



QSA NEWSLETTER

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Quaker Service Australia does not only work with communities in India, Cambodia and Uganda. It is also pleased to support Aboriginal communities and organisations here in Australia. In this newsletter we will begin with some news about a project being supported in Australia before giving some personal stories from people involved in our projects in Cambodia.

Kornar Winmil Yunti, in South Australia

The name of this organisation in Ngarrindjeri means *men working together*, and it is a non-profit organisation that supports Aboriginal men from around South Australia to build and strengthen their social and emotional wellbeing. It has been operating since May 2011, but some of the key staff have been working with male clients in providing some counselling services for many years. Their main services offered have been men's camps, social groups and healing circles and providing state wide support.

QSA's financial support was to the second men's camp held to address the evidence of a strong association between alcohol and impulsiveness among young men, specifically in terms of an increased likelihood of engaging in violence or other risk behaviour. The camp addressed issues significant to healing such as identity and family roles; relationships; Elders roles; Indigenous history; family violence, and grief and loss. As a result of discussions and ideas shared, there was a strong need for the men to be supported more frequently than the annual camps and so a subsequent project was started, also funded by QSA, to facilitate smaller group discussions held in different locations and more frequently. These groups provide training and support for the leaders of the men's groups so that they can play a crucial role in supporting men in their own community to heal and grow. This project was equally well received and successful.



Participants at a men's camp. Photo credit – Kornar Winmil Yunti

An extension to the groups was implemented by KWY, and linking to the *White Ribbon* campaign, they began to hold awareness raising seminars to address depression / suicide and domestic and Aboriginal family violence. Called 'Club Connect' the project was targeting the most at risk – the Aboriginal youth and young males, by providing them with information and encouragement to make positive changes in their lives and supporting them to make informed choices. KWY staff delivered seminars to members of already existing football clubs and were very honest in sharing their own stories, creating an atmosphere of trust and support which many found so very helpful.

Over the past six months, QSA and KWY have been working on a project to support Aboriginal women and their children who are experiencing domestic violence and abuse. The project assesses the client's safety through holistic assertive case management achieved in a culturally safe manner. The staff will also liaise with specialist homeless and domestic violence services as these services are currently unable to provide a case management service.

The outcome of all of these projects is that not only have South Australian Aboriginal communities access to this level of support and caring, but for KWY, it has brought them into greater prominence. In mid July, QSA's convenor and project manager were able to meet with some of the staff of KWY, which was a huge privilege and pleasure. They in turn were keen to meet and to share a very recent piece of news about their organisation with QSA – it has been awarded \$2.7million from government to run services in the north and south of the state for the next three years. This is a huge acknowledgement of the success and importance placed on their work, and QSA is delighted to be able to share this news. It will enable an expansion of their role, increasing their staff from four to sixteen, and linking with other government and Aboriginal services.



Support for rural communities in Cambodia

In Pursat Province, project partner the Department of Women's Affairs office

In September 2016, staff from all four of QSA's project partners in Cambodia met together for a training workshop on the needs of people with disabilities. The workshop helped the staff to understand what is meant by disability, and the many ways it could impact on the lives of the individuals and their families. From now on at the start of each project, greater detail will be recorded in the initial survey of the community. The information was then shared in Pursat by staff from the Department of Women's Affairs (DWAP) with 100 women elected village leaders from Bakan District so that they have a greater understanding of the needs of people with a variety of disabilities and how they can be assisted by the village leaders to achieve

a greater and more relevant access to resources. DWAP staff told QSA's monitor, Jackie Perkins, of the difficulties they often experienced in discussing project involvement with people with disabilities, as they are generally reluctant to put themselves forward, and prefer to sit and wait for a government funded hand-out. This emphasises a need for more widespread discussions within the community and this marginalised group, especially to have people with disabilities feeling that they can be active participatory members of the community with equal access to what is being provided by NGOs. Government funded handouts do exist for people with disabilities but it is very minimal and staff feel that this potentially leads to apathy and is demoralising for the family.

As a result of the training to these women elected leaders a total of 216 additional community workshops have been held by them. Participants numbered nearly 8,000 people which is a good result. By making more people aware of the issues, and of ways to improve interaction and understanding of what the particular needs might be, it is hoped that people with disabilities will feel more encouraged to join in project activities in the future.

Currently in this project, there are 14 people with disabilities (or those having a family member with a disability) are involved out of 100 participants, and disability inclusiveness is now a feature in DWAP's multi-year plan. During the 2017 monitoring visit Jackie met – Dou, a woman who has hearing difficulties and is a permaculture trainee, and two men who are husbands of trainees, and have disabilities as a result of accidents with land mines, one man lost a leg and has a prosthetic one which results in his inability to walk great distances, and Kosal who was in the army, lost both legs and now manages his mobility in a wheelchair. Kosal and his family live on land owned by his grandmother. The land is big enough to grow vegetables for the family, but they do not have a rice field or access to a well so need to earn money each day to buy rice, usually by selling fish caught in a river some distance away, which is also their source of water.



Former soldier and husband of permaculture trainee, who helps in the family's food garden. Photo credit QSA

Another project partner in Pursat, the Bunrany Hun Sen Development Centre was formerly a training centre, but is now trying hard to re-invent and re-invigorate itself as a production centre of handicraft items such as woven mats from cane and bamboo, and of weaving of cotton and silk to make scarves, clothing and household items. As a result of staff there attending the training on people with disabilities, they have upgraded two toilets to make them wheelchair accessible, and put in a concrete ramp to make it possible for everyone to access the ground floor rooms where most of the mat weaving takes place.

The Pursat region has been experiencing severe drought during the past year. The Government distributed water by tanker to remote communities but for many of the poor families, this was of little help as they did not have large water storage containers. QSA was able to use some funds donated to support its work in Cambodia to ensure that each family participating in the project now has two water storage jars with lids to reduce evaporation and mosquito larvae growing. This has made a big difference to people who are not able to walk far to collect and carry quantities of water, and the water supply provided by the Government is of good quality, which cannot always be said of water collected from shallow ponds or nearly dry river beds during a drought.



Water pots ready for distribution, and a recipient in Prognil Village. Photo credit DWA Pursat

Permission has been given for the photos, credit to QSA unless otherwise stated.

Would you like to learn more about QSA and its project partners? If so, we would love to hear from you:

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