



**Australia —
Reaching out
to our Pacific
neighbours**



**Waging the
war against
landmines**



**Young
Australians
working for
development**

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Mr Downer's visit to the Pacific at the end of last year wrapped up a particularly demanding, yet productive, year for the aid program. This edition of Focus emphasises the importance the Minister places on the genuine engagement between Australia and the Pacific region.

Welcome to the first Focus of 1999

Details of the aid program's achievements in 1998 are a feature of this Focus edition. Last year there was a fundamental realignment of Australia's aid program under the Government's new framework, *Better Aid for a Better Future*. Our capacity to respond to the urgent demands of the regional economic crisis and a series of natural disasters was due in no small measure to the changes put in place in this new framework.

Australia played an active role in helping countries deal with the impacts of the regional economic crisis. Our response through the aid program was targeted at a number of levels. Australia used its influence in international forums to ensure active participation by other donors, including international agencies, in responding to the crisis. Early last year, Mr Downer met the President of the World Bank to urge the Bank to take a leading role in coordinating assistance. He also met the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund and stressed the importance of ensuring that the social costs of the crisis were not overlooked in pursuing economic reforms.

To maintain the momentum of an effective international response, Mr Downer plans to convene a meeting early this year

of Ministers from major donor and recipient countries in the region. The meeting will focus on the long-term development challenges facing the region and what needs to be done to restore growth.

Through the aid program, Australia provided additional resources to the worst affected countries including Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam. In Indonesia alone, we increased total aid flows by 25 per cent compared with the previous year. Much of this has focused on helping people cope with the crisis by providing food aid and essential medicines.

In recognising that the social and economic impacts of the crisis are not going to be short-lived, we are also focusing on helping regional countries return to sustained growth and limit the potential for recurrence of the crisis. Crucial to this is an increased emphasis on governance. To this end, Australia is supporting partner countries to deal with systemic problems in the banking/finance sectors; strengthen corporate, legal, judicial and institutional frameworks; and to improve public administration.

At last year's APEC Leaders' Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, the Prime Minister, Mr Howard, announced a major package of economic and financial management

assistance for APEC developing economies affected by the crisis. The package exceeds \$50 million over three years, and targets priority areas identified in the APEC Economic Governance Capacity Building Survey commissioned by the aid program.

The increased emphasis on governance is not limited to economic and financial management issues — it also includes a strong focus on human rights. In his Statement to Parliament, the Minister outlined a clear framework and six key principles for supporting human rights through the aid program. To support implementation of these principles, AusAID will develop practical guidance for program managers, contractors and recipient government counterparts.

Better Aid for a Better Future outlined the importance of focusing our assistance in regions and countries to achieve longer lasting improvements in people's lives. It called for the development of comprehensive strategies, developed in partnership with developing countries. It also required the aid program to be able to provide rapid relief in emergencies and respond to changing pressures.

This approach is no more apparent than in our program of assistance in Papua New Guinea. Over the last year the aid program

assisted in the rehabilitation of agriculture after the 1997 drought, responded to the tsunami tragedy, and contributed to peace and reconstruction in Bougainville.

Reviewing the Treaty on Development Cooperation with Papua New Guinea has been a key issue over the past year. The review will set in place arrangements to ensure that Australian aid to PNG reaches those most in need and makes a real difference to living standards.

As mentioned earlier, the Minister visited the Pacific late last year. During this visit he launched Australia's Pacific Islands Development Strategy, which aims to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance for Pacific Island countries. This is the first Pacific-wide comprehensive strategy. Similar strategies are now being developed for our programs to all major partner countries.

Considerable work has been put into developing a new assessment framework to ensure our aid dollars to multilateral organisations are only directed to those organisations which are effective and efficient in pursuing their objectives.

AusAID commenced work on developing a formal statement of principles outlining the role of NGOs in the aid program. This policy statement is currently being developed in consultation with the NGO community, and will be considered by the Minister early this year.

Better Aid for a Better Future outlined the five key sectors of health, agriculture and rural development, education, governance and infrastructure. These sectors are taken into account in the development of country strategies and specific policies for each sector were prepared or are near completion.

Another major initiative during 1998 has been the significant focus on involving the Australian community in Australia's aid program.

A comprehensive survey demonstrated that the vast majority – 84 per cent – of Australians support overseas aid and that they are motivated by humanitarian

concerns. In the past year the government has therefore placed a high priority on informing Australians about the aid program and involving them both in its delivery and development.

A program of community outreach activities to better inform people about how their overseas aid program works was commenced in 1998. This included a range of seminars hosted by the Parliamentary Secretary Mrs Kathy Sullivan, displays at agricultural and other shows along with improvements to AusAID's internet site publications.

To recognise the efforts of Australian overseas volunteers Mr Downer and Mrs Sullivan launched the Certificates of Appreciation Program. Mr Downer also launched the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program.

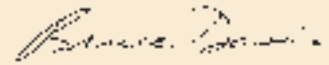
To help ensure the aid program reflects the values of the wider Australian community and plays an important role in opening the aid program up to new ideas and approaches to development, eleven distinguished Australians were appointed to the Aid Advisory Council.

The Australian Centre for Democratic Institutions was also established. Its first activity last November was to co-sponsor a workshop held at the ANU for Melanesian Ombudsmen.

Another priority in 1998 was a new organisational structure to align AusAID with the new priorities identified in *Better Aid for a Better Future*. We have brought together policy development and program delivery functions to enhance the focus on program quality and performance improvement. Key structural reforms have been made to ensure AusAID is open to new ideas and approaches and to implement sectoral priorities.

As you can see, 1998 was a year of many achievements for the aid program and this year will bring its own set of challenges and new demands. Not least is responding to the long-term effects of the Asian economic crisis. We can also plan on being a more outward looking organisation

that draws on the best ideas in Australia and overseas. The continuing involvement and support of the community in the aid program will be an important part of the aid program this year.



Bruce Davis
Acting Director General

Australia ignores the Pacific at its peril

By Matt Francis

Australia ignores the Pacific at its peril, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, said during his recent visit to the region.

Mr Downer said Australia will continue to hold abiding strategic, political and economic interests in the Pacific region, requiring more than the maintenance of routine bilateral relationships.

The Minister spoke of the importance of genuine engagement and empathy between Australia and the region.

GOOD NEIGHBOURS

'We must be more than just neighbours, we must be good neighbours. That is why we devote significant diplomatic resources to our relations with the Pacific island nations and to the work of regional organisations, and why the Pacific occupies such an important place in the pattern of our overseas development assistance.'

Solutions to regional problems, Mr Downer said, must be forged as cooperative undertakings, despite expectations both at home and in the region, that because of its size and prosperity Australia would take a leading role.

'Australia needs the cooperation of the island nations of the Pacific as much as they need ours – and we must work hard to obtain it.

'That is why my approach as Minister has been to encourage Australia to appreciate differences, to listen to what our neighbours say, accept their constructive criticism and avoid facile assumptions.'

Mr Downer said Australia intended to give Pacific Island nations the recognition they deserved, including having the Minister for Foreign Affairs, rather than a



'We must be more than just neighbours, we must be good neighbours', the Minister for Foreign Affairs Alexander Downer said during his recent visit to the Pacific.

junior minister, represent Australia at regional forums.

FACING CHALLENGES

The past year presented the region with both new and old challenges; the impact of the East Asian downturn has been compounded in the South Pacific by the effects of drought, which were still being felt in Fiji, the Minister said.

Australia has worked bilaterally and multilaterally in support of efforts to improve economic management, develop sustainable resources and address issues of good governance.

However, there was a broad consensus in the region, the Minister said, on the need to meet the challenges which lie ahead.

'There is a readiness among regional nations to tackle globalisation and economic change in an open and positive manner, and to integrate new ideas with traditional customs and values.

'I do not underestimate the trauma this has caused. But, as I travel in the region I am told – and sense – a determination to tackle challenges that lie ahead, rather than retreat into despondency and the erection of barriers against the outside world.'

COURAGEOUS STEPS

Mr Downer said the Australian Government commended the courageous steps taken by regional governments to move in new directions and create resilient infrastructure, often at some political cost. Examples

included the efforts of Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu to refocus the business of government and to impose budgetary discipline, and the development of a new Constitution in Fiji.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

An outstanding example of regional cooperation has been the willingness to make a real and positive contribution to conflict resolution on Bougainville. Neutral observers from Fiji, New Zealand, Vanuatu and Australia are contributing to the Bougainville peace process.

‘These are the sorts of endeavours which give me confidence that the region can tackle the big issues which confront us all,’ Mr Downer said.

‘It also leads me to believe that Australia is right to give the priority we do to working cooperatively with the countries of the region and to support them in their efforts to meet their development needs.’

PACIFIC ISLANDS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

In Fiji, Mr Downer launched Australia’s new Pacific Islands Development Strategy which will run from 1999 to 2001, the first in a new series of country and regional strategies developed by AusAID in response to a recommendation of the 1997 independent review of Australia’s aid program.

Australia provides about \$130 million in aid to Pacific island nations, excluding Papua New Guinea, making Australia by far the largest aid donor to the Pacific region if treaty-based assistance to Papua New Guinea is taken into account.

Currently, Australia is one of three countries, with Japan and New Zealand, to provide around 80 per cent of total donor assistance to Pacific island nations.

And while Australia is one of the largest donors on the block, it doesn’t seek in any way to throw its weight around, Mr Downer said.

‘Australia’s assistance is designed to be relevant to national and regional priorities and Australia’s aid delivery mechanisms



Australian aid is working to achieve better governance and stronger growth.

have established a reputation in the region and with other donors for flexibility and responsiveness.’

SELF-RELIANCE

Australia’s long-term aid objective is to achieve maximum self-reliance for Pacific island nations; this will take different forms in different countries, ranging from greater flexibility in the use of aid resources by less economically viable atoll states, through to a graduation from most forms of ongoing aid for larger, more resource-rich countries.

Medium term, Australia’s aid will aim to contribute constructively to the achievement of outcomes in the areas of better governance, stronger growth, greater national capacity, better service delivery, and environmental integrity.

Mr Downer emphasised the connection between good governance and aid effectiveness across all sectors of assistance.

‘There is not only balance, but a high degree of synergy, between aid in support of good governance and aid in support of other, more traditional social and economic objectives,’ he said, adding that the closeness and transparency of relations between Australia and Pacific island nations gave him confidence for the future.

‘I have no doubt this closeness will

remain a feature of our relations into the future. As a key element in those relations, Australia’s Pacific Islands Development Strategy will, I am confident, ensure Australia remains a responsive, reliable and flexible development partner for all Pacific island countries as we jointly face the challenges of the new millennium,’ Mr Downer said. ■

Future Aid to the Pacific – Australia's Strategy

By Matt Francis



Our aid program is helping Pacific Island countries become more self-reliant.

The Australian Government's long term objective in providing aid to Pacific Island countries is to help them achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance.

This will take different forms for different countries. In larger more resource rich nations, it will ultimately mean a cessation of, or graduation from, most forms of ongoing aid once acceptable standards of living are achieved. However because of the vulnerability of these countries to external factors, 'contingency' aid may still be required.

For the less economically viable atoll states, self-reliance will probably never mean independence from aid. Nevertheless, these nations would benefit from being given greater flexibility in the use of their aid resources. As part of this process, there could be considerable evolution in the forms of aid provided and in the

mechanisms used to provide it.

Australia provides about \$130 million in aid to Pacific island countries each year in the form of goods and services. This is equivalent to about nine per cent of total aid provided by Australia over the past decade, and, when aid to Papua New Guinea is included, nearly one third of Australia's aid is directed to the nations of the Pacific.

Australia's aid is largely directed to the seven independent Pacific island nations of Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati and Tuvalu. Our assistance is concentrated in areas considered to have the greatest impact on development – education and training, economic reform and governance, health, environment and natural resources, and private sector development.

OBJECTIVES

In the medium term, Australia's aid aims to contribute materially to the achievement of five principal outcomes for the Pacific island countries.

- Better governance – through widespread adoption of the policy, legislative and administrative frameworks required for an efficient, accountable and service oriented public sector.
- Stronger growth – through sustainable resource use, infrastructure development and effective promotion and regulation of trade, investment and private sector activity.
- Greater capacity – through improvements in national professional, technical and administrative skill levels in both the public and private sectors.
- Better service delivery – through improvements in the quality and reach of basic government services in the areas of primary health care and basic education, particularly outside the main population centres.
- Environmental integrity – through national and regional measures to mitigate the impact of economic activity and population growth on land and marine environments.

