



THE MAGAZINE OF AUSTRALIA'S OVERSEAS AID PROGRAM

# focus

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SOLOMON ISLANDS

» ESTABLISHING THE PEACE

TERRORISM IS A THREAT WHICH HAS NO GEOGRAPHIC OR MORAL BOUNDARIES; A THREAT TO ONE COUNTRY IMPACTS ON US ALL.



## FROM THE MINISTER

I welcome this edition of *Focus* and the attention it is giving to the issue of stability and security in the Asia-Pacific region.

Australia is at the forefront of international support to its regional neighbours and will continue to be a strong advocate of aid in the Asia-Pacific region. This edition of *Focus* highlights activities supporting the Australian Government's continuing commitment to regional security, stability and economic growth.

As we have seen, the absence of security, law and order and stability can have dramatic and devastating economic and social consequences in our region. Terrorism is a threat which has no geographic or moral boundaries; a threat to one country impacts on us all.

It is in Australia's national interest to enhance international security. The Australian aid program is providing a lead role in supporting conflict resolution in the Asia-Pacific region to safeguard

stability and the important gains made in nation-building activities with our neighbouring countries. These activities are part of a larger effort by the Australian Government to maintain and develop stronger defences against terrorism in our region and the many other causes and consequences of instability – such as those featured in this edition.

Ensuring the stability and security of our region requires a long-term investment in people and institutions. The Australian Government, including through AusAID's work, is committed to working in cooperation with the region on key areas such as security and governance.

As part of our activities, the Australian Government is working closely with law enforcement agencies in neighbouring regions to deter and defeat terrorism, people trafficking and other transnational crime. AusAID works in partnership with many Australian Government agencies to

ensure a strong, coordinated and effective approach. These include the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Attorney-General's Department, the Australian Federal Police, The Treasury, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, the Department of Finance and Administration, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service.

The Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) is helping restore security and working to develop good governance and address corruption. The deployment of expatriate officers has also extended to areas of policing, law and justice, and economic and public sector management.

Currently it is not an easy security environment in the Asia-Pacific region for the delivery of international development assistance, but Australian

Government officials are committed to working for peaceful solutions.

The Australian aid program is a key contributor in this sustained effort to maintain security and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and will continue to provide practical assistance and steady support to countries in need.

Alexander Downer  
Minister for Foreign Affairs

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, and the Papua New Guinean Foreign Minister, Sir Rabbie Namaliu, at the Ministerial Forum in Australia, December 2003. Australia and Papua New Guinea signed the agreement for the Enhanced Cooperation Program. Under this agreement Australia has undertaken to help the Government of Papua New Guinea to promote sound economic management and growth and to improve law and order. Photo: AusAID

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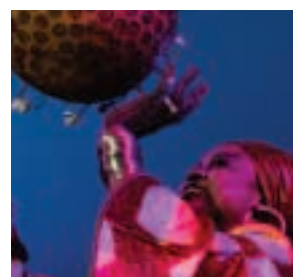
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**Government aid in focus** The Australian aid program is committed to reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development in the Asia Pacific, Africa and the Middle East. Australian businesses and people play a major role in delivering the aid program. Australian expertise, Australian experience and Australian resources are used to tackle poverty. And by investing in development Australia is investing in its future. In 2004-05 Australia plans to spend almost \$2.133 billion on development assistance. The aid program focuses on promoting regional peace, stability and economic development through several hundred large and small-scale projects. Countries to which Australia is committed include Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Tuvalu (the Pacific region); Indonesia, East Timor, Vietnam, Philippines, China, Mongolia, Cambodia, Thailand, Lao PDR, Burma (East Asia); Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan, Maldives, Bhutan (South Asia); and Africa and the Middle East.

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COVER: Solomon Islanders deserve a secure and stable future. Photo: Brian Hartigan/AFP



# IN BRIEF

## ASEAN AUSTRALIA – 30 YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION



Mr Ong with Mr Downer. It was Mr Ong's first visit to Australia as ASEAN Secretary-General. Photo: AUSPIC

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, welcomed ASEAN Secretary-General Ong Keng Yong to Australia to mark the 30th anniversary of Australia's dialogue partnership with ASEAN.

Mr Downer said the visit emphasised the importance placed on the partnership since Australia became ASEAN's first dialogue partner in 1974.

The Minister also launched the publication, *ASEAN and Australia: 30 years of development cooperation*, documenting the ASEAN Australia Economic Cooperation Program (AAECP).

'Today, the focus is economic and trade-related assistance in the context of both regional and multilateral trade policy priorities – and the challenges and opportunities presented by globalisation,' Mr Downer said.

'We are working together with ASEAN, too, to ensure that we enhance the security of our region as well as its prosperity.'

In return, Mr Ong thanked Australia for the help and care it provides for ASEAN.

'Member countries and people continue to look at Australia as a wonderful neighbour and friend,' Mr Ong said.

## FOOD AID TO AFRICA

Australia has been supporting the United Nations World Food Programme, and from March 2002 has committed \$56 million towards reducing the impact of food crises in Africa. Australia's most recent contribution of \$12.8 million will assist people in southern Africa, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

James Morris, the head of the United Nations World Food Programme, recently visited Australia and commented that in a climate of perpetual hunger, young people can often lose faith in the future. 'If they do not even know where their next meal is coming from, they become easy targets for those who recruit for terrorist groups,' said Mr Morris.

'Food security can help dispel the sense of desperation and futility that drive hungry people, especially the young into extremist causes. We are very grateful to Australia for this generous contribution and we will work closely with them to target food aid to as many of the most vulnerable in these three areas as possible,' he said.

**The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Chris Gallus, with the Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme, James Morris, at Parliament House, Canberra.**  
Photo: AUSPIC



## WORLD BANK

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, met with the President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, in early February to discuss Australia's aid program to Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. Also on their agenda was the Australian Government's working relationship with the World Bank.

Earlier in an interview on ABC television's *The 7.30 Report*, James Wolfensohn had commented that '...the fundamental cause of, if not wars, certainly disequilibrium and conflict and, in many cases, terror, is fundamentally poverty.'

Mr Downer advised Mr Wolfensohn of Australia's continuing support in helping develop stability in the Asia-Pacific region: '...we put a lot more effort in the region into helping countries in our neighbourhood with improved governance. And I did talk to Mr Wolfensohn about that and I think he's pretty much on side there,' the Minister said.

In a media interview two days after their meeting, Minister Downer said that James Wolfensohn '...was very impressed with what Australia is doing in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. And I think cooperation with the World Bank in those two areas, as well as beyond that in the region, is very important.'



Mr Bruce Davis, Director General of AusAID with Dr Richard Feachem, the Executive Director of the Global Fund. Photo: AusAID

## AUSTRALIA JOINS GLOBAL FUND

To assist in the fight against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, Australia is to contribute up to \$25 million over three years to the Global Fund, which was established in 2002 by the international community, under the patronage of the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan.

The Global Fund raises funds and distributes additional resources to prevent and provide treatment for AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

The Executive Director of the Global Fund, Dr Richard Feachem, welcomes Australia's contribution, and during a visit to Australia in February 2004 he thanked Downer

for '...the positive and supportive attitude of the Australian Government towards the Global Fund. This is very important to us both in terms of the financial contribution that he has just announced but also in terms of the country-by-country collaboration with Australian aid and development assistance in collaboration with AusAID, particularly in the countries close to Australia...'

Dr Feachem said the Global Fund's finances are '...essentially designed to expand and enhance programs that AusAID has already laid the foundation for and is supporting in many ways.'

## AUSAID: SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In recent months, the Australian aid program has been called upon to deliver immediate emergency responses to communities in need, such as on Vanuatu, Niue and the islands of Samoa, in the wake of cyclones.

In Solomon Islands Australia is working closely with regional partners to improve the on-the-ground law and order and budgetary situation, under the auspices of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). Building on the aid program's existing footholds substantial progress has been made. RAMSI is now working with Solomon Islands to support longer-term reform and capacity building in key areas, including economic governance, law and justice and the machinery of government.

In Papua New Guinea our Enhanced Cooperation Program – a joint initiative with the Government of Papua New Guinea – will support immediate action to promote sound economic management and growth. It will also help to improve law and order and the integrity of national security infrastructure. A fundamental objective of the Enhanced Cooperation Program is to build Papua New Guinea's capacity through lasting institution-to-institution linkages. The program's success will not be measured by improvements in Papua New Guinean institutions at a point in time but through the establishment of broad ranging and long-term relationships between Australian and Papua

New Guinean institutions.

In Indonesia's Papua Province, Australia will fund, through UNICEF, a further two years of activities aimed at improving maternal health in selected districts. This decision follows the recent visit by an AusAID staff member to Papua where the benefits of previous Australian funding for maternal and child health were evident. Papua has been agreed as a focus province for Australian aid between the governments of Australia and Indonesia, and health is a priority sector for this assistance.

### THE WAY AUSAID WORKS

The Australian Government's aid program works with many different organisations, in varied circumstances and often on very sensitive issues such as people trafficking – an issue highlighted in this edition of *Focus*. I would like to let you know what AusAID expects of its staff members when working in Australia or overseas.

All employees of AusAID are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the *Public Service Act 1999* and the *Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct in Practice* for Australian public servants. These requirements apply to all AusAID employees whether they are working as permanent or temporary public servants, as contractual employees, contractors or as locally-engaged staff.

**Bruce Davis is the Director General of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).**





Covered in sweat and mud — a child labourer at a brick factory in Mirpur, Bangladesh. Photo: Trygve Bolstad/Panos Pictures

THE UNITED NATIONS ESTIMATES THAT BETWEEN  
800,000 AND 900,000 PEOPLE ARE TRAFFICKED  
ACROSS INTERNATIONAL BORDERS ANNUALLY.

