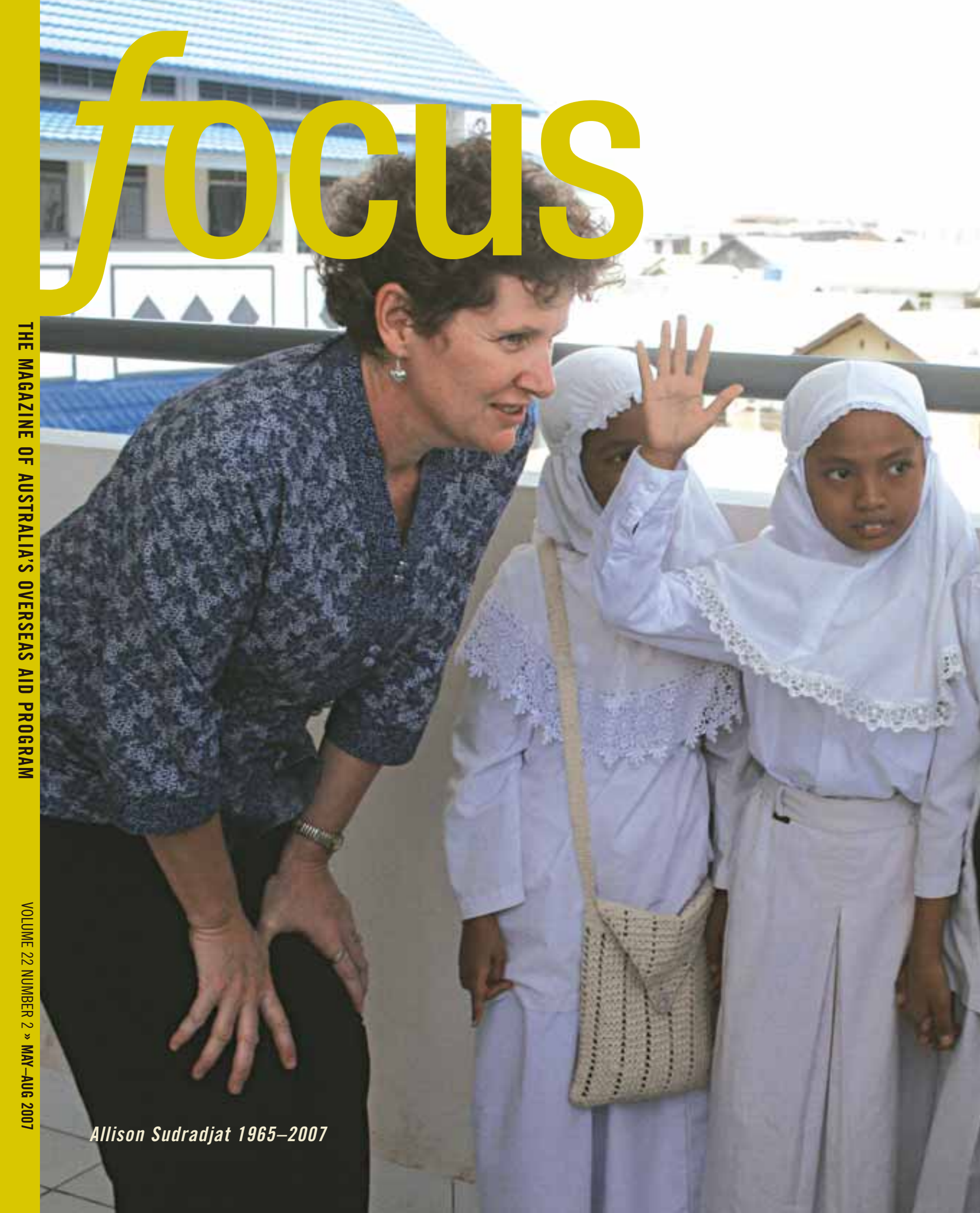


# focus

THE MAGAZINE OF AUSTRALIA'S OVERSEAS AID PROGRAM

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 2 » MAY–AUG 2007

*Allison Sudradjat 1965–2007*



IT IS THE POORER NATIONS THAT SUFFER MOST IN LARGE-SCALE NATURAL AND MAN-MADE DISASTERS, SUCH AS EARTHQUAKES OR CONFLICTS. POOR NATIONS ARE LEAST PREPARED TO COPE AND, WITHOUT OUTSIDE HELP, STRUGGLE FOR MANY YEARS JUST TO RECOVER.



## FROM THE MINISTER

Sometimes a disaster can wipe out everything. I will never forget flying over the Indonesian province of Aceh after the Indian Ocean tsunami and seeing the consequences of nature unleashing its full force. I remember thinking that nothing could ever be worse than this. Survivors, bereft and traumatised, lost family, friends and communities. Homes were gone – in many cases leaving not even the slightest trace where they once stood. The land was completely flattened and unrecognisable. As for businesses and the means of earning a living, they too were swept away. Those who survived literally had nothing.

Australia has a long and proud tradition of delivering emergency aid when and where it's needed. We have successfully led international responses to crises in East Timor and the Pacific. We have responded to urgent humanitarian calls from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Philippines and of course the many countries so dreadfully wrecked by the Indian Ocean tsunami.

Most recently we helped Solomon Islands following the devastating earthquake and tsunami in April. We have provided assistance to support critical sanitation needs, delivered urgent medical relief,

and deployed specialist medical teams. As with other emergency responses, our immediate priorities are to provide clean water, shelter, medical care, food and equipment for cooking. We are also continuing to work with the Government of Solomon Islands to meet longer term needs including the rebuilding of health systems and infrastructure.

Since 2002, we have assisted in over 60 overseas emergencies. In 2006–07 we contributed an estimated \$235 million through our humanitarian and emergency program – about 10 per cent of overseas aid.

Yet responding swiftly, effectively and responsibly to catastrophes, especially those in our own region, is only one side of AusAID's humanitarian and emergency program. The other side – less high profile but of equal importance – is disaster mitigation. In Vietnam, we're helping with the construction of levees to prevent uncontrolled flooding. In Papua New Guinea, a country prone to volcanic eruptions, we're helping to implement early warning systems. The Australian Tsunami Warning Centre will support international efforts to provide early tsunami warnings in Asia and the Pacific.

We cannot prevent disasters. No matter how well we manage our environment, bush fires,

droughts and floods will always be with us. Sometimes stopping outbreaks of violence is also beyond our control. What we can do, however, is help to reduce the impact of natural and man-made disasters and alleviate the suffering they cause.

We know poorer communities are the least able to cope in a major catastrophe and that, without outside help, recovery is uncompromisingly slow and sometimes impossible. The aid program is dedicated to assisting vulnerable communities to prepare for disasters and to avoid some of their debilitating long-term impacts.

As is so often the case in managing relief efforts, it's the intangibles that make all the difference. For example, it's the indefinable quality of the people who make things happen and who put their own lives on hold – sometimes even at risk – to help others. I can't praise highly enough the efforts of all those Australians who so willingly and generously give of their time and skills. Emergency work is physically demanding, emotionally draining and mentally exhausting.

Allison Sudradjat, head of AusAID in Indonesia, was one such individual who never hesitated in times of need. Tragically, her life was cut short in the horrific crash of Garuda flight

200 at Yogyakarta on 7 March 2007. I am personally deeply shocked and saddened by her death. She was an exceptional human being who cared passionately for the aid program and what it can achieve. Allison coordinated the Australian Government's emergency response in Indonesia after the Indian Ocean tsunami, headed the reconstruction program in Aceh and later took over as head of all AusAID programs in Indonesia. She had enormous capacity and talent. President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has paid tribute to Allison's contribution and joins with me in saying not only Australia but also Indonesia has lost a great champion for development.

We are in debt to Allison Sudradjat and to all Australians who, with great courage and determination, go to the rescue of those caught in emergencies not of their making. They are reminders of humanity at its very best.

Alexander Downer  
*Minister for Foreign Affairs*

**The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, looks out at the devastation, Aceh Province, Indonesia.**

**Photo: Rob Maccoll/The Courier Mail RELIEF IN SIGHT**



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ABOVE: Waiting for further medical treatment. At least 40,000 people died in the Pakistan earthquake of October 2005. Photo: Chris Stowers/Panos

**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 2006–07 Australia plans to spend almost \$2.946 billion on development assistance. The aid program focuses on promoting regional peace, stability and economic development. Countries with whom Australia is working include Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, Nauru, 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.

COVER: Allison Sudradjat with students from Min Merduati School in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. Photo: AusAID

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# IN BRIEF

## GREG HUNT ON MINE ACTION

A decade ago, Greg Hunt, as senior adviser to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, was working on what later became the Mine Ban Convention. Today Greg Hunt is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Australia's Special Representative on Mine Action.

As Australia's chief observer during the elections in Cambodia in 1998, Greg Hunt saw first-hand the cruel legacy of landmines. 'Wherever I travelled in Cambodia I came across people who had lost limbs or their sight or had some other impairment because of exploded landmines – the ancillary effects of the Vietnam War and the period of the Khmer Rouge. It was a pretty scarred country and it had a powerful impact on me.'

Since ratifying the Mine Ban Convention in 1997 Australia has been a leading advocate of landmine action. 'It's important that countries sign and ratify the Mine Ban Convention. It's even more important that we continue to give practical support to community education and landmine awareness in countries such as Laos and Cambodia, but also further away, like Angola and Lebanon. To me this is the essence of my job as Australia's special representative.'

Landmine explosions inflict great harm, particularly in poor rural communities where it's the lives of women that are often most severely blighted. In some countries an unmarried woman who is injured may be seen as less productive if she can't work in the fields and is therefore less desirable as a partner. A married woman and her daughters usually end up supporting and caring for family members who have been injured.



This limits their life opportunities.

'In Cambodia I was told that it was incredibly socially confronting to be a female landmine survivor. Women are exiled into invisibility. Essentially they're hidden away which means of course they suffer twice.'

'We're working hard to help change social attitudes through our community awareness and rehabilitation programs. Cambodia is the main beneficiary of Australian mine action activities. We marked International Mine Action Day on 4 April by contributing \$12 million through UNDP mine clearance

activities in Cambodia. The Mine Ban Convention is immensely important but so too are the actual programs on the ground which improve people's lives. I am proud that Australia continues to work hard to help rid the world of landmines and unexploded ordnance.'

ABOVE: The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Australia's Special Representative on Mine Action, Greg Hunt, at the UNIFEM International Women's Day breakfast in Melbourne. 'We're making sure our action on landmines is tailored to meet the needs of women.' Photo: AusAID

## PRESIDENT CLINTON URGES HIV TESTING



ABOVE: President Clinton hugs Maura Mea after her moving speech about the effects of HIV/AIDS on the community. Photo: Paula Jones/AusAID

Former President of the United States Bill Clinton was in Papua New Guinea as head of the Clinton Foundation HIV/AIDS Initiative. He urged the country's leaders to set an example to the world by encouraging voluntary testing for HIV.

People living with HIV/AIDS in Papua New Guinea were represented at an official function by Maura Mea, Vice President of Igat Hope, which is a national network of positive people that AusAID helps to support.

As an HIV-positive woman, Maura Mea is an excellent model of the useful role positive people can play in the

community. She is working hard on behalf of all people with the virus and is committed to eradicating the stigma that surrounds people living with HIV/AIDS. 'Together we can reach the many thousands of people who need treatment.'

Australia provides support, through AusAID, to the Government of Papua New Guinea to fight HIV/AIDS, including paediatric treatment, voluntary HIV testing and counselling initiatives. The Clinton Foundation's work in Papua New Guinea is largely funded through the aid program.

