

focus



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Millennium Development Goals
Mid-term report

Millennium Development Goals

FOR MORE INFORMATION SEE

<http://www.undp.org/mdg/goallist.shtml>



1

Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty

TARGETS

- * Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day
- * Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger



2

Achieve Universal Primary Education

TARGET

- * Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling



3

Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

TARGET

- * Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015



4

Reduce Child Mortality

TARGET

- * Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate



5

Improve Maternal Health

TARGET

- * Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio



6

Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases

TARGETS

- * Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
- * Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases



7

Ensure Environmental Sustainability

TARGETS

- * Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources
- * Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
- * Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers



8

Develop a Global Partnership for Development

TARGETS

- * Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, nondiscriminatory trading and financial system (includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction; both nationally and internationally)
- * Address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries (includes tariff- and quota-free access for Least Developed Countries' exports, enhanced program of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries [HIPC] and cancellation of official bilateral debt, and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction)
- * Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing states (through the Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and 22nd General Assembly provisions)
- * Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term
- * In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth
- * In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
- * In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies

Contents



4



16



20



23



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 2008–09 Australia plans to spend \$3.7 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: A young mother from Darfur, Sudan. Photo: Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures

- 2 In brief
- 4 Going for goals
- 7  **MDG1 Hunger and poverty**
Ground work
Doors wide open on disabilities
Feeding the poor
- 10  **MDG2 Education**
Primary and on
Learning and ABEL
- 12  **MDG3 Gender**
So, what's gender?
Breaking the barriers
- 16 Mid-term report (photo essay)
- 20 Out of Africa
Fistula hospital
Viewpoint: Beyond Geldof
- 23  **MDG4 Child mortality**
- 24  **MDG5 Maternal health**
A safe birth
Volunteering: Multi-skilling
- 26  **MDG6 Diseases**
Love Patrol
- 28  **MDG7 Environment**
In the pink
Year of sanitation
Disaster risk reduction: Sidr and Nargis
- 32  **MDG8 Partnerships**
Smart business
Rising food prices
- 32 **GLOBAL EDUCATION**
School resources

39th Pacific Island Forum

RIGHT: Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister, Sir Michael Somare (*left*), with the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, at the 39th Pacific Island Forum in Niue. Mr Rudd met with Pacific leaders to discuss common action to tackle the region's political, environmental and economic challenges. He also signed Pacific Partnerships for Development with Papua New Guinea and Samoa. Photo: Xavier La Canna/aapimage

'Pacific Partnerships for Development are central to Australia's new engagement with the region,' says Mr Rudd. 'They commit Australia and our Pacific partners to make more rapid progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and our partners' development goals. We want to work shoulder to shoulder with our Pacific neighbours on these challenges.'



INBRIEF

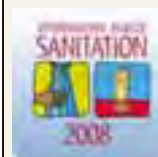


Rising food prices

A former head of AusAID and Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Jim Ingram, AO, is leading a national taskforce on rising food prices (see page 33).

'We will seek to identify how development assistance programs can encourage increased productivity of agricultural land in developing countries, remove specific constraints to the growth in food production, and what role Australia may play in these efforts.'

ABOVE: Tuvalu. Bags of fresh produce and a crate of crabs wait to be loaded on the ferry and taken to market. Photo: Jocelyn Carlin/Panos Pictures



Year of Sanitation

Achieving the MDG7 target of 'halving, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation' has been given impetus with the United Nations declaring 2008 the International Year of Sanitation (see page 29)



ABOVE: Abdullah Saleh Mbamba, Director, United Nations Information Centre for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, at the Australian launch of the International Year of Sanitation 2008, at Parliament House, Canberra. Photo: AusAID

MDG3 Champion Torch

Instigated by the Danish Government, the MDG3 Champion Torch initiative is shining the light on gender equality. The Danes have dispatched 100 torches to developed countries on the understanding that those countries which accept an MDG champion torch also promise to do 'something extra' to empower women in developing countries.

