

ASSOCIATION OF GEOSCIENTISTS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (AGID)

REPORT TO IUGS FOR 2009

Introduction

The regular central running costs of AGID remain virtually nil as all work is undertaken by volunteers or covered by their donations. Occasional help in the updating of the AGID website is given by the British Geological Survey who host the site on their server. Other institutions are generous in donating time to certain of their employees to carry out regular administrative tasks for AGID, particularly in developing countries in which the now “decentralised” AGID operates. Because most AGID members are Life Members who paid a ‘one off’ membership fee, regular income from membership fees is small and remains within the regions in which it accrues. This means that activities rely on voluntary efforts with additional costs funded where possible from the Associations dwindling reserves. In these circumstances the small annual grant received from IUGS have provided AGID with an essential lifeline and, as reported below, many activities were continued and some new initiatives commenced during the year.

IGCP 523 (GROWNET)

The GROWNET project, an internet-based project disseminating examples and discussion on best practices in groundwater development and management in low-income developing countries via a dedicated website (www.igcp-grownet.org), is funded through IGCP. A grant US\$ 4000 was approved for 2009. Papers from many collaborators, ranging from Argentina to Egypt and Iran to Indonesia were posted on the website and to date over 6000 visits to the dedicated site have been made. The technical leader of the project is hydrogeologist Dr S D Limaye, the immediate Past President of AGID whilst AGID acts as treasurer (Dr A J Reedman). Meetings of GROWNET collaborators are held at appropriate international conferences in order to allow liaison between the collaborators, to recruit new supporters to the GROWNET network and to select suitable material to add to the website. This year GROWNET discussions were, or will be, held at the following meetings:

1. Bangkok, Thailand- February
2. Istanbul, Turkey- March
3. Hyderabad, India- September
4. Brisbane, Australia- September
5. Dhaka, Bangladesh- October

The Technical and Financial Report on GROWNET Project for 2009 has been submitted by Dr Limaye to UNESCO/IGCP and a further extension of the project has been requested until the next IGC in Australia.

AGID IYPE Outreach Project (“TEAM”).

A project entitled “Geoscience Information for Schools in Developing Countries” with the short title, intended for school children, “The Earth and Me”, or TEAM, has

the aim to produce simple leaflets on practical geoscience topics, published in vernacular languages, and distributed free to schools in deprived areas of low-income countries. Pilot projects are currently operating in Nigeria (for Africa) and Bangladesh (for S Asia). In spite of failing to get IYPE Outreach Funding, AGID decided to start the project and a small amount of 'seed funding' (\$600) has been made available to AGID Nigeria where considerable progress has been made with the help of almost \$2000 (Naira 236,350) raised locally. The target is to reach 200,000 pupils from at least 40 schools in each of the six geographic zones of the country and good progress towards that target is being made. For example in the south-western region thirteen schools and 2500 pupils, as well six primary schools in Rivers State the south-south zone, had already been reached by the beginning of the year and many more schools have been visited and talks delivered during the recent months. The intended audience is children in the sixth grade of primary and classes 2 and 3 in senior secondary, intending to kindle their interest in geoscience and to appreciate and be more inquisitive about the role geosciences play in the environment Our Nigerian colleagues have already translated and printed over 4000 pamphlets and raised 35000 Naira for transportation of schoolchildren to geological museums (eg University of Ibadan) as an integral part of the project. Much help has been received from staff of the Geological Surveys and in Academia. In addition, in an interesting and valuable initiative AGID members across the country and geologists from the Geological Surveys have completed a preliminary survey of Geoscience awareness levels in Nigeria and results were presented at the AGID GeoDev conference (see below) in Bangladesh. Such was the interest of delegates from several countries that a template for the survey is being provided to interested parties and full results are being published in the proceedings of GeoDev. The survey, amongst more than 20,000 people ranging from students to a wide variety of professionals displayed an alarmingly low awareness of the relevance of Geoscience to development issues, even in a georesource rich country such as Nigeria. (See abstract on AGID website) In Bangladesh a well established group based in the Geological Survey is initiating the TEAM project..

The intention is that these two pilot projects should continue through 2010 but AGID's reserves of funds are virtually expended and some extra funding to sustain the project, as in 2009, will be taken from any IUGS grant given to AGID for 2010.

