

A Brief Report of COMMACT – International Conference-2008

Please note this is not the “final and the only” report. It is written to give an over all view of the conference and post conference exposure and partnership I have experienced. All views and opinion expressed in the report are mine and some extend information derived from the reports I have read. Any clarifications and corrections (if any) please do so at your own free will. Thank U!!!

Venue: Marque Hotel, Brisbane

Dates: 28-30th October 2008

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Introduction:

COMMACT International has set another historic mile stone in realizing its objective by organizing COMAMCT International conference with the theme “*Working together for the common good*” which was very appropriate in its all real meaning and futuristic outlook. It is very encouraging to read the forward note of David Thompson AM, the Chairperson of COMMACT International that he “*looks forward for a bright future for our global network of people and oragnisations focused on and committed to people centered development*”. He continues that “*hope that partnerships forged as part of the conference process produce some lasting and beneficial results for all concerned.*”

The participants from all walks of life, with various professional and development background added the light and life for the conference at Brisbane. Young and old, black, white and tan filled the conference venue. The members from Australia, New Zealand, Samoa, Papua New genie, Tanzania, South Africa, Nepal, East Timor, Mali, England, Pakistan and India actively participated in the three days proceeding of conference. Each one was quite enthusiastic in attending the conference and build new contacts and partnership for future co operation in one other way.

I am grateful to COMMACT – Australia and International for finding a solidarity partner from Australia. My special thanks and gratitude to Mr. Ron Stone the CEO of BEST Community Development Trust- Ballarat – Victoria, for sponsoring my round trip travel and other facilities. My sincere appreciation and thanks to Bruce Hamilton and Pete Vink for their efforts to plan an exposure visit to New Zealand, they also arranged my travel and stay and meeting all costs involved during my stay over there.

I want to write few paragraphs on this great country and continent called Australia the Land of Contrast. Australia is the largest of all island continents and yet the most sparsely populated, taking up an area of 7.7 million square kms. It extends from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean and is a land of magnificent contrasts. From the sunbaked interior to the fertile coastal fringes, almost every type of geographical feature occurs.

There are now-capped mountain peaks, treeless plains, salt lakes, rich undulating farmlands, great rock monoliths, long stretches of golden beaches, trackless deserts, dense rainforests, volcanic lakes, huge rivers and those wonders of the world, the Great Barrier Reef and Uluru. Although basically a peaceful continent where volcanoes are long extinct, earthquakes unknown and the climate generally temperate, I was told there are times when nature can be violent. Droughts occasionally parch the Earth, swollen rivers flood the lowlands and cyclones sometimes lash the coastline it was told some of our friends with whom I had interaction.

It is believed that Aborigines have lived in the country for at least 40000 years, having traveled here from South-East Asia. However they may have arrived as long as 150000 years ago, although this has not been proved by scientific or anthropological research. *But I was moved by the life they face, the great energy they posses, the culture they hold to their hearts, the bright eyes and laughs. Some time I had to think that whether I belong to their race (my big nose and round face with rough mustache – ha, ha!)*

Captain James Cook has been credited with discovery of this country. He charted the east coast in 1770 and claimed it for England. I had spoken to some proud English loyalist and still they think they are living in England (its Ok for me) let them be happy where ever they are. The discovery of gold in 1851 near Orange in New South Wales and then in other states put the country on the map and for two decades thousands of miners poured in from all over the world, irrevocably changing the nature of the colony and making the word "Digger" synonymous with Australia.

Wood lot, Sheep, cattle, Oats, barley and wheat all play a major role in the rural industry. I was educated by some of new acquaintances in my travel that more recent discoveries of massive mineral deposits, off-shore oil and natural gas are the focus of international attention and have helped shape Australia into the stable country it is today. The strong pattern of immigration from overseas also continues, everyone adding their own characteristics including good number of Indians to give Australia its own special flavour.

Conference

The conference began by the welcome note of Maroochy Barambah, Mr Michael Hogan, Two of the leaders or representatives from the Aboriginal communities came to welcome all of us that were a unique way of expressing their solidarity and partnership for working together for the common good. John Goddard welcomed the members on behalf of the conference and he was with us throughout the conference as the facilitator.

Noel d'Silva the Hon, President of COMMACT – International welcomed and spoke for few minutes on the history behind the august organization. He emphasized that "we all need to work together to keep COMMACT to become a vibrant and strong network that will benefit many in the years to come". He also read the message sent by Abdullah Baginda from Malaysia.