Millennium Development Goal 3 is about addressing gender inequity in education, increasing the share of women in employment, and raising the number of women in leadership roles in parliamentary and government positions.

The Australian Government is geared towards achieving these objectives and has readily accepted a torch.

'MDG3 is critical to the practical achievement of progress in developing countries. Educated women are more likely to secure employment and have healthier children and they're more likely to vote and participate in community activities.'

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith



ABOVE: The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith, accepts an MDG3 Champion Torch from Denmark's Ambassador to Australia, Her Excellency Susanne Wagner Hoffmann Shine (*left*). On the Minister's other side is Dr Rini Poespoprodjo, a recipient of one of the inaugural Allison Sudradjat Scholarships awarded by AusAID to outstanding scholars and leaders in the Asia-Pacific region. At the MDG3 Champion Torch ceremony at Parliament House, Canberra, Dr Poespoprodjo spoke passionately about her experience as a paediatrician working in child and maternal health in Papua, Indonesia (see *A Safe Birth* page 25).

What's an MDG?

MDG stands for Millennium Development Goal

In Africa

'The Australian Government is increasing its engagement with Africa. It is our intention to find ways consistent with the best principles of modern development assistance. We have a lot to offer.'

The Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Bob McMullan



ABOVE: The Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Bob McMullan, at an Australian Football League footyWild clinic at Zandspruit, an informal settlement in Johannesburg, South Africa. In partnership with AusAID and Monash University's South Africa campus, the Australian Football League runs weekly footyWild clinics for the children of Zandspruit which include HIV/AIDS awareness and life skills training. There are over 10,000 participants in the footyWild program across South Africa. Photo: Roger Sedres/Salamander

Helping up

RIGHT: Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. Australian athletic champion Cathy Freeman spoke about social inclusion at the Australian High Commission barbecue earlier this year. Guests came from all walks of life – young parents, men and women living with HIV, women emerging from violent relationships, former and current national athletes, and young people with disabilities. Organised by the Papua New Guinea Sports Federation and AusAID, sports officers ran a series of inclusive games involving children with disabilities, paralympians and able-bodied athletes. The get together was all about tolerance and removing discrimination within communities. Everyone received a T-shirt bearing the slogan, 'Don't look down on anybody...unless you are helping them up!' Photo: AusAID







GOING FOR GOALS

Australia has embraced the **Millennium Development Goals**. What are they, why are they important and can they be reached?

In September 2000, international leaders came together to discuss global poverty. The result was the Millennium Declaration quickly followed by eight goals and a bold new global campaign to end poverty.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are ambitious but they're reachable – as long as the drive to succeed remains strong and donor countries are prepared to increase their expenditure on development assistance.

To date the signs are favourable. Donor countries have responded with substantial increases in ODA (official development assistance) and enthusiastic promises of support.

A number of key international organisations (for example, the World Bank, the OECD, and agencies within the United Nations system) are heavily geared towards achieving the MDGs. Grassroots volunteer agencies and charities worldwide (civil society) are equally enthusiastic and embracing.

At the Second United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2005 the international community had no hesitation in reaffirming its commitment.

Midway point

Over the past eight years momentum has built. Rich countries have taken great steps to live up to their end of the global partnership and so have many poor nations.

With help from Australia and other donors, countries like Vietnam and China have made great progress towards developing poverty reduction plans, improving their administrative systems to stop the misuse of public funds, and building their technical skills and capacity. These countries are also reaping the benefits – faster growth, improved work opportunities, and better services in education and health.

But while some developing countries are doing well, a large number are stagnating. These are the countries with weak governance and unstable societies, sometimes referred to as fragile states. Home to about a billion people together they represent the frontline of the fight against poverty. Most countries that fall into this category are located in sub-Saharan Africa. Some are also in the Pacific region.

Extreme poverty is falling fast, but not everywhere

At this point it seems likely the world as a whole will achieve the target of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015 (MDG1). The rate is expected to fall from 29 per cent (as recorded in 1990) to 10 per cent in 2015. Also the number of extreme poor has fallen by about 280 million since 1990 with the total number now hovering just below a billion. But there's a caution. The global numbers mask considerable regional variation.