### ABOUT FOCUS

Focus magazine is published three times a year – January, May and September. Each edition has a different theme. 'Humanitarian aid and disaster relief' is the theme for this issue (May to August 2007 vol 22 no 2). The theme for the next edition (September to December 2007 vol 22 no 3) is 'Investing in people'.

Circulation is 60,000 copies.

Focus may be viewed and downloaded <[www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/focus](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/focus)>

## ALLISON SUDRADJAT 1965–2007

**On 7 March 2007 Garuda flight 200 crashed at Yogyakarta airport in Indonesia. Among the 16 Indonesians and five Australians killed was Allison Sudradjat, head of AusAID in Indonesia. Allison's death is a tragedy beyond measure for her family and friends, and an irreplaceable loss for Australia's overseas aid program.**

Allison Sudradjat died not only serving her country in an exemplary manner but while she was also serving her second home, Indonesia. She was an extraordinarily gifted and capable person – intellectual, analytical with a practical can-do attitude and a dedication to the task at hand. She had energy, enthusiasm and warmth. Above all, Allison was a people person who inspired confidence and admiration.

From the moment she joined AusAID in early 1989 her quality was evident. Three years later she was on a posting to Indonesia as second secretary looking after development cooperation. In 1996 she was posted to Papua New Guinea which corresponded to a heightened period of development and humanitarian need in that country.

In Papua New Guinea she showed she was not afraid to take on the big challenges. Among her many achievements, she coordinated urgent assistance during the crippling drought of 1997–98. In large part it was her organisation and drive that saw emergency food rations reach



starving communities across several remote and difficult to access provinces.

As a negotiator with sharp analytical skills, Allison's contribution to the Bougainville peace process was invaluable as was her contribution in the establishment of long-term AusAID assistance to health programs. Not surprisingly, Allison was also centre stage in the relief operation following the tsunami that hit Aitape in 1998. Tragically and prophetically, this experience more than any other prepared her for what was to come and what was to prove the greatest career challenge of her life.

Allison was in Canberra on 26 December 2004 having dinner with family and friends when news broke of the massive earthquake and tsunami off the west coast of Indonesia. Her immediate response was to head straight to the office. Three days later she was

in Jakarta coordinating Australia's largest ever emergency relief effort. By the time her family joined her a month later, she was in charge of a \$1 billion assistance package.

As an AusAID senior executive based in Jakarta Allison excelled – her drive, cultural empathy and practical good sense were exactly what were needed at this difficult time.

Implementing effective aid programs under a massive accelerated development partnership is, by anyone's measure, a gigantic challenge. Indeed, it demands the full range of talents of an exceptional group of people. Many must share in the success of programming, virtually from scratch in one year, \$1 billion worth of detailed aid activity – but no one deserves more credit than Allison. She brought it all together, working in true partnership with her Indonesian counterparts every step of the way.



LEFT: Allison Sudradjat.

ABOVE: Allison Sudradjat at the official opening of Min Merduati School in Banda Aceh. The rebuilding of schools was one of the early successes of the \$1 billion Australia Indonesia Partnership. Photos: AusAID

Allison's achievements in Indonesia will prove a remarkable legacy. The President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, is among many leaders who have paid tribute to Allison's contribution to Australian–Indonesian relations and specifically to Indonesian development. In a letter to the Prime Minister, John Howard, he said, 'We forever appreciate her compassion and her good work.'

Such achievements rest firmly on Allison's rare ability to draw the best from all those with whom she worked, most particularly from her loyal team. She had an uncanny knack of understanding a much broader canvas than that emerging from her immediate work environment. She was knowledgeable, kind and decent – a thoroughly genuine humanitarian – a bright star.

She is sadly and deeply missed.







# DISASTERS AND EMERGENCIES

ABOVE: Angry mountain. Mount Vulcan, Rabaul, Papua New Guinea, 1994.

Ashfall and mudflows smothered large tracts of land after the eruption. The most densely populated area of Papua New Guinea's island region was all but buried and coconut plantations were devastated. Local residents, such as community school student Richmon Robin from Raluan, will never forget that day, 'As we looked up to the sky, we saw thick clouds of dust. We did not know what might happen so we left our village. As we were travelling, many children, women and men were walking with lamps, water containers and animals. Pumice started falling. Boy, I thought that was the end of us.' Through the Gazelle Reconstruction Project, the Australian Government provided more than \$40 million to help recovery.

Photo: Australian Geological Survey Organisation/AusAID [RELIEF | SIGHT](#)

LEFT: East Timor. Feuding mobs armed with machetes and other hand weapons give chase to rivals in the capital, Dili, in 2006. Conflict is a humanitarian disaster and holds back development. Photo: Adrees Latif/Reuters

AUSTRALIA HAS A REMARKABLE RECORD OF SUPPLYING HIGH QUALITY EMERGENCY AID WHEN AND WHERE IT'S NEEDED. IN TIMES OF NATURAL DISASTERS SUCH AS CYCLONES, EARTHQUAKES, DROUGHTS, FLOODS – OR MAN-MADE CRISES LEADING TO FAMINE OR CONFLICT – COUNTRIES CAN COUNT ON AUSTRALIA. EACH YEAR THROUGH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S OVERSEAS AID PROGRAM, AND THE GENEROSITY AND GOODWILL OF THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE, THOUSANDS OF LIVES ARE SAVED.





## AUSTRALIA RESPONDS

**In order to be truly effective, emergency aid must be rapid, well targeted and responsible.**

### DISASTERS

Developing countries burdened by widespread poverty and a lack of governance are more vulnerable to disasters. They also suffer disproportionately from their impact. Under-developed countries have neither the resources nor the systems to cope during a disaster or in its aftermath.

In Australia if an industrial accident occurs, or wild storms threaten lives and property, people caught in those events can reasonably expect emergency services to come to their rescue. Well trained professionals follow

set procedures and can call upon extra resources if required. Adequate infrastructure and high speed communications facilitate relief efforts.

The same levels of resources and comprehensive systems do not exist in developing countries. People from poor rural-based economies who survive floods, cyclones and other disasters do so largely without state support. And this is only the beginning. If harvests are wiped out and livestock lost they have very little on which to fall back. The state is rarely able to compensate them – food becomes scarce, their means of earning a living disappears, and their homes may be destroyed. Communities are shattered. Without outside help, they can take a very long time to recover – and sometimes they don't.

### EARLY ACTION

Australia's assistance in a disaster is in proportion to its magnitude and severity. Likewise, location and nature determine the type of practical help Australia offers.

'From the moment we learn about a humanitarian disaster – either natural or man-made – we're active,' says Alan March, AusAID's Humanitarian and Emergency Program Coordinator. 'Our officers in Canberra and overseas work exhaustively to gather the most accurate and up-to-date information. For logistical and other purposes it's vital we know what we're dealing with. We can't just go rushing in with tents, blankets, water tablets and so on before we know the terrain, where we can land safely, who in-country we can

**ABOVE: Women at risk. Banda Aceh, Indonesia, 2005. A female survivor of the Indian Ocean tsunami searches in vain for something worth keeping. In some villages up to 80 per cent of those who died were women. AusAID has funded several programs to help relieve financial and social burdens on female survivors and to protect them from discrimination and violence. Photo: Caritas [RELIEF IN SIGHT](#)**

### FIRST STEP

**Before Australia – or any country – can take direct emergency action in another country it must receive an official request for assistance. To not wait to be asked for help formally breaches international protocols. It also fails to acknowledge the affected country's sovereignty.**



work with, whether it's helpful to send extra personnel, what sort of medical help we should bring. There's a great deal to think about, including what other donors might be doing.'

The Australian High Commission or Australian Embassy in-country, local authorities, Australian agencies and non-government organisations with local knowledge and experience are all critical sources of information. AusAID has humanitarian partnership agreements with Oxfam, Australian Red Cross, CARE Australia, World Vision Australia, Caritas and Austcare. They help to make sure urgent relief is delivered fast. 'With their networks already established in-country these organisations, which incidentally are pre-qualified for emergency response, are enormously helpful to us,' says Alan March. 'They understand the local conditions. They know who to speak to and how to tap into local systems even though these are sometimes very frail. They can and do help us construct a supply chain so our emergency relief reaches the most number of people in great need in the shortest possible time.'

Providing practical assistance to a disaster zone is always challenging. Any number of difficulties can arise. Communication links may be poor, essential infrastructure such as roads, airports and seaports may be non-existent, damaged or too small, or the actual disaster area may be inaccessible and unstable – as was the case with the Pakistan earthquake in 2005. And people's accounts of what has happened and what resources are needed also vary wildly.

So, while speed is of course the essence in any emergency, acting so fast that disaster assessments are not carried out, information is

not verified and due consideration is not given to sending the right combination of aid packages is overwhelmingly counterproductive – and can lead to further tragic consequences.

'Once we have the green light and we know enough about what we're facing we move extremely swiftly,' says Alan March. In the Sydney suburb of Moorebank, AusAID has a warehouse fully stocked with emergency items such as bottled water, cooking utensils, tents, water purification tablets and medical supplies. 'These items are ready for dispatch at a moment's notice. We just need to know which combinations are wanted and the quantities.'

For Australia, and many other countries, the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 was the largest and most testing humanitarian disaster relief effort ever attempted. 'It was an extremely challenging time for AusAID. We were stretched to full capacity and worked around the clock to ensure our emergency aid was effective. We were not only dealing with overseas personnel but also taking a leading role in coordinating activities with other Australian government departments and agencies,' says Annmaree O'Keefe, AusAID's Deputy Director General, Global Programs. 'But we got there. Australia's response was rapid, well targeted and responsible. Our efforts helped avert thousands more deaths from illness and disease.'

Australia's effective disaster management is due in large part to AusAID's standby mechanisms that can access transport, supplies, medical services and engineering support from both government and commercial providers. Its emergency response plan allows for the drawing down of extra



Sudan. A doctor examines sick children at a camp clinic. Babies are most at risk of infection and disease when conditions are crowded and unsanitary, and food is scarce. Photo: Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures





resources as required – such as police for victim identification, health for medical specialists and defence for logistics and transport.

AusAID also draws on the experience and expertise of large international bodies or multilateral organisations such as the United Nations. When Super Typhoon Reming smashed into the Philippines in December 2006, Australia coordinated emergency assistance with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNICEF and the Philippines Red Cross.

In the Pacific – an area prone to volcanic eruptions and cyclones – Australia, France and New Zealand join together to deliver humanitarian relief under the FRANZ Agreement. In 2004, when Cyclone Heta struck Samoa

and Niue, and Cyclone Ivy hit Vanuatu, the FRANZ Agreement made sure assistance was prompt, purposeful and tightly coordinated.

Following the earthquake and tsunami that hit Solomon Islands in April 2007, Australia immediately provided critical sanitation support, dispatched basic survival kits and provided urgent medical relief, including six medical teams. Australia will continue to work with the Government of Solomon Islands to rebuild health infrastructure.

‘If the disaster is in the Asia Pacific – our local region – there is a lot we can do directly. We take a leadership role,’ says Alan March. ‘But if it’s beyond our region, such as Mozambique or Zambia, it’s more efficient and of greater benefit to the people in

need if we work through one of the international organisations. Usually giving money is best but sometimes a United Nations body may also ask us to send experts – engineers or medics for example – or specialised equipment. In Sudan, where there are a large number of refugee camps, we make money immediately available to organisations such as the World Food Programme. It knows the ground well and has personnel and infrastructure in place to bring in desperately needed supplies.’ (See *Feed the World* page 21.)

