QSA Notes

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Reflections on the 2021/22 project year: Highlights and priorities

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Women of the tailoring unit, Tamil Nadu, India SOURCE: PBRC

QSA is a long-standing partner in the Australian NGO Cooperation Program, the Australian Government's longest running and largest NGO program. Each year, QSA submits a report highlighting aspects of our activities that reflect the Federal Government's development priorities. The following extracts from the 2021/22 report provide information and some examples from our projects.

Focusing on groups whose needs are greatest

QSA's work primarily aligns with the first and second of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals: No poverty (SDG1) and No hunger (SDG2). Hunger and poverty are inextricably linked, and food security initiatives aim to address immediate and long-term issues.

In Uganda, QSA's partner, St Jude Family Projects, works with the poorest subsistence farmers and their families with less than 1 acre (0.4 ha) of land. Most farmers are women who are subject to multiple social, financial, and other constraints. For example, nationally, women earn, on average, 40% less than men.

St Jude's projects involve building and strengthening skills in permaculture and other organic, low cost and low-tech farming methods, enabling farmers to establish home food gardens and grow nutritious food year-round. By the project's second year, most participants produce a surplus that supplements family incomes and pushes them above subsistence. Training is interdisciplinary and supports a social and environmental safety net involving ecology and climate adaptation, nutrition and health, community-based initiatives, social inclusiveness and leadership.

Water pit construction in Uganda SOURCE: St Jude

Demonstrating inclusiveness

Khmer Community Development (KCD) in Cambodia has clear objectives for inter-ethnic peacebuilding, social justice and community development, goals concerning disability rights and the rights of ethnic communities, and programs to promote involvement in projects.
KCD works with the Phnom Penh Centre for Independent Living to support the elderly and those with disabilities to improve their project participation and social inclusion. Having identified members of the target communities, they provide equipment and motivation to increase involvement in social activities, education and employment. KCD also works with local authorities to raise awareness of their needs and invests in strengthening staff KCD capability.

In Kandal Province, ethnic Vietnamese suffer significant disadvantages and discrimination. For example, they do not have citizenship and cannot own land. KCD designs activities specifically for ethnic Vietnamese who tend to live and work along waterways, engage in fishing and fish farming, and focus on business, unlike their Khmer neighbours that work in agriculture. To promote inclusion, reduce conflict and improve economic outcomes, KCD recruits Vietnamese-speaking staff and actively encourages cultural awareness activities, including arranging for staff to live for short periods within Vietnamese communities to understand their issues.

Focus on localisation

QSA favours community-initiated projects, working with existing community-based or civil society organisations. Many of QSA's partnerships originate from Australian Quaker networks and historical connections. As far as practicable, QSA plays a consultative role in project ideation, concept and design to ensure and encourage that the local partner, together with their community, are actively involved and that projects are relevant to the community's expressed or felt needs and interests.

Strengthening the capacity and capabilities of QSA's partners as local community-focused civil society organisations is another aspect of our approach. For example, this year, we supported St Jude Family Projects and Pitchandikulam BioResource Centre staff to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation skills and experience through joint efforts with external evaluation contractors.

A productive home garden in Pursat, Cambodia SOURCE: QSA

Approach to safeguarding

During the year, QSA vetted all new project partner personnel (including staff, contractors and volunteers) with referee and background checks. We also continued to encourage partners' policies and processes for safeguarding and risk management.

All St Jude Family Projects staff completed specialised disability training with a local expert from Uganda's National Action on Physical Disability organisation. The training included devising disability-inclusive practices, ways to achieve equity in service provision, and access to resources and opportunities for people with disabilities.

QSA provided follow-up and support for project partner Pitchandikulam BioResource Centre in India to review and update their policies and procedures relating to safeguarding, child protection and counterterrorism, including screening and recruitment for project-related personnel, complaints handling and reporting.

Unable to complete all their planned training sessions on gender, role-sharing and empowerment due to COVID restrictions, Khmer Community Development worked with an external consultant to develop a video. As a result, they can now deliver gender training when they can't go to the field, for example, during flooding when they cannot provide face-to-face. Addressing gender issues helps to promote a safe and inclusive environment while reducing the likelihood of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

These projects are supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP)

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