'It is a fundamental obligation of a decent, developed country in the 21st century that we accept that we are part of the global campaign against world poverty. It is not a peripheral interest; it is not cause for occasional gratuitous commentary. It is core business.'

The Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Bob McMullan

LEFT: The Australian Sports Outreach Program, funded by AusAID and run by the Fiji Sports Association for the Disabled in partnership with the Australian Sports Commission, is getting children with a disability into sport. The program draws upon the latest thinking about high quality community sports. Photo: Australian Sports Commission



There has been a steady increase in aid over the past decade, yet most donor countries still fall short of 0.7 per cent of the gross national income target.

LEFT: Philippines. A farmer harvests water lilies. When heavy rains wiped out rice plantations around San Fernando, the water lilies that sprouted saved the community by providing an alternative source of income. Sold to neighbouring traders, the sun-dried stalks were later made into baskets for export. Finding solutions to problems caused by extreme weather conditions is, however, rarely this easy. Photo: Andy Zapata/Reuters

and partner countries and tighter coordination between international agencies,' says McGillivray. 'We're able to lift more people out of poverty and make a difference to more lives because we're not duplicating our efforts or misjudging what's required in terms of assistance.'

The Paris Declaration, which is a set of standards agreed upon by donor and partner countries for delivering aid, is also having a bearing. More donors – including Australia – are now making decisions on development priorities based on requests and information put forward by partner countries. Not so long ago all the decision making was heavily weighted towards the donor. The new lighter more flexible approach is giving equal control to partner countries on how resources can be used to best effect.

What's not going so well is trade for development. It's of concern that multilateral trade negotiations have not yet delivered tangible results, although market access for developing countries has improved slightly and information technologies are spreading rapidly.

Ending poverty

Since 2000 and the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals there have been many success stories. Millions of people, for example, have been lifted out of poverty, many more children are going to school, and fewer children and women are dying from preventable diseases. There has never been a time when the global commitment to ending poverty was

Most of the world's poverty reduction over the past decade has taken place in Asia, especially East Asia, where it has been driven by rapid economic growth. Asia as a whole is on track, but there is concern poverty is becoming concentrated in South Asia.

Elsewhere – in Africa and the Pacific, for example – countries are lagging. Although it has received the most international attention Africa, because of its size, remains the bigger challenge. In the Pacific more than three million people live in extreme poverty, and with environmental changes affecting food production, hunger is becoming an increasing problem.

Growth, which some economists say is responsible for achieving 80 per cent of all poverty reduction over the past decade, is the way forward. 'It's encouraging that we are starting to see faster growth in many African nations and Pacific island nations,' says AusAID's Chief Economist, Mark McGillivray, but warns, 'Growth alone cannot always be relied upon to make significant inroads into poverty reduction.

Policy-makers have to make sure the poor are brought along – that's to say, able to join in, and benefit from, circumstances made possible by uplifts in the economy.'

Partners delivering on promises

According to the DAC (which stands for 'Development Assistance Committee' and is an aid think tank for rich countries), aid to the world's poorest countries more than doubled from 2000 to 2006. But while there has been a steady increase in aid over the past decade, most donor countries still fall short of the target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national income.

Even Australia is below, although it has doubled its aid program over the past five years and is committed to increasing aid to 0.5 per cent of the gross national income by 2015.

But on the upside, donors, including Australia, are much better at targeting their aid – that's reaching the poorest countries and meeting their most urgent needs. 'Aid delivery is now more efficient and streamlined thanks to stronger, workable partnerships between donor



ABOVE: The sign says it all. Giacomo Pirozzi/Panos Pictures

as strong as it is today. Many more developing countries now have sound development strategies, underpinned by support and funding from donor countries.

