

# Focus



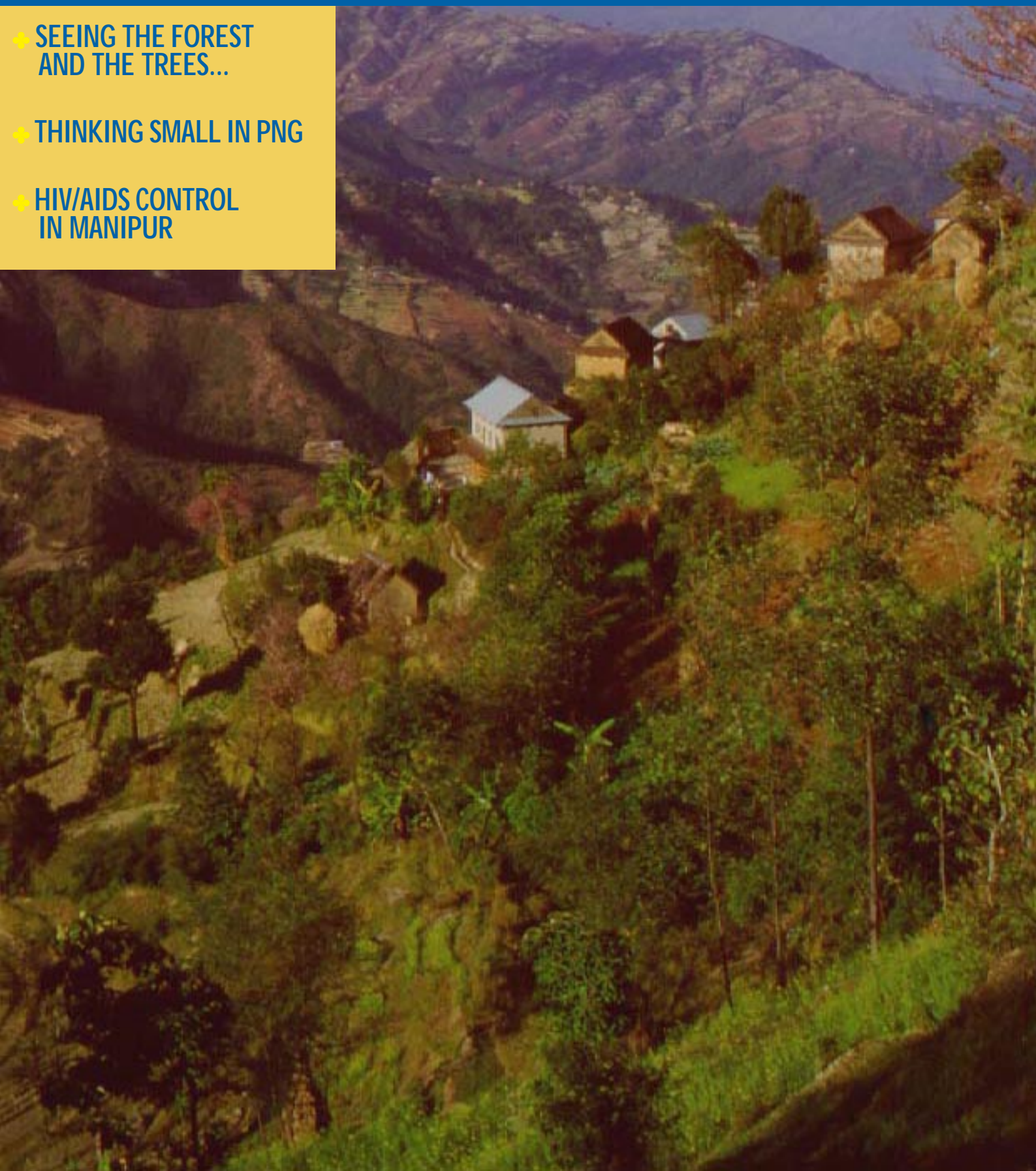
AUSTRALIAN AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

JUNE 1996

✦ SEEING THE FOREST  
AND THE TREES...

✦ THINKING SMALL IN PNG

✦ HIV/AIDS CONTROL  
IN MANIPUR





# Contents



IN FOCUS	5
----------	---

## NEWSBRIEFS 2

ANDREW THOMSON Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs	6
--	---

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA ON TELEVISION	8
--	---

*Focus is published quarterly by AusAID (the Australian Agency for International Development). It aims to make Australia's overseas aid program more widely known and to encourage discussion on development issues. The views expressed are not necessarily those of AusAID or the Australian Government, nor do the boundaries and names shown on maps imply official endorsement by the Government. Articles and photographs may be reproduced with permission from the Director AusAID Public Affairs, telephone (06) 276 4960.*

*Contributions are welcome and should be sent to The Editor, Focus, GPO Box 887, Canberra ACT 2601. Telephone: (06) 276 4693. Fax: (06) 276 4695.*

*Manuscripts should be typewritten and double spaced, using only one side of the paper. When ever possible, a copy on disk should also be supplied. Your name, address and contact telephone number must be included. Colour transparencies are preferred, and you should retain duplicates of both text and illustrative material, including pictures. AusAID does not accept responsibility for damage to, or loss of, material submitted for publication. Allow several weeks for acceptance or return.*

*Editor: Colin Chandler*

*Other contributors:*

*Russell Baker*

*Jackie Dent*

*Wendy Levy*

*Andrea McLaughlin*

*Paul Rathbone*

*Design and art production: BPD Graphic Associates Canberra*

*Electronic Production: AusAID Public Affairs*

*Printing: Paragon Printers*

*Colour separations: PEP Colour*

*Focus is printed on recycled paper.*

*ISSN 0819-9973*

*Cover photo: A village in the hills of Nepal.  
(Photo: Mike Jensen, DFAT)*

REDUCING THE THREAT FROM LANDMINES	10
------------------------------------	----

PNG COUNTRY BRIEF	12
-------------------	----

THINKING SMALL IN PNG	15
-----------------------	----

SEEING THE FOREST AND THE TREES... Nepal/Australia Community Forestry Project	19
---	----

SUPPORT FOR MICROBIOLOGISTS IN ERITREA	28
--	----

CASUARINAS COMBAT EROSION	32
---------------------------	----

HIV/AIDS CONTROL IN MANIPUR	35
-----------------------------	----

DEVELOPMENT ISSUES BRIEF - Exploitative child labour	37
--	----







*Australian Agency for  
International Development*



## **Our phone numbers are changing!**

If you've been looking for information on what Australia does to help people in developing countries, then you need to contact AusAID, the Australian Agency for International Development. We manage the Australian Government's official overseas aid program.

But you should note that on 5 August, our telephone numbers in Canberra are changing. From that date, any AusAID telephone number beginning with 276 or 245 will begin with 206. The rest of the number will be the same as before. For example, our main telephone number is currently 06 276 4000 - after 5 August, it will become 06 206 4000.

**Remember - on 5 August, the prefix for  
AusAID's phone numbers in Canberra  
change to 206.**

For more information, contact AusAID Public Affairs  
on 06 276 4970, or 06 206 4970 after 5 August.

AusAID produces a range of publications and visual materials on aid and development issues. These are available from:

**AusAID Public Affairs**

GPO Box 887  
Canberra ACT 2601  
Telephone (06) 276 4970  
Fax (06) 276 4695  
Email [InfoAusAID@ausaid.gov.au](mailto:InfoAusAID@ausaid.gov.au)

**AusAID's STATE OFFICES**

AusAID's state offices manage the Agency's overseas student program. They can also help with general inquiries. For further information contact the office in your state or territory.

**Queensland**

5th floor, Commonwealth  
Government Centre  
232 Adelaide Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000  
Telephone (07) 3864 8263

**New South Wales**

2nd floor, Sydney Central  
477 Pitt Street  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Telephone (02) 379 8888

**Victoria**

5th floor, Building B  
World Trade Centre  
Melbourne VIC 3005  
Telephone (03) 9613 5555

**South Australia**

8th floor  
Commonwealth Centre  
55 Currie Street  
Adelaide SA 5000  
Telephone (08) 237 6911

**Northern Territory**

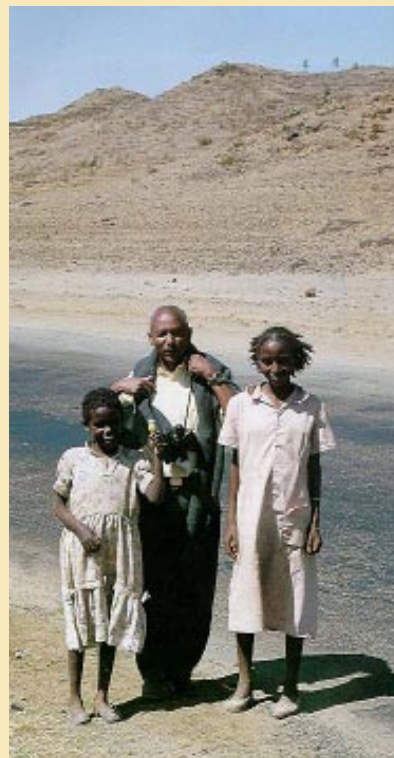
5th floor, Northern  
Territory House  
22 Mitchell Street  
Darwin NT 0800  
Telephone (089) 824 105

**Western Australia**

Floor 12A, St Martins Tower  
44 St Georges Terrace  
Perth WA 6000  
Telephone (09) 231 4400

**Tasmania**

4th floor  
25 Argyle Street  
Hobart TAS 7001  
Telephone (002) 350 950





I recently attended a meeting of the members of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD ("the DAC") to finalise the review of the Australian overseas aid program.

The DAC is the principal body by which the OECD deals with development cooperation issues, and one of its important functions is to conduct peer reviews of developed countries' aid programs. Such a review was conducted in February this year of Australia's aid program. It was conducted by examiners from Denmark and Switzerland. They not only questioned AusAID on its programs and policies, but also the non-government sector and some of the countries which receive Australian aid.

I am pleased to be able to say that the DAC reported very positively on Australia's aid program and on the performance of AusAID. The DAC recognised the unique position which Australia has among developed countries - our main aid recipients are also our neighbours. It found that our overseas aid policy reflects the proximity of Australia to its developing country partners and is closely integrated with Australia's broader interests in the Asia-Pacific region's development. It also found that Australia had adopted some innovative uses of aid to help developing countries participate in liberalised trade and investment flows at the global and regional levels and to promote good governance and human rights. The DAC commented that Australian aid recognises that lasting reductions in poverty can only be achieved through sustainable economic growth supported by a strengthening of the human resource base. Towards this end, the DAC noted that Australian aid has in recent years given more emphasis to the areas of health services and basic education.

It is a tribute to the work of everyone who works in the field - government and non-government - that judged by international standards, the Australian aid program is so well regarded.

Trevor Kanaley  
Director-General

# NEWS BRIEFS

## Developing A Legal System for Palestinians

Australia is providing \$905 000 to assist in developing a legal system for Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank. Australian International Legal Resources, an Australian non government organisation, is undertaking the project in conjunction with the Palestinian Ministry of Justice and Bir Zeit University.

