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Weigh-in at mobile health clinic in Laos.



Inner city housing in Hanoi.

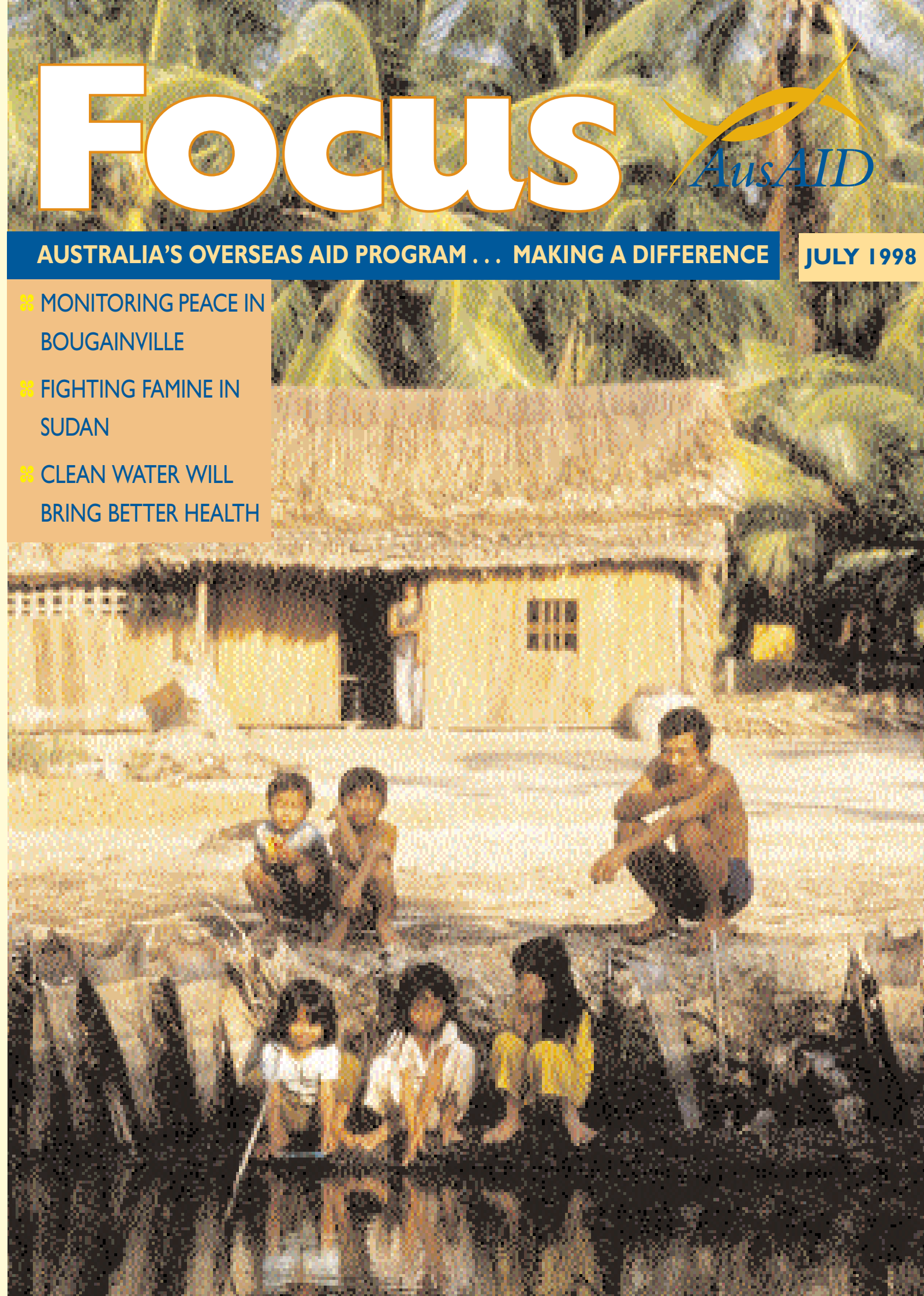
Focus



AUSTRALIA'S OVERSEAS AID PROGRAM . . . MAKING A DIFFERENCE

JULY 1998

- MONITORING PEACE IN BOUGAINVILLE
- FIGHTING FAMINE IN SUDAN
- CLEAN WATER WILL BRING BETTER HEALTH



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Cover photo: *Clean water brings health benefits to South East Asia. See page 19 for an article on work to improve water quality in Vietnam. Photo: Tim Acker*



Construction work underway for new water treatment plants in Vietnam. Photo: Tim Acker



The Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Alexander Downer MP, last month announced that the 1998-99 Australian aid budget will total \$1.48 billion. This is a \$50 million increase over the previous year's budget figure, and represents a real increase of 0.5 per cent.

This is a very positive outcome. It maintains our ODA/GNP ratio and as a percentage of total Federal Government expenditure, compares favourably with other developed countries. The NGO community has generally greeted the budget as a positive step. I will briefly outline some of the highlights of the budget. More detail is provided in the flyer *Aid Budget Summary 1998-99*, which is included in this edition of *Focus*.

The 1998-99 aid budget will respond to urgent development needs, build strategic partnerships and focus on the five priority sectors of governance, health, education, agriculture and rural development, and infrastructure. Our focus will continue to be on our neighbours in the Asia Pacific region and will respond to the social impact of the East Asian financial crisis and provide relief to countries affected by El Niño.

The difficulties facing East Asia at the moment, in particular the civil unrest and social impacts of the Asian financial crisis in Indonesia, has made responding to the crisis in Asia a central theme of this budget. The allocation of emergency funds will be tripled to \$34 million. A new \$6 million Asia crisis fund will provide technical assistance to affected countries, particularly to assist with economic governance, financial sector reform and employment generation, the main beneficiaries being Indonesia and Thailand. The Government's total humanitarian response to the crisis and drought in Indonesia will be approximately \$50 million. An additional \$10.2 million will be provided to Thailand over the next two years, and in recognition of the continuing development challenges facing Vietnam and Laos, new four-year pledges of assistance have been made (\$236 million and \$56 million respectively).

These commitments demonstrate Australia's readiness to assist the countries of East Asia respond to the development challenges presented by the current financial crisis. As the Minister noted, "Australia is helping East Asia manage the current crisis, maintain stability and ensure that the fundamentals are in place for continued growth and development. This will in turn contribute to Australia's and the region's long term economic, environmental and security interests".

One of the budget highlights is the introduction of the new Youth Ambassadors for Development program, a two year, \$10 million

initiative that will see around 500 young Australians living and working in the Asia Pacific. This program will be invaluable in offering training and technical assistance to developing countries, giving young Australians experience working overseas, and encouraging closer links between Australia and countries in the region.

Other increases include a \$14 million increase in governance and human rights, a \$2 million increase for the AusAID/NGO Cooperation Program, and there will be a \$1.75 million increase to the South Pacific above same real levels.

In addition, Australia will continue to meet its obligations to the multilateral development banks and global environment programs, support agricultural research through maintenance of the level of funding for the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, and will provide \$298.5 million in assistance to PNG in line with the PNG-Australia Treaty on Development Cooperation.

This aid budget puts us on the road to achieving the new direction and policy goals outlined in the Government's policy document for Australian aid, *Better Aid for a Better Future*. I think the Australian aid program enters the new financial year in a strong position to help our neighbours improve the living standards of their people.

Trevor Kanaley

AID SUSPENDED TO INDIA

Australia suspended all but humanitarian assistance to India immediately after that country tested a series of nuclear devices in May.

Just days later, Australia withdrew an offer to Pakistan to double bilateral aid to that country if Pakistan exercised restraint and decided not to go ahead with its own tests.

The curtailment of aid was part of a strong reaction against the nuclear tests by both countries from Australia and other countries, as well as the United Nations Security Council.

Activities which directly help the poor will continue in both countries. As the Prime Minister, Mr Howard, said when talking to journalists about Australia's response to the testing, a complete end to aid would hurt the most vulnerable people in India and Pakistan.

Total Australian assistance to the South Asian region is still expected to be \$89.4 million in 1998-99.

DEVELOPMENTS IN INDONESIA

HUMANITARIAN RELIEF FOR INDONESIA

Australia's commitment to humanitarian aid for the poorest people in Indonesia is continuing despite the recent social unrest in that country.

Shortly before the recent outbreak of violence in the streets of Jakarta, the Prime Minister, Mr Howard, announced a major new package of humanitarian assistance valued at \$30 million.

The centrepiece of the package is the provision of up to 40,000 tonnes of Australian grain to help feed critically malnourished and vulnerable groups in the poorer areas of eastern Indonesia. The grain will be used in support of the United Nations' World Food Programme's (WFP) emergency feeding operation which is due to begin delivering food supplies very soon.

UN assessments indicate that as many as 40 million Indonesians are currently living under chronic marginal circumstances as a result of the combined impact of the worst drought in decades and the fallout from the country's financial crisis. Up to eight million people cannot be assured of adequate food supplies through the coming dry season.

The Prime Minister said helping to ensure food security for these people was a primary concern of the Australian Government.

"Contributing grain supplies to the WFP operation is a practical expression of our preparedness to help the most needy, including children and pregnant women," Mr Howard said.

The Australian Government was instrumental in bringing about the recent World Bank-convened donor coordination meeting on Indonesia, which identified the supply of food and medical supplies as key humanitarian needs.



*An Australian Blackhawk Helicopter hovers over a pick up point at the Wamena Airport. The helicopter is part of the Australian Defence Force's contribution to the Humanitarian Relief Mission currently underway in the highlands of Irian Jaya.
Photo: Sgt Gary Ramage*

In addition to food aid, Australia's contribution to the international drought relief effort will include:

- emergency medical supplies;
- supplementary feeding programs for vulnerable groups (such as infants);
- agricultural rehabilitation and employment generation activities; and
- contribution to a World Bank-coordinated program to assist the Government of Indonesia to mobilise drought relief and employment generation schemes.