Introduction to conference themes and COMMACT structure was explained by David Thompson AM, Chairperson COMMACT International. He said that it was not just a conference, but much more that because it was expected to bring new ideas, learning, sharing that will increase the bondage of solidarity and partnership for the future.

Jagadananda, State Information Commissioner, Orissa, India.

He gave a presentation on Citizens and Governance Accountability which was very much based on his vast experiences and activities implemented by his official capacities as the state information commissioner. He emphasized on how the Right to Information Act has been working as a powerful tool in many parts of India, especially in the state of Orissa. As Jagadananda has been one of pioneers in NGO activities and networking regionally, nationally and internationally he gave the over all perspective on strengthening the ways and means of "working together for the common good"

Creating a mutually beneficial partnership

Dimity Fifer

CEO, Australia Volunteers International. Dimity Fifer has long years of conducting this programme globally. There are several examples could be brought in the report that will become a huge one. The participants in the conference had one to one interaction with Dimity. Hope there will more chances to many to make use of AVI's involvement internationally.

Women in People Centred Development

Roopa Mehta, SASHA

Shobhana Pradhan: Technical trade training for disadvantaged women

SASHA is an experienced organisation with higher skills and capacity to motivate women from the disadvantaged section to improve their lives through skills on handicrafts and management. SASHA is one of

best example organisation in adhering the norms and practices of Fair Trade and people centered development.

Community Building Ventures

Community Campus, READ Centre

Carl Ditchburn, Community Campyus 87, University of Teesside, UK +

Sam Chelladurai, Anekal Rehabilitation Education And Development (READ)Centre, Bangalore. India

Carl explained the historical background of his organisation (CC87) that was inspiring one for people at the conference. He gave details on the activities many of success events that CC87 has acquired during the course of time. CC87's intervention with youth, builders, women of young age, students, local volunteers and corporate sector shows that a mixture of stakeholders make CC87's activities more meaningful and colourful. Of course one could realize the hard work put in reaching to this level of achievement.

Sam's presentation in connection with partnership of CC87 has added the value for the meaning of "working together for the common good" more vibrant and strong where the community building venture by CC87 and READ Centre has benefited 500 rural school children and expected to increase its work in many fold in 2009 and years to come.

WORKSHOP

Engaging capital in different economies

Peter Quarmby, Community Sector Banking

Dr Pradip Kumar Sarmah, CRD India. CRD's innovative approaches were appreciated by all the participants.

Pradip and his team's hard work ahs paid the returns through improvisation of cyle and its usage. The Community Sector Banking from Australia has been supporting this innovative programme, where Peter Quarmby's leadership and support has played a major role in improving the lives of many rickshaw puller.

CRD has taken lot of strategic plans and methods to involve both technical and corporate sector organisations apart from the support from CSB. Participants from India and Nepal were keen following the ideas of CRD and will seek Pradip's helping hand in it.

Extended Workshop

Creating a sustainable partnership incl formal partner agreement.

Incl Naresh Pradhan; Dimity Fifer; Garry Bargh; Carl Ditchburn & Sam Chelladurai

Workshop

Innovative Community Initiatives from the marginalized sections in India

Fr Michael Vettickat,

Kottiyam Social Service Society. Since there are many useful activities carried out by KSSS one could not find time to ask as many clarification from Fr.Michael. We found many of his organisation's involvement has brought higher level of local government and state government partnership. We could learn from this example that careful planning and strategically motivated approaches could yield good result in the days to come. Community hotel, community shop, community health centre are among many of innovative activities carried out by KSSS. Fr.Michael is quite anxiously planning to host the next year's COMMACT – international conference.

Stories from on the Ground;

Sharing stories on actions, challenges and dreams of conference participants.

Break-out to four small groups with a group facilitator. Each conference participant is asked to share the story of their organization's work in people-centred development in five minutes!

Summery of day one- John Goddard, Conference Facilitator

Day two

Reflections from Day 1 & Overview of Day 2

Conference facilitator

The facilitator was able to synthesize the overall happening of the first day. He invited as many people's views, and questions for clarification.

Challenges for People's Centered Development

Yvon Poirier

Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNET)

CCEDNET seems to be a strong international network with wider contacts and skills to work to influence as many as international, national policies on development. It has been pioneering in promoting social solidarity economy and enterprise in many of developing countries through holding conference and networking. Yvon is a natural networker that he makes links with activists from world over. He would be one of few persons who would like to convince people who want to work on challenges on people centered development.