But for all the upward and hopeful trends there is no disguising the fact that achieving the MDGs will be a daunting task. Climate change, rising food prices and the fuel crisis were not part of the equation in 2000 but they're very much part of it now. How the world deals with these and other factors will be the test – and the next seven years will show.

Achieving the MDGs – what can go wrong?

There are four main threats.

1. Progress achieved so far is undone.

Last year the price of rice tripled, edible oils doubled and there were food riots in 30 countries. According to the World Bank, 100 million people are at risk and 850 million people are malnourished. Action is needed to provide a safety net for the struggling poor and reforms to increase agricultural production.

2. Inability to sustain faster and more inclusive economic growth.

Poor countries need 7 per cent growth to make serious dents in poverty. To achieve this, governments must address constraints to growth – for example, create sound macroeconomic policies, a conducive private investment climate (including infrastructure) and good governance.

3. Failure to scale up service delivery.

Faster progress towards the education, health, and water and sanitation targets will require expansion in accessibility and quality of those services, and improved public accountability.

4. Donors backing out of their commitments.

Donors at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana in September 2008 discussed how to lock in support. Looking beyond aid, countries also need to aim for greater trade liberalisation and reform.



MDG1: Hunger and poverty

Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty



Ground work

Agriculture is under pressure as world food prices rise and food reserves fall. There's an urgent call for more agricultural innovation and research.

The Australian Government has an entire agency dedicated to agricultural research and providing agricultural assistance to developing countries – from seeds to harvest to markets and national policy advice. The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research – ACIAR – supports development throughout the food supply chain.

Head of ACIAR, Peter Core, says, 'We respond to individual circumstances. We tailor our projects and programs to meet individual situations and we do this through collaboration and action-based learning.'

The track record is strong. Ninety ACIAR food security projects in various developing countries (costing \$130 million) have reaped an estimated \$6.6 billion worth of benefits for both partner countries and Australia.

Independent project reviewers attribute this high rate of return to ACIAR's partnership model which also perfectly encapsulates Millennium Development Goal 8 – establishing 'global partnerships'.

'ACIAR creates partnerships between researchers from Australia and developing countries,' says Core. 'Agricultural research for development has built long-term partnerships that have helped alleviate poverty for millions of smallholder farmers and rural dwellers across the Asia-Pacific region.' (See *In the Pink* page 28)

It is precisely these kinds of results that distinguish the agency. 'I wish to make special note of the impact of the work carried out by ACIAR,' says Dr Derek Byerlee, co-author of the *World Development Report 2008*. 'It is held up internationally as an innovative example of support to agricultural science for development that pays high returns and benefits poor farmers and consumers in developing countries and also in Australia.'

The Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) is part of the aid program. It specialises in delivering aid to developing countries through collaborative, multi-disciplinary agricultural research projects. For more information on the *World Development Report 2008* go to <www.aciar.gov.au>

About 75 per cent of the world's poorest people live in rural areas and most depend on agriculture to make a living.

ABOVE: What the world needs is easy access to affordable, fresh, quality produce. Photo: ACIAR

ABOVE LEFT: Developing drought-resistant varieties of rice in Cambodia is part of a large research program to improve crop breeding. This is one of the many areas that could pay massive dividends, especially for developing countries. Photo: Shu Fukai



Doors wide open on disabilities

'We want to bring people with disabilities to the centre of our development strategy because they are the poorest of the poor. They are the most disadvantaged in every developing country because their disability is an impediment to employment opportunities, to social opportunity and engagement, and it has a ripple effect through the family.'

'People with disabilities have a right to basic services and equal access to education and employment. I want to see our programs increasing opportunities for people with disabilities to take part in economic and social development.'

The Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Bob McMullan

Toshin comes from a small village in Samoa. He's 10 years old and he has cerebral palsy. This year he started school for the very first time.

Although his body is limited in its movements, his mind is active and it's clear he wants to learn. Toshin's intellectual capacity has just recently been picked up by a local disability worker.

