

focus

A young boy with dark hair, smiling broadly, wearing a white short-sleeved school shirt and a maroon and gold striped tie. He is sitting at a green wooden desk. The background is blurred, showing other students and classroom furniture.

THE MAGAZINE OF AUSTRALIA'S OVERSEAS AID PROGRAM

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Australian aid:
Making a real difference
Delivering real results

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

About AusAID

The fundamental purpose of Australian aid is to help people overcome poverty. This also serves Australia's national interests by promoting stability and prosperity in our region and beyond.

The Australian Agency for International Development, AusAID, manages the Australian aid program using methods and partners that are effective in achieving results and efficient in delivering value for money.

What we focus on

Our goals are:

- > saving lives
- > promoting opportunities for all
- > sustainable economic development
- > effective governance
- > humanitarian and disaster response

Where our aid goes

Most of our assistance goes to developing countries in the Pacific, East, West and South Asia. We also provide aid to Africa and the Middle East and a small amount to parts of Latin America and the Caribbean where needs are also high.

Size of the aid program

In 2011-12, Australian aid will increase to \$4,836 million. This is 0.35 per cent of gross national income (GNI). The Australian Government is working towards a target of 0.5 per cent of GNI by 2015-16.



Look out for this icon which tells you where you can find more information at Focus online. Visit <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/focusonline/>

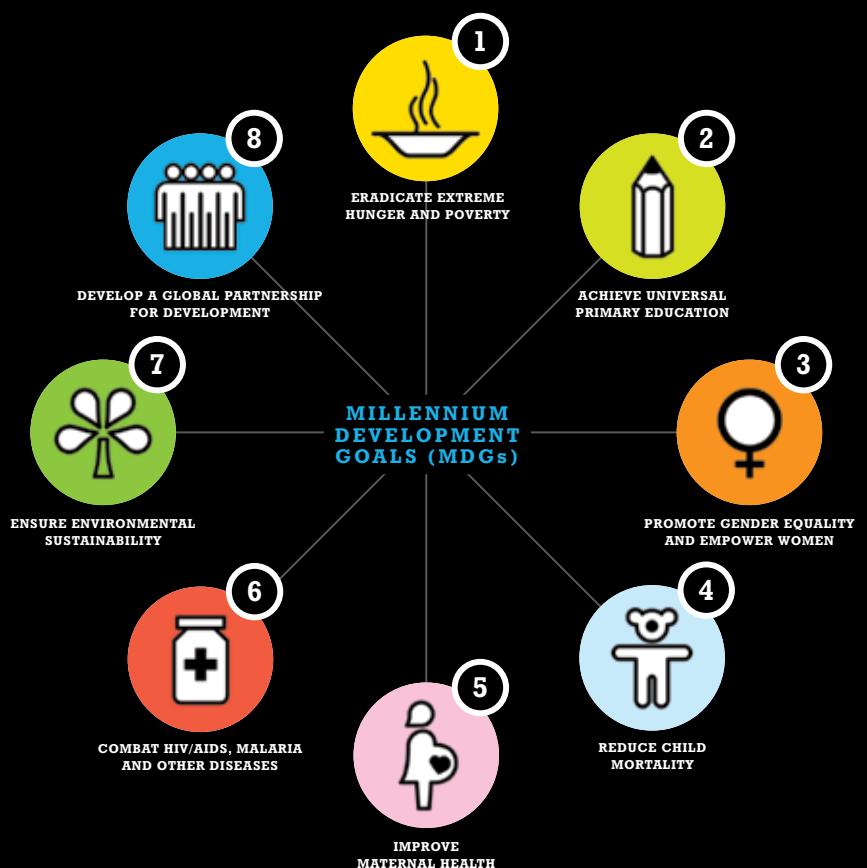
ABOVE: With AusAID and UNICEF support, these Pakistani girls now attend school in the afternoon after the boys have finished their classes.
Photo by Anne Rigby/AusAID.



Millennium Development Goals

The eight Millennium Development Goals represent an agreed agenda for both developing and developed countries, working together in partnership, to reduce poverty and advance human development in a range of critical areas by 2015.

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



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COVER: A student from Kiriwaneliya Singla School in Sri Lanka. AusAID funds projects at the school through a partnership with World Vision. Photo: Conor Ashleigh

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Mr Marles in Vanuatu

Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs, Richard Marles, recently visited schools in Port Vila to see how Australia's work with the Vanuatu Government and other donors is making a difference to primary school children.

Australia has allocated \$6 million this year to helping Vanuatu improve access to education and levels of literacy and numeracy for the country's 43 000 primary school students.

Already 3 000 more children are in school than in 2009 because of aid from Australia and other donors. Unlike Australia, education is not free in Vanuatu and fees are often beyond the reach of parents who earn little or no cash income.

Donors are working with the Government of Vanuatu to relieve

families of this burden by giving grants to schools to replace fees. This means that parents can now afford to send their children to school.

During his visit Mr Marles also met the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and senior business, economic and community leaders.

"Vanuatu is a key partner country for Australia," said Mr Marles. "I met a range of leading Vanuatu economic figures and business people to hear first-hand how the economy is performing and its prospects for the year ahead."

ABOVE: Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs, Richard Marles (centre) with Mr Morris Kaluat, Principal of the Pango Primary School (left) and librarian Dolly Kalran (right). Photo: DFAT, Vanuatu

Australia's new aid policy

The Australian aid program continues to evolve in line with the Government's plan to increase the aid budget to 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income by 2015–16.

Our work is guided by a new policy called *Effective Aid*. The policy sets a new purpose for the program, to help people overcome poverty, and outlines the aid program's direction through to 2015–16. The policy follows an independent review of the aid program in 2010–11 which found that Australia has a good aid program and is an effective performer by global standards.

In line with *Effective Aid*, the Government launched a Transparency Charter for the aid program in November 2011. The Charter commits AusAID to be more open about its programs and to increase the amount of information available on the aid program in a timely and user-friendly format. New transparency webpages are already live for AusAID's Vanuatu and Philippines country programs and all country programs will have transparency pages by the end of 2012.

Effective Aid also commits AusAID to report our results more clearly and the effect our aid has on the lives of poor people. By improving how we measure and report our results, we will be more accountable to our stakeholders and be more informed in our decision-making.

The Government will also work more closely with civil society, Australian business, universities and research institutions, volunteers and the Australian public. Involving these groups in the aid program means we can tap into their ingenuity, know-how and drive. This will be done through a range of measures, including plans to consult annually with the business sector, a new framework for working with civil society and a larger volunteer program.

The next edition of *Focus* will report further on the progress of these initiatives and show how we are delivering more effective aid.



Aung San Suu Kyi visits aid program

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, General Secretary of the Burmese National League for Democracy, has seen first-hand the work being done to help lift Burmese people out of poverty.

Ms Suu Kyi recently visited projects run under the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund—LIFT—in central Burma as well as villages in Myaing township. She was accompanied by Australia's Ambassador to Burma, Ms Bronte Moules, and AusAID Counsellor, Mr Michael Hassett.

The LIFT program was established by Australia, the United Kingdom and other international donors to help the country recover from the devastation caused by Cyclone Nargis in 2008.

So far LIFT has given training in better agricultural practices to 16 000 farmers, and handed over 2 000 buffaloes and 500 tractors to hundreds of farmers in Central Burma. Farmers are now able to cultivate more land and produce more food, which has led to more income for many households and villages.

LIFT has also provided significant support to microfinance activities in 2 613 villages and services to more than 50 000 poor and vulnerable households.

Australia is the second largest aid donor to Burma.

ABOVE: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visited two villages in Myaing Township, central Burma, where AusAID is supporting local communities through the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund. Photo: Yasmin Padamsee/LIFT.

More midwives for Ethiopia

Australia is investing in health programs in Ethiopia that will lead to more trained health workers, increased rates of immunisation and a reduction in maternal and infant deaths.

Australia and Ethiopia recently signed a new bilateral agreement that includes \$43 million over four years to strengthen national health programs in the country.

It will help to increase the number of trained midwives from 2002 to 8 635,

and increase the number of deliveries attended by skilled birth attendants from 18 to 62 per cent.

Through Australia's investment maternal mortality is expected to drop from 590 to 267 deaths per 100 000 live births and infant deaths to reduce from 59 to 31 per 1 000 live births. It will also help measles immunisation reach 90 per cent of the population.



Australia is helping to prevent a deepening food shortage in the Sahel region in Africa.

Millions of people in the Sahel are in need of food following drought, reduced crop harvests and people movements from other parts of Africa affected by conflict, such as Libya and Cote d'Ivoire.

Australia is acting early to help prevent a growing food crisis in the region, providing \$10 million through the World Food Programme and other UN partners. We are focussing on the worst hit countries of Niger and Chad. This builds on our existing work, through the CSIRO, to improve the long-term food security and resilience of West African countries.