# STOPPING THE TRAFFICK



Chinese paramilitary officers read out a notice to young women caught during a people trafficking bust in Xiamen, Fujian Province, China, in September 2003. Girls from China are often 'trafficked' to Taiwan where they expect to find a better life but more usually end up in prostitution. Photo: Chinatopix/AP



# HELPING THE VICTIMS

## AND PROSECUTING THE PERPETRATORS

### THE VICTIM

Nari\* is a fifteen-year-old Cambodian girl from a village near the Thai border. Her mother and aunts work in the rice fields. Her father stepped on a landmine five years ago, losing his leg, and is now unable to work.

Nari left school a few years ago to help care for her younger brothers and sisters. Her family is very poor. A young woman visits Nari's village and she describes her city life in Thailand. She talks about the bright lights and the glamorous job she has as a dancer in a bar. Nari is interested in what the woman is saying. She doesn't want to be a dancer but she would like to be a waitress in a restaurant. She wants a better life and the money to help her family.

The young woman promises to help Nari and tells her to expect a visit from some 'friends' who will arrange a job for her in Bangkok. Nari talks to her parents about the idea. They're not keen but they agree with Nari that they need the extra money. After all, they say, it won't be forever.



Poa from Battambang Province, Cambodia, was just 16 years old when she was forced into prostitution in Bangkok. She was one of the luckier ones who escaped and is now in a shelter for trafficked victims. Photo: Mikkel Ostergaard/Panos Pictures



A few weeks later the young woman's 'friends' visit Nari. They say they've found her a job as a waitress in a restaurant in a smart Bangkok hotel. All the paperwork has been arranged for her to work. Nari can't believe her luck, especially when she hears how much money she'll earn.

As soon as she arrives in Bangkok, things start to go terribly wrong. Instead of going directly to the hotel where they say she'll live, Nari's 'friends' take her to a house where she meets other young girls from Cambodia. The girls look ill, their eyes are glazed, they've got marks and bruises on their bodies. Nari feels scared and wants to go home. When she protests to her 'friends', they start to laugh and

then hit her and lock her in a room.

Later that day, a man visits Nari and rapes her. She is profoundly distressed and frightened. The same thing happens to her each day over the next three days. By the end of the week, she's physically and emotionally exhausted and she's in a deep state of shock.

The next day Nari's given clean clothes and told to go to another room where a man waits for her. This is Nari's introduction to prostitution. She has just become the latest victim of trafficking for sexual servitude.

Nari is controlled and bullied by the trafficker. She's in a new country, and she's remote from everyone and everything safe and

familiar. She has no money, nor the means to get back home. Her 'friends' say they'll harm her and her family if she tries to run away. She's too frightened to escape in case the traffickers find her and carry out their threats. She doesn't want to bring shame on her family who'll despair that they let her go.

Also, Nari can't speak the local language, she's been told that she's working illegally in the country and that she'll be punished if the local authorities find her. Nari's typical of a trafficked victim. She's young, poor, has little education and few prospects. She watches television and is captivated by the glamour and glitz of a large city.

Although Nari is not a real person, the situation described is reality for many trafficked people from many developing countries. Unscrupulous people can easily trick parents into sending their children away. Parents think they're sending their children to better lives but in fact they're sending them to work in factories or as domestic servants. Men without jobs in a poor country can also be duped into believing they will be given work in a wealthier country.

Trafficked people often end up working long hours in sweatshops for little or no pay. Often they're unpaid prostitutes with no money, no freedom and at risk of being diseased. In effect, they're prisoners who are unable to go home – even if they desperately want their freedom.

#### THE TRAFFICKER

The people traffickers are opportunists. Their profile is difficult to define but they commonly find and trick vulnerable people for their own profit. They prey on poor people who desperately need to earn

money. People trafficking is big business. It's a world based on fear, lies and deception: it takes advantage of people who are bought and sold for pleasure and enormous profit.

People traffickers often work in organised crime groups. As technology becomes more sophisticated, they're able to produce convincing fake passports and papers. Access to large amounts of money also means it's easier for people traffickers to try to bribe the police and border officials. Currently many countries don't have well-established investigation procedures in place or the laws to track down, to prosecute and to punish people traffickers.

#### ON AUSTRALIA'S DOORSTEP

People trafficking occurs throughout the world but South East Asia has emerged as a hub in Australia's region. Countries such as Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Burma, which are among the least developed in the region, provide a steady source of people for traffickers. Many trafficked people end up in wealthier Asian countries. A very small number might end up in Australia. The secretive, underground nature of this crime makes it hard to quantify exact numbers, but the United Nations estimates about 200,000 women and children are trafficked in South-East Asia every year.

Australia is currently working with Laos, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia to establish special units, within their justice sectors, to better equip the police and prosecutors in handling people trafficking. The police and immigration officers are also linking up with counterparts in other countries to exchange information about people traffickers.

## WHAT IS PEOPLE TRAFFICKING?

People trafficking involves deceiving or coercing people into travelling to other countries for illegal gain as part of an organised crime racket. Often the people who are trafficked aren't aware that they're being exploited. The profit made by the traffickers doesn't come from moving someone to a new country but from the sale of the sexual services or the labour of the trafficked person in the new country.

The United Nations Protocol to *Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* aims to prevent and combat trafficking, protect and assist victims and promote international cooperation in the prevention of trafficking. The protocol was enacted on 25 December 2003, signed by 117 countries, including Australia, and legally endorsed by 47 countries.

## TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN, INCLUDING FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, BOTH REGIONALLY AND GLOBALLY, IS OF INCREASING CONCERN.

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ALEXANDER DOWNER

\* Nari is a fictitious person.



ABOVE: A group of Cambodian men wait to return to their families after being rescued by human rights workers from the southern province of Koh Kong, Cambodia. Hundreds of men and boys are sent to Thailand every month to work under slave-like conditions on fishing boats and construction sites. Photo: Stinger/AP

ABOVE RIGHT: Young prostitutes at the entrance to a brothel in the Tanbazar red-light district of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Photo: Martin Adler/Panos Pictures

RIGHT: Child labourers cutting cane on a sugar plantation, Leyte Island, Philippines. Photo: Jeremy Horner/Panos Pictures



As part of this global approach, the United Nations Development Program and the International Organization for Migration have joined forces with local non-government agencies to assist in resettling trafficked people to their original home country or moving them to a safer country.

During this repatriation period, fear can often cripple the resolve of a trafficked person. They might want to give evidence to the police, to help put their traffickers behind bars, but they're also frightened that they'll be punished by crime gangs for assisting the police. New laws are now being introduced in Australia to make it easier for trafficked people to help police with their investigations. In tandem with many other countries, Australia has signed the United Nations Protocol to *Prevent,*

*Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children,* which is designed to make it harder for traffickers to operate in the future. People traffickers now face a prison sentence in Australia of between seven and 25 years; many other countries are also tightening their laws to prevent the trafficking of people.

As Mary Robinson, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, recently said, 'The women and children who are subjected to this inhumane cruelty are not foreign to us. They are our sisters and daughters, they are our children. This trafficking in them must stop. In today's world there is no place for this. It must be stopped, stopped completely.' EJ



## USING THE LAW



### ASIA REGIONAL COOPERATION TO PREVENT PEOPLE TRAFFICKING

From an office on the 21st floor of a skyscraper in central Bangkok, Australian lawyer Anne Gallagher is on the phone to a colleague in Cambodia. Together they're working on the finer details of a people trafficking course run at

the new School of Justice and Magistracy. The new course forms part of the basic training for the next generation of judges and magistrates. It's also designed to give them an insight into the crime of people trafficking.

The Cambodian course is part of a larger joint program running in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Burma to develop specialist training. Over time, the program will help shape the way people traffickers are dealt with by the criminal justice system in these countries.

Anne Gallagher is heading the program coordinated by an Australian team with support from the Australian Government. She says, 'People trafficking is an old crime but a new priority for governments. Most countries are still in the early stages of setting up procedures to protect victims and to prosecute and punish perpetrators. Our program works with police and legal institutions to make it easier to investigate and apprehend traffickers.

'We provide support to specialist police and help equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to investigate this crime. We build bridges between law enforcement agencies and those working with

victims of trafficking so they present a united force against traffickers.'

Part of the new program includes field trips so police in the four countries get to know each other. Anne's team also keeps in touch with the Australian Federal Police in Canberra and within the Asia region.

'Trafficking is a transnational crime so police and law enforcers in one country need to get to know and trust their counterparts in the other countries. People traffickers will find it harder to operate if they're up against a regional group of police officials with special skills in tracking them down across borders. By helping countries build up their police forces and legal systems, we can secure justice for victims of trafficking and end the current impunity enjoyed by perpetrators,' she says.

**Anne Gallagher outside the Australian Federal Police College in Canberra.**  
Photo: Irene Dowdy/ID Photographics

## PASSPORT SECURITY



Australia is funding two laboratories in Manila to help immigration officials detect fraudulent travel documents used in illegal immigration. Staff in Manila and at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport are being trained in the art of fraud detection and the use of an international database system to track down suspicious people.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Chris Gallus, visited the Philippines recently to view the fraud detection system firsthand. 'This is a further example of enhanced cooperation between Australia and the Philippines in dealing with migration issues, particularly in combating illegal migration and people smuggling,'

Mrs Gallus says. 'Fighting terrorism is a high priority for both governments and the laboratories are part of a \$5 million counter-terrorism assistance package provided by Australia.'