Mr Howard said the relief package would directly ease the suffering of Indonesia's most needy. The aid will be distributed through international agencies, NGOs and the network of Australian aid project teams in the eastern islands.

This package brings Australia's total humanitarian assistance to Indonesia in response to the drought crisis to almost \$50 million.

The humanitarian aid is separate from the Australian contribution to the IMF's economic program loan to Indonesia.

SWIFT AUSTRALIAN FOOD AID RESPONSE

by Anthea Webb

Australia was the first country to respond to the United Nations World Food Programme's emergency appeal for Indonesia. It pledged \$16 million to help WFP provide food to 4.6 million Indonesians who are especially vulnerable to the country's drought and economic conditions.

Millions of Indonesians are suffering from a combination of the current crisis and the country's worst drought in 50 years. A joint WFP/FAO crop and food supply assessment mission to Indonesia in April determined that at least 7.5 million people in 15 provinces could face food shortages over the next 12 months.

Drought has seriously reduced the amount of food available, especially in rural areas. Skyrocketing inflation means that people's savings no longer buy nearly as

much rice as they used to. Rural Indonesians, who would normally have sought work in the cities when crops fail, are finding that there are no jobs as businesses are paralysed by the crisis.

WFP's emergency operation, now more vital than ever, is moving as quickly as possible to get off the ground. It is dependent on contributions from donor governments to meet the target of 225,000 tonnes of rice and blended foods, valued at US \$88 million.

WFP plans to provide food to pregnant women, nursing mothers, children aged under five and families with no means of support who are eating only once a day. It will also support food-for-work activities, including attempts to prevent the fires that continue to destroy hectares of productive land and pollute the entire region.

WFP had closed its operation in Indonesia in 1996, when the country's strong economic growth in the early 1990s made food aid no longer necessary. Until recently, Indonesia was the world's third largest producer of rice, even providing rice as food aid for Africa.



Local men from the village of Silimo unload bags of rice.
Photo: Sgt Gary Ramage

AUSTRALIA SUPPORTS INDONESIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

by Michelle Hardy

On 17 May, during the unrest that led to the resignation of Indonesian President Suharto, the Australian Government announced that it would contribute \$2 million to assist Indonesia's Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) to improve its capacity to protect and promote human rights.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, said Australia's package of assistance to Komnas HAM was "particularly timely" given the crisis in Indonesia and the important contribution of this institution towards strengthening civil society and the observance of human rights generally.

"Indonesia is a country of enduring importance to Australia," Mr Downer said.

"It is in Australia's national interest to have a prosperous and stable Indonesia. Institutional strengthening is crucial to the continuing process of reform and will provide practical, concrete and realisable benefits for the Indonesian people."

Komnas HAM plays a crucial role in monitoring the human rights situation in Indonesia. Since its establishment in 1993, Komnas HAM has become highly regarded in Indonesia and has achieved positive results in monitoring

allegations of human rights violations and dealing with complaints.

However its ability to adequately guard against human rights violations has been limited by a lack of appropriately trained staff and other organisational weaknesses.

Last September, Australia's Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission went to Indonesia to identify activities Australia could fund to help Komnas HAM improve its capacity to protect human rights.

The activities to be funded under the package now announced include:

- human rights and governance training for Commission members and trainers;
- development of a complaints procedures manual and computerised database;
- a National Seminar on human rights in December 1998;
- management training; and
- English language training.

The timing of this assistance and in particular the National Seminar, is of special significance as 1998 is the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of

Human Rights, and the 5th anniversary of the establishment of Komnas HAM.

Australia is also supporting the promotion and protection of human rights in Indonesia through a number of other initiatives.

In June this year, the Australian Government will fund the visit of five senior Komnas HAM members, including Secretary-General Baharuddin Lopa, to Australia. This follows an earlier Australian-funded delegation in July 1997.

The Australian Government, through AusAID, is currently providing English language training to Komnas HAM staff. We are also providing short-term training courses, through the Specialised Training Project, for government officials, representatives of non-government organisations and lawyers in areas such as trade policy, human rights and intellectual property law.

DROUGHT RELIEF FLOWING INTO IRIAN JAYA

by Michelle Hardy

The Australian Government's food relief operation in Irian Jaya had delivered more than 255 tonnes of food and medicines to villagers by 22 June.

The operation is helping relieve the suffering faced by tens of thousands of people as a result of the drought in this remote part of Indonesia.

Operation AUSINDO JAYA began on 4 May, and by 22 June, Australian Defence Force Blackhawk Helicopters had reached the 255-tonne delivery mark.

While the relief operation is running smoothly, the situation in some villages remains serious.

In the village of Sukubatom, with a population of 500, it appears that children are foraging in the surrounding forest for food and becoming ill from eating plants. AusAID has helped to arrange an urgent shipment of food in response.

The people of Sukubatom have faced severe hardship for some time as their food crops have been destroyed. Their sweet potato crop has only just been replanted and it will take about six months before it is ready for harvest. The school remains open despite the seriousness of the situation, but the markets have closed.

Meanwhile, people in other villages are faring little better. In Kiwiroc, the emergency food relief is being distributed, but villagers there are in urgent need of medical supplies.

AusAID officers in Australia and Irian Jaya are working with the district disaster response authority, SATLAK, and other organisations including the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to help coordinate the distribution of food and medicine.

The Australian Defence Force is transporting rice and other food such as peanuts, tinned fish and peas along with medical supplies from Jayapura to Wamena and then on to affected villages in central Irian Jaya.

The Australian Government is providing up to \$9 million for the operation, mainly for fuel and transport costs.

This assistance builds on the \$3.3 million the Australian Government has provided since last December to help alleviate the effects of the drought in Irian Jaya, and is part of the Government's total \$50 million humanitarian commitment to Indonesia.

Operation AUSINDO JAYA is scheduled to run until about mid-July when it is expected the harvest of sweet potatoes, the staple diet in Irian Jaya, will be ready. AusAID will monitor the outcome of the harvest to ensure that there is sufficient food available, but it is expected the need for emergency food aid will rapidly diminish after this time.

While the main focus of the operation is to airlift food to remote villages, personnel from the Australian Army Malarial Research Institute have been deployed in Irian Jaya to help local health authorities and the ICRC combat outbreaks of malaria. The incidence of malaria is rising due to the poor health of those affected by the drought and the displacement of vulnerable populations into areas where malaria is more prevalent.

The ADF is also transporting aviation fuel from Australia to Wamena for Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) aircraft and helicopters which are also assisting in the relief operation.

- *Further information about the assistance Australia is providing in response to the drought is on AusAID's Internet site.*



Food relief supports children in Irian Jaya.
Photo: Sgt Gary Ramage

Australia helps improve health and education in Vietnam



Twenty-five years of partnership: The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, pledged increased development assistance to Vietnam during his visit there in April.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, announced a new four-year \$236 million program of development assistance for Vietnam during his visit there in April.

The aid will be provided between 1998–1999 and 2001–2002, following the completion this month of the current four-year aid pledge of \$200 million.

Mr Downer said the new and increased pledge demonstrated Australia's continuing strong commitment to Vietnam in this, the 25th anniversary year of diplomatic relations between the two nations.

The Prime Minister of Vietnam, Mr Phan Van Khai, and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Nguyen Manh Cam, warmly welcomed the new

pledge during meetings with Mr Downer.

In the past four years, Australia and Vietnam have successfully built up a program of aid projects, focusing on three agreed priority areas – improving health, education and infrastructure.

The additional funding now pledged will maintain support for existing aid projects in these areas. It will also provide scope for Australia and Vietnam to jointly develop some significant new activities which may include assistance to strengthen Vietnam's financial sector and projects to benefit poor people in rural areas.

Australia also will work with the Government of Vietnam to identify areas of need where we can provide targeted assistance to help manage the effects of the regional financial crisis.



Aid projects will focus on improving health, education and infrastructure.
Photo: Tim Acker

AID PACKAGE FOR LAOS UPGRADED

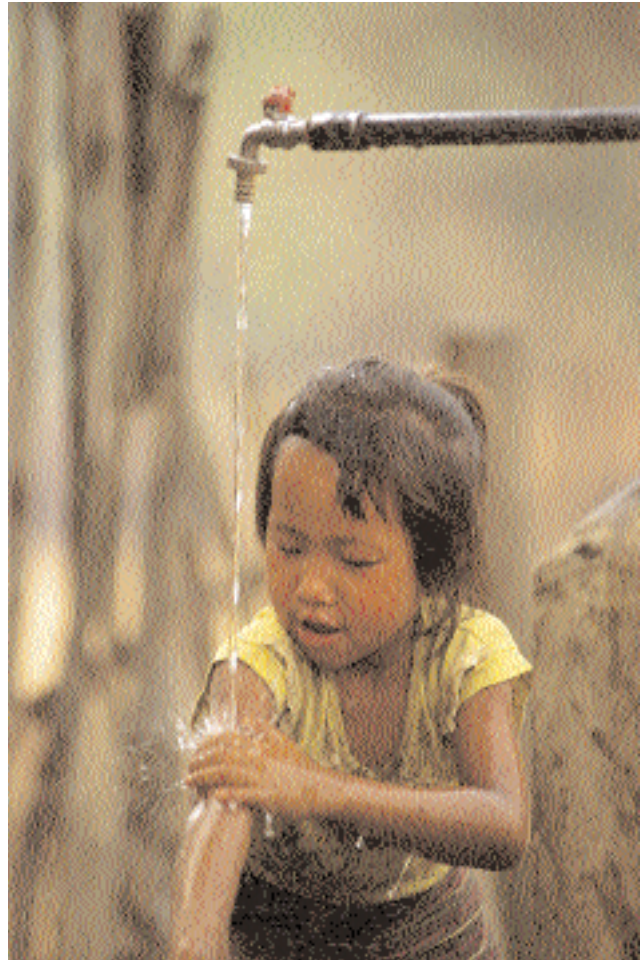
The Minister for Foreign Affairs also announced in May an increase in Australian development assistance to the Democratic Republic of Laos.