Toshin's family loves him very much but because of his physical disability, they assumed he couldn't go to school. This belief, coupled with their anxiety and social discomfort

about his condition, has kept Toshin isolated from his peers. It has also lost him valuable years of learning.

There are many minority groups in the world that struggle to have their voices heard but among the most vulnerable are those with a disability born into poor families in developing countries. The resources and support services to help them realise their potential simply don't exist.

People with a disability everywhere confront enormous social barriers. 'Even in the West life can be hard,' says Kristen Pratt, Director, AusAID's Disability Taskforce, 'but it is very much worse in developing countries where people are more likely to be shunned socially, denied access to education and health services, and have no choice but to rely on relatives to look after them.'

The lack of alternative care arrangements and general support for people with a disability are matters of serious concern to the aid program, not least because of the need to protect from mistreatment. In some circumstances, when money and food are scarce, for example, resentments can build towards those unable to contribute to the household income – and this can spill over into abuse. A person with a disability may not be fed or cleaned properly, or may be shut away at the back of the house.

But Toshin is one of the luckier ones. He's part of a warm and loving family who, although far from rich, are doing all they can so that he can attend school.

It's early days but already Toshin is blossoming. He's made new friends, is enjoying his new school routines and loves learning to read. Suddenly Toshin's future looks a great deal more promising, 'My favourite part of school is singing and playing soccer,' he says.

The 2008–09 federal budget honours the Australian Government's commitment to working with people with a disability in the Asia-Pacific region. It will invest \$45 million over two years for the development of a comprehensive disability strategy to guide Australia's aid program and to develop an avoidable blindness program. For more information about the strategy see <www.aisaid.gov.au>



Poverty is both a cause and consequence of disability.

TOP: Watch that ball. Hilton Early Intervention Centre, Suva, Fiji. Inclusion means that no one is left on the sidelines. Australian Volunteers International is sending a sports adviser to help modify and design programs for children with high support needs. The program is supported by the Australian Sports Commission and funded by AusAID. Photo: Australian Sports Commission

ABOVE: On your marks, get set, go. Nausori Special School, Fiji. Each Friday Makelesi Volank blows the whistle to get the sports program underway. The school program coordinated by the Fiji Sports Association for the Disabled, makes it possible for over 1,000 children in 17 special schools across the country to participate in sports every week. Photo: Australian Sports Commission

Cerebral palsy is a condition marked by weakness and impaired coordination of the limbs, caused by damage to the brain before, during or shortly after birth.



ABOVE: Samoa. Physiotherapist Leilani Jackson-Sapatu helps Toshin go through his paces in one of their regular work-out sessions. Photo: AusAID

The United Nations estimates that approximately 10 per cent of the world's population (roughly 650 million people) have a disability and of those about 80 per cent live in developing countries.

What's Australia doing?

The aid program is working on cost effective interventions that will help people with a disability live full and productive lives, and allow them to share the same opportunities as others in their communities.

Avoidable blindness

AusAID is also developing a program, in consultation with representatives from the region and Australia, to improve diagnosis, prevention and treatment of vision impairments. The program will strengthen existing eye-care training institutions and improve the capacity of healthcare workers.

Up to 75 per cent of blindness is preventable or treatable and more than half of the world's 160 million people who are visually impaired live in the Asia-Pacific region.



Feeding the poor

In Indonesia an estimated 13 million people are malnourished. The problem is particularly acute in the east of the country where food sources are unreliable.

AusAID is funding a \$6.5 million program with the World Food Programme in two of Indonesia's poorest provinces – Nusa Tenggara Timur and Nusa Tenggara Barat, both in the country's east.

Australians spend 15 per cent of their income on food. The poor of the world spend 75 per cent of their income on food.

The nutritional rehabilitation program is feeding school-children aged from six to 13 years. Fortified biscuits are helping to correct diet deficiencies and improve overall health.

The program is also supporting pregnant and breastfeeding women, plus children under five, through local health posts, known as *posyandu*. By offering food – fortified snacks for young children and noodles for the women – it's successfully encouraging regular return visits.