**Mrs Gallus uses a microscope that can detect fraudulent travel documents.**  
Photo: AusAID



## A UNITED GOVERNMENT APPROACH

Last October the Australian Government announced a comprehensive \$20 million whole-of-government package to combat trafficking in persons and complement existing measures. The Minister for Justice and Customs, Chris Ellison, said, 'The illegal international trade in people has been growing considerably in recent years. Australia will not tolerate this repugnant crime.'

The package is coordinated by the *Commonwealth Action Plan to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons* and includes a number of new measures to tackle people trafficking.

- » The United Nations Protocol to *Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, was tabled in the Australian Parliament in December 2003 as part of Australia's ratification process.
- » The Transnational Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Team, established by the Australian Federal Police, is investigating trafficking and sexual servitude. This 23-member mobile strike team combines investigators and intelligence analysts and draws on overseas, and Australian State and Territory forces to combat trafficking. A number of alleged traffickers have been arrested.
- » The Australian Federal Police and the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs are developing and refining protocols and interview procedures to identify trafficked people. Both organisations are arranging
- referrals for investigations into people trafficking and managing reintegration procedures for people who have been trafficked.
- » Immigration officers and sections of various police forces are receiving specialist training on trafficking issues. Officers are being trained to recognise indicators of trafficking and respond appropriately to the needs of victims.
- » Australia is encouraging increased Asian regional cooperation to combat people smuggling and people trafficking.
- » A senior migration officer is working closely with the Australian Federal Police in Thailand to focus on people trafficking in the South-East Asian region.
- » A new visa, for people who have been trafficked, was introduced in January this year to work in conjunction with the existing Criminal Justice Stay visa. These visas enable people who are assisting, or who have assisted, with a trafficking investigation or prosecution to remain lawfully in Australia and, in some cases, to remain permanently.
- » Support is being provided to trafficked people through Centrelink, including accommodation and living expenses and access to legal, medical, training and counselling services. Permanent case managers are also appointed to work with people who have been trafficked.
- » Existing federal legislation is being reviewed to ensure that

the detection and identification of people trafficking is comprehensively included in government activities, and this also includes the prosecution of people traffickers. The interception of various telecommunication activities is now also used in Australia to investigate *Criminal Code* offences such as slavery, sexual servitude, deceptive recruiting and people smuggling.

- » A reintegration assistance project involving AusAID and the International Organization for Migration is being developed to assist people who have been trafficked and who are returned to certain source countries in South-East Asia.
- » Commonwealth, State and Territory agencies are developing an Australian policing strategy to combat trafficking in women for sexual servitude.
- » A domestic community awareness strategy is under development by the Australian Government.

Another important measure previously introduced by the Australian Government to counter the exploitation of children is:

- » *The Crimes (Child Sex Tourism) Amendment Act 1994*. This Act was recently enacted to prosecute Australians who engage in, or benefit from, sexual activity with children under 16 years while travelling overseas. The law is designed to protect children overseas, and carries a penalty of up to 17 years in gaol for individuals and up to \$561,000 for companies.

## A SAFE PLACE

### BAAN KREDTRAKARN CENTRE FOR TRAFFICKED WOMEN AND CHILDREN



The Baan Kredtrakarn Centre is just north of Bangkok and was established by the Thai Government to provide assistance to people who've been trafficked from Thailand and neighbouring countries. The centre receives funding from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and Australia funds the IOM's return and reintegration program which holds follow-up case visits within one year of a person's reintegration into their home community. This is part of Australia's aid program to support stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

On a recent visit to Baan Kredtrakarn, Mrs Gallus met several women and girls currently staying at the centre and says the women's stories are harrowing:

‘This shouldn’t happen to anyone. People trafficking is a brutal crime. The steps Australia is taking will help bring traffickers to justice. Centres such as this are essential in helping women and children create new lives for themselves.’

Women and children usually reach the centre after being rescued by the police or with help from staff working with various non-government organisations. The children attend school, and the women learn practical skills such as weaving, sewing and how to use computers to help them earn a living. They also gain some English language skills to help them communicate with people from other countries. When the women and children are repatriated to their home countries, the Baan Kredtrakarn Centre arranges financial and logistical support for them.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Chris Gallus, met several of the young women at the Baan Kredtrakarn Centre in Thailand. Photo: AusAID

## AMONG FRIENDS

**Lucy Abbott worked at the Baan Kredtrakarn Centre during her 12-month assignment as an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development. She says she found many of the girls were anxious, depressed and timid.**

‘The girls had been through a difficult time. They are aged between 12 and 18. Some were even younger. Many had been tricked into moving to the city to be a domestic servant, thinking they would be working reasonable hours and receiving decent pay. In fact, they were often ‘on call’ 24 hours a day and perhaps being sexually abused by their employer. Others were told they would be working in a factory but instead were sold to a brothel. They were not given any money but were told their wages were being sent back to their families. In fact, they were kept by the employer.’

Lucy says other girls were told they had to repay a ‘debt’ to their employer. ‘The “debt” was the fee paid by the employer to the trafficker and the girls’ food and accommodation. Many of the girls believed they had to honour the

“debt” and persisted in paying it back in tiny payments over months and years.

‘When the girls arrived at Baan Kredtrakarn they were timid and emotionally damaged. It was part of my job to help the newcomers feel comfortable, make friends and get to know their teachers. Language was a big issue because there was no common language either among the girls or the volunteers. Many of the girls did not speak Thai but Burmese, Cambodian, Laos or Hill Tribe dialects. We ended up communicating through a mixture of words, signs and body language. This would lead to some funny gestures and everyone used to break up in fits of giggles. Because the girls were so often frightened and nervous when they arrived at the centre, this actually helped break the ice.’

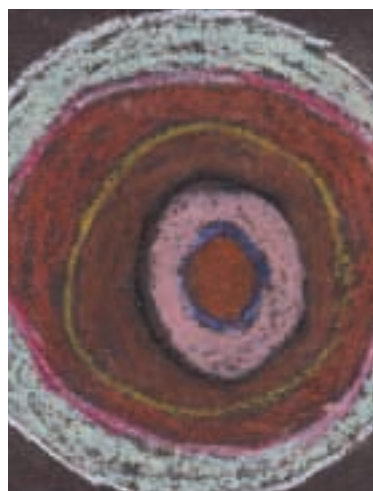
Lucy describes how they would watch videos where the cartoon characters had been in similar situations. ‘By identifying with the characters, the girls would feel less alone and could recognise they were in no way to blame for ending up part of the people trafficking industry. Other times, when they couldn’t talk about their past because it was too traumatic, they’d express themselves through art.’

In the afternoons, the centre staff encourage the women to develop their language skills, and the children sing, play games and weave friendship bracelets. Lucy says this is important for everyone at the centre: ‘The girls learnt to be children again. In time, many learn practical skills that will help them earn a living or get a job.’

While the days were long, hot and busy looking after 40 girls, Lucy says it was rewarding ‘to see fragile, shy and damaged girls blossom into bundles of enthusiasm and smiles. In the shelter many found stability, friendship and nurturing for the first time in a long time.’



Lucy Abbott with some of the staff members at the Baan Kredtrakarn Centre, Thailand. Photo: Lucy Abbott



Through the art program at Baan Kredtrakarn young women are able to express their feelings about their experiences, which helps them to recover. Photos: Lucy Abbott



# STRUGGLES CONTINUE TO WIPE OUT SLAVERY

There is a common belief that slavery is a thing of the past. People were taught at school about the wonderful work done by organisations such as the Anti-Slavery International in London and similar organisations (such as the Anti-Slavery Society in Australia), and activists such as William Wilberforce.



They assume that the campaign to end slavery was won years ago. The British outlawed slavery in the 1830s and the United States in the 1860s.

But the United Nations is using 2004 as a year to commemorate the struggle against slavery and its abolition – and to call on the international community to continue the struggle. Slavery is not a thing of the past.

Slavery might have the following characteristics. A slave is forced to work through mental or physical threat. The person is owned or controlled by an ‘employer’, usually through mental or physical abuse or threatened abuse. The person is dehumanised by being treated as a commodity and bought or sold as a ‘property’. There are also restrictions placed on the person’s freedom of movement.

## SLAVERY HAS FIVE MAIN FORMS

First, about 20 million people are enslaved as bonded labourers around the world – most are in South Asia. This is the least-known form of slavery today and yet it is the most widely used method of enslaving people. For example, these people may have borrowed money for as little as the cost of medicine for a sick child, and they are working to pay it off.

Unfortunately, they cannot read or write and therefore have no idea when they have worked off the debt – and so they are just kept working. They receive basic food and shelter as ‘payment’ for their work. But they might never pay off the loan, which can be passed down through several generations. Thanks to organisations such as the Anti-Slavery International, such work is now a criminal

offence under international law. But governments and police have been slow to enforce the rules or just ignore them.

Second, there is child labour. Of course, some types of work can make a useful contribution to a child’s development.

Work can help children learn about responsibility and develop particular skills that will benefit them and the rest of society. But the International Labour Organisation estimates that 179 million children aged between five and 17 are in the worst forms of child labour – this is work that is hazardous to their mental and physical health. This is one in every eight of the world’s children.

Third, there is early and forced marriage. This affects women and girls – married without choice and forced into lives of servitude, often





accompanied by physical violence.

Fourth, there are about 300,000 child soldiers in more than 30 areas of conflict worldwide, some as young as 10.

Child soldiers might fight on the front line and also work in support roles. Girls are often obliged to be 'soldiers' wives'.

Even if they are eventually freed from their military roles, the children are psychologically scarred for life by what they have seen and done.

Finally, human trafficking is the fastest-growing means by which people are enslaved today. Women, children and men are coerced and deceived by traffickers who promise work with good pay and opportunities in areas far from their family and community.