It’s also important to remember ‘the line between helping and hindering can be very fine,’ says Alan March. ‘On the one hand people have a right to food and shelter and a guarantee of safety. And we have a moral obligation

to assist. On the other hand, an influx of aid and aid organisations in a disaster zone can create a lot of extra problems and pressures. We have to be ever mindful of the corruption angle. There will always be unscrupulous people who will try to exploit circumstances to benefit personally. If emergency aid isn’t managed properly, we’ve not met our responsibility. It’s the Australian way to help – but that means constructively, effectively and thoughtfully.’

## NATURAL DISASTERS IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

The Pacific and parts of Asia are at particular risk from natural disasters because of their position within the Pacific Ring of Fire





**ABOVE: Stadium hospital. Earthquake, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, May 2006.** Indonesian and Australian medics move the injured to a makeshift field hospital in a basketball stadium. Over 5,700 people died and more than 38,000 were injured. Many of the survivors had broken arms and legs caused by falling debris. Australia's emergency response included two medical teams, logisticians and engineers from all over Australia. The first medical team arrived on the ground within two days of the disaster. Such rapid intervention helped save lives. Photo: 'Melbourne'/AusAID **RELIEF SIGHT**

**ABOVE LEFT: Lebanon.** Bottled water from a UNHCR and World Food Programme convoy is unloaded by aid workers in the besieged city of Tyre. Photo: Jeroen Oerlemans/Panos Pictures

– a geologically unstable area shaped like a horseshoe measuring 40,000 kilometres. More earthquakes and volcanic eruptions occur here than anywhere else in the world. It's also a region which is no stranger to floods, cyclones, landslides and tsunamis.

## CONFLICT – A MAN-MADE DISASTER

Conflict is both a cause and symptom of social unrest and, more than any other factor, contributes to enduring poverty. Countries experiencing conflict cannot progress – and in human terms they pay a heavy price.

People forced to flee their homes because of fighting become displaced persons living limbo

existences in refugee camps – sometimes for many years. With their assets destroyed – and this usually means their land – and without possessions or means of employment they must rely entirely on aid agencies. Their lives are essentially put on hold.

Bringing assistance to people caught up in conflict is both complicated and dangerous. Those transporting food and other supplies are at risk of attack and landmine explosions. 'A much closer relationship between military peacekeepers, civilian police and humanitarian workers has to exist where social conditions are unstable to ensure the safety of aid workers and to maintain access to vulnerable communities,' says Steve Darvill, AusAID's Peace, Conflict and Development Adviser. 'At the same time aid workers must be able to maintain their independence and neutrality. They can't support – or even be perceived to be supporting – one group over another. Humanitarian aid is not conditional.'

In September 2006, AusAID provided funds to UNICEF for food and medical supplies for 1.6 million displaced people in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Forced from their homes by fighting, they're now in camps where many have since fallen victim to diseases such as cholera. Malnutrition is also a big problem.

To prevent a measles outbreak among thousands of children in camps in East Timor, AusAID funded a vaccination program through UNICEF. Australia has given funds to the International Committee of the Red Cross in Somalia. Civil war compounded by drought has forced between 500,000 and a million people to leave their homes in search of food.

In other conflicts, such as the civil war in Sri Lanka, Australia

works as much on rehabilitation as emergency relief. 'We contribute to the World Food Programme's relief programs, for example, but we also do a lot of peace building work,' says Andrew Adzic from AusAID's South Asia Desk. 'We helped Sri Lanka draw up a framework to resolve land disputes between Muslims and Tamils and we continue to work with UNICEF to restore schools and improve children's access to them. In conflict-ridden areas this is of course very difficult but it is also of the utmost importance. If we can offer education as a better long-term alternative to fighting we may be able to help secure a more peaceful and prosperous future.' AusAID programs are also helping Sri Lankan women who have been displaced, or who have lost partners through the conflict, to learn ways of making a living and to become involved in the peace-building process.

Sometimes conflicts demand complex responses. The violence that gripped Solomon Islands between 1999 and 2002 brought the nation to a near economic and social collapse. The Australian-led intervention of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), which involves the cooperation of 15 Pacific island nations, is giving the Solomons the stability it needs to confront pressing problems. These include law and order, governance and financial management. It has also brought calm and reassurance to the streets.

## FAMINE – NATURAL OR MAN-MADE

Famine is a feature of poverty and often, in developing countries, a direct result of conflict.

In poorer countries when

successive crops fail because of lack of rain, blight or locust plagues, famine soon follows. Most developing countries do not have spare supplies of food – there's no grain kept safely in reserve just in case of emergencies. There are no back up systems or special funds to pay for imports. 'When famine is declared, Australia moves quickly to contribute to the World Food Programme (WFP). If it can, the WFP buys food from close regional sources. This is often the fastest method to obtain food familiar to the diet of victims and it is also a way of helping to stimulate local economies,' says Ray Bojczuk, AusAID's Emergencies Manager.

In some developing countries a 'hungry season' is typical. This is when not enough food is grown to last the population from one growing season to the next. 'East Timor – a very poor country with an expanding population – experiences hungry seasons not only because it doesn't produce enough food crops but also because poor subsistence farmers don't have the money to buy food when their own supplies run out,' says Neil McFarlane, head of AusAID's East Timor section. 'We provide funds for food aid but we know this is a short-term solution. We've recognised what we need to do is help East Timor improve food security over the long term and strengthen the crisis management capacity of the Government of East Timor. We've been helping the country grow new varieties of crops that produce higher yields. Trials are very promising. I sincerely hope it isn't too long before we can get rid of East Timor's hungry season for good.'



**The mobile mortuary. Thailand, 2004.** At the request of the Thai authorities following the Indian Ocean tsunami, the Australian Government sent 48 Australian Federal Police to help establish a victim identification centre. 'We use a system based on standards set by Interpol. Identifying people relies on a number of personal information matches. We use medical and dental histories, DNA and other physical evidence,' says Dr James Robertson, National Manager of Forensic and Technical Services. Photo: Rob Maccoll/*The Courier Mail* **RELIEF IN SIGHT**

## REDUCING THE EFFECTS

Protecting against all disasters is of course impossible but by planning and investing in resources, developing nations can reduce their vulnerability – they need not experience the full devastating impact of every disaster.

AusAID is working with many countries in the Asia Pacific in disaster mitigation. 'In Vietnam, for instance, we're helping with the construction of levees to prevent uncontrolled flooding. In Papua New Guinea where people live in constant danger of volcanic eruptions, we've helped to implement early warning systems. And now we have the Australian Tsunami Warning Centre to detect earthquakes and other geological disturbances in the region,' says Alan March.

But what makes the biggest difference is good governance. When countries have public institutions that function well they are better able to 'manage' disasters and consequently

minimise their effects.

Communities affected can be supported by the state – given access to medical aid, bank loans, reconstruction programs and so on.

Australia's support for capacity building and good governance, which accounts for nearly one-third of the aid budget, helps developing countries improve their overall ability to provide basic services. Countries that can quickly get services up and running after a major disaster are well on the road to a complete recovery.

Add to this the natural resilience of people. 'We do well to remember,' says Alan March, 'that since time immemorial communities have banded together to help each other cope with disasters. Our emergency assistance is just that – assistance. We listen to what needs to be done and we do it. We stay for as long as we're required, and then we leave. We're not there to take over the whole recovery process. That's the business of individual nations.'

## CIVILIANS NEED TO



**Ensuring the safety and welfare of civilians is a humanitarian fundamental based on the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence.**

### Why is there a need for humanitarian protection?

The number of conflicts and the way they are fought is causing large displacements of civilians within the borders of nation states. Civilians now comprise around 90 per cent of all casualties in armed conflicts.

Natural disasters can also cause large-scale population displacements. For example, in the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, as many as 3.5 million people were made homeless. Many still rely on humanitarian assistance and protection.



# BE PROTECTED



## What are the risks vulnerable civilians face?

Civilians affected by civil strife or a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or mudslide, are often at significant risk of deprivations, physical abuse, exploitation and even death. When conditions are unstable, people are forced to flee their communities, leaving behind their homes, their jobs, their assets and many of their personal possessions. Access to resources, such as clean water and food, is also often limited. Those who can't make the journey – the elderly, disabled, widows, and those who literally have nothing, are sometimes left even more vulnerable amid conflict or environmental hazards.

## Who is responsible for protecting civilians?

The protection of civilians is first and foremost the responsibility of governments. Yet sometimes governments lack the will or

capacity to provide for their citizens. In other cases, governments may be rendered powerless by militant forces or corruption – such as is the case in some African states like Somalia. Through the Fourth Geneva Convention, certain non-state bodies, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, have a mandate to protect non-combatants.

## What is the Australian Government doing to help protect civilians?

The Australian Government provides funding to organisations which work with vulnerable groups of civilians to help cover basic needs like food, water and shelter, and to raise awareness about potential risks. For example, it supports landmine awareness for at-risk populations.

The Australian Government also provides funding for protection officers to work with different United Nations agencies. Crisis areas include Sudan, Kenya, Sri Lanka and East Timor. Protection officers are skilled and experienced individuals who monitor and report human rights abuses and liaise with vulnerable civilians, various aid agencies, governments, and military and police authorities. Protection officers also advocate for the improvement of, and access to, social, legal and community services, and assist with the delivery of aid.

**ABOVE: Karen villagers fleeing Burma (Myanmar) and the ongoing violence from Burma's military regime. The Karen people are one of Burma's largest ethnic minority groups. For the past five decades they have been waging a guerrilla war for the autonomy of the Karen State. Photo: Free Burma Ranges/EPA**

# UPHOLDING RIGHTS



**EAST TIMOR: Olivia Wellesley-Cole is an AusAID-funded protection officer with Austcare. She's currently in Dili seconded to UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). Here is her report.**

**P**olitical and social instability in East Timor in April 2006 led to street violence, the burning of houses and the displacement of tens of thousands of people in the nation's capital, Dili. Schools, churches, government offices became places of refuge.

Over a year later, there is still massive displacement in Dili. Over 30,000 people continue to live as best as they can in internally displaced people's camps. Sporadic violence between gangs armed with darts and home-made missiles erupts on the streets almost daily.

UNHCR is working with the Government of East Timor to ensure that the rights of internally displaced people are respected. As it's important everyone knows what those rights are, my colleague Manuel Carceres da Costa and I have been training



United Nations Police (UN Pol) on the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*.

UN Pol was set up as part of the United Nations Mission in East Timor in mid-2006, and has representatives from over 50 United Nations member states. It operates as Dili's local police force so it's pleasing that more East Timorese police are joining it – although the officers that Manuel and I help to instruct are mainly from Australia, Brazil, Nepal and Namibia.

The guiding principles are specifically concerned with the plight of internally displaced people. In our training sessions we try hard not to lecture but to apply the principles to current circumstances – for example, the importance of the right to vote in the presidential election.

Our training sessions form part of an overall human rights message. Other sections include child protection and dealing with sexual and gender-based violence.

**ABOVE LEFT: Olivia Wellesley-Cole 'We must ensure the rights of internally displaced people are respected.'**  
**ABOVE RIGHT: UN Pol officers are mainly from Australia, Brazil, Nepal and Namibia. Photos: Olivia Wellesley-Cole**



An injured boy looks for reassurance in his mother's eyes. Aid organisations worked hard to deliver emergency aid to survivors of the earthquake that hit northern Afghanistan in 1998. At least 3,000 people were killed and thousands more were left homeless. Photo: John McCConnico/AP





Life raft. Bangladesh floods, 2004. Many communities lost all their crops in the floods. AusAID provided funds to UNICEF to help deliver food, medical supplies, water purification tablets and family kits (including clothing, soap and cooking utensils). Photo: Trygve Bolstad/Panos Pictures

# RELIEF IN SIGHT

The unleashed forces of nature can be terrifying and leave devastation and human misery in their wake – witness the Indian Ocean tsunami. Natural disasters in the Asia Pacific span earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, cyclones, floods and droughts.