'This program is helping to revitalise the *posyandu* system in some of the poorest provinces and districts of Indonesia. It's giving us an entry point to address the much larger challenges of improving nutritional education, hygiene practices and dietary habits,' says Jon Burrough, AusAID's Counsellor for Disaster Management in Indonesia.

Rates of anaemia in children under five participating in the program have dropped from 60 per cent to 33 per cent in Nusa Tenggara Timur. In the other province of Nusa Tenggara Barat, anaemia rates among those in the same program have fallen from 64 per cent to 41 per cent.

With AusAID's continued support, the World Food Programme plans to support some 350,000 children and women in east Indonesia.

Australia is the World Food Programme's largest bilateral donor in Indonesia.



ABOVE: The local *posyandu* (health post) offers nutritional biscuits for children, noodles for pregnant and breastfeeding women, and a chance to check weight gains in babies and toddlers. Photos: AusAID



MDG2: Education

Achieve universal primary education



Primary and on

In Indonesia progress towards MDG2 is so encouraging that the country has set its sights even higher. The aspiration now is to give all boys and girls not just six but nine years of quality education. This is the goal by 2015.

Australia shares the goal. 'In a number of practical ways we're working with Indonesia to make it happen,' says AusAID's senior representative in Indonesia, Blair Exell. There is, for example, the school construction program in which AusAID is building or expanding 2,000 schools. 'We're also supplying essential equipment such as desks and chairs, and resources such as books' says Exell, 'but it's probably in skills training among school administrators that we're able to make our most valuable contribution.'

In Nusa Tenggara Timur teachers trained through AusAID funding show they are inventive, can use resources creatively and favour interactive lessons. The results are impressive. Literacy levels among the province's primary school aged students have

jumped from 42 per cent to 63 per cent in four years.

'Before the classroom looked poor and empty. Teachers dominated,' describes one school principal. 'The process of learning was teacher-centred, talking not doing. The new ways are better and easily understandable for the children.'

It's also uplifting to see classrooms that are 'joyful, interesting, challenging and to see all around cheerful learning.'

Blair Exell says Australia will continue to work hand in hand with Indonesia to provide quality basic education for all. 'We are committed to helping the country equip its young people with the knowledge and skills they need to secure jobs, pursue higher education and improve living standards not only for themselves but also for their families.'

To fulfil this commitment the government is also working cooperatively with Islamic schools. As in Australia, faith-based schools are an important part of the country's

education system. Approximately one in four Indonesian children receives at least some of his or her formal education through a *madrasah* (Islamic school) as these schools are often the only option for children from remote or poorer households.

But in terms of academic quality, *madrasah* lag behind state schools, mainly because most of the teachers are unqualified. To counteract this imbalance, the Australian Government, through AusAID, is helping three Islamic universities to design and deliver a degree program for primary school teachers. This initiative also moves the Government of Indonesia closer to its goal of achieving at least undergraduate level qualifications for all teachers.

School management is another area in which AusAID is dedicating resources. School principals, education officials and school committees are learning to work together to ensure tight administration. Local communities are also taking a more active role in their children's education.

There's a clear drive to keep more girls in school for longer and to increase the number of female teachers and administrators so the female-male staff ratio is more even.

The alliance between the governments of Australia and Indonesia has proved sincere and enduring. Together through education the two countries are laying the foundations for long-term development.

ABOVE: AusAID is helping the Government of Indonesia to raise the standards of teaching in both secular and Islamic schools. Photos: AusAID



One in ten children
in Laos doesn't attend
primary school

Learning and ABEL

Some may view Vone's ambition to one day become a teacher as an impossible dream. The bright 13 year old lives in Oudomxay, a remote, rural community, in northern Laos. In this part of the world children regularly miss out on school.

Few schools even offer all five primary grades and when places are scarce, it's the girls and children from ethnic minority groups that are the first to be turned away.

But Vone is one of the luckier ones. An AusAID-funded project that is spreading across the country is increasing education opportunities and raising standards.

