



Australian Landcare International (**ALI**) is an incorporated, not-for-profit organisation whose aim is to assist other countries to take up Landcare ideas. **ALI does not provide funds for overseas projects – this is left to various aid organisations.**

President's Note

Welcome to our second ALI newsletter. Please use it as a forum for ideas on spreading the good word (and actions) of a Landcare approach to communities in other countries.

There are several exciting projects and activities *on the go* or in the planning and we hope that members will be actively involved with them over the next year or two. We have been looking at possibilities for supporting Landcare in Indonesia, Nigeria and Chile to name a few. The dynamic work started 10 years ago in the Philippines has been very successful and has attracted significant funding from AusAID in the past and now for a further extension. ALI member Noel Vock is project manager and has written a brief article here on the project's development and outcomes.

We know it is difficult period for funding, especially for small groups like ours whose focus is primarily support for overseas Landcare. We are relying to date on members' contributions which only cover basic administration. We urgently need help to get a website up to communicate more effectively across Australia and overseas. It will also showcase ALI's ideas, skills and knowledge base and our possibilities for working with, in particular, developing countries using a Landcare approach. We have a domain name (*ali.asn.au*) and if any member could help us on the technical side to get it going, that would be great.

Rob Youl

ALI was started last year by a group of Australians who had been involved in Landcare at various levels over the last 20 years. We are interested to use our Landcare experience to help others overseas to take up the Landcare approach. There are now more than 10 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, North America and the Pacific where Landcare is established. Other countries have heard of Landcare and want to know if it could help their local communities. **ALI** provides the prime contact point for overseas enquiries about Landcare, and can give guidance and support to those communities interested to know what Landcare is all about.

ALI has direct links with Landcare International (LI), a multi-national group formed out of the International Landcare Conference and based in Nairobi, Kenya. LI works at a senior government and industry level to promote and support the development of Landcare in many countries. **ALI** sees itself working at an organisational and local level.

ALI Members

Currently we have about 20 members of ALI, most of whom are actively involved with Landcare through training, group activities, policy and program development and corporate support. Many have overseas work experience. **Rob Youl** from *CarbonSmart* is the President and **Horrie Poussard**, secretary.. Membership of ALI is a modest \$40 per year.

What we are doing

ALI has a number of actions on the go, including.

1. We edited a new book, in conjunction with Landcare International, on the experience of Landcarers in other countries. It will provide guidance and encouragement to others thinking of starting or expanding Landcare. The book is being published by LI hopefully within the next month and copies will be available through ALI.
2. ALI members oversee the Victorian International Landcare Study Fellowship, funded by private donors. This Fellowship provides an opportunity for an experienced Landcare coordinator to travel to a nominated country and exchange ideas with a developing Landcare movement. Our second Fellow, John Robinson returned late last year after a visit to Virginia, USA.
3. Setting up a database of Landcare expertise across Australia to assist overseas project managers and new groups.
4. Providing advice and guidance to potential Landcare groups, particularly in developing countries. Vickie Mack and Sue Marriott recently visited Indonesia to help a local community group put together a project proposal. A brief report of their visit is in this newsletter
5. Members also provide contact, fellowship and support to those individuals overseas who are interested in the Landcare approach to NRM. Recently a Grayson, Virginia, Landcarer spent some time with ALI president Rob Youl in Melbourne discussing opportunities for expanding Landcare in the USA.

ALI is also looking ways to encourage Landcare in a number of future project areas including Chile, Indonesia, Tonga and Nauru.

Travel Fellowship information.

Rob Youl, who chairs the Travel Fellowship committee said recently that the next fellowship to the USA will be later in 2009. More details on application dates and fellowship conditions will be announced soon.

Fires in Victoria

The terrible fires that gutted a number of small towns and communities in Victoria in February have brought a great response from both local and broader communities. Local Landcare advisers are now busy checking on and assisting group members, advising them of the various support organisations and programs available in their areas. John Robinson, the recent the Landcare Fellow, has many deeply affected communities in his area just north of Melbourne. There will be big production and NRM issues to deal with in the aftermath of the fires but from a personal point of view there are still many other issues of loss that need to be urgently addressed. We expect that Landcare groups will play an important role in getting local communities back on their feet as well as addressing land management needs resulting from the fires.

