

focus



THE MAGAZINE OF AUSTRALIA'S OVERSEAS AID PROGRAM

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WHEN DISASTERS STRIKE

disaster risk reduction > emergency response > rebuilding communities

About AusAID

The Australian Government, through the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), provides official development assistance to countries in the Asia-Pacific, the Caribbean and Latin America, and in Africa.

Development assistance is delivered as part of long-term sustainable programs across a range of sectors—health, education, infrastructure, gender equality, law and order, rural development and the environment. AusAID also has a proud record of delivering humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations caught in conflict zones or natural disasters, such as cyclones, floods and earthquakes.

Reasons for giving aid

Australia is committed to helping developing countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which aim to alleviate world poverty by 2015. Poverty is one of the greatest challenges of our time. We know that poverty not only blights the lives of individuals but contributes to instability and conflict. A strong and effective aid program advances Australia's reputation and influence in the international community. It is in Australia's national interest to support stability and economic development across the world through assistance to people and governments of developing countries.

Size of the aid program

In 2009–10 Australia plans to spend AUD3.8 billion on official development assistance. This is 0.34 per cent of our gross national income (GNI). The Australian Government is working towards a target of 0.5 per cent of GNI by 2015.



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World Water Day is on 22 March. Photo: Dian Lestariningsih

Millennium Development Goals

The eight Millennium Development Goals are a blueprint agreed by all the world's leading development institutions.

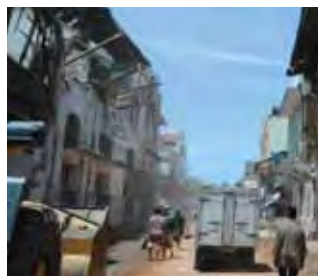
For further information see <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/keyaid/mdg.cfm>



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COVER: When an earthquake hit Padang, West Sumatra, on 30 September 2009 more than 1,100 people were killed and thousands of buildings were destroyed. This woman's home in the Pariaman sub-district, north of Padang, was destroyed. Photo: Andy Campbell, SurfAid

Calendar of events

8 March	International Women's Day
22 March	World Water Day
24 March	World Tuberculosis Day
4 April	International Day for Mine Awareness
7 April	World Health Day
22 April	Earth Day
25 April	World Malaria Day
1-16 May	Fairtrade Fortnight

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Australia elected to United Nations Peacebuilding Commission

Australia has been elected to the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission for 2010.

The commission was established by the United Nations in 2005 to help countries emerging from conflict. It brings together donors, international financial institutions and national governments to provide strategic advice, finance and expertise from around the world.

Australia has a long tradition of helping governments prevent conflict and promote peace in unstable environments in our region, including in Solomon Islands and East Timor. Our peacebuilding expertise and experience will be a valuable asset to the work of the commission.



Further assistance for Zimbabwe

Australia has provided \$5 million through the Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF) for a special Zimbabwe program to help finance private sector activities to boost the country's rural economy and address long-term food security needs.

The AECF is an Africa-wide initiative that provides matching grants, on a competitive basis, to private sector businesses for practical projects that are both commercially viable and will have a

broad developmental impact on the rural poor.

By stimulating investment in Zimbabwe, the AECF will help impoverished rural communities by boosting agricultural productivity, creating jobs and developing local enterprises. An example includes establishing seed distribution businesses.

The assistance moves beyond short-term emergency relief to investment in longer-term recovery.

The assistance brings Australia's aid to Zimbabwe since the formation of the Inclusive Government in February 2009 to more than \$39 million.

ABOVE: Vegetables and eggs are offered for sale in both US Dollars and South African Rand at road side stalls in Harare, Zimbabwe on the 23 April, 2009. The Zimbabwean Dollar has been replaced with the US Dollar and South African Rand, leaving thousands destitute as they have no access to foreign currency. Photo: Kate Holt, Africa Practice.

'Haiti is a country which has regrettably seen terrible natural disasters occur over the recent period, including hurricanes and typhoons a couple of years ago. So our hearts go out to that country for the terrible tragedy which has beset it.'

Stephen Smith, Minister for Foreign Affairs



Australia responds to Haiti earthquake

Australia has committed \$15 million to assist Haiti following the devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake which struck near the capital Port-au-Prince on 12 January, 2010.

More than 200,000 people are feared to have perished in the quake with thousands more injured and millions left homeless.

Australia's assistance package includes \$10 million in emergency humanitarian relief and \$5 million for reconstruction assistance.

A small team of Defence Air Traffic Controllers was also deployed to the earthquake-ravaged capital to assist with the control of military and civil aircraft.

Australia's assistance is being delivered through the World Food Programme, non-government organisations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, and the International Red Cross.

In November 2009, Australia announced strengthened relations with the members of the Caribbean community, including Haiti, and a \$60 million development assistance package for the region which included support to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency.

ABOVE: Children eat a meal distributed by Bolivian UN peacekeepers in Cité Soleil, Haiti, after a powerful earthquake left food shortages in the area. Photo: Marco Dormino, UN Photo.

Australia awards

A new initiative to maximize the benefit to Australia of its extensive scholarship programs, and to support enduring ties between Australia and its neighbours, was announced by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in November 2009.

The Australia Awards will bring together Australia's scholarship programs under a single recognisable brand.

Rather than dilute Australia's scholarship effort through a group of uncoordinated programs, the Australia Awards initiative will ensure that Australian scholarships are consolidated, better branded, and delivered to support Australia's long term interests.

The Australia Awards initiative will, over time, build a new generation of leaders with strong links to Australia.

The Australia Awards will include two streams: a leadership stream that will target the best and brightest scholars to come to Australia; and a development stream that will build capacity in developing countries.

Australia currently invests \$200 million each year in scholarship programs which, at any time, help around 5,000 international students to study in Australia.

The Prime Minister has announced the first phase of the initiative—the Australia Asia Awards—with \$18 million in new funding.

The first Australia Asia Awards scholars take up their awards in 2010 with other regions to be rolled out in the coming years.

The Australia Awards demonstrate Australia's ongoing commitment to building closer and enduring ties with our region and beyond.



Bob McMullan to retire

Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance
Bob McMullan announced his retirement from Parliament on 19 January 2009.

After 22 years in the Australian Parliament, Mr McMullan announced his decision not to contest the next general election.

He will continue as Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance until the next election.

Announcing his retirement, Mr McMullan said: 'The challenge of global poverty and global economic development is one which I hope to make the focus of the next stage of my life.'

ABOVE: Bob McMullan meets a health worker in Uganda. Photo: Kate Holt, Africa Practice



The peace lensman

Years working as a language specialist and interpreter have seen Indonesian Muhammad Bundhowi thrust into the disaster zone and mass media spotlight. As a young teacher, he was touched by the tragic circumstances of Cambodian refugee children.

But his experiences during the first Bali bombings and subsequent disasters were a source of inspiration for the artist and photographer.

Bundhowi has used these experiences as the basis for his soulful exhibition of work, supported by GHD, which recently visited Canberra. In December 2009 the Bundhowi Exhibition gave Australians a chance to see how the artist, whose work has often appeared in Focus magazine, has developed.

Bundhowi produces art to promote images of peace and beauty in contrast to images of war and suffering. He is a skilled interpreter, teacher (formerly with the Indonesia Australia Language Foundation), cartoonist, artist and photographer. He resides in a small village community on Bali.

ABOVE: Bundhowi is well known to AusAID and has been on hand to capture many humanitarian emergency situations in Indonesia.



More at Focus online

NGO partnership

Australia has signed agreements with five major non-government organisations (NGOs) to further strengthen Australia's support of their work tackling poverty.

Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith signed the partnerships, valued at more than \$175 million over four years, with NGOs Caritas Australia, ChildFund Australia, Oxfam Australia, Plan International Australia and World Vision Australia.

Mr Smith also announced a new Civil Society Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Fund. NGOs were invited to apply for a share of up to \$28 million over two years to carry out water, sanitation and hygiene work in Sub-Saharan Africa, South and South-East Asia and the Pacific.

Improving access to clean water and sanitation services is crucial to raising the health and living standards of people in developing countries.

Australia takes action to rid the world of landmines

Australia has reaffirmed its strong commitment to mine action and pledged \$100 million over the next five years in a new strategy to help developing countries affected by landmines.

