



EMPOWER PROJECTS  
ANNUAL REPORT 2015



# Acknowledgements

The Board of Directors of Empower Projects Ltd (Australia) would like to extend their sincere thanks to the following individuals and organisations for helping us achieve all the enclosed milestones as an organisation. You have all contributed towards our mission

## OUR PARTNERS

Our projects are made possible by our outstanding international partners. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank them for their contributions over the last year.

Earthship Bioteecture – A U.S. based sustainable architecture firm that has worked alongside to build an Earthship Community Centre in Kapita.

Voltaic Systems – Our Solar Technology partners based in the USA. Voltaic have been instrumental in ensuring a supply of high quality, customised solar lighting solutions for the Kapita Region in Malawi.

The Hnger Project Malawi - Our technical partners in Malawi to support the establishment of a financial cooperative in Kapita, Malawi.

Reho Travel – A B-Corp and our first corporate sponsor.

Opportunity To Do – A development partner and funding organisation that has consistently supported our efforts in Malawi.

## OUR EMPOWER TRIBE

The heart of our organisation, our amazing team. Thank you for your passion and commitment to our mission. A big shout out to everyone who took part in our events in 2013/2014.

Australia - Sharini Samarakoon, Shashika Peeligama, Charith Ellawala, Mita Das, Kelly Ponsford, , Deborah Binder, Michael Brunac, Thaylise Nakamoto, Belinda Cooper, Emma Stanford, Gloria Chan, Jason Aront, Maki Kwong, Esheksha Flanagan, Kane Callaghan , Sophie Tomarchio,

Malawi - Jones Ntaukira, Runil Patel, Bright Msuku, Lusako Swira, Billy Milimbo , Adam Antoine

Sri Lanka - Ms. Zaluja , Dr. Harsha Wije, Jeya-seelan Sairajan, Mr. Mohamed Iqbal & Gary Paramanathan

Monthly/Yearly Donors - Julia Sharwood, Krishna Dermawan, Bob Chen, Savitri Peeligama, Guy Jamieson, Darlene Baerg, Eduard von Slawik,

## **Malawi Ministry of Trade and Malawi Union of Savings and Credit Cooperatives**

For their assistance in training and supporting our partner communities in establishing cooperatives.



## Our Purpose

To empower disadvantaged communities to take charge of their own development so that they are socially and economically self-reliant.

We believe that when it comes to sustainable development, local communities know best. They know what they would like to change in their communities and understand the challenges they face. Our role is not simply to “teach them how to fish” but to help them organise and take action on their own development priorities.

## Our Vision

To support 100 communities across Malawi and Sri Lanka to have the freedom and capacity to transcend poverty by 2020.

**Our Mission** We partner with disadvantaged communities for up to 5 years: Our work is focused on ensuring that communities are more socially and economically self-reliant by the end of this partnership. So that when we leave, our partner communities are better able to manage their own development projects and start new ones. This is an inspiring journey that we make together in solidarity.

## Here's how we make this happen



Vision Workshops to convert aspirations to action plans.



Access to finance e.g. interest-free loans to start up



Access to sustainable technologies e.g. solar power.



Training and support to ensure long-term sustainability.

## Our Values

We subscribe to the ethics of [Permaculture](#)

**Earth Care** – Respecting our environment and nurturing natural systems.

**People Care** – A commitment to equality, enabling self-reliance, valuing community, and the power of collaboration.

**Fair Share** – Sharing knowledge and surpluses with those in need.

# OVERVIEW

## Shanil Samarakoon

### Founder and Executive Director

This has been a momentous year for us. You will find within these pages a summary of wonderful impact milestones across our projects in both Malawi and Sri Lanka. These stories of impact form the essence of why we do what we do. We feel certain that they will inspire you.



I am also proud to announce that we achieved tax deductibility status (DGR) in Australia within this period. This is a crucial development for us as an organisation as it will open up new streams of income for our projects and also boost our credibility among a range of stakeholders. This achievement was two years in the making and took the passion and commitment of both our teams in Malawi and Australia. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to both teams and our supporters for having faith in our work as an organisation. More than a tax incentive, this rigorous process was a learning experience for us as an organisation and a valuable opportunity to strengthen our processes and standards.