*Relief in Sight*, AusAID's travelling photographic exhibition, raises awareness and understanding of Australia's response to natural disasters and the urgent humanitarian needs to which they give rise.

For more information including dates and venues  
<[www.reliefinsight.com.au](http://www.reliefinsight.com.au)>

## RELIEF INSIGHT

[1] Where there are no roads. Drought, Papua New Guinea, 1997. A real logistical challenge – delivering urgently needed food aid to remote and inaccessible parts of Papua New Guinea. AusAID and the Government of Papua New Guinea worked with the Australian and Papua New Guinean defence forces to overcome many obstacles. Helicopters were sometimes required to fly up steep valleys and land at villages more than 2,000 metres above sea level. Photo: Darren Hilder/Australian Defence Force



[2] Embrace. Banda Aceh, Indonesia, 2005. An Indonesian nurse embraces Heidi Turnbull from the 1st Health Support Battalion (Sydney) to say 'thank you' for the efforts of the Australian medical staff following the Indian Ocean tsunami. AusAID, the Australian Defence Force and Emergency Management Australia each performed vital roles in the relief effort. Photo: Phillip Cullinan/Australian Defence Force



[3] Anxious search. Thailand, 2004. After the Indian Ocean tsunami people searched desperately for friends and loved ones. Pictures of the missing were posted everywhere. More disturbing were the shots of victims found by rescue and salvage teams. The Australian Government sent Australian Federal Police specialists to help with the long, complex and sad process of identifying victims. Photo: Rob Maccoll/*The Courier Mail*



[4] A new grip on life. Banda Aceh, Indonesia, 2005. Queuing for water from the Australian Army. The water purification plant operated by the Australian Defence Force in Banda Aceh was the only source of drinkable water in the city after the tsunami. AusAID helped source and deliver well over a thousand 20-litre water containers and provided funding for a water and sanitation specialist to help local authorities address the city's immediate water supply and sanitation needs. Photo: Belinda Mepham/Australian Defence Force







**[5]** Eyes on fire. Bushfires in East Kalimantan, Indonesia 1997. Massive bushfires burned out of control blanketing parts of Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia. Australia provided equipment, including aerial water bombing services, and training to fight the fires. Photo: Dermot Tatlow /Panos Pictures

**[6]** Boxes of fun. Indonesia, 2006. In spite of what they've been through in the Indian Ocean tsunami, children in a camp in Banda Aceh manage to smile and play. Before they became great toys, the boxes contained lamps from the Australian Red Cross. Later the people in this camp were able to move into steel-framed transitional accommodation, built by the Red Cross with the help of AusAID funding. Photo: Amanda McClelland/Australian Red Cross

**[7]** In safe hands. Earthquake, Pakistan, 2005. The reach of Australian aid stretches a long way, as World Vision's John Schenk discovered while helping to deliver tents, sleeping bags and blankets in Siren Valley. The Australian Government, through non-government organisations like World Vision, provided \$80 million in relief and reconstruction assistance to the thousands of survivors left homeless. AusAID was quick to mobilise a team of experts to help the Government of Pakistan assess damage to critical infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and water systems. Photo: World Vision



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# THE GREAT LEVELLER



**THAILAND:** Disasters are random. They can strike anywhere at any time with varying ferocity so that no one is immune from harm, even death. Those who survive – rich or poor, young or old – live with the trauma of the disaster long after the event. Australian John Russell, one of many holiday makers in the wrong place at the wrong time, tells of his ordeal during the Indian Ocean tsunami.

I was staying on the island of Koh-Raya with my wife, Megan, and a group of friends. We were taking a break – I'd been working in Japan for a few years and it was time for a holiday.

We'd been on the island for almost a week and had made the most of our time – sleeping in, breakfast on the beach, scuba diving, reading books... that kind of thing. We'd had a fantastic holiday but the day had inevitably come when we had to get the boat back to Phuket and start our return journey to Japan.

The day of our departure I was on the beach in the early morning waiting for the diving shop to open. I wanted to pay for the trip we'd been on the day before. As I sat drinking a coffee at one of the beachfront cafes I heard laughter coming from the waters edge. I looked up. One of the boats moored near the shore had tipped over on a sandbank and spilled some chairs into the bay. A few people were around and began to lend a hand. I went down to join them.

Halfway there I met Wolfgang, one of the diving instructors. We both commented on the low water level but put it down to a very big tide. There had been a full moon the night before. It seemed a plausible explanation at the time.

A few minutes later we looked up and were surprised to see a reef jutting out of the water along the edge of the bay. It took us a few seconds to realise that we had been diving there the day before. We knew things were not as they should be, but just then the tide swung around and the water level began to rise again.

As we headed back up the beach to the diving shop the water followed, going back to its original height before a swell lifted it a few extra metres up the beach. Wolfgang and I stood and watched as the water started to go out again, this time much faster and further, causing a few other boats to tip over and break their moorings. As the water reached its lowest point – perhaps 50 metres down the beach – we noticed a very large black swell of water forming behind. It had all the dynamics of a normal wave – sucked-in water towards the bottom and the crest rising above



## MAKING LIFE

# BETTER

Survivors of disaster and conflict in some of the world's poorest nations can rely on RedR Australia and UNICEF working together. Their partnership is making life better in practical ways for people in difficult circumstances.



Sri Lanka. RedR Australia veteran Daryll Ainsworth checks out a consignment of cricket bats. UNICEF is in the business of child welfare which includes encouraging play and sport activities. Photo: RedR Australia

RedR Australia is a non-government organisation which keeps a register of trained professionals covering such fields as engineering, logistics, humanitarian protection, information technology and data communication. United Nations agencies and other established front-line humanitarian organisations draw on this register for short-term disaster relief work. RedR Australia is also a leading provider of practical training courses across Australia and the Asia Pacific. Courses equip experienced aid workers with the specialised skills and knowledge needed to work in the field.

Potential aid workers are given a thorough preview of what they can expect.

For several years RedR Australia has maintained a standby staffing agreement with UNICEF. While UNICEF carries out its broad mandate in areas such as child protection, education, hygiene, and water and sanitation, RedR Australia provides the technical support.

In Sri Lanka, logistics officer for UNICEF, Daryll Ainsworth, manages a large warehouse near the international airport in Colombo. A veteran of RedR Australia, he manages and prepares consignments of humanitarian aid

– only on a much larger scale, and moving much more slowly. We now knew for certain trouble was brewing, but before that day we had probably never heard the word ‘tsunami’, let alone knew what to expect from one.

The first of the large waves was more of a swell. The sea rose about 10 metres, pouring into the few cafes and shops that sat quite high above the beach on a small embankment. When the water once again subsided and slipped out of the bay, a few of the buildings toppled. Walls collapsed under the weight of the escaping water.

As a freelance photographer I carry a camera wherever I go. I quickly grabbed it and took a few photos of the buildings and mess around the beach. Everyone was pretty alarmed by this stage, but the next surge still managed to take us by surprise.

As the water crashed forward I jumped onto a brick wall well above the high watermark to get a better shot, only to find myself up to my waist in water and struggling to stay upright as the sea thrashed around.

There was quite a lot of debris floating around by this stage and as the water swept out again the water and debris started to churn like a washing machine. I was nearly pulled in, just managing to keep my balance.

When the water reached its lowest point I jumped off the wall into waist-deep water and made a dash for the steep side of the bay. I made it just before one of the main waves crashed into the remaining buildings smashing everything in its path. I looked over and saw a friend of mine scrambling onto a roof, only to see

it lurch to the side and snap off its supports before being sucked out into the bay. I watched the terrified expression on his face as he tried to stand up, grabbing for anything to hold on to before I lost sight of him through the palm trees.

This photograph was taken a few minutes later at the top of a small hill behind the beach. I didn't realise at the time, but the man running towards the camera in the diving gear is Wolfgang.

The waves continued for quite some time. Brick walls and roofs were tossed around like balsa wood. Someone told us to evacuate into the jungle-covered hills behind the beach. There were reports of a second wave, far bigger than this one, heading our way after a second massive earthquake off the coast.

It never eventuated. After a while people started to emerge and inspect what was left. By this time the sea had returned to normal, yet what we saw was anything but. The buildings that had withstood the sea's onslaught were completely gutted, boats were floating upside down in the bay, cement, metal and wood debris was everywhere. Entire sections of the beach were torn away leaving exposed the bedrock many metres below.

It wasn't until several days later, when we were evacuated by the Navy, that we found out our friend who had been sucked into the bay had survived. He was in hospital back in Phuket.

LEFT: No warning. Koh-Raya, Thailand, 2004. Photo: John Russell/AP 

RIGHT: Nepal. Maoist rebels. With the end of the 10-year civil war, the next step is disarming former combatants and reuniting them with their families. Photo: Stuart Freedman/Panos Pictures  
 BELOW: East Timor. Examining a hand-dug well for use by internally displaced people in a camp in Dili. Photo: Lindsay Smith/RedR Australia



destined for areas affected by the Indian Ocean tsunami and war-torn trouble spots in the north and east of the country. Heavy fighting regularly occurs in these regions, including artillery bombardment, air strikes and ground conflicts.

While Daryll Ainsworth admits it's difficult working within the complex regulations that govern the transportation of aid, he has had some big successes. 'I was pleased last week when I managed to get four large truck loads of humanitarian aid through to Batticaloa. This is a place where we expected more than 100,000 internally displaced people to be

heading.' Indeed, the trucks arrived just in time – heavy fighting broke out a few hours later.

Water engineer Lindsay Smith has just returned from a four-month stint with UNICEF in East Timor. While used to challenging conditions – in his regular work he delivers water, sanitation and environmental health infrastructure to remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory – circumstances in Dili were very different. UNICEF is trying to meet the emergency needs of thousands of displaced people surviving in camps around the capital. 'The lack

of infrastructure is a big hurdle – it makes operations so much more complex,' says Lindsay whose work involved not only building latrines but also providing washing and cooking water. 'We were working to tight timeframes – it was an emergency – but, all in all, I think we had a few wins.'

From the lofty streets of Sindhuli, Nepal, RedR Australia protection officer Christine Clarence is watching history unfold. A peace accord signed by the royalist government and the Maoist rebels in November 2006 ends a 10-year civil war. The reconvened Nepalese national parliament is drafting a new constitution.

Christine is working with UNICEF in the emergency program for Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups (CAAFAG). As part of the peace agreement, a campaign has been launched to register and disarm former combatants. Eventually civilians, including women and children, will be registered. At the moment thousands of people are dislocated and living in camps across Nepal. In time, program workers will be able to identify former child combatants and help

them to get back to their families. They will also help reintegrate families into communities.

'It's an amazing experience seeing the evolution of this country,' says Christine. 'There's a lot of chaos and confusion as you might expect so planning well ahead is difficult but the people are wonderful. They deserve peace.'

Whether managing a major warehouse distributing vital goods, or building latrines for displaced people, or reuniting children with their families, in each case UNICEF with RedR Australia is performing vital functions that help to improve lives in difficult circumstances. 'There is a clear need for UNICEF in disaster relief, and we are committed to supporting this organisation and its recipients whenever possible,' says RedR Australia's Chief Executive Officer, Christine Vincent.

Such sentiments suggest the association will continue long into the future.

**AusAID makes a significant contribution to UNICEF's programs in its support of RedR Australia.**





FAR LEFT: Detention visit at Becora prison in Dili, East Timor. In private interviews ICRC delegates are able to check on conditions in detention centres and the welfare of detainees.