Launched at the Summit on a Mine-Free World in Cartagena, Colombia, in November 2009, the *Mine Action Strategy for the Australian aid program 2010-14* sets out how AusAID will work towards a world free from landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war. AusAID will specifically work with countries to reduce the threat and socioeconomic impact of landmines.

'The new strategy is an important step in addressing a problem that affects the lives of so many people around the world,' said Bob McMullan, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance.



Since signing the Mine Ban Convention in 1997, Australia has contributed more than \$175 million to mine action.

ABOVE: Soeun Rem, 27, stepped on a mine while working with her father in their soy beans field in Pailin, Cambodia. She now runs a grocery shop, started through a micro-loan from the Australian Government-funded Landmine Survivor Assistance Program. Photo: Somira Sao, Australian Red Cross

Australia increases assistance to UN disaster response

Australia will provide \$60 million over the next four years to the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

Australian Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance Bob McMullan pledged the contribution at the annual CERF Conference in New York in December 2009.

The CERF ensures that funding is available for UN agencies to respond quickly to humanitarian emergencies. To date the CERF has disbursed over USD1.3 billion to assist people in humanitarian need in 72 countries.

Australia is one of the world's top 10 contributors to the CERF and has been a strong supporter since its inception in 2005.

RIGHT: Burma was ravaged after Cyclone Nargis on 2 May 2008. Photo: jhpix



Strengthened partnership with WHO

Dr Margaret Chan, Director General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), discussed global health challenges with Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith and Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance Bob McMullan during a visit to Australia in November 2009.

During her meeting with Mr Smith, Dr Chan discussed the swine flu pandemic response and efforts to tackle malaria in the region. While Dr Chan was in Australia, Mr Smith announced Australia would provide nearly \$7 million for the Asia Pacific Malaria Elimination Network, of which the WHO is a important member, to tackle malaria in the Asia-Pacific region.

This network brings together Asia-Pacific countries who are working to eliminate malaria and provides a forum for experts to work together.

Mr Smith also discussed with Dr Chan Australia's enhanced engagement with WHO which includes a \$64 million commitment over four years to improve health in developing countries.

Australia signs up to 1GOAL

Australia has joined the 1GOAL Education for All global campaign to give children living in poverty the chance to go to school.

Minister for Early Childhood Education, Child Care, Youth and Sport Kate Ellis made the announcement at a football field at Parramatta in Sydney's west last Spring. She was joined by players from the Socceroos and Matildas, and the groups behind 1GOAL.

'With the world's gaze turning to the FIFA World Cup in South Africa, there's a chance for us to leave a lasting legacy of education to Africa and the world,' she said.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd pledged Australia's support for the 1GOAL campaign by video link, joining with leaders from the United Kingdom, South Africa, Ghana, Spain, the Netherlands and France as part of the global launch.

'Australians love football and we know the power that sport has to help reach development goals. We're pleased to work with 1GOAL to give all children the chance at an education and a brighter future for their communities.'



'The Australian Government has made education the flagship of Australia's aid program and we're increasing support for education to help meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015,' Ms Ellis said.

1GOAL is a campaign in the lead up to the FIFA World Cup final in South Africa this year that aims to bring together a range of international partners to help 75 million children around the world get an education.

ABOVE: Campaign supporters and members of the Granville Waratahs junior soccer team. Photo: Dean Sewell, Reru

Drawing the line

by Shaheen Mahmud & Leda Isis Tyrrel, AusAID Bangladesh



In development we talk a lot about lines—being above or below various poverty lines—but in reality things are not always that linear.



We leave the city in the early morning. The air is already thick and hot. As the city recedes the roads become smaller. Vibrant green rice paddies line either side. Rickshaws and carts stacked high with goods are pushed to market. After a couple of hours we stop and refuel with sweet tea and biscuits.

Verging off the main road, we travel along a path built precariously on flood embankments. As we arrive in the village children crowd around the car. ‘Hello, what is your name?’ call the bolder ones, trying their best English. Others hide, stealing shy glances and giggling. One boy, a younger child perched on his hip, says he is twelve. He looks much younger.

UNICEF estimates seven million children are chronically malnourished in Bangladesh and one in three children under five are stunted.

We meet Safura. She smiles and leads us to her house and a small plot of land where she is cultivating vegetables. Two years ago she was identified as ‘extreme poor’. Staff from the large Bangladeshi organisation BRAC (formerly Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) drew a map of her village on the ground and undertook surveys of the individual households to identify the poorest families, she explains to us.

Before joining BRAC’s program Safura spent almost all of her small income on food and still only provided two meals a day—predominately rice—to her family. Her daughter did not go to school. They had no house or land and squatted in a

makeshift hut on the edge of the river. Each year the hut was inundated by flood water and her daughter often got sick. Over 80 per cent of Bangladesh’s population of 150 million live on less than \$2 a day. Over 30 million (20 per cent) are ‘extreme poor’ like Safura.

Over two years Safura received support from BRAC including seeds, fertiliser, lease of a small plot of land, and skills training in gardening and rearing livestock. She also received a daily stipend and access to subsidised healthcare. A village committee provided social support to her and lobbied for services on her behalf.

In development we talk a lot about lines—being above or below various poverty lines—but in reality things are not always that linear. The change in Safura’s life can be measured across a range of indicators—her health has improved



FAR LEFT: Children from the village in Rangpur district in Bangladesh.

CENTRE: A meeting of the BRAC community group in Rangpur.

ABOVE: Since joining the BRAC program Safura has raised two cows and learned to write her name.

Photos: Leda Tyrrel, AusAID

Australia contributes approximately \$50 million (along with the United Kingdom, Canada and Oxfam NOVIB) to the Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction Program. The program is implemented by BRAC, one of the largest NGOs in the world. It will reach over 3.1 million of the poorest people in Bangladesh by 2012.

along with her daily food intake, nutrition, her safety and security. But the most profound change can be measured by her interaction and confidence. She shows us proudly her two cows which she has raised, the new iron on her roof and her ability to write her own name.

For the first time in her life, she has been invited to a wedding of one of the other families in the village. This is an invisible line that can be harder to cross. She tells us she could never imagine that

her life could have changed to such a degree—to be able to send her daughter to school, and to save and think of the future.

In Australia we would expect these things as a matter of course. We don't think twice about making a quick stop on the way home to buy something for dinner, or our capacity to educate our children or plan for the future.

We thank Safura and leave her village followed by children until we join the main road again. After driving back into

the city, we finally hit the urban sprawl. Crossing the railway line, we pass rusty corrugated iron and tarpaulins wedged between the railway line and the road. A group of small children plays in the dust. Over 200,000 people live within a 1km square area in Dhaka's slums. Bangladesh's urban population is projected to reach an ominous 51 million by 2015. Urban poverty is the new frontier. How do you provide support to the poor who have no land or fixed place to live?

Still, thinking of Safura and the resilience of others like her, with the right support the potential is enormous. It comes down to the question of where we draw the line.



Helping farmers in Iraq

by Mandy Gyles, Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research

An Australian agricultural research project is helping Iraqi farmers to grow more productive crops by using Australian farming methods.

Iraqi farmers face a similar climate and similar soils to parts of Australia so the project is helping them to adopt farming techniques which conserve water and the soil. The techniques are similar to those used in Australia and can produce higher yields.

Conservation cropping experts from Western Australia and South Australia are working with Iraqi scientists and farmers on the project funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

The project is based in Syria at the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), a source of expertise on farm water management and crop varieties suited to Iraq's climate. Because of the situation in Iraq, the Iraqi scientists, advisors and farmers travel to Syria to see the trials, visit farms using these techniques, and to get advice on conducting their own trials in Iraq.

Up to 95 per cent of farmers in some regions of Australia use zero-till machinery and retain crop stubble to

eliminate their need to plough, and to retain vital soil moisture. Iraqi farmers often use traditional cropping systems which means they plough heavily, burn stubble and sow late. As a result they face very low yields.

Project leader Dr Colin Piggin said the trials were also testing alternative varieties of oilseeds, oats and peas along with wheat. He said the trials showed crops planted using zero-till techniques consistently produced more by making better use of early season rains.