Australia is also contributing \$9 million to help people caught up in ongoing conflict in the border areas of Sudan and South Sudan. Villages have been burned, hundreds of people have been killed or injured and hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced and are without access to food, water, health and other basic services. To make matters worse, bad weather has affected crops and the UN warns of an impending food crisis.

Australia's funding will go towards airlifting relief water, shelter and medical supplies to the hardest hit and most inaccessible areas.

ABOVE: Australian funded WFP food distribution site at Arbakerams Village, Wajir District northern Kenya. Photo: Scott Kelleher/AusAID



FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Education transforms lives. It can lift people out of poverty like nothing else can and the benefits are passed on through generations. From the Colombo Plan to today, education remains at the very heart of Australia's overseas aid program.

Imagine Australia having a population three times its present size. Now imagine that population consisting only of school-aged children. Imagine further that none of these children have ever gone to school. This is reality for 67 million children in developing countries.

Of these children, 27 million are in the Asia Pacific region and disturbingly their numbers are growing, partly because of high population growth. East Timor and Pacific island nations will soon have a large population of youth, all with dreams and aspirations of their own. Whether these are realised or not, will depend heavily on the amount and quality of education they receive.

Australia's investment in education is designed to help countries make faster

progress towards Millennium Development Goal 2 which is to ensure that children everywhere will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

Getting children into school is achievable. The decade between 1999 and 2009—where numbers of children globally out of school fell dramatically from 105 million to 67 million—shows it can be done.

Australia is playing its part. We are helping 21 countries develop their education sectors and we are providing scholarships to students in 109 countries. We particularly target education for girls, children with a disability and those living in remote areas. Our support for education is solid and reflects the Australian way of wanting to help people get on in life.

LEFT: Students at Taurama Primary School in Port Moresby. Photo: AusAID



Education overview

by Allison Taylor and Elizabeth James, AusAID

There is no single way to improve school attendance or the quality of education that children receive. The challenge—and it is an exciting one—is to find what works best in a particular setting.



"I once lived near an area where there was a mine. To benefit from the mine, the local people had to document the history of the land the mine was on. Most of them had trouble reading and writing so they went to town to find clansmen who could do this for them. While they were away, another group that was more literate submitted their own documentation of the land. Because they got in first, they benefitted more. The first group ended up with a bad deal simply because they were not as educated."

Many people, like those in this woman's story, can end up with a bad deal in life through circumstances not of their making. However, missing out on education makes a bad deal more likely. In developing countries, not having an education often means a life of poverty. It can mean long hours working in fields or in factories for little money. It can mean poor health brought on by drinking dirty water or being malnourished or catching life threatening, preventable diseases. It can limit people's options in what they do with their life and their ability to make informed choices.

Education cannot cure all social and economic ills but it is one of the best defences we have against poverty and one of our best means of gaining a better quality of life and standard of living. Educated societies are generally more prosperous and stable with people able to think critically and creatively because they are not worn down by hunger and day-to-day basic survival. Girls who are educated will in all probability have fewer children, better health and better economic prospects which benefit whole communities.

According to UNECSO, 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills—that is equivalent to a 12 per cent cut in global poverty.

The good news is that more children are in school than ever before. The World Bank estimates in low-income countries, average enrolment rates in primary education have surged upwards of 80 per cent compared with two decades ago, and primary completion rates are now above 60 per cent. Some countries such as India and Tanzania have made stunning progress.

Other countries have not made as much progress, sometimes because they have been involved in conflict, or there

has not been the political will or resources to dedicate to education, especially for girls. Globally, there are still 35 million girls out of school. In some parts of the world, young girls who would rather be in a classroom, become unwilling brides and mothers, a fact noted at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Australia last year. Other children are recruited as child soldiers or sex slaves. Many have to work at home, on the street or doing whatever they can to survive. Children with a disability are least likely to go to school.

Unlike other developed countries, Australia is surrounded by nations where many children don't go to school at all, let alone finish primary school. About 27 million of the 67 million children worldwide who do not go to school are in Asia and the Pacific. The argument for education as a means of transforming the lives of these children is so strong that the Australian Government has put education at the very heart of the aid program.

In 2011–12, our investment in education is anticipated to be \$842 million, which is close to 20 per cent of the aid budget. By 2015, we expect this may increase to 25 per cent.

Our support extends beyond Asia and the Pacific to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh where the need is also desperately high. We work to not just get children into school, but to have them there longer, to give them quality education delivered by teachers with sufficient training to do a decent job. We work to give young people vocational training that will lead to job opportunities and the means to establish themselves financially. Furthermore, we work to build intellectual wealth among scholars so that they may return home and contribute to the economic and social development of their countries.

By working creatively with partners—be they governments, international

Educated societies are generally more prosperous and stable with people able to think critically and creatively because they are not worn down by hunger and day-to-day basic survival.

organisations such as the Global Partnership for Education, or non-government organisations and volunteer groups—we can achieve a great deal.

The following stories show how Australia and Australians are investing in education and giving people in developing countries the tools they need to draw their own value and purpose from life. We see how our support is helping teachers in Indonesia hone their skills, how a new dormitory is giving girls in Papua New Guinea the chance to finish school, the difference a school meal program can make in Laos, how a library in East Timor is introducing people for the very first time to the wonderful world of books—and much more. Enjoy.

TOP: Children from Kiriwaneliya Singla School in Sri Lanka count aloud. The school is partly funded by AusAID through a partnership with World Vision. Photo: Conor Ashleigh

FAR LEFT: Children at Nakanyonya Primary School in Uganda. The lives of many of the children are improved through assistance from Australia and ChildFund Uganda. Photo: Kate Holt/Africa Practice

FAR RIGHT: By 2015 Indonesia aims to have all children receiving nine years of education. Photo: Josh Estey/AusAID



An incentive to learn in PNG

by Michael Wightman, AusAID Port Moresby



ABOVE: Student Janivine Gau in her dormitory at Notre Dame Secondary School in Mount Hagen, Western Highlands Province, PNG. Photo: Cath Mackson/AusAID

TOP: Sister Mary Vivette at Notre Dame Secondary School. Photo: Francina Thomson/AusAID.

TOP RIGHT: Students from Kavieng, New Ireland Province. Photo: Michael Wightman/AusAID

Not long ago the Principal of Notre Dame Secondary School in Mount Hagen, Sister Mary Vivette, found herself in an awful dilemma.

Despite being a champion of girls' education, she was turning away female students hoping to finish the two final crucial years of their high school education at Notre Dame simply because she could not accommodate them. "At the time we could only take on 20 more students than we had room for and many girls were doubling in the beds. Some classes had a ratio of 50 students to one teacher," Sister Mary Vivette said.

Sister Mary Vivette is not one to give up. Back in 2003 she successfully applied for a grant under the Australian Incentive Fund to expand and upgrade the school to secondary school status. The new classrooms, computer and science laboratories, accommodation for teachers and students and secure fences and lighting so important for girls to feel safe, soon had students clamouring to enrol.

Partly as a measure of the school's success and partly because more children

are finishing primary school, Sister Mary Vivette now faces the same problem as before—too many girls and not enough beds or teachers. "With Papua New Guinea and Australia's assistance to primary schools, including abolishing school fees for the first three years of schooling, more students are now coming through to the secondary system."

The pragmatic Sister has again turned to the Incentive Fund. With a new grant, the school will have a 52 bed student dormitory, four new classrooms, a new kitchen, extended dining hall and upgraded water reticulation system and new teacher accommodation.

"This is what the Incentive Fund was set up to do," explains Dave Vosen, AusAID Acting Minister Counsellor in PNG. "If schools can use aid program grants effectively, provide matched funding, attract quality staff and improve services, the incentive for them is a grant from the Australian aid program. It doesn't matter if it's a school or a health clinic or a training facility; through the Incentive Fund we are able to reward good performance by backing those who want



Education in Papua New Guinea

“The girls have their dreams and they are really pursuing them, they are not just sitting back. I think it is a result of the atmosphere we have at the school now.”

Sister Mary Vivette

to make a difference in their communities. It's taxpayers dollars well spent.”

Sister Mary Vivette is determined that girls in Papua New Guinea should continue their education and have the opportunities that boys have. “At almost every graduation I remind the students, staff, parents, and especially the dignitaries present that a society that oppresses women is also an economically poor one, as well as depriving itself of many other riches.”

Papua New Guinea has an education wish list. It wants 75 per cent of primary school aged children in school by 2015. It wants improvements in education management, more girls in schools and in technical and vocational education and more than 50 000 graduates through higher education institutions.

Progress towards achieving this is being made, but there is a way to go. At present Papua New Guinea is struggling to educate its two million elementary and primary school children. More than 500 000 children aged 6–12 do not go to school and it's estimated half the adult population cannot read or write. More boys than girls go to school and complete basic education. The country needs more classrooms, teachers need more training and management and financing from a national to school level needs strengthening.