LEFT: Training session for future overseas delegates of the Australian Red Cross at Fiskville, Victoria. The ICRC directs and coordinates the international relief activities of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in times of conflict. Photos: Roland Bigler/ICRC

# LIFELINE IN TIMES OF CONFLICT

**One of the larger humanitarian organisations, the Swiss-based International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) employs some 12,000 people in 80 delegations around the world. Formed in 1863, it is the founding body of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Wherever there is suffering and vulnerable people caught in conflict, the ICRC is never far behind.**

**T**he three overriding concerns for the ICRC are protection, assistance and prevention.

‘The ICRC’s principal mission is to assist and protect victims of war,’ says Jean-Luc Metzker, head of the ICRC regional delegation for the Pacific. ‘But we’re just as active during peace-time to prevent conflict.’

In the Pacific, for example, ICRC activities are:

- > visiting people detained in relation to internal unrest and violence
- > cooperating with regional national Red Cross societies
- > encouraging states to ratify treaties relating to international humanitarian law
- > advancing international humanitarian law and humanitarian ideals.

#### **Detention visits**

For many years ICRC delegates have been visiting people in

detention facilities in countries affected by conflict, including Fiji, Solomon Islands and East Timor. ‘These visits ensure that detainees receive at least the minimum care and treatment under international standards,’ explains Jean-Luc Metzker. ‘Delegates meet privately with inmates and inspect conditions. They also help prison guards to understand laws governing detention – international humanitarian law and human rights law.’

In East Timor, detainees whose families are unable to visit them send ‘Red Cross messages’ through a network composed of the East Timorese and Indonesian national Red Cross societies and the ICRC. This system allows families to maintain and, in some cases, to re-establish family contact. In Solomon Islands, the ICRC helps families who live in far away provinces to visit relatives held in detention in the capital, Honiara.

It’s an underlying principle that the ICRC never makes public its findings of prison visits but passes them on, along with ICRC recommendations, to the appropriate national authorities. ‘Our job is to protect human dignity through persuasion rather than by public denunciation,’ says Jean-Luc Metzker.

#### **Red Cross societies**

Each of the many Red Cross societies in the Pacific is a formal member of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The newest society is in East Timor, founded by former ICRC employees after the country’s struggle for independence.

‘The ICRC’s regional offices help to strengthen national Red Cross societies so that they can respond effectively in times of trouble – as we saw last year in Solomon Islands and East Timor. In these countries the ICRC



provided emergency relief items such as food and financial aid.'

With the backing of the ICRC, national Red Cross societies are also able to improve tracing services so that families separated during conflicts or disasters can be reunited. During the Indian Ocean tsunami, for example, the ICRC provided satellite phones in Sri Lanka and Indonesia so relatives could let each other know they were safe.

#### International humanitarian law

An important aspect of the work carried out by the ICRC is encouraging states to ratify treaties dealing with international humanitarian law and incorporating these treaties into domestic law. Commitment to clearing landmines and other unexploded ordnance laid during times of war, for example, is an area of concern.

In recent months a new internationally accepted protective emblem – a red crystal – has been legally adopted through the Third Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions. Holding equal status, it will be used alongside the familiar red cross and red crescent symbols that most people associate with the ICRC. 'The red crystal will

#### ABOUT THE ICRC

The ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) is an impartial, neutral and independent organisation whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence, and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in times of conflict. It also strives to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.

make it easier for national societies who prefer not to use the red cross or the red crescent emblems to be recognised and admitted to the movement,' says Jean-Luc.

**ICRC activities are funded entirely through voluntary contributions, mainly through governments and from national Red Cross societies. The Australian Government, through AusAID, is a leading contributor.**

ABOVE: Western Dafur, Sudan. Preparing to distribute basic household items with the support of Sudanese Red Crescent volunteers. Photo: Gassmann/ICRC

## EFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE

In 1996 an international consortium of non-government organisations based in Geneva created the Sphere Project. Its achievement was a set of guidelines for effective humanitarian response. Built around core humanitarian principles, Sphere sets down the 'minimum standards' communities affected by conflict and natural disasters need to survive.

Both private citizens and the Australian Government rightly expect that when they provide funds for humanitarian causes their contributions will be used quickly, effectively and responsibly. The Sphere *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response* builds confidence in the international humanitarian system. This set of guidelines developed by over 400 organisations in 80 countries is the leading reference for many humanitarian aid agencies across the world.

'Sphere sets minimum standards for the basic needs for human survival,' says Steve Darvill, AusAID'S Peace, Conflict

and Development Adviser. 'In an emergency, where you might find many international and domestic humanitarian groups, it can be chaotic. But the Sphere Minimum Standards provide important benchmarks. Application of the standards allows a clearer understanding of what needs to be done, the order in which it should be done, how to do it and so on. By following the guidelines urgent assistance can be given effectively.'

Fundamental to Sphere is the 'do no harm' principle. 'It's a harsh fact,' says Steve Darvill, 'that well intentioned aid, not properly managed, can be quite detrimental. But by applying the do no harm methodologies aid workers can analyse the impact





knowledge that will ensure that we do no harm,' explains Steve Darvill. 'For example, if building a temporary settlement in a country riddled by conflict you need to consider local customs and practices. You need to ensure that familiar food commodities are distributed. You have to make sure women and girls feel safe when they visit facilities like latrines. Local laws and customs must be understood so that the right to use water and other natural resources, such as wood, are negotiated and understood by nearby communities. If these issues are not properly considered by humanitarian workers and aid agencies the temporary settlement is not going to work. In fact, it could create further conflict between the camp inhabitants and those outside.

'It's important to remember that members of disaster-affected communities are survivors – not victims – and they deserve a dignified future. Always the overriding concern for humanitarian workers should be to reduce long-term vulnerabilities and build capacities so that survivors are able to regain control over their lives in the shortest possible time.'

**AusAID is one of the original supporters of Sphere and funds the training of people in Asia and the Pacific on how to implement Sphere guidelines.**

**The Sphere Project**  
[www.sphereproject.org](http://www.sphereproject.org)

**ABOVE: Bejinji camp on the Chad-Sudan border is filled with Sudanese refugees. Photo: O Saltbones/ICRC**

of humanitarian interventions on disaster-affected areas. They can predict where, for example, a certain type of assistance might become the source of competition, pose security threats to recipients, or may be subject to manipulation. Armed with such knowledge, aid workers can better identify the most appropriate type of aid to suit particular circumstances.'

In this way, potentially harmful impacts of aid are minimised and positive impacts maximised.

Another guiding Sphere principle is listening to the views of crisis-affected communities and allowing them to participate in decisions determining their futures. Contrary to common perceptions, communities hit by disaster do not view themselves as passive recipients of assistance. They have their own skills and ways of doing things that are integral to rebuilding their lives.

'The involvement of local people in relief and recovery processes should always be sought and it's critical because they have the local

# VIEWPOINT

## FEED THE WORLD

**The World Food Programme (WFP) is the largest humanitarian agency in the world and the largest program run by the United Nations. Each year, the WFP gives food to an average of 90 million poor people, including 58 million hungry children, in at least 80 of the world's poorest countries. About 15 years ago, a huge percentage of the agency's work was in development. Today about 85 per cent is in emergency response. James Morris, who has just completed his five-year fixed term as Director of the WFP, was in a reflective mood during his recent visit to AusAID, Canberra.**



**James Morris on his recent visit to AusAID. Photo: Angus Braithwaite/AusAID**

'I've always found definitions of emergency response relief, recovery and development quite bothersome. I have never been sure what others mean by a 'crisis' or an 'emergency'.

When I first came to this job, the notion of 400 million hungry children in the world seemed to me very much a crisis. An emergency was the fact there are between 15 and 20 million orphans in Sub Saharan Africa, fending for themselves, because their parents have died of HIV/AIDS.

But we have traditionally defined 'crises' and 'emergencies'

in other ways. Now the top priority for the WFP is preparing for, and responding to, natural disasters and catastrophes. The World Bank report [spring meeting 2007] suggests that from 1975 to 2005, the number of natural disasters in the world increased four-fold – from 100 in 1975 to 400 in 2005. In the decade preceding 2005, 2.6 billion people in the world were touched by a natural disaster, compared with 1.6 billion over the 10 years going back from 1995. This dramatic increase is usually attributed to climate change and depredations to the environment caused by massive urbanisation and desertification.

Preparing to respond to natural disasters – like the Indian Ocean tsunami, the Pakistan earthquake, droughts and floods – has become the overwhelming preoccupation of the WFP. Yet, the fact of the matter is that, of the 25,000 people who die of hunger every day – 18,000 of whom are children – none dies in high profile situations. There's been no sudden catastrophe that immediately draws in the media. They're dying off the beaten track in Malawi or Bangladesh or East Timor – somewhere out of public

view and far away from news cameras.

In my view, the world needs to be just as concerned about that little girl in Malawi or East Timor who is at risk as it is about the victims of the terrible earthquake in Pakistan or the flood in Indonesia or whatever is the latest big event.

It was very easy to raise money for the tsunami – everyone saw the devastation on their televisions. In fact, we had more money than we needed. It is very difficult, much more challenging, to raise money to feed the little girl in Malawi. She is easily forgotten either because the vast majority of people who could help are unaware of her plight or are overwhelmed by the dimensions of the global needs.

It's a crisis of humanity and an absolute global mismanagement disaster that 18,000 children die every day of hunger – one every five seconds – all day long in a world that has plenty of food, money and technology. Imagine the outrage if the headlines tomorrow said, '45 full jumbo jets have crashed. The passengers are all children and they have all died, and, by the way, this is going to happen every day for the foreseeable future'.

We must feed that little girl in Malawi, East Timor, Bangladesh or wherever she may be, and make it possible for her to go to school. If we do that, everything about her life changes for the better. Just a few years in school, not much by Western standards, makes all the difference. Suddenly she is 50 per cent less likely to be HIV-positive and 50 per cent less likely to give birth to a low birth-weight baby. All of the right aspirational hooks for her life are planted, the benefits of

which extend not only to her family but also to the whole community.

You can feed that little girl in Malawi for about \$44 a year [\$US35]. For a few more cents you will help her get rid of skin ailments and internal parasites – perhaps buy a bar of soap or medicine. Simple measures will go a long way in helping her overcome debilitating health problems born of her poverty and neglect. With better nutrition and health, suddenly there is some hope.

I find it so unacceptable and so reprehensible that the political will may not be there, or the resources may not be there, to help that little girl. The life of a little girl in Malawi or any other developing country is just as precious as the life of a little girl in Australia or America. When a child finds herself in a predicament not of her own making, the rest of us have to step in and help. The WFP fed 56 million children last year – 22 million in school. In my judgement, it is the most powerful and important thing we do.

I have no doubt, if we are going to meet the Millennium Development Goals and reduce the number of people who currently go hungry by 50 per cent, we must continue to focus on children. There are 400 million hungry children in the world and we know where they are and how we can help them. One of our most important tasks is involving governments and helping them to introduce good workable social policies and programs. My own view is that an investment in eliminating child hunger also addresses the issue of infant mortality, maternal health, gender equity, universal



primary education, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. If we could have this extraordinary commitment from governments to get rid of child hunger, the world would be changed in the most powerful ways imaginable.

## WHERE THE WFP WORKS

Close to 70 per cent of WFP work is in Africa. Our largest single program is in Sudan where we provide food for about six million people. We have enormous

responsibilities in southern Africa, and Australia has helped us very generously. In 2002–03, 15 million people needed to be fed in Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique.