Local farming machinery manufacturers have constructed various types of zero and low-till seeder machinery with the help of Dr Jack Desbiolles, a zero-till machinery expert from the University of Adelaide.

Dr Piggin said Iraqi farmers, like Australian farmers, were initially sceptical of the change in farming techniques but many have become convinced of the benefits.

'We took a group of farmers from northern Iraq to visit some of the Syrian farmers who have adopted these techniques and they were amazed to see row upon row of plants setting seed, when across the border, on cultivated fields, dry conditions were again stunting crop development,' Dr Piggin said.

'The financial benefits are also clear, one of these Syrian farmers of 1,200 ha, said he had saved \$20,000 in cultivation costs and made an extra \$240,000 as a result of the increased yield of his crop.'

The number of farmers using zero-till technology has now grown from three to around 250 farms in Syria (a total of 10,000 ha), while in Iraq, the process is just starting, growing from 12 farms to over 50 farms (3,000 ha) in the past three years.

What is zero-till machinery?

Zero-till machinery drills the seed directly into the soil instead of ploughing deep furrows. This leaves the rest of the soil undisturbed, avoiding erosion, retaining water and nutrients, thereby enhancing crop growth. Zero-till conservation farming techniques have been used in Australia for the past 30 years

ABOVE LEFT: Conventional cultivation in northern Syria. Photo: ICARDA

ABOVE CENTRE: Dr Colin Piggin in Iraq. Photo: Brad Collis

ABOVE RIGHT: A demonstration of wheat planted using zero-till machinery in Syria. Photo: ICARDA



More at Focus online

Australian volunteers in Cambodia

by Elizabeth James, AusAID

In Cambodia there is an ancient tradition to predict the country's harvests. Every May, several dishes of local crops are served to Cambodia's royal oxen. Whichever dish the oxen favour is seen as a sign of a bountiful year for that crop.

Last year the oxen chose beans and corn, which worried rice growers who believe in the predictions.

Rice is the backbone of Cambodia's agricultural economy and helps feed the country's 14 million people. However, with other crops fetching higher prices, poor farmers are looking to alternatives. 'Rice is still the king of the crop here but it doesn't make as much money as other produce,' said Victor Onions (pictured), a volunteer working with non-government organisation Srer Khmer in Phnom Penh. 'New varieties of rice are producing higher yields but are still well below those of neighbouring countries with similar climates.'

Srer Khmer helps farmers improve their livelihoods in different ways such as increasing their rice yield or growing cash crops like pumpkins or raising livestock. 'We set up meetings with farmers and together we discuss solutions to their problems. Because most farmers have less than two years of formal education and often can't read or write, they learn best by talking and doing.'

Young Cambodians who have moved from rural areas to the city to work in factories have been hit hardest by the recession. They face difficult choices. Without work they can return home to their villages, but that would put greater pressure on their families, who typically rely on their factory incomes to help make ends meet. Alternatively, they can look for other employment within or outside Cambodia. This vulnerability makes them ripe for trafficking.

'Trafficking is very real,' said Evelyn Klein, an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development working with the United Nations in Phnom Penh. 'Cambodia is still a poor country and most trafficked people come from a background of extreme



Australian volunteers, funded by AusAID, are helping ordinary Cambodians to improve their living standards. Cambodia has been hit hard by the global recession.

poverty. Here, men, women and children are all targets. Women may be trafficked to work in brothels and men may find themselves working on fishing boats or in the construction industry for little or no pay and in poor working conditions. People smuggled into neighbouring countries expecting to do one kind of work often end up doing something quite different and are either not paid or end up paying hefty fees to traffickers.'

The Cambodian Government readily acknowledges the problem and is working closely with other countries and non-government organisations to train police and the wider legal system to deal with trafficking more effectively.

Better health and education are part of a wider push to raise the status of women in Cambodia. Laura Portaro, an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development placed at UNIFEM, is encouraged by efforts to draw more women into all levels of public life. After the elections in 2008, women made up 20 per cent of

the total number of parliamentarians and 15 per cent of locally elected community councillors. 'We have been working in partnership with the Cambodian Government and local organisations to raise awareness in communities about the importance of women being involved in the political process and the positive benefits it can have for the community.'

Australia has been an important partner in Cambodia's reconstruction since the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in 1991. 'Over the past decade our assistance has shifted in focus from emergency assistance to longer-term development,' said the head of AusAID in Cambodia, Lachlan Pontifex. 'By helping to increase food production, improve health services and law and justice systems, we are contributing to Cambodia's progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.'



More at Focus online

Save the Children's emergency response to the conflict in Pakistan involves providing food, health and other supplies, and child protection services.



Letter from Pakistan

by Rohan Kent, former emergency services coordinator, Save the Children Australia

Imagine there is a war approaching and a population the size of Melbourne has to gather its belongings and flee its homes.

Imagine this same population walking up to 160 kms across rugged terrain in 45°C heat with limited food and water.

Imagine being one of them.

Many families forced from their homes by the escalating conflict in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province seek refuge at overcrowded camps for displaced people. But the sheer number of people in need leaves many camps over-stretched and forced to turn away families. Many strangers take in homeless families, cramming up to 10 people to a room. Water is in scarce supply, there is only basic sanitation and food is rationed. This

is the reality for hundreds of thousands of children and families in Pakistan.

The heat in the early morning is already oppressive as we set off from Islamabad for Swabi, a small town in Pakistan, which houses one of Save the Children's food distribution hubs. While Save the Children does not operate inside the internally displaced people (IDP) camps, it is working with the 88 per cent of displaced people accommodated in host communities.

In this part of Pakistan, the risk of suicide attacks, kidnappings and robbery is still very real.

Azamabad is one of the large-scale food hubs that Save the Children currently coordinates in partnership with AusAID and the World Food Programme, the United Nations frontline agency that aims to reduce global hunger.

For many people, lining up for a monthly food handout is an undignified experience but the distribution staff attempt to make the process culturally acceptable for the thousands who queue patiently every day. There are toilet facilities, separate registration points for women and children, and shade and water to offer some respite from the intense heat. But emotions sometimes flare among members of the queue because of the difficult and dusty conditions.

This food distribution hub, which looks like a warehouse loading facility, is just one of Save the Children's frontline initiatives in Pakistan. The distribution teams work with the Pakistani Government to conduct three identification checks before the food baskets are handed out. Women-headed and child-headed households are



LEFT: Displaced children gather outside the food distribution hub in Swabi, North West Frontier Province, Pakistan.

MIDDLE AND ABOVE: Consultations with children at the Save the Children/World Food Programme food hub in Swabi, North West Frontier Province, Pakistan.

Photos: Save the Children emergency response staff

prioritised as these families are the most vulnerable. This food hub alone will cater for the food needs of 28,000 families a month, with 3,000 tonnes of food distributed.

Each food basket contains several essential items—flour, dhal, sugar, salt, energy biscuits and oil—precisely measured and in accordance with international standards. Each basket contains enough to satisfy the nutrition needs of a family of six for one month.

The food baskets also contain tea to ensure that people are drinking boiled water. It also reflects an essential part of the Pakistani tradition of sharing a cup of tea with friends and family, and is an example of the attempts to preserve the cultural dignity of these families.

Save the Children emergency staff are working in Pakistan seven days a week from 8 am until 10 pm. The conditions are oppressive, dusty and at times emotionally draining. But this doesn't deter the staff, who smile and get on with the job of feeding the displaced.

Save the Children is renowned for its commitment to child protection and has used this expertise in Pakistan, where children are particularly vulnerable to the crisis. Poor health plagues many children because of overcrowding. Many are unable to access education or a safe and secure place to play, let alone adequate hygiene facilities.

As one of the largest international relief agencies responding to this emergency in Pakistan, Save the Children has supported 260,000 people. More than half—168,000—are children. The organisation provides children with access to health and education programs, distributes hygiene and household items, including nappies for babies, and helps families find food and shelter.

It is heartening that the political crisis has not entirely dented morale among the people at the food hub. There remains a sense of camaraderie and compassion, evidenced by the offers of help for people whose lives have been thrown into turmoil.

Over 2.7 million people have been displaced by fighting between government forces and militants in North-West Pakistan since July 2008. AusAID has provided \$28 million in emergency assistance to those affected by the conflict. AusAID assistance has been delivered in partnership with United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and Australian non-government organisations.

