

## MOTA ISLAND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM—the Hard Work is Paying Off!

### We're Almost There!

What an eventful year it has been. Work has been continuing on the school on Mota Island. Our in-country overseer, Ps Dick Hopkins, has been very encouraged by the progress, both in the actual building and the spirits of the villagers and project workers. Ps Dick is the Principal of Arep Secondary School based at Sola, Vanualava. He takes a 45 minute boat trip between Sola and Mota regularly in order to oversee this project for us. If that weren't enough to keep him busy, he is also Senior Pastor for Island Harvest Community Church in Sola. We are so indebted to Ps Dick for his enthusiasm, drive and commitment to seeing this school completed. He doesn't get paid for this work – he does it because he loves the people of his area and wants to see good things happen in their lives.

This is just one instance of how a single project is drawing the people of a region together. Ps Dick put it so well when he said, "The people in Karamal Village (the school site) are changing tremendously. I realized a change in their attitude this year. I have meetings with them and we all are working hard on the project. The last trip of the two foremen, they themselves (the villagers) work together with them and feed them. I really appreciate it."

So much has been accomplished on the school building in the past year. The outside walls have been completed, together with inside walls that will split the school into 3 large classrooms (these can later be divided again as student numbers increase).

Each and every brick had to be made by hand. Bricks were painstakingly created using bags of cement, coral sand and special moulds. Once again the people of Sola, on Vanualava and people of Motalava Island have pitched in to help. Over 2,500 bricks have been made in Sola and then carefully transported by 15ft boat to Mota. This painstaking process was necessary, as shipping ready-made bricks to such a remote location was not feasible.



**The foremen Ps Dick mentions are Robert Harry (in red) and Levi Nicos (in white), also from Sola. They stay at the project site for several weeks at a time in order to complete needed building stages. Thank you so much, Ps Dick, Robert and Levi!**



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### Inside this issue:

<b>We're Almost There!</b>	<b>1-2</b>
<b>Opening Day—2011?!</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Can YOU Help?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Changing of the Guard</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Keeping in Touch</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Meet the 2010 Life Aid Board</b>	<b>4</b>

## We're Almost There, cont...

But that is not the end of the process by any means. On arriving on Mota, the bricks must be carefully carried up a 50m steep slope, then a further 1.5km before they could be used to form the school walls. The work has been grueling. Imagine carrying individual cement blocks through thick and rocky jungle, avoiding tree roots and hanging branches, and watching out for snakes before getting to the site, carefully depositing your brick in the growing pile, and turning around to do the whole trip over and over again! Many of these people will have been doing this trip in bare feet, uncomplaining. Some have even traveled from Sola and across Mota Island to help. They are focused, intent on the outcome. They are excitedly watching their school take shape day by day, brick by handmade brick. Because they have made this school themselves, they will be so proud of it. Prouder than if someone had just come in and plonked a finished school in the middle of their village. This is their school, you see. They have dreamed of it for years, never daring to hope it might actually become a reality. But because of the generous donations of people they will probably never meet, now their school is more than just a pipe dream. There it stands, for all to see. This school is a physical example of what can happen when people get together and help one another...when we see the good in each other, and the needs our neighbours face. It is a constant reminder to the people of Mota Island that they are not alone. Someone, somewhere cared enough about the future of their children to step in and offer the finances to help make their dreams become a reality, then so many of their island neighbours joined in to help build it. You can't imagine how this makes these people feel, living in such a remote and often overlooked area, to know that they are not by any means forgotten. And so, they continue working.

Once the walls were complete, they were followed by roof trusses and window frames. The roof has been erected and it now looks like a real building!



## Opening Day—2011?!

Due to so many complications with access and weather difficulties, the school will be opening a year behind schedule. But open it will. Classes are due to start at the beginning of 2011. Already there are 25 excited children starting kindergarten this year so they are all ready for Grade 1 at school just as soon as the doors open!

But we are not quite there yet. Scott Douglas met with the Principal Education Officer for Torba Province during the year. During this meeting, it was agreed that the Vanuatu Department of Education (a Government Department) will fund the day to day running of the school, something Life Aid has been negotiating towards for some time. This is great news! Without this funding, the school becomes a nearly impossible venture to maintain financially. Remember that very, very few families, struggling to survive as they are, would be able to contribute any money towards the upkeep of their school. With the Government commitment, administrative and teaching supplies and teachers salaries will be covered each and every year. Even student fees for Grades 1-6 will be covered thanks to a recent AusAid funding boost!!

*"The building is...a very big and beautiful building. People around Mota and even in other islands in Torba (the northern province around Mota Island) cannot believe that such a building is being built at Mota. All the Glory to our God and our Lord Jesus Christ for this Testimony."*

Ps Dick



## Can YOU Help Our Special Appeal?

While this is excellent news for the long-term viability of the school and we are so rapt by it, it means our timeline is very tight in order to make sure it can open in 2011. You see, for a school to receive Department of Education Funding in Vanuatu, it must meet certain criteria. These include things like integrity of structure (which we've met no worries), a clean water source for students and accommodation for the Government paid teachers. The water source has already been factored into Life Aid's calculations, with 2 large water tanks to be attached to the roofline provided by AOG Vanuatu (as a result of AusAid funding), one at either end of the school building. But we are lacking the funds for the teachers' accommodation. We need to build 2 simple homes and do it fast. Teachers will be selected by the Department of Education in May this year, in preparation for the school opening next year, so we only have until May to get everything on the school and teachers accommodation completed, or the school opening may be delayed yet again.