Australia will provide \$76 million in aid to Laos over the next four years. Despite a strong commitment to economic reform by the Government of Laos, the country remains one of the poorest in the world. More than 40 per cent of the population live in absolute poverty and one in 10 children die before the age of five.

As in the case of Vietnam, Australia will work with the Government of Laos to identify priority areas of need, as well as maintaining funding for continuing projects.

FUNDS FOR CHECK ON FINANCE SECTOR

The Australian Government will contribute \$250,000 to fund an independent audit of the seven State-owned



*Clean, running water is essential for good health.
Photo: Tim Acker*

commercial banks in Laos, in response to a request from the Government of Laos.

The Lao Vice-Minister to the Prime Minister's office, H.E. Mrs Khempheng Pholsena, and Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, signed a Memorandum of Understanding relating to the assistance to the Lao banking sector in May.

Mr Downer said after the signing that the structure of the Lao economy and its dependence on investment from its Asian neighbours has left the country especially vulnerable to external shocks.

"The Australian aid program's assistance for financial administration and other governance issues flows from the recognition that poverty reduction programs work best where governments are getting the economic fundamentals right," the Minister said.

"We are pleased to be able to provide this additional assistance to Laos during this challenging period in its development."



*Australian assistance to Laos will help improve health care.
Photo: Tim Acker*

NEW AID ADVISORY COUNCIL NAMED

A fourteen member Aid Advisory Council has been established to provide independent views on Australia's aid program to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer.

The establishment of the Aid Advisory Council responds to a recommendation of the Report of the Committee of Review of the Australian Overseas Aid Program, headed by Mr Paul Simons AM.

Mr Downer will chair the Aid Advisory Council and the Parliamentary Secretary, Mrs Kathy Sullivan, will be deputy chairperson. The Minister said he had appointed 12 other members to ensure our aid program reflects the values of the Australian community.

"I am delighted that 12 prominent Australians from academia, business, religious organisations and community groups have accepted my invitation to join the Council," Mr Downer said.

"I am confident they will all make a valuable contribution to shaping future directions of the aid program and ensuring that our assistance retains a strong Australian identity."

The Aid Advisory Council will meet three times a year, and members have been appointed for a term of three years. The Director General of AusAID, Mr Trevor Kanaley, will also attend the meetings along with a senior representative from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Council's first meeting was held at Parliament House, Canberra, on 27 May.

The new Aid Advisory Council is:

Mr Jim Carlton, Secretary General of the Australian Red Cross.

Ms Margaret Conley, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Expert Overseas Service Program.

Professor Ron Duncan, Professor of Economics and Executive Director of the National Centre for Development Studies, Australian National University.

Archbishop Ian George AM, Archbishop of Adelaide.

Ms Janet Hunt, Executive Director, Australian Council for Overseas Aid.

Ms Jill Lester, Head of Group Corporate Relations, Commonwealth Bank.

Dr Ian Lin, Managing Director of Quo Vadis Consulting Group and former President of the Council of the Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific.

Professor Peter Lloyd, Professor of Economics and Director of the Asia Research Centre, University of Melbourne.

Ms Gaye Phillips, Chief Executive of UNICEF Australia.

Professor Richard Robison, Professor of Asian and International Politics, and Director of the Asia Research Centre, Murdoch University.

Mr Charles Tapp, Chief Executive of CARE Australia.

Professor Cliff Walsh, Executive Director of the South Australian Centre for Economic Studies.

...AID PACKAGE FOR LAOS UPGRADED

Continued from page 8

The audit of banking activities will provide the Lao Government with a clearer picture of the financial position of the banks and the impact of the economic downturn on the finance sector. The audit should also provide Australia and other donors with an understanding of possible future needs in the Laos banking sector.

More than 40 per cent of the population of Laos lives in absolute poverty.



AusAID IN BOUGAINVILLE

THE PEACE DOCTORS

by Matt Francis

Helping with the reconstruction of Bougainville involved gestures as simple as a smile by an unarmed Australian truce monitor or giving women the opportunity to speak up about their hopes for peace.

Several AusAID officers had the opportunity to play a first-hand role in restoring peace on Bougainville as members of the Truce Monitoring Groups (TMG), a regional deployment involving personnel from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Vanuatu.

The first TMG arrived in December last year, and set up operations from bases at Arawa, Buka, Buin and Tonu. Its role was to support the peace process on Bougainville through monitoring the truce and talking to people about the Burnham Truce Declarations.

For the TMG volunteers from AusAID, early impressions of Bougainville are lasting ones.

AusAID's Michael Hunt, Jan Gammage and Stuart Schaefer were members of the first TMG team to arrive on Bougainville. The RAAF Hercules which carried

them to Aropa was only the second plane to land at the airstrip in nine years. Drains which had been dug across the runway had been hastily refilled to make it useable again. The Hercules was unloaded with its engines still turning as there were no ground facilities to service or restart them if they were shut down.

Leanne Merrett was one of the few women members of the TMG sent to Bougainville. She remembered arriving at the logistics base at Loloho and her accommodation for the first night in the 'Opera House' – a giant tin shed on the heavily polluted industrial site used to store



(left) Keeping the engines running: members of the first TMG arrive at Aropa.
Photo: Jan Gammage

(below) The Arawa hospital after several years of conflict.
Photo: Jan Gammage



copper from the mine at Panguna. However, the scenery improved dramatically when she spent six weeks with the TMG based at Tonu and Saveli in the southwestern quarter of the island.

Jan Gammage, who spent two months with the TMG based on Buka Island to the north of the

Bougainville mainland, recalled surveying the scenes of devastation caused by years of war around the former provincial capital, Arawa, with just the 'ribs of destroyed buildings' visible in the long and overgrown grass. The entire social and commercial infrastructure had been destroyed.

"It was like something out of a 'Mad Max' movie," Michael Hunt remembers. "Everything – hotels, shops, houses, schools, offices – had been burnt out and destroyed." Similar destruction awaited in the Buin district where he was to be based. A mission station which had been established by Wally Fingleton

\$2.3 MILLION RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE

The Australian Government has committed \$2.3 million to the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) to help resettle the people of Bougainville.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, said the funding for the IFRC was part of the \$100 million package of assistance he announced last August to help Bougainville recover from nine years of conflict.

"The signing of the Ceasefire Agreement provides Australia with the opportunity to move from emergency aid to helping people move back to their villages and to address some of the legacies of the war," Mr Downer said.

The IFRC rehabilitation program aims to encourage people displaced by the conflict to return to their traditional villages after many years of living in care centres and temporary villages set up during the war. The IFRC program will immediately deliver 700 village resettlement packs containing construction tools, building materials and gardening tools to all districts on the main island of Bougainville.

First aid posts and health centres will receive basic medical kits and community health workers will receive retraining and refresher courses. The program will also rehabilitate the water supply and reconstruct sanitary systems at 14 health centres.

This funding follows a \$4 million Australian contribution to the IFRC in 1997, for emergency supplies which were delivered to 30,000 families in Bougainville.



(the brother of former Australian test cricket captain Jack Fingleton) had also been razed to the ground. The mission had included a church which could seat up to 1000 people, as well as schools, a hospital, housing for teachers and nurses, a workshop and a timber mill, and at the height of its existence served a community of around 10,000 people.

Once established in their different base camps, the daily routines for the AusAID members of the TMG teams ranged from going on patrols in their area, meeting with local

villagers, arranging meetings to talk about the peace process, and resolving disputes which threatened the truce process.

Leanne Merrett said that going for a walk out of the TMG camp at the end of a day's work sent an important message to locals, many of whom had spent several years confined to their village because of fear of being caught up in the faction fighting.

"Just being seen out and about was one of the most important things you could do," Leanne said.



Jan Gammage of AusAID and women of Nissan discuss the peace process.
Photo: Gary Ramage ADF

“The truce meant that some people were able to return to their home villages for the first time in almost 10 years. They were able to re-establish social contacts which had been cut off because of the fighting.

“Our presence made a big difference to the confidence of local people in starting to resume a normal life. If we felt as though we

could move around safely by ourselves, then so could they.”

Jan Gammage said that women truce monitors in Bougainville also played an important role in helping local women to speak out about their hopes for peace.

“Having women in the TMG helped to encourage local women to speak up. After village meetings we held separate meetings for women to ensure their voices were heard as well.”

She tells of a women’s meeting held at Waikuna for the purpose of sending a Bougainville woman to the Lincoln Talks in New Zealand in mid-January. Jan’s task was to distribute letters about the meeting to women in villages she visited, many of whom were at least a day’s walk away from the meeting venue.

“The letters were delivered, the message was spread and about 200 women attended. For some women, attending the meeting cost them the best part of three days, by the time they walked down from the mountains to the market at Waikunai, attended the meeting, and walked back home again. This was a very large commitment to the peace process.”

Michael Hunt is optimistic about the prospects for the future. He believes the focus is strongly on peace and that people on Bougainville are tired of the fighting.

“There are some very enthusiastic and energetic individuals working for peace. They were among those leading the village meetings which we attended to talk about peace and reconciliation,” he said.

Such meetings often took on the appearance of religious ceremonies. They opened with prayers and hymns and presentations of flowers. They would lead to reconciliations

SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY POLICING

Australia has committed \$250,000 through AusAID to a Civilian Policing project in the Arawa region of Bougainville. The project will provide training for Auxiliary Police and will deliver a very tangible dividend from the peace process to the people of Bougainville.

Announcing the project, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, said it was another step to fulfil Australia’s commitment to help the Papua New Guinea Government and Bougainville parties to achieve peace on the island.

“Restoring civilian authority on Bougainville is critical to the achievement of sustainable peace on the island,” Mr Downer said. “Under the Lincoln Agreement, parties agreed to the phased withdrawal of the PNG Defence Force subject to the restoration of civilian authority.

“The maintenance of law and order is also fundamental to normalising day-to-day life. Restoring civilian authority on Bougainville has been accorded an extremely high priority by all groups.”

The six-week training course will be provided to members of the recently formed Arawa night police patrol, which consists of civilians and former Bougainville Revolutionary Army and Resistance combatants.