Save the Children's response has been supported by AusAID, the UK Department for International Development, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and the Children's Emergency Fund.

A community health project in Vietnam is combining smart science, technology and people to control the spread of dengue fever.



Mapping mosquitoes in Vietnam

by Simon Kutcher, Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific (AFAP), Vietnam



The dengue control program demonstrates that a community-led approach combined with innovative solutions and smart technology can provide a powerful outcome for sustainable change.



As the warm orange glow of sunset illuminates the 2,000 households of Thanh Tri, Vietnam, 52 village health workers reflect on their achievements. Over the past three years they have worked with every household in their Mekong Delta community to practically eliminate the dengue mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*.

In a world where dengue is the most widely distributed mosquito-borne virus affecting an estimated 100 million people each year, their results are remarkable. They have achieved a 99.3 per cent reduction in the prevalence of this deadly pest.

As there is currently no dengue vaccine available, prevention and control strategies mostly focus on elimination of the dengue mosquito. The program in Thanh Tri presents a ray of hope for dengue control worldwide.

Since its inception in 1998, the Dengue Control Project has become a model of international best practice in community-based health. Vietnam is one of only

three countries in the world—the others being Cuba and Singapore—to have implemented successful dengue control programs. Out of these three, however, only Vietnam has been able to sustain this success.

The Vietnamese program is run by the Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific (AFAP) in collaboration with a range of project partners, and has been funded by AusAID for nearly 10 years. It relies on introducing a tiny 1 mm crustacean called *Mesocyclops*, a predator that eats the dengue mosquito larvae, into all manner of water storage jars and tanks where mosquitoes breed.

The program is not only environmentally friendly and affordable, it also targets the entire community, teaching everyone from community leaders to school children how to recognise and collect *Mesocyclops*. This allows the communities to control mosquitoes themselves.

Currently the program is operating in 12 communities in the Mekong Delta, protecting nearly 120,000 people in about 20,000 households from dengue. On a recent visit to the project the Australian Ambassador to Vietnam, Allaster Cox, said: 'Vietnam has been remarkably successful in mobilising communities to take responsibility for the control of dengue. The success of these programs and the strong support from the Government of Vietnam should be heralded as an example of what can be achieved when local community members are empowered to take responsibility for their own health.'

The project's success relies on the 40–50 village health workers assigned to each community, who are responsible for monitoring the presence of *Mesocyclops* and the dengue mosquito in each household.

The village health workers also have a new high-tech tool to help. Ramon Shinkfield, an Australian Youth

Ambassador for Development with geographical information system (GIS) skills, recently spent 12 months with AFAP to map dengue mosquito breeding hotspots.

Ramon used GIS to crunch through months of data collected by health workers to produce maps showing mosquito patterns and trends at the household level. This has provided program leaders, village health workers and the community with an image of where the project has been successful and which areas need more effort.

Dr Peter Ryan from one of the project partners, the Queensland Institute of Medical Research, said: 'Very few community-based health projects have been able to utilise new technologies such as GIS in any meaningful way. The fact that Vietnamese scientists and program managers can now map community data down to the household level, analyse results, and distribute resources according to priority and need, represents a very practical application of GIS in a public health setting.'

During his assignment in Vietnam, Ramon provided specialist training in GIS data management and analysis methods to 30 staff from the Vietnamese Ministry of Health to equip them with the skills to monitor the program.

The dengue control program demonstrates that a community-led approach combined with innovative solutions and smart technology like GIS can provide a powerful outcome for sustainable change.

LOWER LEFT: The *Mesocyclops* is a predator that eats the dengue mosquito larvae.

TOP LEFT: School children from the project.

TOP RIGHT: The dengue mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*.

Photos: Simon Kutcher, AFAP



More at Focus online





FOCUS ON DISASTERS



Developing countries are highly vulnerable to natural hazards such as cyclones, floods, landslides, droughts, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunamis.

LEFT: Devastation in Nusa Barooka after the April 2007 tsunami. Photo: Robin Davies, AusAID

ABOVE: A resident of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, carries his child who was injured in the devastating earthquake. Photo: Logan Abassi, UN Photo

Natural hazards can quickly become humanitarian disasters. Disasters can devastate the lives and livelihoods of people in developing countries and destroy years of hard-won development progress.

Managing disasters is not just about responding rapidly to emergencies. It involves reducing risks, being well-prepared and helping communities to rebuild.

Australia provides immediate assistance such as relief supplies, and medical and search and rescue teams.

Australia also makes contributions to development and humanitarian agencies, such as the Red Cross, which have extensive experience in relief operations.

Australia also invests heavily in programs to reduce the risk of natural disasters. Disaster risk reduction programs aim to reduce vulnerability and improve the resilience of local communities. These programs can significantly reduce the costs involved in disaster response while saving lives, livelihoods and development gains.

Tackling disasters



'We are there before a disaster, during a disaster and we're certainly going to be there after a disaster,'

Thanh Le



ABOVE: Thanh Le (left) in the AusAID crisis centre in October 2009.

TOP: Australian Defence Force personnel treat the wounded following earthquakes in Padang, West Sumatra. Photo: Australian Defence Force

When an earthquake hit Padang, West Sumatra, on 30 September 2009 more than 1,100 people were killed and thousands of buildings were destroyed.

Initial reports suggested the damage wasn't that extensive but after 24 hours reports were coming in of widespread damage largely in rural areas. When the Indonesian Government officially requested Australian assistance, AusAID's Humanitarian and Emergency Response Section leapt into action coordinating Australian search and rescue teams and Australian Defence Force medical assistance on the ground.

Thanh Le, AusAID's Manager, Emergency Response, was at the helm helping to facilitate agencies on the ground to get where they needed to be and ensure they had the tools and resources they needed to do their job.

'An earthquake is the one disaster you can't see coming,' he said. 'These

days we have a good idea of what sorts of damage such a disaster will cause—the sorts of injuries people will sustain, the infrastructure and resources likely to sustain damage, the types of secondary problems we will face such as illness.

'The hard part is getting people to prepare for a disaster, like putting in place early warning systems, storing food and preparing disaster response plans.'

Thanh has been on the ground for some of the Asia-Pacific region's major disasters over the last 10 years including four months in Aceh in 2005. In Aceh he oversaw eight teams who distributed more than one million litres of water to devastated parts of the region. That was the last time he 'got mud' on his boots.

When notification of the Padang earthquake came in he admits to feeling a little frustrated at being so far removed from the effort on the ground.

'Padang was interesting because when the disaster first struck we were already dealing with the tsunamis in

Governments in vulnerable countries, donors like Australia, defence forces, the United Nations, non-government organisations and even the private sector strive to improve disaster coordination and response.



Samoa and Tonga and there was no way I could leave.

‘At the time I was coordinating Australia’s response to six separate disasters, ensuring the right people and relief supplies reached those who needed it most. In some ways my job is a lot harder now than when I was on the ground because I don’t get to see the difference I’m making.’

Thanh defines a disaster as an event like a tsunami or a cyclone that overwhelms the local capacity to respond. He said preparation beforehand, of communities, countries, and agencies, was vital.

‘Preparing for a disaster saves lives. If you build a school you build it to withstand cyclones and to shelter the whole village so the community has a safe place to go in a cyclone. If you’re building a bridge, build it high enough and strong enough to withstand floodwaters.

‘That’s why we have a new disaster risk reduction policy—to educate and

help people prepare for disasters—encouraging things like storing food and water, setting up early warning systems, and supporting better weather forecasting.’

Thanh said the international community was constantly learning from and improving its disaster response. Governments in vulnerable countries, donors like Australia, defence forces, the United Nations, NGOs and even the private sector strive to improve disaster coordination and response.

‘If you set a goal for your response you get better and the better you get the less suffering people go through, the more efficient you get and the less waste you produce. You try to shorten the period of suffering for the people and help them rebuild their lives in a more disaster-resilient way.’

Thanh said AusAID has had a significant impact in the Asia-Pacific region especially in times of disaster. Because AusAID works closely with

governments and communities in the region, ‘we know the terrain and how things work. Our response staff are skilled and highly motivated to help when disasters strike.’

‘However many countries also need to get better at receiving international assistance. For example, to more quickly issue visas for humanitarian workers coming in, to exempt customs charges on relief packages, and improve the coordination of the international assistance coming in so that it’s targeted at the people who need it.’