In 2010 AusAID funded the construction of 361 school buildings, which included 184 classrooms, 85 teacher houses, and 92 school

offices around Papua New Guinea. Between 2012 and 2015, AusAID will construct up to 1 100 classrooms, 450 teacher houses and 550 offices.

In 2010 AusAID procured and delivered 539 000 primary school textbooks. In 2011 that number jumped to 1.5 million. Over the next four years, AusAID will procure and deliver another 2.5 million textbooks in PNG. If stretched in a line, the four million books would cover the distance between Port Moresby and Cairns in Northern Queensland.

AusAID also provided \$19.5 million in 2010 and 2011 to eliminate school fees for the first three years of school. This has helped lift the enrolment of primary school children from 53 per cent in 2007 to 75 per cent in 2010, which means that there are at least 200 000 more children in school. Funding of a further \$14 million in 2012 will help support the PNG Government's own fee-free tuition program for all elementary, primary and lower secondary school students.

Teaching the teachers

by Arif Firdaus, Mia Salim and Katherine Pohl, AusAID

Teaching children is one thing. But what about teaching the teachers?

Since 2006, Australia has helped create more than 330 000 new school places for children throughout Indonesia, by building 2 000 new schools. While this gives children access to education, in itself it doesn't guarantee they receive a good education. The quality of teaching and the management of the schools are just as important.

Teachers in Indonesia often only have a diploma and no formal teaching training. With Australian Government funding for the Basic Education Program, teachers were trained to be better at their craft, and principals to be better managers and leaders.

Over several months, school principals, teachers, school treasurers and members of school committees took part in training courses that cover the management and maintenance of schools, budgeting, lesson planning and effective teaching.

At Islamic school, Madrasah Miftahul Ulum in Banten province in Java, the principal teacher, Jazuli, saw the training as a chance for teachers to improve the quality of their lessons.

"I was so excited. The training was full of new information and we were taught many new techniques that we can use to run our school," he said.

He attended the training with four other school representatives, including teachers, and is already seeing the benefits. His staff are now more independent and are helping him with school management.

"I no longer have to tell the staff what they should be teaching on a daily basis. They know exactly what their job is without me constantly telling them."

Science teacher Atik Sumantri is already using his new skills in the classroom. He is the only staff member at his school with a bachelor degree. While his tertiary education helps in his teaching job, his study leant towards 'rote'



learning, a technique which he passed on to his students.

In the past, most of the time, Atik's students wouldn't have a copy of the text book he was using, so he would read passages to his students, who would copy down what he was reciting. Other times a student would write passages from a text book on the whiteboard for other classmates to copy.

"Memorizing information was the only teaching method I used. But when I did

the training, I was introduced to different teaching techniques."

Atik now uses new methods to teach science and is taking his classes outdoors. He encourages his students to bring along tools from home, like rope or a trowel, so they can learn about plants, practice first-hand how to plant trees and discover how they grow. At the end of these lessons, students note down what they learnt and share their experiences. Atik is already seeing results



Australia's new five-year \$500 million Education Partnership with Indonesia continues to support improving the quality of schools including a national professional development program which will strengthen the management and leadership skills of Indonesia's 293 000 school principals, school supervisors and district government education officials.

Australia's assistance also includes constructing or expanding up to 2 000 more junior secondary schools, creating approximately 300 000 new places for junior secondary students.

Indonesia aims to have every child receiving at least nine years of basic education by 2015. Australia is helping Indonesia work towards this goal.

with students finding their lessons more enjoyable and meaningful.

And it isn't just the teachers who attended the training or their students who are seeing a difference—the whole madrasah has benefited.

A new Maths teacher, Titin, missed out on the training but she's been learning about new teaching methods from other staff members.

"My colleagues feel it's important to share their experiences and hold sessions

where they teach us about the techniques that they learnt," she says.

"All the teachers agree that their teaching is now more effective and efficient. They don't rely too much on text books anymore."

So far, more than 12 000 teachers and representatives from schools and constructed have Australia have benefitted from this training.

LEFT: Students at Madrasah Miftahul Ulum in Banten province in Java.

ABOVE: Science teacher Atik Sumantri.

Photos: Maria Siahaan/AusAID



Carol Bellamy and the Global Partnership for Education

by Elizabeth James, AusAID

She has been a corporate lawyer, an investment banker and a New York City politician. Yet Carol Bellamy counts her years working towards helping get children into school as among her finest.

Formerly with UNICEF and now a leading force in the Global Partnership for Education, Bellamy is driven by the idea that nothing, but nothing can lift people out of poverty the way education can.

“Education is a poverty-buster,” she says. “The evidence and history show us that generally those who have been educated earn more in later life and enjoy better living standards than people who miss out or receive only limited schooling. It’s that simple.”

Carol Bellamy’s belief in the transformative powers of education has taken her to some of the world’s poorest nations, where education remains out of reach for more than 67 million children.

“I remember once seeing a little girl

who was living in a camp for displaced people,” she says. “The girl was sitting under a tree in what was a makeshift ‘school’. Her surroundings couldn’t have been worse. Yet she was as bright as a button. She took in everything the teacher was saying with such enthusiasm that I knew I had to help her get the education she obviously craved. And there are millions of children just like her.”

Giving education to children who are currently missing out is what the Global Partnership for Education is all about. For the past decade the Partnership, formerly known as the Education for All Fast Track Initiative, has been working with low-income countries to improve their education systems.

“The Global Partnership for Education is just that,” says Bellamy who became Chair of the Board of Directors in 2009. “It’s a partnership of 46 developing countries, 30 donors including Australia and members of civil society, the teaching profession, the private sector and private

foundations. When a developing country decides to make education a political priority and to increase spending in the area, donors, civil society and the private sector join in and provide additional funds and technical expertise so that together they can make progress faster. You must have the commitment of the country first though. They have to own the idea and want to follow through. That’s the secret to success.”

The approach appears to be working. Since 2002, the Partnership has helped put 19 million more children into school, construct 30 000 classrooms and trains more than 337 000 teachers. It’s also helping to improve the quality of education being offered to children who are already in school.

Cambodia is a good example. The country’s education system suffered badly in the conflict of the 1970s and 1980s and the Government is now trying to make up for lost time. This can be difficult because many Cambodian children have to work to prop up family incomes and even the cost



of getting to school can be too high for many families.

The Global Partnership is working to remove such obstacles by helping Cambodia build schools and facilities in the poorest areas, offering scholarships to disadvantaged children and helping communities place greater value in education.

“The scholarships alone have made it possible for nearly 30 000 children to complete nine years of basic education and about 6 000 primary school teachers have been trained to teach up to grade nine,” says Bellamy. “We also have about 900 school directors trained in managing their schools more effectively.”

For the next few years the Global Partnership for Education will pay particular attention to providing education for children in fragile and conflict-affected states, providing quality education and getting girls into school.

Bellamy sees each as important but for different reasons. “For example, for every

year a boy is educated, his chances of becoming involved in violent conflict drop by about 20 per cent. Every additional year of education a girl has increases her potential income by 15 per cent. And we have to improve the quality of education because there are about 200 million children in developing countries who go to school but are not learning very much. About half the children in the lowest-income countries can’t read anything by the end of grade two. You just don’t find this in developed countries.”

For now, the Global Partnership for Education is on sure footing. Developing countries agreed at a conference in Copenhagen late in 2011 to increase their domestic spending on education by about \$2.5 billion between 2011 and 2014. At the same time, donors pledged about \$1.5 billion to the Global Partnership for Education Fund. Australia pledged \$270 million over four years making us one of the largest contributors. Civil society, the teaching

profession, the private sector and private foundations committed investments totalling \$2.75 billion. Bellamy sees this as the mark of a true global partnership. “We had governments, civil society, the teaching profession, foundations, the private sector and multilateral organisations all coming together to help make education a reality for all children.

“The point is, we can’t save lives, give women the status they are entitled to, grow economies and promote stability without education. It just won’t work. And we must invest in children for their own sake. We need to help them grow up to be literate and curious and nurture them so that they enter adulthood with confidence and an understanding of the wider world.”

LEFT: Chair of Global Partnership for Education, Carol Bellamy at the Copenhagen conference in November 2011. Photo: Anders Thormann

TOP: Children at school in Rwanda. Photo: GPE

ABOVE: The GPE is working with Cambodia to get children into school. Photo: GPE



Food for thought

by Sarah Tiffen, AusAID

“It makes you proud to be Australian when you see some of the things we’re doing with our foreign aid,” Jessica Watson.

Moud is a little girl from the village of Ban Na in the Saravan Province in southern Laos. She is seven years old, her favourite food is fish, and when she grows up she dreams of being a teacher. The World Food Programme’s School Meals Programme is helping her to achieve this dream.

