



QSA Notes

Peacebuilding

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Community members restoring a kanmai.
Photo credit – Vasandham Society



Community protests, and awareness raising campaigns in Tamil Nadu. Photo credit – Vasandham Society

For development work in Australia, and around the world, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) form the main guidelines. Agreed to by all 193 members of the United Nations in 2015, the SDGs aim to achieve peace, prosperity and sustainability for all people by 2030. It is recognised that to address poverty, the world must also address the growing inequality within and between countries, the increasing strain on the world's resources and the global environment, and the burgeoning threats to peace and stability. Goal 16 in particular is relevant to peace building as it states:

To promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The ideas to drive progress on this goal focuses on a range of elements that underpin peaceful, inclusive and

effective societies, particularly the impact of conflict and violence.

Although QSA's work addresses issues such as food and water security, environmental restoration, and poverty alleviation, many of QSA's current projects funded in part by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, have specific actions designed to bring about peace.

Tamil Nadu

For example, in the work of project partner Vasandham Society in Tamil Nadu, south India, a key issue creating disharmony within these communities is access to resources, and in particular water. There are nine open reservoirs, called kanmais, which Vasandham Society maintains to ensure that farmers do not encroach on the periphery by planting crops in the fertile, damp soils, or construct fences which prevent cattle

and villagers from accessing the water. If Vasandham Society, and the 150 women's self-help groups it has helped to form, discover access to the water supply has been denied, they report this to the authorities in the hope that they will take action. If no action takes place, as has been the case in the past, then the community rallies behind Vasandham Society and peaceful protests take place. Vasandham Society also provides a range of workshops for the community, on topics such as reduction of violence towards women and girls, and issues relating to preventing child marriages.

Cambodia

Another example comes from Cambodia, and the work being undertaken by QSA's project partner Khmer Community Development. QSA has reported several times about the specific peace building activities being conducted in



Gender workshop given by staff from Khmer Community Development Photo credit - KCD



Hon Non and Tin Sokha.
Photo credit Khmer Community Development

the community of Prek Chrey near the border with Vietnam. Here they have established a peace club in the school, which helps students address instances of bullying, and the project overall is working to reduce inter-racial tension between the Cambodian and Vietnamese groups. Recent workshops have also been working to address peace within the home, by running gender awareness sessions.

Some of the participants had some interesting comments to make. Tin Sokha who is the sub-chief of the village, attended the workshop with his wife Hon Non. They are both very active in supporting community initiatives. Tin Sokha said KCD had invited him and his wife several times before to join the

gender workshop, but he did not attend because:

I thought that all families who learn about gender were families who have problem such as violence. This time was the first time that we had attended the gender training, and it turned out to be different from what we thought it might be.

Now he understands about the meaning and concept of gender, sex, and gender quality and gender equity. He plans to share his knowledge with other families in the community and is happy that he understands more about his wife's feelings. Hon Non said:

Thank you so much KCD and the donors that you give us this chance to learn and understand about gender.

Mean Seoun is a 56 year-old farmer who lives with her mother and brother. She said before she was ashamed to interact with other people and only stood in the house and did not go anywhere. But now thanks to KCD who invited her to the training and gave her a chance without discriminating, she was able to learn a lot and to be more confidence. She continued to say:

KCD staff have always encouraged me to join with the community and to participate in other KCD activities. Now I know a lot especially about gender and I think in a positive way and love myself and others.

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A message from QSA

The Living Gifts catalogues will be in your Meetings by the time you are reading this edition of QSA Notes. We are happy to accept donations at any time, either by cheque, credit card or direct credit to QSA's bank account with the CUA, BSB 814 282, account number 505 85902. It is really important that if you do use direct credit or simply send funds via your credit card that you also either send the office an email, to john@qsa.org.au or administration@qsa.org.au or phone us on 02 9698 9103 so that we know who the donation has come from, and to which of our funds you wish it to go to. With this information we can then send out a receipt, and Living Gifts cards if appropriate.

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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