STRATEGIES

There are 10 specific strategies for Australia's aid to the Pacific island countries over the next three years which aim to help meet the above objectives.

- The allocation of Australian aid between major recipient countries in the region will be closely monitored against

key economic and social indicators (including population, gross domestic product per person, infant mortality and school enrolment) and other relevant factors such as aid reliance and aid effectiveness. Aid levels will be adjusted where appropriate, gradually and without detriment to ongoing programs.

- Australia's support for good governance will be further extended beyond the executive arm of government and beyond government to civil society. AusAID will develop a more systematic and activist approach to the mobilisation of Australian public sector expertise at Commonwealth, State and local government levels with the aim of building stronger and more diverse linkages between Australia and Pacific island governments.
- A new overview and quality assurance mechanism will be put in place to help assess the overall impact and relative cost-effectiveness of Australia's scholarship programs in Pacific island countries.
- A range of measures will be taken to maximise the coherence and relevance of the staffing assistance, both advisory and in-line, provided under a range of mechanisms, including volunteer programs such as Australian Volunteers Abroad and Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development.
- Australia's assistance in health, education and natural resource management will balance the objective of directly enhancing services with an increased emphasis on supporting improvements in policy, planning and administrative capacity.
- The incentive based Policy and Management Reform Fund (which provides countries with additional funding on a competitive basis for public sector management projects) will be maintained at least at current levels. Project selection will reflect the priorities articulated by South Pacific Forum leaders.



Building partnerships with our Pacific neighbours.

- New funding arrangements will be introduced for regional organisations with the dual goals of providing greater certainty about forward funding levels and encouraging productive competition between organisations for Australian extra-budgetary resources.
- The principle for resource allocation within Australia's Pacific multicountry program will be to strengthen regional ownership of multicountry activities and ensure maximum complementarity with national programs.
- Sector investment programs – under which Australia and the recipient government agree on broad sectoral objectives and jointly manage the allocation of Australian aid funds in pursuit of those objectives – will be piloted in one or more of the smaller island states as a way of increasing the flexibility of Australia's assistance and better integrating it into national priorities.
- Australia will maintain its commitment to structured consultation and project level collaboration with other key donors to Pacific island countries, particularly in the context of economic

restructuring programs requiring extensive and coordinated donor support.

These measures will further improve the capacity of Australia's aid program to deliver measurable results in priority aid areas, increase the equity and cost-effectiveness of resource allocation, and make Australia better able to respond effectively and accountably to the development needs of Pacific island countries. ■

Water Projects Helping in the Solomon Islands

By Matt Francis

Villagers in the Solomon Islands told the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, during his recent visit how water supplies built with Australian aid had improved their lives.



Mr Downer visits Nazareth village in the Solomon Islands, meeting local people and inspecting an Australian-funded water supply project.

Mr Downer was the first Australian Foreign Minister to visit the Solomon Islands in eight years.

The Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Bartholomew Ulufa'alu, and ministers in his Government commended Mr Downer on the current level and focus of Australia's aid program in the areas of health and education, and more recently, in support of the government's policy and structural reform program.

In the village of Nazareth, in Western Province, Chief Eli Suit thanked Mr Downer for an Australian-funded water supply project.

WATER

He said that its completion had improved the local peoples' lives and had benefited the surrounding villages throughout the recent dry season.

Built with some funds contributed by the local community, the project was part of the five-year \$11 million Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project.

Mr Downer also visited a water supply system where water was fed from a natural spring by a gravity supply system. Before its completion, villagers had used a spring for their water supplies located 1.5 kilometres away.

The President of the Women's Federation, Mrs Sisiolo, said that getting water before the completion of the project was difficult.

'Life is easier now because we don't have to look for water, instead water is now looking for us.'

THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

More than 80 per cent of the Solomon Island's 401,000 people rely on subsistence agriculture and fishing for their livelihood. Export earnings in recent years have come chiefly from timber. Manufacturing and tourism are poorly developed.

The Australian Government increased its bilateral aid to the Solomon Islands to an estimated \$11.2 million in 1998-99. In addition, the Solomon Islands will receive assistance of \$1 million through the regional Policy and Management Reform Fund. This brings Australia's total aid commitments to the Solomon Islands, including regional aid, to \$14.1 million. Australian aid is focused on economic reform and governance, education and training, health, and private sector development. ■

Improving health care in Fiji

Australia will help to improve the Fiji Islands health and tax systems following the signing of agreements for three bilateral aid projects.



Better health care for children is a key priority.

Basic health needs will be addressed by targeting areas such as primary and preventive care and action on measures to improve the overall management and delivery of health care services.

The Taveuni Rural and Community Health project is designed to reduce the incidence and prevalence of diseases which contribute to high rates of morbidity and mortality, and to improve the self-reliance and social welfare of the island community. An integral part of the project will be the construction of a new hospital and nursing station.

BETTER HEALTH CARE

As part of a program of comprehensive public sector reform already underway in the Fiji Islands, the Ministry of Health Reform Management project will improve the overall management and delivery of health care services.

Australia will provide up to \$18.7 million over five years for these projects which represents an important upgrading of health services.

Support will also be given for a project that aims to provide a more efficient and effective tax system. The Inland Revenue Restructure and Strengthening Project will

introduce managerial and organisational change within the Department of Inland Revenue and assist with the development of the Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority.

All Fiji Islanders will benefit from a better taxation system which provides a fairer distribution of the tax burden, and improved taxpayer compliance and services to taxpayers. The Australian Government is providing \$1.4 million for the first phase of the five year project. ■

Kiribati says 'thanks' for Australian aid

Assistance from Australia has played an important role in the development of his country, according to Kiribati's President Teburoro Tito.

President Tito asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, during his recent visit, to convey the gratitude of the people of Kiribati to the Government and people of Australia for development assistance provided during the last 20 years.

In Kiribati, Mr Downer and President Tito signed a statement of intent covering the introduction of the Youth Ambassadors for Development Program, which will see up to 500 young Australians working on development assignments in the Asia Pacific region over the next two years.

Mr Downer visited a junior secondary school on North Tarawa. The junior

secondary school system in Kiribati is being assisted by Australia's aid program through the provision of new secondary schools on outer islands and by ensuring that all children have access to basic education for nine years of schooling, including six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education.

KIRIBATI

With a population of 83,000 spread over a land mass of only 811 square kilometres on 33 widely dispersed islands, ocean resources form the mainstay of the Kiribati economy. Australia's support for Kiribati is concentrated in education and training, economic and asset management, and fiscal planning. Bilateral aid from Australia to Kiribati is estimated to be \$5.8 million in 1998-99. Additional support of around \$1.2 million is expected to be provided through the Policy and Management Reform Fund. ■

Tuvalu links strengthened

The visit by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, to the island state of Tuvalu was the first by an Australian Foreign Minister in almost a decade.

During his visit, Mr Downer held separate meetings with the Prime Minister and Governor-General and attended a reception, dinner and lunch attended by all members of Government present in Tuvalu, as well as department heads and other senior community leaders.

Mr Downer visited the Tuvalu Maritime School on Amatuku Island, travelling on the Australian-provided patrol boat, Te Matalili. He unveiled a plaque commemorating Australia's support for the school's development and officially opened a cargo-handling simulator provided by the Australian Government.

Tuvalu's population of 10,000 occupies eight of the nine low-lying coral atolls with a total land area of just 26 square kilometres. It has a mixed market-subsistence economy with 80 per cent of people making their living from fishing and agriculture. Economic growth is inhibited by Tuvalu's isolation, small, dispersed land area, scarce and fragile natural resources, and limited infrastructure. Vulnerability to environmental hazards is also a significant impediment to economic and social development.

Australia's aid program to Tuvalu includes projects in the areas of economic reform, governance and education and training. ■

A Sprig of Success

By Tina Faulk

A four week training course in Queensland, Australia, has led to the regeneration of a rare and endangered species of timber in Samoa.

Just over two years ago, Tito Alatimu, an Assistant Regional Forestry Officer in Samoa's West Savaii Reforestation Project, participated in an Australian course on the propagation of tropical forest trees.

When he returned home, he applied what he had learnt to regenerate Malili – a timber which had almost disappeared because of extensive logging.

Mr Stephen Walker, a Propagation Scientist for the South Pacific Regional Initiative on Forest Genetic Resources (SPRIG), which is mainly funded by the Australian Government, suggested to Tito that an experiment to propagate *Terminilia richii* (Malili) might be worthwhile – and he was right!

Malili is one of the best local timber tree species in Samoa and is well adapted to resist periodic severe cyclones, but it is difficult to propagate from seed. In recent decades Malili was heavily logged and is now rare and endangered throughout Samoa, the only place it now occurs. Malili was also found in Niue but extensive searches have failed to locate the species and it is presumed extinct on Niue.

SAVING THREATENED TREES

Back in Samoa, using the training he'd learned in Australia from his SPRIG course, Tito established a hedge bank at Masamasa Nursery in Savaii, planting 63 Malili seedlings.

When the seedlings shot up, Tito cut them back to three varying heights, 0.10m, 0.20m, and 0.30m, above ground level. He also left some seedlings uncut but pinned them flat to the ground with wire pegs, an



Tito Alatimu has successfully propagated a rare and endangered forest tree in Samoa.

idea he'd gleaned from an experiment with sandalwood seedlings that he'd seen in Queensland. The aim was to see if shoot growth could be improved using this technique.

A month after the cutback, Tito's hedged seedlings had produced new shoots, proving that Malili trees would coppice, a criteria needed for successful tree propagation. The flattened seedlings, pegged to the ground, had also produced some healthy shoots.

Helping out with the experiment, SPRIG despatched five propagation trays (seed raising trays with clear plastic lids to retain humidity), rooting powder, secateurs and fungicide for setting the Malili cuttings.

SPRIG Team Leader Dr Lex Thomson visited the Savaii project last year and worked out how to set the cuttings, using local river sand and available peat moss instead of sterilised potting mixes which are hard to obtain in Samoa.

SUCCESSFUL PROPAGATION

Despite some initial setbacks which provided a learning experience, most cuttings took root successfully, and although, as Tito points out, further work needs to be undertaken to fully understand the propagation process for Malili, the experiment was another SPRIG success story.

Malili can now be reliably propagated, conserved and managed to provide timber and other products and services for future generations of Samoans.

SAVING FORESTS

SPRIG's goal in South Pacific developing countries, especially Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Tonga, is to strengthen national capacity to collect, assess, improve, and conserve forest genetic resources, and promote ecologically sustainable development in the forestry and natural resources sectors of the islands.

SPRIG is a three year pilot project running from 1997-1999 with major funding of \$2.6 million provided through AusAID. Additional funding and in-kind support is provided by the governments of the five SPRIG focus countries.

THE SPRIG PROJECTS

The three main elements of the SPRIG Project are:

- Conservation – strategies for conserving genetic resources of priority indigenous tree species;
- Tree improvement – assisting South Pacific island nations to collect, distribute, exchange, propagate and evaluate priority tree species, and assisting South Pacific island nations to collect, distribute, exchange, propagate and evaluate priority tree species' germplasm, especially that of indigenous species; and
- Institutional development – improving the capability of South Pacific institutions in the conservation and utilisation of forest genetic resources.

SPRIG projects are carried out by the Australian Tree Seed Centre, CSIRO Forestry and Forest products, the Queensland Forestry Research Institute, Queensland Department of Primary Industry – Forestry and FORTECH, in collaboration with forestry departments in Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, the Solomon Islands, the University of the South Pacific and Pacific Islands Forests and Trees Support Program. The consultants for the project were FSP International and Francois Martel and Associates. ■



Growing new forests.

For further information on SPRIG, contact
Dr Lex Thomson, Team Leader,
CSIRO Forestry and Forest Products
PO Box E4008 Kingston
ACT 2604
Canberra Australia
PHONE 61 2 6281 8242
or FAX 61 2 6281 8266
Email Lex.Thompson@ffp.csiro.au

PNG – Australia ties reaffirmed by Ministers

Australia's closest neighbour, Papua New Guinea, receives the largest single slice of Australian aid which accounts for more than one fifth of the total Australian development cooperation program.

In December last year 20 government ministers from Australia and PNG met at the Eleventh Australia-Papua New Guinea Ministerial Forum.

In the best-attended Forum to date, the ministers from Australia and PNG discussed matters of mutual concern, including regional economic conditions, trade and investment links, the PNG-Queensland gas pipeline project, the defence relationship and aid.