The reality is a harsh contrast. Instead, they are forced through the

threat or use of violence to work against their will. At least 700,000 people are trafficked each year.

Australia is involved in international efforts to stop slavery and the slave trade.

On trafficking, for example, the Australian Government signed a memorandum of understanding with the Thai Government on regional cooperation to combat trafficking.

Australia is contributing up to \$8.5 million to this project as a part of a much broader package of Australian development assistance aimed at countering people smuggling, trafficking in women and related transnational crime in the Asia-Pacific region. The total package is about \$24 million for a six-year period.

Therefore, slavery is not just a matter for the history books. It is

still a flourishing business that requires international action to combat it. This 'international year' is a good opportunity to make sure that steps are taken to really abolish it.

Keith Suter chairs the Board of Trustees Anti-Slavery Society (Australia) (Article first published in the *Canberra Times*, 27 January 2004. Reproduced by permission) <<http://www.Anti-slaverysociety.adre.com/index.htm>> <<http://www.Antislavery.org>>



International Year for the Commemoration of the Struggle Against Slavery and its Abolition 2004

ABOVE: Indian activists of the United Nations Trust Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery pose as bonded labourers with their arms tied by rope to mark the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery in New Delhi, 2 December 2003. India has the largest number of workers in the world with estimates of between 11.28 million to 23.2 million child labourers. Photo: Prakash Singh/AFP

ABOVE LEFT: Slave labour. A sweatshop south of Dhaka, Bangladesh, employs 280 garment workers, including children. Factories like this one fail to comply with the most basic health and safety regulations. Overtime is rarely paid although employees often work 70 and 80 hours a week. Their average salary is equivalent to about US\$14 a month. There is no freedom of association, unions are forbidden and workers can be sacked without cause. Photo: Fernando Molerres/Panos Pictures





A few days after known militant leader Harold Keke was arrested, Jimmy Rasta (pictured) and his men surrendered their weapons and ammunition, as part of the weapon hand-back amnesty. Photo: Gary Ramage/Defence

# ESTABLISHING THE PEACE

THE IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE OF THE REGIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION TO SOLOMON ISLANDS (RAMSI) IS THE RESTORATION OF LAW AND ORDER. RAMSI POLICE, WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE ROYAL SOLOMON ISLANDS POLICE AND SUPPORTED BY RAMSI'S MILITARY COMPONENT, ARE HELPING TO BRING BACK PEACE AND RESPECT FOR THE RULE OF LAW. BUT RAMSI IS ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN JUST RESTORING LAW AND ORDER. INCREASINGLY, ITS FOCUS IS ON NATION BUILDING.



Weathercoast, Solomon Islands. Sergeant Martin Wilks comforts eight-year-old Beatrice Bettyrise while Lieutenant Colonel John Turner treats her badly cut arm. The Australian-led mission to Solomon Islands is assisting with medical emergencies as well as law and order as part of the operation, *Helpem Fren* (Pijin for 'Help a Friend'). The Australian aid program will continue to help with the delivery of basic services.

Photo: Gary Ramage/Defence





THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S AID PROGRAM IS A CRUCIAL PART OF THE REGIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION TO SOLOMON ISLANDS (RAMSI).



**[1] Economic vitality.** Fish market, Honiara. With the return to law and order the markets are once more bustling. Traders feel safe to travel and there are plenty of buyers as workers are getting paid again. Photo: Peter Davis

**[2] Correctional services.** Australian Philip Norris, Director General of Prisons in Solomon Islands with Bernice Wasia, a newly-trained prison officer. Australian aid is strongly supporting the law and justice sector. Photo: Peter Davis

**[3] Customs.** Helping to train Solomon Islander officials across all government sectors, including customs, is an area of

need. Photo: GaryRamage/ Defence

**[4] Police.** Members of the Participating Police Force at a reconciliation meeting on the Weathercoast. *Left to right:* Keshwa (Fiji), Faapine Lavi (Samoa), Darren (New Zealand) and Graeme (Australia). Police from around the Pacific are helping RAMSI to establish law and order and rebuild the nation. Photo: Peter Davis

**[5] Peace.** A young Solomon Islander displays her hope for the future. Photo: Gary Ramage/Defence

**[6] Finance.** Ms Decima Sesebo, personal assistant to the Minister of Finance says, 'During the tensions, many of us were

afraid to come to work but now things are much better. More money is flowing to the government and I can see very positive changes ahead.' Advisers from Australian Government departments are working with RAMSI through AusAID to reform the financial and public sectors of government and to stabilise the country's budget. Photo: Peter Davis

**[7] Health.** National Referral Hospital, Honiara. With support from AusAID, a visiting surgical team from the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and another surgeon from Papua New Guinea helps with complex surgical procedures.

Australian aid is rebuilding the health sector by providing staff training, medicines and emergency transport. It is also establishing regional clinics and installing radio communications. Photo: Allan Gilvear

**[8] Law and Justice.** Queenslander Jane Hamilton-White, Principal Magistrate and Jimmy Hanahunu, Clerk of the Court, at work. In partnership with Solomon Islands, RAMSI has now got the court system working again. Justice is a vital element in peace building. Photo: Peter Davis





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## REBUILDING A NATION

**Building on Australia's existing aid program in Solomon Islands, AusAID officers are working as an integral part of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) to advise on development cooperation and assist with peacemaking and nation-building activities to help the country recover from a period of tension and conflict. Nick Warner, RAMSI Special Coordinator, outlines what the countries of the Pacific – including Australia – are doing in a regionally cooperative mission to give Solomon Islands the chance for a better future.**

ABOVE: Thousands of local residents, young and old, turned out for 'Clean up Honiara Day' which was organised by the Honiara City Council and supported by RAMSI. Photo: Gary Ramage/Defence

If you can, imagine a country where hospitals, schools and medical clinics have ceased to function for a lack of funds, imagine a nation where public servants go weeks without pay – not surprisingly, some turn up to work, but many do not. Imagine roads that are literally falling apart, public thoroughfares that are the preserve of drunks and thieves. Then add to that mix – guns, ethnic tensions, rogue police, corrupt politicians and business people, and armed criminals.

This is the nation which greeted RAMSI in the early hours of 24 July last year when the first elements of an Australian-led, Pacific operation arrived in the Solomon Islands. Eight months later, that nation no longer exists.

Solomon Islanders can now move freely and without fear through their stunningly beautiful country. Public finances, free from extortion and demands for 'compensation', are slowly stabilising, and basic services are

gradually being restored. Public servants are now paid on time, the sick are being treated, children are back at school and a new sense of purpose is apparent.

On our arrival in the Solomon Islands, RAMSI's civilian, police and military leaders laid out the framework of Operation *Helpem Fren* to the Prime Minister, his Cabinet, the Opposition, the police and to the people of Solomon Islands. Driving the RAMSI operation was the conviction that, for too long, the Solomon Islanders had suffered at the hands of a small number of militants and criminals who had terrorised the island bringing it to its knees.

RAMSI also involved nine regional countries including Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, PNG, Tonga, Samoa, Vanuatu, Kiribati and the Cook Islands. In the first vital phase, RAMSI was a police-led operation, with about 300 police officers backed by about 1,700 military personnel, that helped build a crucial environment of compliance.

In the first months of RAMSI's operation, there were four key early successes. In planning the operation, it was decided that the first priority would be to disarm the militants, who retained high-powered weapons taken from police armouries during the so-called 'ethnic tensions'.

In the first week of Operation *Helpem Fren* we announced a nationwide gun amnesty with the endorsement of the Solomon Islands Government which ran for three weeks throughout the country. All guns were to be handed in, without exception, and this included all police weapons.

A public information campaign,

including visits to hundreds of towns and villages by plane, helicopter and ship, helped spread the word. This was run in conjunction with a radio and newspaper campaign by the Solomon Islands Government's intervention taskforce. We also worked closely with the National Peace Council, led by former Speaker of Parliament, Paul Tovua.

As a result, more than 3,700 guns, including about 700 high-powered military-style weapons, were ultimately collected. Rather than contain the weapons, RAMSI decided to cut them up in front of the on-looking crowd in a potent display of RAMSI's commitment to rid the nation of firearms.

A second early success of *Helpem Fren* was the surrender of the Weathercoast militant leader, Harold Keke on Guadalcanal's remote southern shores. This was a key milestone in RAMSI's operations. Other militants and police had used Keke's belligerency as a justification for holding onto weapons but after his arrest, they had no more excuses.

A third success was dealing with the former militants. Many of them were gangsters who stood to lose most from the intervention, and were most likely to take violent action against RAMSI or the Government. Because of their activities, we approached this as part of a policing issue. So far, RAMSI has arrested over 50 former militants and most have been arrested for violent crimes.

The final area of RAMSI success is the progress we've made in cleaning up the Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIP). Since July 2003, over 50 RSIP members have been arrested and over 400 have



been sacked. The top priority is now the rebuilding of RSIP into a functional, well trained, and disciplined police force which can gain and maintain the trust and respect of the Islanders. This might take many years and the RAMSI police will remain in Solomon Islands until this task is completed.

The nation-building component of RAMSI now consists of about 80 civilian personnel, many of whom are drawn from ten government departments and agencies in Australia. Their role is to repair the damage done to the essential machinery of government over recent years. Advisers have been placed throughout the justice system to strengthen the country's ability to deal with the large number of arrests going through the court and prison systems. There are also advisers in the Ministry of Finance, helping Government regain control of

expenditure and improve tax collection. These advisers are in-line positions to get the bureaucracy functioning again, but over time they will be training their counterparts to take on these functions to ensure the changes in practices are sustainable.

