



This issue of *Focus* showcases Australia's commitment to promoting good governance in Asia and the Pacific. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, outlined in *Better Aid for a Better Future* in 1997, effective governance is defined as 'the effective management of a country's social and economic resources in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable and equitable'.

# Governance

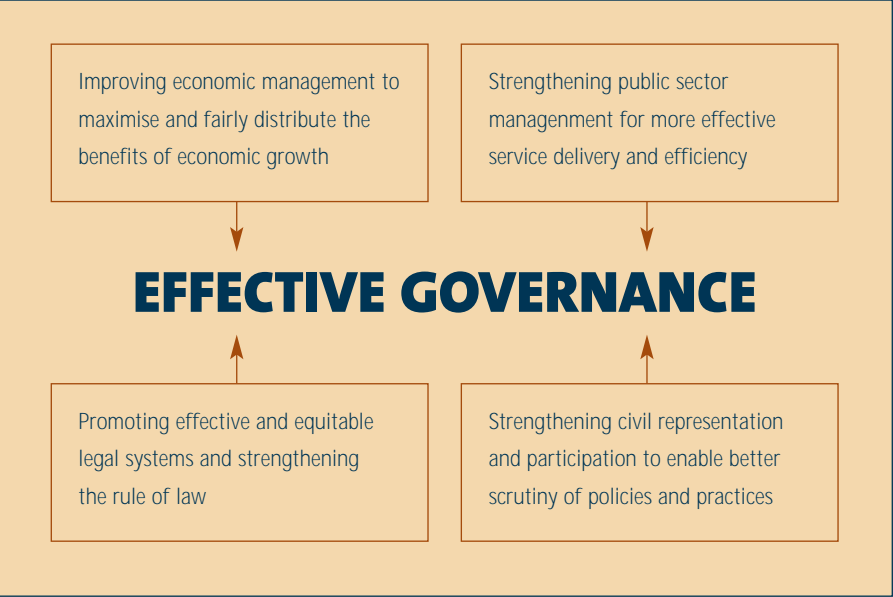
The need to strengthen governance through the aid program was discussed at the June meeting of the Aid Advisory Council. The Minister established the Council to ensure that the aid program reflects the values of the wider Australian community. At that meeting, Council members reiterated the need for good governance as a precondition for sustainable development. Council members noted the need for robust economic policies in the region, and effective policies to address the social and financial impacts of the East Asian financial crisis. The Council also considered the important role civil society has to play in supporting good governance activities in developing countries.

Given the importance of this issue, Mr Downer considered it would be valuable to inform a wider audience, through *Focus*, of how Australia is responding to governance needs in our region. Within the Australian aid program, four main strategic areas where reform efforts can usefully be focused have been identified. They are:

- Economic and financial management
- Law and justice
- Public sector management and
- Fostering the development of civil society.

Accordingly, AusAID has developed the following 'operational framework' for its governance programs:

## OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR GOVERNANCE



## ELEMENTS OF GOVERNANCE

Through the aid program, the Government has also undertaken a number of specific international initiatives relating to governance.

### Meeting on Development Cooperation and the Asian Economic Crisis

Improving economic governance systems was a major focus of the international meeting on development cooperation responses to the Asia crisis, convened by Mr Downer in Sydney earlier this year. This meeting brought together Ministers and

senior officials from 27 countries and senior representatives from nine major international organisations.

Participants agreed that improving governance, particularly strengthening of institutions and financial systems, was essential to minimise the long-term effects of the crisis.

### Governance in the South Pacific

Governance was also under the spotlight at a recent workshop convened by AusAID in the Pacific Islands to discuss public sector reform. Senior Pacific Islanders attended with AusAID staff and consultants.

Highlights included the need to adjust the pace of reforms and to better communicate the benefits of the reform process.

### 1999–2000 Budget highlights: responding to our neighbours' needs

This financial year's budget will provide more than \$1.5 billion as official development assistance (ODA)—an increase of \$22 million on last year's budget figure. It maintains the aid budget in real terms. The ODA/GNP ratio for 1999–2000 is expected to be 0.25 per cent—above the latest available average of all donors of 0.22 per cent.

### Boost in aid to East Asia and the Pacific—and a continued commitment to Africa and South Asia

Aid to East Asia and the Pacific will increase to assist our aid partners to respond to the crisis and in support of their longer-term development needs. Total assistance to East Asia and the Pacific in 1999–2000 is expected to be \$560 million. The Asia Crisis Fund will double to \$12 million. There will be an additional \$6 million for the Indonesia country program in recognition of the effects of the financial crisis and to support the reform process. In addition, as the largest bilateral donor to East Timor, Australia will provide substantial assistance to an autonomous or independent East Timor. Decisions on the exact level and nature of that assistance will be taken when the outcome of the upcoming United Nations consultations becomes clearer. However an early indication of Australia's commitment to East Timor is the \$20 million we have already provided in support of the United Nations consultation process there.

Australia will also continue its commitment to country program assistance in Africa and South Asia. In recognition of the Solomon Islands Government's economic reform program, an extra \$2 million will be provided to its country program allocation.

### Papua New Guinea

There will be a continued commitment to our largest partner country, Papua New Guinea (PNG), with total assistance of \$329 million. Australia's assistance to PNG will maintain its focus on the jointly agreed priority sectors of education and training and health and infrastructure, as well as implementing projects in the renewable resources, governance, public sector management, private sector development and law and justice sectors.

### Emergency assistance: more flexible response

The need for emergency assistance in our region continued at unprecedented levels over the past year and is likely to remain high for a considerable time. The humanitarian emergency in the Balkans and the devastation of Hurricane Mitch in Central America highlighted the need for Australia to maintain its capacity to respond to emergencies. Australia's response to the Kosovo exodus has included allocations to lead UN agencies and NGOs. Our ability to respond to such emergency situations was increased with the tripling of the amount allocated to emergency relief in 1998–99—this flexibility will be maintained in 1999–2000.

### Assistance at the grassroots

Broader development needs through grassroots assistance will be met through an increase of \$1.5 million for non-government organisations through the AusAID-NGO cooperation program. This will see the implementation of community-based projects in the Pacific, East and South Asia and Africa.

Micro-finance activities are key mechanisms for donors to help poor entrepreneurs expand or establish their businesses. As part of the Government's commitment to doubling expenditure on microfinance activities, a three-year, \$3 million Micro-finance Initiative Seed Fund will be established.

There will be increased support to help eradicate polio and iodine disorders by

2000, along with an increase in the Human Rights Funds. The Direct Aid Program will be increased to allow our missions to respond directly and quickly to local, small-scale development needs.

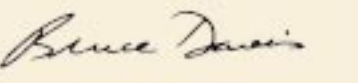
### Commitment to clearing landmines reaffirmed

Australia's commitment to clearing landmines was reaffirmed with the Minister's announcement of an extra \$2 million for demining activities. Australia has pledged more than \$100 million for landmine action between 1996 and 2005. Australia has taken an active role in demining including the *Destroy a Minefield* initiative announced by Mr Downer late last year, which encourages schools, community groups and business to sponsor the clearance of active minefields which are given high priority for clearance by the United Nations.

I have only provided a brief outline of the budget here—more detail is provided in the flyer *Aid Budget Summary 1999–2000*, which is included with this edition of *Focus*. These budget commitments ensure the Australian aid program enters the new financial year in a strong position to continue helping our neighbours to alleviate the poverty of their people and achieve sustainable development.

### Congratulations

On a final note I'd like to congratulate our Parliamentary Secretary, Mrs Sullivan, on her achievement in becoming Australia's longest-serving female Member of the House of Representatives and the longest serving female Federal Parliamentarian. Mrs Sullivan has also just celebrated 25 years in Parliament.



Bruce Davis  
Acting Director General



# GOVERNANCE

Feature on pages 4–29

## Promoting effective governance to reduce poverty

This issue of Focus looks at a range of governance activities funded by the Australian Government. All stories share a common element—the goal of alleviating poverty and fostering sustainable development.

Effective governance means competently managing a country's resources in a manner which is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to people's needs.

Promoting effective governance in developing countries is one of the five sectoral priorities of the Government's aid program along with improving health, education, infrastructure and rural development.

The aid program is promoting effective governance through:

- public sector reform
- economic management including monetary and fiscal policy, financial sector reform and private sector development
- promoting and protecting human rights, including through civil society and promoting accessible and fair electoral and legal systems.





# Minister's introduction

I welcome this special issue of Focus and the attention it is giving to the issue of governance.

## WHY GOVERNANCE MATTERS

Governance is not simply about government. It is the question of what constitutes a good society. The term 'governance' describes the ways through which citizens and groups in any society voice their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. It is essentially the economic, social and political fabric of a country.

Australia's system of governance is based on several important pillars which we take for granted. A democratic system of government which allows all Australians to participate in the civil, political and economic life of our country. The rule of law, freedom of speech and a free media help protect human rights while maintaining social cohesion, and ensuring that our government is accountable and its actions are transparent. These principles underpin our aid programs with our partner countries in Asia and the Pacific.

## GOOD GOVERNANCE – ESSENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

Various developing countries that are quite similar in terms of their natural resources and social structure have shown quite strikingly different performances in the improvement of the welfare of their people and much of this is attributable to standards of governance.

## POOR GOVERNMENT STIFLES DEVELOPMENT

More and more it is recognised that poor government stifles and impedes development.

It is clear that in countries where there is corruption, poor control of public funds, lack of accountability, abuses of human rights and excessive military influence, development inevitably suffers.

## CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE IN ASIA

The Asian financial crisis has been a sobering reminder that many developing countries lack the established institutional capacity and skills to support an equitable and resilient society.

What we have witnessed in Asia as a result of the financial crisis has been the erosion of hard-won development gains. It has also been clear evidence of the importance of effective policy and regulation in the banking and financial services sectors.

We in Australia take our strong institutional foundation for granted. However it took hundreds of years of legal and political development to establish such a strong, secure base.

And while there is some potential for 'fast tracking' the development of these institutions in the Asia Pacific region, it will inevitably be an incremental process requiring patience and long-term strategies and effort.

## REFORM TAKES TIME AND PATIENCE

Reform is not an easy process, it is often a slow and painful transition for existing organisations, in both the public and private sectors.

However Australia's program can play an important, supportive role in nurturing reform. It can provide new models and ideas for change, give training and technical help, share information and open communication between government, business, academia and local people.

Effective governance will be a critical factor in restoring domestic and international confidence in the economies of Asia and to this end, Australia is supporting a range of economic and financial measures to help countries affected by the crisis.

Working to improve governance was one of the key resolutions carried at a major international meeting which I convened in Sydney earlier this year—the 5 March Meeting on Development Cooperation—Responding to the Asia Crisis—to examine the economic and social implications of the Asian financial crisis for developing nations.

## HOW AUSTRALIA'S AID PROGRAM IS ENCOURAGING REFORM

I am confident that through our aid program, Australia can help improve the performance of the public sectors in developing countries so they can deliver better services.

Our skills in public sector management are widely acknowledged and are making an important contribution to the longer-term development prospects of our partner countries in the Asia Pacific and beyond.

Governance and the protection and promotion of human rights are closely linked. We know that effective and equitable development is far more likely when human rights are rigorously and genuinely protected.

In fact, Australia has recently developed a framework for supporting human rights through our aid program.

While there had been some international debate recently about the application of so-called 'western' notions of human rights in the Asia Pacific, this had been overstated.

Australia's approach to human rights is to achieve practical results and real improvements in human rights on the ground. Strengthening the integrity of governance through the aid program is an integral part of this process.

Alfred

Alexander Downer  
Minister for Foreign Affairs



# Indonesia's historic elections

By Michelle Hardy and Beth Delaney

Photos by Richard Mathews

## Main points:

- nearly 118 million voters
- 320,000 polling booths
- 650,000 Indonesian election monitors
- 500 international observers
- 48 parties contesting the poll



Waiting to cast their vote—bamboo polling booths at right.

## HISTORIC POLL

While (at the time of printing) the outcome of Indonesia's historic 7 June elections was yet to be announced—the conduct of the first democratic elections since 1955 has been deemed a success.

A team of 25 Australian parliamentary and government observers watched preparations for the ballot and witnessed voting and early counting at polling stations in Surabaya and Malang in East

Java, Balikpapan in East Kalimantan, Mataram in West Nusa Tenggara and Kupang in East Nusa Tenggara.

The Australian observers joined other observers from the US, Japan and Europe.

Leader of the Australian Election Observer Mission, Senator Alan Ferguson, congratulated the Indonesian people on the successful conduct of the poll.

'Whatever the final results of the June elections, it is clear that the number, and

enthusiasm, of the contending parties was symptomatic of the significant political changes taking place in Indonesia,' Senator Ferguson said.

'Indonesians have a right to be proud of what they achieved in staging this historic election. Our observations led us to conclude that Indonesia has taken a significant step towards a new democratic era.'

The Australian observers described the mood on election day as enthusiastic,





Preparing the tally board in Central Sekotong sub-district, South Lombok.

Indonesians have a right to be proud of what they achieved in staging this historic election.

almost festive, with people waiting patiently for hours to cast their votes.

They concluded that the elections were open and fair despite some hiccups.

Senator Ferguson said there were some ‘inevitable mistakes’.

‘These errors largely seemed due to inexperience and lack of confidence on the part of the electoral officials. For example, there were instances of insufficient ballot papers, a lack of security holograms and a shortage of indelible ink in some places.’

Senator Ferguson responded to criticism that early counting was slow.

‘If anything, the Mission found that the slow progress was being caused by officials at all levels being extra careful in the handling of the results rather than by any attempt to manipulate the system.’

The role of the Australian observers was to assist, rather than instruct, Indonesia’s 650,000 election monitors—many of them young men and women. Their job was to explain the complex polling process to voters and monitor voting.

With 78 per cent of the vote counted (at the time of printing) the trend showed the Indonesian Democratic Struggle Party, headed by Megawati Soekarnoputri, in the lead.

The slow vote count appears to be due to the bureaucratic process adopted by Indonesia’s new Election Commission along with a commitment to ensure accurate counting.

**AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE FOR THE ELECTIONS**

The Australian Government provided a \$15 million electoral assistance package to help ensure free, fair and credible elections.

**ELECTION PREPARATION**

Australia’s assistance included funding for the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) to help Indonesia prepare for the elections.

Australian Electoral Commissioner Bill Gray led a mission to Indonesia last year to establish how Australia could best help.

The AEC also set up the National Results Centre—an internet-linked vote tallying system which provided indicative early results.