The project aims to help the Palestinians to develop basic legislation, strengthen legal institutions and infrastructure and establish a just rule of law.

The project will help establish fundamental procedures for the new Palestinian legislature and an effective system for court administration. It also includes training for the judiciary, prosecutors and police officers and in forensic investigation methods.

## Media Training Package for the Pacific

Australia is supporting a new coordinated regional media training package for the Pacific Islands. The package includes radio, video and television production skills development, management training for media executives and training courses on development issues for media workers and information officers. There is also provision for strengthening regional media organisations and improving their coordination.

Individual training projects will be determined by an advisory board comprised of representatives of

Pacific regional media and training organisations as well as Australian media specialists. One of the regional organisations will be nominated as the host for each training activity and all courses will be conducted in the Pacific.

## Helping Control Foot and Mouth Disease in the Philippines

AusAID and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization are working together to control foot and mouth disease in the Philippines. Foot and mouth is regarded as the most contagious of all livestock diseases and is of grave concern to all farmers, especially in countries like the Philippines where about 70 per cent of people depend on agriculture for survival.

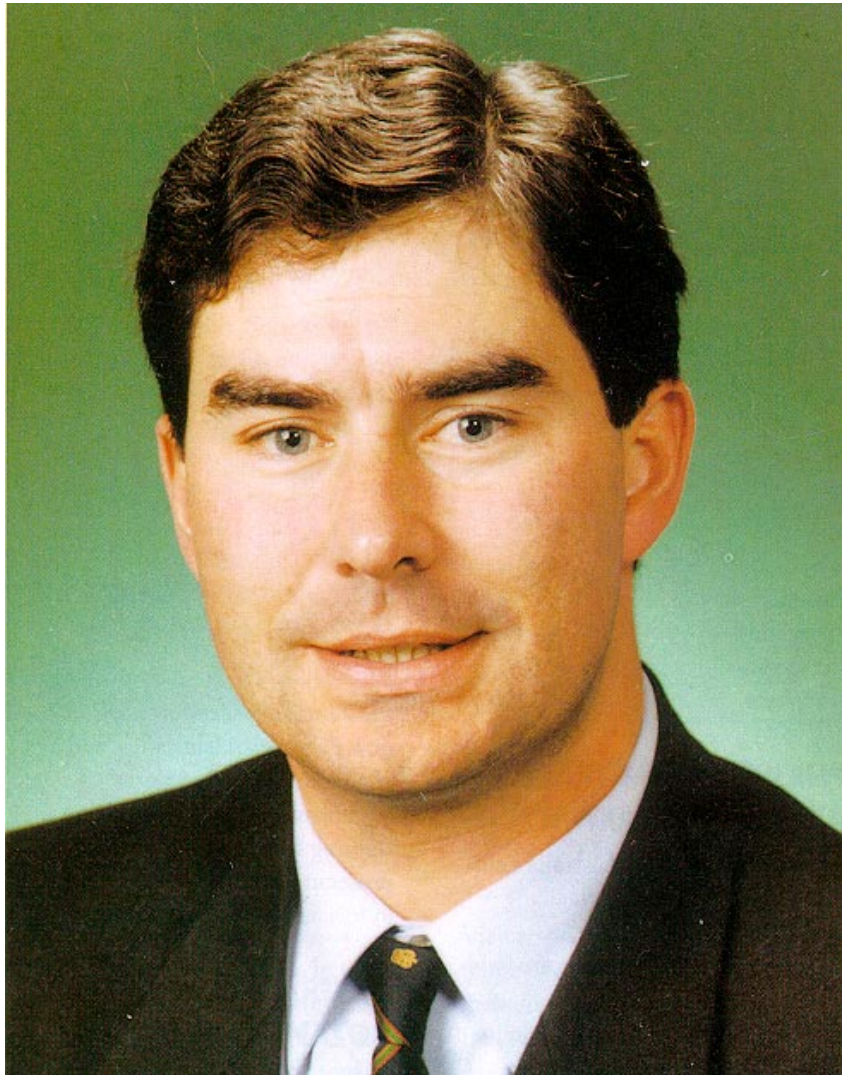
Australia is providing \$6 million over three years for the project, which will strengthen the ability of national and provincial authorities to implement programs to control and eventually eradicate the disease. The project will include technical advice, resources and training, support for diagnostic laboratories, improved epidemiological analysis and surveillance of disease free areas.

A recent outbreak of foot and mouth disease is confined to the northern island of Luzon. The project will also assist in establishing a buffer zone on the Bicol peninsula to quarantine and eradicate the disease. Subsistence farmers will be the main beneficiaries of the project.



# ANDREW THOMSON

PARLIAMENTARY  
SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN  
AFFAIRS



**A**ndrew Thomson MP is the Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, charged by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, with a special responsibility for assisting him with Australia's overseas aid program. He will also have a major role in consular affairs. Mr Thomson's electorate

is the seat of Wentworth in Sydney, a seat which he has held since 1995.

One of the first priorities for Mr Thomson and Mr Downer in this area is to establish a comprehensive independent review of the effectiveness of Australia's aid program. This will be the first major review of the aid program since the Jackson Report in 1985, and is intended to be a rigorous and wide ranging report which will set the directions for the aid program into the next century.

Mr Thomson says that the emphasis for the aid program for the immediate future will be

poverty alleviation, with a focus on the basic necessities - health, education and agriculture.

Unusually for a politician, Mr Thomson has a wealth of experience living and working in Asia. After graduating in Law from Melbourne University and studying further in Taipei and at Keio University, Mr Thomson worked for five years in Tokyo as an investment banker with CS First Boston. He speaks fluent Japanese and Chinese (Mandarin).

In 1991 he returned to Australia to work with his father, golfing great Peter Thomson, in the design and construction of golf courses, and entered Parliament in April 1995.

# NEWS BRIEFS

## New Caledonia cyclone

Australia provided \$25 000 for relief efforts in the wake of Cyclone Beti, which swept through New Caledonia recently causing widespread disruption to water supplies and road and telephone communications.

Cyclone Beti affected the entire territory of New Caledonia, travelling from the north down along the east coast of the main island, and then crossing the main island and hugging the west coast as it moved south. Most of the capital Noumea was without water for some time and swollen creeks and rivers cut roads to the north of the main island. No serious injuries were reported.

Australia's contribution will assist with the reconstruction of local housing and infrastructure in the northern province, where damage to houses, crops and infrastructure was extensive.

## Philippines-Australia Aid Talks in Darwin

The Philippines and Australia held their ninth high level aid consultations on 1-2 May in Darwin. The consultations are held annually alternately in the Philippines or Australia and enable discussion of programming strategies for the aid program. The Australian delegation included Richard Smith, Australian Ambassador to the Philippines and AusAID Deputy Director General Dr Peter McCawley. The Philippines delegation included Delia Domingo Albert, Philippines Ambassador to Australia and the Assistant

Director General of the Philippines National Economic and Development Agency.

Australia's aid program increasingly focuses on the southern Philippines. For the first time, this year's aid talks are located in Darwin, reflecting strengthening links between the Northern Territory and the southern Philippines.

## Food Aid and the Impact of the Uruguay Round

The impact of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade on Australia's aid program is the subject of a recently released report commissioned by AusAID. The report, by Professor Peter Warr and Dr Helal Ahammad of the Australian National University, has been published as part of the International Development Issues series.

The report reviews trends in Australia's food aid and compares them with global food aid. It also profiles trends in food production, imports and consumption in the major food aid recipient countries. It analyses the impact that the completion of the Uruguay Round may have for Australian agriculture and for major food aid recipient countries. Bangladesh, the world's (and Australia's) largest recipient of food aid, is the subject of a case study.

The report draws some conclusions on the implications for Australia's food aid program. Copies are available from AusAID Public Affairs.

## Australian Wheat for Mozambique

Australia will send 11 000 tonnes of wheat to Mozambique to help improve the lives of the poor. The wheat, worth \$4.5 million, is bought from Australian farmers at market prices and will be sold in Mozambique to raise revenue for the Mozambican Government. Mozambique is one of the world's poorest countries and highly dependent on aid.

Funds raised will be used for budget support and for study for 250 Mozambicans at Mozambican institutions. Australia currently provides scholarships for about five per cent of the 6000 tertiary students in Mozambique.

## Aid for Afghan Refugees

Afghanistan's 15 year war has left more than 1 million dead, up to 2 million physically and mentally disabled and about 6 million refugees in neighbouring countries. Australia will provide \$4 million to assist displaced people in Afghanistan and refugees returning from Pakistan and Iraq.

Afghanistan faces a severe food shortage, life expectancy is 43 years, up to one in five children die before the age of one and less than a quarter of the population of 18 million has access to safe water. Australian funds will provide food through the World Food Programme; immunisation programs through UNICEF; medical services through the International Committee of the Red Cross and shelter, water and sanitation activities through the United Nations Centre for



## *English Language Training for Southeast Asia on Television*

JACKIE DENT

**T**o cope with the growing demand for English language training, AusAID funded the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) to produce a 26 part television series *English - have a go*.

On 16 May the first episode of *English - have a go* went to air on Australia Television, the ABC's international satellite television service. Australia Television has a large audience in southeast Asia. The English language teaching series, funded by AusAID and produced by the ABC, was officially launched by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, at Parliament House in early May. AusAID has committed \$1.1 million over three years to the project.

"Australia is well placed to assist with English Language Teaching and this educational television series is a good example of how this country can do more to draw people of our region together," Mr Downer said at the launch.

*English - have a go* is a 26 part series aimed at adults who know a bit of English. They have probably learned English at school and have an elementary command of the language, but they lack the competence and confidence to use the language effectively in real communication situations. The series dramatises the life of the Jones family with lessons in grammar, pronunciation and useful sentences woven into each half hour program.

Viewers will also learn about a range of other Australian families, including families from Korean, Italian, Chinese, English, Aboriginal and Greek backgrounds.

The project includes a number of *English - have a go* books and audio cassettes, published by Oxford University Press. These are based on the television series and were written by teachers from the Centre for English Language Learning at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

The program has its genesis in a pilot produced two years ago which was evaluated by adult learners and English language teachers in Australia, Indonesia, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Brunei and Darussalam. Responses to





this pilot were overwhelmingly positive and guided the development of the series.

"It is no coincidence that young people all over Asia want to learn English. They see English language skills as very important to opening opportunities for themselves, their families and their countries," said Mr Downer.

Indeed, Indonesian Minister for Education Dr Wardiman Djojonergogo recently commented on the significance of language at the Second International Conference on Language in Development in Bali, Indonesia.

"Most people, when asked about development, will orient towards economic and social issues related to development, not fully realising the crucial nature of language and communication in the resolution of these issues," said Dr Djojonergogo.

English language skills tap the technology, information and commerce of the developed world. Across Asia there is a huge demand for English Language Training (ELT) because it provides access to self-development and increased employment opportunities.

Millions of students throughout Asia are studying English. For example, it is the first official foreign language of Indonesia. It is the only foreign language to be compulsory in primary and secondary schools in Indonesia and a vast majority of Indonesia's one million tertiary students are undertaking English language courses.