AusAID is currently supporting a project by the International Federation of the Red Cross which assists national governments to revise legislation and regulations to address these sorts of issues.

LEFT: The beaches of Lalomanu after the tsunami in Samoa. Photo: Lou Anderson, AusAID



More at Focus online

Assistance to Padang



AusAID is supporting Indonesia with \$17 million of recovery and reconstruction assistance following the deadly earthquakes in West Sumatra and West Java in September 2009.

A total of \$12 million was allocated for West Sumatra and \$5 million for West Java.

In West Sumatra, Australia will provide up to \$10 million to help rebuild schools and public health facilities.

Australia will also provide \$1 million to the Government of Indonesia's Reconstruction Trust Fund and \$1 million to Australian non-government organisations to assist with their recovery and reconstruction efforts.

This assistance for recovery and reconstruction was in addition to Australia's emergency assistance, which included urban search and rescue teams and support for the local Red Cross to distribute cooking, hygiene and medical kits.

To assist with reconstruction in West Java following the earthquake in Tasikmalaya on 2 September, Australia is providing \$5 million to help repair or rebuild up to 100 schools. This assistance will build on the existing school construction program delivered through the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

ABOVE: An AusAID staff member examines damage caused by the earthquake in Padang, Indonesia. Photo: AusAID

Disaster risk reduction

In June 2009 Australia launched a new disaster risk reduction policy, *Investing in a safer future: a disaster risk reduction policy for the Australian aid program*. The policy details Australia's strong commitment to reducing the risk of disasters in developing countries. It provides a framework for current and future disaster risk reduction initiatives and outlines how disaster risk reduction should be considered in all development programs.

LEFT: Padang's Chinatown district was hit hard by the earthquake. Photo: Alice Trend, Wavepark.com



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Australia-Indonesia Disaster Reduction Facility



The Australia-Indonesia Disaster Reduction Facility was announced by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono on 22 November 2008 at APEC in Lima, Peru.

The facility is a joint initiative of the Governments of Australia and Indonesia. Australia is providing specialist staff and \$67 million over five years and Indonesia is providing counterpart staff, services and support.

It will build on Indonesia's capacity to manage disasters by drawing on shared disaster management experiences. It will also strengthen national and local capacity to reduce the risk of disasters in Indonesia and the region.

The facility reflects Indonesia's and Australia's concern over the growing impact of disasters in the region, including the potential for human suffering and the erosion of hard-won development gains.

ABOVE: Children after church in the Mentawai Islands, Indonesia. SurfAid has found this to be the most fruitful time to discuss emergency preparedness with local communities. Photo: Bob Barker, SurfAid



Safe water for flooded Vietnamese villages

In September 2009, Typhoon Ketsana tore through the Philippines and then cut a path through central Vietnam, causing major flooding. Cambodia and Laos also bore the impact of the typhoon.

The floods contaminated wells and other sources of drinking water. Having been surrounded by water in the wake of the disaster, thousands of people from central Vietnam found themselves without access to clean water. AusAID provided financial support to the Red Cross response following Typhoon Ketsana.

Two Australian water and sanitation experts, Peter O'Keeffe and Andy Sheehan, arrived in Vietnam soon after the typhoon to help set up a water treatment unit that could filter up to 5,000 litres of drinking water an hour.

Around 8,700 people in Loc Tri village had been buying water since the flooding of their village. Two contaminated wells provided an accessible water source for the water treatment unit to work its magic.

'Local people—especially the children—were very interested in seeing fresh water being produced from the contaminated community well,' said Peter O'Keeffe.

With no major road within a kilometre of the village, the equipment was lightweight and versatile enough to be carted in. It only took 30 minutes to build a temporary base to keep the water bladder steady near the community well.

The Australian Red Cross funded the water treatment unit which was operated by trained local experts once it was set up and formed a vital part of the emergency response in Vietnam. The unit was set up in four places—Loc An, Loc Tri, Loc Dien and Loc Son—for 33 days.

When the floods receded after Typhoon Ketsana, many villagers in central Vietnam had safe water to drink.

Once set up, villagers from outlying regions like Phu Mon, where 220 households had been in need of clean water, were able to make the trip by boat to collect water for households in their community. The water unit has now been packed away, ready for use during the next emergency.

ABOVE LEFT: A local collects clean water after Typhoon Ketsana.

ABOVE RIGHT: Andrew Sheehan samples the fresh water in Vietnam after Typhoon Ketsana.

Photos: Andrew Sheehan, Australian Red Cross

The 29 September 2009 tsunami wreaked havoc on the idyllic holiday islands of Samoa. With Australia's support, Samoa and Samoans are smiling again.



Samoa: the long road to recovery

by Lou Anderson, AusAID media adviser in Samoa



ABOVE: Professor Bill Griggs and paramedics searching through the rubble in the aftermath of the tsunami. Photo: Australian Defence Force

Samoa is renowned for its beautiful, unspoilt beaches, easygoing lifestyle, and friendly, welcoming Samoan hospitality. I've loved living in Samoa for the last three years. It truly is one of the best kept secrets in the Pacific.

That all changed on 29 September 2009 when an 8.3 magnitude earthquake hit Samoa, causing a devastating tsunami along a 30 km stretch of the south coast of the main island, Upolo.

My husband Matt Anderson, Australia's High Commissioner to Samoa, and I were woken by the earthquake. By the time it finished, nearly three minutes later, pictures had smashed as they fell from walls and trinkets were knocked from shelves.

Soon after, radio announcements sounded tsunami warnings. Within the hour the first casualties, including many Australians, were being brought into the nearby hospital.

Staff from the High Commission sprang into action amid further tsunami warnings and Australia immediately provided an initial \$2 million package of support.

The first Australian teams arrived in Samoa 24 hours after the tsunami and only 20 hours after the formal request for assistance from the Samoan Government. In all, 114 Australian medical personnel and search and rescue teams from Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania were

deployed. Disaster experts from AusAID, the Australian Federal Police (AFP), the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Emergency Management Australia (EMA), and Australian Defence Force (ADF) also came.

In the days after the tsunami, eight flights brought in more than 30 tonnes of disaster and emergency relief supplies, and evacuated the displaced and wounded.

The support provided by the doctors, nurses, paramedics and public health officers was nothing short of exceptional. There is no doubt that without this help many of the injured would have died in the days following the tsunami.

Search and rescue teams worked with Samoa Police, New Zealand Defence Force engineers and New Zealand Police cadaver dogs (and later New Zealand Defence Force divers) to complete some 550 hours of searching over an intensive five-day period.

The AFP Disaster Victim Identification team conducted post-mortem examinations leading to the identification of five Australian nationals, as well as the identification of other nationals and Samoans.

The families of the Australian High Commission were some of the unsung heroes of the relief effort. They were kept busy quietly caring for shell-shocked countrymen and Samoans alike. Clothes were passed on, food prepared, beds offered, comfort given.



After a very moving national day of mourning and mass burial nine days after the tsunami, people started to pick up the pieces. Despite the threat posed by the wet season, and nearly five months after the devastating tsunami struck, the Samoan people continue to demonstrate strength.

All day long trucks and heavy earthmoving equipment remove rubbish and debris. Roads are being rebuilt, power poles and lines replaced and water pipes restored. Many people have returned to what remains of their homes close to the beach. Others have moved to higher ground to make new lives in village plantations.

Australia is playing a major role in Samoa's rebuilding and recovery. Australia's assistance to Samoa's tsunami relief and recovery effort now stands at \$12 million.

An Australian disaster expert worked with the Samoan Government to help prepare a post-tsunami reconstruction plan, and in November the Australian Navy's HMAS Tobruk delivered 200 tonnes of aid supplies and essential equipment. The shipment included a new fire truck for Samoa Fire and Emergency Services to replace the one destroyed when responding to the tsunami, as well as donated goods and relief aid for the Red Cross, Caritas and Samoa's Disaster Management Office. While much of this emergency assistance has been distributed to people and communities

affected by the tsunami, some has been used to restock disaster stores.

