainability to enable them to serve their community and its needs better. Most projects have clear timeframes based on previous evidence to support decisions around when sustainable outcomes might be achieved. Monitoring by the project partner and visits by QSA staff track this,

and also regular reporting to QSA let us know how the project is progressing. There are also regular communications between project partner and QSA by email, phone and Skype. All of these can lead to the modification of activities or implementation of a more flexible timeframe as required.

Development work needs to be flexible as circumstances and risks change. For example there may be local holidays, or an election, or a flood or a drought—in fact so many different things can affect the smooth running of a project. As so many of our project activities have a strong base in agriculture, of course temperature changes and the amount and timing of rainfall are therefore critical. What about elections—how do they impact? There is more a deliberate decision to halt project activities around the time of elections.

As many political parties or candidates offer incentives to secure a vote, it is very important that the project activities are not viewed in this light. QSA and its project partners go to extreme lengths to ensure that there is no support given to political candidates or parties, as is stated in its policies.

Pilot projects have more fluid timeframes attached to sustainability goals so that the lessons learned while the project is in progress can be integrated back into the project. It is what makes QSA and its project partners learning organisations. QSA's long term relationships with project partners allows for some later revisiting of previous projects—for example we are currently supporting one project partner to address a new range of issues project beneficiaries face as their age and social, economic and environmental conditions



Using sustainable solar power to operate simple pumps to raise water.
Photo: QSA

have changed, building up their capacity to sustainably manage their water resources thereby improving their food and income security.

If you would like to see for yourself how sustainable the projects are, why not join QSA on a study visit?

There is one happening in late January 2015 to visit some of the projects in Tamil Nadu, South India. The tour will begin on 28 January in Chennai, Tamil Nadu where

one of QSA's project partners, Pitchandikulam Forest, have completed the eco-restoration of a large area of the city. The tour will then move down along the coast to stay in the eco-dorm, among the trees of the forest. There will be opportunities to meet project participants and partner staff from the two main projects supported by QSA and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to share something of your skills and experience with them or perhaps

students in the local schools.

An optional second tour begins immediately after the QSA tour, to meet Quakers in central India, including Devdas Shrisunder from the Friends Rural Centre, Rasulia who attended YM2014. Please contact the QSA office to register your interest and details will be sent to you.

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QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development, 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 culturally sensitive, as well as being economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

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