Skills for Employment Project (SEP)

Garry Bargh & Ramhari Lamichhane

SEP is another example of working together for the common good in Nepal. Personally I feel it has moved the mountains to the plains by training many thousands of youth and women to acquire variety of skills. As Nepal is crawling through democracy and setting standards for integrated community development, this is a great movement for SEP to set a national code to many other NGOs and even government departments. We all were moved by the commitment and strong team work culture of SEP.

From the COMMACT Chapters: Progress and Challenges (15 mins each)

India Chapter

UK Chapter

Australian Chapter

Brief presentations by COMMACT Chapter representatives on progress made to establish vibrant chapters and challenges going forward to ensure continued progress and maximum impact.

Plus exploring new chapters.

Each chapter's short presentation gave us an idea how each one of them are trying to keep COMMACT moving towards in a futuristic perspective. Though there were always hitch in realizing all what they have planned or envisaged. We were able to make a self reflective process that helped us to regain and reengineer our commitment to COMMACT chapters of our country as well as International.

Emphasizing the importance of Education

Mr John Senior Kambowa

Melanesia Education Development Foundation

Introduction to: The Global Poverty Project

Dimitry Fifer

CEO, Australia Volunteers international

Working together for the common good in Australia's International development Program

The Hon Bob McMullan MP

Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance

The MP's talk was very encouraging and inviting us to think globally to develop a system of international cooperation and mutual support. We were all appreciating his knowledge and keenness in understanding the reality and suffering of the poor all over the world.

Day 3

Reflections from Day 2 & Overview of Day 3
John Goddard, Conference facilitator

Workshops

Education and Rehabilitation of street, slum and migrant workers children
Michael KJ
Janarupam, Bangalore

Or
Challenging Situations for Women in the city Bangalore
Sr Georgina Exhanlkatt
Sisters of ST. Joseph of Tarbes-SANGRAHA
Empowerment of Rural Women: an experience
Sr Josena Katreena
SARWA, India

Workshop
Journeying Towards Sustainability:
An Australian NGO's experience
Marecelle Holdaway
Director, Accounting for Life

Or
The role of Fair Trade and Fair Go to increase employment for Refugees
Angie Andrews
West End Network

Breakout discussion group: 'where to from here?'

Four discussion groups will be lead by a facilitator to hear from delegates on their own experiences and the challenges from here.

PANEL: Building a Social Movement Without Borders
Panel Members: north and South country participants

Closing Address

David Thompson
Chairperson-COMMACT International
David's speech in the closing address brought us together again to remember to think always that we are all working for the common good. He invited all to say few learning during three days. On the whole every came up with positive experiences and hope for the best in future.

More to be proud of attending the conference:

Site visits

I went into Group headed by Ms. Amanda Watt:

The Business development centre: it's our job to help new businesses succeed!
History: while many small businesses are home –based, a number of them needed workshops for engineering, carpentry, welding, spray painting and panel beating. There were plenty of office-type incubator spaces around but no workshop –type ones. So in 2002 CEA;s business incubator started at the Salisbury Business Development Centre where clients are given a first fee month's rent. "There is no lease, all people have to do is sign an agreement that they will work in a cooperative environment, because it's all

one big open space. For the first two years tenants pay 80 percent of market rent and then it becomes 100 percent. Then they move on and make room for others”

BOAT BUILDING

An innovative training facility set up on-site in Salisbury to offer clients an opportunity to gain practical experience as they learn engineering competencies and boat building. We found this is new idea for many of us to adapt in our work countries. Places like India can do much in providing space and support through such kinds of programmes which will bring new economic stability and sustainability in a compassionate manner.

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE, Caboolture

“To develop stronger, smarter Indigenous children through supporting more effective leadership, teaching and learning in schools to achieve higher academic learning outcomes.” Dr Chris Sarra

The indigenous Education Leadership Institute believes that all indigenous children in schools can be stronger and smarter. It recognizes the right of all Indigenous children to student performance outcomes that are comparable to that of non-indigenous children. It also recognizes the importance of embracing and nurturing the social and cultural context of indigenous learners as an integral part of this pursuit.