Vietnam has a long history of valuing the study of foreign languages. After 1975, Russian replaced French as the most widely spoken European language. But today it is estimated that around 80 per cent of secondary and tertiary students in Vietnam are studying English.

English is the language of the Asian Development Bank. It is the official language of peak regional forums such as ASEAN, APEC and the South Pacific Forum. In Indonesia and Vietnam, companies involved in banking, tourism, mining, trade, education and communications require employees to be able to speak English.

Trevor Kanaley, Director-General of AusAID sees programs such as *English - have a go* as playing a role in reducing poverty. "I expect that *English- have a go* will be enormously useful to the large

number of people in developing countries in Asia desperate to learn English and improve their employment opportunities. It will also help many other AusAID projects - and not just education projects.

"I can foresee many situations where the opportunity to raise the English language skills of our project partners will make a valuable contribution to the efficient delivery and long term sustainability of our work."

AusAID currently funds a broad range of English language projects in Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand. While AusAID has previously supported the broadcasting of ELT to Indonesia, Cambodia and Vietnam on Radio Australia, this is the first time an aid project has been delivered by satellite. AusAID has unlimited use of the television series on video for activities related to overseas aid.

This series represents an important opportunity for Australian education and training to be exported. The growth of English language services to migrants has led to the development of considerable expertise in Australia in the design and delivery of training. The industry now has considerable experience in teaching and understanding cultural issues relevant to students from Asian countries.

"*English - have a go*, while principally designed as a language education tool, also brings to viewers a contemporary image of Australia and Australian lifestyles. It will contribute to a better understanding of our country within Asia and across the Pacific," Mr Downer concluded.

*English - have a go can be seen on ABC TV every Tuesday at 12.30 and is repeated every Friday at 6.30 am. International viewers can catch episodes on Australia Television every Thursday at 4.30 pm Jakarta Time (5.30 pm Manila Time.)*

*This series is available free of charge on video for any AusAID-funded project. For further information contact Jennifer Lean at AusAID on 06 2764609.*

# NEWS BRIEFS

Human Settlement. In 1995, \$400 000 was provided to the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan for demining activities.

## Forest Fires in Mongolia

Recent forest fires in Mongolia have reached serious proportions due to extremely dry weather. More than 130 forest fires have broken out, affecting nearly 400 000 people. At least 17 people have died and thousands of animals have been killed. Tens of thousands of square kilometres of forest and pasture have been damaged.

Widespread damage to communications infrastructure makes it difficult to ascertain the full extent of the damage. Fuel reserves are being used to transport fire fighters over large distances and there is concern that there will be insufficient fuel reserves for summer crop sowing. Australian assistance of \$20 000 will be used to replace depleted fuel supplies.

## Ugandan Elections - AusAID and AEC Assist

Two officers from the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) visited Uganda recently to assist with data collection systems for the Presidential and Parliamentary elections. Peter Spelman, from AEC's Brisbane office and Laurie Wilson from the Bradfield office in Sydney, had both visited Uganda in 1994 to develop a computer system to process raw data arriving in

Kampala from polling stations around the country for the Constituent Assembly election.

The Ugandan Government requested the Australian officers return to modify the computer system for the new elections and AusAID - Australia's overseas aid agency, provided \$40 000 for the project. The Ugandan Electoral Commission must declare the Presidential results within 48 hours of close of polling, a daunting task given poor communications. The team developed procedures for tallying results for 214 constituencies in 39 district offices, with receipt and publication of results in Kampala. Results were processed in good time and the Electoral Commission met the deadline.

## PNG Air Rescue and Fire Fighting Services

Australia will provide up to \$5 million over two years to strengthen aviation rescue and fire fighting services at major airports in Papua New Guinea. Assistance includes four fire vehicles; rehabilitating existing fire vehicles; safety equipment and training materials; rehabilitating a training centre, improving management structures and implementing an ongoing training program with attachments in Australia.

## Cofinancing Agreement with World Bank

Australia and the World Bank have signed a new cofinancing, technical assistance and consultant trust fund framework agreement. Currently, Australia and the World Bank have 40

cofinanced activities, worth about \$23.8 million in 1995-96. The arrangements allow Australian technical expertise to be used for large scale projects which would not be possible under bilateral programs.

## Review of Australia's Overseas Aid Program

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, announced on 28 May that Australia's overseas aid program will be the subject of a major independent review. The review committee consists of Mr Paul Simons, Ms Gaye Hart and Professor Cliff Walsh and will consult widely both in Australia and overseas. The review committee is to report to Mr Downer early in 1997.

## DAC Aid Review of Australia

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD recently conducted a review of the Australian aid program. It found that Australian development cooperation has clear goals, creditable delivery capabilities at headquarters and in field missions and that Australia works to integrate its assistance efforts into the strategies and priorities of partner countries.

The DAC noted that Australia has a special position among donor countries: many of its main partner countries for aid are also neighbours and their economic, social and political development is of vital interest to Australia in both short and longer term (see the *In Focus* column for more on the DAC review results).



# Reducing the Threat from Landmines

WENDY LEVY



**A**ustralia is one of 53 nations who agreed to restrict the use of anti-personnel mines worldwide in a historic accord reached in Geneva in May at the review conference of the Inhumane Weapons Convention (IWC).

The IWC is the only international instrument capable of delivering a legally binding global ban on landmines.

The accord reduces the threat posed by mines, making them easier to detect and giving them a built in self destruct mechanism which would render them useless 120 days after they are laid.

Australia called for a global ban on the use, transfer, production and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines, believing that a total ban is the only sane human response to the enormity of the global humanitarian and economic crisis brought about by the misuse of landmines. Both the Secretary General of the United Nations and the President of the Review Conference supported a total ban and more than thirty countries, including Australia, are now committed to achieving a total ban.

“There were some positive - albeit limited - outcomes from this first ever review of the Convention,” the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, said. “These were due in no small part to Australia’s efforts and achieved in the face of stiff opposition from those countries which held out against a total ban. In particular, we have a forward looking declaration and an enhanced review mechanism through which Australia will continue to pursue the goal of a total ban with urgency and vigour.

Australia is taking urgent practical steps to combat today’s landmines crisis, including providing \$12 million for a demining program for Cambodia and Laos.

The package includes \$9 million over three years for the United Nations Development Programme/Cambodia Mines Action Centre (UNDP/CMAC) and \$800 000 for Australian Defence Force technical assistance to CMAC, including three technical advisers and one communications expert. \$1.2 million is provided for non government organisations, UNICEF Australia, World Vision and Red Cross for activities in mine clearance, training and support for land mine victims and mine awareness training particularly for school children. \$900 000 will also be provided over three years for unexploded ordnance clearance in Laos.

The contribution will make Australia one of the major donors to UN sponsored demining and bomb clearance efforts in the region. Without increasing the rate of clearance, it will take nearly 140 years to rid Cambodia of landmines and at least 20 years in the case of Laos.

Australia has allocated \$22 million between 1991-92 and 1996-97 for demining and clearance operations in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Laos and Mozambique. Assistance has also been provided in other ways, such as \$22 million over three years for Cambodia, for food aid for people unable to produce crops because their lands have been mined.

## FACTS ABOUT LANDMINES

Average number of people killed or injured worldwide each year:	15 000
Average cost of a landmine:	\$3 - \$30
Cost to clear a landmine:	\$300 - \$1000
Average number of landmines produced each year:	10 million
Number of countries with landmine incidents:	60 +

Nations most affected by landmines:  
Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kuwait, Mozambique, Somalia, Sudan, former Yugoslavia

Major producers and exporters of landmines over past 25 years:  
Belgium, Bulgaria, China, former Czechoslovakia, France, Hungary, Italy, former Soviet Union, United Kingdom, United States, former Yugoslavia

Source: International Campaign to Ban Landmines

It is almost impossible to compile a comprehensive list of mines. The Mines Advisory Group has documented more than 300 identified land mines and switches and even this is not comprehensive.



# Papua New Guinea

FOCUS

12

Papua New Guinea is by far the largest and most culturally diverse country in the South Pacific. More than 700 languages are spoken among the population of over 4 million people, who are spread across mountain valleys and island archipelagos including New Britain, New Ireland, Manus and Bougainville. The terrain is volcanic and mountainous, except for the narrow coastal plains. The climate is tropical and the vegetation is tropical rainforest.

PNG has a small modern sector clustered around several urban centres and mining ventures and a large subsistence and cash cropping rural sector where 85 per cent of people live and work. It has vast natural resources including minerals, timber and fish, but has not been able to harness them effectively for

development. Lack of infrastructure and administrative capacity intensify the difficulties caused by high levels of unemployment, poverty, lawlessness, illiteracy and preventable disease.

PNG is currently working through a severe financial crisis which led the Government to negotiate an Economic Recovery Program with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in 1995. The reform program is designed to restore economic stability and growth, lift public investment and redirect Government expenditure towards increased basic public services, especially in rural areas. It is supported by the IMF, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, Australia and Japan. This assistance is additional to the

ongoing aid program managed by AusAID, the Australian Agency for International Development.

## Australia's aid objectives

AusAID aims to help PNG achieve ecologically sound development and self-sustaining economic growth with equity. Australia's approach is to strengthen PNG's abilities to develop and implement sectoral policies, deliver basic services, foster investment and create employment to increase national self-reliance.

## The Australian aid program

Since independence in 1975, Australia has provided budgetary assistance to Papua New Guinea to support the country's economic and social development. The largest recipient of Australian



aid, PNG will receive about \$312.4 million in 1995-96. Since the mid 1980s, part of this aid has taken the form of specific program and project assistance. This has grown from about \$10 million in 1988 to nearly \$120 million in 1995-96. By agreement between the two countries, direct financial support for PNG's budget is being gradually replaced with joint aid programs addressing PNG's greatest development needs. The last direct budget support payment will be made in the year 2000. This process is governed by the Treaty on Development Cooperation.

PNG and Australia have agreed on six sectors in which Australian assistance will be of the greatest benefit to PNG's development: education and training; health; transport and communications; renewable resources; law and justice

and the private sector. Australia's approach in each sector is to help PNG organisations build their planning and administrative capacity while extending the provision of essential services.

The PNG Government, for example, is undertaking a major reform of the education system which will make basic education available to children even in the most remote areas. Australian assistance involves strengthening the Department of Education and providing teacher training, teaching materials and school buildings.

AusAID's health sector program aims to reinvigorate PNG health care systems through training for health professionals and the restoration of facilities. The program also addresses

PNG's immediate needs in the health sector, particularly primary health care in remote rural areas.

Major road rehabilitation is also supported by the Australian aid program, easing one of PNG's principal barriers to development and allowing the free movement of people, products and ideas.

The education, health and infrastructure sectors will account for about 80 per cent of Australia's program expenditure in 1995-96.

Australia provides emergency assistance when necessary, including to Bougainville and to the Gazelle Peninsula after the Rabaul volcanic eruption. AusAID also funds a range of activities developed by Australian and PNG non government organisations.



