



NEWS

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Welcome PiCCA supporters

Greetings from PiCCA. You don't need us to tell you that it has been a tough year, so we won't dwell on that. We have reached the end of 2020 not only with new a vocabulary ("social distancing" "hard lockdown" "zooming") but new perspectives. At PiCCA, we have learned new ways to work, to progress, to carry on regardless. In 2020, our project work has continued in Vietnam, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bangladesh and Bougainville (see below) and we are so grateful to be able to work in partnership with the amazing resilient people we have met in all these countries. This has all been made possible by you, our network of members, donors, supporters and partners who together make up our community of like-minded souls. So, far from thoughts of despair, all this fills us with renewed gratitude for the gifts of life, and friendship and the opportunity we are given to serve.

As we farewell 2020, we wanted therefore to extend to you our sincerest thanks for your interest and support in whichever way you express it, and to wish you and your families much peace and happiness for this Christmas period and beyond. We would also like you to join us in greeting this new year with hope, optimism and faith in a better future. Together, our small contributions can and do make a positive difference in people's lives.

Thank you so much and a happy new year to all.

Latrines built, WASH training underway in Vietnam

Our 2020 project was a simple enough idea, building much needed latrine systems and providing community wide access to training in hygiene and sanitation matters in the village of Quang Nham. This is in a mountainous area about 75 kms from Hue where almost three quarters of the 4,500 inhabitants have no access to hygienic latrines, leading to widespread and debilitating health and environmental issues.

The project is well underway in spite of enormous challenges. This year, there have been two challenges in particular on top of all the usual ones: Covid and tropical storms.

Regarding Covid, Vietnam has had spectacular success in managing the pandemic with only 1,411 recorded cases as of December 19, 2020. 35 people have died. Experts attribute this success to a variety of factors including the very effective strategy of contact tracing and mandated isolation of at-risk contacts adopted from the very start. Nonetheless, the impact of the pandemic on day-to-day life has created many difficulties, as all tasks are necessarily managed through a Covid safety lens. Vietnam as elsewhere has adapted to this “new normal”.

However, the project faced even more challenging obstacles in September as a series of devastating tropical storms hit central Vietnam, causing loss of life and widespread damage to housing and community infrastructure. For a while the road into Quang Nham was completely blocked by landslides. In an act of solidarity with our Hearts for Hue partners, PiCCA members contributed to their emergency relief campaign to raise funds for food and urgently needed supplies. During this period, our project work was unavoidably put on hold.

Before the storms hit, community surveys were undertaken, an initial group of six families identified to pilot the building of the latrines, and training in construction techniques was delivered. Hearts for Hue now report that with roads open, the project is well and truly back on track and the construction work has recommenced.



Alongside the construction works, Train the Trainer programs are now being rolled out (like the one at left), delivered by Mrs Tran Thi Minh Tam, a WASH expert from Thua Thien Hue’s Water Company. The training targets community leaders and teachers in the first instance

and raises awareness on the protection and maintenance of the latrine systems, and on sanitation and hygiene issues more generally. As a Train the Trainer, it also equips participants with skills and resources to continue the awareness raising process across the community and through the school system.

A challenging year for our friends in central Vietnam but nothing seems too daunting for Hearts for Hue. We are proud to be able to partner with them in their work.



New sewing project in Bangladesh

PiCCA has already supported Symbiosis Foundation in Bangladesh to set up an eye and a dental clinic, as part of a community centre in Kamrangirchor, Dhaka. Funding is also being provided to establish a sewing program, as a vocational training initiative. It is hoped that some of the participants will go on to set up their own small businesses making and mending garments.



PiCCA recently received very concerning news that the Country Director of Symbiosis Bangladesh, Dr Abdur Rahman Pakhi, has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and is being treated in hospital. By all accounts Dr Rahman is in good spirits and he is on the road to recovery. We wish him all the very best. More than half a million Bangladeshi people have been infected with COVID-19, with more than 7,000 deaths.

Chicken vaccinations continue in the Congo



While PiCCA's project in the Congo has concluded, we are heartened to hear that the project continues to deliver positive outcomes. The project focussed on chicken farming (especially chicken health) as a way of improving living standards. Our direct involvement wrapped up in 2020 with the funding of a solar fridge to better store vaccine to inoculate chickens against Newcastle Disease.



One of our partners, KYEEMA Foundation, funded a third round of vaccinations with a view to the project become self-sustaining thereafter. In the latest vaccination round, a total of 8,443 chickens across 335 households, 189 of which are female-headed. PiCCA is very pleased to have been involved in a project that "planted a seed" for the future.

Hako Women's Collective (HWC) takes a lead role

The Bougainville Government in partnership with Australian and Papua New Guinea organisations is running a major project to improve the profitability and vitality of smallholder cocoa farming families and communities in Bougainville.

HWC has been selected to lead a newly established partnership of seven former cocoa farmer cooperatives in Haku to participate in this project. The total value of the project is 500,000 Kina. HWC generously acknowledged PiCCA's role in helping with its organisational development saying we have provided "amazing support and capacity building of our women".