The indigenous Education Leadership institute will support and develop the capacity of fellow educators to pursue excellence in indigenous education. It will challenge fellow educators to deliver excellence in indigenous education. The indigenous Education Leadership Institute is a group of people committed to changing the tide of low expectations in indigenous Education. Our motto is “Stronger and Smarter” –strong in our hearts, proud of our identity, solid in our community-and smart in the way we do things, focused on high achievement, determined to succeed.

We were inspired by the strong leadership and commitment of Dr. Chris Sarra. He was explaining many practical information from his experience in working with his community.

We understood that the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute

- Delivers quality leadership programs to principals and teachers to enhance the teaching of Indigenous school students;
- Develops, facilitates and supervises highly innovative Indigenous education research projects;
- Strengthens links with governments, schools and universities in other states facing indigenous education challenges; and
- Nurtures and develops stronger, smarter indigenous leadership in communities.

All their activities are designed to improve Indigenous Student Outcomes throughout Australia.

Diwali (festival of lights):

Sam brought Diwali lights from India. Roopa and Sam arranged the lights on 28th evening to bring a symbolic expression of Diwali. Other friends like Carl, Yvon, Vijayalaxmi, Bruce, David, Amanda and Pete joined in lighting the lamps. Many wanted to stand for a photograph with the lamps. The lights spread light and warmth around the place near the conference venue. For many friends from other countries it was a new experience. Sam explained what Diwali means: From Darkness to light, from oppression to freedom, from evil (bad) to new life.

Interactive learning and exposure visit to COMMACT – New Zealand and COMMACT- Australia (Ballarat)

1. EXPOSURE VISIT TO WORK AND INCOME

Te Hiranga Tangata – New Zealand

I left Brisbane on 01st November and reached Christchurch on the same day at around 12 midnight. I had a stay at YMCA – Christchurch, I had a good tour of the city on 2nd Nov. (Sunday) Pete Vink came to take me to his office. Though Pete Vink had other commitments as he is working in the Ministry, he was able to fix some useful exposure activities in and around Christ Church. He took me to his office, a big office for an Indian. His immediate boss Ms. Joe (I am sorry I don't know the surname) introduced me to her and all other colleagues. Pete and his wife Deb made me stay comfortable at their home till 4th Nov (half an hour drive from Christchurch)

Pete explained about his work in the ministry briefly. He gave me one of annual reports of his work to go through. Pete is very experienced person in Community development. He has been involved in the local and national community development activities for many years through YMCA- New Zealand, Community Enterprise Trust – Christchurch, Youth Development Programme of New Zealand to name a few. Pete has good experience in working with local aboriginal communities for many years. One of his activities among “conflict groups” within the aboriginals in and around Christchurch has inspired me a lot. I even requested him to write a book on his experiences. Pete Vink is very much identifying himself with the Maori Aboriginal community as he is well versed in the Maori language and their culture.

1a. Trash Palace Paradise

Pulling Apart Tied Old Computers and videos is not everybody's cup of tea, but for Robert Mahoney it is heaven. Robert, who is on Invalid's Benefit, is working as a trainee for Mana Community enterprises" Trash Palace in Porirua. Trash Palace, a recycling centre for household goods such as furniture, white ware, electrical items, books, toys and clothes, employs 14 mental health consumers in both full and part-time. Trash Palace, set up through the non-profit organization Mana Community Enterprises with the support of Porirua City Council, was established to reduce landfill waste. The ministry of Social development contributes funding through the Enterprising Communities scheme.

1b. Child Care programme:

Pete explained on the activities on children in Levin are benefiting from a new childcare programme started with help from an enterprising communities grant. The programme began in direct response to a community need, it began in direct response to a community need. Local working mother of five Kowhai Care programme was born from a recognised need. It's taken nearly three years to get full activation of the programme. I was told that Kowhai Care after School and Holiday programme opened in September 2006 after becoming an approved **OSCAR** (*Out of School and Recreation*) provider. It can provide care for up to 50 children

1c. Building opportunities for young Maori

A new initiative to encourage young Maori to move up the ranks of the building industry was launched in August and has seen two candidates placed with Hawke's Bay builders already. *Te Taiwhenua O Heretaunga* is piloting the Marae Trade Training programme which aims to place up to 15 young Maori into the building industry each year for the next three years.

Applicants are nominated by local marae and selected after a formal interview process. They earn as they learn while employed on the job with local building firms. Their on-the job learning is complemented through

studying toward National Certificates in Carpentry (level four). They study four weeks per year over three years at the Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT).