More tripping !

In February Bruce Lloyd visited the US to attend environmental committee meetings and will see some Landcare areas.

In March Rob and Alison Youl will also be heading there on a personal trip. But they will find the time to stop off at Landcare groups (and potential groups) in Virginia, Missouri and North Carolina. They are packing a lot into their 3 week trip and no doubt we will hear all about it on their return.

Landcare in the Philippines – A decade on and still prospering

By Project Leader, Noel Vock (noel.vock@dpi.qld.gov.au), ACIAR-AusAID Philippines-Australia Landcare Project, Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Nambour, Queensland

Soil erosion in Asia is due to a combination of steep slopes, erodible soils, heavy rainfall, forest clearing and intensive cropping practices. It significantly reduces farm productivity and adversely affects water quality and storage, marine resources and biodiversity.



Serious erosion in northern Mindanao

With 65% of Asia's 1.6 billion rural people earning their livelihoods from farms located on steep slopes of greater than eight percent, where soil erosion rates are among the worst in the world, this is a significant problem. Nowhere is the soil erosion problem more pronounced than in rural uplands of the southern Philippines, where it poses a grave threat to sustainable farming and poverty reduction.

Many projects have tried to tackle soil erosion but have had little sustained success.. Landcare in the Philippines started at Claveria in the province of Misamis Oriental in northern Mindanao in 1996 through a local partnership between farmers, the Claveria Local Government Unit and the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) – now the World Agroforestry Centre. The concept aimed at getting stronger farmer involvement in the development of conservation farming technologies for steep slopes, particularly the more farmer-

friendly systems such as Natural Vegetative Strips (NVS).

In the process, the partners all learned a lot about working together and the merits of a different approach. They coined the approach with the term 'landcare' to identify it as a new concept, emphasising the greater 'grass-roots' farmer involvement compared to the previous traditional 'top-down' technology transfer process.



Landcare Coordinator, Eldon Ruiz, talks with farmers and farmer leaders

Following significant early success, in 1999 two internationally-funded projects enabled landcare to consolidate at the Claveria site and to be tested at other sites. The Philippines-Australia Landcare Project, funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), brought together ICRAF and the Southeast Asian Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) with four Australian agencies (Queensland Department of Primary Industries; University of Queensland; Barung Landcare and Queensland Department of Natural Resources). It focused on three new landcare sites in Mindanao. The second landcare project, funded by the Spanish aid agency Agencia Espanola Cooperacion Internacional (AECI), enabled ICRAF to undertake other landcare work in Claveria as well as establish new landcare pilot sites in the islands of Bohol and Leyte in the Central Philippines.

In all sites, the focus was on using the landcare approach to improve farmer involvement in and adoption of soil conservation and agroforestry technologies. While the Australian project played a major role in developing landcare, a primary focus was the monitoring and evaluation of landcare processes and impacts. By 2004, more than 600 landcare groups had formed, with one-third to two-thirds of the farmers at each site adopting soil conservation technologies, affecting between 15-25% of the total farm area. In addition, more than 40 local institutions adopted the landcare concept, where activities and projects were identified and planned by farmers rather than imposed on them. This demonstrated the potential for landcare to improve local governance.

In 2004, the Philippines-Australia Landcare Project was expanded to further sites. This phase of the project was co-funded by ACIAR and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).

The Landcare Foundation of the Philippines, Inc.

In 2003, under a project funded by the Spanish agency AECL, the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) established the Landcare Foundation of the Philippines Inc (LFPI). Its primary purpose was to administer a Small Grants Program to landcare groups in three of the primary landcare sites in northern Mindanao through a special Landcare Trust Fund provided by AECL.

In 2007, LFPI became an official partner in the Philippines-Australia Landcare Project, as a result of the institutional research of the project indicating that it was the most appropriate agency to take on the longer term lead agency responsibility for the development of landcare in the Southern Philippines.

