





## A big year for Permaculture for Refugees (P4R) Remarkable meeting of minds, actions and generosity

We believed that permaculture would be valuable in refugee camps and settlements but we didn't have the necessary evidence to take to camp managers, international and local NGOs and other refugee organisations.

So, we embarked on a project to teach Permaculture Design Courses (PDCs) to refugees in SEAsia, the Middle East and Europe, with people of all religions and cultures. We included teachers from the core group (P4R) to have a first-hand experience, so one or two of them co-taught on every one of the six courses.

We included one or two people from the host organisation in the camp and some from the local resident community. This meant that after the course, not only the participant refugees, but also the organisation staff and local residents knew permaculture.

The integration of refugees, locals and staff has proved to be a valuable design choice and we would replicate it in the future. It has many benefits such as sustainable knowledge, integration with the local community and friendships across many barriers.

We are finalising the first report on ***Teaching Permaculture in Refugee Camps and Settlements***. The report covers:

- Project proposal and funding
- Preparation in country
- Host organisation
- Local community
- Venue
- Numbers of participants
- Translations and interpreters

- Challenges for teachers
- The PDC course and its adequacy
- Outcomes from the courses six months later

Overall 200 students received PDCs despite all the challenges. Each PDC has yielded valuable information on

- value of teaching permaculture in these precarious situations
- the methods and adequacy of the course
- potential short and long term outcomes

This report also contains stories and experiences of individual teachers and will be a valuable guide to anyone wanting to teach PDCs in a refugee camp or settlement. And, in fact, anyone teaching refugees in camps and settlements.

We are also working on a second report, ***Permaculture Works for Refugees***, which collates all the results from each site six months or more post-training. After the courses finished, diverse groups and sometimes individuals have applied permaculture in a great variety of ways and with imagination. Many outcomes were unexpected and surprising.

Both reports incorporate data collected from P4R core group teachers' evaluation held in Greece after the course in Attica and, results from all the comprehensive individual reports for each course.

## P4R Activities

### 1. Dates, sites and hosts of the six PDCs

Bangladesh - Beside Camp 19, January 2019	Bangladesh	BASD
- Cox Bazar Camp 19, January/February 2019	Turkey -	BASD
Izmir, Imece, March 2019	Greece - Lesvos, Low Tech Lab,	Imece
March/April 2019	Greece - Attica, Lavrio camp, April/May	Low Tech Lab
2019	Malaysia - July 2019	Permaculture School
		USCI/Blue Ribbon

In addition

- The course for refugees held by Candela and the local community in Spain produced the first refugee trainer.
- Permaculture work in with returnees to Mosul after it was blitz bombed was voted the best project for the city. It was lead by Hushyar Salih.
- A PDC course for refugees was held in Melbourne, Australia, by the teachers from Rahamin Ecological Centre.

### 2. New Supportive Role of P4R

The big work of the year was the PDCs however we made contact with other organisations and individuals and that was valuable as we were sometimes asked and sometimes took a supporting role when disasters struck. Colleagues working with refugees in Hong Kong, Kashmir, Afghanistan and Lebanon wrote to us in times of tragedy simply to share grief or

anxiety. When the Philippine number of IDPs increased due to earthquakes and typhoons, and Bangladesh had cyclones and floods, we were pleased to listen - by email or support where we could. This support fulfils a real need.

### 3. Funding Sources and kind and generous people

**Profound thanks** are due and now given to the following people and organisations who believed in us.

- **Quaker Service Australia and the Victorian Fund** which supported all the courses with the exception of Malaysia which was self-funded.
- **Private individuals** generously donated at times and this was so helpful. We are grateful for every donation which went through the minute scrupulous scrutiny of **TheBigFix** a legal not-for-profit. Thank you to Lis Bastian of TheBigFix.
- We are grateful to **LUSH** for funding the P4R core group's evaluation.
- Without **Eunice Neves** the accounts could never have been so completely distributed and finalised and so these reports never written. Thank you Eunice.
- And Brenna Quinlan for her graphic of what the Climate Movement looks like.
- Alan Clayton for offering to be our honorary soliton
- Thomas Kern for being our stand-by accountant - if ever we have a lot of money
- Un-named but profoundly appreciated anonymous donor
- Nadia Polivka for being there in case we need a psychologist specialising in refugee situations

The projects were accomplished with a small budget especially when evaluating the outcomes and in comparison with other PDCs. The modest cost of overall project has been due to every teacher donating their time and resources as volunteers. This speaks of exquisite dedication and concern for refugees.

We have no funds to work with for our next stages but we act as if we have and will, after all....***she/he travels furthest who knows not how she/he is going there.***

### 4. Networking and Learning

- Marguerite and Franci attended a conference in Turkey accompanied by one of the refugee women from the PDC in Turkey, who is now started a new livelihood growing mushrooms now.
- Marguerite also attended a conference at Findhorn on refugees to present P4R.
- Antonio has participated in on-line seminars with Re-Alliance, and attended a workshop on permaculture and development in the UK.
- Marguerite and Jed produced short videos of their teaching experiences.

I've been aware that over time, that permaculture quality input can drift because people are unable to access materials for their courses and compare their courses with others. So an advanced course was seen as "in service" to upgrade knowledge, explore new projects and of course, meet smart Indians.