Economic reform is crucial to the future of the Solomon Islands and will require foreign and local investment if economic growth and jobs are to return to the country. Regulatory reform, taxation reform, restructuring of state-owned enterprises and reform of the financial sector are required to ensure stability and credit to business and consumers.

RAMSI has been a success I believe because it was the right plan with the right level of political backing and resources. The intervention also came at the right time. The operation arrived with overwhelming political and,

crucially, public support in Solomon Islands.

We also had the right team. Agencies in Canberra nominated their best people to the operation, and the teamwork between DFAT, the AFP, Defence, AusAID, Finance, Treasury and the various intelligence organisations has been superb. The intervention also received the full backing of the Pacific Islands Forum, most of whose member states have sent police or military officers to be part of RAMSI.

I believe RAMSI's approach has also been the right one. It was an intervention but it was an intervention by invitation. RAMSI is engaged in a partnership with the Government, Parliament and the people of Solomon Island, and decisions are taken together, after discussion. While we have made extraordinary progress in the short time we have been in the Solomon

Islands, the job is not yet done. The situation is not yet one where RAMSI could leave tomorrow and feel confident that what we have achieved would remain in place.

Solomon Islanders also need to take the lead on fundamental long-term issues such as land reform, economic development and political and social issues. RAMSI has provided a secure environment with a functioning government and economy, so that Solomon Islanders can work through these issues to create a safer and more prosperous life. That is what RAMSI promised them on Day One and we have pledged to stay until those changes are entrenched.

As Prime Minister Howard said in December last year during a visit to Honiara, 'RAMSI will remain until the job is done.'

**Abridged from a speech by Nick Warner  
24 March 2004.**

## AUSAID STORIES IN THE SOLOMONS

### NATASCHA SPARK

Natascha Spark is a policy adviser to the Solomon Islands National Peace Council. The council held a crucial role in conducting the gun amnesty where more than 3,700 firearms were surrendered by communities. Natascha says that 'When council members are talking about their commitment to having a gun-free Solomon Islands they are speaking from their hearts.'



### TONY CORNISH



Tony Cornish works with the National Disaster Management Office in Honiara. He advises on operational matters, and assists staff in preparations for cyclones.

In 2003, funding assistance from Australia and other donors enabled the office to coordinate relief efforts for the cyclone-devastated islands of Tikopia and Anuta in Temotu Province. It also

organised delivery of nearly 100 tonnes of food aid for the people of the Weathercoast; and made sure there was continuity in humanitarian aid for internally-displaced people from the Weathercoast who were living in camps on the outskirts of Honiara.

### ROGER BUTTERICK

For more than three years, Roger Butterick has been working to improve hospital management based at Honiara's National Referral Hospital. He says he's seen some positive changes: drug and medical supply systems have been restored to operational levels, the hospital's infection control program is established

and work is underway on improving waste management practices.



'Working in a developing nation has been the best thing I have ever done. There is just so much opportunity to make a difference, and I find this personally very satisfying,' he says.

**Photos: Gary Ramage/Defence**

# REDR

## ON THE FRONTLINE

When the Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), James Morris, addressed a lunch at Parliament House in Canberra last February, he singled out the Registered Engineers for Disaster Relief (RedR) in Australia for its magnificent contribution to the work of the WFP in Iraq. James Morris praised the courage of RedR electrical consultant, Alex Fakira, as one of the 'true heroes of Baghdad'. With support from the Australian Government's overseas aid program, RedR Australia members can be found providing professional assistance to frontline agencies working with people in countries in need.



LEFT: Without roads, bridges or port facilities, RedR logisticians imported and distributed thousands of tonnes of building materials – known as shelter kits – to 35,000 families throughout East Timor. RedR engineers helped convert the timber and galvanised iron into housing. Photo: RedR

FAR LEFT: Men working for 'Cash for Work', a program run by UNHCR in Jalalabad, Afghanistan and implemented by RedR. Photo: RedR

Since 1995, with funding from AusAID, RedR Australia has signed Standby Staffing Agreements to provide technical services to United Nations agencies including UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, UNOPS and OCHA. These agreements have sent RedR members to hot spots around the world including Rwanda, Tanzania, Chechnya, East Timor, Pakistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and Sudan.

In East Timor, RedR provided the backbone for the UNHCR Shelter Programme delivering

building materials to 35,000 families. In Pakistan and Afghanistan, RedR engineers improved living conditions by providing shelter, clean water and sanitation for long-term refugees in the border area camps, and later by assisting people who wanted to return home.

A RedR engineer, based in Kabul, provided a blueprint of UNHCR Shelter Guidelines for returnees; and an electrical engineer undertook a needs assessment of all United Nations offices throughout the country. Three RedR engineers in

succession worked on the re-integration program in Jalalabad to assist 450,000 returnees. They built roads and suspension bridges to help villagers reach health services, ran food for work programs, set up schools and health clinics, developed income generation schemes and worked with local administrators in the provinces and districts.

A significant part of RedR's work is to deliver a comprehensive training program, partly funded by AusAID, to prepare its members and other humanitarian workers for the field. Participants are

introduced to the complexities of the humanitarian relief system, international humanitarian law, SPHERE standards, camp planning, logistics, cross cultural issues, personal health, security and communications. The Nippon Foundation of Japan provides funding for RedR training throughout East Asia and the Pacific, and the agency is a training partner with UNHCR's e-Centre based in Tokyo.

Christine Vincent, RedR Australia  
<[www.redr.org](http://www.redr.org)>



# UNSUNG HEROES



Australian Government overseas programs are working in support of disaster relief to provide stability for countries in need. Last year, four highly-motivated members of RedR Australia were among the unsung heroes of the World Food Programme's (WFP) greatest challenge: to provide food aid to 27 million Iraqis.

As part of the largest humanitarian operation in history, the WFP moved more than two million tonnes of food for relief aid in Iraq. At the peak of the operation about 1,000 tonnes of food were moved each hour, 24-hours a day, seven days a week. This was the first-ever deployment of the WFP's



arrangement with Australia as a 'standby partner', and Australians Lang Kidby, Jodie Clark, Terry Graham and Alex Fakira were vital workers in the Iraq operation.

Jodie Clark managed the warehouse in Basrah, southern Iraq, and Lang Kidby handled the busy transit point in Kuwait. Terry Graham ran the WFP warehouse in Dohuk, northern Iraq, and is still in Jordan, keeping the food moving into Iraq.

Alex Fakira is an electrical consultant who was to be in Erbil, in northern Iraq, in August last year – however the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, which killed 22 people,

changed his plans. The bomb blast knocked out power as well as the back-up generator. Alex went on to Baghdad despite the extremely difficult conditions and level of danger to resolve some major electrical problems.

Australian Greg Vanny, who's worked for WFP for three years, is their regional telecommunications officer and he saw the devastation firsthand, 'When the bomb took out everything, our back-up power was hit too. Without electricity, we had no communications. We couldn't reach our staff even via mobile phone. So it was critical to get the generator fixed and Alex was vital in getting it done.'

**LEFT** A shipment of food arrives at the port of Umm Qasr for distribution in Iraq. Photo: Antonia Paradel/WFP  
**FAR LEFT:** Children enjoy World Food Programme biscuits. Photo: Daniel Pepper/WFP

Without a reliable power supply, the computers, radios and mobile phones couldn't operate, which created a greater security risk for staff in Baghdad. As the thermometer regularly reaches 50 degrees Celsius in August in Baghdad, no air conditioning in the buildings also made their working lives difficult. But within two weeks of his arrival, Alex had rewired the old generator and installed two new generators in the tent compound which was quickly erected to replace the demolished building.

In September 2003, all United Nations staff including the RedR personnel had to evacuate, yet the Iraqi Ministry of Trade and Coalition Provisional Authority continued to distribute food rations to the Iraqi population.

This innovative 'standby arrangement', where specialists from RedR are called upon at short notice to move food, run warehouses or fix vital equipment, is funded by AusAID. The 'standby arrangement' is also assisting the WFP to deliver food to some of the most difficult locations in the world.

**Anthea Webb, World Food Programme**  
<[www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org)> or <[www.un.org](http://www.un.org)>

On Monday 5 January this year Cyclone Heta passed near Savaii, Samoa's largest island, causing widespread damage to food crops and some housing. The cyclone then tracked southeast directly over the island of Niue causing severe devastation.

Australian emergency assistance supported the Samoan Government and the Samoan Red Cross to assist disaster relief efforts; and Australia also made significant contributions to the people of Niue with immediate disaster relief with water purification, first aid supplies, food, shelter and the restoration of communication.



# HETA

## HITS HARD

**Former AusAID officer Joanne Laurence is currently working as a technical assistance manager with Emergency Management Australia. While with AusAID she'd worked extensively in the Pacific and gained a local knowledge of the lifestyle and culture of the people of Niue. From the minute Cyclone Heta hit, Jo was involved in providing disaster relief. Here is her account.**



**'H**ello Jo, are you packed?' was the start of the 10.30 pm phonecall I received on 8 January this year. One day later at the same local time, I was sitting on an RAAF C130 Hercules transport. Wedged against a truck, conspicuously not in khaki, I was the only civilian accompanying an army medical team to Niue.

The island of Niue sits in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and it's a tiny coral atoll east of Tonga which rises straight up out of the deep ocean. Niue is locally known as 'The Rock' because it has cliffs all the way around. If you were driving at the speed limit of 40 kilometres an hour, it's possible to drive around this island in under 90 minutes.

Living on a cliff you'd think

you'd be safe, but the 50 metre waves accompanying Cyclone Heta badly hit Niue, damaging over 200 houses, demolishing the hospital and affecting many food crops, businesses and government buildings.