The continuation of the Australia-Papua New Guinea Development Cooperation Treaty beyond 2000 was agreed at the Forum.

AID PRINCIPLES

Ministers agreed on the principles that will underlie the aid relationship between Australia and PNG.

They include:

- A strengthened benchmark system of sectoral performance targets consistent with the World Bank and IMF economic reform program and linked to the level and composition of the program;
- A growing proportion of the program devoted to rewarding and encouraging good performance by agencies inside and outside the PNG Government (Incentive Fund);
- A maximum indicative annual planning figure for the period July 2000 to June 2003 of \$300 million in nominal terms where appropriate, a sectoral investment approach will also be promoted in the future;
- Increasing levels of participation in the aid program by PNG agencies, companies, and individuals;
- Continual refinement of the program to meet PNG development priorities.

The ministers endorsed the outcome of the high level consultations on the aid program which was signed by officials on 8 December 1998, and the proposal to develop benchmarks in education, health and infrastructure for 1999.

SUPPORT FOR AUSTRALIAN AID

PNG Ministers, led by Foreign Minister Roy Yaki, thanked Australia warmly for the prompt and generous assistance provided in response to emergencies in recent years such as the Rabaul volcanic eruptions, the drought and the Aitape tsunami. Ministers noted the start of a project to strengthen PNG's disaster management system early this year.



Australia's commitment to Papua New Guinea reaffirmed.

BUILDING PEACE ON BOUGAINVILLE

Australian ministers congratulated the PNG Government on its constructive and flexible approach to the Bougainville peace process. All the parties – in Port Moresby, and on Bougainville – had demonstrated impressive commitment and leadership.

Australian ministers reaffirmed their readiness to continue to facilitate the peace process through the Peace Monitoring Group and the aid program. The Bougainville aid program remained an extremely high priority for both Governments, especially in delivering a peace dividend in the form of restoration and reconstruction.

Australia will accelerate the roads project and supplement the Peace Travel Fund. The primary focus on health, education and humanitarian assistance in Bougainville was appropriate and would be further strengthened with the implementation of infrastructure projects in various parts of the province. Australia would continue to assist with the training of police for Bougainville. The fact that the first major Australian-funded infrastructure project to be completed in Bougainville was a hospital was an especially pleasing one, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, said, during his recent visit.

MINISTER OPENS NEW HOSPITAL

At the opening of the Buka Town Hospital and the refurbished Buka Airport landing strip, Mr Downer said the completion of the projects represented a milestone in the evolution of Australia's aid program in Bougainville.

'A hospital is a symbol of healing, of things getting better', Mr Downer said.

On his previous visit to Bougainville, in April 1998, Mr Downer had witnessed the signing of the Bougainville Peace Treaty, putting an end to years of conflict and bloodshed.

'The healing process in Bougainville has clearly begun. Australia is proud to be able to assist that process and this hospital is just one visible example of our commitment to peace and development,' Mr Downer said.

The Buka Town Hospital makes high quality health care more accessible for all Bougainvilleans who previously had to travel by sea or air to the PNG mainland for medical services. The 84-bed hospital includes two operating theatres, labour wards, x-ray facilities, pathology, surgical, medical and dental services.

At the height of the construction phase, it was the largest construction project in Bougainville, employing over 160 people. Bougainvilleans learned new skills in construction, concrete work and carpentry. Local tradesmen, plumbers, mechanics and electricians, were able to rejuvenate and hone their skills.

The upgrading of the Buka airstrip was part of a larger, nationwide program, of Australian assistance to the aviation sector in Papua New Guinea. The key objective of the program being carried out with the PNG Office of Civil Aviation is to improve safety and contribute to a more effective aviation sector.

AID TO BOUGAINVILLE

Mr Downer addressed local concerns about the distribution of aid projects around Bougainville. With the return of peace, AusAID has moved quickly to provide assistance across Bougainville. Thirty thousand family packs, 700 village reconstruction packs and over 400 medical supply kits have been distributed. Significant community-based reconstruction has also taken place. Thirty first aid posts and 30 double classrooms are being built, with plans for another 50 first aid posts and 70 double classrooms.

Work has begun on upgrading Radio Bougainville and the construction of wharves at Kangu and Mamagota in southern Bougainville, and rehabilitation of the coastal trunk road and three key health centres is set to commence this year. The upgrading of the high school and specialised training centre at Talena is almost complete, with the high school at Nissan to be completed this year.

RE-ESTABLISHING GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Downer also identified the need to re-establish government services throughout Bougainville.

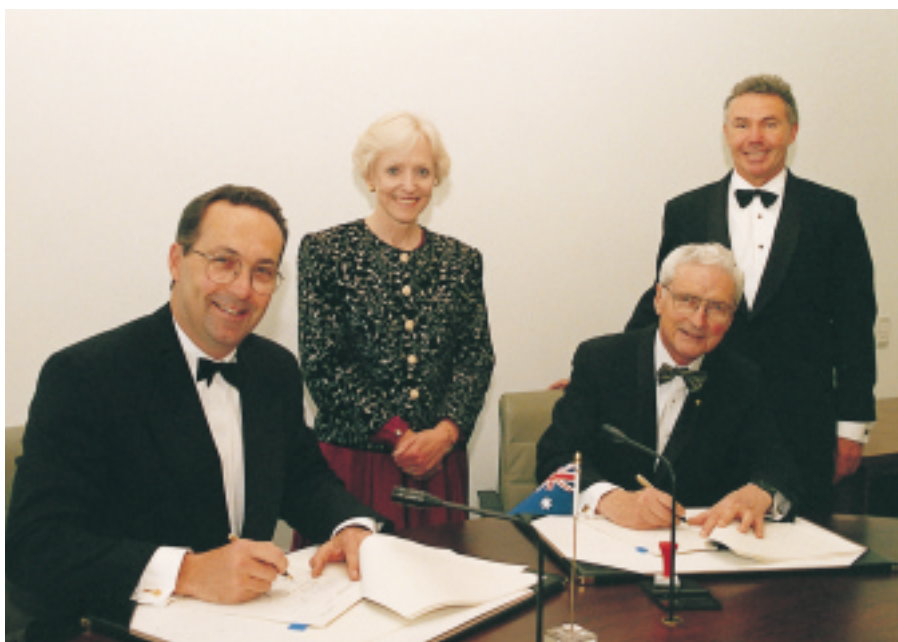
'This will take time. Australia stands ready to help and looks forward to working hand in hand with both the national and provincial governments as more substantial reconstruction activities are identified and implemented,' Mr Downer said.

He congratulated those involved in the successful completion of the projects: the Government of Papua New Guinea, the local landowners, the Australian managing contractors SMEC International (Buka Town Hospital) and Cardno and Davies (airstrip), local contractors, Kinakon (hospital) and Shorncliffe (airstrip), and the national and provincial officials who assisted with the planning and implementation process. ■

Australian engineers – responding to world-wide emergencies

By Lorraine Haase

The Australian Government has agreed to continue supporting the work of a group of Australian engineers, RedR Australia, who are part of United Nations emergency relief operations.



TRANSFER OF SKILLS

As well as using their professional skills in saving and improving the quality of life for thousands of people, Australian engineers transfer their skills to the local community.

To date, Australian engineers have been deployed in 13 countries, including Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Russian Federation, Uganda, Chechnya, Tajikistan, Yemen, Liberia, Mali, Niger and Papua New Guinea. Nine of the 36 deployments so far have been women.

Around four million people have benefited from the work of Australian engineers since 1995. ■

Parliamentary Secretary, Mrs Kathy Sullivan attended the signing of the funding agreement between AusAID and RedR with (left to right) then Acting Assistant Director General, Africa and Humanitarian Relief, Mr Peter Waddell-Wood, RedR Chairman, Mr Bruce Sinclair and then Director on the RedR board, Russell Wade.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Kathy Sullivan, recently attended the signing of a deed of agreement between AusAID and RedR for \$2.7 million in funding for the organisation over the next three years.

RedR Australia (Registered Engineers for Disaster Relief Australia) provides experienced technical personnel to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees at short notice to assist in responding to emergency humanitarian situations with the planning and provision

of essential life supporting infrastructure in refugee camps.

Through RedR, Australian engineers are involved in practical and important projects such as improving water supplies, sanitation, roads, camp planning, shelter and demining.

Their assistance also has a direct positive impact on the distribution of food aid and refugees' access to medical assistance.

Young Australians for Development

By Katrina Peach

This month a group of young Australians will depart our shores to become the first Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development. They will work on development assignments throughout the Asia Pacific region using their skills to assist developing countries, while building long term goodwill and understanding between Australians and our neighbours.



Vietnam's Minister for Planning and Investment, Dr Tran Luan Gia (centre) with Youth Ambassadors bound for Vietnam and left to right, back row Vietnam's Ambassador to Australia Mr Tung, the Executive Director of the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development program, Mark Darby and Australia's Ambassador to Vietnam, Michael Mann.

These outstanding young people were selected from a field of almost 700 applicants. They range from solicitors and engineers to marketing officers, journalists, information technology graduates and teachers. They share a common desire to make a positive contribution to the development of our neighbouring countries.

A Commonwealth Government initiative, the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program identifies and places skilled young Australians, aged 18-30, on development assignments throughout the Asia Pacific region. It gives them an invaluable opportunity to broaden their experience and increase their understanding

of the cultural diversity and development needs of our neighbours. At the same time, they will enjoy a unique professional development experience that will expose them to working in a cross cultural environment and develop their skills in resourcefulness, adaptability, management and leadership.

PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT

The program works with Australian Partner Organisations including companies, educational institutions, government agencies and community organisations which have a commitment to the Asia Pacific region. These organisations can select their staff to participate in the program and even nominate the countries and assignments where they want them to work. The program accesses a previously untapped pool of Australian skills and human resources. Here, we profile several of the first Australian Youth Ambassadors.

LUISA RUST — BANKING ON VANUATU



Luisa Rust can't wait to take up her assignment in Vanuatu where she will be working with Mal Gibson. No, it's not the actor, this Mr Gibson is the manager of operations at the National Bank of Vanuatu where Luisa will be involved in market research and product development.

Luisa, from Sydney, currently works with the international trade division of Australian Business Ltd. In this role, she promotes export development programs and initiatives amongst Australian business. For the past two years, she has advised NSW Central Coast companies on how to export their products abroad. Luisa hopes her

Pacific experience will give her new skills she can use when advising companies in the future about exporting to foreign markets.

'Australian Business Ltd is giving me leave of absence for the program. They see me maturing and gaining new skills that they will use when I get back. They also see it as an opportunity to gain information on the South Pacific that they have never had before and to establish new links and build their business interests,' Luisa said.

'They have always focused on South East Asia and those markets are in some turmoil now so they are looking for new markets and this is a great introduction to the Pacific,' she said.

A competent Japanese speaker, Luisa was previously a research analyst with the Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) in Sydney.

The 29 year old has a Bachelor of Economics, a diploma in International Trade Management and expects to complete her Master of Business in International Marketing at Sydney's University of Technology later this year. It's these skills that have secured her an assignment with the government owned National Bank of Vanuatu in Port Vila. The bank recently received an Asia Development Bank grant to restructure and recapitalise with the aim of improving its financial stability and controls.

Luisa's role will complement this project as she will be involved in writing and implementing a new marketing plan and strategies to develop processes for customer satisfaction surveys and product testing.

'It's great because the banking industry and financial services, on a global scale, are growing industries and great to be in,' she said.

Luisa has travelled around Africa and just recently returned from Indonesia where she was backpacking for three months.

'I've always wanted to go back and work in a developing country and contribute something to development. I think everyone has a personal responsibility to do this. I have been lucky to be educated in Australia

and I'd like to pass on these skills,' she said.

Luisa is currently recalling her high school French lessons and thinks 'Ou est le banque' will be a useful phrase.

DZUNG LE — BUILDING A DATABASE IN NEPAL



Twenty two year old Dzung Le has just completed a Bachelor of Information Systems at Swinburne University of Technology. Next month, he will be using his computer expertise to help Nepal's Centre for Micro-Finance in Kathmandu build a database system to track and monitor their microfinance programs.

Dzung and his family left Vietnam in a fishing boat when he was four years old. He doesn't remember much about his birth country and, while he speaks Vietnamese, he now considers himself an Australian and is proud to be selected as one of the first Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development.

'It's going to be a challenge I think but it will be great to do something like this and I'm looking forward to it. I'm a person who likes change and this will certainly be a change,' Dzung said.

His course has provided him with a range of information technology skills that he hopes to transfer to his Nepalese colleagues.