A *marae reference group* consisting of eight local marae representatives, as well a representation from local Maori builders was formed shortly after. Pete said that part of the initiative is to build up the trade skill base for our local marae. These guys will be helping with the general maintenance on their own marae so that is a positive spin-off as well.

1d. Greenways Social Enterprise Project

A Dargaville based enterprising communities' project supporting greenways trust to expand its firewood and ground maintenance maintenance business will help employ sickness and invalids beneficiaries from the Kaipara. This initiative supports the ministry of social Development's Sickness and invalid's Benefits Strategy, which aims to broaden and strengthen he support for clients by exploring new ways supporting them towards achieving employment and independence.

It was told that Greenways, a charitable trust, provides 24 hour residential care service for people with intellectual disabilities, offering assistance with social and life skills and provides a range of recreational ad work skills to help people integrate into everyday community and family activities. When the largest supplier of firewood in the Kaipara recently closed down their operations, Greenways took up this as an alternative job providing activity and decided to expand its firewood services and become the only provider in the district. The trust approached Work and Income's Enterprising Communities to help with these expansions.

1e. Home support North Restorative Care

A Northland industry partnership between work and income, home support north, the Northland district health board ad multi skill has seen six work and income clients into employment. The partnership was set up as a Restorative Care pilot programme to support the delivery of home based and community support services within the Kerikeri district for clients over 65 years of age.

I was told by Pete that "There has been a significant increase in demand for Home Based Support Services ad this is predicted to increase in the future. Recruitment of good, trained staff has in the past has been an ongoing challenge for home based services." Having a more highly trained and skilled workforce will improve the quality of service that we are able to offer our clients and better meet the needs of New Zealand's ageing population.

1f. Waikato River trail.

Pete explained about the activity: The hard surfaced track offers passing bays and turnaround areas for those in wheelchairs, mobility scooters or prams and is one of two new walkways along the Waikato river. The Dunham Creek and Snowsill Trails, which run alongside the Waikato River between Atiamuri and Karapio, are the largest in series of walkways to have been established since 2004. Over the next five years a further 12 separate trails will be built along the Waikato River and, once completed, the trails will cover more than 100 km.

Taskforce Green workers (Mighty River Trackers), who are overseen and trained by Work and Income Enterprising Communities-funded construction supervisor, have carried out construction and maintenance work on all trials. Taskforce Green is a Work and Income subsidy that allows a client to participate in project-based work where they can develop work habits and general on-the-job skills.

1. g. Kiwifruit Action Initiative

Pete gave me the information on this activity briefly and gave me the document to read to have better understanding. With a steady reduction in the number of unemployed and an estimated annual shortfall of up

to 1,000 workers during a season, the bay of plenty kiwifruit industry is finding it increasingly difficult to recruit enough staff.

However an initiative designed to help sickness and Invalid's Benefit clients, particularly those experiencing mental illness, into employment within the kiwifruit industry has paid dividends for both participants and kiwifruit employers. Following this training, participants were placed into job share or full-time pack house positions. Horticultural unit standard training was also given.

1. h. Visit to Pathway Trust:

Pete and I visited Pathway Trust and met Mr.Murray Kennady the CEO of the trust. There were several young men on the work. One of their main activity is to make and export as many as chairs to various places in New Zealand and overseas. The entire work is done by unemployed youth and people return from the prisons. As they found it hard to cope up with life outside the prisons they are given skill building and capacity building training as well as leadership orientations by the Pathway Trust. Pete said that he was earlier involved in this activity, hence he knew the trust and senior staff well.

Pete took extra time and initiation to ask Murray whether his trust can think of supporting READ Centre if they have any funding possibilities. Murray was all the more happy to mention that his trust would be very happy to assist READ Centre, if it wants to identify potential buyers of the chairs that the trust produces. It was an encouraging move from the Pathway way trust. It is up to READ Centre to make use of this contact and act upon as quickly as possible.

I was lucky to meet Kura Geere-Watson of Monarch Centre in Christchurch. Pete Vink arranged a short meeting with her since she knew me from the previous COMMACT conferences. She was keen to listen to me about the work we do in India, to know the present activities of COMMACT – India, to know how COMMACT – NZ and India could work together to improve our friendship and co operation.