The training will be supported by an Australian and a New Zealand adviser. It includes instruction in conflict resolution, communication and mediation skills.

between families, clans, villages and districts which had been torn apart by the fighting over the previous years.

Attending village meetings and helping with the talks about peace at the local level were an important part of the TMG mission. The presence of outsiders helped people to express their feelings more openly.

“We heard many emotional stories at the reconciliation meetings,” Leanne Merrett said.

“Having outsiders there to acknowledge the trauma and suffering people had been through helped to provide a release for the local community,” she said.

Nigel Ewels was based at the Tonu teamsite and said he was particularly impressed with the attitude of the people in the Siwai district in the south west.

“Despite some bitter fighting during the war, both sides were working closely to push forward with the peace process,” Nigel said.

“Communities were actively involved in rebuilding community infrastructure in the form of schools and aid posts.

“Individuals were rebuilding homes and planting gardens to facilitate the move back to their home villages.

“The road clearance project sponsored by AusAID was actively supported by many communities and helped to funnel much needed cash into the economy. Even in the remoter parts of the Area of Operations you would see that large sections of the road had vegetation cut back from it,” Nigel said.

AusAID officers contributed to peace in other ways. Stuart Schaefer played a role in resolving a truce violation involving members of the Resistance and BRA over a boat which had been seized on Taurato Island.

The truce monitors talked with the different sides to the dispute, held a meeting, and resolved the problem, including the return of the boat to its rightful owners.

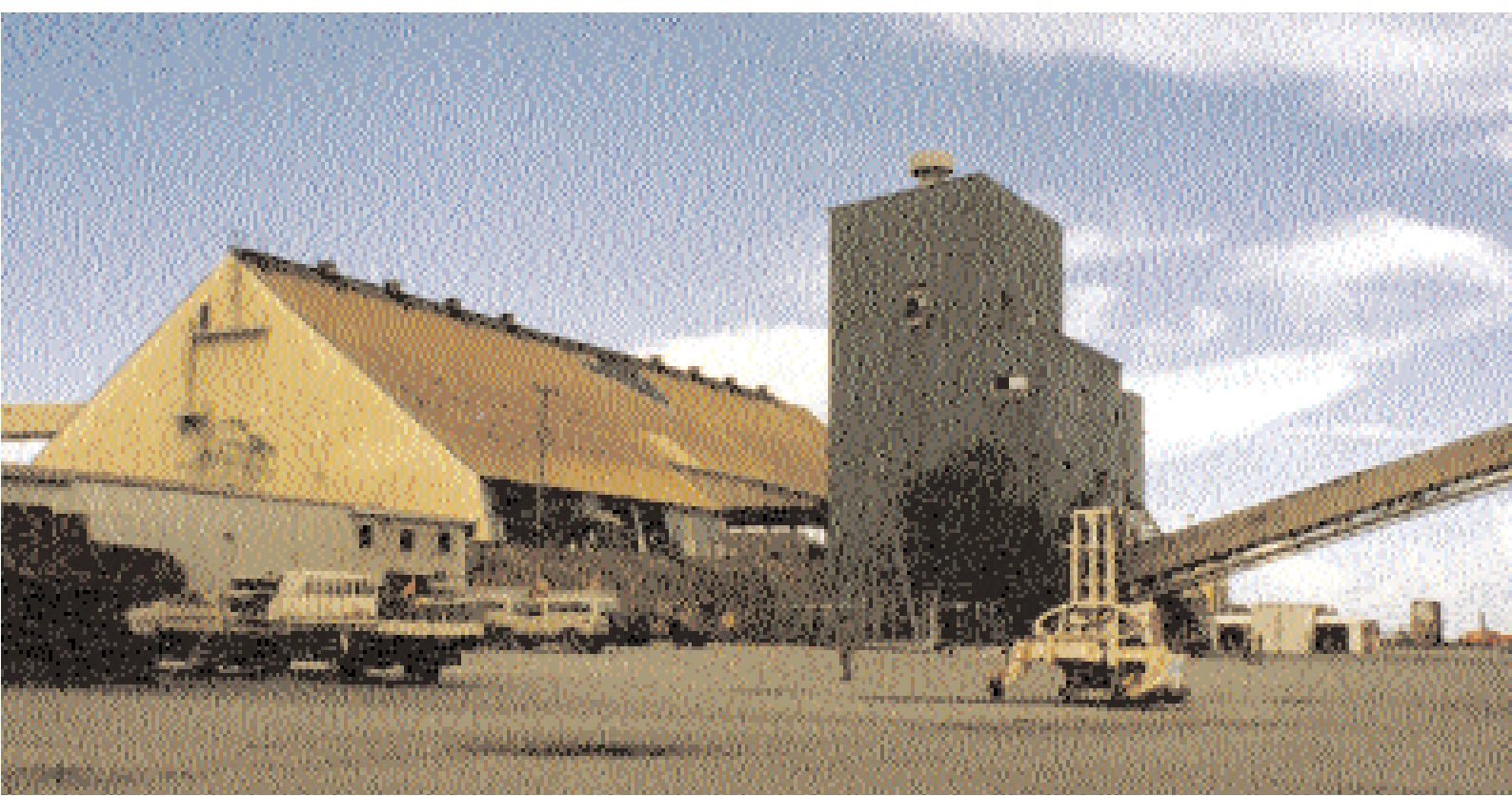
“It was good to be on the ground to see the changes occurring, as well being able to make a practical contribution to the process at the grassroots,” Stuart said. While with the TMG he worked in the international policy section of the Defence Department, before joining AusAID.

He also observed other tangible signs of peace at work, including local roads starting to fill up again with a variety of “amazing vehicles” as people regained confidence in moving about.

“One day you walked past what looked like a heap of junk sitting in the jungle. The next day, it had moved,” Stuart said, paying tribute to the skill of the local mechanics who managed to get vehicles back on the road despite several years without spare parts.

That the roads of Bougainville are again busy with traffic as people go about their daily routines is in no small part thanks to the efforts of the ‘peace doctors’ from AusAID and other agencies who contributed to the work of the Truce Monitoring Group.

The TMG base camp at Loloho, or the ‘Opera House’.





Mrs Sullivan at the official opening of the Bac Giang water treatment plant.
Photo: Tim Acker

SOUTH EAST ASIA - AUSTRALIA

OFFICIAL VISIT STRENGTHENS TIES

by Michelle Hardy

Mrs Kathy Sullivan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, recently visited Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam to gain first-hand experience of AusAID projects in Asia and to assess the impact of the regional financial crisis on our neighbours.

Mrs Sullivan has responsibility for Australia's international development assistance program, and this article provides Focus readers with a comprehensive report of her official visits and her impressions of the impacts of AusAID projects in the three countries.

One key impression reinforced in each country was that AusAID projects are generally continuing despite the impact of the financial crisis, with both emergency relief and longer term programs fully functional.

INDONESIA: 11-18 FEBRUARY.

During her week-long visit to Indonesia, Mrs Sullivan travelled to West Timor in East Nusa Tenggara Province, Surabaya, Bali and Jakarta, for talks with Indonesian Government Ministers and officials and representatives of aid organisations.

Mrs Sullivan said the severity of the drought in Indonesia was brought home to her while visiting villages in West Timor, where families have received loans from AusAID to help them set up small businesses.

"At the first village, I met a group of women who were using their loans to raise chickens," Mrs Sullivan said.

"The chickens were scrawny because the corn, which they were usually fed, was being reserved for the villagers themselves. As a result, the chickens were eating the stringy pulp of the palm trees and their chicks were not surviving.

"In the next village, there was no corn. The chickens were no longer being fed and it was the people who were resorting to eating the palm pulp, despite the fact that eating it can cause internal bleeding."

In response to the drought and the effects of the financial crisis on Indonesia, the Australian Government has announced humanitarian assistance totalling \$50 million. This includes up to



These nurses in Kupang, Indonesia, told Mrs Sullivan about their work on the Women's Health and Family Planning Project.

\$10 million for a joint AusAID-Australian Defence Force food relief operation in Irian Jaya (see separate article on page 6). AusAID is also continuing to provide other assistance, including two new projects which Mrs Sullivan announced during her visit to Indonesia.

One of the new projects is a \$12 million program to help Indonesia improve maternal health services.

"It is a sad fact that 21,000 Indonesian women die during childbirth every year," Mrs Sullivan said.

The money will help support UNICEF's Safer Motherhood Program, which has been successfully operating in parts of Indonesia since 1995.

Mrs Sullivan said the \$12 million contributed by Australia would mean that the Safer Motherhood Program could be expanded to target women most at risk of maternal death in West Java -

where annually about 6,000 women die in childbirth - and also in the provinces of Maluku and Irian Jaya.

"In these areas, the problem is more acute as geographic isolation and poverty makes it hard for women to access health services," Mrs Sullivan said.

The Safer Motherhood Program aims to improve the quality of maternal and neonatal health services, support village midwives and traditional birth attendants, and help identify problems during early pregnancy.

The project adds to several other AusAID programs in the Eastern provinces that help improve the health of women and their children.

The second project is a \$37 million workforce training initiative, one of the largest aid programs ever undertaken in Indonesia by Australia.

The Indonesia Australia Partnership for Skills Development Program is a five-year project which aims to better educate and train Indonesia's workforce, particularly in Eastern Indonesia, including Irian Jaya and East Timor.

Mrs Sullivan witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding initiating the program by Indonesia's Director General for Primary and Secondary Education, Professor Achmady, and the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Mr John McCarthy, at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta.

Mrs Sullivan said the Australian funding would help Indonesia train more highly qualified technical staff and the professionals necessary for Indonesia's development.

"The present lack of adequately skilled workers poses a major development obstacle for Indonesia," Mrs Sullivan said.

THE PHILIPPINES: 18-25 FEBRUARY.

Mrs Sullivan spent a week in the Philippines where she inspected several Australian-supported aid activities on the southern Philippines island of Mindanao.