Congratulations to HWC President Dorcas Gano, the leadership group and all HWC members on this impressive milestone.



Left:

HWC have almost completed a new project (not PiCCA funded), to build a standalone Safe House for women escaping family violence. HWC have gone from strength to strength since PiCCA supported them to construct a community centre (Luman Hipakoko) and an agricultural hub.

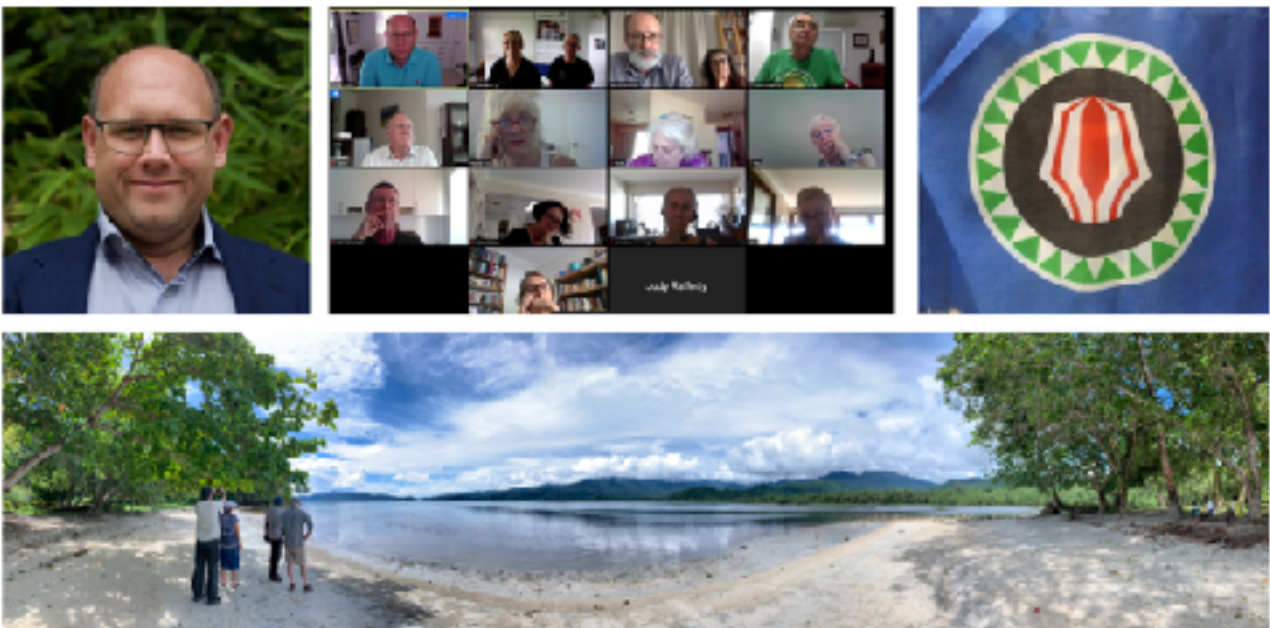
Community dialogues in Bougainville: PiCCA's first webinar

The inaugural PiCCA webinar was held on Sunday 29 November. Fifteen PiCCA members from Brisbane to Melbourne participated via Zoom in a stimulating discussion moderated by Dr Serge Loode on the topic of "Mediating Democracy - What Australia Can Learn from Political Dialogue in Bougainville". Dr Loode, the project leader of the Bougainville Transition Dialogues, provided an illuminating presentation on the work of the community dialogues project set within the background of the civil war in Bougainville from 1989 to 1997, the peace process 1997 to 2001 and the establishment of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG), through to the referendum on Bougainville's political future in 2019 and the ABG elections in 2020.

PiCCA members learned that the highly successful transition dialogues are designed to promote peace building through facilitation of inclusive grassroots political discussion in the village communities of Bougainville that can feed into government decision making processes and that of agencies such as the

United Nations. The dialogues bring no pre-conceived solutions, are facilitated by local people and provide opportunities for Bougainvillians to participate in decisions that determine their own future. Through Dr Loode’s presentation and subsequent discussion, members were able to reflect on the value of getting so many people together to discuss issues that matter to them, as well as considering implications for Australia’s foreign policy towards Bougainville. A summary of the webinar will shortly be available on the PiCCA website.

Feedback from participants to the webinar was very positive, agreeing it was a privilege to hear Dr Loode share his experiences. Also to learn a lot more about one of PiCCA’s important project sites. Given the success of this first webinar the PiCCA Board has decided to continue with a series of similar events on topics related to community development. The next is proposed for May 2021.



The PiCCA philosophy

Supporting locally-driven and locally-managed projects in less-developed countries overseas, projects that are addressing issues at the heart of a problem, projects that are designed to be self-sustaining over time and build the skills & expertise of local people.

We learn as much as we give. We offer our overseas partners a bridge to financial and non-financial resources (e.g. advice, useful contacts through our networks). And we absolutely love what we do!

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