'My course was about understanding how technology is used to deliver information and this is a primary focus of business today,' Dzung said.

Along with working on his development assignment, Dzung hopes to increase understanding between the Nepalese and Australians and is particularly keen to meet the local Tae Kwon Do team and see what they can teach him.

'Apparently Nepal has a really good Tae Kwon Do team and my own teacher is going to put me in touch with some people over there,' he said. Dzung has been studying Tae Kwon Do for three years and last year won the Victorian championships for his weight.

After completing his assignment, Dzung hopes to work for a telecommunications company in Australia that has international operations.

CAROLE HARRIS — TACKLING TB IN VIETNAM



When Carole Harris was 11 years old, her uncle died of leukemia. It was then that Carole decided she wanted to be a doctor and help people. A qualified pharmacist, the 25-year-old is now completing the third year of her postgraduate medical degree at the University of Sydney. This month, she

will take a sabbatical and travel to Vietnam as an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development.

Carole will be working with the International Organisation for Migration researching the side effects of drugs used in the treatment of tuberculosis. Her research will be used in analysis and identification of high risk groups.

Tuberculosis kills more people than any other infectious disease in the world today. The disease accounts for more than 25 per cent of preventable adult deaths in developing countries. It is a bigger killer than malaria and AIDS combined and, in 1993, the World Health Organization took the unprecedented step of declaring TB a global emergency.

The World Health Organization reports that more than three million new cases of TB occur in South East Asia every year. TB is currently the leading cause of death among people who are HIV positive and accounts for 40 per cent of AIDS deaths in South East Asia.

Carole applied for the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program through the international office of the University of Sydney which is a Partner Organisation. She was delighted when she was linked to the TB project in Vietnam and is looking forward to doing her part in helping prevent the spread of this terrible disease.

'It will use a bit of both my pharmacy and medical skills,' Carole said. 'I'll be collecting data on the side effects which people complain about with the medication and I'll also be going on a few field trips.' Carole is being sponsored by the medical faculty of her university which has links to Vietnam.

Carole has travelled widely in the United Kingdom and Europe but this will be her first trip to Asia and her first experience in a developing country. She has started learning Vietnamese and is looking forward to arriving in Ho Chi Minh city this month. There will be eight Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development posted to Vietnam.

KATRINA DOHERTY — SET FOR THE SOLOMONS



Katrina Doherty was a pediatric nurse before she felt the 'call of the wild' and returned to university. Last year, the twenty nine-year-old completed a Bachelor of Science in Natural Systems and Wildlife Management.

The Solomon Islands' Ministry of Forests, Environment and Conservation is glad Katrina gave up nursing because they will host her as an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development in their Forestry Division. This division regulates forest management throughout the Solomon Islands and its newly appointed commissioner is an Australian expatriate.

Katrina's assignment was sourced through the Institute of Foresters of Australia and she will be helping ensure the implementation of new forestry legislation that will provide the basis for ecologically sustainable forest management. Katrina previously enforced regulations of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act while working as a ranger at the Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park in the Northern Territory last year.

While working at the park, Katrina lived with the local Mutitjulu aboriginal community, learned their language and



Australia's Youth Ambassadors will work on development projects throughout the Asia Pacific building long-term goodwill and understanding.

volunteered as an adult literacy tutor. The experience provided her with a great introduction to working in a cross cultural environment and she expects the skills she acquired to assist her in adapting to life in the Solomon Islands.

'Nursing fostered my communications skills and awareness of cultural issues and it allowed me to express my concern for others and desire to help and assist those in need,' Katrina said.

While she still practices her nursing, mostly on search and rescue operations in the national park these days, Katrina's passion is now wildlife management and she is looking forward to sharing this with her counterparts in Honiara. ■

Clearing the Path — Australia's role in the international campaign against landmines



The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, meets two young victims of landmines.

HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN THE AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT VOTED TO RATIFY THE TREATY?

Well, I felt very proud. This achievement means a great deal to me personally and to the rest of the Government. We've played an important part in bringing about the Ottawa Treaty and we've played a leading role in the campaign to ban landmines. Ratification of the treaty by the Parliament was an important moment in the development of Australia's position on landmines.

It also means that we now have on the statute books legislation which will get rid of landmines from Australia's military inventory, except a small number needed for training purposes.

Almost exactly a year after the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, signed the international treaty to ban landmines on Australia's behalf, the Australian Parliament voted to adopt the Government's Anti-Personnel Mines Convention Bill 1998. The vote on December 10 last year, gave effect to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, in Australian law.

The Minister, Alexander Downer, spoke to AusAID's Deborah Nesbitt about Australia's participation in the international campaign to rid the world of landmines.



Unexploded ordnance in Cambodia.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO BECOME SO INVOLVED AND SO PASSIONATE ABOUT LANDMINES?

Back in 1995 when I was the Opposition spokesman on Foreign Affairs, Sister Pak Poy (National Coordinator for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines) came to see me. She put a very passionate case for Australia taking a much stronger position on the landmines issue than we were taking at that time. I was quite impressed with the arguments she put. Subsequently, I not only heard a great deal about the impact of landmines in Cambodia but also on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan, I visited a demining operation. There I saw the impact of landmines on people. Those kinds of experiences are going to strike anybody.

And then, I think ultimately, intellectually there is a very strong argument, that when a war comes to an end and a cease fire occurs, the artillery stops, the bombs stop and people live in peace.

But that is not the case with landmines because landmines don't respect a cease-fire. Landmines stay in the ground and people continue to be threatened by them whether hostilities have ended or not. So they are a particularly vicious sort of weapon.

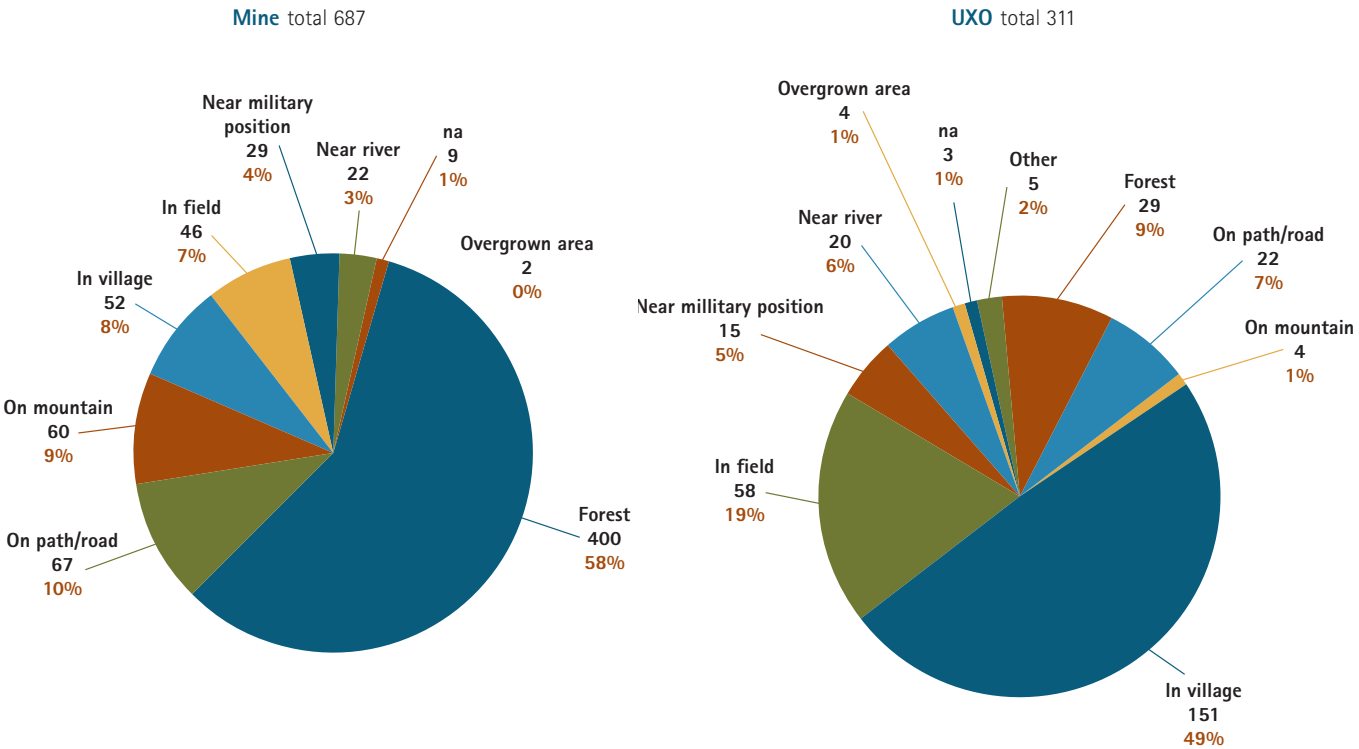
SEVERAL KEY COUNTRIES, LIKE THE UNITED STATES, CHINA, RUSSIA, VIETNAM, INDIA, PAKISTAN AND KOREA, HAVEN'T SIGNED THE OTTAWA TREATY. HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL AND WHAT CAN AUSTRALIANS DO ABOUT IT?

Well I'm disappointed frankly. I think it's in their interest to sign the Ottawa Treaty and I'm sure the people of those countries would like their governments to sign it. The arguments used for not signing it, in most cases, revolve around what they perceive to be their own need to use landmines. So it's a matter of deep disappointment to me that they won't sign the Treaty. On the other hand, I think we've got to continue to work



Clearing landmines.

INCIDENT TERRITORY BY DEVICE Period of report January 98 – October 98 Total casualties for period 1,034



Cambodia Mine Incident report, October 1998. Mine Incident Database Project.



The painstaking task of ridding the fields of landmines.

at them, continue to apply pressure internationally. Their own communities will continue to apply pressure on them to sign the Treaty.

There are also other initiatives being pursued not least, the Conference on Disarmament proposal for a ban on the transfer of landmines. If countries like China, Russia the United States, Vietnam, Korea and so on were prepared to sign up to a ban on the transfer of landmines that would be a very good initiative. But it wouldn't be as good as getting them to sign the Ottawa Treaty.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN MORE ABOUT THE ROLE AUSTRALIA'S PLAYING IN THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT ON LANDMINES?

The United Nations Conference on Disarmament meets in Geneva and Australia is a very active participant. The Australian Ambassador on Disarmament, John Campbell, has been the Special Coordinator on Landmines for the Conference for the last two years. He'll be trying to continue in that position in 1999 and I'm sure he'll succeed.

He's been trying to get the UN Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on an international treaty to

stop countries that produce landmines from selling them, or for that matter, giving them away to each other. That would put an end to any type of trade in landmines.

A lot of the countries which have signed the Ottawa Treaty never used landmines, so you want to get the people who are the real users of landmines and the merchants of landmines to sign up to these treaties as well.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN MORE ABOUT AUSTRALIA'S WORK TO STRENGTHEN THE REVISED PROTOCOL II ON LANDMINES OF THE INHUMAN WEAPONS CONVENTION (IWC)?

The IWC and its protocols prohibit or restrict the use of certain types of conventional weapons like anti-personnel mines, anti-tank mines, booby traps, incendiary weapons and fragmentation weapons.

The IWC and its revised Protocol II on landmines preceded the Ottawa Treaty. We would like to see a broader adherence to the Protocol and a strengthening of its compliance provisions as well. The first annual conference on the revised Protocol II will be held later this year and that's an opportunity to try to strengthen it. It's not

as strong as the Ottawa Treaty but it is pretty much universal. So, it's another path through which we can continue to campaign to broaden the coverage of the ban on landmines.

AUSTRALIA HAS COMMITTED MORE THAN \$17 MILLION TO DEMINING ACTIVITIES IN CAMBODIA OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, AND IS IN FACT THE LARGEST CONTRIBUTOR TO DEMINING IN THAT COUNTRY. HOW IMPORTANT IS CLEARING LANDMINES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAMBODIA?

It's fundamentally important for Cambodia because it is, to a significant extent, an agricultural economy. Over 80 per cent of Cambodians live in rural areas and landmines are predominantly in rural areas, so their existence prohibits agricultural development and therefore economic development. More importantly, the human cost of landmines in Cambodia is absolutely enormous. Landmines and unexploded ordnance kill or maim around 100 people each month. Cambodia has the highest number of amputees in the world. One person in 245 is an amputee, in almost every case as a result of landmines.

So the human and direct economic cost of landmines in Cambodia is simply enormous. So the task of getting rid of landmines in that troubled country is a particularly important one and one that we contribute strongly to. In particular, through the work of the Cambodian Mine Action Centre. We are the largest supporter of the Centre.

