



Partners in International Collaborative Community Aid Ltd.

NEWS

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PiCCA representatives have visited each of our two projects: see page 2 to read about the sustainable food project in Swaziland, and go to page 4 for an update on the women's catering project in Sri Lanka.

Read about PiCCA's first collaborative event, with the Brisbane Development Circle, on page 3.

Warm wishes for the festive season

PiCCA Directors would like to wish all members and supporters a peaceful and enjoyable time over the Christmas period, and a very happy and successful 2016.

Thank you for your support during 2015, and we look forward to continuing the PiCCA journey with you next year.

Best wishes,

Stephanie, Tiziana,
Warren & Steve

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Members celebrate PiCCA's first year

PiCCA members gathered for a celebratory event on 4 December, to hear first-hand from Director Warren and member Terry about their respective trips to PiCCA-supported projects in Sri Lanka and Swaziland.

Warren spent two weeks with Bridging Lanka, and was clearly moved by the level of need and also by the resilience of the people, especially the widows who, against high odds, are working towards a better future for themselves and their families.

PiCCA's first two projects are quite different, and this was borne out by the fact that while they were there, Warren experienced significant flooding and Terry significant drought!

During the ensuing discussion, we learned that Mannar district is the setting for Bizet's opera 'The Pearl Fishers', something that Jeremy Liyanage (CEO, Bridging Lanka) says could be one of many drawcards for tourists.

Thanks to Warren & Tiziana for generously hosting this event, and to Warren and Terry for spending valuable time and personal resources visiting and reporting on PiCCA projects.



(L to R) PiCCA member Craig Jones, Bridging Lanka CEO Jeremy Liyanage, and PiCCA Directors Warren McMillan and Steve Maguire



Meet the Swazi farm Caretaker

Mr Richard Vilakati (above, at the farm site) has been identified by Swaziland's King Mswati III as the custodian of the farm, which is being developed with PiCCA's support to provide meals for vulnerable children.

The land is owned by the King, who has granted permission to PiCCA's partner, AMICAALL, to use as much land as is needed for the project. The thinking is that 'the King's land is being used to feed the King's children'.

Mr Vilakati is a part-time employee of the local Council who is very committed to the project. He is an experienced farmer, lives close by, and is well respected in the community.

The Caretaker's role will be key to the project's success, to ensure the security of the irrigation equipment and to keep intruders (including animals) out.

Mr Vilakati will be paid a modest stipend for his Caretaker duties.



Fertile food bowl on its way

"Sustaining Food and Volunteers" project update

A specialist advisory group appointed by PiCCA's partner in Swaziland, AMICAALL, has confirmed that the chosen farm site is well suited to provide food for up to 4,000 vulnerable children.

The group advises that the land is fertile, usually receives good rains and the soil is suitable to grow maize and vegetables to feed vulnerable children attending up to 49 Social Centres throughout the country.

PiCCA member, Terry Parker, visited Swaziland recently and met with Rudolph Maziya, CEO of AMICAALL Swaziland to discuss the project. Terry also inspected the farm site and met the identified Caretaker and other staff.



From L to R: Mr Richard Vilakati (Caretaker), Mr Mayibongwe Dlamini (AMICAALL Program Officer) and Ms Thinni Dlamini (AMICAALL Director of Programmes).

The plans to prepare the land are coming along. Approval has been sought from the Ministry of Natural Resources to drill a borehole, and fencing materials have been received from the Food and Agricultural Organisation. The Caretaker has been chosen, and suitable crops (maize, beans, pumpkins and baby vegetables) have been identified.

However, Swaziland's worst drought in living memory has caused a delay. (The grey skies on the day of Terry's visit did not last.) Government tractors are ready to plough the land once the rains come. AMICAALL hopes to initially use 4 hectares, with 1 hectare dedicated to fast growing baby vegetables, a good cash crop which could generate income to reinvest in the project (e.g. Caretaker wages and equipment maintenance). An additional 6 hectares of land can be made available as the project expands.

AMICAALL is hoping to construct a lockable shed to secure the bore and pump and enable the Caretaker to stay overnight.

From PiCCA representative Terry Parker...

“The project is clearly well underway in the context of planning and establishing the foundations. The drought has delayed the actions planned to have happened so far, but much has been put in place to commence when the rains arrive. The commitment of the people involved in encouraging and augers well for a successful project.”

“I’m reminded of a definition of ‘sustainability’ that has really stood the test of time. It was devised by the Brundtland Commission in 1987: ‘Sustainable development is the kind of development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’ ”

“I think that PiCCA’s investment in this project is worthwhile, as it is providing seed funding to an initiative that has the potential to be self-sustaining over time. This is sustainable development.”