In Laos, people living in rural areas are generally very poor and having enough to eat is never a given. In 2002, WFP began offering school meals to make sure that children had enough to eat and were able to concentrate and learn better. The villages of Ban Na and Ban Nabone have had WFP school meals for two years. Another school is about to begin the program.

For little girls like Moud, who grow up in remote areas, on small farms, often with parents who have had no access themselves to education, the simple act of being fed at school may transform her life.

Little girls are particularly vulnerable to the effects of poverty on their opportunity for education—their labour is so needed at home, to work the field and care for siblings—and dreams of escaping poverty, let alone being a teacher, seem very remote.

Australian Jessica Watson, 2011 Young Australian of the Year, is now a Youth Representative for WFP. She visited Laos and talked to students about how she achieved her dream to sail alone around the world at the tender age of 16 years. Jessica is now working to draw attention to the equally daunting challenges facing little girls and little boys.

“These children are so brave, and face such difficulty—and the people delivering the school meals programs work so hard—I’m just glad I can be part of doing something to make a difference,” says Jessica.

While little Moud may not be sailing around the world by the time she is 16, the School Meals Programme might



just help her stay in school until then, which will have significant effects on her future. Education may help her to transform her life—to break out of the rural poverty into which she was born, to have children a little later, to make sure, when they do come, that they are immunised, fed well and sent to school themselves. She may work, and save, and use the money to help her own family and the wider community.

“The opportunity to meet the people of Ban Na and Ban Nabone villages has really opened my eyes to the food shortages and the challenges that affect children in Laos, and across the world,” says Jessica. “I really wanted to be involved in programs that help children directly, and this meals program does that so well, getting kids to school and keeping them there longer. I never quite understood how difficult life could be for kids not so far from Australia. It really is incredible. I have been so lucky to fulfil my dream of sailing round the world, but

some little girls and boys have a simpler dream, much harder to achieve without help—having enough to eat.”

In Laos, Australia’s work with the WFP has a positive impact on the whole community. Wherever possible, WFP buys locally grown produce. This supports the local economy and food arrives on time, it is more palatable and culturally acceptable.

The community’s involvement is also part of the project’s success. If a school wants to take part, it establishes a school feeding committee which is made up of village chiefs and elders, parents and teachers. Village women cook the main staple, which is often vitamin-and mineral-fortified corn-soya blend, plus oil and sugar and serve it at the schools. Local community members provide the additional ingredients such as bananas, pumpkin or coconuts, and provincial and district boards oversee the program and provide training.

As well as receiving food, children are also given take-home rations as an

incentive for parents to send them to school. Boarders, who live too far from school to return home each day, also receive food.

“I noticed that attendance was greater in the schools that had meals,” says Jessica. “I can’t wait to come back next year and see the difference the program has made to enrolments and attendance, and to catch up on what all the kids that I met are up to, how much they’ve grown and what they’ve learnt.”

TOP LEFT: Jessica Watson in Ban Na village in the south of Laos enjoys a mid-morning snack with the children in the school. The snack is provided as part of the WFP’s School Feeding Programme. Australia has a \$180 million four-year partnership with WFP. Last year we were its sixth largest donor. Photo: Bart Verweij/WFP

TOP RIGHT: Jessica Watson with bags of rice and soya-blend. These are a token representing a recent Australian contribution of \$500 000 to the WFP’s School Feeding Programme in Laos. Photo: Bart Verweij/WFP

More than half of the children worldwide who miss out on education live in areas affected by conflict. They may be orphaned, displaced, living in camps, or recruited as child soldiers or even sex slaves to soldiers.

In several parts of the world, Australia supports organisations that help children whose education has been severely interrupted by conflict. The assistance includes establishing schools, helping older children learn vocational skills, and providing children with emotional support and encouragement.

Establishing a school in a conflict or post-conflict area is good for many reasons. It gives children a place to go where they are safe, where there is routine, where they can learn and where they can start to recover from the physical and emotional ordeals they have been through.

Parents also benefit because they can start to build new lives— which might include going to work—knowing that their children are in safe hands during the day.

Save the Children is one organisation that specialises in helping children in areas affected by conflict. Many of their programs are funded by the Australian Government, including activities in South Sudan and Nepal.



The missing years

by Rebecca Barber, Save the Children, Yadira Galarza and Elizabeth James, AusAID

Bindu Nepali (name changed) is a young girl from the far western region of Nepal; a country that has also been marred by many decades of conflict.

Bindu was a child soldier. Part of her role was to train new young combatants.

One day as she was training a group of people, she was badly injured. She was given little assistance and after she recovered, she escaped and went back home. However, for weeks her parents didn't accept her and her deeply

conservative community regarded her as 'impure and bad' for having left her home. Bindu also suffered a severe backache, couldn't get back into school because of her family's poor financial condition and her self-confidence diminished.

Bindu's plight is not unusual. Many children were recruited as child soldiers in Nepal, especially those whose parents or family members had disappeared or died. Their education was one of the first things to be disrupted.

Since 2006, AusAID and Save the Children have been working together

to help children like Bindu. Programs have been set up offering psychological counselling, education, income and medical support. So far 2 700 children have been assisted.

While nothing can make up for a lost childhood, programs such as those in South Sudan and in Nepal can help children retrieve something from their missing years of education. With education, they have a better chance of escaping the poverty that remains so deeply entrenched in their countries.



A second chance in South Sudan

For a child in South Sudan, gaining an education is about as hard as it gets.

Imagine the setting. Decades of conflict, two million deaths, four million displaced people and two entire generations of people who missed out on education, children and youth who were separated from their parents—many recruited into the armed forces as child soldiers.

South Sudan is now an independent state. While fighting persists in parts of the country, strenuous efforts are being made to build up the new nation. In a country where less than half of the children are enrolled in primary school, three-quarters of those over the age of 15 cannot read or write and where a 15 year-old girl has a higher chance of dying in childbirth than completing school, it's not surprising that giving children an education is a priority.

There is a lot of catching up to do. Schools that were destroyed during the conflict have to be rebuilt. In many cases, schools that are operational tend to be shut down for long periods to house displaced people and others needing or demanding shelter. Teachers, worn down by years of having to make do with little or no pay and few resources, have to be re-trained. New teachers have to be recruited, especially female teachers who are few and far between. And young people, many too old for primary school and often carrying awful emotional scars from being child soldiers, are desperate for a second chance to go to school.

Over the next two years and with funds from AusAID, Save the Children is giving many of these older children that crucial second chance. In Unity state, one of the least-served states, Save the Children is offering classes in basic literacy and numeracy, accelerated learning programs and vocational training. Through Accelerated Learning and Technical and Vocational Education Training, Save the Children provides opportunities to out of school youth: dropouts, those who missed the opportunity for formal

education, demobilized child soldiers, and vulnerable groups of young men and women.

Rebecca Nyalen Lieth is one of these children. The 16 year-old has completed two terms of accelerated learning at Mary John Primary School, one of the 30 existing schools taking part in the program. "Accelerated learning is good because it's a shortcut for someone like me who missed out on formal education from an early age," she says. "Vocational training in agriculture, masonry and bread-making is the best part of the program because the community benefits from the skills. And all the young people who joined the program are now better learners and have stopped causing problems around the community like they used to before joining program."

"There is a lot of inequality in the area and young men and women need a sense a purpose and a way of gaining some sense of self-worth," says John Bentiu, Save the Children's Child Protection Project Officer in Leer County.

There's a long way to go when it comes to reaching the education targets of the Millennium Development Goals. In Unity state in particular, there are 231 students for every one overcrowded classroom and 69 students for every teacher. Very few children continue beyond primary school, especially girls, who are often married in their early teens.

"This is such an important time for the young people of Sudan," says J Dabuo, a teacher at Mary John Primary School. "Most have known little other than conflict and bare survival. They've been soldiers, refugees or displaced from their homes. Losing their childhood is bad enough. Missing out on education now would be very bad for them and disastrous for our new country."

TOP LEFT: Children in conflict affected areas often miss out on schooling and the opportunities that arise from education. Photo: Albert Gonzalez Farran/UN

LEFT: Save the Children has been campaigning against the use of children as soldiers for many years. This photo is from its "Things of the Past" Exhibition. Photo: Paul Torcello and Save the Children





Clean water, healthy students

by Lou Anderson, AusAID

The link between education and toilets may not be immediately obvious, but the children at Betivatu school in the jungle-covered Guadalcanal province of Solomon Islands understand the connection better than most.

Until recently they had no running water, toilets or places to wash their hands. When nature called they had to leave the classroom and go into the bushes or to the nearest river when they wanted a drink of water. “This meant they were always missing classes,” says school principal, Eddie Gideon.

Through a partnership between AusAID, the Government of Solomon Islands, World Vision and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, water tanks and toilets are being installed in schools and communities across the country, helping over 100 000 rural people.

