



Significant moments over the last months

It's been an exciting couple of months for the Symbiosis family.

The newly opened Maternal and Child Health Clinic delivered their first baby!

And while this Clinic is taking its first steps, we have the Padma Women's Development Committee in some ways leaving home, as they gain their registration with the Government of Bangladesh.

We also say Hello to a new bunch of supporters who attended events held in

Launceston and Brisbane, and say Farewell to our talented communications wiz, Anna Cuthel.

And a final thank you for your support throughout the 2015-16 financial year. Generous end of financial year donations have enabled us to start the new year with a stronger budget than expected. However, the economic environment and ongoing cuts to aid funding remain a challenge for us and we are so thankful for your faithful gifts and other ways you join together with us in this vital work.



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We have switched to bi-monthly email newsletters.

If you would like to help us save on postage and instead receive your Symbiosis newsletter by email, please let us know your address by contacting the office!



A huge thanks to Anna Cuthel who did a fabulous job serving Symbiosis in communications over the last two years. She finished up with us last month to return to Kenya with her husband and two small boys. We are going to miss her ... and her graphic design skills! **Anyone willing to volunteer** their skills and time, please contact Lisa West-Newman at communications@symbiosis-int.org.

Also, **thank you to the many people involved in the recent fundraising events** held in Brisbane and Launceston. It is al-

ways encouraging to see the enthusiasm of volunteers in helping to get the word out about the work of Symbiosis.

We were also reminded of the real sacrifices made by you, our supporters, as **together we help empower tens of thousands of people in Bangladesh to learn, save and grow their way out of poverty.**

We apologise to our supporters who subscribe to our paper newsletters. Somehow we missed sending these out for the months of April and June. But we're back with our news from August, in September!! Thank you for your grace and ongoing support.—Lisa

A New Milestone

On a humid, rainy 19th of July, the Padma Women's Development Committee became one of the first Symbiosis groups formally recognised as a Community Based Organisation by the Government of Bangladesh. In a joyful ceremony replete with beautiful saris, long speeches and framed certificates, the Committee, representing 15 groups with a total of 300 women of the Gazipur District, took a **major step towards independence.**

Eight years ago, these ladies were incredibly poor and only just beginning to learn to read and write.

Symbiosis workers helped to organise these functionally illiterate women into groups of around 20 to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as social empowerment (such as human rights, health and the value of cooperative effort).

Integral to these village groups is the formation of a savings fund. Rather than accessing external credit (such as microfinance), these groups learn to work together establishing joint savings from which they borrow and repay with all interest returning to the joint fund. Symbiosis staff guided them through learning to save, responsibly borrow and repay, develop and present a plan, and manage a fund.

These skills and funds have enabled many of these women to establish small, home-based businesses



that add much-needed income for their families.

Over time, the role of the Symbiosis staff has changed as the group members gradually assumed responsibility for their own work. With the formal recognition of the Padma Women's Development Committee, **Symbiosis will step out of the mentor role to become a partner in their endeavours.**

With village groups savings totalling Taka 1,500,287 (about \$A27,300) and the Committee entrusted with contributions from the 15 groups of Taka 329,418 (\$A6,000), these women have learned the power of working together. They now hope to use their registration to access Government services for their communities and partner with Symbiosis in future income generation projects.

These women are a powerful example to the thousands of other women in groups throughout Bangladesh of **what can be achieved by working together.**



New clinic welcomes first baby

An excited crowd formed to welcome baby Ruhan, the **first baby to be born at the new Maternal and Child Health Clinic** in Dhonbari. His 22 year old Mother, Rajina Begum heard of the clinic through her cousin, and was well cared for by Bani and her team who helped deliver the 4kg bundle of joy (pictured).

While Symbiosis has been working with Traditional Birth Attendants and pregnant women for many years, the Clinic run by Bani and her team of newly qualified Skilled Birth Attendants expands this by providing safe deliveries, as well as pre- and post-natal checks and identifying complex presentations for referral to the nearest hospital.

Symbiosis hopes to establish **another training clinic** if we are able to gain ongoing extra funds of around \$25,000 per annum.