A priority for Australia was to help strengthen Indonesia’s domestic monitoring capability to facilitate acceptance of the elections domestically. To this end, Australia supported the main monitoring groups



Chairman of the polling station, Pak Raden, was the last person to vote at Sokong Village, North Lombok. The colourful polling booth is in the background.



Transporting ballot boxes by cart.

including the Independent Committee for Election Monitoring (KIPP), the University Network for a Free and Fair Election (UNFREL) and the Commission on Election Monitoring and Development of Democracy (Rector’s Forum).

**SECRECY OF THE BALLOT CRITICAL**

In the run up to the election, Australia also helped educate voters about their rights on polling day—the key message being the secrecy of the vote.

Preparations for the election were meticulous with detailed manuals provided to local polling booth committees explaining how to set up polling stations—including exact measurements on the size of voting booths.

Three AusAID officers were among the Australian observer team—Dr Kevin O’Reilly, Ms Kirsten Bate and Ms Jenny Clarke. Dr O’Reilly and Ms Clarke joined Judi Moylan MP and Kelly Hoare MP in





# Governance in the Pacific

By Michelle Hardy

Improving governance in the Pacific came under the spotlight at a recent workshop on Economic and Public Sector Management held in Suva.



Communicating the reasons for reform to the general community was raised as a key issue at the workshop on governance in the Pacific.

The workshop, chaired by AusAID's Acting Director General, Bruce Davis, looked at the experiences of Samoa, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands in implementing reform.

Ten AusAID officers working in the Pacific attended along with Samoa's Financial Secretary, Epa Tuioti, Director General of Vanuatu's Public Service Commission, George Pakoasongi, Governor of the Central Bank of Solomon Islands, Rick Hounipwela, from the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Savenaca Siwatibau and from the International Monetary Fund, Klaus Riechel.

Issues raised included the need for flexibility in adjusting the pace of reform, the need to better communicate the reasons

for change and the importance of finding reform 'champions'.

'Assistance should primarily aim to back institutions that demonstrate a commitment to responsible, open and effective government, and only secondarily aim to introduce specific systems and procedures,' the report of the workshop noted.

A particular challenge raised was finding the right pace for introducing change. Participants agreed on the need for programs to allow pauses while governments achieved desired outcomes and reviewed objectives and strategies in the light of experiences to date.

The need to better promote the benefits of reform to the general community was a

point made consistently at the workshop.

'By their very nature, institutional strengthening projects aimed at building up the strategic planning, revenue raising and resource allocation capacity of central and line agencies will yield no tangible benefits during the first 12 to 18 months of project implementation.

'For this reason, it is essential that reforming governments also be given early assistance in their efforts to bring about visible improvements in service delivery.

'Governments do not have enough time and political capital at their disposal to place institutional reform before improvements at the coalface.' ■





centre for **democratic** institutions

# Strong institutions

By Kirsten Hawke

Since the Australian Government established the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) at the Australian National University in Canberra last year, it has been busy providing training and workshops for key decision makers in the Asia-Pacific region.



An anti-corruption workshop held by the CDI in Jakarta.

Already, the Centre has organised orientation courses for judges, leadership courses for Indonesian non-government organisations, workshops for Melanesian Ombudsmen and Parliamentarians from Indonesia and a seminar on human rights reporting for Indonesian officials.

An anti-corruption workshop held in Jakarta for Indonesian journalists, academics and government officials in February attracted 48 participants who said the training increased their knowledge about the negative effects of corruption and how it can be effectively investigated.

The CDI's future program of activities includes workshops for parliamentarians from Laos and Thailand, seminars on human rights reporting for officials from China and the Philippines, training for journalists and a conference on democracy and free markets.

The Centre has arranged several high profile events including the 1998 address delivered by the former president of the Philippines, Fidel Ramos, and the visit by the former president of Russia, Mikhail Gorbachev, who spoke to Members of Parliament and guests about democracy in Russia.

The Centre was the initiative of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, who saw the need for an institution dedicated to promoting human rights, democracy, governance and institution building in the Asia Pacific region.

Given the political and economic uncertainties which have been a part of the region for some time, and their negative impact on development, the Australian Government has recognised through the aid program, that the political and civil context for reform is as important as grassroots economic and social development. ■



# New CDI consultative group

A consultative group of eminent people has been established to assist the CDI with its important work of promoting democracy, human rights and good governance in the region.

Its members include the Chairman of CARE Australia, the Right Hon Malcolm Fraser, former High Court judge, Sir Daryl Dawson, former Governor of South Australia, Dame Roma Mitchell, President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Professor Alice Tay and the Director, Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University, Professor Ian McAllister.

The consultative group will provide policy and strategic advice in the key areas of parliamentary and judicial processes, the development of an independent media and the participation of non government organisations in civil society.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, said the range of skills and experience held by the members of the consultative group exemplified the CDI's mission, which was to 'harness the best of Australia's democratic experience in support of developing countries' needs for good governance'.

'The Consultative Group brings together an extraordinary group of people with a range of skills and experience particularly suited to the work of the Centre for Democratic Institutions,' Mr Downer said.

'The establishment of the CDI was an initiative I was proud to launch in 1998. Already, its work on promoting democracy, human rights and effective governance in the Asia Pacific region has gained a positive reputation.'

One of the responsibilities of the consultative group will be to assist the CDI

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to gain sponsorship from the private sector and philanthropic institutions both in Australia and overseas.

The Australian Government has provided \$5 million over the next five years to assist the establishment of the CDI.

## CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEMBERS

**The Rt Hon Malcolm Fraser**  
Chairman CARE Australia

**Hon. Sir Daryl Dawson AC KBE CB**  
Former Judge of the High Court of Australia

**Hon. Dame Roma Mitchell**  
AC DBE CBE  
Former Governor of South Australia

**Dr Andrew Southcott, M.P.**  
Member for Boothby

**Hon. Laurie Brereton M.P.**  
Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Mr John Hyde**  
Senior Fellow with the Institute of Public Affairs

**Mr Bill Gray AM**  
Australian Electoral Commissioner

**Professor Alice Tay**  
President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

**Professor Ian McAllister**  
Director, Research School of Social Sciences, ANU

**Dr Michael Porter**  
Chairman, Tasman Institute

**Mr Geoffrey Barker**  
Journalist, *The Australian Financial Review*

**Ms Gillian Storey**  
Delegate to the Pacific Democrat Union

**Mr John Dauth**  
Deputy Secretary, DFAT

**Mr Bruce Davis**  
Acting Director General of AusAID

**Mr Roland Rich**  
Director of the CDI. ■



# Taking law to Tongan villages

By Clare Bleakley in Tonga

Evening classes in rural Pacific villages are a world away from the formalities of the courtroom. But for village women in Tonga, these classes are providing an essential insight into Tongan law and, more importantly, giving them vital information about their legal rights.



Launch of the Women's Legal Literacy Project, International Women's Week, 1999.

The Australian Government aid program—supported courses are being run by Tonga's Women-in-Law Association (WILA) whose members include Tonga's only woman magistrate, a legal adviser to the Ministry for Police, legal counsel to the Bank of Tonga, private practitioners and paralegals.

The association was formed three years ago, out of a shared view that there can be no equitable access to the justice system without awareness and knowledge. From this, the Literacy on Women's Legal Rights Project emerged drawing directly on case work

experience and focusing on village women.

So far the results have been positive. Around 40 women have attended each seminar and there have been reports that potentially violent domestic situations have been averted since there is improved knowledge about dealing with conflict.

Workshops are held at night to ensure women can attend and three resource books have been published in Tongan to ensure local women have access to information about their legal rights.

Tonga's royal family has also supported the seminars. Princess Nanasipau'u is the

patron of WILA and has publicly supported the need for raising awareness of legal issues.

There has also been strong support from the Tongan Government, with the offer of Crown Law Office resources for the seminars.

There is now a growing demand to take these seminars to the outer islands—areas like the Ha'apai island group where the Governor has specifically requested that WILA runs a seminar since local people have limited access to legal advice. ■

# Vanuatu gets the basics right

By Susan Nicholls

Vanuatu is known by many Australians as an idyllic, palm-fringed holiday destination where they go to leave their troubles behind for a few short weeks. The Vanuatu few people see is a country with troubles of its own. This is the Vanuatu that Australia's aid program is helping to put back on a firm footing, so that its government is effective and its future secure.



Improving forestry practices is a priority to protect Vanuatu's environment.

In June 1997, the Government of Vanuatu held a National Summit to look at their problems. It agreed to a 'Comprehensive Reform Program', a program backed by the Asian Development Bank and supported by Australia and other donor countries.

This reform program was all about getting the basics right—renewing the checks and balances in the Vanuatu Constitution to guard against misuse of power, improving public service performance, promoting business investment, and making sure that the people of Vanuatu get a fair go in their

dealings with government and the law.

The reform program came at a crucial time for Vanuatu. The country was in bad shape with very low economic growth, a shortage of skilled labour, low investment and poor management practices in business and government.

The program set out a vision for Vanuatu's future starting with a well-governed, democratic and united country. Economic prosperity and a well-educated, healthy population in touch with traditional values and culture were parts of the plan. Finally, a well-managed natural

environment was seen as vital to Vanuatu's long-term success.

Stable government and a dynamic private sector were named as the first steps to achieve that vision.

Soon after the national summit, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, said that Australia stood ready to assist the Vanuatu Government to advance reform. By 1998–99 the Australian development assistance program was worth \$13.1 million.

'Maintaining the momentum of the Comprehensive Reform Program is critical,' Mr Downer said.



The Minister added that Australia's aid would be focused on supporting a number of priorities including reforming the public sector and improving financial and economic management.

Since the summit meeting, substantial progress has been made despite the Asian economic downturn.

The Vanuatu Parliament has passed laws to improve government services and to get the tax and financial processes in order. With a reformed public service appointed on merit and responsible budget planning, the decisions made at the national summit two years ago are on track.

Vanuatu's Prime Minister, Mr Donald Kalpokas, reaffirmed his support for those decisions at a recent press conference.

'We have made significant progress in implementing reform,' he said. 'We have stabilised the economy, reformed the tax system, brought the budget under control and liberalised the foreign investment rules.'

But there was no cause for complacency, Mr Kalpokas said.

'My strongest sense today is of unfinished business. We have made good progress but there is a long way to go.'

As well as these important changes to strengthen and improve government practices, ongoing help in health, education and legal areas—all high priority in the reform program—is also being provided.

Management of hospitals, nursing training and the supply of essential equipment for hospitals have been part of Australia's aid program. A teacher-training project is under way, and support for the Vanuatu legal system is in place, with a promise of more to come.

The Vanuatu private sector has also come in for a boost thanks to the Australian aid program. New buildings with a total value of about \$6 million are being provided. All will be built by local contractors.

Two projects to help protect Vanuatu's environmental heritage are the Sustainable

Forestry Utilisation Project and the Land Use Planning Project. These build on the 'Code of Logging Practice' which AusAID helped Vanuatu to draw up.

Vanuatu's commitment to reform has meant that Australia has been able to help in key areas to support the reform program. ■

## Good governance benefits Samoa

In Samoa, good governance is bringing big dividends to this once economically troubled nation.

Reforms underway in Samoa's Treasury Department, supported by the Australian aid program, have seen a return to a budget surplus and substantial economic gains including low inflation and an improved balance of payments.

As part of the Australian aid program in Samoa, strategic support has been given to policy and management reform in Treasury. The key achievement so far has been the introduction of program budgeting which has played a key role in encouraging government departments to control expenditure and to match expenditure to performance.

The project, which began in 1996 and continues until 2001, is a combined effort with the Asian Development Bank. Accountability and efficiency in the Treasury Department is steadily improving following the development of better staff skills in the areas of corporate and strategic planning, policy analysis and research and financial management. Higher standards in accounting procedures and records management are also being introduced.

Australia's aid strategy in Samoa stems from the Samoan Government's *Statement of Economic Strategy* which aims to achieve sustained economic growth through a healthy and competitive private sector.

The strategy was developed after Samoa plunged into economic uncertainty in the early 1990s, as a result of underlying

structural weaknesses. These included a serious trade imbalance, large external debt, rising urban unemployment and a large public sector with many inefficient state-owned enterprises. Natural disasters in the form of two cyclones in successive years in 1990 and 1991 and taro blight further weakened the economy of this small island nation.

The challenge has been to diversify the economy through sound policies supporting deregulation and fiscal reform as well as making state-owned enterprises more competitive.

The Samoan economy has successfully weathered the Asian financial crisis, demonstrating the protection which can be offered by carefully implemented reform.

New revenue policies to reform the tariff and taxation systems are being introduced and other key departments including the Public Service Commission, Education, Health, Public Works and the Water Authority have been identified for future strengthening and reform, again with the assistance of the Australian aid program. ■

# Students for good governance

A Samoan public servant, a Zambian police officer, an Indonesian government adviser and a local government official from West Kalimantan would appear to have little in common. But as former Australian Government-sponsored scholars, who have successfully completed tertiary studies in Australia, they have returned to their home countries intent on raising standards of governance. They are among the thousands of overseas students who have studied under the Australian Development Scholarships Scheme, managed by AusAID.



Left Nancy Kaona—a member of Zambia's police force, Yasmin Sungkar—researching industry policy, Dr Matagialofi Luaiufi-Moli—working to reform Samoa's public sector, Adang Budiman—raising the standard of local government in West Kalimantan.

They are promoting good governance in their country by their very example and also through their contributions to reforming public sector institutions in their country.

One graduate who attained a doctorate in Policy Formulation and Implementation at Armidale's University of New England has gone on to become the Secretary of Samoa's Public Service Commission. In this role, Dr Matagialofi Luaiufi-Moli is playing a lead role in Samoa's wide ranging public sector reform program.

Another graduate is Nancy Kaona from Zambia. She is distinguished by being one of the few qualified women in Zambia's police force. Ms Kaona is currently studying a Bachelor of Social Sciences (Police Studies) to fulfil her goal to help reform her country's police force. Zambia's police service has been undergoing reform since the transition to a multi-party democratic state.

Since completing her study in Australia, Yasmin Sungkar has become a researcher at

Jakarta's Centre for Political and Regional Studies. Now she is completing a PhD thesis on industry policy in Indonesia. Ms Sungkar said her experience studying in Australia gave her a strong understanding of industry policy and equipped her to help improve the quality of decisions on industry policy.

Also from Indonesia, another former Australian-sponsored scholar, Adang Budiman is now a local government official in West Kalimantan's Human Resource Department. The department manages 65,000 civil servants and Mr Budiman is contributing to good governance by examining ways of raising government revenue and promoting public servants based on merit, rather than seniority.