## Facts

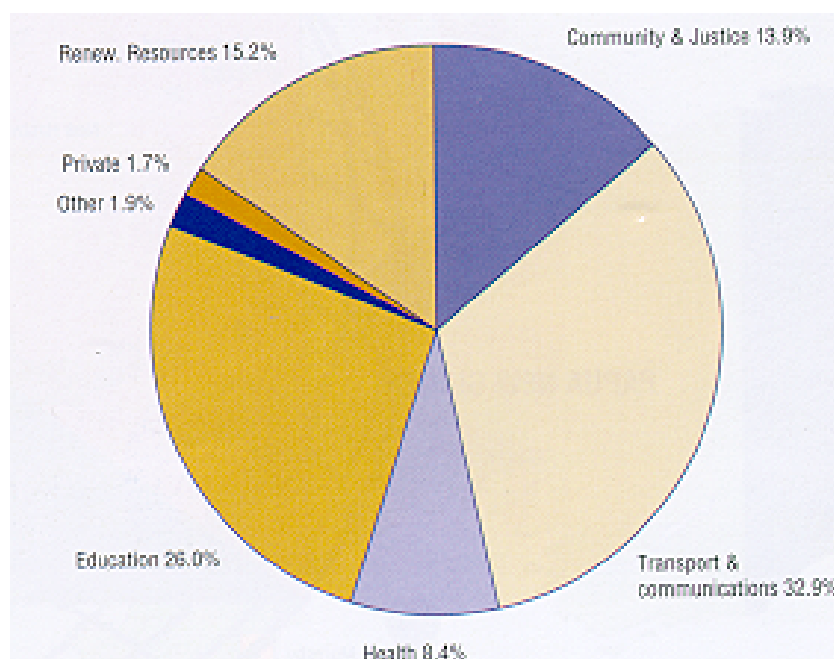
Capital:	Port Moresby
Area:	462 840 sq km
Currency:	Kina
Official languages:	English, Pidgin, Motu.

Total Australian aid: \$312.4 million in 1995-96

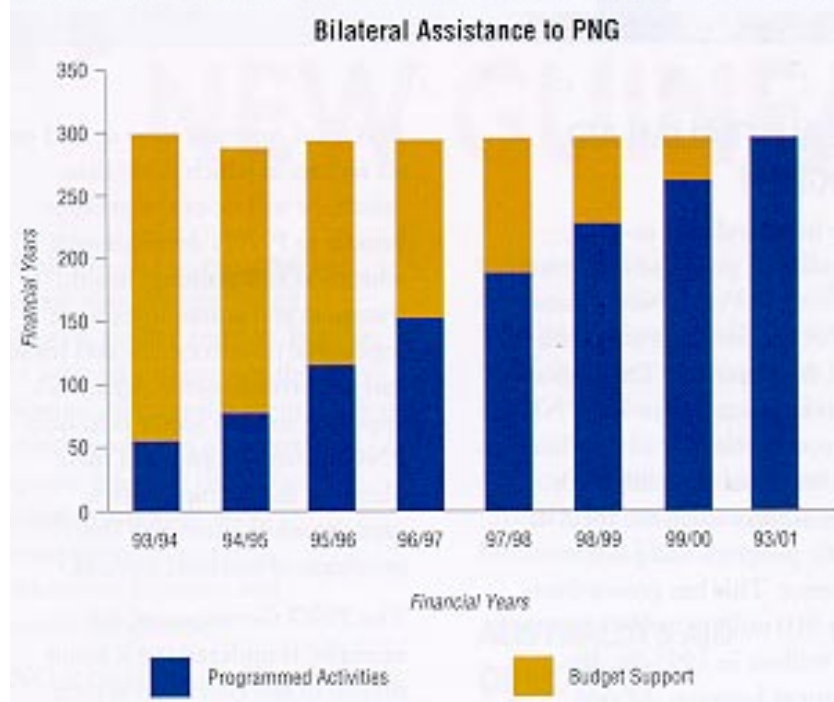
## A history of aid to PNG

Australian church and service groups have been active in the country since last century, particularly in education and health. After World War I, responsibility for the Territory of New Guinea passed from Germany to Australia and the two territories were jointly administered by Australia. In the 1960s, as the colonial era drew to a close, Australia helped PNG prepare for independence, by providing training in the skills of government administration. At independence, however, there was still a shortage of skilled indigenous people at middle and upper management levels in both the public and private sectors and a significant dependence on expatriate administrators.

At independence in 1975 the Australian Government made a commitment to support the new country through untied budget contributions, enabling the PNG Government to determine revenue and expenditure. As revenues increase, PNG has been increasingly able to cover its own budgetary needs. Australian assistance is being redirected towards jointly programmed activities in the areas of PNG's greatest development needs.



Indicative Australian aid to Papua New Guinea by sector: 1995-1996



## Key Statistics

	Australia	PNG
Total population (1994)	17.8m	4.1m
Average population growth (% p.a.)	1.5	2.3
Life expectancy (years)	78	56.3
Infant mortality (per 1000 births)	7	66.6
Primary school enrolment (%)	98	80 (Grade 1)
GNP per capita in 1994 (US\$)	17 980	1130



# Thinking *small* in PNG

Russell Baker

*Creating an entrepreneurial class: Australia is exploring ways to help the rural poor of PNG to start and expand their own businesses.*

Australia's troubled northern neighbour, Papua New Guinea, lurched into yet another economic crisis last month when the World Bank issued a 90-day warning which could see it curtail a \$455 million rescue package. PNG responded defiantly to the bank's demands that it implement agreed economic reforms. Prime Minister Julius Chan said, "No one, and certainly not the World Bank, is going to give me an ultimatum."

But such an ultimatum from one of PNG's international donors should not have come as a surprise. Billions of dollars in aid, mainly from Australia, have been pumped into PNG since it

achieved independence in 1975. Much of it has gone towards supporting a bloated government sector rather than improving the living standards of most of the population.

Similarly, the large revenues generated by mining, oil and forestry projects have not been channelled to where they are needed most. Large-scale exploitation of natural resources has created few spin-off benefits for other sectors of the economy to help promote broad-based development.

More than three years ago, PNG unveiled its strategic plan, *Beyond the Minerals Boom*, which promised to develop the country's non-mining private sector. The rhetoric, however, has not been matched by results.

Australia and PNG agree that the private sector is one of six priorities for AusAID's

\$325 million-a-year development co-operation program (others are: education and training; health; transport and communication; law and justice; and renewable resources). An AusAID-commissioned PNG Private Sector Development Study is being completed to help identify where aid would be best allocated.

## Subsistence:

More than 80 per cent of PNG's population lives in rural areas, surviving through subsistence agriculture or by selling cash crops. Less than 15 per cent of the labour force is employed in the formal wage economy.

Acknowledging this, the draft report of the private sector study says: "The expansion of rural-based activities is the only way to significantly increase production and provide employment opportunities in the foreseeable future."

"This is because of the overwhelming importance of agriculture, the relatively small formal economy and the relatively small labour absorption capacity of secondary and tertiary industries in urban areas."

This suggests PNG should be focusing more on helping micro-enterprises (which operate in the informal economy) and small businesses, and less on protecting the interests of large companies.

Probably the largest constraint on small businesses in rural areas is a lack of access to credit. Banks ignore enterprises in the informal economy and are reluctant to lend to registered small businesses that cannot provide sufficient collateral. To address this, the draft study suggests that Australian aid could be used to develop "micro-credit" schemes, which help the rural poor start and expand their own businesses.

The Federal Government has also signalled that more of Australia's aid should be channelled into self-help programs, and Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer has shown an interest in micro-credit schemes.

Already on the job, AusAID will announce this week support for the Liklik Dinau/ Abitore Trust Micro-Credit and Savings Project in the eastern highlands. The project has been operating for more than two years and has a repayment rate above 90 per cent. It is run from an office in Goroka and AusAID funds will be used to establish a second office in Kainantu.

Most micro-credit schemes are modelled on the Grameen Bank, established in 1983 to lend money to the rural poor of Bangladesh. Grameen has more than 1 million borrowers, more than 90 per cent of whom are women. The average loan size is



about \$75 and the bank boasts a repayment rate higher than 98 per cent.

In his writings, Grameen's founder, Muhammad Yunus, has said governments and donors in developing countries place too much emphasis on creating wage employment to remove poverty instead of encouraging self-employment.

Self-employment is a means for women, in particular, to become income earners and demonstrate their economic talents, he believes. Grameen-type schemes typically involve five women from a village forming a group. After a training program the group chooses two women to be the first recipients of loans. The group is responsible for monitoring how the money is spent and for ensuring weekly





repayments are made. If there are no problems with the first two loans, the others in the group can apply for loans.

Loans may be tiny but they can help women break the income trap by providing them with the initial capital for activities like poultry farming, handloom weaving, crop trading or shopkeeping.

PNG's small and medium-sized businesses also need help gaining access to credit and the AusAID draft study recommends assistance in establishing mutual loan funds and in revitalising savings and loans societies. However, PNG has a poor track record when it comes to these loan schemes partly because of incompetent management by Government agencies.

Past credit schemes such as those operated by the Small Business Development Corporation have also been plagued by bad debts so they have come to be regarded as grant schemes.

The SBDC has recently launched a Small Scale Business Guarantee Fund and the PNG Government has been at pains to point out to prospective borrowers that the new scheme is not another handout. The Government has also warned the banks supporting the fund that while the SBDC is guaranteeing the loans they should not regard the guarantee as a way out of pursuing bad debts.

### Expertise:

The SBDC's task is to create an entrepreneurial class in PNG and, as managing director Alois Lavu says, to enable indigenous people to participate in the economy.

However, the SBDC lacks the funds to establish the presence it needs in PNG's 19 provinces and few of its staff have the expertise to provide business advice. To address the latter problem AusAID has finalised funding for SBDC's *Start Your Business/ Improve Your Business* project. Lavu says part of the project will be to "train the trainers" at the SBDC.

PNG already receives about 21 per cent of Australia's aid and this percentage will rise even further if the Government makes cuts in other areas. However PNG itself may be safe from cuts given the Federal Government's commitment to "maintain existing foreign aid commitments" to the country.

The Prime Minister of PNG, Sir Julius Chan, has asked Australia to consider a moratorium on the



shift in Australia's aid from budget support to fully programmed aid. The transition is due to be completed in 2001. But during his recent trip to PNG, the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer said his Government would be sticking to the timetable to which PNG and the former Labor Government had agreed.

Along with the shift to programmed aid has come the introduction of agreed benchmarks which PNG must meet to ensure the receipt of aid funds. These include the PNG Government's provision of counterpart funding to ensure sustainable results from the Australian aid program. For example, AusAID would reassess its commitment to funding road projects if the PNG Government was not prepared to allocate specific resources each year to road maintenance.

Australia's side of this bargain includes assistance in boosting PNG participation in the aid program. Chan has argued in the past that the transition to programmed activities means aid money flows back to Australia via aid-related contracts granted to Australian companies. AusAID is breaking up project work into small parcels to enable PNG tendering where possible and is encouraging Australian companies to form joint ventures with PNG companies or to subcontract work to PNG companies. AusAID has also committed itself to:

- enhancing the abilities of PNG enterprises to bid for contracts;
- the greater use of trust accounts that provide funds to PNG Government agencies to implement projects; and
- using the services of more PNG non-government organisations.