In response to a request for assistance Australia dispatched an Australian Defence Force medical team to set up a temporary clinic. As the person in Emergency Management Australia responsible for support to the disaster management offices in the Pacific region, I was deployed to help integrate support measures with the Niuean Government. Fortunately, I had formed links with the Niueans some years before. I was also to assess further needs and to keep information flowing back to Australia. With all international

communications cut, the satellite phone became an essential link.

The most heart wrenching vision on arriving at Niue was the devastation. The island had been a picture of paradise, lush and green, surrounded by little inlets full of red and blue and yellow fish. After the cyclone it looked as if a giant vacuum cleaner had sucked the vegetation from the shore, leaving bleached white coral sticking out like bones. The fish were gone, the reefs destroyed. Everywhere salt spray had burnt plants, leaving them brown and dry. The coconut palms were down and the pawpaws rotting on the ground.

As always, the people of Niue were most impressive. Their warmth and friendliness, and their sense of community spirit were strong in their response to this

disaster. I felt humbled by their generosity – as people who had just lost so much shared their food with us as we moved around. In the face of their courage and determination, I felt privileged to be able to provide them with help.

<http://www.ema.gov.au>

**ABOVE: Damaged buildings and landscape shortly after Cyclone Heta swept through Niue. Photo: Stephen Close/AusAID**

**TOP LEFT: Joanne Laurence. Photo: Alastair Wilson/EMA**



## FOOD FOR AFRICA



Sigrid Thornton talks to some children helped by the food aid program run by World Vision and supported by AusAID in Chainda, Zambia. Photo: World Vision

It's a long way from Pearl Bay, but World Vision Ambassador, and Australian actress, Sigrid Thornton recently visited a joint AusAID/World Vision food distribution program as part of a two-week tour of projects addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS in Zambia, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Poor harvests, prolonged drought and high rates of HIV infection have taken a heavy toll on food supplies in many parts of southern and eastern Africa. Food is essential in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Women and girls who have enough to eat are not forced to sex work as a last resort to earn money for food. Proper nourishment is also important for people with HIV as it means they remain stronger for longer, can work, grow food and care for children.

Sigrid's visit to Chainda included a tour of a distribution centre, where people queued for

their monthly allocation of maize meal, oil, sugar and food supplements. She also spent time visiting families affected by HIV/AIDS who receive support through the Chainda program.

While in Zimbabwe, Sigrid and the World Vision delegation visited the Dande Water and Sanitation project in the north. With more than 39,000 people in the program area, AusAID and World Vision are constructing pit toilets and introducing and upgrading fresh water supplies. They are also running community-training sessions on hygiene, and repairing and maintaining water pumps.

Sigrid's visit to Africa's most disadvantaged highlighted an effective partnership between World Vision and AusAID.

Further information on World Vision's work to fight HIV/AIDS can be found at [www.worldvision.org.au](http://www.worldvision.org.au)

## FUND FOR REFUGEES

There are thousands of refugees, internally displaced people and asylum seekers in the Asia-Pacific region who, for all sorts of reasons, including fear of persecution, have left their homes. Some are eventually able to return but most become permanent refugees living on the fringe in another country. Often they must make do with very poor conditions without access to basic services, social support or the means to provide for themselves or their families.

Recognising the plight of refugees and asylum seekers, the Australian Government is providing \$15 million through its International Refugee Fund to support the activities of key multilateral

agencies, such as UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). Australia's objective for the fund is to improve living conditions, alleviate suffering and maintain the dignity of refugees, asylum seekers and those people displaced within their own country.

The fund is helping the International Organization for Migration to safely return and reintegrate almost 90,000 people in Afghanistan affected by drought and conflict. In countries such as Sri Lanka and Indonesia it's assisting UNICEF programs dedicated to caring for refugee, returnee and displaced children through education, health and psychosocial programs.

During a recent visit to Australia by Ruud Lubbers, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, announced that \$5.3 million from the fund would go to UNHCR to support refugees in the Asia-Pacific region.

'By providing assistance to these vulnerable groups, we reduce the incentive for them to undertake hazardous journeys to other countries within the region. UNHCR is one of Australia's key international partners in implementing programs to assist refugees and asylum seekers,' Mr Downer said.



Making the best of the washing facilities at Ban Ma Muang Refugee Camp, Trat Province, Thailand. Photo: R Breen/UNHCR



## WORLD WITHOUT LANDMINES

Donations from the Australian public and support from the Australian Government have helped to implement landmine projects in Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia and Mozambique. AUSTCARE – Australia's non-governmental organisation specialising in assistance to refugees overseas, displaced people, and those affected by landmines – has addressed the direct impact of landmines in these countries. It has also addressed the indirect social consequences caused by land deprivation and lack of support infrastructure.

According to global statistics, 82 countries are affected by landmines and between 15,000 and 20,000 new landmine casualties happen each year, of which at least 85 per cent are civilian casualties. More than half of these landmine victims die from the initial explosion of the mine, while other victims are badly maimed, requiring amputation. As people are often living in areas isolated by landmine contamination, they're unable to access health facilities and many casualties go unreported.

AUSTCARE is working with local and international organisations to provide emergency landmine clearance for returning refugees and displaced people. Once the emergency ends, AUSTCARE strives to promote well-being and reduce poverty by providing practical and sustainable development assistance to landmine-impacted communities.

**In cooperation with AN-ICBL, AUSTCARE has initiated the inaugural Landmine Action Week which runs from 14 to 23 May.**

**ABOVE LEFT: This Angolan boy has been provided with prosthetic limbs after losing his legs to a landmine.**

**Photo: AUSTCARE**

**ABOVE RIGHT: A deminer clears landmines and unexploded ordnance from beneath the house of Mrs Yun Nang in Anlong Veaeng Village, Preah Vihear Province, Cambodia. Until now Mrs Nang has had to risk walking through mined areas in her village. Photo: Charmaine Williams/AUSTCARE**

## BALI BURNS UNIT

A new intensive care and burns unit will soon be operating at the Sanglah Hospital, the largest public hospital in Bali. Sanglah Hospital is near the centre of Denpasar and has nearly 700 beds. It's also the main referral centre for Bali's smaller hospitals and network of community medical clinics. On 12 October 2002, the hospital received nearly all the victims of the Bali bombings, including many Australians, who were initially taken there for medical treatment.

The new burns unit is to be named the '12 October 2002 Australian Memorial Centre' and will provide additional facilities to counter Bali's overstretched public health system. It's designed to house an intensive cardiac care unit and intensive care unit on the ground floor, and a 15-bed burns unit, with its own operating theatre, on the first floor. The workmen are painting and fitting-out the interior of the two-storey building.

Dr Anik Sandy, who liaises between the Sanglah administration and the Australian team supervising construction, says the new centre is a first for Indonesia. 'It's very special. I understand the Royal Adelaide is the only Australian hospital that has a dedicated operating theatre as an integral part of a burns unit. I think this new facility will do much good for many people.'

**ABOVE LEFT: Putting the finishing touches to the ceiling of the entrance foyer of the 12 October 2002 Australian Memorial Centre.**

**ABOVE RIGHT: Dr Anik Sandy of Sanglah Hospital and project manager Rob Mark discuss interior colour schemes. Photos: Gregson Edwards**



Providing avenues for communicating between different groups is one way in which Australia is helping to foster dialogue and understanding with its Asian neighbours.



# A KANGAROO

## ON THE RADIO

Having an understanding of a neighbour's point of view helps the Australian community to create solid working relationships in the Asian region – but often these dialogues are not displayed in advertisements in newspapers or in commercials on television. In fact, in some countries, Australia takes a back seat and encourages local identities to give Australia a new name. In Indonesia, the locals often use an affectionate nickname when referring to Australia in casual conversation: *negara kang guru* – the land of the kangaroo.

Not surprisingly, there've been several attempts to exploit this ready-made branding and the most successful has been KangGURU Radio English which is a long-running Australian overseas aid activity in Indonesia. The program is operated in partnership with the national broadcaster Radio Republik Indonesia and has – very much in the manner of its namesake – gone ahead in leaps and bounds since its launch in 1989.

Kang guru is a clever play on words – *kang* means 'brother' in the Sundanese dialect and *guru* is



Indonesian for 'teacher'. Put together, *kang guru* produces a term which, idiomatically, is profoundly warm and positive to native Indonesian speakers. KangGURU Radio English operates from Denpasar in Bali, and has become an important people-to-people platform between two regional neighbours, which is reflected in the slogan, 'Good neighbours make good friends'. The Australian Government places importance in supporting free speech in a democracy, and as part of this approach, encourages the free flow of information with the media. KangGURU Radio English is now a multi-media organisation: it



LEFT: Kevin Dalton, a former school principal in Australia, is the driving force behind KangGURU. Photo: Gregson Edwards

ABOVE: KangGURU clubs get together. Photo: KangGURU

produces a magazine for its 8,000 subscribers and 800 schools; there are about 75 KangGURU Connection English language clubs, and the *KangGURU in the Classroom* teacher package is proving a hit with local schools.

Kevin Dalton, a former school principal from Victoria, is at the centre of this activity. He used to work at a Muslim university in Indonesia, and then taught at an English language school for about six years. In early 2000, despite having no media experience, Kevin's classroom communication skills and natural ease at the microphone gave him an easy transition to broadcasting.

Four years on, a recent audience survey reveals that more than 2000 English language teachers around Indonesia are regular users of the program's materials. In fact, 'media personality' is an apt job description for Kevin. He meets his 'students' in appearances in photographs. Given that each teacher has, on average, between 40 and 50 students, and taking into account Kevin's been known in Indonesia for about 15 years, he has an impressive record as a 'brother-teacher' from the land of the kangaroo.