Director of AusAID's Student Program Section, Bill Kennedy, says the Australian Development Scholarships Scheme is helping achieve the aid program's objective of promoting good governance.

'One of the most valuable things that AusAID can do in governance is to expose

people from developing countries to Australian values, institutions and government,' Mr Kennedy said.

'This was the fundamental basis of the Colombo Plan and remains one of the cornerstones of scholarships. By their very nature, scholarships make a general impact on governance, irrespective of their field of study.

'Many former students have returned to their home countries and made outstanding contributions in both the government and private sectors.'

A look at the statistics also shows the positive role the scholarship scheme plays in promoting good governance.

In 1998 there were 4,349 sponsored students from 52 countries studying at 48 Australian institutions. The fields of study included law and justice, development studies, business administration, banking and finance, policy and administration, resource management, politics, social planning and development. ■



# A model for the Philippines

By Kirsten Hawke

A senior delegation from the Philippines visited Australia recently to learn more about local government. Local government in the Philippines continues to face challenges in devolving responsibility for essential services. The issue is controversial following a decision in 1991 to give local government charge of delivering health, agriculture, environment and welfare services.



Left Edwin Bael (Philippines Embassy, Canberra), David Swan (Director, AusAID Philippines section) and Senator Pimentel.

The visit by 15 officials responsible for implementing the changes at the local level in the Philippines was significant because the group was interested in learning ways to improve service delivery.

The group led by Senator Aquilino Pimentel met representatives of several Australian Local Grants Commissions.

Senator Aquilino Pimentel said the delegation would return to the Philippines and 'make an adaptation of the Australian funding model to use back home.'

'The study tour has been serendipitous for us,' Senator Pimentel explained.

'In 1991 we broke the stranglehold on the central government in the Philippines

and we empowered people through the devolution of central government, in areas like health, agriculture, welfare and the environment.'

'We were happy to learn how Australia's funds are equalised between the States and within the States themselves.'

Another delegate, from the Office of the President, Mr Antonio Nevy, said the study tour had been timely because local government had been disadvantaged in the Philippines.

'We need funds to sustain and maintain all services,' Mr Nevy said.

'Just one example is that we legislated to give our health workers a pay rise, but

we didn't have enough money through the inequities and rigidities of the Internal Revenue Allotment formula to fund the pay rise.'

Support for local government is an integral part of Australia's assistance in economic governance to the Philippines, particularly following the decentralisation of responsibility for basic services.

Through its aid program and its emphasis on better economic governance and public administration, Australia is supporting the Philippines Government's efforts to ensure that adequate services are provided to the poor and people living in provincial areas. ■

# Training Vietnam's future leaders

By Susan Nicholls

Human rights and international law are the focus of an innovative aid project at the Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy in Vietnam. The academy is Vietnam's most influential political thinktank. It is also the country's main centre for political studies and government education, offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses to Vietnamese officials.



Australia's Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Kathy Sullivan, and the director of Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy, Dr Cao Duc Thai.

In 1995 the academy set up a Centre for Human Rights Research. Its purpose was to carry out research and provide teaching to academy students on international human rights law.

That same year, the academy asked Australia for help to fund a series of training courses and to establish a library of textbooks and journals on human rights and international law issues.

Australia provided nearly \$190,000 to the Centre for Asian and Pacific Law at the University of Sydney to carry out the project.

The project had three parts: an introductory training course in Hanoi, an in-depth course held in Australia, and the provision of books and journals for a library.

Run by Professor Alice Tay, a professor

of law at the University of Sydney and President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission since 1998, the three-part project is now complete.

The Hanoi course attracted 63 participants from the academy, other institutions and government agencies. Eleven students came to Sydney for the second part of the training. Their Australian training involved field trips to Australian human rights-related agencies and meetings with officials in Sydney and Canberra.

**'It is through the pursuit of practical and effective efforts to promote human rights that we show our real commitment.'**

Students also asked for—and received—additional training on human rights issues in their home region of East Asia.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, who visited the Centre in July 1997, said he had been 'delighted to hear that all parties felt the project had been very successful'.

Mr Downer said Australia had put particular emphasis on support for the establishment and strengthening of human rights institutions.

'It is through the pursuit of practical and effective efforts to promote human rights that we show our real commitment,' the Minister explained.

Centre director Dr Cao Duc Thai said the project had played an important role in increasing the centre's research capacity.

'The impact of the project will last for a long time,' he said.

'The centre appreciates AusAID's assistance. AusAID was one of our first counterparts, and is also our good friend'.

The final stage of the project—a library of books and journals—was completed last year when Australia's Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Kathy Sullivan, presented 450 books to the academy.

At the presentation, Mrs Sullivan said the books would assist development of the research capacity of the centre, which had as its focus of study 'an area which is important to us all—human rights'.

Mrs Sullivan noted that a substantial aspect of the successful Vietnam-Australia relationship was a constructive dialogue on human rights issues based on mutual respect.

Talks are underway between the Australian Government, the Government of Vietnam and the academy about a second phase of training and research assistance. This could include study tours in the Asia Pacific region, translations of human rights texts into Vietnamese and a joint research project. ■



# Criminal justice in Cambodia

By Matt Francis

As Cambodians continue the task of rebuilding their country after years of conflict and political and social upheaval, there is a growing desire for more open and accountable government processes and greater protection of human rights.



View of the Tuol Sleng Museum, Phnom Penh—formerly Pol Pot's infamous torture centre.

For much of its recent history, the administration of justice in Cambodia has been arbitrary and brutal, and in many cases, simply non-existent. However, with improving political stability and more democratic processes in place, Cambodians have recognised the need for a major shift in the culture of police, the courts and prisons to support more transparent and accountable government processes in the area of criminal justice.

The Cambodian and Australian Governments are working together through the Cambodia Criminal Justice Project to

improve the operational, managerial, institutional and human rights conditions within the Cambodian criminal justice system. The project is targeting improvements in the operational systems within the police, prisons and courts which will result in better trained staff. This in turn will help all people involved in the criminal justice system.

It is a challenging and difficult project by anyone's standards—but it is also delivering real improvements in the operation of the criminal justice system in Cambodia. It is also earning strong support

from the Cambodian Government and officials involved in the administration of the criminal justice system. The project is well regarded for its very tangible achievements to date by United Nations officials such as Thomas Hammarberg, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Human Rights in Cambodia, and by other donors who are now also considering support for strengthening of Cambodia's criminal justice system.

The project comprises activities to improve institutional support to the police, courts and prison systems in Cambodia, as well as a program of capital works to upgrade police stations, the courts and prisons, prisoner accommodation, administration facilities, staff accommodation, workshops and medical and recreation facilities.

Australian police and prison experts are working closely with counterparts from Cambodia's Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice to develop an integrated approach to improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

The first stage is where victims, witnesses and suspects come into contact with the Judicial Police. Improvements in police leadership, management, skills and discipline will enable effective and efficient policing and compliance with the rule of law. This component of the project involves working with police officials to develop improved operational procedures and train police officers in them, as well as

conducting training in investigative techniques and addressing organisational issues within the Judicial Police.

The court system is an integral link between the police and prisons. The project aims to create a more credible, consistent and efficient court system in Cambodia, as well as developing systems of accountability related to the arrest of suspects, detention and possible imprisonment and introducing them into the court system. It includes the development of a handbook on laws, procedures and circulars relating to court practices, and improving record-keeping processes to enable timely and transparent compliance with laws and procedures relating to arrest, detention and imprisonment.

The prison system is the final stage of the criminal justice system for a convicted person. The project seeks to improve prison management and conditions for prisoners, enhancing the human rights of prisoners in the process, through activities such as the development of prison operating procedures and their distribution to all prisons; the provision of health services and medicines for prisoners; the implementation of a prisoner visiting system and allowing prisoners to undertake meaningful work while in detention. The project is also seeking to put in place better administrative systems that ensure prisoners are not jailed without an order from a court, or held without trial beyond the allowable time limit, and are released on the day of the expiration of their sentence. There have already been noticeable improvements in the welfare of prisoners during the life of the project: prisoner health has improved as a result of longer periods out of cells along with improved hygiene and medical treatment. The development of vegetable gardens and small farm activities have contributed to a better diet for prisoners. ■

# Building a social security system for China

By Matt Francis

China's long-term transition from a centrally planned economy to one based on the market system requires a new approach to providing social assistance for its 1.2 billion people. The reform program commenced by the Chinese Government includes a wide ranging shake-up of state-owned enterprises. Enterprises are being restructured, corporatised, privatised, and in many cases, closed.

For many Chinese workers, the 'cradle to grave' welfare system offered by state-owned enterprises is a thing of the past. Women, elderly workers and the less skilled have been particularly affected by the changes.

The establishment of a social security system that provides equitable assistance for those affected by the reform process and the transition to a more market-oriented economic system is a priority for the Chinese Government.

It's an area in which Australia is well placed to help. With a long-established and comprehensive social welfare system, Australian expertise is being used to help China strengthen its ability to develop and manage effective social assistance programs.

Chinese officials from the Ministry of Labour and Social Security are attending training courses and workshops in Canberra and Beijing to learn about Australia's experience in social security and social welfare policy development and management.

Key areas of discussion include the development of social sector priorities and

Women, elderly workers and the less skilled have been particularly affected by the changes.

individual programs; financial aspects of social sector management; funding the health sector; and development of a legal and regulatory framework for social security and welfare policy and service delivery.

This cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Security is part of Australia's \$20 million, four year China Capacity Building Program. The goal of the program is to support Chinese policy-making and program implementation in key areas relating to China's transition to a market economy. ■



# Civil service reform in Thailand

By Jennifer Lean

Australia is sharing its experience in public service reform with Thailand's civil service in an effort to help improve civil services for Thai people.



Senior Thai Government officials meeting officers from Centrelink in Canberra. Seated in front row middle is the Secretary-General of the Office of Civil Service Commission, Dhipavadee Meksawan.

Reforming Thailand's civil service is a major issue as the country's civil service has faced intense scrutiny in recent years. Thailand's Office of the Civil Service Commission has also stepped up efforts to improve the performance of the country's civil service in the wake of the Asian financial crisis.

Australia's overseas aid program is funding a project to help reform Thailand's civil service which involves Thai civil servants working in Australia on placement

to learn from Australia's experience in public service reform since the mid-1980s.

Among the issues which the Thai civil servants are exploring with their Australian counterparts are whistle blowing, merit protection and ethics promotion, remuneration reform, position classification reform and accrual accounting.

Australia's Public Service Merit and Protection Commission has hosted Thai civil servants including senior Thai Government officials for two week placements with

various Commonwealth Government Departments, to give hands-on experience in public service reform.

But the help from the Australian public service does not end once the two week placement is over. The officers from both countries keep in contact through email and other electronic communications so the Thai civil servants have access to advice from professionals experienced in implementing reforms. ■

# Transparency in PNG

By Andrea Smith

‘We are reaching a point where the national conscience is being stirred and aroused to a degree that everyone must cease to tolerate falsehood, dishonesty and pretentiousness in public life...Our young democratic structure is starting to show signs of political stress and strain.’—Mr Simon Pentanu, Chief Ombudsman, PNG Ombudsman Commission.

These views from Papua New Guinea’s Chief Ombudsman, Simon Pentanu, are compelling evidence of the relevance and importance of Australia’s role in helping PNG to strengthen its key legal institutions.

At the request of the PNG Government, Australia is giving practical assistance to ensure the reform process succeeds.

As part of the PNG Ombudsman Commission Project, Australian advisers are working with local staff to improve their skills and to raise public awareness of the role and activities of the Ombudsman’s office.

The Ombudsman Commission is playing a key role in promoting transparency and accountability within the public sector. One of its main functions is the administration and enforcement of the Leadership Code which governs the behaviour of the country’s elected leaders.

This involves working to prevent unacceptable and dishonest practices including bribery, corruption, the abuse of power for personal gain, misappropriation of public funds and unethical conduct. In a climate of increasing concern about poor

governance, the Ombudsman has so far successfully prosecuted several leaders for breaching the standards of accountability of the Code.

The Ombudsman Commission is committed to building public confidence in its activities by being efficient and responsive. To help achieve these goals, Australian advisers are helping the Commission to plan, organise and monitor its work as effectively as possible. ■

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## Keeping Sri Lanka’s families together

By Sally Bernard

Minor offenders in Sri Lanka’s seriously overcrowded prisons will have the option of community service sentences rather than jail, as part of an Australian-funded aid project aimed at rehabilitating petty offenders.

Currently young offenders and those who have committed minor offences are automatically jailed. The results are overcrowded prisons and families left destitute when their breadwinners are jailed. In many cases people face mandatory jail sentences simply because they can’t pay fines.

As part of an Australian aid program, the Sri Lanka–Australia Training and Capacity Building Program (TCB), the Sri Lanka Ministry of Justice and

Community Affairs is developing a system of community-based corrections for youth, first-time and petty offenders. This system will provide Sri Lankan courts with an alternative sentencing option, which not only rehabilitates offenders but also reduces the burden on prison facilities.

Through the TCB, Australia is also helping improve the performance of Sri Lanka’s Geological Survey and Mapping Bureau in its delivery of geological surveying services. Australian advisers

are providing technical assistance in Sri Lanka and training is also taking place in Australia.

The commercial arm of the University of Wollongong, the Illawarra Technology Corporation, is managing the program, and is responsible for the placement, management and monitoring of sub-contractors. The project began this year and so far the Australian Government has provided nearly \$500,000 for initiatives under this project. ■



# Economic governance

By Robert McKinnon

Economic governance refers to the policies, institutions, frameworks and capabilities a country utilises to promote sustainable economic growth and improved living standards.

## **ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE—THE KEY TO ASIA'S LONG TERM RECOVERY**

Since its onset in mid-1997, the Asian financial crisis has highlighted the need to strengthen economic and financial management in affected countries. Improvements in economic governance are vital to ensuring a swift and sustainable recovery. These improvements will also help protect the tremendous poverty alleviation progress achieved by many regional countries during the last two decades.

The Asian financial crisis has highlighted the need to strengthen economic and financial management in affected countries.

## **SHORT TERM SUPPORT—LONG TERM REFORM**

Australia has responded with a substantial and growing portfolio of economic governance assistance. This aims to help strengthen economic institutions and frameworks as well as management and technical capabilities in affected countries.

Australia's initial response focused on the immediate challenges of the crisis, especially supporting implementation of the sweeping recovery programs put in place by many countries in the region. Emphasis is

now increasingly shifting to longer term strengthening of economic and financial institutions, legal and regulatory systems and economic management capacities. These efforts will help ensure affected countries are better placed to deal with economic cycles in the future.