As the Philippines-Australia Landcare Project draw to a close in mid 2009, the last year of the project will be both a testing time and an opportunity for LFPI. If they are successful, it will showcase them as a highly capable organisation and put

them in a very good position to attract future backing by government and non-government organisations.

For more information about landcare in the Philippines, visit the project website at www.landcaremates.org .

Landcare in Indonesia

A brief report on a recent visit by ALI members Victoria Mack and Sue Marriot.

"We are now approaching you to provide us with the appropriate information on how to go about the whole (Landcare) process and also how to raise funds for the proposed program. Our strategy is to 'kick-start' the program in the buffer zone region, and later reach out to the rest of the deserving areas of Indonesia through targeted capacity building and awareness campaigns. We would appreciate your assistance to help us facilitate development that will move our communities from the poverty cycle that resource degradation has consigned them into. The communities have shown their willingness to change to sustainable production practices by donating 10 ha of land to set our demonstration plots - a huge gesture in an area where land is not only scarce but also very costly".
Raymond Obunga, INFRONT, July 2008

This was the request SILC received last year. INFRONT needed a hand to continue doing some great work it had started with UK donor funds in 2005.

SILC felt that any advice about Landcare without understanding the context of the request would be inappropriate so in November 2008 Victoria Mack and Sue Marriott visited central Java, Indonesia to learn about INFRONT's projects and to share lessons from Australian and International Landcare.

The INFRONT office is in Yogyakarta, Central Java, a thriving city of some 5 million which was devastated by the May 2006 earthquake with over 5500 people killed, thousands injured and livelihoods, buildings and infrastructure damaged. Some weeks later, Mt Merapi (one of the most active volcanos in the world) also erupted. Amongst the natural forces of nature including regular flooding there is the added chaos of people, cars, scooters and bikes of every size, age and model using all available “every which way” on the roads. Getting to the INFRONT office each day provided a glimpse of how Indonesians go about making a living.

INFRONT was formed in 2005 by a small group of academics from the forestry department of the Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta. One of its projects has been in the Selo sub-district, approximately 65 kilometers north of Yogyakarta City in central Java, located in the buffer zone between the Mt Merapi and the Mt Merbabu National Parks.

The Selo sub-district is approximately 1600 – 2000 metres above sea level which means a significantly cooler climate than the lowland areas of Java. The farmers grow more temperate crops including strawberries, peas, potatoes, tomatoes, carrots, broccoli, cabbage, onions, leeks, corn and similar. Some farmers have a few cattle most of which are housed all year round, with fodder harvested by hand from roadsides and public land.

In Indonesia arable land is scarce and there is increasing encroachment on hillsides with very steep slopes. All land suffers from continuous rotation which causes severe erosion and nutrient depletion. These slopes are not contoured or terraced and on many farms the rows run vertically.



Steep slopes and high rainfall lead to erosion and low production.

The soils are low in organic matter and the farmers have noticed crops yields are declining. The area in Central Java is wet between October and July. Farmers are noticing that the wet season is finishing earlier and starting later which causes problems with crop finishing and replanting. The average farm family owns about one hectare or less with every square metre under crop to provide for a relentless cycle of daily needs.

There are already farmer facilitators in place: young men, enthusiastic and committed and all working on a voluntary basis, very similar to Australia’s original Landcare facilitators. Even amongst the poorest of the villagers there was a sense of urgency to try and escape the poverty cycle.

The area is also a major watershed for Yogyakarta, and supplies one of the biggest rivers into the city. Commercial water harvesting is also drawing heavily on Selo’s ground water supplies. The Selo buffer zone represents some of the worst forms of land degradation resulting from unsustainable agricultural practices. It has lost over 90% of its primary vegetation cover due to agricultural conversion and clearance for firewood which supplies over 80% of energy needs of the area’s 27 000 inhabitants. Farmers walk great distances, spending an average six to eight hours per trip each week to harvest livestock fodder and firewood simply to sustain their immediate needs.

The use of biogas plants from housed cattle is a simple technology which is being trialled by 10 households in the study area which has clearly demonstrated a reduced reliance on firewood for cooking, and allows more time to concentrate on crop production and marketing.



