**Where some of your donations go….**

**Julianne Stewart, Programs Director**

When you see financial reports from the organisations that you support with your donations, it can often be quite disconcerting to see that a significant proportion of the funds spent go on things like “office costs”, or “management costs”, or things like that. What exactly do these costs refer to?

For ABM’s community development programs, most of the funds are transmitted to our partners overseas to spend on their programs working with communities. This will often include some staff salaries in these countries, or proportions of salaries. Much of the amount that stays at ABM is allocated to staff salaries as well.

So what do these people do for their salaries, both in Australia and in the partner country?

One thing is **training**. A lot of time is spent training local staff who in turn train community workers and members in things such as how to manage a community group, how to run a budget for a community group, and how to report on what the group has been doing. Principles of accountability, principles of transparency….or it might be technical training in how to improve crop production, or how to run a literacy class, or how to mobilise a community around the issue of women’s empowerment.

Another thing that ABM and partner staff do is **monitoring**. When you set up a project in the field, you need to go and check that it is going ahead, you need to find out if there are any problems, or any need to adjust the project to take on board things that hadn’t been fully anticipated when the project was first set up. You have to find out what is happening on the ground and report back to those who are funding you.

And so there is report writing, financial acquitting, and checking of acquittals. Reports have to be written for funders, for governance bodies, for supporters, all requiring different kinds of information.

Good program management also requires regular measurement and occasional evaluation. Are we achieving what we hoped to achieve? How many people have been assisted by this project? What have been the longer term impacts of a project several years down the track? Did people who graduated from the Vanuatu literacy program go on to earn a greater income? Did the Papua New Guinean men who participated in the gender awareness program end up ensuring their daughters got the same opportunities to finish high school as their sons? Did the Kenyan farmers who participated in the three year assistance program continue to grow their incomes? Did the farmers benefit from the new knowledge about drought-resistant crops and good storage and value-adding methods? Did the local government in the Philippines continue to work with communities to supply much-needed road and water infrastructure?

I’d like to give you an example of how much it can cost to monitor just a couple of projects in a remote rural location in Papua New Guinea – a country where roads are in short supply, and where air and boat travel -- and walking -- are often the only means of getting from A to B.

Plane from Port Moresby to the nearest airport (and return): **$550**  
Road transport (including carrying diesel fuel for the next leg of the trip) from the airport to the boat jetty (and return): **$180**  
Cost of dingy hire, to visit four communities, including accommodation for two dinghy drivers (trips are very long, and drivers take turns to sleep and drive), and fuel: **$1,290**  
Accommodation for ABM and program staff in villages along the way: **$535**Food and drink for the seven days of the monitoring trip: **$290**

This comes to a total of **$2,845** for one week, and does not include the small program staff salaries, or the cost of providing training and equipment for the literacy program in those communities.

And these costs could be replicated across many of ABM’s programs, especially where the project sites are in rural and remote areas, where the support to local communities is most needed.

So you might ask, why bother with monitoring if it can cost so much? The answer to this question lies partly in the need for project work to be transparent and accountable to the people donating the funding. It lies also in the need for ABM to be accountable to the people whom our work is aiming to assist. We must be just as accountable to them as to those who donate their funds.

And in case you are wondering what might be “left” for a particular project or activity that you have donated towards once the monitoring costs are taken out, you can rest assured that one monitoring trip covers multiple activities and projects. If an ABM staff member goes to monitor our programs in one African country they will also visit at least one other African country where we provide program support, to enable much greater economies of scale.

ABM’s Isabel Robinson comments: “Sometimes it seems strange to me just how much partner staff, and project participants, appreciate a visit from an ABM staff member, but they do. Our visits motivate partner staff and communities, and make them believe that there really are actual people in Australia that care about them. It connects them to the outside world. In PNG and elsewhere, it enables staff to travel somewhere that they had never (or rarely) been, to check up on a project that was recently completed, and to find out how similar projects could be improved in future. Person-to-person relationships, and my interest in their work, represents the interest of ABM and the wider Australian network's interest in their work, which makes them proud, and gives them energy to continue.”

And perhaps the final word on this should go to one of ABM’s partners… the new Bishop of Machakos, Rt Rev’d Joseph Mutungi said to two ABM staff members during a recent visit to Kenya, – ‘when you are here, we are there’.  Perhaps these last comments reflect the essence of ABM’s church partnerships…whether they be for development projects or for our broader support of the church’s mission goals.

PHOTOS AND VIDEO

[**P:\Papua New Guinea\Isabel PNG (Dogura Diocese) January 2014\SAM\_1065.JPG**](file:///P:\Papua%20New%20Guinea\Isabel%20PNG%20(Dogura%20Diocese)%20January%202014\SAM_1065.JPG) **ABM’s Isabel Robinson preparing to get on a boat on a recent monitoring trip to Dogura diocese’s Literacy and HIV programs.**

[**P:\Myanmar(Burma)\2012 Lina and Julianne\2012-11-30 CPM Devt Training and Delta Monitoring Visit\CPM Devt Training and Delta Monitoring Visit 023.JPG**](file:///P:\Myanmar(Burma)\2012%20Lina%20and%20Julianne\2012-11-30%20CPM%20Devt%20Training%20and%20Delta%20Monitoring%20Visit\CPM%20Devt%20Training%20and%20Delta%20Monitoring%20Visit%20023.JPG) **ABM’s Lina Magallanes joins partner staff on a monitoring trip on the Ayeyarwady** **Delta in Myanmar.**

[**P:\Papua New Guinea\ACPNG Staff\Constance Mogina - How to Get to Midino.mp4**](file:///P:\Papua%20New%20Guinea\ACPNG%20Staff\Constance%20Mogina%20-%20How%20to%20Get%20to%20Midino.mp4) **Hear ACPNG’s HIV Officer from Dogura Diocese explain some of the costs of monitoring programs in remote areas.**