## **MOBILISING THE AUSTRALIAN AID RESPONSE**

Australia has mobilised a significant regional and bilateral aid response.

At a regional level, Australia has taken a leading role through the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to strengthen economic governance in East Asian economies.

At the November 1998 APEC Leaders Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, the Prime Minister, Mr Howard, announced a three-year, \$50 million package of economic and financial management assistance to APEC economies most affected by the economic crisis. This package built on a major survey of economic governance issues in affected economies undertaken by Australia.

In 1998-1999, Australia introduced the Asia Crisis fund, with an initial funding of \$6 million, and doubled to \$12 million in 1999-2000. This fund has supported a wide range of economic governance activities including fiscal management, economic monitoring, reform of bankruptcy systems, supervision of financial institutions and reform of state-owned enterprises. It also supports measures to address social impacts, such as assistance for the World Bank's

Social Monitoring and Early Warning Unit in Indonesia.

Australia's bilateral aid programs with crisis-affected countries have also given enhanced priority to economic governance issues.

In Indonesia, Australia is implementing a \$70 million program of economic management cooperation from 1997-98 to 1999-2000. This includes a Technical Assistance Management Facility to transfer skills and expertise in economic capacity building and public sector policy making. Approximately \$5.5 million in economic governance assistance will be provided from 1999 to 2001 through this facility. Assistance will target capacity building needs in areas such as microeconomic reform, economic forecasting, foreign investment facilitation, bankruptcy reform, privatisation, labour market analysis and intellectual property rights.

In Thailand, a new Australian aid program is under implementation with activities focused on good governance, the banking and finance system and mitigating the crisis impact on the poor and disadvantaged.

In the Philippines, Australia has developed a five-year, \$25 million governance facility that will give priority to economic and fiscal management issues.

Australia's cooperation programs with China, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia also include expanding assistance to strengthen economic governance. ■

# Education—the key

By Nicole Tyrie

Education is a priority for development in its own right, but it also plays an important role in promoting effective governance. The challenge of promoting effective governance is all the greater given the World Bank's recent findings in its 1999 World Development Indicators that almost one billion people will enter the 21st century unable to read or write.

This statistic is of great concern since education is the basic building block for alleviating poverty. It is a form of investment—an asset for developed and developing countries alike.

The World Bank predicts that if the goal of universal primary education by 2015 is to be met, around 200 million more children than at present need access to primary education, an increase of more than 40%.

The 1999 World Development Indicators report found that while some developing countries have succeeded in providing access to schooling, just two-thirds of children who start primary school are still there five years later.

If the goal of universal primary education is to be achieved, the World Bank says improvements in access and participation, retention at school and higher literacy levels are all required. The World Bank also say that quality, not just access to facilities, may influence students' and parents' decisions to continue with schooling.

'Quality must be of pre-eminent concern...there is little point in expanding access unless there is reasonable quality,' the report said.

Work also needs to continue on how to assess education outcomes. The Bank and other donors are helping countries to monitor and evaluate the quality of education being provided.

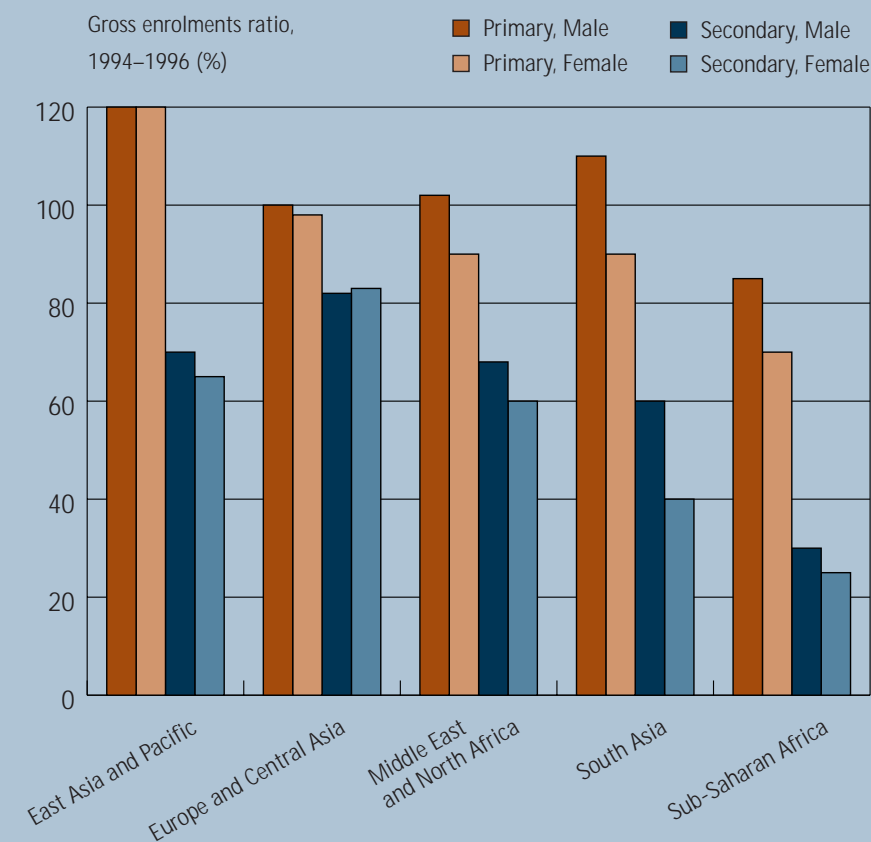
The report also found that special strategies are needed to encourage the

enrolment of the poor and other marginalised groups, particularly girls. The international goal that both girls and boys have equal access to education (gender parity) in primary and secondary education by 2005 is as difficult for most developing countries as the goal of universal primary education. The graph below shows that South Asia has a lot of ground to make up in ensuring girls have equal access to education, while East Asia has achieved

universal primary enrolment for both boys and girls.

Nevertheless, in our own region, *World Development Indicators* notes that while the financial problems of the East Asian financial crisis have been well documented, a less publicised feature of the crisis has been the impact on children, especially girls. The number of girls dropping out of school, as their families can no longer afford to educate them, has underscored

## GIRL'S ENROLMENTS CONTINUE TO LAG



Source: 1999 World Development Indicators



the vulnerability of poor people in accessing education.

The Australian Government agrees with the World Bank's view that education plays an important role in the alleviation of poverty. As a result, education has been identified as one of five sectoral priorities of Australia's aid program. The Australian Government is committed to providing programs that increase access to and quality of education in developing countries, especially in basic education.

In the recent 1999-2000 aid budget, the Australian Government announced it will spend an estimated \$250 million directly on education programs. The education sector represents the largest single area of sector expenditure in the aid program. In fact, this financial year, the share of Australian aid expenditure going to basic education was almost double the average being spent by the rest of the aid donor community. ■

*World Development Indicators* can be found on the World Bank's web site at [www.worldbank.org/data/wdi/home.html](http://www.worldbank.org/data/wdi/home.html).

For further information on education in the aid program please contact the AusAID Gender and Education Policy Section on 02 6206 4873 or email [christopher\\_richards@ausaid.gov.au](mailto:christopher_richards@ausaid.gov.au)



The Australian Government is committed to ensuring

The Forum's third annual meeting was hosted by the Indonesian National Commission on Human Rights in Jakarta in September last year. An important outcome of this meeting was the establishment of the Advisory Council of Jurists. At this meeting, the Forum also recognised the role of non-government organisations in the promotion and protection of human rights. The next annual meeting will be held in the Philippines in September this year. ■



26 focus July 1999

# Good governance a challenge

By Keith Scott

Promoting good governance is one of the toughest development challenges. But there is cause for optimism. The World Bank suggests in its 1999 World Development Indicators report that the need to address governance issues is greater than ever.

'Countries that pursue good policies with sound institutions perform better in economic growth and poverty reduction: that translates into improvements in the lives of people—more food on the table, healthier babies, and more children in school,' the World Bank says.

It is a view in accord with the Australian Government's belief that: 'in the absence of effective governance, aid efforts in support of poverty reduction and economic growth will be undermined.'

While bad governance, like mushrooms, flourishes in the dark, the Bank sees information as shining a light on the development path. It believes recent advances in data collection, particularly in survey methods, have improved understanding of what causes corruption and mismanagement, how these practices affect development and how they can be combated.

The Bank has found that one successful technique—presently under development—is to survey the parties to corruption directly and simultaneously, including households, enterprise managers, and public officials. The surveys ask about the costs and private returns of paying bribes to obtain public services, privileges and public jobs. The Bank believes such information can identify activities and agencies where corruption is concentrated, educate the public and help in developing an anti-corruption agenda.

Quantifying poor governance is good aid. Data can be seized on by the media,

opposition parties and civil society to stir public debate.

The Bank warns, however, that 'unless governments, working with civil society and the private sector, can blaze new trails in improving governance and combating corruption, development will be endangered'.

It is, nevertheless, optimistic. It sees emerging new standards of global behaviour, driven partly by changing attitudes toward bribery in industrial countries and partly by heightened awareness in developing countries of the costs of poor management and corruption. The Bank's own anti-corruption strategy includes an internal corruption hotline, blacklisting of firms, a greater focus in project design on transparency and anti-corruption strategies for partner countries. It is also building partnerships with others working in the field including the OECD, UNDP, bilateral donors, other multilateral development banks, NGOs and regional organisations.

Already, many initiatives have been taken internationally, to which Australia is a party. These include the OECD's Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials, the Development Assistance Committee's 1995 framework to help strengthen partner countries' capacities for good governance and the IMF's Code of Good Practices on Fiscal Transparency. Australia's own strong support for good governance is further evidenced by the commitment in

'Countries that pursue good policies with sound institutions perform better in economic growth and poverty reduction: that translates into improvements in the lives of people—more food on the table, healthier babies, and more children in school.'

1999-2000 of \$148 million direct expenditure on the governance sector, outlined in the 1999-2000 aid Budget. ■

*World Development Indicators* can be found on the World Bank's web site at [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)



# Parliamentary Secretary visits Africa

By Paul Flanagan

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Sullivan, visited Africa recently to see how Australian aid projects operated on the ground in Mozambique, Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Mrs Sullivan visited several key aid projects in southern Africa funded by the Australian Government, after attending a trade meeting at Maputo, Mozambique. Projects she visited gave an insight into the development issues facing Africa—improving governance, reducing HIV/AIDS, providing clean water, clearing landmines and humanitarian needs.

Mrs Sullivan said the visit, from March 29 to April 16, confirmed her view that the Australian Government's aid program was making a difference to the lives of the poor.

'Australian aid works. It is extremely effective in providing development and relief to many people suffering in Africa due to poverty, war and illness,' Mrs Sullivan said.

'The Australian Government, through its aid program, is helping Africans to build their own houses, run their hospitals, improve their education systems, maintain their water bores and provide emergency food to refugees.'

While Africa faces many pressing problems, Mrs Sullivan said the projects she saw gave her cause for optimism.

## CHILD VICTIMS OF WAR IN SUDAN

On Easter Sunday she flew to northern Kenya to visit the centre of the humanitarian relief efforts for southern Sudan. Sudan has suffered its worst humanitarian crisis in a decade, with a two-year drought and displacement of a further 150,000 people after intense fighting in southern Sudan. At Lockichokkio, six

large transport planes were on a constant shuttle run into Sudan, ferrying food and other essential supplies. The local hospital, staffed with Australian volunteers, was a stark reminder of the effects of the conflict. Wards were filled with children who had been shot, many with their limbs amputated.

Mrs Sullivan also visited the Kakuma Refugee Camp near Turkana which provides food, fuel, wood and basic services to 70,000 refugees. Here, Mrs Sullivan marked the start of drilling at a new borehole to source fresh water for the Turkana community.

## CATARACT OPERATIONS TRANSFORM LIVES IN NAIROBI

During a visit to the Kikuyu Hospital in Nairobi, she presented the board chairman with a cheque for staff development and training. The hospital has strong links with Australia. It employs Australian medical students on a voluntary basis and has training links with the Fred Hollows Foundation. Patients told of how a cataract eye operation had transformed their lives, moving them from blindness and alienation to being able to return to work to support their families.

## PACE OF CHANGE IN MOZAMBIQUE ENCOURAGING

'In parts of Africa I visited, there was great hope as people rebuild their societies after decades of conflict. Mozambique—one of the poorest countries in the world and a

country with the worst infant mortality rate in the world—is rapidly progressing under a new democratic government.'

In Mozambique, Mrs Sullivan travelled to a food-for-work project, a women's savings project and a UNICEF HIV/AIDS project.

## WATER FOR MOZAMBIQUE

While visiting Vilanculos in Mozambique, local women demonstrated their skills in repairing the local water pump. The surrounding area is one of the driest in Mozambique, with bores usually having to go to depths of 100 metres or more. Women are required to walk up to 30kms to fresh water.

Mrs Sullivan announced funding of more than \$8 million for new water supply and sanitation projects to be managed by Australian non government aid organisations with their local partners.

## SUPPORT FOR MICRO-FINANCE PROJECTS

Mrs Sullivan said another highlight was visiting micro-finance projects in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Soweto, South Africa. The Australian Government is funding micro-finance projects in Africa which assist local people, particularly the poor, to set up their own businesses.

'There has been an incredible response to these innovative projects,' Mrs Sullivan said.

'People I met were improving their lives through investments they had made with a relatively small amount of money. A challenge is to ensure these activities can



Mrs Sullivan visited a hospital staffed by Australian nurses and surgeons at Lockichokkio, northern Kenya. Despite five months of operations trying to save her bullet-shattered leg, the young girl in the picture was still full of smiles and moved around saying 'Giddy mate'.

keep going, dealing with complex issues of cultures of non-payment, possible fraud and building up local support structures.'

In South Africa, meetings were held with a range of people trying to reform public services after the end of apartheid. The pace of change in the last five years has been dramatic, as new and more equitable policies have been developed for education, health, housing and other basic services.

Australian aid is helping to share our experiences in turning these policies into improved services on the ground.

## IMPROVING GOVERNANCE A PRIORITY

'Improving governance is a key priority for South Africa's future. Australian expertise can speed the transformation process, drawing on similarities of language, government structures and the goodwill of

Australia's fight against apartheid. Our assistance is producing benefits many times the cost of our governance activities.'

## HIV/AIDS

In Mozambique and South Africa, Mrs Sullivan visited HIV/AIDS projects. These included an education program targeted at youth, a community centre providing care to families affected by HIV/AIDS, and a research program aiming to cut transmission of the disease from mothers to their children.