I organised for two key people from three SEAsian refugee support organisations to attend the Advanced Permaculture Course run by GUILDA [www.guildapermaculture.com](http://www.guildapermaculture.com) with Eunice Neves and Sara Wuerstle in India with the objective of upgrading their training and for the group to meet up and exchange experience in their work with refugees. See photo



Advanced Permaculture Course P4R participants in India  
L-R Poritosh, Terence, Norani, Sarah and Ajit. Ershad prefers not to be in photos but he was very present

- Sarah Queblatin, as P4R core representative, attended the Advanced Permaculture Design course in India. Everyone reported that it was a valuable experience.
  - Norani and Noorul from Malaysia,
  - Sarah and Terence from Philippines
  - Ajit, Ershad and Poritosh from

Bangladesh GUILDA waived all fees for P4R participants.

Aranya gave free food, accommodation and internal travel and participants paid their own travel by bus and plane.

To strengthen the refugee organizational base, an MOU was signed with Green Releaf in the Philippines, and will be signed with BASD and Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group (BMRSBG), Re-Alliance and, others are being approached.

## 5. Website and Data Base

Antonio has continued to work steadily, devotedly and intelligently on the website with Marguerite and Ruth in particular. The work is **funded by LUSH** to whom we are very grateful. The website is a valuable place for the excellent collection of information we are adding on all aspects of refugees and permaculture.

We continue to add permaculture people who are

- Working with refugees
- Have similar projects and their results,
- Would like to be involved in this work or support it, and,
- We especially welcome young permaculture people

## 6. European activities

The group in Europe continues to look for an 'umbrella' supporting partner, and types of organisation which would suit them best. Several leads are being followed. They are also investigating the expansion of their numbers.

We have reported on the activities of Marguerite, Franci, and Antonio as they continued to faithfully, against a difficult year, work across all P4F areas. They tell of their experiences in the wonderful 'teachers' experiences' attached to this document.

## 7. P4R South East Asia (SEAsia)

With the increasing frequency of disasters in SEAsia and the forecast of future catastrophes in the region, a regional node of P4R is being established. One UN report declares that at least five megacities in this region will be flooded by 2050 with all the associated consequences for greater forced migration.

The case of the Rohingya in Bangladesh is now at the International Court in The Hague with charges of genocide of the Rohingya people by the Myanmar government and army. Bangladesh is seriously considering placing all the nearly 1,000,000 refugees on a small swampy island off Cox's Bazaar. We, in SEAsia, are very concerned about this for the danger, the isolation and hiding of refugees.

We have been able to grow P4R group in SEAsia by giving teaching experience to Jed Walker, Kate Lavers and Greta Carrol. Kym Blechynden, another permaculturist who has years of experience in refugee camps is now with us. And recently we have Sarah Boule express interest. These are finding experienced permaculturists with experience in refugee camps another roles such as nutrition. They find greater potential for change and motivation in permaculture with its integrated approach than conventional approaches. Kat and Kym will co-teach a course in Bangladesh in February.

We also will approach Indonesia and Thailand to be part of our P4R SEAsia group because both countries have large refugee populations.

## 8. Future directions

We are developing programs and proposals for future work building on the gratifying results of this year. Here are some of the issues we have identified.

### **Involve more teachers in P4R**

- In the short term, our goal is to engage more experienced permaculture teachers to support organisations working with refugees and IDPs with quality PDCs until they feel ready to run their own courses.
- And, we want to investigate the effectiveness of training experienced NGO workers through offering PDCs to them. We know they are keen from their response in camps.

### **Permaculture Teacher Training**

It is highly desirable, if not a priority, to offer teacher training after the PDCs to both refugees and staff from host organisations. This would move us closer to our goal of having refugees teaching permaculture to each other. It is also possible that by training more NGO staff, already working with refugees, in permaculture, will increase the impact for refugees.

This is the next stage, and ideally can be tested by returning to the camps we worked in this year. Most refugees' experiences of learning and teachers has been '*repeat after me*' or '*sage on the stage*'. We can offer learner-centred, curriculum and skills based training to produce more competent and well-informed teachers to scale up effective impacts.

As our big goal is to have refugee teachers, we still have some way to go.

### **Need for translation of materials into refugee languages**

An urgent need is to have materials translated into refugee languages and the first group would be: Arabic, Dari, Farsi, French (we do have quite a few), Rohingya, Chen, Mon and minor languages. It is proving difficult to find people competent to translate.

We are about to have translations into Dari/Farsi and Bengali. However we lack well-translated materials in Kurdish and the languages of African refugees. This is a major problem. One wonderful supporter, Meg McGowan, has offered to raise some funds for translation into refugee languages.

Funding has been applied for to translate Bangladesh materials into Bengali - the language of Bangladesh and Bengal in India. It potentially has the potential for wide exposure to large populations of refugees.

Milkwood Permaculture, and the Permaculture Magazine in UK and YES in USA have given free on-line subscriptions to host organisations such as Blue Ribbon and BASD and the Afghan Peace Volunteers in Kabul. This is valuable only where people speak English.

### **Collaboration**

P4R SEAsia group is developing collaborative and supportive relationships with refugee organisations in the region, beginning with Green Releaf in the Philippines, BASD in

Bangladesh, Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group and Asylum Seekers Centre in Australia, and is looking forward to expanding these fields of mutual concern.

*With love, thanks and deep appreciation to each of you individually, and your organisations, and a much better year for Earth, for refugees and for better world leadership in 2020.*

**Rowe Morrow December 2019**

**2020 is to be THE YEAR OF WELCOME!**

**AND NOW.....here is really interesting reading....what the teachers have to say about their experiences this year with each one different and compelling. Their experiences are listed in chronological order of the PDC courses.**