More than 75 sailors from HMAS Tobruk helped local communities, environmental NGOs and the Samoan Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment with their clean-up and rebuilding activities for a day. Clean-up teams headed to Lalomanu beach, one of the worst affected areas, with two light amphibious resupply cargo vehicles (LARCs), capable of being used on land and in the water, to lift heavy metal and debris from the reef and beach. By the end of the day, more than five tonnes of debris was picked up.

While the reef clean-up was in full swing, two navy work teams headed to the local preschools to repair classrooms damaged by the tsunami. HMAS Tobruk's doctor, Lieutenant Commander Sue Sharpe, also spent the day at Lalomanu Hospital treating more than 40 patients. Medical equipment and supplies from the ship were donated to the hospital.

Staff and students from the AusAID-funded Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) also helped people and communities affected by the tragedy. In the week after the tsunami, the APTC's training restaurant provided hot lunches for more than 300 staff, patients and families at the local hospital, and APTC vehicles were offered to the Red Cross to transport essential supplies to the affected areas.

Many APTC families have been helping the Samoa Victims Support Group, which housed more than 11 families who lost their homes during the tsunami.

The drive along Upolu's south coast is still a heart-wrenching journey. The coast is still scarred from the tsunami which destroyed thousands of homes and killed more than 143 people. Every day I hear another sad story or another amazing story of survival. Samoa and Samoans have been incredible—such unshaken faith and so resilient despite enormous loss and adversity. Samoa remains open for business. The bulk of Samoa's hotels were unaffected, and were you to visit, you'd be welcomed with open arms and broad smiles. It's the Samoan way.

ABOVE LEFT: Donated clothing starts to arrive.

ABOVE CENTRE: When the Royal Australian Navy's HMAS Tobruk docked in Samoa in November 2009, it delivered 200 tonnes of essential equipment and supplies and a new fire truck for Samoa Fire and Emergency Services. The fire truck, donated by Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade, replaced the one destroyed during the tsunami. It has been dedicated to volunteer fire fighter Peter Letiu who lost his life during the emergency.

ABOVE RIGHT: The navy at work repairing Saleaumua preschool in Aleipata which was damaged in the tsunami.

Photos: Lou Anderson, AusAID



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Rebuilding Aceh

by Kirsten Mee, AusAID



To me, the Indonesian province of Aceh in northern Sumatra will always be synonymous with the Indian Ocean tsunami.

On my most recent visit I witnessed the rejuvenation of the vegetation and the villages that have been built along the western coast from Banda Aceh to Calang. Yet the remnants of the devastation from the tsunami are not difficult to spot.

Concrete pads where homes and other buildings once stood are now overgrown with grass and shrubs. The old coast road that once connected Banda Aceh to the towns of Meulaboh and Calang now sits in the middle of the ocean, with only remnants of what used to be bridges reaching out from the waves.

Hundreds of thousands of square kilometres of rich agricultural farming land ruined by salinity have been adapted to a new industry—aquaculture.

Perhaps one of the most visible impacts of the tsunami is the absence of children and the elderly. In some places, like Calang, 90 per cent of the population perished. For those left alive, the challenge was survival. Families were fractured, livelihoods lost and local infrastructure and economies destroyed.

In the village of Blang Krueng on the outskirts of Banda Aceh, it's easy to be impressed by the reconstruction efforts. This community now has a new village hall, a new community health centre, a library for the repaired school, roads,

Australia has contributed \$1 billion over five years through the Australia–Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development.

clean water and electricity. It even has a community-elected female village head.

Thanks to donors like Australia, essential government services like births, deaths and marriage registrations and land mapping have now been restored, and many people who fled to other parts of Aceh are coming back to try to start their lives again.

One program helping former residents make the transition back to the west



coast since March 2005 is AusAID's Local Governance and Infrastructure for Communities in Aceh (LOGICA) program.

LOGICA's Australian team leader, Jeff Herbert, believes Australia's response was very effective. 'What AusAID did as the lead agency was to coordinate and respond to emergency needs immediately after the tsunami. When assistance from other countries started flowing in, Australia identified the gaps and filled them in a way that avoided duplication and wasted resources.'

He said Australia did not just build a hospital or a school but 'made sure that the hospital was staffed with well-trained and well-equipped doctors and that the school had teachers who operated within recognised teaching standards.' This work continues today through the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development, which is supporting Indonesia's reconstruction and development efforts.

Although many communities in Aceh now appear to be recovering, big challenges still remain. It is the opinion

of many people in Aceh like Aguswandi, a consultant with the Indonesian Government's Aceh Peace Reintegration Agency, that 'improving the capacity of local people and more entrepreneurship and industry are the keys to long-term development.'

The ethos of the Indonesian Government's strategy for the post-tsunami reconstruction was to 'build a better Aceh.' Through the generosity and specialised skills as well as the determination and exuberance of the Acehnese people, progress towards poverty alleviation and sustainable development in a post-tsunami Aceh appears to be well within reach.

TOP LEFT: Students at a school in Banda Aceh, reconstructed and refurbished with Australian Government funds. Photo: M Anshar, AusAID

ABOVE: The power of the tsunami killed everything in its path. Photo: Rob Maccoll, AusAID

ABOVE RIGHT: Australia helped map more than 88,000 plots of land and provided small grants to communities to rebuild homes. Photo: Andi Madusila, AusAID

The December 2004 tsunami was caused by an underwater earthquake 250 km off the western coast of northern Sumatra that measured more than 9.0 on the Richter scale.

Without warning, the coastlines of 12 countries around the Indian Ocean—Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Seychelles and Madagascar—were hit by up to 15 metre waves of devastating ferocity.

Of the more than 200,000 people who perished, 167,000 were from Indonesia. Another 570,000 Indonesians were displaced.

The Australian public donated \$350 million in the tsunami appeal—the biggest public donation in our history.

The Australian Government's response was immediate. AusAID swiftly mobilised resources, skills and disaster experts, who were among the first to reach the affected areas. The Australian Government also made an immediate contribution of \$33 million in disaster assistance and relief.

Australia has contributed \$1 billion over five years through the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development.



Testing our disaster capabilities

by Claire McGeechan, communications officer, AusAID

A ferry shoots flares high into the skies above Manila Bay. The ferry is sinking because of a category four super typhoon crossing Manila and Central Luzon in the Philippines. The super typhoon is packing winds of up to 220 km an hour and causing widespread destruction. The Philippine Coast Guard comes to the rescue with a helicopter dropping rescue divers into the water to help victims jumping off the distressed vessel. A Japanese seaplane approaches the scene, landing just a few hundred metres from the sinking ferry. Together with the Philippine Coast Guard and the Philippine Navy, the victims are brought ashore and given immediate medical care.

This scenario was part of a cooperative exercise in the Philippines designed to test the ability of a number of countries to respond to a disaster in our region. I was lucky enough to participate in the exercise, gaining valuable experience as

a member of AusAID's Rapid Response Team—a trained team ready for deployment if the need arises.

The impressive sea rescue followed a desktop simulation that played out the coordinated response to the disaster.

The ASEAN Regional Forum Voluntary Demonstration of Response was the first ever initiative of its kind in the region bringing together the 27 members of the ASEAN Regional Forum.

The exercise also involved a range of activities from high-level roundtable discussions to engineering and medical projects. As a new member of the Rapid Response Team, I was really excited to get involved.

Although the coordination of the sea rescue demonstration looked seamless and simple, a similar operation in a real disaster could be quite different.

Time and planning are not luxuries afforded to disaster response situations, and the beautiful sunny weather that we

had that day would be unlikely during a super typhoon. However, testing coordination mechanisms through a simulation in near-perfect conditions does help to improve the efficiency and cooperation of a real disaster response.

As part of the exercise, civil and military personnel from countries including Australia, the Philippines, the United States, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Japan also worked together on various medical and engineering projects in Central Luzon, north of Manila. The projects had the twin aims of improving cooperation between countries in the event of a disaster and benefiting the local communities concerned.

One of the projects Australia participated in was to provide a clean water supply for the people of Sapang Bato by building a much-needed water purification system and a well. Australian personnel also worked alongside other



'I had learned a lot, but the more you learn the more you understand the complex nature of disaster relief. No situation, or its response, is ever the same.'

Claire McGeechan



What is the ASEAN Regional Forum?