In Zimbabwe, life expectancy in 1990 was 68 years. Today it's 35 years. With a population of about 12 million people, 1.3 million children are orphans because mum and dad have lost their lives to AIDS. A combination of food scarcity, tough weather, the impact of HIV and then, on top of this,





FAR LEFT: Somalia. A mother kisses her child who has cholera at a camp hospital in the country's south, November 2006. As fears of war loom United Nations humanitarian chief for Somalia, Eric Laroche, says 'a corridor of peace' is needed to so aid can reach 400,000 people who have fled their homes to escape the worst flooding in a decade. Photo: Karel Prinsloo/AP  
 LEFT: Canned fish. Banda Aceh, Indonesia, 2005. Aid organisations, including the World Food Programme, provided more than 789 tonnes of emergency supplies after the Indian Ocean tsunami. Photo: M Anshar/AusAID **RELIEF IN SIGHT**

an awful pervasiveness on the part of government, the private sector and civil society not to respond, has entrenched a set of almost insurmountable problems in this part of the world. This past year, the WFP has fed about 10 million people in southern Africa.

There are about a dozen WFP programs in Asia. We have now moved Afghanistan and Pakistan into our Asia regional bureau office and we're in Bangladesh, East Timor, Laos, Cambodia, Sri Lanka and Indonesia – all places where Australia has been our partner.

For example, AusAID makes resources available for the WFP–UNICEF partnership in Laos to feed about 660,000 people. We're helping to find alternative livelihoods for poppy farmers, but a big piece of the work is providing food for children in the north. UNICEF helps improve education and sanitation facilities while WFP provides the food. AusAID helps us bring the United Nations family together.

Over the past 12 years we've had huge responsibilities in North

Korea – very difficult. It's the only place where we do not have universal access to every part of the country. In 2005, we provided food for 6.5 million people. In December 2006, we fed 730,000 people. The big problem is gaining access to hungry people. And we work very hard at keeping the humanitarian agenda separate from the political.

For illustrative purposes, I like to talk about the seven-year-old boy in North Korea and compare him to the seven-year-old boy in South Korea. Already the North Korean is eight inches shorter and 20 pounds lighter. The World Bank says the most powerful investment any country can make is seeing that its children are born to healthy mothers, nursed by healthy mothers and that they stay well nourished for the first 24 to 36 months of life. If this doesn't happen, no matter what remedial action is taken later, children never really catch up. When you think about the reconciliation of the Korean peninsula, which may happen someday, you will see the

joining of two extremely different societies – one will be healthy and one will be very unhealthy.

Australia has helped the WFP in Afghanistan where we are looking at providing food for towards seven million people over a two or three year period. Security is difficult, the weather conditions are tough. For a long time we have been providing food as compensation for teachers. There is no cash to pay salaries so we help to pay them with bags of food. Without an education system the country really would grind to a halt. Also, trying to provide alternative livelihoods for poppy farmers – which we do in Burma, Colombia, Laos and Afghanistan – is a pretty tough sell. The same sort of money can't be made raising other crops.

## HOW THE WFP WORKS

We are a decentralised organisation with headquarters in Rome. We have regional offices in Bangkok, Cairo, Kampala, Dakar, Johannesburg and Panama. We try to push as much responsibility and

authority as we can down to the country and regional level. We try not to be bureaucratic.

Last year our budget was about US\$2.8 billion. We had 98 countries helping us – the largest number in history. The United States gives us about 40 per cent of our budget, the European Union would be second and Australia is number eight. You – Australia – gave us about US\$60 million last year and when you look at your gross national product – your country versus the world – you are a very generous donor.

We have about 1,200 international employees and another 10,000 to 12,000 national employees. About another 6,000 labourers work for us on a daily basis, unloading ships, planes or whatever. Also we operate the United Nations humanitarian air system. We provide the only air service that is in existence in Sudan, Angola, Somalia – places where commercial air services don't go. We have about 2,300 non-government organisation (NGO) partners around the world



**If we could just harness our joint efforts to ensure that women and children have access to nutritious food and basic health care, we would very quickly see the change. In just 10 years, we could break the cycle of malnutrition for some 300 million children – the very number that suffers from chronic hunger today. It is achievable: for less than \$1.25 [US\$1] a week we can give a mother or a child supplementary food with all the micronutrients they need for healthy growth.** James Morris

and have a great relationship with many Australian NGOs. RedR Australia helped us in 15 or 16 tough situations last year in Asia and Africa, paid for by AusAID.

The WFP focuses mainly on nutrition but we're also very concerned with gender issues. We know if we give food to a woman it will be properly used in the family. For this reason we insist that all of our distribution committees around the world have at least 50 per cent women making decisions. It just works better.

## ADMINISTRATION OF THE WFP

We have worked very hard at strengthening the stature and support of our national staff. The quality of people we are able to recruit is exceptional. We have focussed on business practices. It used to be that we would not spend your money until you had sent the cheque. But now we don't wait. We have a strong balance sheet and we know that the sooner we spend money in a crisis, before prices go up and people have lost

their coping mechanisms, we can, with the same amount of money, take care of 30 per cent more people.

We know if Australia says it is going to give us \$6 million we are going to get it and the cost of borrowing it internally and feeding more people provides a much higher benefit in the beginning. It is a good thing we have changed our auditing operations. Almost all the major operations of the WFP are audited every year. In North Korea, we have had four audits since 1997. That gives me and everyone else some degree of comfort that the program is responsibly managed.

We have worked hard to diversify our fundraising base. Five years ago we had less than a dozen private sector donors; today, we have over 110. Our only criterion is that donors have to care as much about what we do as we do. Donors have to have the ability to make us better and help us do more. For example, a logistics company came in and looked at our warehouses and said if you do this and this you will have 40 per cent more

capacity. We have a whole range of partners like that and this year we will produce more than US\$100 million of support. We try to have a partnership mentality, partnerships with AusAID, the United Nations and NGOs. There is no substitute for being part of a team that is focussed on the common good.

Some good ideas have come out of United Nations reform – for example, the Central Emergency Response Fund which is an immediate response account managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which Australia helps support to the tune of \$10 million for the past several years. Money in the account can be used instantly. Our country directors call on it when they have a crisis. It's most useful to smaller agencies.

The cluster approach is also a sensible initiative. This is where different agencies take responsibility for different aspects in a major humanitarian response. For example, WFP takes the lead for hunger, nutrition, transportation and logistics while we share the responsibility for

information, technology and communication with others. In the Lebanon conflict we fed 830,000 people but we also transported goods for the World Health Organization, the Red Cross, World Vision and UNICEF.

## DANGER

Security is a very big problem. It used to be there was a different kind of respect accorded to humanitarian workers. Yet more people have lost their lives doing humanitarian work in the United Nations than doing peacekeeping work. We have 135 duty stations around the world operating at Phase 3 or higher under the United Nations security standards. People are really at risk. It raises a whole lot of worrying issues.

**ABOVE: Ethiopia. An HIV-positive patient infected with the tropical disease Kala Azar and suffering from malnutrition. The first program of free treatment with antiretroviral drugs for HIV/AIDS patients in Ethiopia was not launched until 2004. Photo: Pep Bonet/Panos Pictures**



## MANAGING MEDICINES



**FAR LEFT:** Pharmacy adviser Jean Spinks (right) and head pharmacist Ibu Wardah Apt check medical supplies at the Provincial Sector Hospital in Banda Aceh. **Photo:** Elizabeth James/AusAID  
**LEFT:** ‘Medicines can’t just sit around in a warehouse indefinitely. Storage requirements are stringent,’ says Dr Passmore. **Photo:** Phillip Passmore

A cold chain is a continuous system of conservation and distribution of vaccines, at a precise temperature from production to administration, to guarantee their effectiveness.

**Disease spreads quickly among people caught in natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies. Cholera, a water-borne disease, is common in floods, typhoid breaks out in refugee camps where overcrowding is a problem. In earthquakes and cyclones, broken bones and open wound injuries are the major concern. And across all this people, traumatised and suddenly in stricken circumstances, often find they have little resistance to illnesses such as pneumonia and influenza. Most deaths during complex humanitarian emergencies are from preventable causes.**

In a natural disaster or humanitarian crisis the most urgent requirements are clean water, food, shelter and medical care. Each is vital to sustain life but by far the most difficult to manage is medical aid. Sending in the right sort of medical equipment, medicines and health-care workers to meet specific emergency requirements is an immense task. Airlifting bottled water, packaged food and tents is difficult enough but, when it comes to medical equipment and pharmaceuticals, there is simply much more to think about.

Dr Phillip Passmore, a medical supplies specialist attached to AusAID, knows all about the complexities of the medical supply chain. He’s been on a number of AusAID teams that have assisted with emergency response and rehabilitation after several humanitarian crises, including the bomb attacks in Bali, the Indian Ocean tsunami in Aceh, and the earthquake in Yogyakarta. He also has wide experience in refugee health care.

‘Most countries have a medical supply system but how effective they are in emergencies very

much depends on how well they’re managed and whether the country hit by disaster has a good emergency preparedness and response plan.’

Countries usually keep what’s called ‘buffer stocks’ – medicines especially reserved for emergencies which also can be dispatched at short notice. But, as Dr Passmore explains, these medicines are often not looked after so, when it comes to needing them, they’re compromised. ‘Medicines can’t just sit around in a warehouse indefinitely. Storage requirements are stringent, especially temperature and humidity conditions. Many emergency medical supplies, particularly vaccines require a “cold chain”. And because most medicines have expiry dates, they must be turned over regularly – that is, either used, disposed of properly or replaced. Types of medicines required to treat infections and illnesses also change from time to time.’

In other words, taking care of pharmaceuticals is a big part of any

country’s emergency preparedness and response plan. And ‘it can be quite complicated.’

Disaster zones always place immense pressure on disease prevention programs in any country. ‘If an earthquake occurs in a place where there’s already a functioning immunisation campaign, you would only be looking at getting in booster doses to protect the population,’ says Dr Passmore. Conversely, where such programs may still be in development or have some weaknesses, there is much more to worry about.

‘For example, following the Yogyakarta earthquake and in Aceh after the tsunami, active tetanus became a big problem. I’ve seen the same problem in other humanitarian emergency situations around the world. The reasons could be that the ongoing immunisation campaign is not comprehensive enough or people who have been immunised haven’t received a booster shot within 10 years. In Australia, we’re always



reminding people to make sure that their shots are up to date.

‘So the conclusion you draw in disasters like these is anybody with wounds has a tetanus risk. This means local emergency aid people need to ensure sufficient tetanus vaccine booster doses are on site so all wounds patients can get a shot. Where a patient’s immunity is in doubt the doctor may decide some tetanus immunoglobulin is required. The logistics of how to do this should be part of the emergency preparedness and response plan because you must get those items to your disaster site very promptly.’

In the example of Yogyakarta and Aceh, Australia sent large amounts of tetanus immunoglobulin as stocks were not available in Indonesia. ‘We were

an extremely valuable donor. We organised quickly and sent the supplies. Tetanus immunoglobulin is like an instant immunity but it’s expensive and many countries can’t afford to keep large amounts of it.’

Australia also sent antibiotics to Yogyakarta – a special type which weren’t available in Indonesia but were urgently needed for good wound care. ‘Often resistance develops to common antibiotics so, in order to save lives, you have to bring in the big guns.’

This sending in of the anti-tetanus products and special antibiotics at the right time and in the right quantities is how emergency medical aid should work. AusAID specialists working closely with Indonesian health authorities and personnel from the World Health Organization

rapidly assessed the nature of the disaster on the ground. Treatment needs which could not be obtained within Indonesia – such as the requirement for a specific type of antibiotic – were immediately identified and sourced. How much better is this scenario than the rushing in of medical supplies that are not requested nor wanted. ‘The wholesale dumping of everything, just in case it is needed, is never desired. It throws up all sorts of problems with storage and security.’