## Services:

The World Bank wants to see improvements in the delivery of key services such as health and education to the rural sector. It also wants less spent on public service salaries and more on capital investment and the introduction of a sustainable forestry policy.

Downer suggested to PNG last week that it had no alternative but to adhere to the program. PNG may be prepared to call the World Bank's bluff, but if the international donors walk away from the country, whose economy shrank 4.8 per cent in 1995, it would be a signal for international investors to do the same.

This is a scenario which the PNG Government, the World Bank and the Australian Government all share an earnest desire to avoid.

*Russell Baker visited Papua New Guinea last month as an awardee of the AusAID Media Travel Grants Scheme.*



# Seeing the Forest and the Trees...

## Nepal/Australia Community Forestry Project

Andrea McLaughlin

Photos: Mike Jensen DFAT

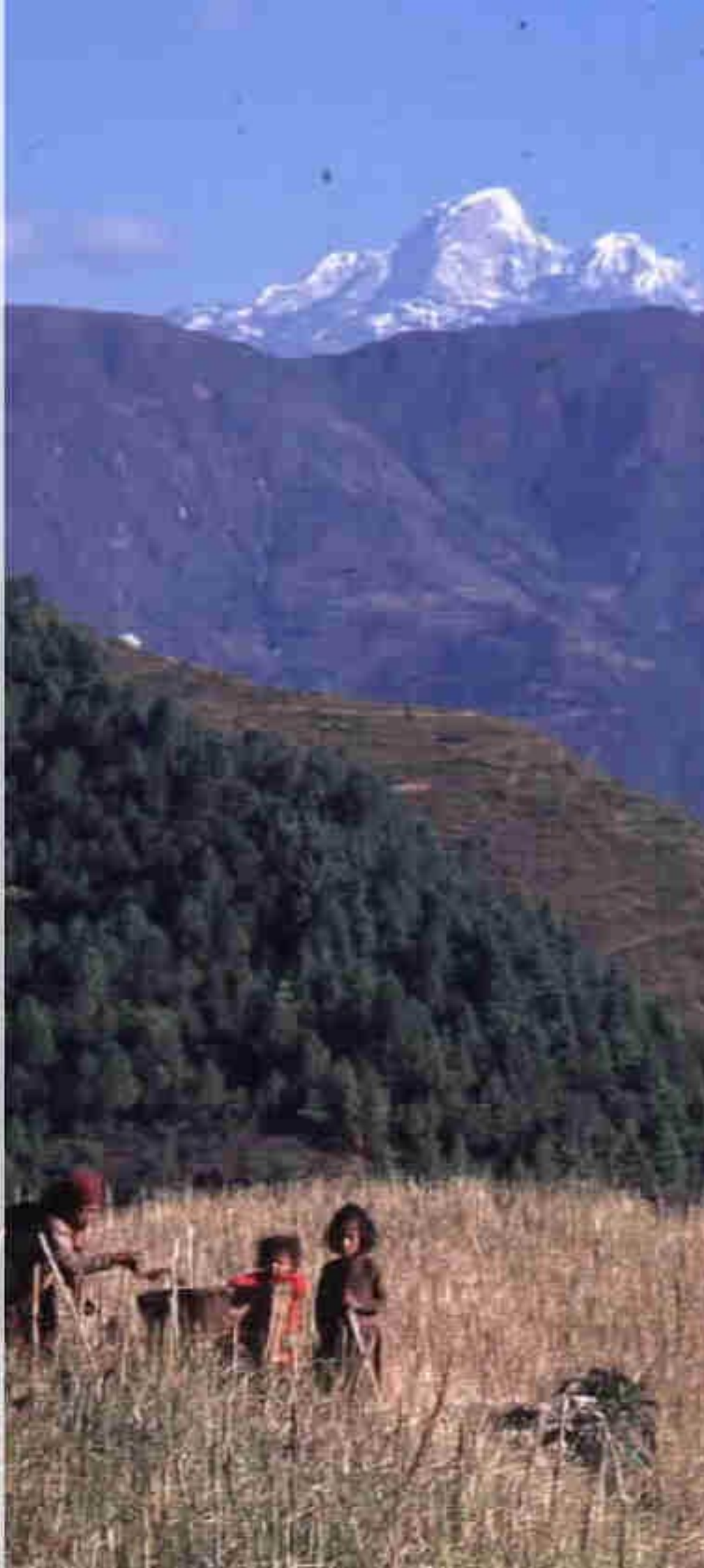
*Improving lives and preserving Nepal's unique environment: Andrea McLaughlin reports on one of Australia's longest-running aid projects.*



**H**alf way up a steep hill a group of six Nepali women are stopping to rest by the side of the road. They have spent all day hauling heavy loads of millet down to the local town for grinding. They're now on the way home, their bags of grain suspended from thick straps around their foreheads. Giggling and chatting they sit on a rocky platform, shading under the branches of an enormous, ancient fig tree, one of the oldest in the area.

The women are from the village of Gaurati Chyandanda in the Middle Hills of Nepal. Twenty years ago, the slopes around them, like many in the mid-hills, were bare and barren and the forests upon which they relied were dying. Now on either side of the road, thick patches of indigenous forest and pine plantation share the landscape with small groups of houses and tiny cultivated terraces growing maize, rice, wheat or millet. The people of Gaurati Chyandanda have legal rights to these forests and are planning to build a road up to the village with the profits they've generated from them.

One of the reasons for the change has been the presence in this district since 1978 of the Nepal/Australia Community Forestry Project. The project has brought enormous benefits to both Australia and Nepal. For Australia there is the satisfaction of a successful and sustainable project, which has used Australian forestry expertise to conserve forests and improve the lives of the Nepali people. On the Nepali side thousands of hectares of barren land are now covered in trees, which are managed and protected by local people. There is also new hope, confidence and optimism for the future amongst some of the poorest people on earth.







## From Technical Advice to Self Help

Australian forester Dr Ken Shepherd first arrived in Nepal in 1977. He'd been invited by his colleague at the Australian National University, Professor David Griffin, who was designing a new Australian aid project aimed at arresting the deforestation of the Middle Hills. Like most foresters of the era, they were technical specialists: Ken Shepherd a sivilculturalist, David Griffin a world expert in soil microbiology.

"What did it look like? Terrible, absolutely terrible," says Dr Shepherd. "It was dry, barren, the people were desperately poor. The hills were bare or covered in scrub."

Drastic problems called for drastic solutions and the project team set about helping the Government of Nepal with its massive program of reforestation. The Australian input was mainly in the form of technical assistance

and training for Nepal's Forest Department staff, both in Nepal and back in Australia. Within five years thousands of hectares of trees had been planted and hundreds of nurseries established.

Since then the project has evolved and changed dramatically. It has shifted from a focus on reforestation to working with groups of local forest users, known as Forest Users Groups, helping them manage and protect their own forests resources. It has gone from a project where solutions to forestry problems were imposed from above to a bottom-up approach which tackles a broad range of local issues. At the same time the nature of the Australian input has moved from provision of technical advice on growing trees to providing local people with the help they need not only to manage their forests, but to utilise them in ways which benefit the whole community.

Ken Shepherd, who was appointed Project Director in 1991, witnessed the transformation. "In

the early days, things were being driven by the centre. It was imposed. We persuaded local people to get involved. We provided the technical advice ...and the local people provided the labour. It was then found that if you set up a Forest User Group and very carefully designated which piece of forest was theirs, very often you found there were indigenous management systems in place already. We began to focus on what was already there and where there wasn't an indigenous system we started to encourage it."

There are now thousands of User Groups all around the country, managing their own patches of forest. In many cases, they have branched out, becoming micro-entrepreneurs as well as forest managers. Many have begun to generate income, enough in some cases to make a significant improvements in the lives of village people.



## Focus on Women

The lives of women in Nepal are short, hard and monotonous. They spend long hours collecting forest products, fetching water, tending fields and caring for families and children. Their status is low, literacy rates are among the lowest in the world, and it is one of the few countries where life expectancy for men is higher than it is for women.

The two Districts where the project operates are also traditional areas for the sinister trade in children to the factories of Kathmandu and teenage girls to the brothels of India. Children are often willingly sold by their parents into the brothel trade. Remittances from one girl can make a big difference to a family's standard of living.

Unfortunately, many of these girls return after a few years infected with HIV. Many never return due to illness or disgrace.

Community forestry has helped provide hope. On an immediate level, women's lives have been made easier because the forest products they rely upon are now more abundant and easier to gather.

More and more women have also developed the confidence to become involved in discussions about forest issues. This has led to the development of other activities which will particularly benefit women and girls, including water schemes. The project has employed a small group of specialists to work with

forest user groups and have so far brought cleaner, safer water to 10 000 people.

Less than 20 per cent of women in Nepal can read and write. The project has helped set up literacy and numeracy classes which not only enhance their ability to take part in decisions on forestry matters but enable them to take a more active role in their own and their families' future.

Many User Groups are also raising money, tiny amounts in some cases, but enough to inspire confidence in the future and prevent the drift of village men, women and children to an uncertain future in the towns and cities of South Asia.









## A Forest Success Story

In Gaukhureswar near the popular Nepali tourist town of Dhulikhel, I met Mr Badri Pd Janggam, the elderly Chairman of the Gaukhureswar Forest User Group. He took me on a tour of their forest, a lush mixture of natural broadleaf trees, hardwood forest and scrubland.

Walking through the dense thickets, Mr Janggam explains that more than 30 households rely on this forest to provide the basic necessities of life. It provides wood to build their houses, water for them to drink, energy to fuel their fires and food to feed their animals.

The villagers have devised a simple rotational system so that some parts of the forest are rested while others are used to collect firewood, dead leaves or fodder. They have also introduced a user pays scheme, charging forest users a small fee for collecting loads of fuel.

“Before the project, we used to collect forest products from this forest, but we never cared about the forest because the collection was illegal. But now we think about the forest and we harvest carefully.”

Climbing up a steep embankment we enter the nursery, a small clearing housing thousands of young seedlings. By collecting fees from forest users this group has saved enough money to buy 1600 seedlings of lokta, a tree which provides the raw ingredient for the exotic, silk-like paper produced in Nepal and highly prized in Japan. The Australian project organised training for three villagers in how to grow lokta. “There is a company from Japan trying to encourage this species to be grown in Nepal,” says Badri Janggam. “So we think we can generate some funds out of these species.”

He won’t be drawn on what he thinks the group might do with any profits from such an exercise. “The committee will decide

whether to spend it on forest development or community development,” he says.

There are now groups like Gaukhureswar all over the middle hills of Nepal, protecting forests, ensuring a regular supply of forest products for their members and accumulating funds which they use to plant more trees, hire forest guards, build roads or schools, establish drinking water systems or connect electricity.

## Country-wide

The Australian project has done more than just benefit the people of the two Districts involved. It has helped shape national forest policy and provided a model for community forestry which is now well established throughout Nepal.