The changes are immediate for the 450 students at Betivatu school. “I think

the children are healthier, we’ve seen less sickness and things like skin disease have cleared up,” says Eddie. “There’s also no smell, so the school is a much better place now.”

The new facilities, which include ablution blocks of five toilets for both male and female students, staff toilets and drinking water tanks, are matched with education and information about personal hygiene.

“It is life in Solomon Islands that most communities do not have water tanks or ready access to clean water and toilets,” says Eddie. “This is the same for my students. We know that toilets are not common at home, but we can still encourage the students to tell their family about hygiene and how it helps keep people healthy.”

“It is widely known that communities that have access to clean water and sanitation facilities and practice good hygiene are able to reduce the risk of poor health and the spread of disease,” says World Vision’s water, hygiene and sanitation adviser in Honiara, Bryce

McGowan. “This has positive spin-offs for attendance at school or work and is a really important message to spread.”

ABOVE: Principal of Betivatu community school in Solomon Islands, Eddie Gideon, with students celebrating the new water tanks. The students and staff now have clean water and better hygiene. Photo: Lou Anderson/AusAID

Solomon Islands has a national plan to improve quality and access to education for all of its people.

Australia is providing \$31 million over four years to help the plan succeed. The money will go towards equipment in all 207 junior secondary schools in the country, the fee-free policy through grants to schools, improved data collection and analysis from schools, training teachers and raising the quality of post-school training opportunities so young people will be more employable.

Coffee culture in Kiribati

by Australia-Pacific Technical College



Serving up a champion espresso is exactly Tereen Aata's cup of tea, correction, coffee. First, her training in hospitality with the Australia-Pacific Technical College led to her winning a coveted Gold Medal at the Origin Culinary Arts Show in Port Vila, Vanuatu, where Kiribati-born Tereen did her training.

Then, her expertise really paid off when she was appointed to impart the art of good coffee-making to learner-baristas—coffee-bar staff—at the Maritime Training Centre in Kiribati. It's an important job, because it's helping Kiribati students gain the credentials and experience that will get them good jobs in the fast-expanding international world of coffee-drinking. The Centre provides training for young i-Kiribati men and women to gain employment as stewards on cruise liners and container ships around the world.

"My studies have opened up a world of favourable job options for me, and they'll be open for the graduates I train too," says Tereen, who, with all-round culinary expertise, also helps out in the kitchen at the Marine Training Centre.

Tereen recently broadened her international training with a six week attachment in Montenegro on the Adriatic Sea along with seven other instructors from the Kiribati Maritime Training Centre. She spent part of her time at the Azalea Maritime Centre studying First Aid and the remainder at a five-star hotel in Montenegro.

From student to trainer, it's quite a way to come for someone who admits that before enrolling at the Australia Pacific Technical College she had never even tasted espresso coffee.

ABOVE: Tereen Aata making her mark with coffee.
Photo: Australia-Pacific Technical College

The Australia-Pacific Technical College

The College was set up by the Australian Government to help students in the Pacific gain Australian-standard skills and qualifications for a wide range of technical and vocational careers throughout the Pacific and internationally—careers that are in demand. There are campuses in Fiji, Samoa, PNG and Vanuatu. The College has a scholarship scheme to ensure that Pacific Islanders, particularly those from non-campus countries have access to the College.

The College offers Australian Certificates III and IV training in tourism and hospitality, automotive, manufacturing, construction, electrical trades, health, and community services. These qualifications provide opportunities for jobs, more rewarding and better paid work and access to further training and higher education.

Since 2007, more than 3 000 students have graduated from the College. In 2010–11, 803 students left the college with certificates in automotive, construction and electrical and manufacturing, 148 with qualifications in health and community services and 590 with training in tourism and hospitality.



Back to school in Nauru

by Elizabeth James, AusAID

Clarissa Jeremiah would have to be the envy of many school principals. Her school, Nauru Secondary School, is as good as new, she has enthusiastic students filling the classrooms and a waiting list of about 300 adults who are desperately keen to enrol in her school's night education program.

After years of languishing, education in Nauru is on the up and up. Between new education legislation, a new curriculum, better teacher training and an \$11 million upgrade of the secondary school funded by Australia, the education sector has turned a corner. For the first time in a long time, students can start to map out a future for themselves, be it in Nauru or further afield.

"When parents come here they still can't get over the fact that this is a school in Nauru," says Clarissa with a broad smile, "they say it feels like their students

are at a school overseas—the teachers and students feel the same way. They are all very proud and happy with their new school."

Before the changes, education was a casualty of the economic highs and lows that have characterised Nauru over the past four decades. The heady wealth generated by phosphate and enjoyed by residents in the 1970s and 1980s provided little incentive for children to go to school. With the end of phosphate mining came heavy borrowing, large debts and the collapse of the Bank of Nauru. There was little left for infrastructure and basic services such as education. Between 2000–2005, schools were barely functioning, teachers were paid infrequently and school maintenance, transport and education supplies were run down.

Over the past few years, with funding and support from Australia and New Zealand, the sector has been reinvigorated. All children now go to

school and truancy is mostly a thing of the past. This has less to do with new regulations which mean parents can be fined if their children repeatedly miss school and more to do with the fact that children see good things happening at school and want to go.

Teachers are doing extra courses to upgrade their qualifications. The number of primary school teachers with qualifications increased by 12 per cent in 2010 and the trend is continuing. Furthermore, more children with special needs are going to school.

The biggest changes are at the Nauru Secondary School which has been completely rebuilt and has 450 students doing either academic subjects or taking part in Nauru's first technical and vocational training program.

The recent upgrade was the largest infrastructure project in Nauru in nearly 20 years and provided welcome employment for 200 workers and injected



The recent upgrade was the largest infrastructure project in Nauru in nearly 20 years and provided welcome employment for 200 workers and injected \$1.5 million into the struggling local economy.



\$1.5 million into the struggling local economy. Enrolments increased by ten per cent the moment the school was completed.

By offering vocational subjects in engineering, construction, hospitality, kitchen operations, manufacturing, clothing and textiles, students are given a stepping stone into internationally accredited institutions such as the Australia-Pacific Technical College and to job opportunities in Nauru and in other countries.

The changes have gone down well with the students. “Most students attend school regularly now and there are fewer truants,” says Jettrina Demauna. “There are also a lot of extra activities and sports such as rugby, basketball, judo and weightlifting.”

Fellow students Aidan-Luke Atto and Jerochee Brechterfeld agree. “Students feel very positive,” says Aidan-Luke “and the vocational stream makes it easier for

older people to come back to school.”

The 120 adult students enrolled in night classes are there because they want qualifications for their particular trade. “Most have years of experience but no qualifications which is why they’re excited about the classes,” says Clarissa. “It’s good to see we are meeting a need here in Nauru.”

When Nauru went through its own financial crisis in the 1990s, many students dropped out of school. A re-entry program specialising in literacy and numeracy has been set up to entice them back. In the first intake, 25 students re-entered school and 80 are expected in the next intake.

“It’s been a roller-coaster year for everyone in the education sector,” says Joanna Crawford-Bryde, an Australian education specialist funded by the Australian Government to help the Government of Nauru reform the education sector. “But the teachers and