2. Visit to Buller Community Development Company (BCDC) Ltd. West Port – New Zealand.

After three days of my stay in Christchurch Pete Vink dropped me at Christchurch airport. I flew half an hour to reach Hokitika – a small town where Bruce was conducting a meeting. Bruce Hamilton came to receive me at Hokitika airport (the smallest airport I have ever seen)we drove from there to Westport, we had to drove about two hours through mountains facing the Tasman sea. I was feeling as if though I am in a long tour of sight seeing. The beautiful sea and creeks with lush vegetation, especially the Pancake Mountain and national park was hugely astonishing. I was given shelter at Bruce's home. His wife Joan and son James were happy to meet me as Bruce has already mentioned about me. Though the weather was very cold and raining, the warmth of the family and their kind hospitality made me at home really. I cooked Chicken curry for evening meal. Three of them liked my curry.

The Buller Community Development Company Ltd, was started in 1989. It is basically a community company owned, controlled by local Buller community. Though like any other company create better economic development plan and activities for supporting their shareholders. But it does not have a ultimate profit motive at any cost, it works closely with the greater support and partnership with local community. It has three major principles to create community based, managed and owned through following ethics:

- It is in business to provide economic and social development for Buller community
- Assets are held in trust for the Buller community now and in the future
- The success of its commercial objectives feed its social objectives

BCDC's over all vision is to create employment and business opportunities for Buller Community.

Initially few socially concerned locals in Buller started to build a base on creating alternative employment opportunities for people who were losing jobs from other areas in Buller district. Two Scottish with grassroots experiences came to impart training and ideas on employment. Three people from Buller went to learn the model and adapted in the course of time.

2a. The Buller Community Fertiliser Company:

They have very interesting activities that are wholly managed by the local community members. Bruce Hamilton the General Manager took me to places where the activities are established. The Buller Community Fertiliser Company was established in 1993 that recycles Kiln dust from the nearby cement works converting into Nodulated Stock Dust (NSD).

Bruce explained that the NSD is very good potassium that has high demand which helps the soil to gain more qualities of fertiliser and has rapid response pasture enhancer. I saw huge machines operating in the unit. I met one of local aboriginal (may be Maori) man who operates that huge machine.

2b. West flora nursery is another innovative activity that BCDC has designed for the economic development of the local community. There are several hundreds of flower and horticulture plants in the nursery. This nursery has been actively promoting local community's involvement in safeguarding plants, trees and shrubs. It runs its programme in a technically qualified way and create means of economic development for the community. I met some of very committed women and men who are working hard in the nursery.

I visited another nursery in a place called Tauranga Bay where lot of plants grown for restoring west coast project like quarries, mine sites as well as planting in plain lands region. I understood since this region is always greenish and having many of rare and ancient plants species the programme is value based and will have long stand effect on the environment and ecology.

2c. Industry Training New Zealand Ltd: Bruce gave me the details on this training course. he said the youth to acquire new skills and go forward in their livelihood activities. Since this is a certificate course that honors them with a certificate, they have better chances to work any where and earn. I was told most of them come from affected life background. BCDC has trained many people in the past.

BCDC is offering course that introduces the trainee to all aspects of welding, light engineering, and blacksmithing. They have a fully functional forge on site. This helps the trainee to learn on the spot. Here each trainee makes their own tools and artistic and creative talents are encouraged.

2d. The course of blacksmithing consists of: Workshop safety practices, forge tools, engineering core skills, hammer skills, anvil carel met an young man was busy completing his new project "converting a bicycle into three wheeled motorable one with the help of 0.5motor that will give 30kmph speed and one can ride around 30kms per liter. He had fitted a 4 liter cane to the tricycle (but with thick small tyre broader than the normal bicycle tyre) others were busy in designing or preparing new iron and steel instruments used for hardware and farm application. This unit also is supported by the Ministry of youth of New Zealand.

2. e. BCDC has tailored made "Pathway plan" through different skill building like:

- Team building
- Literacy
- Nuemeracy
- Goal setting
- Personal presentation
- Interviewing techniques
- Job search skills
- Unit standards
- First Aid certificates
- NZQA unit standards
- National Certificates

Bruce reminded me that this industry's health and safety representative course are entirely approved by the Employment Relations Services of the Department of Labour – NZ. Bruce also mentioned some of **major achievement that BCDC has to be proud of:**

- BCDC has created employment for more than 100 local people.
- Developed three trading ventures whose profits support many other important services in the region.
- Creating sustainable opportunities for them to self funding and make surplus to benefit their own community in the district.