'The magnitude of the HIV/AIDS problem in Africa is tragic. In Zimbabwe and South Africa, up to a quarter of the adult population is infected. Decades of development are at risk of being undermined unless this epidemic is quickly brought under control.'

## AUSTRALIAN AID SUPPORTS BASICS

In South Africa, Mrs Sullivan visited housing projects, a school for deaf children and an employment training activity. South Africa faces great challenges in the post-apartheid era. Australian aid is supporting government efforts to improve the provision of basic services such as low-cost accommodation and clean water supplies. In 1994, more than 7 million South Africans lived in basic corrugated shacks or other inadequate forms of housing.

New small businesses are being supported by the Australian Government, in part to address the chronic unemployment problems facing South Africa.

Mrs Sullivan said it was important that Australia continue to support the people of Africa to reduce their impoverished circumstances through sustainable development.

'While our focus must remain on the Asia-Pacific region, I am heartened by the development work that is taking place in Africa and I feel very privileged to have inspected our key aid projects in my position as Parliamentary Secretary for the aid program.' ■

# Clearing landmines in Mozambique

By Kirsten Hawke

Clearing landmines is a high priority of the Australian Government's overseas aid program. Along with the terrible injuries they cause, landmines are displacing people from their land and thus hindering development.



Mrs Sullivan, wearing the protective glasses required at a demining site, receives instructions on how to detonate landmines from the head of the Accelerated Demining Program in Mozambique, Jacky D'Almeida (left).

While in Mozambique in April, Mrs Sullivan—who is Australia's Special Representative on Demining—visited the Accelerated Demining Program (ADP) in Magude, Mozambique. Here she saw clearance operations in the minefield, attended a mine awareness program at the local school and discussed the benefits of landmine clearance with local people at Maleaurne.

Mrs Sullivan also witnessed the tedious, dangerous work confronting deminers. Work shifts were limited to 20 minutes to

ensure concentration did not slip. Often there is little to show for long hours of work. In the area Mrs Sullivan visited, deminers had found 700,000 pieces of metal—all treated as potential landmines. Whilst only 31 of these 700,000 detections turned out to be mines, fear of mines had prevented local villagers from accessing their closest source of fresh water.

'As Australia's Special Representative on Demining, I was very pleased to see the operations of the Accelerated Demining Program,' Mrs Sullivan told the ADP's

director Jacky D'Almeida.

'The professionalism of the ADP was apparent and this professionalism has translated into a very low injury rate for your platoons.

'The death, injury and disruption to local communities caused by mines—or even the uncertainty of whether mines are present in an area—demonstrate to me that demining is a vital development cooperation activity.'

A key component of demining operations is ensuring they are targeted at areas of greatest social and economic need. The objective is not just to remove as many mines as possible. Rather it is focusing on areas where landmines are most likely to cause injury, or prevent people from accessing valuable land or infrastructure.

The Australian Government has provided aid to Mozambique to support the work of the National Demining Commission, which has established clear priorities for demining in the south of the country.

Australia has also assisted in training local deminers. Two Australians and two New Zealanders are involved in training more than 500 locals in mine clearance operations.

Australia has committed funding of \$100 million in the decade 1996–2005 for landmine clearance throughout the world. This includes technical assistance provided by members of the Australian Defence Force who are helping train local people to clear mines from marked tracts of land. ■



# Australia's aid program to Africa

By Robin Taylor

The aid program to Africa is driven by the Australian community's concern to help poor people in this vast continent. Reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development is the aim of the program.



Mrs Sullivan with local school children benefiting from a food distribution scheme. Australian aid funds had helped fly food to Vilanculous, Mozambique, an area that had been devastated by the worst flooding in decades.

The aid program to Africa has three key priorities:

- Supporting governance activities
- Improving the livelihood of the poor
- Providing emergency and humanitarian relief.

## **SUPPORTING GOVERNANCE**

Supporting effective governance is a high priority, partly in response to concerns among Australians that poor governance has contributed to humanitarian emergencies in Africa.

In South Africa and Mozambique, Australia is supporting better systems of government by providing technical assistance and training to national

government bodies and key private sector institutions. These programs aim to help with the changes underway in both countries. The programs focus on building the skills of local people in areas such as education and training policy, economic and industry policy, human rights and water and sanitation.

## **SOUTH AFRICA CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM**

The South Africa Capacity Building Program is Australia's largest governance project in Africa. The country was torn apart by the divisions and inequities of the apartheid era. However since the new democratic government came to power in

1994, Australian aid has helped to rebuild the country and provide basic services to the disadvantaged.

Key achievements of the program are:

- Identification of a property management model for the Department of Public Works that could create 10,000 jobs for skilled labourers from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Working with the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority to provide access to telephones in the poorest areas
- Assisting the Development Bank of South Africa to improve public-private partnerships. Results include two toll road projects, project management training and help to draft environmental guidelines for water and sanitation projects
- Helping the Ministry of Justice to develop a gender policy and organising a conference on the prevention of violence against women
- Assisting the Independent Electoral Commission with the 1999 national elections, including helping organise the National Tally Room
- Working with the South African Department of Communications to set up a Broadcasting School for broadcasters from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Assisting the Central Statistics Service to conduct the 1996 Census—resulting in better demographic, trade and economic data





On arrival at the Kakuma refugee camp in northern Kenya, home to over 70,000 refugees from the conflict in southern Sudan, Mrs Sullivan was greeted by a colourful display of dancing from the local Turkana community.

- Helping the National Department of Education to strengthen planning and management, to boost the quality of education services
- Working with the South African Department of Finance to develop the Treasury Control Bill, review budget systems and develop national/provincial funding arrangements
- Advising the South African Revenue Service on best practice approaches based on Australian experience. As a result an additional \$100 million in revenue has been collected
- Assisting the Department of Trade and Industry to set up the South African Competition Commission which is examining competition, regulation and consumer protection issues to make business more competitive
- Helping the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry to develop a water management plan for the Thukela Basin.

Australia is also helping to strengthen tertiary education institutions in Africa so they can contribute to the reconstruction and reform process. In South Africa, Australia is linking 20 Australian tertiary institutions with South African institutions. Scholarship programs are also providing opportunities for students to study in their own country or Australia.

To help strengthen governance in the region, a Governance Fund will be established in 1999–2000 targeted at southern African countries.

#### **IMPROVING THE LIVELIHOOD OF THE POOR**

Australia's priority is to develop services on the ground to alleviate poverty and strengthen community organisations and civil society. This includes funding projects targeting HIV/AIDS, water and sanitation, food security and demining.

To improve conditions for the poor, the Australian Government recently developed a new development strategy for Africa focusing on practical partnerships between

communities in Africa and Australia. To achieve this, there will be annual funding for Australian non government organisations (NGOs) operating in southern African countries.

#### **EMERGENCY AND HUMANITARIAN RELIEF**

Australia provides humanitarian relief in Africa in response to disasters and to address the basic needs of the victims of protracted crisis situations. Assistance takes the form of food, water, emergency medicine, basic education, infrastructure and health care and micro-finance. The priority is shifting the emphasis from emergency food aid to longer-term food security to help communities feed themselves.

Humanitarian aid is generally provided in partnership with other multilateral or non government organisations. For example, Australia is working with 40 NGOs through *Operation Lifeline Sudan* to distribute emergency food aid to the victims of war in the Sudan. ■

# Australia's 'living saint'

By Kirsten Hawke

There are many heroes in Australia's overseas aid program, but in Ethiopia they call her one of Australia's 'living saints'. She is Dr Catherine Hamlin and with her late husband Dr Reginald Hamlin, she opened the world's first Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia initially with 50 beds in 1974.



Dr Catherine Hamlin with her senior assistant Dr Aubaye Woldemichael at Ethiopia's Fistula Hospital.  
Photo by Cameron Bloom

Since then, more than 17,000 women have been treated for fistula problems and 93% of all women treated have been able to return to their families and villages and resume a normal life.

Dr Hamlin visited Australia in March to publicise the hospital and to tell Australians how the hospital has gone from strength to strength with their support. In a meeting with AusAID, she thanked supporters of the Fistula Hospital.

'Thank you for what you are doing for the women of Ethiopia,' Dr Hamlin said.

'I am very proud that Australia has done so much to help these poor women.'

One of those women was Mamitu Gashi who was 16 when she was carried by her brother and father into the hospital. She suffered a protracted labour for days and had given birth to a stillborn child. As a result, she suffered nerve damage and a fistula, a debilitating condition where a hole forms between the vagina and the bladder or bowel resulting in permanent urinary or faecal incontinence.

'Women like Mamitu have lost everything in life,' Dr Hamlin explained. 'Some are as young as 14 years old, they married early and got into this terrible condition from obstructed labour.'

Some women suffer the further effects of severe nerve damage from labour and are left crippled. Dr Hamlin explained how another young girl crawled to a local clinic after being in labour for 10 days. She was later brought to the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital by camel to be successfully treated



The hospital has treated more than 17,000 women since it opened in 1974.

by Dr Hamlin and her small team of dedicated staff.

Obstructed labour affects 5% of all women, but in Ethiopia, a country of 58 million people, with no decent transport system, women can be up to three days away from medical assistance.

'After nine to ten days, the baby dies from obstructed labour and the women are left with terrible injuries. This reduces them to terrible loneliness. They are abandoned by their husbands and become outsiders in society.

'They are the poorest women in the world. They cannot work and are shunned by society. They lose their babies, home and family and live in tremendous isolation. Some eke out a living by carrying sticks.'

Dr Hamlin and her late husband, both obstetricians and gynaecologists, moved to Ethiopia in 1959 on a three-year contract to establish a midwifery department at the Princess Tsahai Hospital. In those three years, the Hamlins noticed the inability of the existing hospital system to deal with fistula cases and the lack of doctors trained in fistula surgical procedures.

'That's what motivated us to help these girls. Fistula is a life long sorrow. We stayed on in Ethiopia because we were able to mend them and give them a new life, which gives us joy.'

The Australian Government has supported the hospital since 1984 and provided \$1.2 million for the recent extensions and upgrading of the hospital. This has transformed the hospital. It now has a new wing with an extra ward, in addition to a new kitchen, surgery, pathology laboratory, library, physiotherapy room, X-ray unit and accommodation for doctors and nurses.

The opening of the new wing at the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in January this year attracted many African and foreign dignitaries including the Australian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Philip Green. The President of Ethiopia, Dr Negasso Gedada, cut the ribbon to mark the opening of the new hospital wing. At the opening ceremony, local religious leaders called on communities to accept laws which stopped under-age marriage, the major cause of fistula problems.

The hospital now operates on more than 1100 women every year and has three full-time doctors. It is also involved in training up to 100 doctors a year in fistula surgical techniques so they can take their skills to hospitals across Africa. A few of the patients who were cured of fistulas since 1974 have stayed on at the hospital as medical assistants, including Mamitu Gashi. Mamitu became a skilled fistula surgeon

despite being illiterate and was recently recognised by the London College of Surgeons for performing more than 1000 fistula operations.

Reverend Stuart Abrahams, the Australian representative of the Hamlin Fistula Welfare and Research Trust, visited the Fistula hospital recently for the opening and was moved to call it 'an oasis in the desert of Addis Ababa'.

'The facilities are impressive but what really permeates the hospital is Dr Hamlin's gift of love to the patients and staff,' Reverend Abrahams said.

'There is a real sense of bonding and acceptance at the hospital.'

Dr Hamlin is an outstanding Australian who has shown remarkable initiative in establishing and developing the Addis



A new life for a young Ethiopian woman. Ninety-three per cent of the hospital's patients recover to lead a completely normal life.

Ababa Fistula Hospital. She has built the hospital into a viable institution which has vastly improved the lives of more than 17,000 Ethiopian women.

Donations to the Fistula Hospital can be made through the Hamlin Fistula Welfare and Research Trust through their Australian Representative: Stuart Abrahams, 75 Nicholson Avenue, Westleigh NSW 2120, ph: 02 9875 2530. ■



# Youth Ambassadors

The first group of Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development left our shores in March this year and arrived in countries around the region to take up their development assignments. They are working on a diverse range of projects in the Asia Pacific including legal aid in Fiji, forestry in the Solomon Islands, urban planning in the Philippines and health policy in Vietnam.

A Commonwealth Government initiative funded through AusAID, the program provides young Australians with an opportunity to make a positive contribution to development while broadening their experience and increasing their understanding of the cultural diversity and development needs of our neighbours.

Here, two youth ambassadors, Dzung Le, 21, from Melbourne and Peter Vanderwal, 29, from Sydney, share some of their first impressions with Focus readers.

*Dzung Le and his family left Vietnam in a fishing boat when he was four. After recently graduating from university with an Information Technology degree, Dzung decided to return to a developing country and transfer some of his new skills. Today, he is building a database for the Canadian Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) in Kathmandu. Dzung will teach the Nepalese staff to maintain the database which will keep information on CECI's studies of the mobilisation of capital for micro-loans and community banking schemes.*

## BY DZUNG LE IN NEPAL

Namaste! is the formal greeting I get from everyone I meet in Nepal. I landed at the small Kathmandu Airport on the last day of March. The flight was turbulent and, when the plane began its descent, I was feeling very dizzy from the change in altitude but getting off the plane and seeing the huge mountains was an amazing sight.



Dzung Lee in Nepal.

I had some trouble with immigration though. The guy at the desk looked at my passport several times and I don't think he was convinced of my Australian nationality. So he gave it to the guy at the next counter and he looked at me and at the picture in the passport several times. His friend asked me where I was born and I told him Ho Chi Minh city. He said 'China?' I said 'Vietnam'. I think, by this time, they were thoroughly confused about my nationality and gave up trying to find out. They shook their heads and stamped my passport—I was in.

I am working with the Canadian Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) which specialises mainly in micro-finance studies, farming, water and hydro-

electricity. We're talking about studies on how small loans such as 2000 rupees (AUD\$50) can benefit a villager and influence micro-economics in the villages. It is quite amazing stuff really.

I recently visited Bhindasavani village, 40km east of Kathmandu and met with the village Savings and Credit Organisation (SCO), one of the most successful in the country. With over 3000 members, it runs a savings scheme which involves people putting in 10 rupees a month (that is about 0.2c). If they fail to make their contribution, they are fined. Loans are given on an as needed/grant basis. A percentage goes to agriculture, housing, education, technology and *ad hoc*. It is not uncommon for loans to be taken by someone, often women, to buy food for the family.

The SCO has a loans committee that approves each loan and they have a 98% repayment rate. SCOs exist because poor people in areas such as these cannot get loans from the banks. By forming a group and mobilising their savings, the community can provide capital for people to start up their business.