One of the troubles, especially for developing countries, is the reluctance to say no. There is an element of not wanting to offend. A country in the midst of a disaster, natural or man-made, appreciates the goodwill of the international community and its immense generosity in sending aid. ‘Even if the form of aid is impractical, few countries would ever say so. The situation in Aceh, for example, was well and truly complicated and exacerbated by the overwhelming international donation of, in many cases, inappropriate medical supplies,’ explains Dr Passmore.

‘It’s a hot topic that flares up every time there’s a disaster. The media is not interested in whether medicine is appropriate or not. You hear people say, “We got 700 tonnes of medical supplies into the area”. If I read that I would have convulsions because I know the trouble it causes. It would be just so much better to send what was actually needed and which related to a rapid assessment of real requirements.’

The security problems can’t be underestimated with stockpiles of unrequested, inappropriate or unidentifiable medicines (due to

inadequate or incomprehensible labelling) lying around. Piles lie wastefully on airport tarmacs under tarpaulins or sit on the wharf in ship containers. The donated medicines are commonly not properly documented and therefore can’t be tracked. All too easily they’re pilfered and end up in the community where they can do serious harm – either because they are used without medical supervision or because they are absorbed into criminal counterfeiting or other rackets. The World Health Organization has guidelines on appropriate donations of medicines yet still the irresponsible donations continue.

AusAID knows the problems and ensures it always acts responsibly. Firstly, it heeds the advice of recipient governments and medical specialists as to what medicines and vaccines are required. Secondly, either directly or through contracts with specialist agencies, AusAID makes absolutely sure all products are professionally managed on their way to the people who need them. Furthermore, AusAID is open and sharing of its firsthand expert knowledge and experience. It will continue to do all it can to make sure other groups responding to emergencies act responsibly and effectively.

**ABOVE LEFT: Indonesia. A South Australian medical team unpacks a supply of tetanus immunoglobulin, Fakina Hospital, Banda Aceh. Trying to halt the spread of disease among survivors was the highest priority in the immediate aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami. Photo: Dermot Tatlow/Panos Pictures**



# VOLUNTEERING



## ON THE BEACH

**VIETNAM:** Australian Youth Ambassador for Development James McFarlane is in a culturally rich and geographically spectacular part of the country. DaNang lies at Vietnam's centre looking out at the South China Sea. As a former patrol captain with the Bondi Surf Lifesaving Club and lifeguard with the famous Bondi Icebogs, there's not much James doesn't know about the beach. As a development officer with the local tourism authority he's training young adults to become lifesavers. He's also teaching swimming and generally encouraging locals and visitors alike to respect and enjoy the sea. Here he tells of his experience in helping to save lives.

**B**efore I arrived I had very little idea what my job as a teacher of lifesaving, swimming and beach safety would entail. Even the most basic comparisons with Australian lifesaving threw up wildly differing pictures.

Aussie lifesaving is a volunteer, community-based movement with a long history. It's very much part of the Australian identity. Australians love the beach!

By contrast, Vietnamese lifesaving is a professional service enacted by government decree just nine years ago. Few people in

Vietnam even know how to swim since it's not a particularly popular pastime although, unexpectedly, spending time at the beach is.

Attitudes towards the beach are very different.

From the outset I knew I was in for a challenge. Two days after my arrival Typhoon Xangsane swept in from the Philippines and destroyed large sections of DaNang city. The infrastructure along the coast was almost completely wiped out as were most of the tourist services. After fishing, tourism is the principal employer.

The typhoon also smashed the

homes of most of my prospective students. Understandably, in those early weeks, they had other priorities on their minds than learning lifesaving skills.

It was a tough beginning.

But as I settled down and got into the rhythm of Vietnamese ways, everything opened up. What began as a small class of six soon evolved into one of 20. My skills improved – in fact, they're constantly improving. I'm discovering better ways to convey meaning and new ideas across the huge cultural and language divide. And while it is still somewhat

**ABOVE LEFT:** Class is in. James McFarlane (top) with a group of conscientious students. 'I've had from army generals to chickens wander into my classroom to check me out and to see how things are going.'

**ABOVE:** Practical lesson – learning correct lifesaving techniques in the authentic setting of the beach.

**LEFT:** Part of the experience is exploring the land and, says James, 'there's no better way than by motorbike.'

Photos: James McFarlane

of a mystery how, my students understand me!

None of the 65 lifesavers I have trained so far has spoken a word of English. When you consider I can speak only rubbish Vietnamese it's quite remarkable we've managed to come so far and accomplish so much.

I have to admit teaching would be pretty impossible if I hadn't hired Miss Trinh, a wonderful translator, or couldn't rely on the assistance of Mr Cuong, a student in my first class who has no English skills but is easily my best student. With them as back-up,

and good preparation, I'm able to train effectively.

Explaining everything through a translator makes the process incredibly slow but it's teaching me the most amazing amount of patience. My students are also inspiring. They sit and listen attentively as Miss Trinh translates everything I say – twice.

I'm finding the lack of education and different beliefs are my biggest obstacles. Almost everyday I am reminded that not everyone has the same grasp of how the body works. My students, for example, are unaware that the lungs consist of two respiratory organs, that oxygen is transported around the body via the blood and that a pulse is not muscle twitching. It's not a case of someone giving them the wrong information – it's simply that no one has given them any information.

Problem solving and critical thinking have also not been part of my students' limited schooling. Consequently, when they are confronted with a new scenario they tend not to do so well – they hesitate to treat patients, for example, if there's more than one injury or the injuries are presented in a combination not seen before. A simple example may be a drowning victim with a jellyfish sting across his face – what do you treat first? I'm breaking new ground as I try to pass on general principles that can be applied to any patient (a more efficient system than trying to learn thousands of different responses for each patient) but it's a new approach.

Yet I'm having some success. One of my most satisfying moments was when the students of my fourth class asked if they could stay behind. They had finally understood and wanted me to ask them questions in different scenarios to double check that they had got it – and they had.

It's the reaction of the lifesavers that makes this job so rewarding. The skills they now have and the attention they've received from the local government has given them a sense of pride. Our efforts were recently reported on the national evening news, which caused great amusement given that most of my students are from poor fishing villages. On top of this, in the current Lunar New Year (Tet Festival) celebrations we received news that every successful graduate of my training program will receive a 20 per cent pay increase. This is a huge boost to morale and has made me the most popular bloke in town.

Working and living in Vietnam is proving the most amazing experience. I've had from army generals to chickens wander into my classroom to check me out and see how things are going. I've sat for hours on the Vietnamese coast with lifesavers I can't speak to very well but with whom I can have a great laugh. The People's Committee has given me an award and the lifesavers have given me a whistle. I feel I'm helping not only to protect people from drowning but also turning the Vietnamese on to the joys of swimming at the beach. This is the best job in the world.



## TOWARDS SELF HELP

**PHILIPPINES: As an AusAID youth ambassador for development Kate Horwood spent a year in Manila with World Vision International. She worked on a ground-breaking project to improve skills in humanitarian assistance across the Asia Pacific. By anyone's measure, it was a strenuous and eventful time.**

I'm not the first to observe the dawning of the new millennium has coincided with an increase of natural and man-made disasters in the Asia Pacific region. We have witnessed earthquakes and floods, civil wars and coups and, of course, the giant of all catastrophes, the Indian Ocean tsunami on 26 December 2004. And following quickly behind every large-scale disaster comes an army of international humanitarian workers. Everyone works furiously to alleviate suffering and stay on top of the wave of human misery.





pleased to say the project made great progress and we were able to field a much larger and more efficient tsunami response team.

Not that many months later we were again thrown into the thick of it with the major mudslides – caused by heavy flooding – in central Philippines. With every disaster I was reminded of the project’s value and spurred on to redouble my efforts in improving training and skill levels.

As I grew closer to my colleagues – and you get to know each other well in this business – they gradually revealed their motivations for taking on humanitarian work. All had witnessed the full horror of disasters and all had wanted to do more to help. Now that they had the chance to learn professional skills, they grabbed it with both hands. I was struck by their determination. They were absolutely passionate about helping their fellow countrymen, and they worked incredibly hard.

The future of emergency aid lies in raising the capacity of local response. I firmly believe this, even though achieving it may require substantial effort on multiple levels. Coordinating and implementing training across many cultures is a mighty challenge – people have different ways of learning, different views about assessing competency, different approaches.

I feel fortunate to have been part of the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development program which is wholeheartedly committed to skills transfer and developing local capacity. It’s with satisfaction I look back on my year in the Philippines. I like to think I

played my part, albeit small, in training local emergency workers to know what to do and how to alleviate suffering when, God forbid, the next major disaster strikes.

Immediately after her youth ambassadorship in the Philippines, Kate Horwood went to Afghanistan with World Vision International. Due to the declining security situation however she was forced to return six months later. Kate is now in Uganda with World Vision International’s Humanitarian Emergency Affairs Department. She is working in the north where over 20 years of civil conflict has left the entire population living in refugee camps. She is still applying lessons learnt in Manila.

**AusAID’s Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) program places skilled Australian volunteers, aged 18 to 30 years, on short-term assignments in the Asia Pacific. For more information about the program see <[www.ausaid.gov.au/youtham](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/youtham)>**

With the number, size and complexity of disasters showing no signs of abating, it’s important people who respond to them – the emergency workers – receive the best possible training. In addition, many more of these emergency workers need to, and should, come from local populations.

In times of crisis expert help from the international community is of course always gratefully received, but many developing countries no longer want to rely entirely on the kindness of strangers. They want to play a

greater role in responding to their own disasters.

World Vision recognises this. Its Humanitarian Competencies Project is specifically designed to enhance the skills and capacity of national relief workers across the Asia Pacific.

Working on the project was incredibly demanding. I arrived in Manila less than four months after the Indian Ocean tsunami demonstrated all too convincingly the need for qualified emergency aid workers. Yet, in spite of having to expand its scope suddenly, I’m

**LEFT: Devastating slide. Mudslide, Guinsaugon, Philippines, 2006. The Australian Government immediately provided \$1 million to the Philippines National Red Cross and other local relief agencies to help with the most urgent tasks of evacuating survivors and distributing food, clothing and medical equipment. It also sent a team to assess site stability, and to provide advice on water and sanitation in evacuation centres and on longer-term disaster preparedness. Photo: United States Navy/Getty Images [RELIEF SIGHT](#)**

# SUPPORTING THE TEAM

**VIETNAM:** Qiu Yi Khut is an Australian youth ambassador for development attached to CARE's Emergency Preparedness Program. In the past, youth ambassadors have been particularly successful in strengthening local capacity in a range of emergency response areas. Qiu Yi Khut is proving she's no exception. Here's her personal account.

It's around 10 a.m. on a Saturday. Normally I would have my head sandwiched between two pillows in a futile attempt to block out the neighbourhood cacophony of motorbikes, water pumps, sledgehammers and chickens. But on this day I'm not trying to sleep – I've already been at the office for hours tracking data and reading statistics as the damage reports start to trickle in from the latest typhoon.

We'd been watching the progress of Typhoon Xangsane for some days, ever since it ripped through the Philippines en route to Vietnam's central coast region. I'd called fellow youth ambassador James McFarlane (see *On the Beach*), based in DaNang, the night before to check things were okay. He was happily having a drink on a balcony outside when the winds started to pick up. 'Get inside!' I urgently advised. Sure enough, a short time later, windows around him were blown in, his roof blown off and he was forced to evacuate to the only hotel in town with food and running water. (But he was fine – nothing worse than a good story to tell and an unexpected hotel bill.)