Parallel to us receiving DGR status, Empower Projects also earned its first corporate sponsor over this period. [Reho Travel](#), a [B-Corp](#), is now our primary sponsor for project expansion in Malawi. We are excited about our partnership with this progressive organisation. Their support means that we are able to spend more time focusing on what we do best – working alongside communities at the grassroots to support their plans for self-reliance. On a related note, we have seen our teams in Malawi and Australia grow in size and in capacity. Developments that set us in good stride as we take on bigger projects and challenges.

We have much to celebrate but yet still, we have much left to do. Over the next year we will be planning our exit from the Kapita region (our first five year partnership), expanding our focus on our new project in the Mpamba region and scoping potential projects in Sri Lanka. We will also be looking to strengthen our board, our team of advisors and develop an annual fundraising campaign. There is much to look forward to and I'm excited to see how it unfolds. We are deeply grateful to all those who have helped us grow to where we are today.

With Gratitude,  
Shanil Samarakoon  
Founder & Executive Director

# EMPOWER MALAWI-OVERVIEW

## Jones Ntaukira

### Executive Director

We continue to be amazed by our own growth over the last 4 years. The financial year 2014- 2015 was a remarkable success for us at Empower (Malawi). In the year under review, we saw our work expanding to a new district, Nkhata Bay, where our work will support 38 villages in the area of Chief T.A Timbiri in the next 5 years.



This brings our work in Malawi to a total of 76 villages, just 24 villages short of our goal of supporting a 100 villages by the year 2020. Our work in Kapita, Mzimba is scheduled to end in December 2015. However, there is a high possibility that this may be extended to 2016 to ensure future sustainability. The construction of the community centre is not complete yet- with 3 more rooms to be built we expect that this particular project needs an extra 2 months past the proposed deadline of December 2015. During the period, we hired a permaculture specialist, Tina Sosten, a graduate of the Kusamala Institute of Agriculture and Ecology. Tina will be managing all work relating to permaculture at Empower-Malawi both projects and consultancy.

Her first assignment involved overseeing the school health and nutrition project at Kapita Primary School in Kapita. With considerable success registered already, we expect to replicate this project to other schools across Malawi in the coming months. We will need a couple of partners for this both local and international. Meanwhile, we are engaging with the Ministry of Education in Malawi for support of the project. A hearty thank you to all our supporters and partners, both local and international. Because of your support, Empower is now able to reach out, intimately, to 15,000 people in Mzimba and Nkhatabay. In the financial year 2015-2016, we will explore other districts where we will introduce our work. We also have ideas towards launching social ventures that will act as income generating activities for Empower (Malawi) to sustain our work. We will let you know as we go, please join us!

With Gratitude  
Jones Ntaukira  
Executive Director – Empower Malawi

# IMPACT SUMMARY

## Kapita Region - Mzimba District

- 200 households in Kapita have access to solar lighting systems in their homes. This has triggered region wide interest in solar power.
- The Kapita COMSIP was formed and has 34 shareholders. This financial cooperative has issued loans to 16 farmers and entrepreneurs thus far. We expect this young cooperative to experience considerable growth in 2015 and 2016.

Especially as Empower has trained over 200 entrepreneurs in the region in business development.

- A second build to complete the Earthship Community Centre took place in Jan 2015. 5 out of the 8 rooms are now complete and local community members have received extensive training to complete the remaining rooms.
- As highlighted in this video, the solar system, water harvesting and eco-sanitation elements of the building are fully functional.
- Our new permaculture consultant Tina Sostén has been continuing to support the expansion of the organic food garden at Kapita Primary School. The school is providing fruits such as bananas and pineapples to its pupils on a regular basis. 25 lead farmers have been trained in sustainable agriculture methods as part of a regional outreach program.
- Empower further supported Kapita Primary School through in-kind donations of over 160 textbooks, a laptop, a projector and 3 tablets that resulted in the creation of a library.
- Parents of Kapita are coming together to discuss the potential of establishing a preschool in the coming year.





# PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

## Permaculture Training in Kapita



Our permaculture specialist, Tina demonstrates how mulching is done to the farmers during one of her routine field door-to-door support.

We hired a fulltime permaculture specialist within Empower. In just 5 months, Tina has trained 25 farmers, rejuvenated and expanded the permaculture garden at Kapita Primary School, facilitated more than 5 workshops with lead farmers right in their home gardens. Tina is also working closely with Kapita Primary School to introduce a school health and nutrition project at Kapita Primary School. This is in order to promote hygiene at the school and enhance food production to sustain a meals program at the school. Tina is overseeing the expansion of the garden from 1 acre to 4 acres within 2015.