One elderly woman here, who must have been in her late fifties, told us how she took out a 25,000 rupee (AUD\$500) loan to start a knitting business. She bought an old manual knitting machine (the kind where you knit the first threads and run the arm across each time you want to knit a row) and some wool. She managed to repay the loan within a year. She made woollen jumpers for schools and a broker would buy

them from her by the kilogram. She showed us her business which was in the second storey of an ancient brick house with cracking boards. The room was no larger than 3.5m by 1.5m. It had her bed, knitting machine and a cupboard. She proudly showed us her accounts book, a raggedy textbook which had neatly ruled columns. She learned to read and write from the education programs that the SCO funds. She smiled with modest pride. It was an inspiration to meet such a determined woman.

CECI studies the mobilisation of people's savings and I am developing a database to collect the information gathered from the SCOs. They want to have a central database to generate reports and other information. I have a feeling it's going to be a long process to map out all of the information because there are hundreds of SCOs.

I can't believe how lucky we are to live in a country like Australia which offers so many comforts and pleasures. Nepal is like another world. The sounds of Australia and the problems of home are miles away and seem insignificant when compared to those of Nepal. The only thing that reminds me of home is my Aussie accent and slang and, of course, the larrikin sense of humour that I am trying to introduce to the Nepalese, with mixed success I might add.

*Peter Vanderwal was completing an MA in Psychology and working part-time at the Pioneer Clubhouse mental health rehabilitation program when he applied for the Youth Ambassadors program. He saw it as an opportunity to transfer some of his skills while learning about another culture. Peter is working for the Rotary Club of Suva East in the Fiji Islands. He is helping to implement various aspects of humanitarian projects which range from the donation of wheelchairs to setting up laser ophthalmological treatment units.*

## BY PETER VANDERWAL IN FIJI

Since arriving in Fiji, I have discovered a few things about trans-cultural employment. It's not the same as working at



Peter Vanderwal (left) at work in Fiji.

home. Surprise, surprise. In the Fiji Islands, making phone calls can be difficult. A receptionist at the front desk, computers running the same software (maybe version 6.0 rather than 7.1 but essentially the same).

The receptionist with the Commander switchboard is there to handle out-going calls just as much as in-comers. In most workplaces, the custom is to call the receptionist, tell them the number you want and why, hang up the phone and wait to be connected. This is not a bad custom, by any means, it is just cumbersome and slows you down, only one receptionist and lots of people making out-going calls.

The hive of activity is perhaps centred more around the office social structures. South Pacific Time rules this hive. Things do get done, and the standard of output is not necessarily any different to the standard in Australia. The essential difference is the value placed on the necessity of getting things done now. It is more relaxed in the Fiji Islands. This is really rather pleasant, once you get used to it. So now I go slower, relaxing, taking the time to talk to those

around me, building relationships, forging ahead in the work I'm doing probably more effectively than if I just put my head down because this way I have people working with me, not around me.

In a work environment, it is also necessary to accommodate cultural differences, which entails a more laid back attitude when working to deadlines and a respect for the established channels of communication and authority, even if you think you can work more effectively another way.

I will work within the structures here, and make a difference in whatever small way I can. ■

- More information on the Youth Ambassadors in the field is on AusAID's website at [www.ausaid.gov.au](http://www.ausaid.gov.au)
- Applications for the next intake of Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development close on 27 August 1999.
- Application forms can be obtained by phoning 1800 000 656.



# Clearing landmines

Every 20 minutes, somewhere in the world, a landmine claims another victim. Around half of them are children. It's estimated that there are between 60 and 70 million landmines, worldwide.

In Cambodia, landmines are a deadly threat to development, claiming some 1300 victims last year alone. For these people, everyday tasks like farming, collecting wood, fishing or tending stock have become a terrifying lottery—one out of every 230 Cambodians has lost a limb through landmine injuries.

The process of ridding Cambodia of this insidious legacy of war is painstaking but progress is being made. Last year there were 1300 victims compared with 1412 victims in 1997 and 2799 victims in 1996.

Australian soldiers have helped to train Cambodians to clear mines using the latest Australian technology and over 525,000 mines and unexploded ordnance have already been neutralised.

Australia also supports mine awareness programs, especially for children who make up a large number of those injured or killed.

The following images put faces to the statistics and show how determination and courage can win the war against landmines. ■

Photo captions by Deborah Nesbitt who recently visited Cambodia. Photographs by Tim Acker.



Da Lin is a young mother and a deminer who has just returned from maternity leave to her job with the Mine Advisory Group. She says her mother prays every day that she will return safely. Da Lin is helping clear landmines in the village of Chisang in north-west Cambodia, once occupied by the Khmer Rouge. Although fighting stopped in 1995, the threat of landmines is restricting resettlement.



ABOVE

Thirty-nine year old Ry Saverth still smiles despite his injuries. He lost his leg when forced by the Vietnamese to demine forests where Khmer Rouge fighters were hiding. Now he works as a deminer and says: 'I don't want any of my compatriots to be injured like I was from landmines.'

RIGHT

Demining is both tedious and extremely dangerous. Chan Sinath is clearing mines in the village of Chisang. He gently prods the ground for the object which his detector has found. It could merely be a piece of scrap metal or it could be a landmine.



ABOVE

Kiam Choem's life has been ravaged by landmines. He has lost both his legs. Of his four children, his eleven year old daughter has lost an arm and his nine year old son has lost a leg. Along with around 15,000 other refugees, Kiam and his family recently returned to Cambodia from a camp on the Thai border to try to build a new life in the village of Ta Sanh in Samlot.



BELOW

In the villages of north west Cambodia, the threat of landmines is ever present and children are all too often victims. Over 16 per cent of landmine casualties are children aged between five and fourteen years old.



BELOW

Members of a community mine marking team take a break from their work. They are working in a village in north-western Cambodia where refugees are streaming home, wanting to resume normal life. But life can't return to normal while the fields are strewn with landmines, unexploded ordnance and booby traps.

ABOVE

Mine awareness campaigns are essential for the reduction of casualty rates. Mine awareness is all about changing people's behaviour—but how do you tell people not to collect water or cut wood because the fields might be mined?





# A new lease on life

By Deborah Nesbitt, who recently visited the Kompong Speu Rehabilitation Centre in Cambodia, where landmine and polio victims are finding a new lease on life.



Learning to walk.

It was pure courage and sheer determination in action. The small boy practised over and over, learning to walk with callipers. Over the hours of hard training only once did I see him wince, when he thought no one was looking, as he adjusted the new wrappings on his legs. A polio victim, this brave Cambodian child was receiving treatment at the Kompong Speu Rehabilitation Centre, just outside Phnom Penh.

He was the youngest patient for the day. Most of the centre's patients are landmine victims, young men who have lost legs to the landmines that carpet Cambodia.

One in every 230 people in Cambodia is an amputee, a terrible legacy of the civil strife that has racked the country for around 27 years. War has left about 5 million landmines lying around, in the rice fields and forests, waiting to tear at the limbs and lives of the survivors. In one of South-East Asia's poorest countries, losing a limb means being unable to feed yourself or your family, not being able to move around and being isolated.

'I felt like a king to work at the centre and save lives,' Moeun Sopheap said about starting work at the Rehabilitation Centre.

Now the centre's administrator, Moeun says most landmine victims suffer deep depression because they cannot earn a living or contribute to their family. He said some commit suicide but the ones who make it to the centre are offered new limbs and with them, a new life. Getting back on their feet means an amputee can earn their keep by cutting wood, carrying water or even climbing for palm sugar or becoming a construction worker.

Funded by the Australian Government's overseas aid program, and run by the American Red Cross, the Rehabilitation Centre offers orthotics (like callipers) to help people with damaged or deformed limbs. The centre also offers prosthetic limbs for amputees—made in a busy little factory out the back. It's a tricky job. International

standards for making prosthetic limbs have been adjusted to cope with Cambodian conditions. The limbs will have to survive becoming water logged as people work in rice paddies and going 'barefoot' in a place where shoes are a luxury.

An outreach team keeps a check on whether the limbs are being used and how they are bearing up under the conditions. The team also tracks down people who need help and brings them to the centre for treatment.

Once they have been fitted with their new limb, patients receive physiotherapy and help relearning to walk. The centre's new gait training area and dormitories for patients and their families feature signs which recognise Australia's assistance. Australia has committed \$2.5 million over three years to the centre. New dormitories, a kitchen and a vegetable garden to keep resident patients busy are under construction with this year's funds. Plans are also underway for a wheelchair training area and a volleyball court.

With Australian help, the Kompong Speu Rehabilitation Centre is making a very real impact on improving the quality of life for thousands of Cambodians still suffering the effects of war and poverty.

'I think of myself, I have two legs and it's hard to make a living. For the person with an amputation it's very difficult. I want to save them and help them make a better life,' Moeun said. ■



# Giving Cambodia's kids a future

By Maryanne Plummer, who recently visited an Australian Government funded project that's changing the lives of thousands of the city's street children in Phnom Penh.



Learning how to sew gives this young girl the prospect of a job.

They're so much a part of the dusty colours of Phnom Penh's fast moving palette, that after a few days, even the foreigner's fresh eye doesn't notice them anymore.

But they're everywhere. Twenty thousand of them. Scampering down the riverbank after a tossed can. Two asleep huddled under an awning. Little grimy hands—table height—at your restaurant. (Fifty cents will buy a flower to sweeten your lapel, and something for your conscience). They are Phnom Penh's street children.

Many of them fend for themselves, without parental or institutional support, in the streets of the capital. They do it by begging, selling recyclable rubbish, selling

flowers, selling themselves. They steal—often under threat from older gang teams. Many leave home because they have been beaten, only to be beaten—by gangs or police—on the streets.

Nearly half of Cambodia's population is under 17. This 'baby boom' has strained the individual and collective resources of a nation already incapacitated by war and civil disruption. The same wars have produced orphans, families which can't support children, and families which rely on children as a source of income.

But not all the stories are terrible. Mith Samlanh, or *Friends*, is a project for street kids in Phnom Penh run by the Save the Children Fund. The project aims to alleviate poverty and improve the livelihood of



All the kids at Friends have the latest haircuts thanks to the jobs training project which takes them off the streets.



Electronic engineers in the making.

children and their families, as well as advocate for children's rights. One of Cambodia's most successful aid projects, *Friends*, is providing some form of assistance to around 10,000 street children and their families in Phnom Penh and has helped many thousands more since it began in 1994. Since 1996, *Friends* has received more than \$300,000 in funding from the Australian Government's overseas aid program. The Government has committed more than \$800,000 to the project over the next three years.

It's Saturday night, and Cheap Senghak is doing kids' stuff. He's hanging out at the *Friends* residential centre with 122 other kids. The centre provides them with a safe place to stay, eat and wash, and some affection from the live-in supervisors. Tonight, Cheap is playing board games and skip rope. Not so long ago, he was collecting rubbish, sleeping at the garbage collection centre, and watching out for the street gangs he feared would find and beat him. Cheap has run away from his home because: 'I was very stubborn and my parents beat me'. He was stubborn enough to run away from a gang team who 'made me do something very bad', before he came to the refuge of the *Friends* centre.

Squeezed into the sleeping quarters tonight are children aged between 18 months and 18 years old. The youngest was brought in with her older sister. The girls were found begging in Phnom Penh's Central market, (where stiff competition from Cambodia's many amputees makes the going tough). Among the boys playing skip rope is one with a chalk-whitened face. Pale skin is considered more attractive to the buyers in Phnom Penh's sex trade.

*Friends* runs two other facilities for street children. The first is a day centre, where the kids who work at night-time can come to sleep. The other, a combined school and vocational centre helps give children a chance to get out of the streets—by giving them access to education and marketable skills. One skill is to learn to cut hair. Just about everyone at the vocational centre sports a nifty hair cut! While a group of kids giggle and watch, their companion chops away at a reluctant volunteer—the snipper with his tongue stuck out in concentration, the snippeer frowning into the mirror! Right now, it's a bit of fun. But with a few implements and some experience, a street kid can become one of the city's street barbers. In other rooms and courtyards, children are learning to sew,

fold napkins and wait tables, repair the ubiquitous 'moto', carpentry, electronics, and bicycle maintenance.

Sreymon is 16 years old. She is not very forthcoming about her own life on the street. But when she is asked about the experiences of other children, Sreymon says as much with sad and serious eyes as she does with her tongue.

'It's not so easy to live on the streets. The girls can be raped, and some people come to take them away and sell them. The boys can be attacked by gang teams who make them do bad things.'

'What do you like about the *Friends* centre?'

'Oh, it's very good. There is good food to eat and training is provided.'

It's easy to get sentimental about poor little children. But in a country first ripped apart—then hardened—by three decades of violent disruption, sentimentality is a luxury rarely afforded the people of Cambodia. So the money which goes toward the running of *Friends* does not buy 'comfort'—as we understand it in the affluent world—for Phnom Penh's street kids. It does buy them freedom, education, and dignity. In the words of 16 year old Sreymon: 'It gives the children a future.' ■



# Australian water-wheels a hit

By Angela Ee in Beijing

When a group of officials from Xinjiang, China, visited Australia recently, they were surprised to find that there are simple solutions to complex problems, such as how to fairly distribute and price water from a river.



Group photo of delegation in Australia

What they saw was a simple device called a water-wheel which is used across the Murray Darling Basin in Australia, in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. It measures how much water a farmer uses for irrigation and the user is charged accordingly. This device, which was invented in Australia some 40–50 years ago, may soon become a permanent feature across the Tarim Basin in China.

The principle of user pays is just one aspect of sustainable water management that the 12 officials from the Tarim Basin Commission looked at during their 10-day visit.

The study tour is part of the Australian Government's \$3 million technical assistance program to improve water management in the Tarim Basin, ensuring the sustainability of the resource and the environment.

'Even though the circumstances are different, the issues facing the Tarim Basin are similar to those faced by the Murray Darling Basin, the Australian consultant for the project,' Mr Clive Lyle said.

'Until recently, 80 percent of the total water resource of the Murray and Darling rivers was diverted to irrigate farms and supply towns with water. That naturally had an adverse environmental effect on the river and threatened its long-term sustainability. The Tarim Basin has the same problem.'

Covering five per cent of the total area of China, the Tarim Basin receives just five centimetres of rainfall a year. The river is without question the lifeline for five million people who live in the basin area, 80 per cent of whom are farmers.