Bruce explained to me that Home Builders Programme is another success for BCDC, that was started to support the grass root family service with skilled staff and a team of care givers providing Respite care for challenging children to give beleaguered parents a break (rest). Day care services and family education are some of very inspiring activities. Home builders now run through separate trust with financial support from BCDC. The development of employment and business opportunities. The promotions of training opportunities nationwide are some of other important areas of intervention by BCDC.

3. Visit to BEST Community Development Trust (BEST CD) - Ballarat. Victoria. Australia

After a long bus travel from Westport to Christchurch I got the flight to Melbourne – Australia that was a three hours journey. Ron Stone received me from the airport and we went straight into a youth award giving ceremony that was organized by the city council of Ballarat, with help of many other charities including BEST CD. We reached Ballarat with heavy rain and thundershower that the whole city was waiting for many days. I was witnessing that several youth receiving their awards made me to realize that still there is greater hope left in hands of youth all over the world. Two of BEST CD staff also received award.

Ron Stone introduced me to many personalities who are working in community development, in and around Ballarat. Ron took me to have dinner in one of restaurants, I felt honoured by the presence of city council Mayor Cr Stephen Jones and the official Mr. Frank Williams for international culture promotion in Ballarat. Mean while we had very useful discussions. Mr Frank Williams mentioned to me that he was instrumental in helping several international students and professionals to get their work done and solve many of their problems. He said if there is anything that his department can do to improve the work or intervention of READ Centre he will be happy to do so. Afterwards we proceeded to Ron's home where I was looked after by Ron and his wife Brinda. I enjoyed the stay with them, I was taken for a brief walk of that area to have glimpses of that area. I could understand that how much all people in Australia love to live with nature and protect environment and ecology of their country.

3a. Ballarat Show:

I had an unique experience of the show. When I heard “show” I thought it would be like a film show or an exhibition. But it was spread across hectars of land with big sheds and lawns filled with different kinds of activities. One side there was horse riding and competition, the other side woodcutting competition (a age old show that was considered to be very serious and professionally made). First time in my life I saw different sizes, kinds of axes in dedicated boxes that axers keep them like highly sensitive instruments (polishing often, cleaning each time when they remove from box and so on) I was told by Ron that the axers some time use their axes like a shaving blade just to show how sharp their axe is. There was a wood log cutting competition; one man cut a thick 12 inches radious log within 20 seconds and he was first in the group.

Ron and I went around every where in the show. We had our lunch there. We also participated in a puppet show conducted by two young women from Ballarat. Ron was impressed by the puppet show. I really enjoyed very much as I used to train students and youth on preparing and enacting through puppets. We saw old cars, old diesel pump sets, tailoring machines, kitchen wares, cloth items, bakery units etc. I was surprised to see two of Indian made (Scorpio) Mahindra four wheeler drivers exhibited, was told that these jeeps are in high demand in Australia. I felt it was good thing for people to come to one place and spend a happy time with various activities and spend time leisurely. I feel we need such kinds of events atleast once in six months so that it works like a “stress buster” amidst of busy and individualistic life that many of us go through.

BEST CD can be proud of its history of high level performance. Behind these achievements is an organization that has drawn together the talent of a committed staff that aspires to continual improvement

focusing on our vision. The collective efforts of staff lead by the CEO Ron /stone and the Senior Management Team show a healthy vibrant organisation. The Board is committed to BEST CD has established itself as a leader in community development.

This has been recognized in recent years though a long list of community awards including the YMCA Corporate Cup 2001-2003, the Prime Minister's Award for Best Community Enterprise 2003, Prime Minister's award for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships 2004, 2006 CGU Commerce Ballart Business Excellent Community Involvement Award and Overall Winner. In 2007 they added to this impressive list when they were announced as the inaugural People's Choice category winner in these prestigious awards.

BEST CD is governed by committed personalities with high profiles and experiences. It has the

- Board of subcommittees
- BEST board members
- Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – Mr.Ron Stone

3b. Organisational structure ethics: I was educated by Ron Stone when I asked him how he was able to justify his organizational and credibility alliance with other organisations or network. He mentioned that "*adhering and achieving their organizational values of service excellence, social justice, equity of access, integrity, reliability, workplace trust and harmony, and openness in communication*". He said that the ongoing challenge for BEST CD is to maintain an appropriate balance between effectively delivering and indeed further increasing community development services many of which are non income generating whilst at the same time ensuring that they remain financially viable and secure.