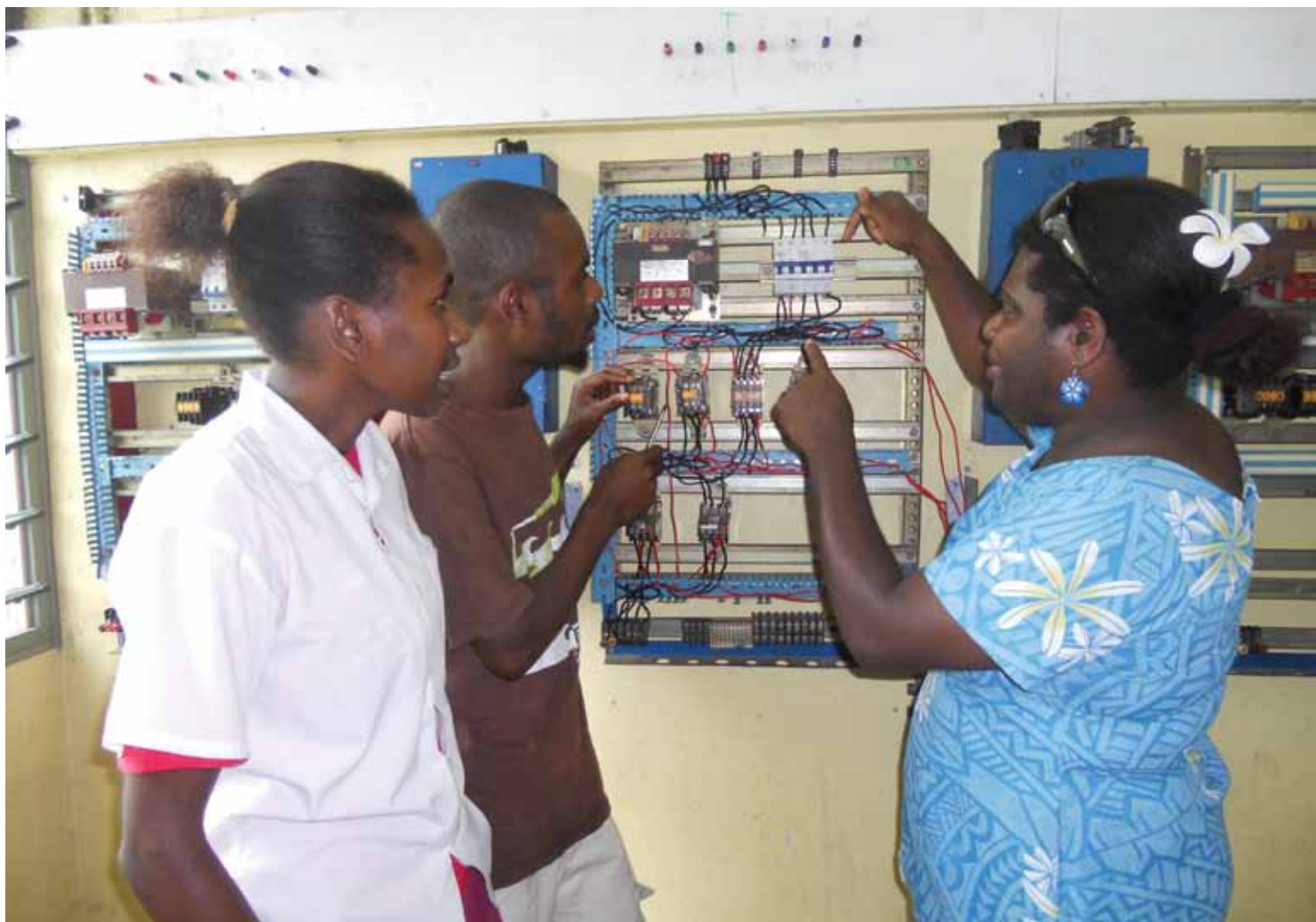
principals are doing a great job and they will soon start to see the results of their hard work.”

As for Jettrina, her experience of school can now be summed up in a single word—‘fun’.

ABOVE LEFT: Students Aidan-Luke Atto, (left) Jettrina Demauna (centre) and Jerochee Brechterfeld (right) enjoying studying at the Nauru Secondary School. Photo: Rod Henshaw

ABOVE CENTRE: The upgraded Nauru Secondary School is attracting strong enrolments and even has a waiting list. Photo: AusAID

ABOVE RIGHT: AusAID Education adviser for Nauru, Joanna Crawford-Bryde (left) with Nauru Secondary School Principal, Clarissa Jeremiah. Photo: Rod Henshaw



Ni-Vanuatu women — trainers in the trades

by Anna Gibert

Australia is helping Vanuatu build a skilled and educated workforce to improve government and serve an expanding private sector.

Teaching masonry and tiling comes easily to Gail Waki. She is a rare breed in Vanuatu—a woman in a traditionally male dominated trade.

All but one of her technical and vocational education and training students at the Vanuatu Institute of Technology in Port Vila are young men. “There’s a lot to be learned,” she says “producing basic technical drawings, using small plant equipment, erecting scaffolding, constructing block bases and the list of traditionally masculine sounding skills goes on.”

On the other side of the island, Rina Alau, is also teaching a trade usually done by men. She is an electrician and teaches electrical wiring at the Institute’s outpost in Ebule village.

The two women began to learn their trades when they received scholarships funded by the Australian Government to encourage more women into non-

traditional trades in courses at the Vanuatu Institute of Technology. They went on to further their skills at the Australia-Pacific Technical College, again on scholarships from the Australian Government.

After graduating, they gained valuable practical experience in the private sector. Gail and Rina are now dedicated teachers to all their students, but also want to prove women can do anything—indeed everything, especially with non-traditional trades.

Although Vanuatu’s economy is expanding, the majority of people in rural areas don’t have quality primary school education, basic health services, regular and safe water supplies, modern energy or reliable transport. Job opportunities are limited.

Australia is working with Vanuatu to build up these sectors and the skills of local people. This includes funding



The two women began to learn their trades when they received scholarships funded by the Australian Government to encourage more women into non-traditional trades in courses at the Vanuatu Institute of Technology.

a national skills development program that provides training in provincial and rural locations for specific trades and professions that are in high demand and will help with the country's economic progress.

The program recently had Rina and Gail in Vanuatu's largest island, Espiritu Santo, delivering courses for 30 trainees living in rural areas. While Rina's students learned how to repair broken power points and switches at a local technical college, Gail's trainees were busy laying tiles in the local training centre. As their trades are in high demand, the students are very likely to find work when they finish their training. Many will be approached to work on building and construction sites, while others will consider starting their own businesses.

Although men continue to make up the majority of trainees in the trades in Vanuatu, the fact that these two trainers

are women is a big step forward in breaking down traditional perceptions about women's roles and their ability to work in a range of sectors.

Gail is quietly confident her one and only female student will do well as she moves into the second year of her training. "She is greatly encouraged seeing me teaching and has a lot of confidence," she says. "Her father is also builder. That support is important. You need male family members and partners to back you up. If they are helping you, for sure you will succeed."

Anna Gibert works for the Technical Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program in Vanuatu.

TOP LEFT: Rina Alau (right) teaching electrical wiring to students in Vanuatu.

ABOVE: Gail Waki (right) teaching tiling in Vanuatu.

Photos: Peter Morris/TVET

The Technical Vocational Education and Training Sector Strengthening Program is funded by AusAID and offers people in provincial towns and villages training in areas that will build up local economies.

In 2010, about 1 000 people, almost half of whom were women, received training, and 900 farmers and businesses received advice through the program. After the training, two-thirds of the trainees reported earning higher incomes and three-quarters of farmers and businesses increased their production and profits.

In 2011–12, the program will deliver 60 training packages in agriculture and business development to 2 500 people.



Afghanistan on a learning curve

by Elizabeth James, AusAID

Attaullah Wahidyar comes from Afghanistan. He is a medical doctor and an educational specialist. His passion for his country led him away from medicine to focus on education. He said he was asked what he would do if he came across a man in Afghanistan who was desperately hungry but was also about to be killed—would he give the man food first and then save him or the other way around? He decided then that safety and security was the priority for Afghanistan and for this the country needed better education. He is now at Sydney University doing a doctorate in education under an Australian Leadership Award Scholarship, provided by AusAID through the Australia Awards for Development.

Ten years ago, Afghanistan's education system was in tatters. There were fewer than one million children in a school and hardly any were girls. There was no unified curriculum and education in many of the more troubled areas depended on the goodwill of non-government organisations.

A decade on, with support from the Government of Afghanistan and international donors it's a different story. There are more than seven million children in school and about four in every ten are girls. Australia alone has financed the construction of 30 schools with another 36 underway in Uruzgan province, one of the country's poorest areas.

"The expansion of education in Afghanistan is a remarkable success story," says Attaullah. "I don't think any country has that sort of history of getting children to school."

Attaullah himself has had a hand in the turnaround. In 2008 he was Chief of Staff and Senior Policy Program Adviser

to the Afghan Minister for Education and continues to provide advice to the Ministry. "There are many challenges. When we say the children are in school, about half are not physically in school buildings. 'School' may be a mosque, a private house, under a tree even.

"Also, we do not have anywhere near enough trained teachers. Only one-third has the minimum qualifications. At present anyone who has graduated from Year 12 can be hired as a teacher and in some more remote areas people with just six or seven years of education are taken on. For now our solution to improving teaching standards is to send master trainers from Kabul into the provinces to work with teachers for up to 25 days. Also, accelerated learning programs are being implemented to upgrade qualifications of existing teachers. Over time, the least experienced teachers in Afghanistan will be replaced by those with more training."

Despite basic education being compulsory for all children to Year 9, getting girls into school remains a



challenge. This is the focus of Attaullah's doctoral thesis. As a father to six girls, he knows the social constraints that have to be overcome. "In Afghan culture, the most valuable asset we have is our girls. If our money or property is taken, we may not think too much about it. But if something happens to our girls, we might react to it to the point of fighting and it will go on for generations. Parents don't want to risk this so if they are not sure about the environment they are putting their girls in, they will keep them at home.

"This is often misinterpreted by people in other countries. They see it as a bias against girls. It's not that. It's a way of minimising potential conflict. One way around this is to have more female teachers. Parents feel much more confident about sending their daughters to school if there are female teachers but unfortunately there are very few of these in Afghanistan at the moment."