Tough work harvesting and carting livestock feed

Many of the simple techniques being used by the villagers could be used by Australian farmers. Their ideas of recycling, using local resources and innovation along with their community spirit is inspiring – the one thing that is lacking is enough funding to experiment to see if they can do more with better species, different varieties of crops, more research and different approaches to marketing their produce.

The farmers and INFRONT shared a common vision that a community driven movement that inculcates environmental conservation into the local culture would be the most appropriate approach to help restore the unique ecosystem of the Merapi – Merbabu corridor.

The farmers have expressed interest in adopting a Landcare approach. The interim name of the group is the Merapi Landcare Association, or Peduli Lahan Merapi.



Victoria Mack and locals at community meeting

SILC's friends and family members have to date contributed to the cost of soil tests and some office expenses to help the Landcare process along and, together with INFRONT, is in the process of buying herb and spice seeds for farmer trials. SILC has also agreed to try to help INFRONT find resources to further develop the Merapi Landcare Association and facilitate ongoing links to Australian and International Landcare projects and networks. The engine of this project is in the villages. The work already done and the energy of the facilitators and the dedication of the INFRONT team are inspiring.

**Victoria Mack and Sue Marriott
February 2009**

The Benefits of ALI membership

- Using your landcare experience to assist overseas groups
- Overseas contacts for future travel
- Developing links with possible sister groups overseas
- Being part of a world-wide movement for land, biodiversity and community improvement
- Regular e-newsletter on overseas Landcare developments
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Skills/interests.....

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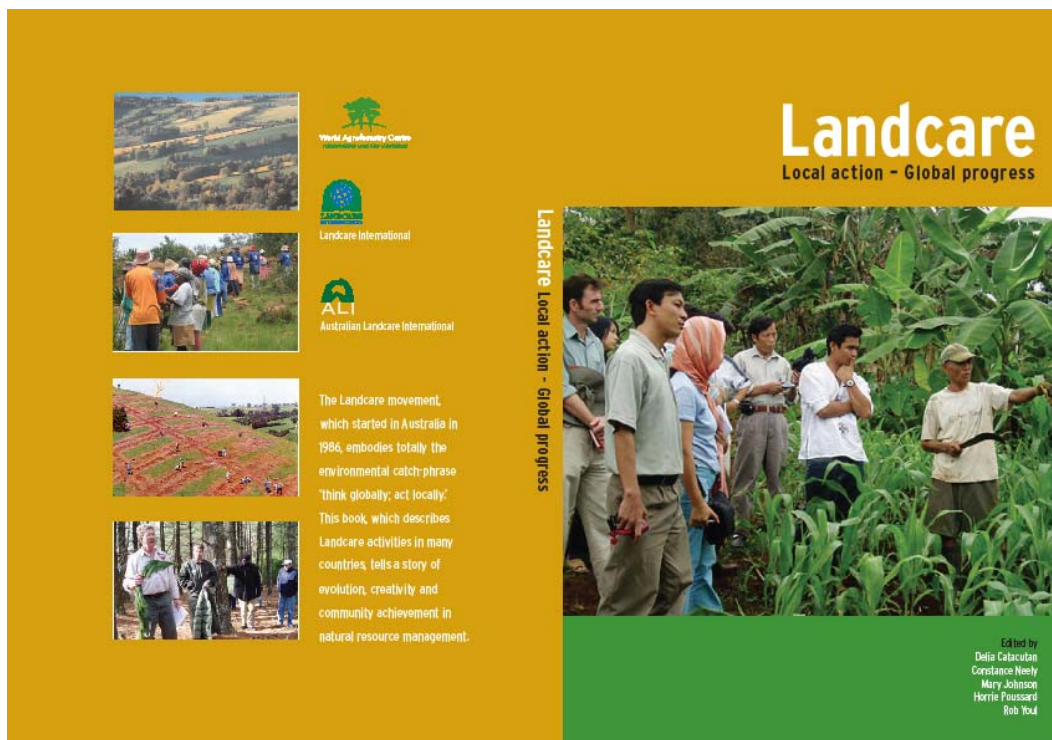
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Or direct Bank Transfer to Bendigo Bank

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Proposed wrap-around cover of the new Landcare International book.