WILL YOU BE ATTENDING THE MEETING OF FIRST PARTIES TO THE OTTAWA CONVENTION IN MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE IN MAY?

I'll be aiming to be there as a demonstration of the Australian Government's commitment to the Treaty and the overall cause of demining. ■

The war is over but the fight goes on — Ridding Lao PDR of landmines

By Anne Colquhoun, who recently visited Lao PDR

When a war ends, all the fighting is expected to stop too. But not this war. Now the fight continues against an enemy that is insidious and deadly. Although it cannot be seen until it's too late this sinister enemy does have a name — unexploded ordnance or UXO for short.



Productive farmland can be deadly because of the threat of unexploded ordnance.

Lao PDR, a country that was neutral during the Vietnam War, is littered with UXO, even though the war officially ended more than 20 years ago.

The United States flew more than 500,000 bombing missions over Lao PDR and more than two million tons of bombs were dropped. On average, a payload of bombs was dropped every eight minutes

around the clock for nine years. Many did not explode. After nine years of warfare it will take an estimated 100 years to clear the ordnance.

The effects are horrifying. The average age of people killed in Lao PDR by UXO is 26. Nearly 11,000 accidents have occurred since 1973, most from 1973-1978.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT DEPENDS ON DEMINING

Kerry Shegog is an Australian based in Vientiane. She is the UNDP's trust fund coordinator for UXO in Lao PDR. She says that Lao PDR's development and future economic security depends on progress in removing UXO from its farms, villages and forests. The known casualty rate is at least



Lao PDR's development and future economic security depends on progress in clearing landmines.



The UXO threat entrenches the cycle of poverty.

200 per year but the statistics for UXO victims may not reflect the real number of victims because of remote and unreported accidents.

'It really is one of the fundamental causes of poverty in Lao PDR. In Sekong for instance, they burn every year just to see how it's going, but every year that they burn, there's another explosion in the area, they burn again to see if it's clear and another one will go up', Ms Shegog said.

The UXO threat entrenches the cycle of poverty. Productive agricultural land cannot be developed or used to grow food. Not every UXO explodes when it is touched – some are more volatile than others. The sad fact is that sometimes people try to clear their own land of UXO, often with tragic consequences.

'You can't build a new school or a new clinic or a new market – you can't do anything until you've cleared the area, because it's just too dangerous', Ms Shegog said.



Children are vulnerable because they don't understand the danger.

FARMERS AND CHILDREN MOST AT RISK

The people most affected by UXO are farmers and children. Farmers are at risk when they remove bombs from their fields.

Children are vulnerable because they don't know the 'bombies' - small bombs that are about the size of tennis balls - are dangerous. Children under 15 make up 44 per cent of UXO victims in Xieng Khouang Province.

'They tend to play with them like toys because they don't understand the danger', Ms Shegog said.

The victims of UXO suffer in under-resourced hospitals where families have to travel many kilometres to feed injured relatives, in a country where there is no real form of social welfare and where begging is becoming endemic in the market places.

AUSTRALIA'S ROLE IN DEMINING

Australia, in partnership with other donor countries, contributes to a trust fund managed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Lao PDR. The UNDP is being assisted by international non-government organisations - Gerbera and Handicap International. The UNDP primarily coordinates the effort. The project focuses on the areas of highest risk like



It's estimated it will take 100 years to clear the country of landmines.



Australia is one of the largest donors to UXO clearance in Lao PDR.

villages and schools in nine provinces.

'We've just got to get into the villages and clear the bombs out of them because they're really high risk areas. If one bomb goes off you lose a lot of people', Ms Shegog said.

She said the project is helping to build the capability of a local organisation, UXO LAO, by training Lao people to detect and safely remove UXO. They are also trying to reduce the casualty rate through an educational campaign using local radio in local dialects and books and posters telling people of the dangers of UXO.

TRAINING LOCAL PEOPLE

The project has trained 54 teams in UXO clearance. Teams are trained by international specialists in UXO clearance and supported financially by international donors. In 1997, UXO Lao cleared 159 hectares of land, destroyed over 43,000 items of ordnance and briefed over 90,000 people about the dangers of UXO.

Australia is one of the largest donors to UXO clearance activities in Lao PDR. Australia has provided nearly \$A1.7 million to support UXO related activities in Lao PDR, and has pledged a further \$A2 million. These funds are currently directed to the UNDP Trust Fund, a World Vision project clearing ordnance in the southern province of Khammouane, and to a nationwide children's UXO awareness program run by UNICEF. Clearance can only be undertaken in essential areas at the moment. It will take many millions of dollars to rid Lao PDR of UXO.

Donor support needs to continue for Lao people to live without fear of UXO. Funds are available from international donors for Technical Advisers for 1999. However the resources are insufficient to keep funding and training Lao people beyond 1999. Only if projects like these continue, can important development work give the people of Lao PDR a secure future. ■

For further information on UNDP, visit their website <http://www.undp.org/> With thanks to Cathy Bennett, Michael Hunt, Jim Archer and Kathryn Sweet, AusAID, Jeff Roach, DFAT, Kerry Shegog, UNDP Laos and Justine McLaren. Photos courtesy UNDP and Anne Colquhoun.

Grameen bank — lending to defeat poverty

In 1976, a modest research project began in Bangladesh. It has led to a revolutionary system of lending to the very poor that is changing the lives of millions of people, the majority of them women. The Grameen Bank, founded by Professor Muhammad Yunus, has now extended US\$2.5 billion in tiny loans to some of the poorest people in the world – helping them achieve self-employment, attain self-reliance and break out of the poverty trap.

AusAID officers Stav Zotalis and Kimberley Berglind recently spent two weeks in Bangladesh learning more about the innovative and socially responsible Grameen Bank.

Stav explains how the Bank, whose approach to lending to the poor is now replicated in 62 countries around the world, is transforming the lives of millions.

WHY IS THE GRAMEEN BANK DIFFERENT FROM OTHER BANKS?

The most obvious difference is that the Grameen Bank lends small amounts of money to people who would normally be



Professor Yunus with AusAID's Stav Zotalis.



Women are benefiting significantly from this revolutionary lending system.

refused loans by mainstream banks. In fact it was for this reason that Professor Yunus established the Grameen Bank. Back in 1976, he was struck by the plight of 22 year old Sophia Khatoun who was struggling to survive in a small Bangladeshi village called Jobra. She worked seven days a week making finely woven bamboo furniture. Because she had no working capital, she was forced to buy her materials on credit. Professor Yunus, then a Professor of Economics at a nearby university, calculated that she was paying 10 per cent interest per day – more than 3000 per cent interest a year.

He lent her 50 taka (a few dollars) and within months she was able to make her business viable, increasing her income seven fold and repaying the loan to Professor Yunus.

After this, Professor Yunus extended his lending to other very poor people and then tried to interest the mainstream banks in doing the same. They weren't interested and so Professor Yunus became a full-time banker. Since then the Grameen Bank has extended loans totalling US\$2.5 billion and each month lends between US\$30 and US\$40 million.



The Grameen Bank is changing the lives of the very poor helping them achieve self-employment and self-reliance and break out of the poverty trap.

The Grameen Bank's loan repayment rate is over 99 per cent. It outperforms all other banks in Bangladesh and most other banks around the world. It now has 1100 branches operating in nearly 40,000 villages. At the end of 1998 it had 2.3 million borrowers, 94 per cent of them women. The Bank's experience has shown that women are more reliable when it comes to repaying loans and are far more likely to spend their increased income on their families.

HOW DOES THE GRAMEEN BANK HELP THE POOR BREAK OUT OF THE POVERTY TRAP?

Lending what seems to be an insignificant amount of money can help the very poor take that first step towards self-reliance. It helps them establish self-employment opportunities. These are people who otherwise could never secure a loan because they lack the assets required as security by traditional banks. Under the Grameen Bank's regulations, a prospective borrower, usually a woman, forms a group with four

others. They all become co-guarantors of each loan. They meet weekly to make their loan repayments and to discuss new loan proposals. While it's up to each individual to decide how the loan is used, the others must give their approval. If one person defaults, the other members lose their borrowing privileges.

These meetings also have significant social benefits. They become a forum for discussing other issues such as basic sanitation, health, family planning and child immunisation.

I attended several of these meetings and was impressed by the level of enthusiasm and confidence demonstrated by the borrowers and how the loans were improving the lives of these people.

HOW DOES THE CONCEPT OF MICROCREDIT, AS IMPLEMENTED BY THE GRAMEEN BANK, CHANGE PEOPLE'S LIVES?

It was obvious from the people I met that giving them access to affordable loans is helping them overcome poverty.

One woman I met was Fatima. Before becoming one of the Bank's clients, she had no land, couldn't afford regular meals for her family and lived with her brother-in-law and his family. Now, after taking out her first loan 11 years ago, she owns land and livestock and has a house. She can now afford to send her children to school and provide regular meals for her family.

Maleakea Begum's story is similar. After 10 years with the Grameen Bank she can now provide regular meals for her three children and support her son's studies in Dhaka. She too owns land, a house, livestock and a large fish pond.

The Grameen Bank is proof that, given access to small affordable loans, many of the poor in Bangladesh can overcome poverty through their own efforts. ■

Bangladesh Floods 98 — Dealing with the aftermath

By Lorraine Haase

Bangladesh is slowly recovering from the recent massive flooding which left millions of people homeless and three quarters of the country under water.



Aid workers distribute food in the aftermath of the floods in Bangladesh.

The floods devastated the country which supports a population of 120 million people in an area smaller than the state of Victoria.

Bangladesh faces flooding every year, usually beginning in July and ending in mid-August. But last year the floods came in three waves and lasted more than 65 days.

DEATH TOLL LOWER THAN EXPECTED

In terms of loss of human life, the disaster didn't inflict the horror losses of the past; the 1988 floods claimed 6000 lives. The death toll could have been much higher than the estimated 1500 lives lost.

AusAID's First Secretary for Development Cooperation in Dhaka, Jason Reynolds, said the lower numbers of casualties had been attributed to the

Bangladeshi Government's early flood warning systems and emergency evacuations.

The nature of the flooding also played a part in keeping the death toll down.

'The floods rose gradually. It wasn't something that happened over a couple of weeks. It happened over a three month period,' Mr Reynolds said.



The floods left twenty-one million people homeless.

Despite the lower than expected toll on human life, the impact on the people of Bangladesh was devastating. Twenty-one million people have been left homeless or marooned by the floods.

SEVERE CROP DAMAGE

Damage to rice crops was estimated at around \$300 million. Other crop losses were severe and large numbers of livestock died. Fisheries also suffered heavy losses.

More than 9000 kilometres of roads were damaged and more than 6500 bridges and culverts washed away. Almost 2000 schools were affected.

Half of the capital, Dhaka, was under water for weeks. Food and drinking water was in short supply and survivors suffered diarrhoea and other illnesses caused by polluted water.

Australia, through AusAID, responded to a United Nations appeal for emergency relief and immediate rehabilitation.

Part of that response has been to contribute to rebuilding the country and assisting the worst affected.

FEEDING THE HOMELESS

Mr Reynolds said the major problem after the floods was feeding the homeless and dealing with health problems.

With the increased susceptibility to a range of food and water-borne diseases like

diarrhoea, dysentery, typhoid and cholera, as well as skin infections and malaria, the incidence of these diseases and related deaths had been expected to increase.

However, Mr Reynolds said this was avoided partly because of adequate warnings about the risks of drinking contaminated water and two mass distributions of oral rehydration tablets provided by the government.

'The major problem was dealing with people in remote areas because the only way to get to them was by boat.

'NGOs combined with the government to distribute food to these areas along with medicines, oral rehydration tablets and water purification tablets,' he said.



Helping Bangladesh get back on its feet.



The people of Dhaka opt for alternative transport as the floodwaters rise.

REHABILITATION

Australia has contributed to several flood rehabilitation projects including an assessment of damage to the country's water infrastructure. Embankments, canals and protective works were all damaged in the floods.

In Munshigonj, a project has been established to help flood victims whose health is severely affected by environmental pollution. New tubewells will provide safe drinking water and pit latrines are being constructed to reduce the spread of disease.

Australia is also providing seeds for quick growing vegetables and wheat, to provide much-needed food. Additional agricultural support is also being provided along with materials for house repairs.

FOOD AID

As part of its immediate response, the Australian Government brought forward to October its normal end of year bilateral shipment of 50,000 tonnes of wheat. The delivery of Australia's development food aid shipment of 36,000 tonnes through the World Food Programme (WFP) was also brought forward to mid November.