He added that BEST CD continually need to achieve our mission of Enhancing "*individual and enriching the community*" which at the same time being. So, by various measures, BEST CD remains on of Australia's most successful non-for-profit entities. There is clearly plenty of evidence to support the contention that they are an employer of choice and that we are widely recognised as a highly successful community organization. Their staff selection procedures, the rating and professional development that we make available to our staff and board members, the generous terms and conditions of employment that assist in attracting and retaining staff members, the community objectives that we pursue and the rewards that result from being part of an organisation that is really making a difference, the encouragement given to all staff to contribute to discussion and debate with confidence that their opinions are valued, the mutual support that is available from colleagues throughout the organization, the communication structures that maximize input into decision making and the recording and distribution of such data, the continuing focus on organizational health, commitment to continuous improvement, the ongoing maintenance and further development of an effective physical and human infrastructure and the general adherence to organizational values.

I thought I will make a brief report on BEST CD as it has many activities with greater details and spread across Ballarat.

3c. HUMAN RESOURCES

The main priority of the Human Resources (HR) department is to attract, retain and develop high quality staff who demonstrates commitment to the development of the Best Community Develop- ment's(BEST CD's) vision, mission and strategic goals.

3d. MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS

BEST CD's overall image, starting with print media, regular newspaper advertising in the Ballarat Courier (News Daily). Ron told me that after much thought and many different design concepts they had to split the overall advertising into three standalone ads; employment stayed in employment, training stayed in training and tuition, and the community ad became a fortnightly feature in the early news section of the paper. I was told that they advertised in a number of special publications across the region with our new template as well as sponsoring many local organizations and events throughout the year.

3. e. CORPORATE SERVICES

The main role of the corporate services team is to provide excellence in customer service to internal customers, particularly directors and staff. However the team has continued to also add value through other departments and units that are part of BEST and have been active in all aspect of social development the following units represent their respective role. BEST has 160 full time staff to carry outs community development activities in and around Ballarat:

- Finance department
- Information technology
- Quality assurance
- Property
- Business Development Mangt
- Quick Print
- Café Best
- Conference Centre Ballart
- Conference Centre Bendigo
- Youth Works
- Interclub
- Futures for young Adults
- Community Projects
- Employment & Training Services
- Vocational Training
- Computer Training
- BEST Employment Ararat & Stawell
- BEST Employment Ballarat
- BEST Employment Bendigo
- BEST Employment Horsham
- BEST Employment Maryborough
- Community Work Coording unit

Ron found time to take me around his organisation, even though it was a weekend. I was able to see many of their work places, people, staff and products. Ron took me to one of his best friend's 70th Birthday. It was an experience for me to meet many of Ron's good old friends from his teaching days, where Ron also held top position as secretary of teachers union.

Mean while we have been exploring new ways and means of co operation between READ, CC87, BEST CD, BCDC and Pete's network in the future. Ron was impressed by Carl's organisational activities. He was expressing few times about Carl and his work. I feel that there would be higher chances to bring good co operation between these organisations. Ron also is keen in attending the next year COMMACT International conference at Kottayam if everything goes well. BEST CD may try to do at least one Social Audit for the organisation. I feel CBSN may be contacted by BEST CD later.

I was told by Ron, there may be chances for BEST CD to send few volunteers to work on special projects that READ may design and communicate to BEST CD. We hope all these aspirations and plans will come true soon.

Future possible partnership between READ Centre and BEST CD:

READ Centre will have to work out a project proposal on Primary Education for Community Development. This proposal may be applied to the national government of Australia through BEST CD. (Ron mentioned to Sam that he has to act soon, so that he will be able to do his level best to do his portion)

I have tried my level best to write as many events and experiences as I could that gave me deeper insight and helped me to understand the value of commitment between people and personal lives of all concerned towards working together for the common good or people centered development, where ever we are working. This exposure gave me to realize the disadvantaged and marginalized face almost same problems all over the world, may be the level and velocity of problems may differ given the political, geographical, cultural, economic and ethnical situation.

All credit and credibility goes to COMMACT – International and the leaders from each chapter. I thank all who helped me to learn a lot from all of them. These experiences and interactions will increase in the days to come I hope.

In Solidarity
Sam Chelladurai
Executive Director, READ Centre, Bangalore. India