In January, we added 3 rooms to the Kapita Community Centre- making a total of 5 rooms. The first phase of the project took place in 2013 when 2 rooms were built. A team of 3 Earthship Biotecture crew all the way from Taos, New Mexico in USA flew to Malawi together with 15 volunteers from around the world. The local that teamed with the volunteers and with the guidance of th Earthship crew, learnt a lot of skills and received certificates. Empower will support the locals to complete the remaining 3 rooms by January 2016. Currently one room is being used by the Kapita COMSIP Cooperative Limited as their office.

## Earthship Community Centre



## Kapita Community Savings and Investment Promotion (Kapita COMSIP)



The Kapita COMSIP is the first cooperative that Empower has ever helped established. It is a financial cooperative which lets members save money, own the cooperative by purchasing shares and access their savings at any time by means of withdrawals. Members also have access to loans for various type of uses ranging from agriculture, business and emergency loans. From July 2014, membership has increased in the period from 11 to 34 at present with working capital of approximately US\$2000 excluding member savings. 16 people have received a one type of loan or the other from the COMSIP at least once. Repayment have been an impressive 100% with no bad loans. The COMSIP has brought banking services right to the doorsteps of the members.

## Edmond Banda

Edmond Banda is a tailor from the Kapita region of Malawi. He has seized opportunities with both hands! He was one of 200 entrepreneurs trained in business development and he used this knowledge to develop his tailoring business.



Click on the picture for a [short video](#) on Edmond's Story.

## Impact of Permaculture at Kapita Primary School

Find out more about how a school garden is transforming the lives of staff, pupils and parents at this rural school in Malawi. Enrolment to school has soared past 400 pupils and there are plans to expand the garden even further.



Click on the picture for a [short video](#) on Edmond's Story.



# Mpamba Region – Nkhata Bay District

## Timbiri Community Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO)

In the period, Empower saw its footprint in Malawi extending to a new region- Mpamba in Nkhata Bay district in the northern region of Malawi. A region of 38 villages and approximately 10,000 under the Traditional Authority Timbiri.

In February, a Vision workshop was conducted in Mpamba after the Nkhata Bay District Executive Council gave Empower (Malawi) a go ahead to work in the district. The Vision Workshop process resulted in the identification of 3 critical development priorities over the next 5 years.

1. Food security
2. Access to financial capital
3. Access to electricity



Women in a discussion group during the self-facilitated Vision Workshop Process.

We are supporting this community by supporting and funding the establishment of a community bank (a savings and credit cooperative- SACCO). Through the SACCO, Empower will support development of agricultural cooperatives and renewable energy financing. Thus addressing all 3 regional priorities.



Empower is working with Malawi Union of Savings and Credit Cooperatives (MUSCCO) to provide capacity building support for the SACCO. 40 community members were trained and applied for the cooperative registration with the Registrar of Cooperatives under the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The Timbiri SACCO is now a registered financial cooperative. It is expected to open its doors in November 2015 and address financial inclusion for hundreds of households in the region over the next year.



Timbiri SACCP treasurer (lady) and Secretary stand with a brand new motorbike given to the SACCO by Empower to ease mobility during member mobilisation.

Over the next 12 months Empower will be supporting the Timbiri SACCO through ongoing training and support, an interest free loan (approx. AUD 8,000) and coverage of professional staff salaries for a two year period. The goal being for the SACCO to be completely independent well within our five year partnership.

# EMPOWER SRI LANKA-OVERVIEW



Shyamika Peeligama  
Country Director

Our project in Puthu village in Sri Lanka was completed in 2015 and we thank our partner organisation Sewalanka and our consultant Dr Wije for their collaboration. We are proud of the achievements of the people community of Puthu village who worked together with our assistance to bring much needed educational opportunities for their children in the establishment of a local preschool in the village. The community allocated some land from the village and with some initial capital from Empower the construction of the preschool commenced at the end of 2014.

Successful negotiation with government authorities in 2015 resulted in securing funds to complete the construction of the school and operational handover of the school to government authorities who will oversee the training and staffing of the preschool. The school will open its doors to the little people of Puthu in 2016 and we are confident of the impacts their attendance at pre school will have in laying a valuable foundation for learning.

In addition, through the efforts of our permaculture consultant Dr Wije, Empower and Sewalanka have introduced a practice of permaculture to 20 households who are enjoying the benefits of organic compost, increased yields of vegetables and fruit for household consumption and knowledge about maintaining a chemical free sustainable agricultural practice.