An additional \$1 million in emergency assistance was provided in the form of food aid. This is being distributed as an additional 4000 tonnes of wheat through the normal food aid channels.

Mr Reynolds said food aid was directed at those most in need - the poorest of the poor. In Bangladesh, the vast majority of food aid is distributed by WFP. Currently the UN body is feeding around five million people.

Mr Reynolds said Bangladesh was continuing to deal with the aftermath of the

floods and will feel the impact for years.

Only recently, the country was struck by a cyclone which has hampered efforts to rebuild infrastructure and get the agricultural sector back on track.

But Australia, through AusAID, is one of many countries around the world contributing to the effort to get Bangladesh back on its feet. ■

Controlling a choking weed — PNG's campaign to eradicate water hyacinth

By Glen Staiger

Two humble species of insects have become crucial weapons in the battle to rid Papua New Guinea of an aquatic weed which is threatening to choke inland waterways and spread disease.

The weed, water hyacinth, is widely acknowledged as the world's most destructive water weed. A free-floating plant introduced from South America, water hyacinth has already infested and contaminated lakes and rivers throughout PNG.

It forms a thick, impenetrable mat, impeding water transport, creating an ideal habitat for disease and restricting access to important fishing grounds.

Controlling the spread of the plant was the focus of a recent AusAID project in PNG which involved the release of specially bred species of weevils and moths to



Water hyacinth is acknowledged as the world's most destructive water weed.



Biological control agents, in the form of two species of weevils, join the fight to eradicate water hyacinth.

'biologically control' the water hyacinth. The Australian Government has provided approximately \$1.4 million to fund this project since 1993.

'BIOLOGICAL CONTROL AGENTS' **JOIN THE FIGHT**

CSIRO Entomology, at the Long Pocket Laboratory in Brisbane, has built up extensive expertise in controlling water hyacinth and worked with AusAID to control the weed in PNG. The method CSIRO uses involves breeding insects that infest and damage the plant. These insects are referred to as 'biological control agents'. To tackle the water hyacinth problem in PNG, the Australian scientists used two weevils (*Neochetina eichhorniae* and *Neochetina bruchi*) and two moths (*Sameodes albigutallis* and *Xubida infusella*). These were initially reared in

Brisbane and transported to PNG for distribution where water hyacinth was already threatening large expanses of vital waterways.

THE HUMAN IMPACT

Water hyacinth has had a significant impact on the health of local people in PNG and has damaged vital rural industries such as farming and tourism.

It creates an ideal habitat for disease-carrying insects such as mosquitoes, increasing the incidence of serious diseases like malaria and dengue fever. Malaria is already the third leading cause of death in PNG.



Water hyacinth is choking vital inland waterways.

The thick mats of weed also restrict access to vital fishing grounds which provide the major source of animal protein for river communities. This has contributed to poor nutrition.

In one community, people were forced to bring their pigs into the village area because the water hyacinth made access to farmland very difficult. This caused major health problems because the people and pigs shared the same drinking holes and the pigs polluted the water. Water quality is already a major health concern in PNG, with three-quarters of people in rural areas lacking access to safe drinking water.

CHOKING TRANSPORT

Project director, CSIRO's Dr Mic Julien has had hands-on experience with water hyacinth.

'You can't push a canoe through this stuff', he said. 'We've got a 40 horse power boat that can't get through it.'

Deaths have resulted when people in urgent need of medical attention could not be transported to hospital in time for life-saving treatment.

Transport in PNG is difficult at the best of times. In the Sepik region for example, there are very few roads and airstrips. People rely heavily on river transport to reach medical services, schools, farming areas, fishing grounds and markets. The weed makes transport by canoe extremely difficult.

CONTROLLING THE WATER WEED

When AusAID's Water Hyacinth Control Project began in January 1993 there were only 15 confirmed areas where water hyacinth had become established. However the Australian team soon discovered the weed had spread to many other areas. There are now more than 320 reported areas affected by water hyacinth with 216 confirmed. The weed is present in all 19 provinces of PNG

with the infestation exacerbated by poor access to the affected areas.

Lake Waigani and Lake Gerehu, near Port Moresby, had 70 per cent and 95 per cent cover of water hyacinth respectively. Weevils were introduced into these lakes in 1993 and now the water hyacinth cover has fallen to 30 per cent and 55 per cent. The project coordinator, Warea Orapa, is an officer with the PNG National Agricultural Research Institute.

Mr Orapa said the project had spectacular results in the Sepik area. Lagoons that had up to 80 per cent of their surface covered with water hyacinth now have less than 10% cover. This has allowed people to resume a normal lifestyle. 'The project has also achieved control in the Western Highlands Province but the process was slower compared to the Sepik due to the cooler temperatures,' Mr Orapa said.

SPREADING THE WORD

AusAID has funded an awareness program to warn local people of the hazards of water hyacinth and discourage them from distributing the plant to unaffected areas. Since 1996, the project has employed a full-time information officer to spread the word to people in both urban and rural communities. With the help of educational videos, radio programs, pamphlets, posters and public information sessions, community awareness of water hyacinth has greatly improved. Many of the recent reports of water hyacinth infestations have been a direct result of the information campaign.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

PNG Government officers have taken part in the rearing, distribution and monitoring of the biological control agents. Rearing stations have been set up in Angoram, in the East Sepik Province, and in Port Moresby. Officers of the PNG Department of Agriculture and Livestock (DAL) have received both formal and on-the-job training.

Dr Julien said officers from the Division of Primary Industry in East Sepik Province and from the PNG National Agricultural Research Institute worked on the project from the start and have a good understanding of what is needed to continue the work.

Mr Orapa is also confident PNG has the technical ability to continue the project. 'It will be important for us to maintain linkages with overseas institutions to share ideas and information,' Mr Orapa said.

USING WATER HYACINTH FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES

Various attempts have been made to use water hyacinth as raw material for commercial activities. In Kenya, where Lake Victoria is overrun with water hyacinth, a local company recently began using the plant fibre for paper production. In India, it has been used for biogas production. Cottage industries in the Philippines have used the plant to make sandals, hats and furniture. The introduction of these

industries into PNG might provide an additional source of income for people. However Mr Orapa cautioned that it would need to be established that communities were willing to undertake the harvesting of the weed.

Dr. Julien said significant hurdles would need to be overcome before commercial processing of water hyacinth became an attractive industry. 'This weed is 96 per cent water! This makes harvesting and processing the plant very expensive. Only the poorest of nations would view such an industry as economically viable.' Dr Julien said commercial use of water hyacinth could never replace a coordinated biological control program. 'Water hyacinth grows in very remote places. Harvesting from these locations would be extraordinarily difficult,' he explained.

FUTURE OF WEED CONTROL IN PNG

PNG now has the technical capacity to continue the successful weed control program. The rearing and distribution of control agents will need to continue for two to three years.

'There is always the chance that water hyacinth will spread to new areas. This is why it is important to maintain the institutional capacity to respond to new outbreaks if and when they occur,' Dr Julien said.

Once each of the control agents are established nationwide, the weed control program will have achieved its purpose and will have provided a self-sustaining, inexpensive form of weed control.

areas such as PNG, the number of plants can double in several weeks. This phenomenal reproduction rate is possible because the plants continually produce offshoots, which break away and become separate plants. The plants also reproduce through the germination of seeds. Seedlings reach maturity very quickly and the time between germination and flowering can be as little as six weeks. The seeds can remain viable for up to 20 years. This makes the weed almost impossible to eradicate.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL

Biological Control is an inexpensive way of controlling pests. Scientists search for insects, mites and fungi that will either eat or damage the target plant. A control agent such as an insect will only be released if it is clear the insect does not harm other valued plants or animals. CSIRO Entomology have found four South American insects suitable for use as biological control agents and these have been released in PNG. Once the insects have become established, they continue to multiply and keep the plants under control. Biological control will not eradicate water hyacinth but it can significantly reduce weed cover and make waterways accessible to local people for transport and fishing.

Biological control is preferred over herbicidal control because it is cheaper and does not damage native flora and fauna. Biological control can be complemented with manual removal of plants when the outbreaks of water hyacinth are confined to small, easily accessible areas.

WATER HYACINTH

Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) is a native plant of South America. It is grown as an ornamental plant because of its beautiful, pale blue flowers and shiny green leaves. Water hyacinth can grow in wet soil but usually grows in still or slow-flowing water. The plant forms thick mats, which can cover the entire surface of lagoons and rivers. The plants grow up to one metre above the water surface and in tropical

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks to Dr Mic Julien and Warea Orapa for their contributions and assistance with the preparation of this article. ■

Australia — ‘a school for tolerance and compassion’ says Fidel Ramos

By Deb Nesbitt

Former Philippines President Fidel Ramos has urged Australia to stand up for democratic values in the region, suggesting Australia can help its neighbours by being a ‘school for tolerance, moderation, compromise and compassion.’



Fidel Ramos

Delivering the inaugural annual address of the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) in Canberra recently, Mr Ramos said the Asia-Pacific region was where Australia's future lay and where Australia's security and prosperity may ultimately be decided.

The address by Mr Ramos was the second major activity of the CDI since it was established last June. The CDI is playing an important role in the Government's practical approach to governance. The first major activity of the CDI was a Workshop for Melanesian Ombudsmen, held at the Australian National University (ANU) last November. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, opened the workshop, which was a joint activity with the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the ANU.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR CDI

The Government is providing \$5 million over the next five years to support the CDI's program of practical activities including

seminars and workshops to promote democracy, human rights and effective governance in developing countries, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.

Mr Downer, introducing Mr Ramos (President of the Philippines from 1992 to 1998) said that he was well qualified to deliver the inaugural annual address of the CDI.

‘It has been my intention to have the Centre encourage an exchange of ideas and experiences about democracy in the region,’ Mr Downer said.

‘I cannot think of a more qualified individual to launch this process than H.E. Mr Fidel Ramos. Mr Ramos is one of the great statesmen of the region.

‘He has served his country admirably as a soldier and a leader. He played a key role as Defence Secretary in defending democracy in the Philippines in the difficult period when his predecessor, President Cory Aquino, was in power. He then smoothly handed the reigns to his successor, President Joseph Estrada, and agreed to remain as a Presidential Adviser.’

In his address at Parliament House, Mr Ramos urged Australia to continue to support democratic values.

‘It is gratifying to know that Australia is determined to respond positively - and soberly - to demands for empowerment from the common people of our region,’ Mr Ramos said.

He added that if Australia was to promote tolerance, moderation, compromise and compassion, it must stand up for democratic values in the region.

‘For, if democratic values are not openly defended and actualised by those nations that profess them, they would not in the long run prevail, and people everywhere would become all the poorer.’

‘Australia and the rest of us must continue to insist that the poorest individuals in our global society are of equal moral worth and that we, as human beings, have obligations to one another. By daring to reach out, we should also be caring and sharing.’

‘To me this could be one of the highest duties of this Centre for Democratic Institutions.’

POSITIVE RESULTS FROM ASIAN CRISIS

Mr Ramos also said the financial upheaval in Asia could have some positive results.

‘So far, the crisis has been disruptive of social-economic progress in East Asia - not only destabilising to national politics - but also damaging to people's lives. Over the long term however, its effects could be on balance, beneficial.’

‘I suggest that the crisis could in the end, result not only in more transparent and dependable financial systems but also more truly democratic political systems throughout the Asia-Pacific region.’

‘Not only is the crisis forcing corporate cultures to converge in the direction of more openness and greater efficiency. Across differences in history and culture, the crisis is also compelling East Asian states to establish their authority less on coercion and more on social consensus.’ ■

Operation Recovery heals wounds left by bombing

By Lorraine Haase

The physical scars left after the massive bomb explosion outside the US Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, last August are healing. But work is continuing on healing the psychological trauma.

In response to that trauma, the Oasis Counselling Centre and Training Institute, in Nairobi, initiated a coalition of counselling centres and organisations, to provide free trauma counselling for victims, their families, and others affected by the blast.

As part of the Australian Government's response to the attack, \$US31,100 was given to Oasis to help fund critical stress debriefing and trauma counselling activities.

HELPING CHILDREN

The Australian grant also helped meet the costs of another very important project, which aimed to assist children in dealing with the terrorist attack.

Part of the money was used for research and publishing of children's books on counselling, including a guide for teachers and care givers and a booklet on how to answer children's questions on the bomb blast.