The issues of water-sharing, water-pricing, water quality, and balancing the

needs of agriculture with the need to sustain the river system are complicated by the fact that the Tarim River flows through a number of prefectures within Xinjiang province.

But it's a situation not unique to the Tarim Basin, as the Chinese delegates learned. In Australia, the Murray and Darling rivers flow through four different states and it took them years to hammer out a cooperative framework and work out water quotas for each state. Despite the difficulties of balancing competing state interests, the Murray Darling Basin Commission is today a success story on which the Tarim Basin Commission is modelled.

The delegates learned a great deal about Australia's efforts to decentralise water management after inspecting the state-owned Goulburn Murray, the privatised Murray Water and several Land Care Groups.

In China, farmer cooperatives are becoming increasingly popular with the establishment of water-user associations.

'This grassroots approach is important as ownership is the key to sustainable environmental management,' Mr Lyle explained.

To arrest the problems of salinity threatening the water supply in the Tarim Basin, the delegation went to Kerang in Victoria to see how evaporation basins are used to remove salt from water. They were also shown a high-value horticultural development in these saline conditions,



The Chinese delegation examines the water-wheel.

a testimony that saline areas are not a total write-off.

In Albury, New South Wales, they visited a state-of-the-art water treatment plant where urban effluence is treated and then used for the surrounding wetland to encourage a natural environment on the flood plains, as well as irrigate trees for commercial harvesting.

To underscore the importance of maintaining such engineering facilities, the delegation visited the Hume Dam which has experienced some structural problems. The message to the delegates was that while infrastructure facilities may look solid, they have to be constantly maintained.

Excessive water diversification upstream in the Tarim Basin is also threatening the 'green corridor', a stretch of native poplar forest in the lower reaches of the river basin. The delegates visited Barmah in Victoria to see how Australia is tackling a similar problem.

Australia's experience and expertise in combating its aridity problems is relevant to China where 43 per cent of the population live in arid areas and half the country's arable land is afflicted by a shortage of water.

In the past, over-regulation and use of the Murray Darling system meant the annual flooding pattern was disrupted and the floods only occurred once every five years. Because of this, Australia's largest

river red-gum forest was threatened with destruction until a program which mimics the rivers' natural flooding regime restored much-needed water for the forest to regenerate and survive.

The needs of today versus the needs of tomorrow, and the needs of agriculture versus the needs of a sustainable environment, were questions the delegation was confronted with during their visit.

Australia's experience and expertise in combating its aridity problems is relevant to China where 43 per cent of the population live in arid areas and half the country's arable land is afflicted by a shortage of water.

Water issues are often emotive and contentious but Mr Lyle said the message to the delegation was that 'these problems can be worked out over time...it didn't happen overnight with the Murray Darling.' ■



# Democracy in Russia

By Deborah Nesbitt

Having witnessed their entire Government sacked yet again by President Boris Yeltsin, and their economy pitched into turmoil, many Russians are looking forward to parliamentary elections this December and presidential elections in June 2000. Mikhail Gorbachev is optimistic about his country's future, despite the political crisis and economic turmoil Russia faces and his scathing criticism of the current President Boris Yeltsin.



Mr Downer and Mr Gorbachev in Canberra.

His optimism is clearly based on his passionate commitment to democracy and the rule of law, a passion he showed when he spoke at Parliament House in Canberra recently.

The former President of the Soviet Union, former General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and winner of the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize was a guest speaker for the Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI), an initiative of Australia's Foreign Minister, Mr Downer.

Funded by the Australian Government through AusAID, the CDI is quickly gaining an international reputation for delivering a platform in Australia to international

statesmen who have trodden the hard road to democratic reform. In doing so, the CDI is playing a unique role in extending the debate on democracy in the region.

Introducing the former Soviet President, Mr Downer described Mr Gorbachev as a statesman who has profoundly influenced the shape of global politics through his disarmament initiatives and by transforming the former Soviet Union's relations with the West.

Mr Downer said the former President's policies of glasnost had 'set in train democratic forces which would politically and economically transform the countries of the former Soviet Union and east Europe.'

Speaking about his country's long and painful road to democracy, Mr Gorbachev said he had initially thought he could 'breathe new life (into Russian communism) by injecting some democracy into it.'

But he realised soon that the whole system had to be replaced.

'The declaration of political and economic freedom and human rights had to be complemented by genuine political reform that would allow those freedoms to take root.'

While Mr Gorbachev hit out at his successor, claiming President Yeltsin 'is a spent force, politically, physically, intellectually,' he said he would prefer that Mr Yeltsin serve out his term and step down within the constitutional process.

'I would even favour the adoption of a certain law that would provide for him in the future. I would do all that for the sake of the continuation of the democratic process and democratic institutions in Russia.'

Mr Gorbachev told the audience of parliamentarians from all sides of politics, diplomats and members of the press gallery that although Russian democracy is backsliding compared to what was achieved under perestroika, the coming parliamentary and presidential elections were critical for Russia.

'It is very important for us, for the first time in Russian history, to have a change of government, a change of Russia's rulers, in a democratic and constitutional way.' ■

# PNG students make the grade

By Matt Francis

By the time the PNG/Australia Secondary School Students Project (SSSP) finishes in 2001, it will have assisted more than 1500 students from PNG to complete their secondary education in Australia.



Some of the 1500 students from PNG who have been part of the PNG/Australia Secondary School Students Project since it began in 1989.

Many of the project's students have excelled in their studies and played important roles in the life of the Australian school community. Most have gone on to further study at the tertiary level, as well as contributing in a range of fields in Papua New Guinea.

Established in 1989, the project was intended to promote broadly based growth and social development in PNG through the promotion of better human resource development. It also sought to increase the number of highly trained PNG managerial and technical staff, as well as increase the number of secondary school graduates eligible for post secondary education and training. Another goal of the project was to increase contacts between Papua New Guinea and Australia.

From its modest beginnings in 1989 with an intake of just 25 students at five

schools, the project grew each year until hitting its peak in 1995 when there were 595 students at 38 Australian schools in Queensland, the Northern Territory, and northern New South Wales. This year, in the last intake of the project, 99 new students began their secondary studies in Australia.

PNG students have made a significant contribution to the academic and sporting life of their Australian schools. Several have achieved positions of student leadership. For instance, Karen Drapok has been selected as 1999 Girls' Captain of All Souls' and St Gabriel's School. Prefects include Jairus S Kako at Abergowrie College, Gina Vari at Brisbane Boys' College, Franz Hemetsberger at The Southport School and Salote Tabua at The Kooralbyn International School.



Karen Drapok—PNG secondary school student and 1999 Girls' Captain, All Souls' and St Gabriel's School.

Almost two-thirds of the students who finished Year 12 in 1998 were offered places at tertiary institutions in PNG.

Kooralbyn International School former student Evan Paki went on to complete his Masters in Law at Harvard University under a Fulbright Scholarship, followed by a stint with the World Bank in Washington, DC. For other young PNG people, such as Betty Alupian from Enga province, undertaking secondary studies in Australia has allowed her to develop her individual potential despite disruptions at her local school in PNG. Betty persisted with her studies despite the odds. She sat her Year 10 exams and was named Dux of the school. This year she completes her Year 11 studies at a school in Townsville. Her ambition is to become a doctor. ■



# Kosovo—Australia responds

By Julie Clarke-Bates and Michelle Hardy

The Australian Government responded quickly to the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo providing \$6 million to international and non government relief agencies working in the field who were able to deliver emergency assistance as quickly as possible. These were the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme, the International Committee of the Red Cross, CARE Australia, the Australian Red Cross and World Vision Australia. Assistance provided with the help of the Australian Government included food, shelter, medicine, clothes, blankets, fuel, cooking utensils, water supply and sanitation and family kits.



Helping children in the refugee camps come to terms with the terrible events of recent times is a challenge for aid workers. Photo by Anne Rigby.

The assistance provided through the aid program was part of the Australian Government's humanitarian response to the crisis. The Government has also provided safe haven for up to 4000 Kosovars from the refugee camps in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

## Assessing the best way to help

AusAID officer Laury McCulloch, from the Humanitarian and Emergencies Section visited the Cegrane, Stankovics and Blace refugee camps in the Former Yugoslav

Republic of Macedonia in early June. Laury also visited refugee camps in Tirana and near the port of Durres in Albania as part of his visit to assess the situation and the need for possible further humanitarian assistance. On his return, he told *Focus* the humanitarian needs in the region were immense and Australia's efforts were well appreciated.

### HOW HAS OUR ASSISTANCE HELPED?

Our funds are going to several organisations and are part of a very large program. For example, the World Food Programme emergency operation in the

region, to which Australia contributed \$1 million, is valued at over \$150 million. However, the World Food Programme greatly appreciated that our assistance was given quickly and without any restrictions. The World Food Programme can utilise such funds flexibly according to its immediate priorities whether for the immediate purchase of food aid or to improve the communications network to enhance the coordination of food aid deliveries. Similarly, our \$3.5 million contribution to the UNHCR was provided in response to the UNHCR's general appeal for the Kosovo crisis and was not earmarked for any specific discrete activities. Again, the provision of such funds allows the agencies involved maximum flexibility in responding to the immediate priorities on the ground.

### WHAT ROLE WERE AUSTRALIANS PLAYING ON THE GROUND?

I visited the Cegrane and Stankovic refugee camps in Macedonia being run by CARE Australia on behalf of the UNHCR. I met up with quite a few Australians including Jo Hutton, the CARE Australia coordinator in Macedonia. CARE Australia has an important role in managing these camps for the UNHCR and had earned a reputation as being highly effective under what can only be described as very challenging

circumstances. I was impressed with CARE's management of the camps particularly in view of the short time some of these camps had been operational. The Cegrane camp, for example, had undergone several expansions to increase its capacity from initially around 15,000 refugees to its ultimate capacity of around 38,000 people. Such expansion in a relatively short time obviously requires very efficient and flexible management. Unfortunately I wasn't able to visit some of the other camps due to time constraints, particularly in Montenegro where World Vision is working with the funds Australia provided.

### HOW MIGHT AUSTRALIA ASSIST TO HELP REBUILD INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES?

We are examining the immediate needs in terms of rehabilitation and humanitarian need in the context of our overall humanitarian priorities in 1999–2000. Whilst the situation in the Balkans is serious there are continuing humanitarian needs in countries such as North Korea and in Africa where millions of vulnerable people continue to be at risk. And whilst the reconstruction needs in Kosovo will be large, it is not an area where Australia has a priority in terms of Australia's development assistance. The priority for the Australian aid program is providing bilateral development aid for countries the Asia-Pacific region in particular. I don't really see us getting involved in any major way with reconstruction etc.

I expect that European donors, including the European Commission, will be the major players in the reconstruction efforts together with other multilateral agencies such as the World Bank. The European Commission has already established an Agency for Reconstruction of Kosovo which will work closely with the United Nations.

### WILL AUSTRALIA CONSIDER PROVIDING FURTHER AID FOR THE REFUGEES?

Any further response needs to be balanced with other demands on the limited humanitarian budget. For example, at the

moment there is a chronic situation in North Korea with the slow famine affecting millions of people. We have to put Kosovo in perspective with other humanitarian needs such as North Korea and the Sudan.

The major immediate issue facing humanitarian agencies in the Balkans in June (1999) was the prospect of hundreds of thousands of refugees having to spend the winter in refugee camps which were ill-equipped for the very low temperatures in high altitude areas of Macedonia and Albania. However, the recent peace accord and the rapid return of around 500,000 refugees from neighbouring countries to Kosovo itself have necessitated the adoption of other contingency plans. The rapidity with which events have changed over the past month presented further major challenges to international relief agencies and the United Nations. To their credit these agencies appear to have responded to the new situation in a very professional and effective manner. ■

## Feeding the hungry

The World Food Programme (WFP) launched a major emergency operation in the Balkans region in early April in response to the Kosovo crisis. The project provided food aid for nearly one million people affected by the conflict.

A major component of the WFP operation was the provision of bread to Kosovar refugees on a daily basis. The WFP moved quickly to contract local bakeries in both Macedonia and Albania to provide bread. This included the WFP supplying flour to the bakeries which were also provided with flour as a payment for their services.

AusAID's Laury McCulloch visited the bread distribution operation in camps in Tirana and near Skopje.

'Getting the bread to the refugees was more complex than it appeared,' Laury said.

'It involved shipping flour to Durres port and transporting flour by road, or in



A welcome loaf of bread. Photograph by Tom Haskell, World Food Programme.

some cases by air, to various regional centres in Albania.

'In cases where local bakeries did not exist, the WFP brought in mobile bakeries.'

The WFP also provided ready-to-eat rations, including daily humanitarian rations and ready-to-eat meals, for refugees upon arrival at border crossings.

'My overall impression was the WFP operation in Albania and Macedonia was a highly effective and well coordinated system which had been assembled quickly to respond to the immediate food needs of the refugees,' Laury added.

'The WFP also instituted a daily air service between Rome, Skopje and Tirana to facilitate the transport of United Nations staff and staff from other relief agencies, including NGOs.

'I would like to extend my thanks to the World Food Programme, especially their field staff, for facilitating the visit to Albania and Macedonia,' Laury said. ■



## Helping restore lives

AusAID officers Anne Rigby and Dan Heldon from the Papua New Guinea (PNG) Branch have taken leave to help out in the camps managed by CARE Australia in Macedonia. Also in Macedonia is Jo Hutton who was previously with the PNG Branch and is currently CARE's Head of Mission.

They are among the 30 Australians working in the CARE camps in Macedonia as well as re-establishing a CARE office in Kosovo.

Anne's role as a program officer includes monitoring CARE projects, writing proposals, program development reporting and planning, as well as liaising with other agencies and donors.

While the main task ahead is assisting refugees to return home, the current challenges include assisting with the longer-term rehabilitation of Kosovo, planning for Macedonia's future needs and assisting refugees who are unable to return home.

'There's a feeling of apprehension for the future as Kosovars return to destroyed homes and lives, cope with the loss of family members and recent memories of war, killing and destruction,' Anne told *Focus* from Skopje.

While Anne is based in CARE's office in Skopje, she spends a considerable amount of time at the two camps managed by CARE—Cegrane and Stenkovec II—located in northern Macedonia near the Kosovo border.

'In a typical day, I would meet with CARE field workers including our camp managers, water and sanitation engineers, food distributors, health workers, donors and a wide range of representatives from implementing agencies including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

'This includes daily liaison with the UNHCR on whose behalf CARE manages two of the seven refugee camps and which is critical in ensuring the safe and effective management of the camps and their residents.'

Anne said one of the main priorities was



AusAID's Anne Rigby (second from left) familiarising herself with the camps. Photo by Anne Rigby.