**We really don't want to disappoint the people who have worked so hard to get to this point so urgently need to raise \$5,000 by the end of February 2010 so the building work is completed on time.**

### Can you help?

*Please consider helping however you can.*

*See the donation information on the next page...*



**Even small change for us can equal such a big difference to them!!!**

## Changing of the Guard

It is with some sadness that we farewell several Board Members this year as they move on to other projects.

During the year Amy Diffey returned to her homeland of New Zealand, and stood down from the Board. But she will continue to write newsletters for Life Aid from across the ditch so is not completely lost to us!

Peter and Robyn Patterson have spent 4 years on the Life Aid Board in various capacities, most recently as Chairperson and Treasurer respectively. We will miss Peter's lighthearted approach and zest for life while doing the important job of directing the Life Aid meetings. Robyn's meticulous care over Life Aid's finances has also been invaluable.

Ian and Gina Callaghan also leave Life Aid this year. Ian has been Life Aid's Secretary for the past 3 years running, and Gina has been a legend in the fundraising arena, planning events with precision.

Life Aid Intl has relied heavily on the input of these key people, and we will miss them sorely. We are so grateful for the hard work and dogged determination they have shown in helping lift the profile of the organization, and work tirelessly in their 'free time' to assist communities like the one on Mota Island towards great sustainability and a brighter future. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts, folks! We wish you all the best as you move into your future endeavours.

# Thanks!

## Watch This Space...

During the past year, Life Aid has received a number of requests for support from communities around the world. For the time being though, we have kept our focus small in order to ensure the completion of our project on Mota Island in Vanuatu. However, once this project is finished and left in the hands of its community leaders, Life Aid will be in touch with a new project to inspire you!

## Keeping in Touch

We're expanding our sphere of influence!

To enhance awareness of Life Aid International we have the **Life Aid International website** ([www.lifeaidinternational.org.au](http://www.lifeaidinternational.org.au)),

a **Facebook Causes** page that currently has approximately 130 members (find it by linking through Scott's Facebook page)

and an **Ammado website** - an International Corporate Responsibility web community at [www.ammado.com/nonprofit/lai](http://www.ammado.com/nonprofit/lai).



## Meet the 2010 Life Aid Board

With so many old faces moving on, we have a number of new ones for you to meet. Many thanks to those who have moved to take up the standard left by our departing Board Members. Meet the 2010 Life Aid Board!! You will see there are still a few familiar names and faces, together with the fresh new ones.

### Scott Douglas – President and Secretary



Scott has been a part of the Board for Life Aid Intl since the organisation's inception in 2004. He has his own business called Focus Quality Management Solutions. He has over 20 years experience as a manager and

leader in various government and non-government organisation's and holds post graduate qualifications in management. Scott is driven by his belief that true success comes from investment into the lives of other people as well as his desire to see third world and developing nations reach their development goals.

### Ramona Bullard – Vice President and Director for Marketing and Communications



Ramona is a new Board member to Life Aid Intl and takes up the roles of Vice-President and Director for Marketing and Communications. She owns her own business called Blue Sky Solutions and has over 15 years experience in Business & Communications, predominantly in a management and consulting capacity. Ramona's industry experience spans the retail, engineering, construction, manufacturing, media and education sectors. She has enjoyed working with groups such as Thies, Centrelink and Townsville City Council as an advocate for organizational improvement and change. Ramona has an extensive history in supporting not-for-profit organisation's.

### Julie-Ann Douglas – Treasurer



A Board Member with Life Aid Intl since 2005, Julie-Ann this year takes on the role of Treasurer. She is a registered nurse having worked in community and neo-natal intensive care and currently in palliative care nursing. Julie-Ann has a history of supporting people 'behind the scene' and has visited India providing support to an orphanage.

### Fay Baker OAM FAICD – Board Member



Fay is a new Board member however has supported Life Aid Intl early since its establishment. Fay is a Company Director and business owner. She has been a member of numerous Boards in Queensland and was previously a Councillor for Townsville City Council and President of the Townsville Chamber of Commerce. She has invested a great deal into the Townsville community over many years and her experience and vision to see people groups develop is a great asset to Life

### Diane Taylor – Board Member



Diane is a new Board member to Life Aid Intl. She has worked as a Child Protection Officer for a number of years, is the foster carer for a number of children and has established a number of community development ministries with her husband Ross, who is the Senior Pastor of Townsville City Church. She has also worked with indigenous communities in the gulf and western areas of Queensland and has a drive to see the needs of disadvantaged people met and exemplifies this by her actions. Diane is community challenger, and has been a citizen of the year recipient.

## Get Involved!

Are you looking for a fulfilling role helping advocate and assist developing communities make positive changes?!? Life Aid Intl is looking for more caring, committed and qualified people to **join our Board of Management**. Please contact Scott Douglas for more details on the role.

Join us at our **Planning Day on Saturday, 20 February 2010**. Everyone welcome! We will have a vision casting session with the possibility of a local business person coming to speak. We will then be working on developing our Strategic Plan, Marketing and Communications Plan and Business Plan along with discussions about future direction. Not sure if you can help? We are sure you can! We want all kinds of folks, and are looking for skills in a vast range of areas ranging from building, marketing, fundraising and PR through to mail merging, letter writing, itinerary planning, table setting, and more!!! If you want to help, we want you there! Please come along! Contact details on the front page of this newsletter.

## Special Appeal for Teachers Houses

If you wish to help we can accept donations by mail, cheque direct debit, or credit card. Just go to [www.givenow.com.au/lifeaidinternational](http://www.givenow.com.au/lifeaidinternational) for details. Australian donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible.

Thank you for your support!

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Are your contact details changing or do you want to give us some feedback? Please fill out the portion below and send to 125 Greenwood Drive, Kirwan, QLD 4817 for any changes or feedback to us.

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