Dr Wendy Bovard of Oasis said no tragedy of the magnitude of the terrorist attack could go unnoticed by anyone, especially children.

'Teachers and care-givers play a very vital role in the lives of our children and are therefore in a better position to share with them in such a critical time,' Dr Bovard said.

'It is for this reason that we have put together a book that could be of assistance to those teachers who desire to help the hurting children of Kenya.

'Many children were affected by the blast in various ways.

'We know that some children lost their mother or father or both, while some saw them injured, and others watched their neighbours in pain and loss.'

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

One of the booklets developed as part of this program is titled A Guide For Teachers And Caregivers – Working With Traumatized Children. A second booklet titled Questions Kids Are Asking – About The Bomb Blast was also developed.

Dr Bovard said some parents may have asked their children not to think about or talk about the blast.

However she said it was important to talk about what happened and express feelings in order to help the healing process.

'Many of us would like to talk to our children about the situation but we don't really know what to say.

'This book is designed to help people read and talk about the bomb blast with their children and encourage them to express feelings in a healthy way.'

COUNSELLING CONTINUES

So far more than 2500 adults and 300 children have been debriefed, offered further counselling, or with those heavily traumatised, referred to professional counselling centres and organisations.

Follow up of affected victims continues under Oasis' coordination.

Prior to the grant to Oasis, the Australian High Commission also provided much needed medical assistance in the aftermath of the bombing. As early as the evening of August 7, Australia provided \$US9,755 to Kenyatta National Hospital for the purchase of pharmaceutical supplies.

Australia has also responded to a smaller blast, which occurred on the same day as the Nairobi attack, on the US Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

In total, \$US30,000 was provided for the improvement of diagnostic facilities at the Muhimbili Medical Centres ultrasound unit.

The centre's functions had been hampered by the lack of available medical equipment, especially diagnostic equipment. ■

Australian training: It's a hit

By Deborah Cameron

Jakarta – The website at the Australian Embassy jammed and telephone queues lengthened when an estimated 10,000 Indonesians scrambled for information about Australian Development Scholarships.

When applications opened in July more than 4,500 'hits' were recorded on the website in three days. This is a measure of the level of demand for Australian Development Scholarships that provide opportunities for people to study at Australian tertiary institutions.

High interest in the scholarship program is a measure of confidence in Australian education and training. And it also strongly indicates that the Australian Government has 'hit the nail on the head' in its aid program by providing assistance that is relevant to current needs.

In 1998-99 Australia will spend a large share of its \$127 million annual aid budget in Indonesia on education and training initiatives, all of which have the goal of transferring to Indonesia technical skills in areas of need. The scholarship program, which is one of the most effective ways to transfer skills, receives annual funding of approximately \$24 million.

RECORD NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS

This year a record 360 postgraduate scholarships will be awarded to Indonesians who have chosen to pursue Masters and Doctorate programs at Australian universities.

But scholarships are only the beginning. Australia has a much broader commitment to education and training in Indonesia. The \$37 million Partnership for Skills Development Program focuses on meeting Indonesian industry demands for appropriately skilled workers. The \$46 million Specialised Training Program addresses short term training needs of both the public and private sectors.



Students return to Indonesia with new skills and expertise.

DEVELOPING A SKILLED WORKPLACE

The Government of Indonesia has said that a more highly skilled workforce is a key part of its development strategy and has worked closely with Australia to build-up human resources.

TRAIN THE TRAINER

Much of the focus is on 'train the trainer' initiatives - these programs involve highly motivated participants who return to their work places or industries to pass on their skills and knowledge to others.

High priority is given to providing training and education opportunities to women and this extends to the scholarship program where qualified women are actively recruited.

In the eastern provinces, Australia has provided special training for midwives and

other health professionals and at village level women receive training in management of small farming and craft enterprises.

RESPONDING TO CHANGE

Australia has been a leader in adapting its aid program to Indonesia's rapidly changing political and economic environment.

For example, 60 extra post graduate scholarships were set aside in this year's scholarship program for disciplines relating to Indonesia's economic reform program such as finance, accounting, economics and business. Upon their return to Indonesia, these scholars will be able to apply their skills and expertise toward the economic development of the country. ■

Kangaroo babies – caring for premature newborns in Africa

By Anne Colquhoun

An Australian Government-funded aid project which has introduced new techniques in caring for premature babies is helping improve the survival chances of many tiny African infants.

Called the Kangaroo Care Method, the revolutionary approach to caring for premature babies has been the subject of a research study undertaken by Harare paediatrician, Dr Rose Kambarami. Dr Kambarami is a graduate of the University of Newcastle's distance learning program, which is supported by AusAID. The program is providing essential training in clinical epidemiology in Harare and Addis Ababa.

BABIES IN POUCHES

Recognising that caring for premature babies is a major problem in many developing countries, Dr Kambarami tested a procedure, which involves the newborn being carried in a 'pouch' between its mother's breasts. It was originally developed by two South American doctors in Colombia. Now African trials of this innovative approach have shown that babies cared for in this way have a better survival rate than those placed in incubators.

OUTSTANDING RESULTS

In hospitals where resources are scarce, nurseries are overcrowded and medical staff are overworked, the Kangaroo Care Method has had outstanding results.

In Harare, premature babies who were carried in their pouches against their mothers' bodies gained twice as much weight per day as those in incubators, had a shorter stay in hospital and a better chance of survival.



The Kangaroo Care method of caring for premature babies is having outstanding results.

As a result of Dr Kambarami's research, a national program has been introduced in Zimbabwe promoting Kangaroo Care because of its reliability and affordability.

Professor Richard Heller from the University of Newcastle says the success of Dr Kambarami's research emphasises the importance of programs like the Distance Learning Program.

'We all hope that important research like this will continue to flow from the program helping ease some of Africa's major health problems', he said.

AusAID support for the Distance Learning Program has allowed it to be extended to offer joint degrees from the University of Zimbabwe and the University

of Newcastle. It means the University of Zimbabwe will be able to use the University of Newcastle's materials to develop its own program over the next two years.

It also means that African health professionals will be trained to carry out research on health issues, which are relevant to the developing world. ■

Dengue breakthrough in Vietnam

By Jeffrey Hii, AusAID Health Adviser

In a world breakthrough, an Australian Government funded aid project has eliminated dengue-carrying mosquitoes from a small village in North Vietnam.



Biological control and community action has wiped out dengue mosquitoes in some villages.

The combined use of biological control and community action has wiped out dengue mosquitoes in Phan Boi village and mosquito numbers have declined by 75 per cent in other villages. The number of dengue fever cases detected in communes involved in the project has dropped dramatically.

A WORLD-WIDE KILLER

Each year, there are 30 to 60 million cases of dengue throughout the world, leading to thousands of deaths from dengue

haemorrhagic fever, particularly among young children. In 1998, Vietnam experienced 225,565 recorded cases and 359 deaths due to dengue fever/dengue haemorrhagic fever.

With no vaccine available and insecticide campaigns proving ineffective, eradicating *Aedes aegypti*, the mosquito species that spreads the virus causing dengue, has seemed impossible in the tropics.

NEW HOPE

Now a three year project, funded by the Australian and British Governments, and implemented by the Australian Foundation for People's of Asia and the Pacific (AFAP) and Vietnam's Ministry of Health offers new hope. Key members of the project, Dr Vu Sinh Nam from Vietnam's National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE), and Professor Brian Kay from the Queensland Institute of Medical Research have successfully pioneered a new approach to eliminating *Aedes aegypti*, using a tiny

crustacean or copepod, which eats mosquito larvae.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL

Copepods are tiny crustaceans, small relatives of crabs and lobsters. They are particularly effective because of their broad diet, consisting of algae, protozoa, rotifers, and most aquatic animals up to their own size, and because they do not depend solely on mosquito larvae for their food source. One of the many species of Copepods, *Mesocyclops* is the most promising biological control option because of its voracity as a predator and ability to survive in artificial water containers.

Large water storage containers such as concrete tanks are particularly suitable for the introduction of *Mesocyclops* in Vietnam because they normally contain water and typically are only cleaned about once a year. This means that frequent restocking of these containers with *Mesocyclops* is not required.

The strategy was discovered to be effective in a 1993 pilot study when project staff introduced field-collected copepods into Phan Boi's village wells, cement tanks, ceramic jars and other containers.

After a 15-month period, community involvement was initiated and every household in Phan Boi was given field-collected copepods in March 1994.

The village also intensified a recycling program that provided an incentive to get rid of discarded and unused containers that could serve as water collection and therefore breeding sites for the dengue mosquitoes.

POSITIVE RESULTS

This strategy was assessed in August 1994 when survey information was collected which showed *Aedes aegypti* had disappeared from 400 houses in Phan Boi. Subsequent surveys showed that it had not reappeared over the next 27 months. This positive result was not observed in Nhan Vinh (1 km away from Phan Boi), a control village. Similar findings have been observed in small-scale field trials in French



Each year there are 30–60 million cases of the mosquito-borne dengue fever.

Polynesia, Laos and northern Australia where *Aedes aegypti* has been eliminated from wells due to the introduction of *Mesocyclops*.

PROJECT EXTENDED

Following the success in Phan Boi village, the project was extended to six other communes in three northern provinces in a project conducted by the NIHE and AFAP.

Again, the initial results have been promising. In six months there has been a 75 per cent reduction in the dengue mosquito population and only seven cases of dengue have been detected in the communes involved in the project. This compares with 1,027 cases reported in surrounding communes in the three provinces.

AFAP and the scientists involved are now eager to extend the project in south Vietnam, trialling it in different, and possibly more challenging conditions. ■



AUSTRALIAN FOOD AID FOR INDONESIA

Australia is providing an additional \$7 million in food assistance for Indonesia, targeting the poorest and most nutritionally vulnerable.

The latest contribution, consisting of 11,000 tonnes of Australian rice is being channelled through the United Nation's World Food Programme (WFP). It brings total Australian humanitarian assistance, in response to the Indonesian crisis, to \$60 million.

An earlier food assistance package involved the distribution of 45,000 tonnes of Australian wheat. Australia, through AusAID and the Australian Defence Force, also supported a major relief operation in Irian Jaya.

IMPROVING THE LIVES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN CAMBODIA

An Australian-backed health project in Cambodia is helping reduce the high rates of maternal and infant mortality through a comprehensive immunisation campaign.

Cambodia has one of the highest rates of death among mothers and infants in Asia - deaths which are often caused by preventable diseases.

Through its support of the UNICEF Cambodia Expanded Programme on Immunisation, Australia is helping reduce the incidence of tuberculosis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, measles and poliomyelitis. All pregnant women and children under one are being immunised against the diseases.

Between 1988 and 1996, Australia contributed more than \$9 million to the

immunisation program, making it the largest single donor.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN EASTERN ASIA

A new economic study has identified a range of potential opportunities for Australian business in the eastern region of Indonesia.

The study, which looked at opportunities in the Australia Indonesia Development Area (AIDA) highlighted agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, education, health services, light manufacturing, infrastructure, oil, gas and mining as sectors with potential for Australian business.

The report which was prepared by a consulting team led by the Australian National University, found that new, longer-term opportunities had been created by changes in the Indonesian economy, including deregulation and currency realignment.

HELP FOR COLOMBIA'S EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

The Australian Government has contributed towards relief efforts in Colombia where more than 1000 people were killed and thousands injured in last month's devastating earthquake.

Australia has provided \$500,000 for medical assistance, food and shelter - to be channelled through international organisations including the Red Cross and the United Nations.

AUSTRALIA HELPS CLEAR CAMBODIAN LANDMINES

Australia is boosting its assistance to Cambodia to help rid the country of landmines and unexploded ordnance.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Kathy Sullivan, has announced that Australia will contribute \$1.5 million over two years to fund four civilian advisers working with the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC).

CMAC - a civilian agency of the Royal Cambodian Government - destroys landmines and unexploded ordnance and promotes mine awareness activities.

The Australian-funded advisers to CMAC will work in the areas of human resource development and management training. Two Australian military advisers are currently involved in operations and technical training.

The funding for the adviser positions is part of the Australian Government's commitment to provide more than \$100 million for demining and related activities over the 1995 - 2005 decade. ■



By Joanne Laurence (AusAID Global Education Program)

Teachers across Australia are browsing AusAID's specialist Internet site, GlobalEd, to help their students learn more about global issues including the environment, human rights and multiculturalism.

GlobalEd, which was established as part of AusAID's Global Education Program, gives teachers quick access to a range of material including case studies and information about specific projects. The site began in October 1997 and has grown from 4000 to 35,000 hits a month.

