



# QSA Notes

## The impact on QSA of membership of ACFID

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ACFID Conference speakers Anjana Regani (left) and Lily Thapa (right). Photo: ACFID

One of the key dates in the Australian Council For International Development (ACFID) year is the Annual General Meeting. This is part of a two-day conference in November, held this year in Melbourne. It is a wonderful opportunity to network, catch up with colleagues, learn some new ideas and ways of working as well as hearing some unusual stories from member agencies' program partners from around the region.

The conference began with the AGM. This included the audited financial statement and reports from the various committees. ACFID now has 123 members and 17 affiliate members. During the AGM we welcomed into membership three interim members and four affiliates. This past year has seen the

Code of Conduct committee finalise and launch the revised Code of Conduct to which all member agencies must adhere, and this requires QSA to make some changes and additions to its suite of policies. The current process of redrafting policies will also address these additional requirements. Some policy implications will apply to our project partners, and this will form a key part of discussions during the upcoming monitoring visits so that a common understanding is established with key project partner staff. Rather than simply handing over a policy written to comply with Australian standards to well-intentioned people for whom English is their second or third language, a face to face discussion will help to ensure that the essence of the policy is fully explained and understood.

At the end of the reports of the AGM, there were some resolutions to consider, which were accepted unanimously. They were then made into press releases to gain a wider audience. These I think would also be acceptable to Friends, and it was on that basis that I accepted them on behalf of QSA.

- A resolution that the people seeking asylum, and those already found to be refugees detained on Manus and Nauru are the legal and moral responsibility of the Australian Government; and that ACFID and its members request urgent humanitarian action to bring a cessation to the suffering of the people due to Australia's offshore detention practice; and that the refugees and asylum seekers be brought to

Australia while determinations are made about durable solutions for each of them.

- In support of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, ACFID and its member agencies resolve to stand in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people for *Makarrata* (the coming together after a struggle), and to support their aims and aspirations for substantive constitutional reform, by leveraging our networks and influence.

We also welcomed the new president of ACFID, who is Susan Pascoe, formerly the Commissioner of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). Susan has the potential to bring her extensive political knowledge and networks to support ACFID and the sector during her initial term of two years.

Around 250 people representing the member agencies and some university students attended the conference, which had as the theme 'Transformational Change and Development: Engage. Create. Lead.' After a welcome to country by a local Aboriginal Elder, the audience was enthralled by the work of Lily Thapa, Founder of Women for Human Rights, a pioneer organisation working for the rights of widows in Nepal. Lily explained that culturally,

widows in Nepal face a difficult situation. They must remain separate from their own family for a year and not attend social occasions, associate with any men, and remain within their husband's family, but are unable to claim her husband's property unless she is over the age of 35 years. Lily found herself as a widow with two small children at the age of 29 years. I could not imagine how she managed to survive the first year, being told by family members that she 'did not need' to attend a family wedding, was unable to visit her family when her need for their support both emotionally and financially would have been at its greatest, and having to deal with in-laws who were trying to claim the house with the law supporting their actions. She channelled her outrage into making a difference for other women by creating an NGO which has helped hundreds of young widows and has succeeded in bringing about national political policy changes, making it possible for widows not to be ostracised, and to have immediate and full access rights to property.

We also heard from Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Minister for International Development and the Pacific; Senator Richard Di Natale, Leader of the Australian Greens; and Senator Penny Wong, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade. Panels of energised speakers addressed action and

advocacy for change with participation from Stop Adani Campaign; Love Makes a Way; Climate Action Network; transformational organisations for change; and Campaign for Australian Aid. There were also three sessions giving a choice of options to discuss particular topics in more detail. Each option addressed various forms of actions and advocacy for change – a packed agenda of which this report is only a snippet. For those wanting to know more, please contact me in the QSA office.

### Living Gifts catalogues

Printed copies of the latest catalogue have been sent to the members of the QSA Linkages Sub-Committee in your Regional Meeting, but you can also download them from the QSA website: [www.qsa.org.au](http://www.qsa.org.au). Inside the catalogue you will find a variety of gifts to support the QSA projects, ranging in cost from \$30 to \$100, and some with open amounts. Projects in Cambodia, India, Uganda and Australia will benefit from your alternative gift by supporting community groups to achieve food and water security as well as the means to increase their income for the family, increase their health and wellbeing and take care of their local environment. We welcome and encourage your support Friends

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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