It's not just about the physical reconstruction of homes and property, it is also about personal reconstruction.

implementing plans to help people return to their homes and livelihoods in Kosovo. Another priority for the UNHCR and non government organisations (NGOs) was preparing for the European winter both for those refugees who are unable to return home and for those whose homes in Kosovo have been damaged during the crisis.

'Planning for the winter is critical even though it is now the height of summer here,' Anne explained.

When the European winter starts, the needs become very different in terms of the needs for shelter, warmth, food and clothing.

Anne said another priority for CARE was implementing psycho-social and trauma counselling activities so people can start to put the pieces of their fractured lives together—this is acknowledged as an important part of the healing process.

'It's not just about the physical reconstruction of homes and property, it is also about personal reconstruction.'

Anne said the experience and understanding she would bring back to AusAID would assist the agency to gain more insight into the challenges faced by NGOs in providing humanitarian assistance, particularly in the planning and implementation of emergency assistance operations and programs.

Working with the United Nations, NGOs and donors in the development of post-emergency medium-term planning was also a very valuable experience.

AusAID's Dan Heldon works with youth, special programs and community services as well as implementing the psycho-social counselling project.

'The young people in the camps have all been through traumatic experiences and living in the camps is like having your life on hold,' Dan told *Focus* from Skopje.

'The programs in the youth centres help to bring young people together to build relationships, to have fun and to start the process of coming to terms with their recent past and their uncertain future.

'Having AusAID staff working in the field with non government organisations such as CARE, is not just about taking skills with them, but also bringing new skills back that will be invaluable for other emergency situations such as East Timor, Cambodia and Africa.' ■

# Asia crisis response

By Erika Avila

Australia is continuing to take a lead role in galvanising the international community to maintain support for the countries affected by the regional financial crisis. Recently Australia gained wide support for the establishment of an information-exchange mechanism on crisis-related issues, which will be based at the Asian Development Bank in Manila.



Mr Downer chairing the meeting.

Called the Asia Recovery Information Centre, its establishment was agreed at a meeting in Sydney earlier this year, hosted by Australia to identify appropriate responses to the Asian crisis.

The establishment of the Centre was agreed at *The Meeting on Development Cooperation: Responding to the Asia Crisis*, held in Sydney on 5 March 1999. This meeting brought together Ministers and senior Government representatives from 27 countries, including those affected by the crisis and major donors, as well as senior officials of nine major international organisations. It was the first high level forum held to discuss medium to longer-term strategies for addressing persisting social and economic impacts of the crisis.

Chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, it gave key players an opportunity to exchange ideas on

reform and recovery.

Representatives from countries affected by the crisis stressed that their Governments were determined to continue to work towards introducing major reforms. They emphasised their commitment to improving standards of economic and financial management, through stronger policy, regulatory and legal systems.

Representatives of the donor community noted the substantial international response to the crisis so far, and highlighted efforts of the international financial institutions, in particular the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Donors also reinforced their support for the reform process.

At the same time, delegates emphasised that social protection of some of the world's most vulnerable people was an essential part of recovery and underscored the



Mr Shigemitsu Sugisaki, IMF.

importance of investing in social sectors such as health and education.

Recognising the importance of adequate information in guiding responses to the crisis, the meeting welcomed Australia's proposal to establish the Asia Recovery Information Centre (ARIC). This information facility will operate through the internet and will focus primarily on Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Thailand.

As well as collecting information on the recovery process, the ARIC will publish key economic and social indicators and identify emerging needs in the region. The ARIC will be an important source tool for improving coordination of responses to the impacts of the crisis. ■

- A copy of the meeting communique can be downloaded from AusAID's website at [www.ausaid.gov.au/mdc-rac/index.html](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/mdc-rac/index.html)
- ARIC website: <http://aric.adb.org>

# Economies threaten the environment

By Michelle Hardy

While there has been much research into the economic and social impacts of the Asian financial crisis—there has been little on the effects on the environment. AusAID recently commissioned Peter Dauvergne from the University of Sydney's Department of Government to investigate the environmental impact.



New environmental problems.

Peter Dauvergne concluded that while the crisis brought new environmental problems and made old ones worse—it also offered opportunities for improved environmental management. His report for AusAID—*The Environment in Times of Crisis: Asia and Donors After the 1997 Financial Crisis*—found that political, administrative and financial reforms flowing from the crisis have opened 'potential windows of opportunity' to improve environmental management.

But he cautioned some groups were paying a higher price with the poor, in both urban and rural areas, bearing a heavier

burden. Stabilising economies in the region was now essential to improve environmental conditions.

## **ECONOMIC GROWTH AT ANY COST COULD TRIGGER A SECOND CRISIS**

Economic growth must not be achieved at any cost—particularly to the environment, the report said. Ignoring the environment could trigger a second crisis centred on environmental collapse.

'Donors should reject the argument that countries need to wait until they can financially afford to address environmental problems,' the report said.

## **INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

The slow-down in industrial production led to a fall in air pollution but the report predicted air pollution would increase as factories resumed production and tried to cut costs—adopting lower standards, evading regulations and avoiding investing in new and cleaner technology.

## **WATER QUALITY DECLINES**

Early evidence suggests water quality has worsened. In parts of Indonesia, the amount of organic waste per unit of waste effluent has risen significantly—apparently the result of more firms dumping untreated waste (to save money and due to weaker enforcement).

'These findings point to the need for donor assistance to support stronger enforcement of environmental regulations.'

## **IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

Rapid currency devaluations have created strong incentives for government and business to increase agricultural and natural resource exports. There are ambitious plans to expand exports of plantation products (particularly palm oil), fish, minerals, shrimp and coffee. Although a lack of capital has so far constrained this expansion, future rapid growth would put new pressure on land, forest and water resources.

The migration of the urban poor and the unemployed to the countryside would put even greater pressure on already fragile environments.

The timber industry has also been affected by the crisis, with an initial sharp drop in demand from the major buyers, Japan and South Korea. This had a positive effect, lowering unsustainable harvesting rates and providing scope for industry reform in countries like the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.

Now demand is resurging, driven in part by China, and South-East Asian and Melanesian forests are under intense commercial pressure. ■

A copy of the report is on AusAID's internet site at [www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/latest.html](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/latest.html)





# snapshots

## HUMANITARIAN AID FOR NORTH KOREA

Australia has expanded its humanitarian relief to North Korea in the wake of new reports about worsening food shortages and famine.

Announcing an additional \$4 million in aid, Mr Downer said reports from the Australian Government's representative on a World Food Programme mission pointed to the need for urgent and continuing assistance.

'Malnutrition for children under seven is at chronic levels and famine conditions are apparent in some parts of the country,' Mr Downer said.

'Australia's \$4 million package will consist of \$3.25 million to the World Food Programme to buy food and to upgrade local factories producing high energy foods.

'Australia will also contribute \$250,000 to UNICEF for vitamins and minerals for the local production of Corn Soya Blend, a highly nutritious food for young children.'

He said Australia would also provide \$500,000 to the International Federation of the Red Cross to distribute basic drugs and medical supplies, along with coal, blankets, bed sheets and plastic sheeting for hospitals.

### VIETNAM AID

Australia's Ambassador to Vietnam, Michael Mann, recently opened an electrification project which will improve health care and education for hundreds of families in rural regions.

Mr Mann said the project in Hoa Binh Province represented a strong cooperative

effort with local Vietnamese authorities led by Christian Children's Fund of Australia (CCF) with support from AusAID and the Sydney Rotary clubs of Kellyville and Rydalmere.

'This is a good example of how Australia's aid program is helping meet community needs,' Mr Mann said.

'The project is due for completion next year at a total cost of almost \$275,000.'

CCF Australia's national director, Jane Edge, said the project would bring an end to the risks from an unsafe and unreliable power supply.

'Local health clinics will be able to store medicines in refrigeration units and sterilise medical instruments,' Ms Edge explained.

'Children who struggle to do their homework by weak lamplight will now have reliable lighting.'

### CHINA AID PROJECT

The translation into Mandarin of a book on international trade is one of the practical outcomes of Australia's assistance to China through the Economics and Foreign Trade Training Project.

The translation of *The Political Economy of the World Trading System* by Bernard Hoekman and Michel Kostecki was carried out by 12 Chinese students who undertook their Graduate Diploma of International Economy course. The students studied at the University of Adelaide in 1996 as part of the project.

The book was presented to Australia's Ambassador in China, Mr Ric Smith, and

AusAID's Counsellor for Development Cooperation, Mrs Donelle Wheeler. In presenting the book, Xu Mingde, Section Chief, Department of American and Oceanian Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (who was also one of the translators) expressed the gratitude of his colleagues who had the opportunity to study international economic and trade policy in Australia.

### AUSTRALIAN DISASTER CONFERENCE

Emergency Management Australia (EMA) will hold a three-day conference in Canberra in November which aims to establish a program for disaster prevention for the 21st century.

There will be keynote and short presentations by emergency management practitioners, risk managers, policy-makers and researchers along with open forums and interactive discussions.

Key issues to be examined are disaster mitigation, community participation, duty of care obligations and roles of governments, non-government and private organisations and the community.

Other issues to be covered at the conference include assessing risks, raising awareness of the issues, reducing economic losses and social disruption, preparing for response and recovering from disaster. ■

For more information or for a registration form, contact: Conference Logistics, phone 02 6281 6624, fax 02 6285 1336, email [conference@conlog.com.au](mailto:conference@conlog.com.au), or visit EMA's website at [www.ema.gov.au](http://www.ema.gov.au)



# global education

By Arthur Burch, manager Global Education program

## WHAT'S NEW IN GLOBALED

AusAID's specialist internet site, GlobalEd, which provides teachers and students with a wide range of material on developing countries and global issues, is currently focusing on health projects around the world.

Among them are case studies from Fiji on the effects that changing lifestyles and diet are having on health, and from Laos a project to improve the survival rate of mothers and children. There's also information about a vital project in Vietnam where iodised salt is saving thousands of children from brain damage and impeded development.

GlobalEd examines other important development issues including poverty, urbanisation, child labour, human rights, safe water, pollution, the environment,

micro-enterprise activities and literacy.

The GlobalEd site is also looking at how small interest loans at the community level are helping families become self-sufficient and how Australian aid is helping build better bridges and roads in Papua New Guinea.

Microsoft's  
Communique  
Magazine has listed  
AusAID's GlobalEd  
internet site  
number two in its  
list of top 10.

## NEW RESOURCE BOOK FOR TEACHERS

A new resource book for upper primary school teachers called *Look Global* is now available to teachers.

It helps teachers and students explore global issues and features a range of resources and practical activities aimed at encouraging students to think about what is happening in their world.

## OTHER GLOBALED NEWS

- The full list of United Nations International Days is now available
- A list of ideas to commemorate days like World Environment Day or World Television Day is also online. ■

Visit the site at  
<http://globaled.ausaid.gov.au>



# business news

## ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ABOUT REFORMS TO AUSAID'S CONTRACTING PROCESS

Following the Minister's approval of reforms to AusAID's contracting process, AusAID conducted information seminars for the business community. Answers to commonly asked questions at these seminars are below. A full list of frequently asked questions and overview of the changes is on AusAID's Internet site under Reforms to AusAID's Procurement Procedures at [www.ausaid.gov.au/business/contracting/index.html](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/business/contracting/index.html)

Q. Who will be permitted as a referee?

A. An independent reference can generally be obtained from recent clients, eg. PNG line agency, the Asian Development Bank.

Q. When will referees be required by AusAID?

A. The Request for Tender (RFT) will state that CVs will require referees. AusAID will not be restricted to contacting only nominated referees and will reserve the right to make referee checks on any nominated team members.

Q. Is AusAID going to strengthen the Contractor Performance Assessment System (CPAS)?

A. Yes, the system is currently under review. The review will broadly examine contractor performance issues, not just the formal CPAS.

Q. Given the change in emphasis from Project Directors to Management Arrangements, will AusAID give equal status to other nominated positions in relation to being the central contact etc?

A. There will be a general freeing up of current requirements. The new focus will be

on who is going to manage the project, how much time is committed, how much it will cost, and who is responsible for what rather than focusing on titles such as 'Project Director'.

## SEMINARS ON THE AID PROGRAM FOR BUSINESS

AusAID holds seminars targeting new and other interested participants in the aid program. Recent sessions for contractors have included an explanation of the new contracting reforms, and seminars for the health and engineering sectors.

AusAID will provide speakers to explain contracting procedures, an overview of the aid program or to talk about other issues of interest to industry or sector groups. Contact the Business Liaison Officer at your State Office or the Business Liaison Unit in the Canberra Office.

## IMPORTANT TIPS FOR NEW PLAYERS

AusAID welcomes new businesses to improve the competitiveness and quality of aid delivery. Tips for new players follow:

- Take a medium to long-term view about doing business with AusAID rather than expect to bid and win vast amounts of work in the short-term
- Adopt a strategic and focused approach by targeting specific projects and opportunities rather than a scatter gun approach
- Network with AusAID. Meet Country Program Managers and key CSG staff
- Read AusAID's *Contracting Out* publication
- Network with other consultants. Bids involving several companies working together are common
- Read the *Business Participation in Australia's Aid Program* publication along with the Short-listed Tenderers

page on AusAID's Internet site at [www.ausaid.gov.au/business/tender/index.cfm](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/business/tender/index.cfm)

- Take advantage of the Future Tender Opportunities system on the AusAID Internet site at [www.ausaid.gov.au/business/index.html](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/business/index.html) for early warning of potential tender opportunities
- Nominate technically qualified personnel for service on a Technical Assessment Panel (TAP). It is best to nominate a technically qualified person at the time the job is advertised rather than send in a blanket CV. Experience on a TAP will help you understand AusAID's selection processes and at the same time provide an insight into the quality of other bids.

## CONTRACTORS ASKED TO PROVIDE DETAILS ON SUB-CONTRACTORS

Contractors are being asked to help AusAID gather data on the involvement of Australian business and individuals in the aid program. The reason for this is to better inform the Australian community about how Australian business and individuals work together to deliver aid. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Sullivan, has asked AusAID to collect this information to improve community understanding of the role of Australian companies in the aid program.

AusAID is therefore seeking information from contractors about sub-contractors, comprising of firms and individuals that they engage on AusAID's behalf. AusAID appreciates the cooperation of all contractors in providing this information. ■

For more information, contact Keith Joyce on (02) 6206 4272, fax (02) 6206 4877 or email [keith\\_joyce@ausaid.gov.au](mailto:keith_joyce@ausaid.gov.au)