In Mindanao, she also had meetings with members of the Bangsamoro Women's Foundation, the South Cotabato Governor, Hilario de Pedro, and Mayor Rozalita Nunez, and local government officials of General Santos City.

In Manila, Mrs Sullivan met a number of senior government officials as well as the Asian Development Bank President, Mitsuo Sato, and other senior bank officials.

Mrs Sullivan first visited Mindanao eight years ago.

"At that time the province was still on a war footing and my hosts thought it was too dangerous for me to travel," Mrs Sullivan explained.

“This time, I travelled still with an armed escort, but nevertheless in an atmosphere devoid of threat.”

At a base camp, Mrs Sullivan announced that Australia will provide \$2 million to help improve basic living conditions for former Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) combatants and their families. This is part of the US\$13 million United Nations Development Program aid package to post-conflict areas in Mindanao.

“This funding demonstrates our commitment to supporting the peace-building process, following the September 1996 signing of a peace accord between the Government of the Philippines and the MNLF after more than two decades of armed conflict in Mindanao,” Mrs Sullivan said.

Australia’s contribution will also help fund basic household amenities such as water supply systems and toilets, along with other infrastructure like school buildings and community health centres.

An estimated 6,400 former MNLF combatants and their dependants - totalling about 45,000 people - are expected to directly benefit from this emergency assistance.

The area covered by the Special Zone for Peace and Development is receiving \$23 million in Australian assistance for health, education, development planning and agriculture projects.

After visiting Mindanao, Mrs Sullivan was hopeful that the peace process would continue despite the challenges ahead.

“It is true the former rebels are finding it hard to lay down their guns and to return to the mundane life of the farmer, but the women are determined to put war behind them,” she said.



“From what I saw, I think the women of Mindanao will succeed in getting their businesses going, earning the money they need to send their children to school and to persuade their husbands to abandon the conflict. They are getting help from outside aid agencies, including AusAID.

“I am proud to say that everywhere I went, I received heartfelt thanks for the part Australia has played in helping the people of Mindanao reap the rewards of peace.”

In a major initiative for the Philippines, Mrs Sullivan also announced that Australia would provide \$19.5 million to help improve health services in some of the poorest regions of the country.

This project is the largest health initiative that AusAID has supported in the Philippines. Australian assistance will directly target the people of the provinces of South Cotabato and Surigao del Norte, in Mindanao.

Governor Nur Misuari of Mindanao (left) and Mrs Sullivan (right) sign an agreement for more Australian aid to Mindanao at the Ibrahim Sema base camp. Looking on are (from left) Lynn Pieper, AusAID Counsellor in Manila, Madam Tan Misuari, and the Australian Ambassador to the Philippines, Mr Miles Kupa.

Under this initiative, Filipino non-government organisations and community groups will receive grants to help provide better training for health workers, improve community health programs and establish community health resource centres.

“Special attention will be given to ensuring that women, children and people living in remote areas have access to better health services,” Mrs Sullivan said.

The program aims to reduce the incidence of major diseases in children, including pneumonia, diarrhoea, tuberculosis, malaria and schistosomiasis.

Australia's contribution will complement US\$51.1 million being provided by the Asian Development Bank and funding by the Government of the Philippines.

VIETNAM: 25 FEBRUARY TO 3 MARCH.

Mrs Sullivan spent a week in Vietnam to commemorate the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Australia and Vietnam and to visit a number of aid projects.

Mrs Sullivan delivered a message to the Vietnamese people from Prime Minister John Howard at the anniversary celebrations, attended by 650 Vietnamese and Australians from government, business and non-government organisations involved in delivering development assistance.

"The 25th anniversary is an excellent opportunity to celebrate the warmth and closeness of our relationship which has stood the test of time and change. We look forward to building on our friendship with Vietnam," Mrs Sullivan said.

"Australia and Vietnam enjoy a broad-based, friendly relationship ranging across the fields of trade and investment, education and training, political relations and people-to-people links."

During Mrs Sullivan's visit, the Vietnam Provincial Water Supply Project (see following article) reached a milestone with the official opening of a new water treatment plant to service the town of Bac Giang.

Mrs Sullivan also opened new patient wards at Vinh Long Hospital, near the My Thuan Bridge construction site. Australia provided a grant of \$33,000 to upgrade the wards to ensure that the health services of Vinh Long Province remained adequate. Two

local health clinics in Tien Giang were also being refurbished with assistance from Australia.

During her visit to Ninh Binh, a rural province north of Hanoi, a group of about 30 women took Mrs Sullivan into their homes where they told her, through interpreters, how their self-confidence had improved as a result of learning new skills to help them earn an income.

The Vietnam Family Planning project, which began in June 1992 and runs until June this year, aims to improve the health of women in rural villages in 20 communes, along with improving their economic and social status. This has been achieved through training and loans to about 4000 women.

The 30 women from the Ninh Binh Women's Union delighted in telling Mrs Sullivan how the small loans they received had made a big difference to their ability to generate income for their families.

"The project has helped to strengthen the Women's Union, resulting in more members and more important than that, the project has helped to improve the status of women at home and in the community," the chairwoman of the Ninh Binh Women's Union, Mrs Le Thi Bich, told Mrs Sullivan through an interpreter.

The women who have received loans under the project have been very enterprising in turning their small loans into profitable businesses such as growing flowers for sale through hotels in Hanoi, farming livestock, growing peanuts and vegetables, sewing, and renting out rice threshers and buffalo for ploughing fields.

*Dr Pham Thi Giang, Mrs Kathy Sullivan and Dr Martin O'Dell inspect water treatment works.
Photo: Tim Acker*





Clean water will bring better health

by Michelle Hardy

Lack of access to clean water is one of the major development issues facing Vietnam. Just 43 per cent of the population have access to safe water and only 22 per cent have access to sanitation.

A recent World Bank survey found only 100 of Vietnam's 436 towns have access to piped water; this represents less than half the urban population.

Drinking dirty water has had a big toll on generations of Vietnamese people, with many suffering from diarrhoea, dysentery, typhoid, hepatitis and cholera.

The Vietnam-Australia Provincial Water Supply Project is providing access to safe, sustainable and continuous water to more than 400,000 people, in the towns of Bac Ninh and Bac Giang in the north, Ha Tinh in the centre and Tra Vinh and Vinh Long in the south.

The project, which began in 1995 and runs until 2000, aims to provide the majority of households in the five towns with clean water – either through their own tap or a community tap supplying potable water.

AusAID is contributing \$50 million to the project while the Government of Vietnam is providing about \$20 million.

The project is managed for AusAID by a joint venture of three Australian companies - Kinhill, ACIL and Montgomery Watson Australia, in cooperation with Vietnam's Ministry of Construction.

Australian companies have won contracts worth more than \$30 million to supply equipment and materials for the project. Queensland companies have been awarded the largest share of business, with contracts worth more than \$20 million and the remaining \$10 million going to suppliers from NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

The role of the Australian contractors is to provide technical assistance and training at the national, provincial and local level and procure equipment and materials for each water supply company.

The Australian team leader, Dr Martin (Larry) O'Dell from Kinhill, has managed the project since it began three years ago.

"The first challenge was to get the relationship and management structure right between ourselves and the Central Government, the Provincial Government and the Water Supply Company in each town," Dr O'Dell recalled.

THE VIETNAM-AUSTRALIA PROVINCIAL WATER SUPPLY PROJECT



| Location | Source | Number to benefit |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Bac Giang | Surface water | 87,900 |
| Bac Ninh | Ground water | 60,000 |
| Ha Tinh | Existing reservoir | 56,300 |
| Tra Vinh | Ground water | 85,500 |
| Vinh Long | Surface water | 115,800 |
| Total | | 405,500 |

The map shows the location of the five towns in the AusAID project.

All five water supply companies have now designed either a new or improved system capable of delivering a clean, continuous supply of water.

New water treatment plants at Bac Giang and Bac Ninh, north of Hanoi, have already begun operating. Construction is in progress on the schemes in the remaining three towns.

INVOLVING THE PEOPLE

In all five towns, residents are being encouraged to participate in community activities aimed at raising awareness of the importance of clean water.

Women's groups, schools and local government (represented by People's Committees) have formed a Water, Health and Sanitation Sub-Committee in each town to support their water supply project and ensure local needs are taken into account in its planning and development.

Two Vietnamese women, Ms Nguyen Mai Oanh and Dr Pham Thi Giang, who work as part of the Australian Team, are responsible for public awareness campaigns and local initiatives to improve sanitation in all five towns.

Their message is simple – clean water means better health.

Ms Oanh is taking messages into primary schools while Dr Giang is educating members of households through a network of volunteers who work one-on-one with families to encourage them to take responsibility for improving their health.

"I try to encourage people to understand that they have to play a part in improving their own health," Dr Giang said.

"I explain that the Australian contribution alone will not result in improved health."

Dr Giang was very optimistic about the benefits the project will bring.

"The World Health Organisation says 80 per cent of diseases come from dirty water or lack of access to clean water. If we have clean water, we can reduce 80 per cent of diseases."

SELF-HELP AT THE MICRO LEVEL

Dr Giang trains a team of volunteers in each town to motivate local families to pay for improvements to their own drainage and sanitation arrangements; for example laying concrete paths, building drains or installing toilets.

Families provide the labour and about 60 per cent of the cost, while AusAID contributes about 20 per cent and local authorities the rest. Each family decides what changes will benefit them and the volunteers teach them the necessary building skills.

Dr Giang said most families were initially reluctant to contribute their own money to these 'micro-activities'. But such contributions by the family are necessary for them to feel a sense of ownership of the new facilities.

"Then we began setting up the management structure within the water supply companies. This involved us training the management and workers in everything involved in running a water supply company."



Construction work on track to bring clean water to five Vietnamese towns by the year 2000.
Photos: Tim Acker

She has responded to this challenge by concentrating first on motivating the poorest families. Once the better-off families see for themselves the benefits of cleaner streets and better drainage, they follow the lead.