GEOETHICS

Agid Vice President, Dr Vaclav Nemeč is Chairman of the AGID Working Group on Geoethics. Dr Nemeč and Mrs L Nemečová produce a regular Newsletter (Geoethics News, sent to members by mail and posted on the AGID Website. A regular session on Geoethics and meeting of the AGID Working Group on Geoethics is held at the Mining Pibram Symposium in the Czech Republic. A very successful meeting was held in October 2009. The topic of Geoethics has now become a very significant topic for AGID through the hard work of Dr Nemeč and his wife and through their efforts and encouragement a new chapter of AGID with a particular focus on geoethics was recently formed in Spain. Details are in the latest edition of Geoethics News (December 2009) to be posted on the website shortly.

GEODEV 2009 (BANGLADESH)

An international conference “Geoscience for Global Development” was organised by AGID, The Bangladesh Geological Survey, Geological Society of Bangladesh and IGEO and took place in Dhaka, Bangladesh from 26 to 31 October 2009.

The conference was opened in the presence of Dr Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, BB, Adviser to the Prime Minister and Brig General (retd) Muhammad Enamul Huq, MP, the Honorable State Minister, Energy and Mineral Resources Division, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources of the Government of the peoples Republic of Bangladesh.

At the outset of the conference a handy “pocket-sized” volume containing the 141 abstracts received was distributed to all participants. In all, 130 scientific papers had been submitted in advance of the Conference with many from geoscientists from a total of 43 countries other than the host country. These scientists, many from developing countries in Africa and Asia, were well represented at the conference though, inevitably, financial constraints prevented some of the intending overseas participants from travelling to Bangladesh.

Parallel scientific sessions were run over two days covering three main themes as follows:

Theme A: Geoscience Education (30 abstracts)

A-1: Geoscience Education and Awareness

A-2: Women in Geo-Education and Geo-Development

A-3: New Approaches in Geoscience Education and Research

Theme B: Natural Resources (58 Abstracts)

B-1: Exploration, Exploitation and Management of Natural Resources

B-2: Combating Energy Crisis and Researching Alternative Energy Sources

B-3: Water Resources Development, Management and Quality Assurance

B-4: Role of NGOs in Natural Resource Management and Environmental Protection

Theme C: Development Activities (50 Abstracts)

C-1: Geoscience for Development Activities – Development of Cities and Industries and Construction of Highways, Dams and Bridges.

C-2: Impacts of Development Activities on the Natural Environment

C-3: Natural HAZARDS Assessments and Infrastructure Development

C-4: Climate Change, Ecology and Biodiversity

In a final plenary session three special papers were presented with the following titles:

The Growth and Rise of the Tibet Plateau (by Paul Tapponnier, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore and Institut de Physique du Globe, Paris, France)

Applying Geoscience to Australia’s most Important Challenges (by Paul Kay, Geoscience Australia)

The Value of Geoscientific Information in Developing Countries (by Anthony Reedman, Secretary General AGID)

In addition to the rich diversity of topics presented in the three parallel thematic sessions, there was a poster session and exhibition and also ample opportunity for

informal discussions and the establishment of personal and inter-organisational relationships, not least during two excellent conference dinners and a spectacular final evening display of Bangladesh dancing and music. Many participants joined the post conference field trip to the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest in the world and one of the two World Heritage Sites in Bangladesh.

It is planned to publish the full proceedings of the conference following editing and preparation for printing. This will make a valuable addition to the recently published *Proceedings of the GSB/AGID International Conference on The Role of Natural Resources and Environment in Sustainable Development in Southeastern Asia* which (NESDA) which was available for distribution during the present conference. This attractively produced 394 page publication contains seventy papers covering the nine themes of the NESDA conference held in Dhaka in 2003.

PUBLICATIONS

AGID continues to communicate and disseminate information through its website. In addition AGID's GEOSCIENCE NEWSLETTER is published quarterly in India with financial assistance from UNESCO and is mailed to over seven hundred addresses in 35 countries around the world. The Newsletter is edited by Dr S Limaye and number 58 appeared in December 2009 and will be posted on the AGID website shortly.

SCHOLARSHIPS

AGID grants small scholarships to students in low-income countries to aid their fieldwork. In 2009 two grants of \$100 each are being made available to Bangladesh and Nigeria in conjunction with the TEAM project.

IUGS GRANT

In order to continue its work, particularly the TEAM project (seed funding in Bangladesh and Nigeria) and the William Greenwood student scholarship scheme, **AGID requests a grant of \$1000 from IUGS for 2010.** AGID's own reserves are now exhausted. Though AGID will continue to seek local funds in the developing countries where it is most active, money is badly needed as 'seed' money for new initiatives in several developing countries.

Dr A J Reedman
Secretary/Treasurer