Afghanistan is trying to build up an academic base and education, including undergraduate studies at university, is

free of charge. "I can think of only three or four people in Afghanistan—a country with a population just a little higher than Australia—who have a doctorate in education," says Attaullah. "We have a huge intellectual gap. Nations are guided by intellectuals and historically this is one of our biggest weaknesses as a nation. We have not been able to provide thinkers and intellectuals to guide our society.

"My Australian Leadership Award Scholarship will give me a broader view of how other countries approach education. At home, I think we have been too focussed on what the Government and donors believe is best and we haven't paid enough attention to communities themselves. Through my studies I want to create a better understanding of the relationship between government policies on girls' education and how communities themselves view the issue. Girls in Afghanistan must be educated and we need better policies backed with adequate financial resources to make that happen."

As well as providing scholarships to scholars like Attaullah Wahidyar, Australia is working with Afghanistan to improve its education sector.

In 2010–11, Australia helped to build up the skills of Afghans working in the education ministry and funded the training of 60 teacher trainers in Malaysia. These trainers have in turn trained 340 teacher trainers in Afghanistan. Australia also contributes to the World Food Programme's school feeding programs. In Uruzgan Province, we have funded the building of four schools for 2 300 students and provided literacy, numeracy and administrative training to provincial officials.

TOP LEFT: Dr Attaullah Wahidyar at AusAID in Canberra after talking to staff about his research on education for girls in Afghanistan. Photo: Angus Braithwaite/AusAID

ABOVE: AusAID funds some education programs in Afghanistan that give priority to female students. Photo: Hans Stakelbeek/FMAX

Noor's story

by Hannah Cattanach, AusAID

Noor Jehan from Peshawar in Pakistan has faced many of the challenges confronting people with disability in developing countries. Awarded an Australian Development Scholarship, Noor is now studying in Canberra and is committed to using her experience to help improve the lives of people living with disability.

Growing up in Pakistan, where not quite half of all girls receive a primary school education, the challenge of being a female was compounded for Noor by being vision impaired and a wheelchair user.

Poor infrastructure meant that Noor couldn't travel five minutes outside her house in her wheelchair without getting stuck and needing assistance. Once at school, there were no books designed for the visually impaired or any services to support students with disabilities.

"The challenges are everywhere, but the biggest obstacle is overcoming attitudes" says Noor.

"People on the street would stare at me. There was an expectation that I should just stay at home. Being a female and also a wheelchair user it was assumed I could never contribute financially."

While harrowing at times, Noor drew on these experiences to stubbornly carve out new opportunities and prospects for her future. By the time she completed high school, infrastructure in Peshawar had been further ravaged by war and women wishing to work were physically at risk.

"I learnt that if I want to live independently as a woman with a disability then if I need to leave somewhere, I'll leave. If I need to crawl, I'll crawl! I'll do whatever it takes to show I'm capable and to make my way in the world."

Noor completed a postgraduate degree and took a job working with a disabled persons' organisation. It was during this time that Noor first learnt about AusAID, which was developing a strategy to ensure that people with disability would benefit equally from Australian aid.



"The biggest constraint to disability-inclusive development is reaching people with disability. In Pakistan, many of them are hidden away or separated from society," says Noor.

"What I liked about AusAID's approach is that they were seeking out the views and interests of people with disability—they were asking us what we needed and not making any assumptions."

Even working in the disability sector, Noor sometimes confronted discrimination for being a woman. In spite of this, she worked hard and became an accomplished member of staff. She also had a boss who was committed to her achieving her professional goals and who became a strong mentor.

"My boss was incredible. He offered me a career, he offered me training and one day he came by my desk and offered me a brochure—on how to apply for the Australia Awards!"

Noor applied for an AusAID-funded Australian Development Scholarship and in 2011 arrived in Canberra to begin a Master of Public Policy at the Australian National University.

"Being in Australia is amazing—the university provides everything I need to do well in my studies. I can get around by myself, and people are understanding and supportive," says Noor.

"I worked hard every day through school and in my job in Pakistan and I'm so proud to be here. I appreciated all the support that I got while in Pakistan—from my family and from my boss in particular, and now I'm so thankful to AusAID."

"Now that I'm here, I want to use my studies to help people like me get the kind of support and opportunities that I have been given."

ABOVE: Noor Jehan in Canberra. Photo: AusAID

In line with the AusAID disability-inclusive strategy, *Development for All*, AusAID actively encourages people with disability to apply for Australia Awards and supports them throughout their study in Australia.

Information about Australia Awards can be found at www.australiaawards.gov.au

Mentoring in the ghettos

by AusAID Caribbean

Lascelles Page was half-way through a university degree in information technology when he had to drop out because he could no longer pay his tuition fees.



ABOVE: Lascelles Page (left) talking to young people about the merits of the YUTE program.

TOP: Lascelles Page (left) with Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica CEO, Sandra Glasgow.

Photos: Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica

The 24 year-old ended up returning to the tough concrete jungle of Trench Town, one of the poorer suburbs in the Jamaican capital Kingston. Trench Town is best-known as the community where the legendary Reggae artist Bob Marley lived and which inspired some of his most famous songs. It's also one of the more volatile places to live in Jamaica.

Crime and violence is a problem. "Sometimes if there is a feud in the community and I need something in one section, I can't go there until there is some peace in the area," said Lascelles.

The Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica set up the Youth Upliftment Through Employment program, YUTE, as a way of steering young people away from crime and from the economic support many of them receive from criminals, towards jobs and a greater sense of purpose. YUTE is funded by AusAID, other donors and private sector organisations.

The program works by asking trades people and professionals to mentor youth living in ghettos and help them find work. Lascelles was initially wary of the program because he found similar schemes in his neighbourhood had not been particularly useful. However, he decided to try it and a stint as a volunteer in data processing soon led to paid employment as an administrative assistant with the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica itself.

Since then, many inner-city youths have been employed in jobs ranging from landscapers, factory workers, inventory clerks, carpenters, painters, waiters to customer service representatives. Some are given help with basic numeracy and literacy to better prepare themselves for work, be it as an employee or to start their own businesses.

Lascelles has since re-enrolled in university and is a firm advocate for YUTE. "Every time I see the letters Y-U-T-E I just feel passionate," he said. "It has touched many lives. Most of the people that I know are not doing certain things again because of the program. It has prevented a lot of them from going into criminal activities. They have been identified, given mentors and are involved in a positive way."



East Timor—ten years on

by Merryn Royle and Elizabeth James, AusAID

In May 2002, East Timor celebrated its status as a new nation. With a President, a Prime Minister and its own Parliament, this small country with just over one million people set out to determine its own development and its own future.

Ten years later, East Timor has made great strides, given the scale of the development and security challenges it has faced. As a result of the violence that followed the 1999 vote for independence, two-thirds of the country's infrastructure was destroyed, the economy was devastated and there were no functioning government institutions left. The country was essentially starting from scratch.

"History tells us that states emerging from conflict can take 30 or 40 years to get to middle income levels and many never make it, falling back into conflict,"

says Vincent Ashcroft, the head of AusAID in Dili. "That East Timor has experienced several years of relative stability and economic growth, and has managed to save a large proportion of its oil and gas wealth, is a significant achievement."

East Timor still faces many challenges. Despite the country's growing petroleum wealth, the country is still one of the poorest in the world. Private sector development remains constrained by a poorly educated population, weak public institutions, and unreliable electricity, transport and telecommunications. These factors, combined with outbreaks of instability in 2006 and 2008, have made it difficult for East Timor to move away from its dependence on oil and create jobs for its growing population.

But there are signs that things are improving. The number of people living below the poverty line has dropped from

50 per cent in 2007, to 41 per cent in 2010. More children are being vaccinated, and East Timor is on track to meet the MDG for reduced child mortality. More women are receiving care from skilled health workers during pregnancy and childbirth, and the number of children enrolled in school is increasing. Thousands more people have better water and sanitation services, relieving them of the backbreaking task of collecting water of dubious quality.

"East Timor has come a long way in the past ten years," says Vincent. "Australia has been the largest development partner throughout this period, as well as supporting peace and security with troops and police under two UN mandates. There is of course a long way to go. Many people still lack basic services like clean water, and more work is needed to improve infrastructure, such as rural roads, throughout the country. There



are some positive signs for the future—the Government's Strategic Development Plan gives a clear picture of where it wants to be 20 years from now, and the Government is willing to make significant investments to turn that plan into reality."

In November 2011, Australia and East Timor signed a new development partnership, which has Australia supporting East Timor's own priorities for development. These priorities include increasing access to health and education, improving rural infrastructure such as roads and water systems, boosting agricultural productivity and strengthening governance.

"East Timor is one of our closest neighbours so it is in our interest to see it grow and become prosperous," says Vincent. "But there is more to it than that. There are extensive people-to-people links that help to define the relationship. Many Australian defence personnel and police

have served in East Timor, thousands of volunteers have lent their support, and there are more than 50 friendship groups where communities in Australia partner with communities in East Timor. Darwin is just 45 minutes by plane from Dili, and there are large Timorese communities in many Australian cities. All of this makes our relationship different to any other donor."