Dr Giang accompanied AusAID to visit a resident of Ngo Quyen

district of Bac Giang who contributed 350,000 Vietnamese dong or about US\$28 to build a path and drains around his house as part of a neighbourhood activity.

Mr Hoang Van Hoe, a widower, is retired with four children – three at school and the other unemployed. He sold lettuce and chickens to pay for the path and drains and has no regrets about the decision.

“Now we feel civilised to have this very clean footpath and a much cleaner atmosphere,” Mr Hoe said through an interpreter.

At present, Mr Hoe’s family get their water by lowering a bucket into an open water tank in their courtyard. By the end of this year, a tap is due to be installed at their house after new pipes are connected as part of the improvements to Bac Giang’s water supply system.

The volunteer motivator who convinced Mr Hoe and his family to improve their paths and drainage, Mrs Hoang Thi Hong, said other families who had made similar improvements were pleased with the results and felt the money they had contributed was worthwhile.

“Before we built the path, the lane was very dirty, there were floods and it was very uncomfortable. But, after the work was completed, people felt very happy and, of course, it is good for their health,” Mrs Hong said.

WATER TREATMENT PLANT A ‘GREAT ACHIEVEMENT’

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Kathy Sullivan, attended the official opening of Bac Giang’s water treatment plant during her visit to Vietnam in February.

Mrs Sullivan said the project was considered a model for other water supply projects in Vietnam.

“When I observe the tangible results of our cooperation – such as the opening of the water treatment plant – and consider the lasting benefits for the people in all five towns, I believe it is money well spent,” Mrs Sullivan said at the opening.

The chairperson of the Bac Giang Provincial People’s Committee, Madam Pham Thi Hai Chuyen, said the establishment of the water treatment plant was a ‘great achievement’.



The Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Construction, Mr Nguyen Tan Van, said the project was ‘contributing to the socio-economic development of the five towns’.

About 3,000 households in Bac Giang are already connected to the new water system. One Bac Giang resident who had water connected to a tap at her house for the first time, was Mrs Nguyen Thi Viet.

Through an interpreter, Mrs Viet said that having clean water piped into a tap in her home would benefit her four children.

“Because we know the water’s clean and safe, we know our health will be improved,” she said.

The head of Bac Ninh’s Water, Sanitation and Health Sub-Committee, Mrs Vu Thi Thu Nga, said that the community strongly supported their water supply project.

“We have conducted public meetings in three wards (neighbourhoods) to talk about water tariff issues and already 2,000 households have applied for water connections out of 13,000,” Mrs Nga said.

“I feel the population of the town is well aware of the importance of clean water.”

Mrs Nga said residents of Bac Ninh had held a competition among primary school students to design a

*The water project is contributing to the socio-economic development of the five towns.
Photo: Tim Acker*

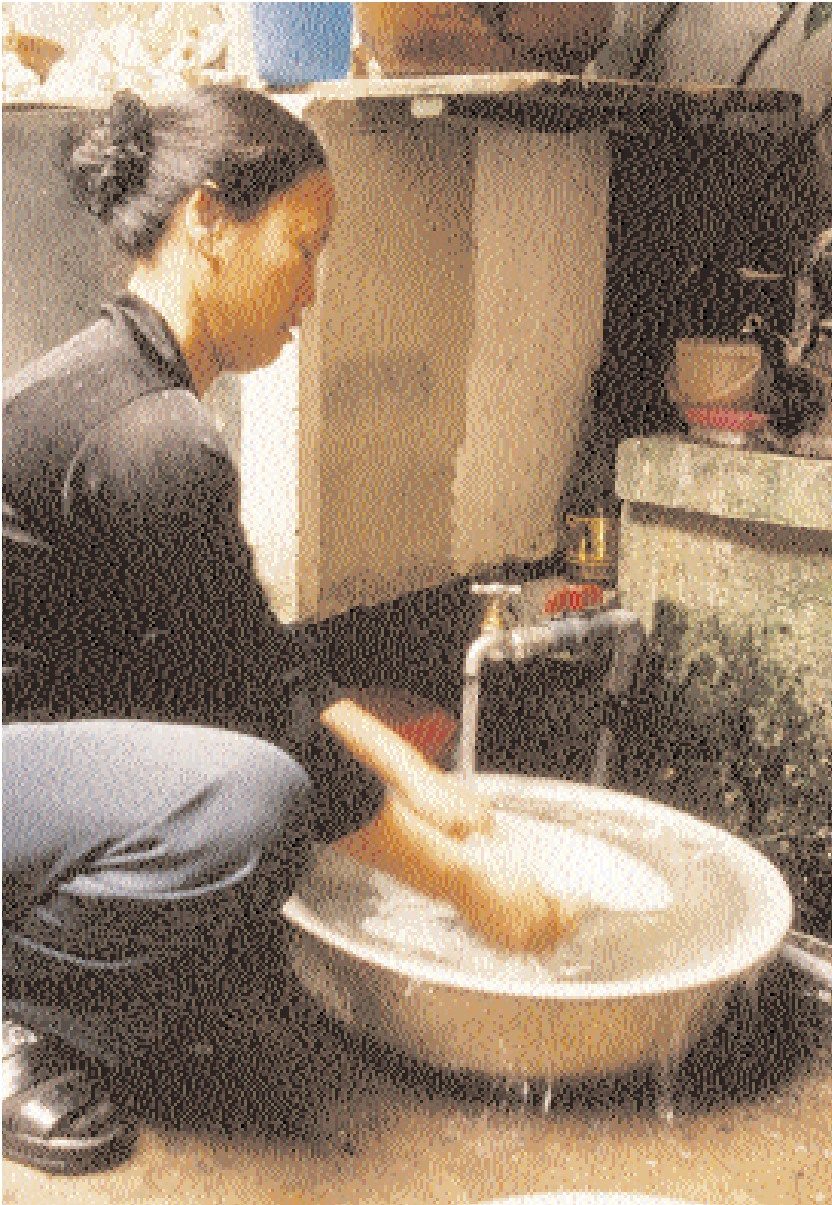
poster highlighting the links between clean water and good health. Winning entries were featured in a calendar that was distributed in the community.

Mrs Nga said the residents of Bac Ninh appreciated the help from Australia.

TEACHING THE BENEFITS

Enthusiasm for the project was evident during a visit to Ve An Primary School in Bac Ninh.

The school’s principal, Mr Nguyen Si Khuong, said teachers had



Results that count. Clean running water means better lifestyles and improved health for the people of Vietnam.
 Photo: Tim Acker

developed special curriculum to teach students about the importance of clean water.

The school is trialing a new teaching method which involves children teaching students one level below them about the benefits of drinking clean water. Mr Khuong said pupils were more receptive to health messages delivered by their peers. The

parents' committee of the school is also raising funds to build toilets, as there are currently none.

Similar activities are underway at schools in Ha Tinh in Central Vietnam and Tra Vinh and Vinh Long in the Mekong Delta. In Tra Vinh, the Water Supply Company has taken the initiative and is providing funds for clean water and toilets in four of the local primary schools.

Vinh Long has an urban population of about 250,000 but only about half have piped water.

The effects of drinking polluted water were sadly obvious during a visit to a group of poor families in Vinh Long whose only supply of water consists of a stagnant black sludge in the lane around their houses.

Residents showed how they scoop up this sludge and try to settle it by storing it in barrels before they pour it from one barrel to another in an effort to take out some of the effluent in the town's waterways.

A resident, who did not want to be named, summed up the experiences of her neighbours: "We drink this, it makes us sick." Other residents simply pointed to skin infections on their neck and rubbed their stomachs to show the effects of the sickly water.

Vice-President of Vinh Long primary school, Mrs Hoang Huynh Nga, said teachers were encouraging students to alert their parents to the need to boil drinking water.

"Since the program began, the children complain to their parents if they are given dirty water," Mrs Nga said.

"They say that their teacher has advised them that they must have clean water."

Polluted water will soon be a thing of the past in this and other Vinh Long communities. Construction of the Vinh Long Water Supply, with the help of Australia, began in March and is expected to provide clean running water in October 1999.

Note: Michelle Hardy, AusAID Public Affairs, and Tim Acker, photographer, visited Vietnam in 1998.

CROPS REPLACE MINES IN AusAID-BACKED



by Carol Haffke

Between crops and mines: the red and white strip marks the boundary of the mine clearing operation.

A bright red and white striped tape stretches across a tract of land in the small village of Moamba in Mozambique's Maputo province. Villagers are now growing their crops just centimetres away from one side of it.

The tape separates the end of a cleared area and the start of a field still littered with landmines.

With this particular stretch of land now free of mines, villagers can begin to live without the constant fear of an explosion. They can start farming again, take shorter routes

to gather water and firewood, and not worry about their children accidentally straying into the minefields.

AusAID recently provided \$1 million to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Accelerated Demining Programme (ADP) in the province of Inhambane in Mozambique. This contribution will ensure the continued operation of up to two platoons of fully-equipped and trained personnel to clear minefields until January 2000. It is part of the \$100 million Australia expects to commit for demining and related activities around the world over the 10 years to 2005.

The use of landmines was widespread during the protracted Mozambique civil war, which ended with the signing of the Rome Peace Treaty in October 1992.

The war was mainly fought in rural areas in southern and central Mozambique and the mines and unexploded ordnance left behind now constitute a major threat to the rural population.

The ADP project will provide many positive and tangible rewards for the people of Inhambane. More and more arable land will become available for cultivation, thus encouraging sustainable livelihoods, reducing migration to the cities and increasing domestic food production.

MOZAMBIQUE PROJECT



The Director of the Accelerated Demining Program, Mr Jackie D'Almeida, sitting on ground, briefs members of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation.

AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION INSPECTS THE WORK

In late April, an Australian Parliamentary Delegation visited the clearing site in Moamba to see first hand the work of the UNDP program.

The leader of the delegation, the Hon. Bob Halverson MP, was joined by the Hon. Clyde Holding MP, the Hon. Bruce Reid MP, Senator Barney Cooney, Senator Julian McGauran, Senator Sue Knowles, Mr Richard Coventry and Mr Neil Bessell.