Issues covered include poverty, urbanisation, child labour, health, human rights, safe water, pollution, forest preservation, small scale financing and literacy.

General information about developing countries is available, as well as a directory of useful books, videos and other resources for teaching global education.

CASE STUDIES

The GlobalEd Internet site has case studies using specific projects happening right now around the world to describe global issues and describe what life is like in developing countries.

Each case study is backed up by detailed teacher's notes and student activities which can be printed off and taken straight into the classroom. (Copyright permission is not necessary for materials on the GlobalEd site) Case studies are presented in both a primary and a secondary school version.

In the latest case study, we look at how specially trained sniffer dogs are being used to detect landmines in Mozambique. Another case study tells the story of young girls working as labourers in India who have quit work for school and are now able to read and write.

WHAT'S NEW

New material appears on the GlobalEd Internet site every two weeks. Recent additions to the site include video footage of exploding volcanoes in Papua New Guinea and a case study on exploding fish in Samoa! ■

GlobalEd can help fill out your picture of the world. Join us at <http://globaled.ausaid.gov.au>

REFORMS TO AUSAID'S PROCUREMENT PROCEDURES

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, has agreed to a number of reforms to AusAID's procurement procedures following a recent review conducted by AusAID. The reforms aim to improve project quality; improve the quality of contractor selections; and make the process fairer for bidders. The reform package is explained on AusAID's Internet site at www.ausaid.gov.au/ops.html.

USEFUL PUBLICATIONS

AusAID's Business Participation in Australia's Aid Program 1997-98 is a valuable resource for individuals and organisations interested in participating in Australia's aid program. The publication provides a comprehensive listing of business contracts current in 1997-98, and includes key information on each contract.

AusAID's Corporate Plan 1998-2000 is another important document for businesses interested in Australia's aid program. The Plan defines the objective and core business of AusAID and serves as a guide to the priorities and key result areas that underpin the delivery of Australia's aid program.

Copies of both publications are available from AusAID's central and regional offices, from Bibliotech, and from AusAID's Internet site.

GOVERNANCE SECTOR

Governance is now one of AusAID's five priority sectors, the others are health, education, infrastructure and agriculture. Effective governance requires of public officials transparent, accountable and

equitable policy which is responsive to people's needs. A recent World Bank report concluded that aid is most effective at reducing poverty in developing countries that have sound policies and institutions. This in turn requires an active and informed civil society able to influence the allocation of resources by government.

Australia has been helping Papua New Guinea and Pacific Island countries with governance activities for many years. More recently, the crisis in Asia has led to an increase in aid activities that target economic and financial governance issues. Technical assistance in areas such as financial regulation, public finance, privatisation, judicial development, codes of conduct for public officials, development of national human rights institutions and capacity for building for NGOs is now an important part of the assistance Australia provides to partner countries.

PUBLIC SEMINARS

AusAID periodically stages seminars for the benefit of new and other interested participants in the aid program. Each session covers introductory information on the business opportunities that are available in the delivery of the aid program, the selection process that AusAID undertakes for each new project, tips and strategies for preparing a winning bid and issues that are particularly relevant to the regional audience. AusAID staff will also be available to answer any questions you may have.

PERIOD CONTRACTS

AusAID is in the process of transferring existing period contracts onto the Agency's

Intranet system for easier internal access.

This process requires the submission of business details and CVs in electronic format by companies and consultants with current period contracts. AusAID asks all those concerned to ensure their information is submitted as soon as possible.

Enquiries about the site can be made by phone to (02) 6206 4796 or by email to pcps_ausaid@ausaid.gov.au.

INTERNET SITE

AusAID is pleased to announce that it is changing the presentation of the Funding and Business section of the AusAID Internet site to make it more accessible to the business community. The section will now be known as Doing Business with AusAID and will continue to expand with improvements and new features on business opportunities with AusAID, contracting policy and business publications.

UPCOMING TENDER OPPORTUNITIES

Early information on tender opportunities which are expected to arise in Australia's aid program can be found through Upcoming Tenders Opportunities (formerly known as the Early Notification System) on the AusAID Internet site.

Further information on possible tender opportunities found on Upcoming Tender Opportunities can be accessed by contacting the Pacific Contracts and Policy Section at pcps_ausaid@ausaid.gov.au. Your request for information will be forwarded on for a reply from the Director of the relevant section in AusAID. ■

1998 — the year in review

1998 was a demanding year with the regional economic crisis, the implementation of a new framework for aid and the increased emphasis on strengthening community understanding of the aid program. There were many achievements in the overseas aid program last year, which are outlined below.



ASIAN ECONOMIC CRISIS

An Asia Crisis Fund was established. As part of the Prime Minister's Economic and Financial Management Initiative for APEC, an assistance package built on the APEC Economic Governance Survey, was also developed.

The financial year has seen an over 40 per cent increase on last year's budget for Indonesia. Australia increased its Consultative Group on Indonesia (CGI) pledge by one third over last year's pledge. Support has been wide-ranging, with strong humanitarian and governance focus.

Additional funds were provided to Thailand with agreement to continue aid

past the previously agreed graduation point. Additional resources have also been provided to the Philippines.

AUSTRALIA'S ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSIONS

Australia played a significant role in discussions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank on the regional crisis to help strike a balanced response that was credible and acceptable to the markets, and ensured the social impacts of the crisis were taken into account. A trip to Washington in March by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, was instrumental in this regard.

Australia played a key role in the Consultative Group on Indonesia.

Work is well underway for a meeting of aid and development cooperation ministers to be convened by the Minister in Sydney in March 1999.

Australia encouraged donor collaboration in the Pacific, including specific initiatives with France, Japan, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

Australia negotiated an expansion of climate change adaptation activities with the Global Environment Facility. This mandate will greatly assist the Pacific Island countries.

PNG/PACIFIC

At the annual Ministerial Forum, PNG and Australian Ministers gave in principle endorsement to the negotiations between officials on the PNG Aid Treaty post-2000.

The Government's objectives for the peace and reconstruction process in Bougainville have been effectively supported by the aid program.



Added emphasis on governance programs and sectoral funding options were features of aid talks.

A region-wide, cohesive three-year strategy for the Pacific has been developed, and was launched by Mr Downer in Suva in December.

PLEDGE TO VIETNAM

There has been an increased four-year bilateral aid pledge for Vietnam amounting to \$236 million.

HUMANITARIAN RELIEF AND EMERGENCIES

Australia responded effectively to the many

humanitarian relief situations and emergencies within the region, for example, the tsunami in Papua New Guinea, rehabilitation of agriculture after the PNG drought, floods in Bangladesh and China, and drought in Irian Jaya.

BUDGET FLEXIBILITY

The flexibility to respond to emerging needs in the region has been increased through the tripling of the emergency allocation in 1998-99 and a carry-over facility for the emergency allocation.

The budget has been reoriented to align with critical areas of need, such as increased assistance to Indonesia, and additional funds to Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam.

FOOD SECURITY

The Australian Government pledged \$1 billion over four years for global food security measures and renegotiated its pledge for the Food Aid Convention.

MULTILATERAL ORGANISATIONS

There were successful negotiations on International Development Association (IDA 12) – with IDA 12 at the same notional level as IDA 11. Australia and

Japan were key players in pushing for the recognition of the effects of the Asian economic crisis. Positive outcomes were gained on two issues of particular interest to Australia. First, IDA 12 retains the exception that allowed a number of Pacific Island countries to be eligible for IDA credits. Second, Indonesia is now eligible for IDA credits.

Within AusAID, a multilateral assessment framework has been developed and is being piloted this year - this will enable the Australian Government to ensure aid is targeted towards the most effective and efficient multilateral agencies. More in-depth reviews are to be completed in 1999.

SECTORAL REFORMS

Economic governance has taken a higher priority in virtually all program activities.

Key principles for human rights have been developed and were announced in the eighth annual statement to Parliament by Mr Downer.

Australia is assisting the Indonesian Human Rights Commission, Komnas Ham, through the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC) and the Indonesia-Australia Specialised Training Program.





A new policy framework for health sector assistance has been developed; a review of Australia's agricultural assistance was commissioned; there has been increased and diversified assistance for basic education (including expansion in Asia); and a review of the aid program's approach to private sector development has been commissioned.

Baseline data on AusAID governance and child labour projects is being established.

A HIV/AIDS prevention and care three-year program in the Mekong sub-region has been implemented.

Within AusAID, an Assistant Director General was appointed to guide the overall direction of the sectoral approach.

COUNTRY STRATEGIES

Country strategies have been developed for Vietnam, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, PNG and China. Regional strategies have been developed for the Pacific, South Asia and Africa.

NON GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

Accreditation procedures for NGOs are being consolidated, and a formal statement of policy principles and objectives for cooperation with Australian NGOs is being prepared. A priority is meeting with NGOs to discuss the possible effects of the GST on their aid activities.

There has been a substantially enhanced dialogue with NGOs at the Ministerial, Parliamentary Secretary and officials' levels.

CENTRE FOR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

The Australian Centre for Democratic Institutions was established and is running programs to bring together officials from various institutions in Australia and developing countries.

AUSTRALIAN YOUTH AMBASSADORS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development program was established and has had a tremendous response.

DEMINEING

The appointment of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Kathy Sullivan, as Australia's Special Representative on Demining,

combined with Australia's contribution to United Nations Mine Action Service and Australia's demining pledge over the 1995 to 2005 have highlighted the importance of demining to development.

The Destroy a Minefield initiative has been announced and will be operational early this year.

COMMUNICATIONS/OUTREACH

The Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary have recently considered a communications strategy for the aid program. The strategy includes an increased emphasis on community outreach activities to better inform people about how their overseas aid program works, and places a high priority on community involvement in the aid program.

The AusAID/ACFOA community attitudes to aid survey provides the aid program with the basis for laying the foundations for planning outreach activities in 1999 and beyond.

The Aid Advisory Council has been established and has met twice this year. An enhanced role for the Council is now being developed.

Some 3000 people visited the Australian aid program display at the Royal Hobart Show – similar displays are planned for 1999 in all capital cities and selected regional centres.

The aid program's Internet site has been widely used by the public (80,000 hits a week) with the Global Education site ranked second in the top 10 sites of the month in Microsoft's Internet magazine.

A series of 'Access the Australian aid program' activities have been held. There are now better linkages with contractors through the integration of contract services throughout AusAID. AusAID is also ensuring a two-way flow of information by feeding back lessons-learned to major contractors.

VOLUNTEER CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION

Nearly 200 Certificates of Appreciation have been presented to volunteers in 1998. More ceremonies are planned for this year to offer formal recognition by the Australian Government of the contribution made by volunteers to the aid program.

AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY

There has been increased Australian identity in aid projects through Australian expertise with technical assistance and clear identification on site of Australian involvement.

Work is underway to identify more clearly Australian engagement in the aid program, including by geographic region.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Reforms to the delivery of scholarship activities are now firmly in place. The next phase of reform will be developed and implemented in 1999.

AUSAID REFORMS

A priority this year has been a new organisational structure to align AusAID with the new priorities identified in *Better Aid for a Better Future*.

Policy development and program delivery functions within AusAID have been brought together to enhance the focus on program quality and performance improvement. Key structural reforms have been made to ensure AusAID is open to new ideas and approaches and to implement sectoral priorities.

Following a major staff review, 'hot spots' in AusAID were identified – staff were re-allocated to areas such as performance information and assessment, sectoral groups and regional economic crisis sectors.

A sectoral group was established to advise on the five priority sectors.

Improvements to the Activity Management System will secure data integrity; and improve analysis and reporting against key result areas. ■



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Contributions are welcome and should be sent to
The Editor
Focus
GPO Box 887
Canberra ACT 2601
Tel 02 6206 4968
Fax 02 6206 4695

Contact the editor regarding proposals for articles. AusAID does not accept responsibility for damage to, or loss of, material submitted for publication. Allow several weeks for acceptance or return.

Editor
Michelle Hardy

Editorial Assistant
Natsuda Pittman

Editorial Coordinator
Megan Dixon-Child

Contributors
Anne Colquhoun
Francis Elliott
Tina Faulk
Lorraine Haase
Jeffrey Hii
Matt Francis
Deb Nesbitt
Emily Robertson
Stav Zolatis

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**for more copies of Focus,
or other AusAID publications,
contact:**

Bibliotech
GPO Box 4
Canberra ACT 2601
Tel 02 6249 2479
Fax 02 6249 5677
Email books@bibliotech.com.au

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