The Chief Planning Officer for the Nepalese Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Mr Amrit Lal Joshi, is a great enthusiast for community forestry and the benefits it has brought Nepal.



## Why Forests Matter



Laxmi Kumari Newar lives in a small village of 27 households perched atop a ridge in the Nepali Middle Hills. She and her husband rely on growing crops, tending animals and the products of the nearby forest to survive.

Her house, typical of those in this village, is completely devoid of furniture or any personal effects, running water or sanitation. Downstairs it is dusty and dark. Chickens peck at the dirt floor and the air is filled with smoke from a hearth in the corner. Laxmi Kumari is cooking food for the buffalo on a small fire fuelled by a small log from the forest.

The timber to make her two story house has come from the local forest. Carrying her youngest daughter on her hip she shows visitors upstairs. Here where a little more light comes in through a window, is an old mattress, on which the entire family sleeps. The rest of the floor is entirely taken up by their recently harvested millet crop.

Outside in a stall lives the buffalo. Laxmi Kumari gathers dead leaves and pine needles from the forest for its bedding. This bedding will be mixed with dung and spread on

the family's land as fertiliser, helping increase the yields of their buckwheat and millet crops.

Laxmi Kumari's village began planting pine trees 16 years ago and now manages a large pine plantation. An elderly neighbour, smoking a locally made cigarette, recalls that in the old days, she used to spend all day digging up roots to get enough wood for one load of firewood. Now it takes less than an hour to gather what she needs for the day.



# Women Managing Forests



Dil Kumari Shreshtra, 33, is the Chairwoman of the Mahankali all-women Forest Users Group Committee. She and her 13 committee members manage a 8.75 hectare forest - a mixture of pine and natural broadleaf forest - on the outskirts of the small bazaar town of Chautara. In the male-dominated society of Nepal, the Mahankali group is a bold experiment.

"Nepalese women go into the forest and collect forest products," says Dil Kumari, holding the hand of her three-year-old daughter, "but we realised that men were always on the Committees. We thought- if we do all the work, why not form our own committee?"

"In the first six months we had some difficulty with things such as bookkeeping. Now we feel more confident and feel we can face anything."

The committee charges a small fee to the 80 households who use the forest to collect firewood and fallen leaves. They've raised enough to help build a new water supply and a series of retaining walls to prevent soil erosion in the forest. Their forest is healthy and productive and the water which used to take them hours to collect is now cleaner and more plentiful.

The next project to be undertaken by the committee says Dil Kumari is "...to build a primary school ... because the other school is crowded and too far away."

Overall women still play a limited role in decisions over forest management in Nepal, partly because of social, religious or caste restrictions and partly because most of social, religious or caste restrictions and partly because most of them can't read or write. In the Mahankali group, only Dil Kumari. Who has a job as a clerk and the Treasurer of the committee have any formal education. In an attempt to address this, the NACFP has developed a literacy program especially for women members of Forest User Groups, with 6000 women taking part so far.

Mr Joshi, who undertook post-graduate training in Australia as part of the project and was a District Forest Officer in one of the Districts where the project operates, acknowledges the influence of the work which went on there.

"Australia was one of the donor countries which was involved in support of the forestry sector at the time when this policy of managing forests by the

community was initiated. Most of the ideas were generated from the districts where the Australian forestry projects were going on. So I don't hesitate to say that the idea was generated ... by the people of those two districts."

Community forestry in Nepal has been so successful it is now enshrined in law under legislation which is widely regarded as amongst the most progressive in Asia. This legislation enables the

control and management of the forests to be handed over to villagers - to the people who are most likely to look after the forests - because their survival depends on them.

The people of Guarati Chyandanda are in the midst of making some complex decisions about their forests and their future. The pine trees which they planted around 16 years ago, because they were the only

## Thirty Years of Partnership

species tough enough to survive on the denuded hills, are now mature and needing to be thinned. Some of the group want to continue developing the pine plantation because of the opportunities it provides to raise money. Others want to harvest the trees systematically and allow the natural broadleaf forest, which provides a bigger range of forest products, to regenerate. They are also looking at options to add value to the timber produced by their forests. A small saw mill has been suggested as an option, as has the construction of furniture for the markets in town.

The local forest rangers and project staff have been explaining why the forest needs to be thinned and the options available to the group for making money from their timber.

The outcomes of the Australian forestry project in Nepal can thus be written in many ways. In bald terms there are over 350 active Forest User Groups in the two Districts, with more being set up every month. Thousands of hectares of natural forest have been brought under the management of users groups. 20 000 ha of new trees have been planted.

But there's much, much more. There's a whole community which has grown in confidence and skills and resources and thousands of people who are working to improve their lives while conserving the environment at the same time.

*"This approach of using forest user groups is time consuming. It's slow. It won't work if you just whizz in there for a year and you're out. AusAID should really get the credit for staying with it as long as they have."*

(John McEachern, Country Representative, Nepal, IUCN)

In the early 1960s the Government of Nepal asked Australia for help to reforest the Kathmandu Valley with the first Australian residential forestry adviser arriving under the Colombo Plan in 1966. It was the start of a relationship between Nepal and Australia which has lasted thirty years.

A succession of Australian technical advisers arrived over the next ten years. They travelled the country, advising the Government and setting up trial plots of Australian species such as eucalypts and acacias around the Kathmandu valley.

The trials of imported species weren't a success and were stopped in the mid-1970s. At the same time came the realisation by everyone involved, including the Australian Development Assistance Agency (later AusAID), that if Australia was to have any impact on the forests of Nepal, its aid would have to be broadened out from technical assistance to an integrated approach which involved people as well as trees.

The new project which began in 1978 was heavily influenced by the new ideas of community forestry. Not a lot was known about how to actually implement community forestry, but over the next 16 years the Australian project, in partnership with the Government of Nepal, consistently broke new ground. The role of the Forests Department also changed dramatically over the years. Rather than enforcing and policing government policy, it now works with the people to help them plan for their forests and their future.

While the project has evolved through a number of distinct phases since 1978, it has been managed throughout by the Australian National University, most recently by ANUTECH Pty Ltd, the University's commercial agent.

Many of Australia's top foresters spent long periods of time with the project, creating a continuity in personnel which has added to its success. It has demonstrated that a long term approach to development creates understanding and a sharing of ideas and skills which has benefited the people of Nepal as well as Australia.







## *Support for Microbiologists in Eritrea*

---

*Paul Rathbone, The Australian Society for Microbiology*

*Eritrea is a country on the north-eastern tip of the horn of Africa and has been ravaged by many years of war, drought and famine. Tuberculosis, malaria, typhoid and leprosy remain some of the biggest killers of the Eritrean population. Through the initiative of Australian doctors, AusAID is providing financial support to improve laboratories and help train Eritrean scientists.*



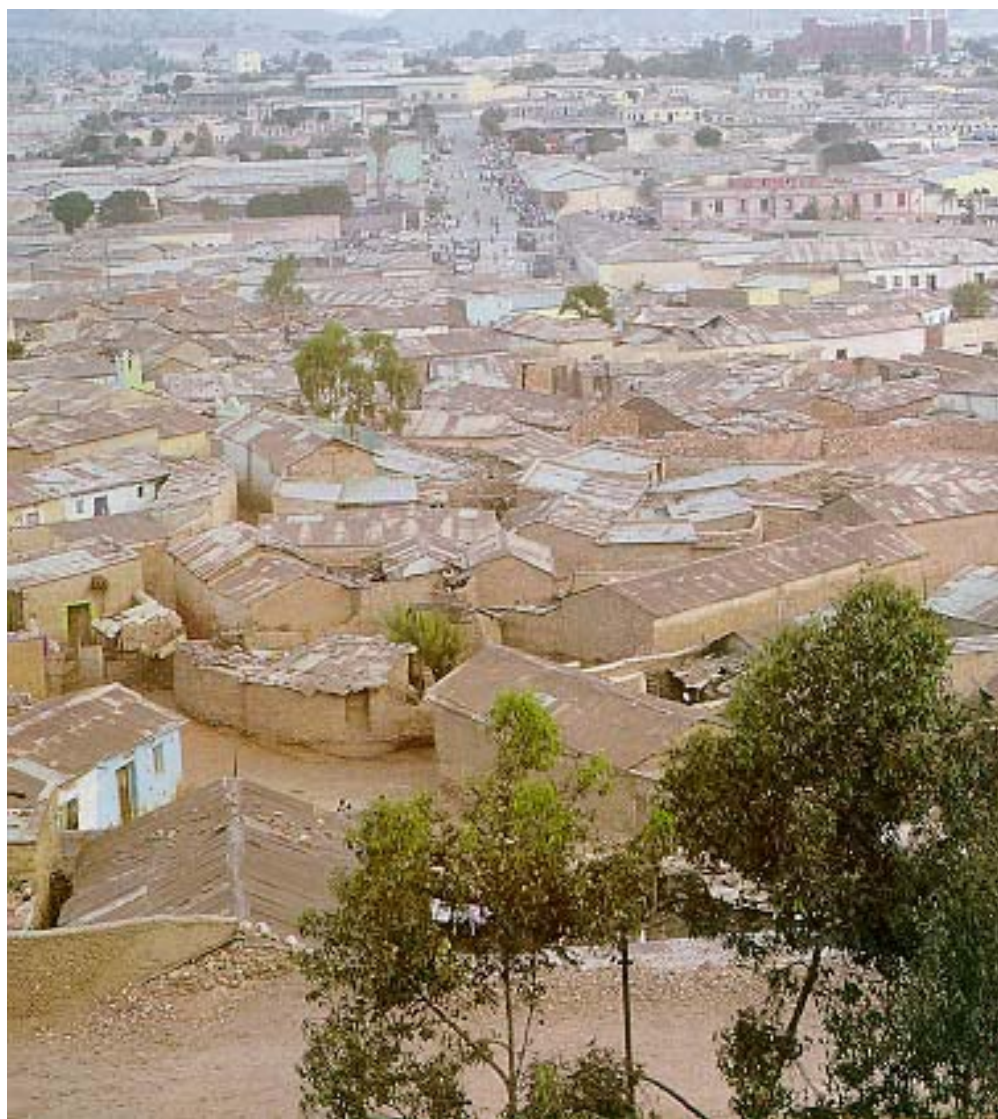
Eritrea's history is one dogged with occupation by various kingdoms and empires and was united under European colonialism in the late 1800's. Under Italian rule until 1941, Eritrea was taken by the British and served as a base for many operations during World War II. Eritrea was annexed into a federated Ethiopia with a United Nations resolution in 1950, guaranteeing democratic rights and autonomy, but ignoring the Eritrean peoples' desire for independence. After years of peaceful demonstration against human rights violations, war against Ethiopian rule began in 1961.

A 30 year struggle for freedom from Ethiopian rule, with the loss of many lives, finally resulted in the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) taking control of the capital Asmara in 1991 and beginning a new era of independence.

The government now has the long and difficult task of rebuilding the country and providing for the Eritrean people with little resources. All aspects of the economy from health, transport, agriculture to education have to be totally rebuilt. The government has to heavily rely on aid supplied from overseas agencies until the economic situation of the country improves.