Gregson Edwards is a freelance writer.  
<[www.kangguru.org](http://www.kangguru.org)>



# OUT OF A WASTELAND

**At Samata Sarana in Colombo women displaced or traumatised by conflict have opportunities to learn new skills and help re-build their communities.**

**S**tand in the middle of the central courtyard of the five-storey building and listen. The place is an echo-chamber of activities. On several levels above, the sounds of children in their classrooms can be heard, one group is singing, another is reciting the alphabet. These are the children that live in the nearby

slums but here, in this building, they receive free tuition, uniforms and nutritious meals.

On the ground floor is the crèche where young women can deposit their infants and take part in educational programs. Nearby are 20 beds for the elderly. Men and women withered by hardship as well as age, can rest a while,

snooze in the afternoon and receive medical attention and a healthy meal.

On another level gather groups of young women in their twenties. These are women displaced from the country's conflict-affected northern and eastern regions. They have come here for a three-month residential course. Among other things, they will learn skills to help them make a living and contribute to the rebuilding of their communities.

Walk through some of the downstairs doors and you enter the kitchens where 2,000-plus meals a day are prepared (mostly from donated food) for some of Sri Lanka's most disadvantaged people.

This is Samata Sarana, a non-government organisation in the heart of Colombo's slum area. 'The name means "Help for All",' explains Sister Bernie, the founder



## SAMATA SARANA



- » The three-month residential, skills-training program for women from conflict-affected areas began in 2001.
- » About 50 women, aged between 18 and 22 years and from across all ethnic groups, participate.
- » Most are from extremely poor families.
- » Many of the women come from families where the main income earner has been killed in the conflict.
- » UNICEF monitoring of the women when they return home has revealed significant changes. Many women have set up their own small businesses, some have become teachers, some have returned to school to catch up on what they missed during the conflict and others are very active in community rebuilding.

of the organisation that began 15 years ago.

It's significant that this building stands on what was once Colombo's main rubbish tip. In the fold of Samata Sarana, the slum dwellers, the refugees and the impoverished elderly are far from the discarded refuse of a society that has failed them. Rather, they are valued individuals and vital members of a community.

'People who leave here are not the same as when they enter,' says Sister Bernie with particular reference to the residential skills training program for young women. 'When they arrive they are often chronically shy, they have very few social skills and virtually no vocational skills. Many have been traumatised by displacement, some have incurred injuries from landmines. Three months later, when they are ready to return to

their provinces they have new skills, new confidence and new hope.'

With support from the Australian Government, the residential program of Samata Sarana is making a big difference to the quality of many lives. As the course progresses the women develop happier and healthier outlooks on life.

Needle and sewing crafts are one of the main practical activities but the women also engage in discussions on social issues, such as leadership and discrimination. 'We have Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim girls mixing here and learning from each other,' says Sister Bernie. 'Once they are away from their war ravaged environments it doesn't take long for trust and new friendships to develop. When they return home they take these new attitudes with

them, and that clearly benefits the entire community.'

Dancing is one of the most popular recreational activities and also one of the most healing. 'Dance helps the women give expression to many suppressed feelings,' says Sister Bernie.

One of the current participants is Prema, age 22, from Jaffna. Because of the troubles in the region Prema missed out on much of her formal schooling. 'When I return I want to contribute something to my community. I hope that what I learn here will help me to do that and to make a living.'

'Hope is the main outcome of being here,' says Sister Bernie. 'People without hope have no future and our aim is to give them a future, that's all we are trying to do.' **Peter Davis is a freelance writer and photographer**

**FACING PAGE LEFT: Sister Bernie and Father Joe are responsible for the success of Samata Sarana.**

**FACING PAGE MIDDLE: Children from the slums are provided with clean clothes and an education.**

**FACING PAGE RIGHT: The Samata Sarana building rose from what was once the Colombo rubbish dump.**

**ABOVE: Prema, from the conflict-affected northern provinces of Sri Lanka, learns how to use a sewing machine in the skills development workshop.**

**Photos: Peter Davis**

**In Binh Thuan on Vietnam's south-central coastline, the AusAID-funded Basic Education and Teacher Training (BETT) project is making a dramatic improvement to the school experience for over 13,000 children. Promoting the principles of 'active learning', 50 teacher-trainers work with teachers in over 40 primary schools to improve the quality of education for children.**

## BETT OFFERS A BETTER WAY



Active learning classrooms are catching on in Vietnam. In contrast to rote style methods of learning, children work cooperatively and are encouraged to ask questions. Photo: Stephen Lynch/Save the Children

In Vietnam, primary education had been based on traditional styles of learning, with children expected to memorise the lessons delivered by schoolteachers. The active learning approach shifts the focus of learning onto the child, and pupils become 'engaged' in the learning process with the teacher facilitating their learning. This means the children work collaboratively in groups to participate in creative exercises and educational games and are encouraged to express their point of view in class.

BETT teacher-trainers conduct workshops focusing on specific curriculum areas and grades which so far have been delivered to over 500 teachers in Vietnam. In addition, a number of curriculum resource materials have been developed, and the most popular are Bingo games, counting rhyme charts, picture charts for learning about the human body, and alphabet wall cards.

Local community groups have actively supported the program by transforming 15 classrooms into active learning environments with classroom walls painted in bright colours and ceiling fans, lights and

blackboards installed. The result is children are expressing the benefits of 'I learn new things which are not too difficult,' and 'It's exciting and fun at school.'

With only two thirds of all teachers trained to the National Level of Teacher Qualifications, the success of the BETT program has attracted the attention of the Government of Vietnam. Recently it launched the 'Education For All Action Plan' (EFA) to improve the quality of education in Vietnam, and these reforms are seen as key to broader development goals of building a stable and prosperous nation.

Within the EFA's 2003–15 plan, which was announced in June 2003, quality education is stressed as the 'driving force for development and the means to support Vietnam's transition towards a more modern, knowledge-based and globally competitive society.'

In response, active learning principles are being adopted by teachers across the country, and children are receiving the foundation tools needed to meet the challenges of the future. As the parent of one child involved in the BETT program says, 'Our children here at school are small but being developed as learners – we say that now they are "small but quick".'

**Stephen Lynch, Save the Children**  
<[www.savethechildren.org.au](http://www.savethechildren.org.au)>



# VOLUNTEERING



## LIGHT UP THE WORLD

**Dave Irvine-Halliday was trekking the Annapurna Circuit in Nepal in 1997, when he paused at a roadside schoolhouse with a sign inviting passing foreigners to stop to teach the children.**

**P**eering into the unlit classroom, he thought: 'it's dark in there!' Then, he thought, 'I wonder if I can help them?' That simple question changed his life, and is now poised to transform the lives of millions.

Dave is an electrical engineer working in Canada who specialises in photonics – the use of light for communication and computing. He believes the future lies with solid-state lighting. Less than six per cent of Nepal's 3.4 million homes have a reliable power supply and this set Dave thinking of how he could light homes in villages remote from power networks.

**TODAY'S HIGH-BRILLIANCE, WHITE LED LAMPS CAN PROVIDE BASIC LIGHT TO A VILLAGE OF 60 HOUSEHOLDS IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY FOR THE SAME ENERGY AS A SINGLE 100-WATT LIGHT BULB IN ONE ROOM OF AN AUSTRALIAN HOME.**

Light-emitting diodes (LEDs) exploit the quirky laws of quantum physics to turn electrons directly into light, without waste heat. Since their invention in the 1960s, LEDs have evolved into powerful little lights capable of shining continuously for 30–40 years of normal service.

Stewart Craine, an Australian engineer working for Australian

Volunteers International (AVI), joined up with Dave Irvine-Halliday in Nepal in 2000 to work on the 'Light Up the World Foundation'.

The project had begun in Dave's Calgary University lab in Canada with his attempt to develop a multi-diode lamp. In 1999 demonstration lighting sets were installed in several Nepalese villages using simple generators to power the lights. By the end of 2001, their rechargeable, battery-powered, cluster lamps were lighting buildings in remote areas of Nepal, India and Sri Lanka. By 2004, the Light up the World Foundation had spread to the Philippines, Afghanistan and South Africa.

Now, basic light to a village of 60 households in a developing country uses the same energy as a single 100-watt light bulb in one room of an Australian home.

Julian Cribb

**For more information about Light up the World Foundation see**  
**<<http://www.lightuptheworld.org>>**

**ABOVE: Dave Irvine-Halliday holds a flashlight and lamp made of LEDs in Aluthebedda, Sri Lanka. He 'lit up' this village in 2001. Photo: Xavier Lecoultré/Rolux**

Dave Irvine-Halliday exhausted his personal savings funding his Light up the World Foundation in its first two years. In 2002 he received a Rolex Award for Enterprise which brought him much needed funds, attention to his cause and a growing stream of donations.

The Rolex Awards for Enterprise aim to encourage a spirit of enterprise in visionary individuals around the world, providing the financial support and recognition for projects that advance human knowledge and well-being.

The awards are presented every two years in five areas: Science and Medicine, Technology and Innovation, Exploration and Discovery, the Environment and Cultural Heritage. However, a project may be submitted in almost any field of endeavour, provided it contributes to the betterment of humankind. Anyone of any age, from any country or background is eligible, and can be nominated by any person.

Five Laureates, those who present the most exceptional projects, each receive US\$100,000. Five runners-up, the Associate Laureates, each receive US\$35,000.

The winners of the 2004 Rolex Awards will be announced in September 2004, and nominations for the 2006 awards will be called for in June.