Typhoon Xangsane definitely marked for me the beginning of a massive learning curve. The emergency procedures and

response mechanisms that I had been working on for the past five months were about to go through their first thorough testing.

My assignment with CARE has been to build up the emergency preparedness planning and response capacity of the organisation and the CARE Vietnam emergency response team. In the direct aftermath of Xangsane, I was relieved and encouraged that the workshops, training sessions and general effort we had put in over the past few months really paid off. Members of our local team were successfully deployed to affected areas in a joint 'rapid needs assessment' coordinated with other non-government organisations working in Vietnam. Together we assessed the damage and the level of need in communities. It was an affecting experience for all concerned.

The storm season in the Pacific usually runs from May to November. Vietnam gets around a dozen major storms each year but there are always exceptions. In early December, Typhoon Durian really shook things up. It came with exceptional strength for that late in the season, weaving an erratic path across the South China Sea before skirting down the Vietnamese coastline and passing through the southern provinces



LEFT: 'You could say it's been a crazy year of learning, collaboration, responsibility and growth,' says Qiu Yi Khut.

BELOW: Devastation left after Typhoon Durian, Ben Tre Province.

Photos: Qiu Yi Khut



– an area not normally hit by typhoons and which consequently was very under prepared.

With the experience of Xangsane behind us, our emergency response team deployed the next day to conduct a rapid needs assessment – we were the first non-government agency on the ground. The level of unmet need caused by Durian demanded an immediate emergency response program.

After speaking with other agencies, submitting proposals for funding and conducting interviews with people most affected and local authorities, CARE delivered 750 emergency household kits (including blankets, mosquito nets, cooking pots and utensils).

These were given to the poor, most seriously damaged households and represented crucial assistance.

I've lost a lot of sleep this year – to insomniac roosters and natural disasters alike – but I've gained so much in exchange. Getting to know my colleagues at CARE Vietnam and helping to build the emergency response team have been wonderful experiences. It has not always been easy learning the ropes of emergency preparedness and response, or coordinating rapid needs assessments and delivering emergency relief to battered communities – but it has been rewarding beyond measure. You could say it's been a crazy year of learning, collaboration, responsibility and growth.



## MOTHER LOAD

In natural disasters, women are often more severely affected than men. 'In earthquake-prone areas such as Pakistan, women are more likely to be working inside stone houses which can collapse suddenly. 'There's no earthquake-resistant architecture or steel framing here,' says AusAID's Barbara O'Dwyer. 'Being inside a house is sometimes more hazardous than being outside.'

**D**uring the Indian Ocean tsunami many women in Indonesia and Sri Lanka drowned, either because they could not swim or climb trees or, as in Sri Lanka, run fast enough. 'Women were hampered by their saris wrapping around their legs and of course many women were also carrying young children and babies, trying desperately to keep all of them together and safe,' says AusAID humanitarian aid and gender specialist, Barbara O'Dwyer.

Emergencies, which include natural and man-made disasters, take a heavy toll on the whole community, but more so on women. No matter what's going on, women still have to give birth, take care of children, and look after the sick and the elderly. The disruption to normal community and family life makes this enormously difficult, especially for women from poor households. 'Furthermore, in conflict zones with the breakdown of law and order, there is virtually no security or



protection. Women and children are extremely vulnerable to ruthless and exploitative behaviours,' says Barbara O'Dwyer.

'If normal employment opportunities are lost, which occurs mostly among people who have been displaced from their homes, women and girls may be forced into prostitution. In prolonged crises they may find themselves exploited for sex in exchange for food. The needs of women are greatly exacerbated in times of crisis and emergency.'

Even after a natural disaster, such as a flood, women are burdened not only with cleaning up and starting again but also the emotional strain of reassuring the family. Surviving disasters requires physical and mental stamina which can be severely tested when loved ones have been lost. 'This is not to imply men don't also suffer and work hard in the recovery stages, but it is seen more often as the woman's role to be physically and emotionally resilient, both during and after disasters.'

Thorough preparation however, can help reduce the devastating

effects of major catastrophes, and the subsequent terrible load on women. Countries which are 'disaster ready' are less affected by immediate and longer-term impacts. Those that concentrate on building capacity through social, institutional and economic changes will be in better positions to recover quickly.

But preparation requires full commitment. Women as well as men need to be closely involved in both the planning and preparation stages and they have made it abundantly clear that they expect nothing less.

Women want to be trained, organised and involved in all aspects of disaster management, including prevention and preparedness, and response and rescue activities. The AusAID-funded Quang Ngai Natural Disaster Mitigation Project in Vietnam is one of the first to recognise this by taking into account the specific needs and capabilities of both men and women.

Through the Vietnam Red Cross and the Women's Union,

the project is providing for 1,240 women in 28 communes to learn swimming, boat handling and rescue skills, and basic first aid. The Women's Union is also helping the Fisheries Extension Centre, which is attached to the Department of Fisheries, to give advice about disaster management to coastal towns and villages.

Such initiatives bring greater safety not only for women but to households and whole communities. The increased capabilities and skills of mothers, wives and sisters benefit men and children. Everyone is better off because no one is left out. Women, particularly mothers, may also feel they are sharing care and responsibility – and, to an extent, divesting themselves of the 'mother load'.

**ABOVE: Vietnam. Becoming water safe. Quang Ngai Natural Disaster Mitigation Project, funded by AusAID. Activities include learning how to swim, handling a boat, rescuing someone in danger of drowning and administering first aid, Photos: AusAID RELIEF SIGHT**

## LEARNING TO HELP – ON-LINE



**Southern Cross University is offering a unique overseas development course specially designed for fieldworkers helping communities to minimise the effects of natural disasters and other emergencies. The big difference is that it's on-line.**

Conceived and created in collaboration with the United Nations, the Master of Community Development (Emergency Management) is attracting students from all over the world. 'Our students are made up of those already involved in humanitarian work and those who want to begin,' says Dr Jean Griffiths, Southern Cross University's Head of the School of Arts and Social Sciences.

Evans Omari, who has been working with the United Nations mission in Liberia, West Africa, completed the course last year. He's in no doubt about its usefulness.

'Completing the program was just perfect preparation for what I am doing here which is helping to rebuild communities affected by civil war. Much of my work is finding ways to reintegrate former combatants into society.'

The course was developed on the advice of the United Nations during the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (1990–2000). 'There's no other course like it in the world. We focus on strengthening communities – giving them the ability and know-how to withstand the long-term debilitating effects of disasters,' says Dr Griffiths.

'It's less about the immediate on-the-ground response than about building capacity.'

The course not only hones students' analytical skills but also rounds out their knowledge – and, throughout, the emphasis is on practical application. 'During and directly after the Indian Ocean tsunami the course was almost exclusively about the consequences of the disaster, its massive scale and what could and should be done,' says Dr Griffiths.

'Our first graduate was Phillippe Gatineau, a French aid worker. At the time he was working with the United Nations in the hills of Guatemala,' explains Dr Griffiths. 'Until we started our course he wasn't able to take up any study because he was never in a position to attend classes. What is so great about our on-line program is that

THE MASTER OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT) COURSE IS OFFERED BY DISTANCE EDUCATION AND CAN BE STUDIED FROM ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD.

it gives people the opportunity to study wherever they are working.'

Kat McConnell, who is now working with the APEC 2007 Taskforce, became interested in the course after travelling through Africa. She completed a Diploma of Community Development last year which allows her now to move into the Masters program. 'I always wanted to do community work,' Kat says, 'and the course has made me much more aware and practical about how I might get involved.'

*Australian Scholarships*, announced in April 2006, is an initiative of the Australian Government to promote sustainable development and excellence in education in the Asia-Pacific region. AusAID manages the Australian Development Scholarships and the Australian Leadership Awards under the *Australian Scholarships* initiative and partners with over 55 Australian education institutions in the delivery of the programs. For further information <[www.australianscholarships.gov.au](http://www.australianscholarships.gov.au)>

ABOVE: Evans Omari – helping to rebuild communities affected by civil war as part of the United Nations mission in Liberia. Photo: Southern Cross University



# GLOBAL EDUCATION

## RELIEF IN SIGHT IN SCHOOL

It is sometimes difficult to appreciate fully what people caught up in terrible disasters go through. 'Sometimes the event is too far away, too big or just too much outside our own experience to feel a real connection,' says Arthur Burch, Manager of AusAID's Global Education program. 'Yet it is important to understand and empathise with those affected by natural disasters and to try to put ourselves in their shoes. How would we cope? What are the main considerations during and directly after a disaster? Just how easy is it to recover?'

*Relief in Sight*, AusAID's travelling photographic exhibition, shows the consequences of natural disasters in the Asia-Pacific region. The range of images gives a clear idea of the wreckage and trauma of large-scale catastrophes, and the

burden they particularly place on the poor who are least able to cope. *Relief in Sight* shows the courage and resilience of disaster survivors and Australia's compassionate response to their urgent needs.

### ASSISTING TEACHERS

AusAID's specially commissioned school curriculum material has activities for before, after and while attending *Relief in Sight*. For those teachers and school groups unable to attend the exhibition a school-based presentation is available.

For more information see <[www.reliefinsight.com.au](http://www.reliefinsight.com.au)>

### WATER POSTERS

AusAID has reissued its set of four water posters. Order from <[books@ausaid.gov.au](mailto:books@ausaid.gov.au)>

## HOW TO GIVE

Australians have always responded generously to international appeals for help in times of emergency and disaster.

Offers of assistance from the Australian community however must be carefully matched with the needs identified by countries affected by disasters. Often this is best achieved through cash donations rather than gifts of surplus clothing, tinned food and medical supplies. This is because it is more expensive, logistically difficult and sometimes inappropriate to send relief items that have not been specified. Sending items just in case they might be needed is not helpful.

In times of disasters and emergencies a list of organisations with appeals for cash donations can be found on the Australian Council for International Development website <[www.acfid.asn.au](http://www.acfid.asn.au)>

The Australian Government recognises the important contribution that individuals and companies pre-qualified with specific skills can make to relief efforts. Volunteers should contact the Australian Volunteers International telephone hotline on 1800 331 292

For further information about volunteering see <[www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/volunteering.pdf](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/volunteering.pdf)>

### ABOUT NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

The Australian Government works with non-government organisations to deliver around seven per cent of the aid program. Organisations like Australian Red Cross, CARE Australia, World Vision Australia, Caritas, Austcare and Oxfam have long been important partners of the Australian Government, and provide a vital link with the developing world.

These non-government organisations bring particular strengths to Australia's aid program. They mobilise public support and voluntary contributions for aid, they have strong links with community groups in developing countries, and they often work in areas where government-to-government aid is not possible.

Many also have particular expertise in providing for immediate needs, particularly in emergencies where quick and flexible responses are essential.

All Australian non-government organisations funded through AusAID are required to undergo a rigorous accreditation process and abide by a code of conduct. Government funds can only be channelled through organisations that are transparent and accountable, have substantial community support and are of sufficient size and professionalism to deliver aid effectively.





VOLUME 22 NUMBER 2 » MAY–AUG 2007

## FOCUS IS THE MAGAZINE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S OVERSEAS AID PROGRAM

*Focus* is published by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). It aims to increase community awareness and understanding of the Australian Government's overseas aid program, which is managed by AusAID.

The views expressed are not necessarily those of AusAID or the Australian Government.

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Proposals for articles should be sent to the Editor. AusAID does not accept responsibility for damage to, or loss of, material submitted for publication.

Design by GRI.D, Canberra  
Printed by Pirion Pty Limited, Canberra

ISSN 0819–9973  
Volume 22 Number 2 May–August 2007  
© Commonwealth of Australia 2007

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