## Future Projects in Sri Lanka

At a planning meeting held in 2015, the Empower board and its members decided on the importance of exploring further opportunities for project collaboration with suitable dynamic partners and communities in need in Sri Lanka. A scoping plan was developed and in the process of being implemented with some exciting prospects already on the cards! We look forward to exploring what exciting new opportunities await for us in Sri Lanka in 2016.

Thank you!  
Shyamika Peeligama  
Country Director – Sri Lanka

# Our Impact in Sri Lanka

Our collaboration with Puthu village in Batticaloa (Eastern Sri Lanka) started in 2012.

Here is a snapshot of some key project initiatives across the period.





## Sustainable Agriculture



Our Permaculture consultant Dr. Wije continued his work with the local permaculture committee to build the capacity of households to develop their own home gardens. Through follow up training, support visits and access to literature, 20 households are now actively practicing permaculture. These households are composting food waste in close proximity to their homes and maintaining home food gardens that are starting to supplement their diets and serve as an additional income stream. Young women and widows from the war have taken to permaculture as a means through which they can maximise productive use of their land and earn additional income.



This initiative has also seen an increase in the planting of fruit trees such as bananas and pineapples. Training in effective land and crop management is expected to lead to improvements in water management as the village is prone to flooding.

This poses serious health risks in addition to damaging property. As we left Puthu village, Dr. Wije felt that the local committee had sufficient knowledge and commitment to continue to expand the practice of permaculture in their village.

## Pre-School Construction



A critical part of our partnership with Puthu village centered on the establishment of a preschool. A deeply symbolic development in a war ravaged region. Early childhood education is seen as a critical component of rural development and we are proud to report that our collaboration with the community, the local District Secretariat and the Department of Education has resulted in the completion of the village's own preschool building. In order to ensure future sustainability, the Department of Education has committed to training and employing two teachers from the community. At the point of us leaving, up to 20 children are expected to form the first enrolment at Puthu Village's new preschool.

# TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Our teams in Malawi and Australia experienced great growth and development over the last year.



## Malawi

In Malawi we have benefitted from exciting new recruits. Kathy Kamsikiri joined us as an Administrative officer. Her arrival has already had a marked impact on the local team's efficiency when it comes to administrative matters surrounding payments, transfers and team coordination.

Tina Sosten joined our team as a Permaculture Consultant. As mentioned earlier, her arrival means that we now have in-house capacity to conduct permaculture training and support across our projects.

Tina and Kathy also bring a female perspective to our team that was lacking before. We are committed to gender equality and are proud to report that our team is not only growing in technical capacity but is also walking the talk with regards to diversity and inclusion.

2014 also marked the start of a new tradition for our Malawi team, a team retreat for team building and strategic planning for the year ahead. Our Executive Director Shanil Samarakoon was in Malawi for the first retreat. It was a great opportunity to reflect and ideate to develop action plans for 2015.



## Australia

Our volunteer base in Australia grew to 14 members across the period. Importantly, we have been able to attract the services of talented young professionals who are adding to our capacity to coordinate and deliver world-class results. Significantly, we are starting to develop a volunteer base in Melbourne, marking expansion beyond our home base of Sydney.

We now have young professionals from diverse fields such as marketing, law, finance, management consultancy and psychology contributing to important functions across our organisation. From project research to financial management and marketing.

Over the next year, the board will be looking towards expanding its members and leading the development of a formal board of advisors.

# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

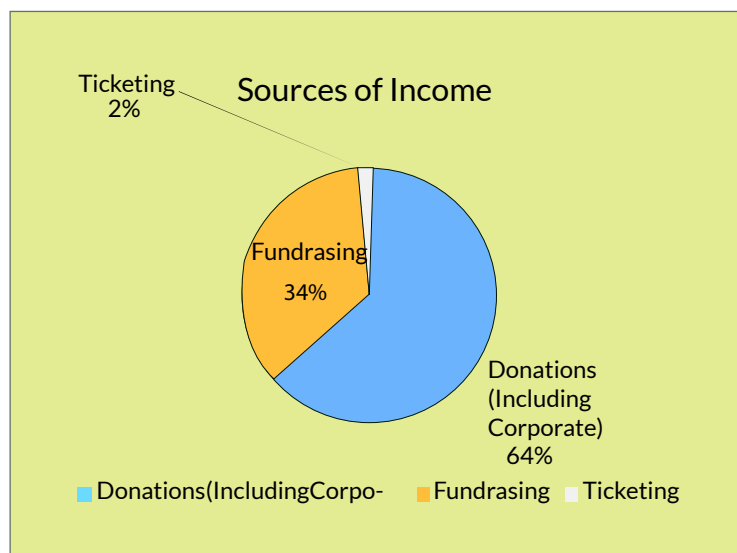
**James Feng**

## Director of Finance

It gives me great pleasure to present Empower Projects' financial position for FY 2014-15. We have gone from strength to strength when it comes to our fundraising efforts and this year was no different. Our biggest achievement by far has been achieving tax deductibility status for the organisation. This means any donation over \$2 by donors can be claimed as a tax deductible when lodging their tax return. This applies to both business and individuals and we are proud to be able to offer our supporters some incentive in supporting our cause. I have again adopted the method of breaking up the analysis into incomes and expenses to provide everyone with more clarification. Please see below:

## Sources of Income

Sharp increase in Corporate Funders: Our corporate partners, Opportunity to Do as well as Reho Travel have made significant commitment on the financial front to our cause. Both companies have upped their support, which in turn made a substantial impact on our overall fundraising effort. Total fundraising went up by 21% and fundraising from corporate donors increased by

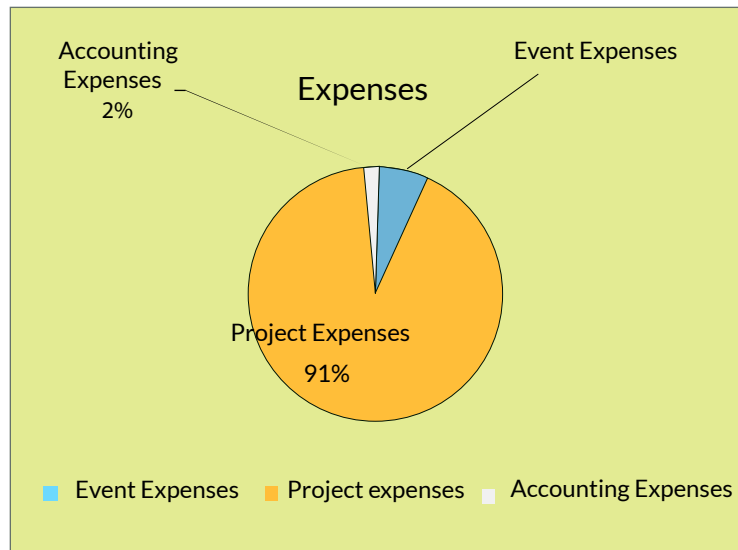


On the contrary event based fundraising have decreased. This change in income patterns tells the story that we are shifting from an event driven non-for-profit to a campaign driven organisation and I am pleased to say this is a positive as it is less labour intensive to run and a far more effective way to fundraise. We hope we can build on our success and enlist more corporate partners as we move on. Regular donors have remained steady this year. However, we are also looking towards increasing our pool this year, as we all know a little can go a long way in our projects.



# EXPENSES

Things on the expenses front have remained steady with our Kapita project as we kick start the final winding up phase and the community taking full control of the Kapita Projects. It is safe to say that our model have worked well with high repayments rates being recorded with regards to out community banking project and increase in production from our permaculture driven food garden.



We also started our second project in Malawi this year in the region of Mpamba. Overall project expenses have increased sharply due to the roll out of the new project with it being a much larger project and potentially servicing more than 10,000 people.

We have incurred less bank fees as a result of consolidating transactions into quarterly basis. Further, we have also put everything under one category within project expenses to provide clear clarification on our financial statements. All expenses have being invested into the projects and our directors have continued the tradition of volunteering for another year.

Our financial position returned into positive territory and we strive to improve our position even further this year. On behalf of the board of directors I would like to thank all of our supporters for their efforts in supporting our cause and we look forward to another challenging and hopefully fruitful year.