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is made up of ten member states—Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam—and aims to promote growth and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. The ASEAN Regional Forum was set up in 1994 in recognition of security interdependence in the region. It draws together 27 members that have a bearing on the security of the Asia-Pacific region, including the 10 ASEAN countries, as well as Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia, United States, Papua New Guinea, Democratic Republic of Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan, East Timor, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The next ASEAN Regional Forum Voluntary Demonstration of Response is planned for 2011 in Indonesia, co-hosted with Japan. Australia will again participate and assist with the planning of this exercise.

countries to provide medical and dental care including tooth extractions, minor surgery and immunisations for children. It was amazing to see military personnel from so many different countries working together to help the local community.

Just to keep things interesting, an actual typhoon threatened to cross paths with our activities. While the impact was less severe than initially feared, 48 hours of fairly constant rain kept everyone on their toes, and almost took out a suspension bridge that was being built across a river. Luckily, the bridge was close enough to completion that the raging river below—a mere trickle when I first arrived—had no impact. Overall, the exercise was successful. An after-exercise review highlighted many areas for improvement, including a stronger presence of non-government organisations.

I flew home courtesy of the New Zealand Air Force and was both disappointed and relieved to discover the aircraft was a

standard passenger plane. However, the comfortable flight home gave me time to ponder my experience. I had learned a lot, but the more you learn the more you understand the complex nature of disaster relief. No situation, or its response, is ever the same. Geography, culture, politics, national capabilities and priorities, infrastructure and weather only add to the enormous complexities of a disaster response. The most exciting part though was the sense that we are closer to an efficient and coordinated international system for disaster response that will save lives.

ABOVE LEFT: A victim is treated as part of the Manila Bay emergency simulation.

ABOVE RIGHT: A Japanese Defence Force aircraft lands in Manila Bay to assist the Philippine Coast Guard in the rescue operation.

Photos: Claire McGeechan, AusAID

After the cyclone

by Marianne Jago, humanitarian assistance officer, Cyclone Nargis, AusAID

Nearly two years since Cyclone Nargis devastated the south coast of Burma, the survivors are displaying a unique brand of resilience.

At village meetings I hear stories. They're shocking stories. People here have similar tales, if not worse, and they want to tell them. It becomes obvious fairly quickly that my job is to bear witness to what happened, as much as it is to monitor how Australian aid is being spent.

I am in Burma with AusAID for a seven-month stint to monitor the Australian-funded work of United Nations agencies like the World Food Programme and UNICEF, and international non-government organisations like Save the Children, World Vision and Care Australia.

In between coordination meetings in Rangoon we visit the Irrawaddy Delta. There we see, hear and feel the ongoing effects of Cyclone Nargis which struck Burma on 2 May 2008, killing more than 140,000 people and seriously affecting another 2.4 million.

Yes, assistance is reaching the Burmese people. No, nearly two years on, it's not enough in many cases.

What is most striking is the courage of the Burmese villagers. One is a young woman, Ma Hla (not her real name), who runs a self-reliance group through the United Nations Development Programme using AusAID funding.

Articulate, charismatic and motivated, Ma Hla is semi-literate and a widow at 24. She tells how she watched, clinging to a palm tree, as her husband and two children were swept away in the middle of the night when the cyclone's four-metre tidal surge reached their village.



This woman is inspirational. Her ability to pick herself up and keep going in the face of so much loss is humbling, almost humiliating. The group she leads sets aside a small amount of money each month and lends it at a low interest rate to whomever they decide needs it most.

The women tell us about the strength and confidence, as well as budgeting skills, they've learned from being in the group. Since Burma's informal credit system has been largely wiped out in cyclone-affected areas, initiatives like this are providing a lifeline to many.

But more ambitious credit and grant schemes are also needed. Falling commodity prices because of the global recession meant that most farmers didn't recover the cost of last year's harvest or repay the debt they'd accumulated since Nargis swept away their livelihoods. They say they haven't faced this level of uncertainty about their futures before.

In Rangoon, the Burmese people had largely cleared the streets of fallen trees and other debris within days of the cyclone. They give new meaning to the word 'resilience.'



The bulk of the early, life-saving response came from the Burmese people themselves. Community organisations were formed to locate and distribute aid demonstrating the quintessentially Burmese 'culture of sharing' that the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has nominated as 'essential to the relative success of the emergency response.'



More at Focus online



TOP: Small livelihoods grants of just USD30–70 from the UNDP are enough to give these small business owners back their livelihoods and create a sustainable income. Photo: Marianne Jago, AusAID

ABOVE: This well is the main source of fresh water for a small village. Photo: Marianne Jago, AusAID

LEFT: The women consulted in this village told the author (seated centre right in red blouse) and UNICEF officer Daw Ma La (on her right) how emergency child-friendly spaces have helped children recover. Photo: Joyce Win, UNICEF

Humanitarian assistance for Burma

Australia has committed \$65 million to help survivors of Cyclone Nargis in Burma. This includes a \$15 million humanitarian assistance package for the people of Burma announced in November 2009. That \$15 million includes:

- > \$7 million over two years for water and sanitation
- > \$4 million to improve food security especially for families dependent on agriculture and fishing
- > \$2 million to improve access to education services for children who have yet to return to school
- > \$1 million to support essential maternal and child health services in rural and remote areas
- > \$1 million of further support for ASEAN's role in the management and coordination of relief efforts

Diary of an NGO

by Dr Dave Jenkins, SurfAid International Founder

SurfAid International is building on its disaster response experience to help the villagers of remote Indonesian islands to prepare for another giant earthquake and possible tsunami.

Flashback to Christmas 2004: On the afternoon of 26 December 2004 I was still nursing the usual Christmas over-indulgence, parked in a musty 1960s caravan on the back lawn of SurfAid Chairman Dr Steve Hathaway's house by the beach.

After a tough year building SurfAid field projects in community health and malaria control in the Mentawai Islands of West Sumatra, Indonesia, it was time to relax, surf and catch-up with my two daughters, who had dubbed me the 'missing-in-action Dad'. Since founding SurfAid in 2000, I had spent a lot of time away or working and we were well overdue a holiday together.

Then news about the damage from the earthquake and tsunami started filtering through. There were deaths and injuries on Nias, an island north of the Mentawai Islands and closer to the earthquake's epicentre. No outside help was there. I began to pack my bags. This was our territory, the places we loved to visit and surf. The emails and phone calls began to fly—'What's been hit? What's the situation on the ground? What can SurfAid do given that we have no experience in emergency response?'

I flew to our office in Padang, West Sumatra. Over the following days we found that a few surf charter boats were the only ones responding to villages in remote islands where fragile communications and infrastructure had been hit. Hundreds of thousands of people were at risk of hunger and disease. By partnering with the local surf charter industry, mobilising our staff, and accepting offers from medical volunteers, we could provide assistance to these communities.



What followed was to change SurfAid forever as surf companies Quiksilver and Billabong led with substantial donations, followed by the general surfing community. In two weeks we tripled our capacity with sufficient funding to send a small flotilla of medics and supplies north into the worst-affected zones.

It quickly became apparent that SurfAid was the only non-government organisation with the marine logistics capable of supplying the island chain. AusAID quickly offered to help us extend our response and we soon became the lead agency in the remote islands, sending daily situation reports to the UN

and advising AusAID and the US Navy on the needs of the people.

Fast forward to 2005: On 28 March 2005 Nias was hit by another earthquake measuring 8.7 on the Richter scale. Our teams were faced with another full scale emergency. Again AusAID supported our response, which this time required more medical evacuations and care. I remember fighting back tears upon finding a nine-year-old girl one week after the earthquake. She was lying in a hilltop village in extreme pain with fractured hips. It was AusAID funding that saved her life and those of many others in the days and weeks that followed.



Over the course of the two disasters, we helped nearly 160,000 people—immunising 16,500 children, distributing nearly 30,000 insecticide-treated mosquito nets, treating nearly 3,000 sick and injured people, distributing 360 tonnes of emergency aid, and performing 60 emergency evacuations.

Our focus has since turned to preparing communities for future disasters. More large earthquakes are predicted for the region and research shows that \$1 spent on disaster preparedness saves up to \$10 in disaster response and recovery.

continued next page

In 2006, with the support of AusAID, SurfAid International developed an emergency preparedness or 'E-Prep' program to save lives. The E-Prep program uses drama, song, video, artwork, comics, radio messaging and community-based emergency preparedness plans to train villagers how to react quickly and decisively in the event of a disaster.