Terry meeting with Mr Rudolph Maziya, CEO of AMICAALL Swaziland

Global development goals: inspiring or dreamy?

Last month PiCCA collaborated with the Brisbane Development Circle to hold an interactive forum, “From MDGs to SDGs: Looking back to shape the future”.

Hosted by BDC’s Carly Stephan and Rebekah Ramsay, participants discussed a range of challenges and opportunities facing the world if all 17 of the new Sustainable Development Goals are to be achieved.

PiCCA Director Stephanie Boldeman and PiCCA member Terry Parker each provided a short introduction to the topic.

Stephanie highlighted the positive legacy of the Millennium Development Goals: that they articulated a clear set of shared objectives for development, harnessed significant aid funding and political support



and they helped to save or improve millions of people’s lives. On the flip side, the MDGs suffered from a lack of perceived legitimacy and progress in achieving the goals has been very uneven - particularly for women and girls.



Terry pointed out that this issue of uneven progress was behind the notion of the new SDGs, ‘leave no-one behind’. The 17 goals, bold, wide-ranging and universal, were developed using a highly consultative approach. Despite some criticism (Professor William Esterley called the SDGs “Senseless, Dreamy and Garbled”), Terry argued that the new goals are simple, action-oriented and multi-faceted, recognising that poverty is a complex, structural and contextual challenge.

The discussion that followed was thought-provoking and it was great to have PiCCA members involved in the event. Here’s a link to [BDC](#), and to the [UN’s SDG](#) knowledge platform.

Visit to Mannar Women's Catering Company

PiCCA Director, Warren McMillan, has just returned from a two-week visit to the site of the Mannar Women's Catering Company Project in Mannar, Sri Lanka. The project is being implemented by PiCCA's partner in Mannar, Bridging Lanka, and aims to develop a sustainable catering business employing women who were widowed or in other ways severely impacted by the civil war.

Warren reports that significant progress has been made in the project so far. The group of women has been formed and while its numbers vary according to demand for the catering product, the foundations of the company are being established. At the moment the women are delivering catering services through a number of different outlets.

The women have a store in the weekend markets at the Madhu Church, a sight of devotion and pilgrimage, and made famous internationally by the Pope's recent visit. It is located in the jungle about 40 kms away from where most of the women live (in Manthai West) and they travel to the markets by bus, first into Mannar Town, where they change to the bus for Madhu.



Warren Mc Millan meeting Bridging Lanka CEO, Jeremy Liyanage



Mannar is the name of both the island and its main town. It is also the name of a broader



administrative region which includes the island and part of the adjacent mainland. Mannar is described in the lonely planet guide to Sri Lanka as "forlorn". While that might be the view of whoever wrote that part of the guide, it is such an unfair label to apply to the resilient, hospitable, friendly inhabitants. The population of the region is about 150,000 most of whom are Tamil and Catholic. Significant minorities include Muslims and Hindus. The economy is primarily agricultural with fishing and rice farming key sources of income. The area was highly impacted by Sri Lanka's civil war, the trauma of which still resonates in personal tragedy, ongoing poverty and community concerns.

Five weeks ago the women succeeded in negotiating access to a temporary kitchen site on the grounds of the government offices in Manthai West (*see photo at right*). Here they have opened a canteen which provides lunches and refreshments to a passing trade as well as to people who work in the offices. They are also winning ad hoc contracts to cater for events.

At the same time a block of land has been identified for the construction of a permanent kitchen and canteen right next door to their current temporary site. Approvals are being negotiated with the various government agencies that have a say but as there are many such agencies this promises to be a fairly lengthy process.

To underpin this work, Bridging Lanka worked with the women over a period of weeks to develop an incremental business plan and a related action plan process which outlines key steps and responsibilities to progress the development of the company.

The women's livelihoods are already improving as income is being generated from the catering company. This is helping them secure loans to buy assets such as motorbikes, to build more secure housing and to cover education expenses for children.



Stella (*above, making tea at the canteen*) is a widow with one daughter, whom she would love to be well educated. Stella's other ambition is to show people that she can 'come up' and have a good life. "I don't want to beg from others, so I work hard," she says. Stella has been able to borrow money to build a house and a well.



Ampika's home was destroyed during the civil war, so she was living in poor temporary housing (*left*). She is using the wages from the catering business to finish her new house (*right*). Ampika has made friends through the company and they sometimes share meals together.



There is still much to be done for the project to be completed, particularly in the area of constructing the permanent kitchen facility but the women are engaged and motivated. Their enormous resilience in the face of tremendous personal tragedy, war trauma and ongoing poverty is an inspiration and a breath of hope for the future of Mannar.

In the words of the women involved:

*"We are not slaves to anyone. We feel we have a future.
We can stand on our own two feet, be free and independent."*