Many Thanks

James Feng

# Financial Statements



**Empower Projects Limited**  
**ABN 58 164 937 982**

**Financial Statements**  
**For the year ended 30 June 2015**



**Progressive Accounting and Taxation**

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**Detailed Profit and Loss Statement**  
**For the year ended 30 June 2015**

	2015	2014
	\$	\$
<b>Income</b>		
Interest received	8.39	21.14
Ticketing	980.00	575.00
Fundraising	19,005.46	28,591.13
<b>Donations Received</b>		
- External Donations Received	29,870.00	9,610.43
- Internal Donations Received	3,930.00	4,710.00
- Donations Received-Other	1,237.00	330.00
	35,037.00	14,650.43
<b>Total income</b>	55,030.85	43,837.70
<b>Expenses</b>		
<b>Operations</b>		
- Bank Fees And Charges	151.99	243.59
- Accountancy	1,155.00	660.00
	1,306.99	903.59
<b>Event Expense</b>		
- Venue Hire	2,610.15	1,518.00
- Fundraising supplies	647.65	1,116.67
	3,257.80	2,634.67
<b>Project Expense</b>		
- Allowance	46,822.96	10,818.77
- Training	0.00	33,147.99
	46,822.96	43,966.76
<b>Legal fees</b>	0.00	366.00
<b>Total expenses</b>	51,387.75	47,871.02
<b>Profit from Ordinary Activities before income tax</b>	<b>3,643.10</b>	<b>(4,033.32)</b>

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**These financial statements are unaudited. They must be read in conjunction with the attached Accountant's Compilation Report and Notes which form part of these financial statements.**

Notes to the Financial Statements  
For the year ended 30 June 2015

	2015	2014
<b>Note 2: Cash assets</b>		
<b>Bank accounts:</b>		
- CBA #681	672.18	1,266.51
- Westpac #773	0.87	4,204.24
- Westpac #978	47.80	47.03
- Bendigo #601	8,300.00	0.00
- Bendigo #577	140.03	0.00
	<u>9,160.88</u>	<u>5,517.78</u>
 <b>Note 3: Financial Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current</b>		
<b>Unsecured:</b>		
- Loan from members	<u>2,500.00</u>	<u>2,500.00</u>
	<u>2,500.00</u>	<u>2,500.00</u>
	<u>2,500.00</u>	<u>2,500.00</u>
	<u>2,500.00</u>	<u>2,500.00</u>
 <b>Non-Current</b>		
<b>Unsecured:</b>		
- Loans from members	<u>3,500.00</u>	<u>3,500.00</u>
	<u>3,500.00</u>	<u>3,500.00</u>
	<u>3,500.00</u>	<u>3,500.00</u>

These notes should be read in conjunction with the attached compilation report of Progressive Accounting and Taxation.



## Directors' Declaration

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The director has determined that the company is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies prescribed in Note 1 to the financial statements.

The director of the company declares that:

- 1. the financial statements and notes, present fairly the company's financial position as at 30 June 2015 and its performance for the year ended on that date in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements;**
- 2. in the director's opinion, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the company will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.**

The director is responsible for the reliability, accuracy and completeness of the accounting records and the disclosure of all material and relevant information.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the director.

Dated:

## Compilation Report to Empower Projects Limited

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We have compiled the accompanying special purpose financial statements of Empower Projects Limited, which comprise the balance sheet as at 30 June 2015, the profit and loss statement for the year then ended, a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes. The specific purpose for which the special purpose financial report has been prepared is set out in Note 1. The extent to which Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements have or have not been adopted in the preparation of the special purpose financial report is set out in Note 1.

### *The Responsibility of the Director of Empower Projects Limited*

The director of Empower Projects Limited is solely responsible for the information contained in the special purpose financial statements and has determined that the significant accounting policies adopted as set out in Note 1 to the financial statements are appropriate to meet the director's needs and for the purpose that the financial statements were prepared.

### *Our Responsibility*

On the basis of the information provided by the director of Empower Projects Limited, we have compiled the accompanying special purpose financial statements in accordance with the significant accounting policies adopted as set out in Note 1 to the financial statements and APES 315: Compilation of Financial Information.

Our procedures use accounting expertise to collect, classify and summarise the financial information, which the director provided, in compiling the financial statements. Our procedures do not include verification or validation procedures. No audit or review has been performed and accordingly no assurance is expressed.

To the extent permitted by law, we do not accept liability for any loss or damage which any person, other than the company, may suffer arising from any negligence on our part. No person should rely on the special purpose financial report without having an audit or review conducted.

The special purpose financial statements were compiled exclusively for the benefit of the director of Empower Projects Limited. We do not accept responsibility to any other person for the contents of the special purpose financial statements.

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**Progressive Accounting and Taxation**  
**Suite 7 170 Burwood Road**  
**Burwood NSW**

17 October, 2015

**This compilation report is to be read in conjunction with and forms part of the attached unaudited financial statements and notes.**



# EMPOWER PROJECTS ANNUAL REPORT 2015