FAR LEFT: A young boy being immunised against measles after an outbreak of the disease in 2011. Australia funded the immunisation of 495 000 children aged between 6 months and 14 and also provided Vitamin A supplements. Photo: Arlindo Soares/AusAID Dili

CENTRE: Children in Cassa Village in Ainaro Subdistrict now have clean water close to their home. Australia funded the installation of the water system. Photo: Joao Soares/AusAID Dili

TOP RIGHT: Parents enjoying their new baby. With Australian assistance, maternal and child health is improving. Photo: Penny Tweedie

Working closely with the Government of East Timor, Australian support has achieved tangible results.

For example, we have supported the Government of East Timor to build or rehabilitate over 2 000 classrooms since 2007, and helped increase primary school enrolment from 67 per cent in 2005 to 86 per cent in 2010. Better still, almost as many girls as boys are now going to school.

We have trained 54 Timorese midwives, as well as 21 nurse anaesthetists who are now assisting with emergency obstetric care. We have also provided 119 overseas scholarships for study in medicine, health administration and surgery. We have helped increase the under-five immunisation rate, from 35 per cent in 2003 to 53 per cent in 2009.

Australia has contributed to more than 155 000 people gaining access to new and improved water systems and provided 31 000 people with basic sanitation since 2008.

During the same period, we helped rehabilitate and maintain 5 200 kilometres of rural roads through labour-based programs which have provided 108 000 short-term job opportunities. These have been especially important for the country's many unemployed youth.

Australia's Seeds of Life program has helped East Timor increase its agricultural production and farmer incomes, by encouraging the use of higher yielding crop varieties. Since 2008, the program has provided 25 000 farming families with improved varieties of maize, rice, sweet potato, cassava and peanuts. The improved varieties offer potential yield increases of up to 159 per cent.



Volunteering—the power of a book

by Elizabeth James, AusAID



ABOVE: Beth and Dan Gilfillan in Ermera, helping to set up local libraries in Ermera District.
Photo: Biblioteka Ermera

Ten years ago the people of Ermera District in East Timor were getting used to the idea that their country was finally independent. A library was probably the last thing on their minds, especially as half the adults in the country cannot read and write.

Today, Biblioteka Ermera is a large, welcoming yellow building standing in the centre of Gleno, the district's capital. Every month 2 000 people pass through its doors, all eager to learn something new from the library's books, newspapers, magazines and puzzles.

The popularity of the library is in large part due to the passion of the local staff and Australians Beth and Dan Gilfillan. The two AusAID funded volunteers are on a 30 month assignment, working with the Ermera District Administration to establish and manage the library.

"The library came about by circumstance and opportunity," says Beth. "Dan was initially working with the Parish of Ermera and the District Administration. I came with him and in my spare time I started reading books to children in my street. We'd act out the stories and when I saw what a huge improvement this made to their reading and how pleased the parents were, I began wondering whether a public library would be a useful service. Fortunately the District Administrator and a kindergarten teacher were of like mind, found some land and asked us to help set up the library. They were the ones who turned the idea into a project."

The library has come a long way in twelve months. From its humble beginnings in a small room, it is now a sizeable building in its own right. Every day there is a trail of children coming in, alone or with their friends, to read or look



at pictures. The daily story times are a big hit. Teachers also come to borrow books in their subject areas, while other adults enjoy the books on offer, especially the collection of recipes.

It is however a limited range. Only 500 books have ever been published in the most common language Tetun and the majority are children's books. "The problem is that most parents were never read to as children so the idea of reading to their own children is totally new. They don't know how to do it," says Dan. "We found a way to break down the art of reading to children to six steps and we teach them these so that they can go home and enjoy a book with their kids. The benefits of parents doing this are well documented."

Much the same applies to teachers, who receive very little training and are not used to working with books. Schools generally have very few books. "The

training we give is quite basic," says Beth. "We show teachers how to hold a book so that students can see it, how to read with expression and the type of questions to ask children. It helps get them started."

The library's reach now includes some unexpected places such as the local hospital where library staff teach nurses and midwives how mothers can use books to help their babies' development.

Plans are now in train to extend the library to another five towns. A second library has recently opened and new staff members are being trained. Most will never have been inside a library before, and certainly will have had no experience in running one. They will work at the Gleno branch for a couple of months and when they start work at a new branch, will have support from one of the existing library staff.

For the two Australians, it's fulfilling work. "I feel a sense of responsibility

in a world with so much to try to help provide equal opportunities for all people, regardless of where they are born," says Dan.

For Beth, the motivation is seeing the big picture falling into place. "This is fuelled by the small satisfactions of seeing things go well such as a mother telling us that through the library she realised she could play a role in her children's education or someone telling us they stayed awake reading a Tetun book from the library until the power went out.

Beth and Dan are with Australian Volunteers for International Development. More details about volunteering can be found at www.aisaid.gov.au/volunteer

ABOVE LEFT: Full house at Biblioteka Ermera in East Timor.

ABOVE: Beth and Dan outside Biblioteka Ermera. Photos: Biblioteka Ermera



Readathon in the Philippines

by Elah Abangan, AusAID Manila

You can build classrooms, train teachers and provide resources, but you can't force children to love reading. You can however, steer them in the direction of books, helping them discover the magic that lies within.

This is exactly what the non-government organisation Sa Aklat Sisikat Foundation did with students from disadvantaged communities in one of the country's largest cities, Caloocan. It organised a 31-day Readathon for 16 000 children from 29 schools.

Every day, for 31 days, the schools set aside an hour during which the children read as many books as they could. Each child's progress was monitored on a chart.

Australia contributed with a \$125 000 grant for the purchase of popular children's books written by Filipino authors and for training to help teachers learn new ways to teach reading.

The activity was a resounding success. Ms Youra Bragado of Bagong Silang Elementary School saw many changes in her students. "The love and habit of reading was instilled in them. The Readathon is over but they continue reading books."

Mark Jhon Tamayo, a student at Tala Elementary School, said he was excited

about reading time because apart from the stories, he and his classmates enjoyed dressing up as characters in the books, role-playing and drawing characters from the stories.

The Readathon's success is also supported by formal evidence. A study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology found that about 70 per cent of the children increased their reading ability and comprehension skills. Half developed the habit of reading, and the students' scores for a national achievement test in the Philippines increased by five per cent. This is significant because the students from Caloocan score the lowest of all children in the 16 cities that make up the National Capital Region surrounding Manila.

Reading with comprehension is an important skill for school and lifelong learning. Studies show that children's ability to learn key subject areas such as English, Science and Maths depends largely on their ability to read. Improving the reading and comprehension skills of children in elementary school will better prepare them for higher level learning.

The Sa Aklat Sisikat Foundation is one of the leading non-government organisations accredited by the Philippines Department of Education

High population growth in the Philippines puts considerable stress on public services such as education. Partly as a result of this, the Philippines is a long way from meeting the MDG 2 target of having all its children complete primary school.

Australia is the largest country donor working with the Government of the Philippines to improve the country's education sector. Over the past five years Australia has helped about two million young Filipinos be able to go to school, and has raised the quality of education by funding improvements to the curriculum, teacher training and teaching materials.

to deliver reading programs in public schools with low learning achievement. It has been running reading programs and teacher training for the past decade in 795 public schools, reaching 22 481 teachers and principals and 927 230 students.

ABOVE LEFT: Former Australian Ambassador to the Philippines, Rod Smith reads to children taking part in the Readathon. The children are wearing masks to perform stories from their books.

ABOVE RIGHT: Australia presented mobile carts with popular books to schools taking part in the Readathon. Photos: Elah Abangan/AusAID

GLOBAL EDUCATION

New global education website

Global education enables young people to learn about poverty reduction and development. It encourages them to participate in shaping a better world. It challenges and empowers them to be good global citizens by understanding and respecting cultural differences and the rights of others.



The global education website, funded by AusAID, supports teachers to include a global perspective in their classrooms. An exciting new website has been developed to meet changes in teaching, technology and learning styles.

It includes:

- > an introduction to global education and suggested activities for students that will enable them to apply their new knowledge and skills
- > teaching and learning resources designed to support the new Australian curriculum, a professional learning module, strategies and school case studies
- > updated background information, statistics, case studies and country profiles to allow students to investigate a range of global issues
- > searchable galleries of photos, videos, web links and templates
- > a monthly newsletter
- > regular updates to hot topics related to global issues
- > a calendar of international days and global education events
- > capacity for users to comment and contribute to discussions with the global education community.

The website offers teachers more connections with the wider global education community. It brings together a wealth of resources and will be updated regularly. Join the community now at www.globaleducation.edu.au



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