MAIN: Dr Dave Jenkins with malnourished baby.
Photo: Bob Barker, SurfAid

TOP: Shindy was buried under her house for 10 minutes before her family could dig her out. She is taking part in SurfAid's psychosocial program. Photo: Matt Hannon, SurfAid

ABOVE: Villagers carry out an evacuation drill.
Photo: Kirk Willcox, SurfAid

Fast forward to 2006: Nias and the Mentawai Islands lie in one of the most radical earthquake zones in the world, where two tectonic plates in the Earth's crust meet underwater. About once every 200 years one of these plates slips abruptly under the other. This causes a massive upheaval, or 'mega thrust', that can lift coral reefs out of the water and cause events like the 9.3 magnitude Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunamis of December 2004, the 8.7 northern Sumatra earthquake of March 2005, and the 8.4 and 7.9 Mentawai earthquakes of September 2007.

Previous events of this magnitude were in 1797 and 1833. Experts like Professor Kerry Sieh, formerly with the Californian Institute of Technology and founding director of the Earth Observatory of Singapore, predict another giant earthquake off the coast of Sumatra within the next few decades.

In 2006, with the support of AusAID, SurfAid International developed an emergency preparedness or 'E-Prep' program that is designed to save lives. The E-Prep program uses drama, song, video, artwork, comics, radio messaging and community-based emergency preparedness plans to train villagers how to react quickly and decisively in the event of a disaster.

Fast forward to today: Our E-Prep teams travel into isolated communities to build up the skills of the community disaster management teams or 'Satlinmas'. The Satlinmas know how to treat the wounded, evacuate people with injuries and use basic search and rescue techniques.

The Satlinmas have designed emergency response procedures, including local early warning systems and high-ground evacuation plans. They have identified evacuation routes, prepared evacuation sites and stored food on high ground.

The program started with school-based training before moving to the community level. So far E-Prep has trained more than 1,600 volunteers in a range of specialist skills. The emphasis has been on communities using local and available resources. For example, villagers learn how to make stretchers from bamboo and sarongs, and evacuate vulnerable pregnant women using chairs or doors.





SurfAid is working with 58 communities in the region to deliver the E-Prep program.

Moses, the head of Katurai village, told me recently that his community knows they have to be ready to help themselves, as they don't know when help could arrive. They have enough food stored to live for two months if something big happens.

SurfAid continues to work with 58 communities in the region but there is still much more work to do and more villages to help prepare.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Mentawai school children. Photo: Bob Barker, SurfAid

TOP: School children practise emergency drills. Photos: Jason Brown, SurfAid

ABOVE: Canoes at Katiet. Photo: Bob Barker, SurfAid

SCHOLARSHIPS

Australian scholarships making a difference

In 2009, AusAID gave more than 1,270 scholarship awardees the chance to study in Australia before returning home to contribute to the development of their countries and the region.



Glossy Chakma

Glossy Chakma graduated with a Masters in Engineering Science from the University of Melbourne in 2005. She is now responsible for disaster management in the Rangamati district of Bangladesh for the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF).

'As a civil engineer, I worked with organisations such as the Hunger Project Bangladesh and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). During this time I helped design schools and supervised the development of proper waste management systems.

'In 2004 I applied for an AusAID scholarship and was offered a place in the Masters in Engineering Science course at the University of Melbourne where I majored in environmental engineering. At first I wasn't sure whether I would be able to accept the offer because I was pregnant and the

baby was due at the same time the course was supposed to start. But I was able to postpone my study and my husband and I moved to Melbourne to start my Masters course when my baby was four months old. Without my family around I would have felt homesick and struggled to study.

'I graduated with my Masters in December 2005 and, after returning to Bangladesh, I joined Oxfam Great Britain's Bangladesh program. My job mainly involved working with people in flood prone areas in North Bengal, providing advice on reducing flood risks.

'Since November 2009 I have worked under UNDP's CHTDF Disaster Management Cluster. This program works on earthquake risk reduction and recovery preparedness. My key role is to develop institutional and community capacity. I facilitate the partnership to help them to construct earthquake-

resistant buildings and help implement community preparedness activities.

'I strongly believe that the opportunity to pursue further education in Australia through the AusAID scholarship increased my understanding of development, increased my confidence and helped my professional development. In the future I hope to continue to help reduce the risks and hazards posed to vulnerable communities by natural disasters.'

LEFT: Glossy Chakma (middle) with earthquake training participants in Rangamati.

I Gede Wahyu Wicaksana



I Gede Wahyu Wicaksana (pictured above), from Indonesia, is doing a PhD in political science and international relations at the School of Social and Cultural Studies at the University of Western Australia.

'I have been severely visually impaired since birth, suffering from a condition known as corneal dystrophy. Because of this condition I have suffered enormous discrimination throughout my life. In Surabaya, Indonesia, I was an honorary lecturer in Airlangga University's Faculty of Social and Political Sciences. But my disability prevented me from being granted a permanent position.

GLOBAL EDUCATION

Resources for schools

Global education prepares students to live in an increasingly globalised world and to be active, participating citizens who contribute to shaping a better future.

'I started my scholarship at the University of Western Australia (UWA) in January 2008. Less than a week after I arrived in Perth to start my scholarship, Airlangga University requested I return to Surabaya immediately to undergo administrative and medical tests as part of my application for a tenured position. It was a long and hard road to get to that point and I will always be incredibly thankful for the passionate support I received from my colleagues at Airlangga.

'In October 2008 I found out that my tenure had been approved and my colleagues at Airlangga University believe I am one of the first persons with a disability to receive a tenured position from the Indonesian Government. As you can imagine I am ecstatic.

'AusAID representatives in Indonesia have told me how delighted they are with the achievement and how it affirms Australia's commitment to making its aid programs accessible to people with a disability. I must thank AusAID for the support I've received. I do realise my scholarship achievement has empowered me and put me on equal footing with my colleagues at Airlangga.

'As part of my PhD I am researching the role Islam plays as a marker of identity in Indonesian relations with Pakistan and India. My study is progressing very well and I have just undertaken a fieldwork trip to Indonesia.

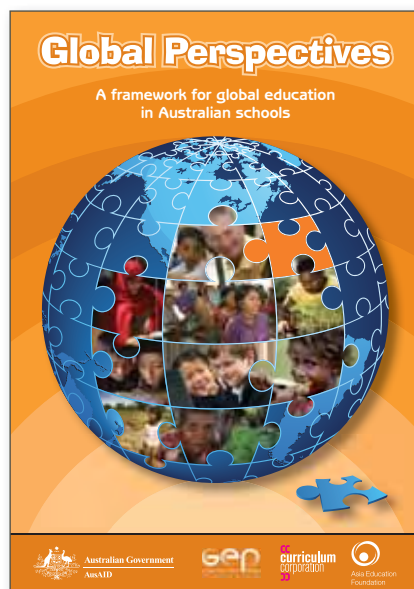
'I have received excellent support from the UWA Disability Officer and the Association for the Blind. I hope to establish a disability unit at the Airlangga University when I return to take up my tenured position on the completion of my studies at UWA.'

Australians are members of a global community, and are connected to the world through cultures, economics, politics, shared environment, enhanced communication and travel. Unfortunately the resources of the world are not shared equitably, people suffer injustice, discrimination, abuse of their rights, conflict and the effects of unsustainable development.

Global education promotes positive values, knowledge and skills to take action for change. It is transformative. The global education statement outlines a framework and provides suggestions

for including a global perspective across all levels of schooling and across the curriculum. It aims to develop in teachers and students an open-minded approach to the world and a predisposition to actively participate with others to build a shared future.

In each state global education is promoted by teacher training groups who can also assist teachers prepare lessons and teach with a global perspective. Details for your state are at www.globaleducation.edna.edu.au and follow the 'PD Providers' tag.



Global Perspectives: A framework for global education in Australian schools provides ideas for the integration of a global perspective in the classroom. It is available free from books@ausaid.gov.au



Pacific Neighbours: understanding the Pacific islands helps teachers and students understand our near neighbours in the Pacific and Australia's role in the region.

www.globaleducation.edna.edu.au



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