They were briefed by the Director of the Accelerated Demining Programme (ADP) Mr Jackie D'Almeida, along with Operations Technical Adviser to the ADP, Australian Army Major Peter McIntosh and UNDP Program Officer responsible for the demining portfolio, Sigurd Marstein.

Mr Halverson passed on a message of goodwill from Australia's Special Representative on Demining, Mrs Kathy Sullivan, to UNDP Resident Representative, Mr Emmanuel Dierckx de Castre.

"Our contribution underlines the priority the Australian Government places on building a solution to the global landmines problem," Mrs Sullivan said.

The delegation was briefed on the advantages of manual mine clearance, which is favoured in this region. It is certainly, to date, the most reliable method for the safe removal of mines and unexploded ordnance, albeit labour and time intensive. An added value of this method is the ease with which the knowledge can be transferred to local operators and organisations.

A major objective of the operation is to develop a national mine clearance capability in Mozambique beyond the current project period.

Importantly, 483 of ADP's 487 employees are Mozambicans. This deliberate approach to foster a national capacity for demining should ensure that effective demining work will continue beyond 2000.

WASHINGTON LANDMINE CONFERENCE

A high-level Australian delegation led by Mrs Kathy Sullivan, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, attended a major three-day conference on global demining in Washington from 20-22 May.

The United States Government convened the conference to develop mechanisms for better coordination of demining operations, and a global strategy for elimination of the landmine threat to civilians by the year 2010.

The Australian delegation affirmed this country's commitment to a coordinated approach to demining operations around the world, and reinforced Australia's belief that individual countries affected by landmines should be helped to develop and plan their own demining programs.

Help for victims

While in Washington, Mrs Sullivan announced that Australia will provide \$2 million to a special appeal for landmine victims launched earlier this year by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

The ICRC Special Appeal for Assistance for Mine Victims will be used to help fund physical rehabilitation programs, medical and surgical assistance, mine-awareness programs and to help people disabled by landmines.

Essentially, the appeal will focus on the rehabilitation and re-integration of landmine victims into their communities.

FIGHTING FAMINE

IN SUDAN

by Anthea Webb

*Some women of the stricken region carry the emergency food to their village.
Photo: WFP/J.Share*

The United Nations World Food Programme is working desperately to avoid a major famine in Sudan, and Australia has joined the international effort.

On 25 May, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, announced that Australia would give \$680,000 to help the World Food Programme provide food for hundreds of thousands of Sudanese people on the brink of starvation.

The Minister also announced that Australia would provide \$320,000 to Community Aid Abroad for an emergency seed distribution project in the Bahr el Ghazal region of southern Sudan. UNICEF and the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) are also planning to send seeds. Both moves aim to take advantage of a pause in fighting in the civil war in Sudan.

Some 380,000 people are estimated to be in critical need of food following intense fighting and drought in Bahr el Ghazal.

WFP staff in Rumbek area reported that women were collapsing from hunger, exhaustion and desperation when they arrived at food distribution sites.

A severe drought last year, followed by heavy flooding, destroyed up to 60 per cent of crops in the area.

At the same time, intense fighting between the Government of Sudan and rebel Sudanese People's Liberation Army troops not only threatened lives, it prevented the delivery of life-saving humanitarian aid.

The Government of Sudan suspended permission for aid agencies to fly vital food and medical supplies into the area for one month while the fighting continued.

AID FLIGHTS RESUME

Permission to resume flights was granted just before peace talks between the government and rebels started in May, giving aid agencies access to all areas in the Bahr el Ghazal region.

The government also granted permission for WFP to increase the number of planes it uses to deliver aid from one to five. WFP staff are now working frantically to get enough food into the area before it is too late.

Delivering this urgently-needed food to Sudan is fraught with difficulty. WFP uses a combination of road, barge and air to get food to the people who need it most, in



some of the most inaccessible places in Sudan and the world. In this current crisis, the only way to reach the people of Bahr el Ghazal in time is by air, making it a particularly expensive and complicated logistic operation.

A LOGISTICAL NIGHTMARE

The special transport and logistic problems, exacerbated by continuing fighting and harsh weather conditions, contribute to very high costs for delivering food. The operation is plagued by a lack of funds.

The arrival of four extra C-130 Hercules planes was just in time for the operation. But according to Australian Michael Sackett, WFP's regional manager for the Horn of Africa, the logistics involved in keeping the planes in the air have increased exponentially.

Another Australian, Tony Freeman, is responsible for just that. Based in Lokichokio, in northern Kenya, Freeman tries to make sure that each plane makes two flights per day, delivering a total of 96 tonnes of food. That's enough to feed 240,000 people for one day.

Fuel is one of Freeman's most difficult problems. The planes use 150 tonnes of fuel per week. WFP can only store 3,000 to 4,000 tonnes of fuel at a time, so it has to be trucked in regularly. Recently, the main road was cut by heavy rains, and the Government of Kenya appealed to WFP to help them fix it. Occasionally, the convoys are

*Emergency supplies from the UN World Food Programme are unloaded in Bahr el Ghazal
Photo: WFP/J.Share*

held up by local bandits, who use the aircraft fuel to light kerosene lamps.

Getting enough money to buy the food is another problem. WFP has only enough stocks to feed the people of Sudan until the end of June. It had to borrow food from its other operations in Africa, such as the Great Lakes region, including Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire, in order to meet the urgent needs of displaced people in Bahr el Ghazal.

WFP needs an additional 50,000 tonnes of food for its entire Sudan operation. It has appealed for US \$65 million to cover food and transport costs for 12 months. Last year, it received only 50 per cent of the funds it needed to provide emergency food relief in Sudan.

The Australian Government, through AusAID, has already made a unique contribution to WFP's work in Sudan. In the past two years it has provided around \$1.5 million to enable WFP to buy food from areas in Sudan where food is plentiful. It then ships the food to other areas in Sudan where people are hungry. Purchasing food locally is a cost-effective, time saving option. It also helps to boost local production capacity. Much of the surplus has been generated with the help of NGOs.



One of the Sudanese households that benefited from this WFP delivery.
Photo: WFP/IC LaRuffa

The current crisis in Bahr el Ghazal is just the latest in 15 years of chronic war and drought in Sudan. In some parts of the country crops have failed for the past three years. The constant need for people to flee fighting - and their fields - has caused 30 per cent of children under five in displaced camps to be malnourished.

Unfortunately, the future holds little hope. Experts predict that rebel and government forces will take advantage of the long dry season to try to capture areas which have enjoyed relative peace until now. It is possible more people will be displaced.

Although normal rains have begun in Kenya, and should move north into Sudan, the people have almost no seeds and few tools with which to plant for the next season.

Almost two and a half million people in Sudan rely on the World Food Programme to get them through chronic food shortages caused by drought and civil war.

In emergency operations like Sudan, WFP aims to give the most vulnerable people access to food and to prevent the need for them to leave their homes in search of food. Natural and man-made forces make that a tough goal.

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

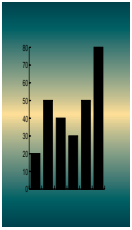
In 1997, WFP helped 52.7 million people, of which 19.1 million were affected by man-made disasters and 10 million by natural disasters. WFP shipped or purchased locally 2.7 million tons of food aid.

Australia has a long history of support for WFP. It is the 6th largest donor to the organisation, providing cash for emergency and protracted relief operations and cash and commodities for WFP's development food aid activities.

The Asia and Pacific region is the largest user of food aid for development. WFP is active in 14 countries in the region and reached over 19 million people in 1997.

Australia directs part of its contribution to WFP for food for work activities in China and Bangladesh. WFP is currently managing one of its largest and most complex emergency operations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea).

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is dedicated to providing food for life, food for growth and food for work. It aims to save lives in emergencies, to improve the nutrition of mothers and babies, and to empower poor communities to be self-reliant by helping them build the infrastructure they need to overcome hungry periods.



BUSINESS NEWS

OPPORTUNITIES IN JAPAN'S ODA PROGRAM

Many Australian companies may be unaware of the possibilities for foreign participation in Japan's very large program of Official Development Assistance.

The Japanese aid budget for 1997 was 16.8 trillion yen (about US\$13 billion), making Japan the largest aid donor in the world. Despite the pressures generated by the Asian financial crisis, Japanese ODA is expected to continue at high levels through the medium term.

Well over half of the 320 Japanese-sponsored development studies in 1996 were in the Asian region, where the experience and expertise of Australian companies, particularly in fields such as transport, communications and energy, is well recognised.

Yet in the last decade only 12 Australian consultant groups have participated in Japanese development studies projects. We rank 11th of the 61 countries who have participated in that part of Japan's ODA effort. Similarly, over the last five years a total of 19 Australian companies have participated at the implementation stage of 17 development projects funded by Japan's Overseas Economic Co-operation Fund (OECF).

The opportunities for greater Australian involvement were explored at a recent Tokyo seminar, when officials from OECF, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and JICA (Japan International Co-operation Agency) were hosted by the Australia New Zealand Chamber of Commerce in Japan.

At the development studies stage, it is important for interested Australian consultants to identify and forge links with a prospective Japanese partner. (JICA has about 500 Japanese firms registered as consultants, and all its development studies projects must be managed by a Japanese firm.)

At the procurement stage, the OECF's quite liberal policy leaves procurement of goods and services to the developing country, subject to compliance with Japanese guidelines on the process.

In the five years to 1996, about half the contracts approved by OECF have gone to suppliers in the developing countries, while the share going to suppliers

in developed countries other than Japan has fluctuated between 13 per cent and 18 per cent.

Given the focus of Japan's aid program on Asia, and Japan's recognition of Australian experience in the Pacific as well as Asia, there would seem to be grounds for optimism about the Australian share of these contracts as well as our participation in development studies consultancies.

ADVISORY AND COMPLAINTS SERVICE FOR SUPPLIERS

As part of the Government's reforms to Commonwealth purchasing arrangements, a Purchasing Advisory and Complaints Service has been established in the Department of Finance and Administration.