**For more information on the awards**  
**<<http://www.rolexawards.com>>**

## BUILDING BOATS

**VANUATU:** A couple of years ago, Australian yachtsman Trevor Naylor was cruising through the southern islands of Malakula, in the area known as the Maskylines, when he noticed two things. Everyone used wooden canoes to travel from one island to the other and there were hardly any trees.



In the Maskylines, hardwood and breadfruit trees numbers have diminished to a stage where the wood resource will be exhausted within three years. In turn, this could have a devastating impact on the ability to fish and to travel.

In seeking to find an answer to reverse this environment concern, Trevor met with the chiefs and community of the island. Together they put together a proposal for the Australian Government's Small Grants Scheme for funding to address their concerns: a project based on environmental protection. They planned to save the remaining trees and create jobs by building fibre-glass boats. The net result of funding from the Australian Government is the development of the South Malakula Canoe Project.

In opening the project, the Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu, Steve Waters said, 'We recognise the difficulties faced by people who are living in the remote areas of Vanuatu. Access to transport is not always easy, and the opportunity to earn a living is often very difficult. It was because we received such overwhelming support from the Province, the Government of Vanuatu and the community, that we agreed to provide the funding of over four million vatu [about \$60,000] for the South Malakula Canoe Project.'

Thanks also to the tireless efforts of Trevor Naylor, the South Malakula Development Association, and the builders and workers at the factory, the South Malakula Canoe Project is now producing seven-metre canoes and two types of water tanks. And they're cheaper to buy than in Vila, Vanuatu's capital.

The community donated the land free of charge for five years and supplied labour and building materials. Now the factory is providing much needed employment. Already eight young men are learning the skills of the fibre-glass trade, specialising in canoes. MM

Launching one of the new boats.  
Photo: AusAID







## WOMAD 2004

Been boogying to a hot Brazilian rhythm, courtesy of Gilberto Gil and band? You'd be forgiven for thinking you were in the middle of South America, rather than the Botanic Gardens in Adelaide, South Australia.

The World Music festival, known locally as WOMAD, blossomed in Adelaide's parklands in the first week of March for three late summer days and nights of international music, food and wine. More than 300 artists from 20 countries performed on six stages, often to share their personal reflections on music, life and world affairs. Overwhelmingly, their message was one of hope – a challenge to pull together, across nations, to create a better future.

More than 68,000 people visited the festival making it an ideal opportunity for AusAID staff and returning Australian Youth Ambassadors to talk to people at the Global Community stall about Australia's overseas aid program.

The AusAID display highlights the Australian work done to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Asia-Pacific region.



FAR LEFT: Oumou Sangare at WOMAD.

Photo: Tony Lewis/ Womadelaide 2004

LEFT: WOMAD carnival atmosphere.

Photo: Tony Lewis/Womadelaide 2004

TOP LEFT: The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, and recently returned Australian Youth Ambassador for Development, Reina Pierina, were on hand at the AusAID site to chat to the passing crowd. Photo: Simon Kaldy/AusAID

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	STATE
17–22 May	<i>positive.negative</i> Photographic Exhibition	Martin Place Sydney	NSW
2–3 July	Alice Springs Show	Alice Springs	NT
16–17 July	Mudgee Small Farms Field Days	Mudgee	NSW
22–24 July	Royal Darwin Show	Darwin	NT

For more details as they become available see  
<<http://www.ausaid.gov.au/about/outreach.cfm>>

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### IS AUSAID AUSTRALIAN?

Yes. Australian Government aid is delivered mostly by Australians – it uses many Australian goods and services – and creates employment in Australia.

represents about one quarter of one per cent of Australia's gross national income. Through this commitment of our money, every Australian gets to play a part in reshaping the world.

### WHY DOES AUSTRALIA GIVE AID?

Australia has an aid program because it's in our national interest. It helps to reduce poverty and makes a real difference to people's lives. Our aid program is known as Official Development Assistance (ODA) and helps build a safer, more secure region.

### HOW MUCH OF THE AID BUDGET IS USED BY ADMINISTRATION?

Only about four per cent of the aid budget is spent on administrative costs.

### HOW MANY PEOPLE DO WE ACTUALLY HELP?

In any given calendar year, we will help more than 58 million people in need.

### HOW DOES AUSTRALIAN AID IMPROVE REGIONAL SECURITY?

If we reduce poverty, we build stronger communities and more stable governments. Then if conflict arises, there's a greater chance the issues will be resolved peacefully.

### WHERE DOES THE MONEY ACTUALLY GO TO?

Most of it goes to our nearest neighbours. Nearly 80 per cent of our aid program is directed towards the Asia-Pacific region. The countries where we're helping to fight poverty include Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, East Timor and Cambodia.

### HOW MUCH AID DOES AUSTRALIA GIVE?

In the 2004–05 financial year, Australia will provide aid worth an estimated \$2.133 billion. This

# VIEWPOINT



## FOOD, WATER AND WAR

**Fighting for food is perhaps the most understandable of all human instincts, says Tim Fischer, former Deputy Prime Minister and chair of the Board of Management of ATSE Crawford Fund.**

ABOVE: The Hon. Tim Fischer.  
Photo: ATSE Crawford Fund  
TOP: Working the rice paddies in Vietnam.  
Photo: AusAID

**A**t a conference in Canberra four years ago I was particularly struck by the words of Admiral Chris Barrie. 'In affluent societies, we take ready access to food and water for granted, but in their absence people are driven to do whatever it takes to get them.'

Perhaps Admiral Barrie's speech was a little before its time – given more recent horrific developments – however the conference provided the first opportunity in Australia for a senior defence leader to talk about the relationship between conflict and poverty. Admiral Barrie concluded: 'History has shown us that better access to life's essentials, basic infrastructure and political democracy diminishes the likelihood of inter- and intrastate conflict... The lesson is clear – we must be prepared to do more, rather than less, to maintain peace and security.'

Agriculture, food and access to natural resources such as water, play key roles in development for poor nations and in the avoidance of conflict. Fighting for food can be an even stronger driver than allegiances and politics. Hungry people are more likely to become embroiled in conflict because they become discontented and disaffected and they are easy prey for groups who see them as a means to selfish or political ends.

This year's International Year of Rice provides an opportunity to reflect on some of the excellent work which Australian organisations, such as AusAID and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), and the International

Rice Research Institute (IRRI) have undertaken together. They are working together to help nations regain stability through agricultural research and development and, in doing so, establish peaceful societies run by democratic governments.

Through the 1990s, AusAID funded the Cambodia–IRRI–Australia–Project (CIAP), which helped that previously war-torn, troubled nation of Cambodia return to a stable, peaceful life. CIAP was one of Australia's most successful major development projects in Asia, and helped turn Cambodia into a rice exporting, more stable, food-secure nation.

ACIAR is also working with IRRI, in East Timor, and the lessons learned in Cambodia and East Timor are being applied in Afghanistan. There, the IRRI and several of its partners in agricultural research are focused on re-establishing agriculture and rural development as an essential foundation for a peaceful society.

Australia can be proud of its contributions through international agricultural research to improve food security, drive economic growth, and ultimately maintain peace.

**VIEWPOINT is a forum for readers to express their ideas and perspectives on overseas development issues. Views do not necessarily reflect the ideas and policies of the Australian Government. Readers who would like to contribute should send their articles (not exceeding 500 words) with full contact details to the Editor, Focus, Public Affairs Group, AusAID, GPO Box 887, Canberra ACT 2601 or email [focus@ausaid.gov.au](mailto:focus@ausaid.gov.au)**



# GLOBAL EDUCATION



Ding Thi Tu mixes dried rice by hand at her home before cooking.  
Son Hai Commune, Vietnam.  
Photo: Will Salter/AusAID



## INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RICE 2004

This year is the International Year of Rice and it's the first time an international year has focused on one crop. The theme of 'Rice is life' is a sign of the importance of rice as a primary food and income source especially in many developing countries.

The International Year of Rice promotes improved production and access to rice while providing income for millions of rice producers, processors and traders.

## FOOD SECURITY

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle. (World Food Summit 1996).

## FACTS

- » World Food Day, which is held on 16 October, highlights the need to create a food-secure world.
- » More than half of the world's population lives in low-income, food-deficit countries which are unable to produce or import enough food to feed people.
- » Soil degradation, chronic water shortages, inappropriate agricultural policies and population growth threaten food production in many countries.
- » There is enough food in the world for all people to have sufficient food, however the food is unevenly distributed.

## AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE

The Australian Government helps developing countries in the Asia-Pacific to reduce poverty and address food security. This is done by promoting trade liberalisation, peace and stability in the region, security of land tenure, rural development and agricultural research.

Australia also provides emergency food aid to developing countries in need. In May 2003, the Australian Government announced a \$1 billion food

security pledge for five years from 1 July 2003 for programs and initiatives which enhance the food security of people in the developing world.

There are specific programs to improve food security for people in need which include:

- » helping people improve their farms and productivity;
- » constructing food stores and improving roads so that food can be moved to where it is needed, or where it can be sold;
- » promoting national and international trade to encourage economic growth and poverty reduction;
- » improving the status of women and girls so it is easier for them to play more productive roles in society;
- » contributing to a stable, conflict-free environment;
- » ensuring that adults, and especially children, receive food in emergency situations;
- » promoting rural development, including sustainable agricultural, fishery and forestry production and management of natural resources; and
- » preparing for disasters and emergencies to meet transitory and emergency food requirements in ways which encourage recovery and rehabilitation. IT

The Global Education website provides information and case studies on line at [www.globaleducation.edna.edu.au](http://www.globaleducation.edna.edu.au)



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