## THREATS TO LIFE IN ERITREA

Health issues are a major concern for the Eritrean people. The population of 3.5 million has a life expectancy of 46 years and although accurate data is not available, it has been estimated that 90 per cent of the population are sick or are killed by infectious diseases. 135 babies out of every 1000 die in a country where only one doctor may be available for every 28 000 people.



Malaria is the most significant infection and results in excessive childhood mortality. The spread of many other infectious diseases is aided by poor nutrition and living conditions. Tuberculosis, gastroenteritis, typhoid, leprosy, meningitis and parasitic infections are common.

HIV infection is about one per cent in the urban Eritrean population and lower in rural areas. Concerns are held amongst health care workers that with the movement of the population since the end of the war and the nomadic existence of some groups that it may only be a matter of time before more people contract

HIV. Attempts are being made to educate the population in the prevention of HIV transmission, but resources are limited and further funding is needed.

Limited laboratory services for the detection of infectious disease have been available to a small percentage of the population. These services were initially set up by the EPLF during the war. Situated at the war front, these makeshift laboratories were manned by EPLF fighters and played a significant role in providing diagnostic services for local communities and fighting forces.



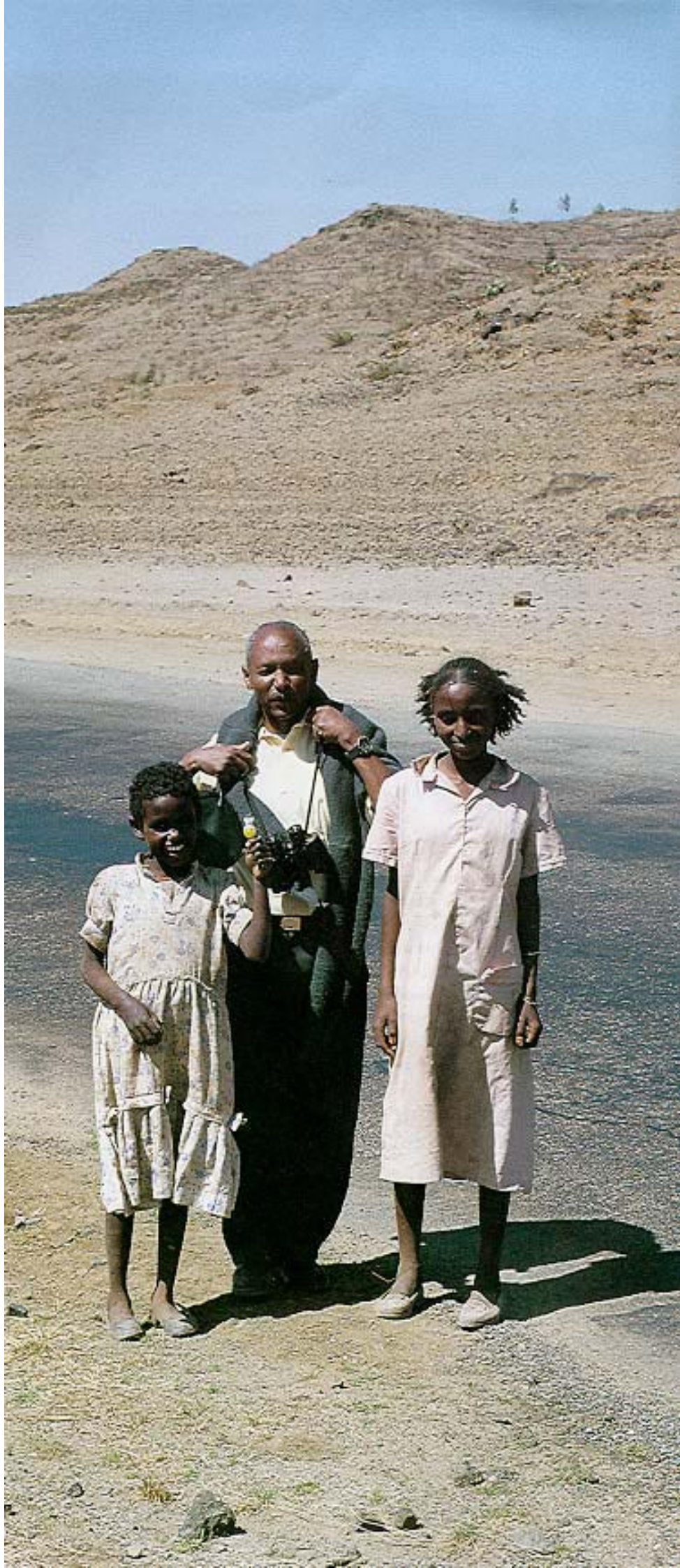
Microbiology technician Mr Asmorem Zere is training in Australia as a result of a \$20 000 AusAID grant and through the sponsorship of The Australian Society for Microbiology.

Mr Zere spent 15 years as a freedom fighter with the EPLF and when not defending his country, worked as a laboratory technician at the frontline. "The EPLF used great ingenuity in dealing with difficult health problems during the war. Pharmaceutical products such as antibiotics and sterile intravenous solutions were manufactured in an underground factory comprised of modified shipping containers," said Mr Zere.

Mr Zere has been in Australia since June 1995 and is spending time training at the microbiology laboratories of Fairfield Hospital and the National HIV Reference Laboratory.

Mr Zere will obtain experience in the diagnosis of bacterial infections, TB, HIV and other infectious diseases. Following his time in Australia, Mr Zere will return to the CPHL in Eritrea to help upgrade the standard of the TB laboratories and to give further training to laboratory staff.

Although some aid has been received in the past from well meaning communities Mr Zere said that often it was inappropriate. "On one occasion we received a delivery of old microscopes but the lenses which were essential for examining material were missing. This effectively rendered the equipment useless. When we contacted the manufacturer in an endeavour to obtain the missing pieces we were informed that the equipment had not been manufactured for over twenty years!"





“Disease prevention programs, education of technicians together with appropriate equipment is necessary to build the health services up to the required level. Many of the health problems faced by Eritreans are treatable and the situation we are in today is really a reflection of the hardships of the past 30 years.”

Training of laboratory staff is a major concern as no major facilities have existed to update technicians in laboratory techniques. Along with Mr Zere, AusAID is also supporting the training of Melles Seyoum, Director of the Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL) in Eritrea. He is currently training in Australia.

## AUSTRALIAN DOCTORS WORKING IN ERITREA

Another key to the improvement of health care in Eritrea is to upgrade facilities and services which were neglected under Ethiopian rule. As a result of assistance from AusAID, The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia and The Australian Society for Microbiology, projects to upgrade microbiology laboratories are underway.

The projects to rebuild Eritrea's laboratories stem from the work of Australian doctors. Drs Lyn and Paul Waring worked as volunteers in the Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL) in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea. There they experienced first hand the difficulties health workers face in meeting the needs of the population.



More recently and with established contacts in Eritrea, Lyn and Paul Waring obtained a grant from AusAID to improve communications between the CPHL, charitable agencies and other laboratories around the world. Through working Mr Seyoum from the CPHL, the Warings obtained further funding from US AID to rebuild the laboratory and upgrade other facilities at regional and central laboratories.

Dr Elizabeth Dax is Director of the National HIV Reference Laboratory (NRL) and has been involved in projects in Eritrea over the past few years. Together with Mr Greg Cooper from the Red Cross Blood Bank in Victoria, she has conducted an on-site workshop in HIV testing.

A national HIV testing strategy has been established and with the assistance of trained health workers, a survey is being conducted to determine the prevalence of HIV infection in Eritrea and identify the predominant risk groups.

It is hoped that further grants will be obtained to allow for the on-going training of health care workers in Eritrea and a continual upgrading of laboratory facilities in the country.

*The author wishes to thank Dr Elizabeth Dax from Fairfield hospital for assistance in preparing this article*







# CASUARINAS COMBAT

# EROSION

*Dr Trevor Booth, CSIRO Division of Forestry and Forest Products*

Australian casuarinas are welcome visitors to a number of countries around the world where coastal erosion is a major problem. In places such as China, India and Vietnam, strong winds create erosion, sweeping bare sand dunes inland and destroying arable land and dwellings. Planting trees such as casuarinas in shelterbelts along the dunes helps to strip winds of their force.

In the tropics, the most common tree species used in coastal shelterbelt plantings is *Casuarina equisetifolia*, a native of north eastern Australia and parts of the Pacific and south east Asia which thrives in sandy conditions. *C. equisetifolia* is a nitrogen fixing tree, producing root nodules which can fix about as much atmospheric nitrogen as legumes. The wood is dense and is very good for fuel, charcoal and for timber for general construction.







The tree has brought significant extra income to households in China, India and Vietnam, where it is sold for poles and fuelwood. It also provides protection from typhoons and valuable organic matter for farming. Resultant sand stabilisation has reduced incidence of eye and respiratory diseases. Households have adapted traditional rice growing methods to the raising of casuarina plants, ensuring they have access to as many seedlings as they need.

Southern China has more than one million hectares of *C. equisetifolia*, India has 800 000 hectares and Vietnam 100 000 hectares. These plantations are mostly along the coastal dunes, in strips varying in width from a few hundred metres to five kilometres. The plantings are extensive and important socially and environmentally, but the seed used is generally of unknown



origin. It is likely that the plantations are well below potential productivity levels for the species. Recently, there have been reports of pathogenic fungi in Vietnam and Thailand. the fungi was previously recognised as a problem only in India and indicates a potential threat to the sustainability of land systems based on casuarina.





AusAID recognises the importance of casuarina trees to rural communities in developing countries, providing funding for scientists from the Australian Tree Seed Centre at CSIRO to search for superior genotypes of *C. equisetifolia* which are more vigorous in growth and disease resistant. The Centre organised a germplasm collection from more than 20 countries in Asia, Africa, Central and South America, the Pacific and Australia. Field trials were conducted in countries where *C. equisetifolia* is used extensively. Preliminary observations reveal considerable variation in a number of growth traits and the level of susceptibility to attack by fungal pathogens. The tests will provide important baseline data for future selection of the best planting material.





# HIV/AIDS Control in Manipur

*Andrea McLaughlin*

In August 1995, in a town in the remote north east Indian state of Manipur, India's first needle and syringe exchange was established, with funding from the Australian aid program.

The exchange, with the knowledge and support of local and state authorities, provides clean needles, syringes to registered addicts, as part of a unique attempt to stop needle sharing and halt Manipur's galloping HIV infection rate. The exchange is one small part of an innovative project, run by the Emmanuel Hospital Association, an Indian non government organisation, which includes awareness raising, free HIV testing and counselling, home based care and vocational training. Part of the project's uniqueness is its adaptation of "harm reduction" principles to address the problem of drug use and its sinister companion, HIV/AIDS.

Manipur accounts for barely 0.2 per cent of India's population, yet it has more than 17 per cent of the country's known HIV cases. The people of Manipur are a mixture of tribal groups of Tibeto-Burmese background, sharing languages and origins more in common with western China and Burma than the rest of India. But proximity to the Golden Triangle has a high price. From within a population of 1.8 million, the project estimates there are around 40 000 intravenous drug users. A study by the Indian Council for Medical Research puts the number of injecting drug users lower, around 15 000, but estimates over 80 per cent of them are HIV positive.

