



QSA Notes

Climate change and caring for the environment

JACKIE PERKINS | QSA ADMINISTRATOR



Workshop in Prek Chrey, Cambodia.
Photo: Khmer Community Development



Participants in the workshop
Photo: Khmer Community Development

Have you and your family, or you and your Meeting had discussions about ways of working to help reduce the impact of climate change and improve your local environment? It's a discussion which many groups are holding, and agreeing to make changes. This is also true for QSA's project partners. One such community in Cambodia was asked these sorts of questions, at a workshop set up to commemorate World Environment Day in June.

This rural community does not have the luxury of many of the services we take for granted here in Australia, such as recycling services and garbage collection so their answers may surprise you. Before the workshop they were asked how they would get rid of plastics and metal cans – over half said they would throw on the side of the road when travelling, some would burn the plastic (such as bottles, bags and wrapping) and bury the cans. Old, rotten food or

dead animals, most people said they would throw into the river. The river is close by, is swiftly flowing and quite wide, but its uses by others downstream for drinking water and cooking helps explain the spread of disease at times. The river was also the most likely place for a range of items no longer needed, such as old motor oil, clothes, batteries, and some of the tyres with the rest being burned. There was already a trend to sell old computer and electronic equipment to recyclers, and other household items would be given away or swapped. The workshop facilitators had a big task ahead of them to change some of these ideas to more environmentally aware ones. They began with a discussion on climate change, what accelerates the process, what changes had they already noted in the climate (such as a dropping of the water table, rains less predictable in terms of timing, wind strength and volume of rainfall) and what did they

think about the appearance of their community and had there been any problems already with rubbish on the ground. Everyone commented on the piles of rubbish everywhere and the smell and flies associated with this, of the danger to the freely-roaming animals from eating the plastic bags with food scraps in them, and many people had cut their feet on hidden tin or glass among the rubbish. Gradually the discussion moved on to different ways of disposing of rubbish, and recycling took on greater prominence when it was realised that some people make an income from selling on specific items such as bottles, plastics, electronic equipment etc. Some community members are learning about organic farming methods, including how to make good compost so they too were able to add these ideas to the discussions. What started out as a sad workshop quickly became very exciting and lively as ideas were discussed and adopted.



The results of a hard day's work.
Photo: Khmer Community Development

Methods of sorting recyclable items were worked out, what could be sold, how the poorer members in the community would be able to use second hand clothing (I will be sure to share some photos of the Quaker Shop in Adelaide and the monthly stall at Devonshire Street Meeting during my next monitoring visit), and how some items such as dead animals could be buried instead of being thrown in the river. Following on from the workshop, 36 students from the local school with help from 80 adults collected all of the rubbish from around the community, and everyone was encouraged to plant more trees in the area – so far 222 trees have been planted, most of which are trees which will provide something tangible such as fruit which can be eaten and surpluses sold, which reduces the risk of the trees being cut down for firewood after only a few years. And everyone has greater pride in their community and it's one more way of the community coming together to address problems.

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Fruit trees ready for planting. Photo: Khmer Community Development

New banking arrangements for QSA

Friends may be interested to learn that QSA has now opened an account with the Credit Union Australia (CUA Bank). Donations to this account in the name of Quaker Service Australia Inc. are always welcome, the new numbers are BSB 814 282 and account number 50585902.

The next edition of the Living Gifts catalogue will be available on line (www.qsa.org.au) and in paper form by mid-September – look out for further announcements about this.

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.

119 Devonshire St Surry Hills, NSW 2010 Australia • administration@qsa.org.au

PHONE +61 2 9698 9103 • FAX: +61 2 9225 9241 • ABN 35 989 797 918



ACFID
MEMBER