The service was established following calls from industry for access to a speedy mechanism for handling complaints. It will advise suppliers about their options for resolving complaints, and help suppliers and buying agencies to resolve misunderstandings.

The service will not replace existing formal mechanisms for dealing with complaints, and will have no power to overrule agency decisions in individual procurement processes. Purchasing agencies remain fully accountable for their purchasing decisions.

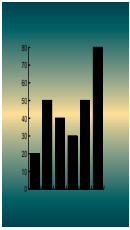
The Purchasing Advisory and Complaints Service can be reached by phone on 1800 650 531.

SELLING TO MULTILATERAL AGENCIES

A revised Multilateral Procurement Guide will be available shortly from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The guide explains business opportunities offered by a wide range of international organisations including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, other multilateral development banks and a number of United Nations programs. It also provides contact details and some advice about how to go about winning contracts with these agencies.

Copies of the guide are available from the Multilateral Procurement Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Phone (02) 6261 2242 or (02) 6261 2484.



BUSINESS NEWS

NEW COMMONWEALTH PROCUREMENT GUIDELINES

The Department of Finance and Administration (DoFA) issued new Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines on 2 April 1998, giving effect to the simplified and streamlined procurement policies announced by the Government in December 1997.

The new guidelines extend a degree of discretion to agencies such as AusAID in relation to their purchasing arrangements, subject to certain "Core Policies and Principles" (CPGs) set out in DoFA's official circular.

"The CPGs allow agencies to handle their own affairs, taking account of their own circumstances and the nature of the markets in which they are operating," the circular states.

"These core policies and principles are intended to strike a balance between prescription and empowerment, so as to encourage agencies to obtain the best value from procurement, on a whole of life basis, while ensuring the Government's procurement related policies are observed."

The CPGs cover six aspects of the procurement process: namely value for money, open and effective competition, ethics and fair dealing, accountability and reporting, national competitiveness and industry development, and support for other Commonwealth policies.

Electronic copies of the guidelines (14 pages of text) are available from the DoFA website at <http://www.dofa.gov.au/ctc/cpgs.htm>

MORE TRANSPARENCY IN AusAID PROCUREMENT

AusAID has decided to publish the names of all bidders shortlisted for new projects.

The move aims to encourage a greater diversity of organisations to become involved in AusAID projects. It will also further increase the transparency of the Agency's procurement processes.

EARLY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM FOR AusAID TENDER OPPORTUNITIES

AusAID will introduce shortly on its Internet homepage an early notification system of possible future tender opportunities in the Australian aid program. General information will be provided on the objective of the project together with a description of the activity to be undertaken. Interested parties will be able to contact the relevant Country Program Manager by e-mail to seek additional information.

DOWNLOAD AusAID TENDER DOCUMENTS FROM THE INTERNET

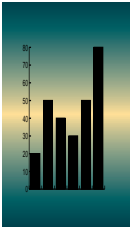
To speed up distribution of its tender documentation, AusAID has started to make this material available on the Internet. Contractors throughout Australia will be able to download the documents from AusAID's homepage.

AusAID proposes to make its tender documentation available on the Internet when it is practical to do so. However, the complexity of some material may mean it can be provided only in hard copy.

Tender advertisements will advise whether the documents are available electronically. Contractors will be required to enter contact details prior to accessing the site to enable AusAID to advise of any amendments to the tender material.

Tender documents will still be available in hard copy from AusAID.

AusAID's homepage can be found at <http://www.ausaid.gov.au>



BUSINESS NEWS

UPDATED LESSONS LEARNED DATA NOW ON AusAID'S WEBSITE

A streamlined and regularly updated database containing lessons learned from completed AusAID projects is available on-line to the public.

The AusAID Lessons Learned Database (LLDB) can be a very useful tool for organisations preparing for a new activity with AusAID.

It can help guard against overlooked risks, or point to particular approaches that have been successful in past projects.

The LLDB has been designed to provide efficient user access through fields such as sectors and/or countries, or by keywords. They are each fully referenced to facilitate detailed follow-up.

The database was recently trimmed down to about 70 clearly presented lessons, and will be updated regularly with lessons learned from project reports, reviews and evaluations.

This is a valuable form of feedback within AusAID as we seek to improve our own performance, and we are happy to invite other organisations dealing with the agency to make use of it through www.usaid.gov.au

AusAID PROGRAM PROFILE

THE APEC SUPPORT PROGRAM

AusAID's APEC Support Program was established in 1995 and provides a flexible funding mechanism aimed at facilitating and strengthening links between Australian Government bodies and developing countries in the Asia/APEC region.

The program provides between \$20,000 and \$200,000 for small scale, high impact activities nominated by Australian Government departments or statutory authorities and aimed at supporting the participation in the APEC process of developing countries in the Asia/APEC region. Specifically, the program funds activities which support the long-term development needs of recipient countries in addition to the APEC mandate of free trade and investment. Currently, the APEC Support Program attaches particular priority to activities which will help developing member economies respond to the challenges presented by the East Asia financial crisis.

Grants are provided for activities which:

- support trade liberalisation within developing economies; and/or
- enhance the capabilities of developing economies to facilitate trade and investment (which may include projects to strengthen the intellectual property

rights regulatory environment, align national standards with international standards, harmonise customs, improve quarantine controls, improve communications and information flows and assist the mutual recognition of qualifications); and/or

- otherwise support the capacity of developing economies to adapt to a free trade and investment environment.

Priority for funding under the APEC Support Program is given to proposals which originate from the activities of APEC Working Groups or other APEC entities. Successful applications will generally involve a financial contribution from the applicant, as well as some cost sharing with other APEC members.

Under the APEC Support Program, priority target developing economies are Indonesia, the Philippines, China and Vietnam, although other APEC developing economies will also be considered for support. Trade liberalisation and facilitation activities involving non-APEC members and high priority aid recipients in the Asia Pacific region may also be considered.

DEVELOPMENT

STATISTICS

AUSTRALIAN AID REMAINS STABLE IN FACE OF INTERNATIONAL DECLINE

Australia's overseas aid contribution has remained stable at 0.28 per cent of the Gross National Product (GNP) for the calendar year of 1997 – well above the average for all donors of 0.22 per cent.

This contrasts to an international trend of decreasing Official Development Assistance (ODA) flows to developing countries.

In its latest report issued on 18 June, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has found that total flows of ODA to developing countries declined from \$55.4 billion in 1996 to \$47.6 billion last year.

This represents a fall of 14.2 per cent.

“The disturbing trend of reduced aid flows over recent years is yet to

be reversed, especially in the largest OECD countries,” the report said.

As a percentage of the combined GNP of the member countries of OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), ODA has fallen for five consecutive years from 0.33 per cent in 1992 to 0.22 per cent in 1997, its lowest level ever.

With decreases from most G7 countries in 1997, their assistance now represents 0.19 per cent of their collective GNP. Cuts in the aid budgets of the G7 countries account for almost all of the recent fall in ODA. Of the G7 countries, only Canada and Japan increased their ODA in real terms.

In contrast, aid from non-G7 countries has remained broadly



A paediatric ward in Sayabouri Province in Laos.

stable since 1992. Real ODA rose in 11 of the 14 non-G7 donors in 1997, including Australia.

The 1998 Development Cooperation Report, to be published early next year, will report on the extent to which DAC members are adjusting their aid programs to meet the challenges outlined in the OECD's 21st Century Strategy.

The global goals embraced in the strategy include a real and effective partnership to reach the internationally agreed aims for economic and social development. These include poverty reduction; improved education; health and gender equality; environmental sustainability; human rights; and good governance.

Malaria testing is provided through mobile health clinics in Laos.



Introducing...



The AusAID Global Education Internet site is now available.

Download ready-to-use teaching materials, including the latest figures, case studies, country information and a directory of useful resources.

Join us at <http://globaled.ausaid.gov.au>

GLOBAL EDUCATION BROADENS THE HORIZONS

For enquiries phone 02 6206 4898

MEDIA RELEASES

Here is a list of media releases issued by AusAID since the last issue of *Focus*. Each of these most recent releases, as well as previous releases and other publications, can be accessed and downloaded quickly and easily from AusAID's website. The website (<http://www.ausaid.gov.au>) provides a wide range of other information about our activities and programs, and is regularly maintained and updated.

- 26/05/98 - \$6.4 million to HIV/AIDS projects in Africa
- 26/05/98 - Australia to help improve education in Bangladesh
- 25/05/98 - Australia joins world appeal for food aid to Sudan
- 20/05/98 - Australia gives \$2 million for landmine victims
- 18/05/98 - Australian support for Indonesia's Human Rights Commission
- 12/05/98 - Australia to be represented at Washington landmine conference
- 08/05/98 - NQ business opportunities in PNG
- 12/05/98 - Joint Budget Press Release
- 12/05/98 - 1998-99 Aid Budget - Responding to the East Asian crisis
- 12/05/98 - 1998-99 Aid Budget - Strengthening partnerships with NGOs
- 12/05/98 - 1998-99 Aid Budget - Aiding Australia and the Region
- 08/05/98 - Establishment of an Aid Advisory Council
- 07/05/98 - New Australian aid pledge for Laos
- 04/05/98 - \$10 million youth ambassadors program
- 03/05/98 - \$30 million humanitarian relief for Indonesian poor
- 30/04/98 - \$2.3 million for Bougainville resettlement assistance
- 30/04/98 - Australia to assist policing on Bougainville
- 26/04/98 - New Australian aid pledge for Vietnam
- 08/04/98 - Humanitarian assistance for North Korea
- 07/04/98 - Australia supports new Pacific environment headquarters
- 01/04/98 - Australia commits \$1.5 million to demining in Africa
- 01/04/98 - Australia winds down PNG drought relief effort
- 25/03/98 - World Bank convenes international meeting on Indonesia's humanitarian situation
- 25/03/98 - Australia helps Laos to cope with Asian financial crisis