Manipur is one of three epicentres of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in India, and arguably the fastest growing. Best known are the

huge urban centres of Bombay and Madras where the virus is passed on via heterosexual activity, especially the thriving commercial sex industries. In sparsely populated Manipur transmission is mainly associated with the sharing of needles by injecting drug users.

In Manipur a "hit" of pure Burmese heroin costs around one Australian dollar. It is easily and readily available throughout the state, which shares a 352-km-long border with Burma where much of the world's heroin is produced.

Intravenous drug use in Manipur soared during the early 1980s, mainly among young men. The community responded in a number of ways including the establishment of detoxification and rehabilitation centres. These units promoted abstinence but with mixed success. In some, residents were chained to their beds, in order to stop them injecting. Jails were also widely used, with desperate families placing their addicted relatives in protective custody in order to wean them off heroin. Recidivism was around 80 per cent.

The first HIV infection in Manipur was registered in 1989, probably transmitted by drug couriers or local women returning from the brothels of Thailand or Burma. But it was a study published soon afterwards that galvanised the community. Without their consent, a number of injecting drug users were tested for HIV. Not only did more than a half test positive, but the names of those tested and their results were published in local newspapers.

"This created an enormous public response," says Dr Peter Deutschman, technical adviser to the project. "The publication of



the names had some terrible consequences initially and the stigma associated with that is only now just being broken down."

Publication of the lists also brought home the magnitude of the potential problem. It showed that within a year of the first HIV case being detected, over half the injecting drug users in the state may well have been infected.

Around that time, Dr Deutschman, a softly-spoken surgeon from Melbourne who had worked in India for 13 years, began to link up with people and organisations who wanted to do something to help Manipur deal with its HIV/AIDS problem.

These included Luke Samson from Sharan, a Delhi-based NGO dealing with drug addiction and HIV and Mark Thomson, the AusAID representative in Delhi, who having just returned from the north east, was keen to find a community health project and an organisation Australia could support. The lead was taken by the Emmanuel Hospital Association, an Indian NGO working in health and community development among the poor, where Dr Deutschman was employed.





“We knew HIV/AIDS was a major problem and AusAID already had HIV/AIDS projects in Bombay and Madras,” says Mark Thomson. “The north east was the other hot spot we hadn’t touched.”

After a year of AusAID-funded research and consultation it was decided to focus efforts on Manipur’s border province of Churachandpur. With a population of 180 000, Churachandpur had 3 000 intravenous drug users. It also had a pool of highly motivated community leaders who had given much time and effort to the problem of drug addiction.

The resulting project, SHALOM (Society for HIV/AIDS and Lifeline Operation in Manipur) was jointly designed by Deutschman, Tamara Aboagye-Kwarteng, from the Macfarlane Burnet Centre for Medical Research in Melbourne who had extensive experience designing HIV/AIDS projects in developing countries; and two doctors from the project town itself, already key figures in the indigenous response to HIV/AIDS, Dr B Langhkam and Dr V Muana.

Between them the two doctors have 40 years experience in Churachandpur and are well known and highly respected members of the community. Keen to come out of government service and work on solutions to the HIV problem, the doctors

were subsequently appointed co-directors of the project and because of their standing in the community are seen as one of the key reasons for its success. To date AusAID has provided \$230 000 in funding for the first two years of the project.

SHALOM works closely with district health authorities and other non government and government agencies working to address drug addiction and HIV/AIDS in India’s northeast states. But SHALOM, which began in February 1995, is unique in a number of ways. As well as enjoying the blessing and involvement of the state government, it is attempting to halt the spread of HIV and deal with the problems of massive drug use, by employing the principles of harm reduction.

Harm reduction accepts the realities of drug use. It says that along with attempts to stop the supply of drugs and the demand for drugs, some people will continue to use drugs and that measures must be taken to minimise the harm they do to themselves and society. Its a controversial approach, rejected by many, especially law enforcement agencies, as “giving in” to the evils of drug abuse.

The authorities and community in Manipur however appear to have embraced their experiment with harm reduction with relative ease, largely due to the extensive consultations carried out to

discover what was acceptable to the authorities and to the community. No opposition to the needle and syringe exchange has been reported and the Churachandpur Superintendent of Police L M Khaute has issued orders that SHALOM clients and staff should not be detained for possession of needles and syringes, normally a jailable offence.

“We have chosen to live with the lesser evil of drug abuse in order to curb the AIDS menace, and so far I have not had occasion to regret my decision to allow the syringe and needle exchange program,” Superintendent Khaute is quoted as saying.

But SHALOM is more than a needle and syringe exchange program. It is an integrated approach to the twin problems of drug addiction and HIV which endorses abstinence from drugs as well as rehabilitation and harm minimisation. It has established a home based detoxification service, a confidential HIV testing and counselling service, a home based care program including jail visits for people with AIDS and an innovative community education program. Commercial sex workers are also starting to be reached with safe sex messages and condom distribution.

It is too early to tell if the project is working in terms of reducing the rate of HIV infection in Churachandpur, says Dr Deutschman, but there are positive signs.

“The needle exchange usage is going up 30 per cent per month and all the injection site infections we were seeing, caused by dirty needles, are drying up.”

Whatever the results of this pilot approach, it reflects a willingness by communities as well as local and state authorities to look with fresh eyes at solutions to a problem which has seen the small state of Manipur become home to nearly twenty per cent of India’s HIV positive people.

# DEVELOPMENT

## ISSUES BRIEF

### Exploitative Child Labour

An estimated 100 to 200 million children under the age of 15 work. Some 95 percent are in developing countries, and about half live in Asia. The most salient characteristic of child labour is that it is often hidden.

Child labour is one of the most difficult development issues to tackle. The underlying causes of child labour are related to poverty, the lack of education, and the social acceptability of the practice.

#### What is Child Labour?

Part-time work is a fact of everyday life for many children in both developed and developing countries. Child labour is exploitative, however, when children undertake work that is too dangerous or too protracted, is hazardous to their mental and physical health and prevents or hampers their access to education. This kind of work encompasses a wide range of activities, most of which is illegal under existing national legislation in most countries.

Children working in exploitative labour situations can be children who are part of family labour in agriculture and in home-based work; children who do paid or unpaid work in factories, small workshops, mines and in domestic service; children living on and off the streets in urban areas, such as shoe-shine boys, rag-pickers, prostitutes and

beggars; and bonded children who have been pledged by their parents for a sum of money.

These children often face extreme physical hazards and health problems specific to their occupation. For example garbage pickers suffer from bacterial infections and tetanus; agricultural workers are exposed to organic dusts and pesticides; domestic servants are often subject to physical violence; and child prostitutes are at extreme risk of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

#### What are the Basic Interventions?

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC), ratified by 187 countries, has spurred greater government and public attention to the plight of working children. In 1991, the ILO initiated its International Program for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). In 1993, UNICEF reviewed its Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances program (CEDC) and broadened its mandate to cover working children.

Aid donors can play a role by supporting government and community efforts to address child labour, though progress in this area will depend largely upon the extent to which countries can alleviate the conditions of poverty and directly address the issues on a national basis. Given the scale

and complexity of the problem, there is a growing opinion that national and international efforts and domestic enforcement capacity should focus sharply on the more extreme forms of exploitation such as bonded child labour, child trafficking and child prostitution.

The elimination of child labour in countries where it was once common came about through a combination of economic growth and changing attitudes towards children. These changes were accompanied by the development of better legal and enforcement measures that made admission to employment conditional upon completion of a statutory number of years of school attendance up to a specified age. Current international consensus on exploitative child labour recommends a combination of measures to tackle the problem. These need to be adapted on a country-by-country basis, as the design of effective action against child labour requires a clear understanding of local economic, social and cultural conditions.

**Preventative measures** address the underlying conditions that cause child labour through social and economic development that overcomes poverty on a long-term basis. As well as encouraging the development of an environment conducive to private sector expansion and employment creation, some governments have introduced a variety of poverty-



alleviation programs that specifically focus on improving income opportunities for poor families, particularly women. These programs include the construction of basic infrastructure like feeder roads which improve access to markets and projects which introduce new farming techniques to increase productivity.

In this context, micro-enterprise programs can make an important contribution. These programs often combine non-formal education programs with credit assistance for self-employment. Successful interventions will reduce family dependence on children's earnings. However, they can also inadvertently worsen the situation with children, especially girls, often employed on a casual or piece-work basis in small, unregulated enterprises or as unpaid family labour in household establishments.

In conjunction with economic growth and poverty alleviation programs, expanding educational opportunities is also a critical intervention. *Universal primary education* is a major instrument for removing children from the labour force. However, the relationship between education and child labour is not a simple one. While families are prepared to make major sacrifices for the education of their children, they will make the investment only if they see education as economically affordable, physically accessible, and relevant in terms of future employment prospects. Some countries have introduced programs to decrease the cost of education to poor families in order to make schooling more attractive. These programs offer free school meals, clothing and books to children from poor families. Other programs offer apprenticeships or other types of school-work

combinations that provide education with income as an alternative to child labour. However, there are many practical problems to sustaining and developing such programs on a larger scale. The subsidy approach is expensive, and the cost can only be justified if indeed these incentives go to the people for whom they are intended.

The elimination of child labour requires *raising awareness* at all levels of society. Social attitudes have to change and political commitment is essential. Legal protection is required to underpin these efforts and sustain achievements. Well-organised advocacy campaigns can contribute to changing social attitudes. Community groups and the media can also play an important role in drawing public attention to egregious instances.

**Rehabilitative measures** are aimed directly at helping children now suffering from exploitation. Such services include flexible education programs and primary health care, as well as temporary shelter, legal and medical assistance. Many rehabilitative programs also include income generating schemes for families of working children, often carried out in conjunction with broader government development programs. While these rehabilitative programs can be resource intensive, they do provide an essential humanitarian service to children in difficult circumstances.

**Trade sanctions** have been advocated by some groups as a possible way to reduce child labour. Experience to date,

however, indicates that import bans against products of exploitative child labour are not effective. Firstly, only a very small percentage of the products of child labour are made for export. Most are used in the domestic market. Trade bans would therefore have a minor impact on the overall problem. Secondly, trade sanctions could result in even greater hardship for the children consequently dismissed from employment. In some instances it could force them into even more hazardous employment. On the other hand, measures such as codes of conduct and labelling schemes can be useful mechanisms. An example is the 'rugmark' scheme in Bangladesh by which carpets are labelled free from exploitative labour.

A mix of approaches is needed to address the complexity of exploitative child labour. While child labour will gradually decrease with higher levels of social and economic development, in the medium-term elimination of the more abusive and hazardous forms of child labour can only be achieved through a strong political commitment to invest in education and in complementary programs of poverty alleviation targeted at the poorest and most vulnerable groups. Alongside these efforts is the need for sustained information and education campaigns to counter values that legitimise exploitative child labour.

# DEVELOPMENT

## ISSUES BRIEF