ABEL (Access to Basic Education in Laos) is giving children, especially girls, a good basic education. Currently active across three provinces in northern Laos, the project is also transforming quality and methods of education. At a government level it's working with the Ministry of Education on policy

directions and reform, while on the ground it is bringing together the resources and expertise of UNICEF and the World Food Programme.

'By combining the strengths of the World Food Programme and UNICEF there is a better chance of providing communities with the right incentive and environment for their children to receive an education,' says Manivanh Phoumavong, AusAID's officer in Laos.

Classrooms too are becoming more inviting, vibrant and 'child friendly'. Vone's is positively brimming with activity. There are 'learning corners', shelves stocked with teaching aids and resources, and colourful posters on the walls.

Dull rote learning is replaced by interactive, hands-on learning. When the bell rings children clamour to get into the classroom. During lessons they shoot their hands into the air eager to answer questions, and they revel in

everything that is going on.

'When students work together in groups they achieve better results, they discuss and share their ideas. Achieving good results also motivates the students to learn,' says Thongphat Phayasith, Vone's teacher.

The high protein mid morning snacks, distributed through the World Food Programme, ensure the students have energy to concentrate. Giving the children something to eat also sends a reassuring message to struggling parents – at least at school they know their children are fed. For some parents this is huge incentive to keep sending them as is the provision of a clean water supply and safe toilet block. These facilities – and the teacher training – are provided through UNICEF. Much of the curriculum is dedicated to learning about hygiene, healthcare and safeguarding the environment – lessons which hopefully the children take home to their families.

At the end of the day, Vone makes the three kilometre trek back to her village. Although the journey includes wading through a river she will happily do it all again tomorrow. This young girl believes it's a small price to pay for the chance to go to school.

AusAID is providing \$10.5 million over five years to fund the ABEL project from 2006–10.

ABOVE: Vone (*right*) and classmates absorbed in problem solving. 'My hope is that every child will go to school regardless of whether they are poor, girls, disabled or have learning difficulties or if they belong to one of the ethnic groups in this area,' says Bounchanh Vanhnasy, Vone's school director. UNICEF/Simon Ingram



MDG3: Gender

Promote gender equality and empower women

So, what's gender?



The world is starting to grasp that there is no policy more effective in promoting development, health and education, than the empowerment of women and girls, and no policy is more important in preventing conflict or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended.

Kofi Annan, former United Nations Secretary General

Gender inequality means women and men follow different paths and that in the case of women these paths often lead to disadvantage. Where's the evidence? Women do more than 50 per cent of the work in the world but receive fewer benefits. Men on the other hand, have most of the power and take all the big decisions. They can – and in many societies they do – use violence to impose their authority. The violence in the world today, from domestic violence to armed conflict, is overwhelmingly male.

'A lot of people think that gender roles are innate – fixed – but this is not so,' says the Director of AusAID's Gender Unit, Barbara O'Dwyer. 'Gender roles are socially grown and can change – and fast – when circumstances warrant.'

As a rule, because men and women experience the world differently they

have different attitudes and thoughts. 'We do well to remember this when we're implementing development assistance programs,' says O'Dwyer.

An anecdote that comes out of AusAID's education program in Papua New Guinea makes the point.

During consultations about what the program could do to support education in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, women and men were divided into two groups. Separately they were asked what they thought were the three most important requirements to support kids at school, and what they thought the other group would say.

The women said running water, separate sanitation blocks, and security. They thought the men would say double classrooms, libraries and teacher houses. The men said double classrooms, libraries and teacher

houses. And they thought the women would say double classrooms, libraries and teacher houses.

While the story is gently amusing it clearly illustrates that men and women have a very different take on the world. And it also shows men's superior and more powerful position in society lets them assume women will fall in behind them. It never occurred to the men in this story, for example, that the women could or would think differently. Men do the speaking and deciding. Women do the listening and acquiescing.

'The fact is men and women see and feel life differently, and they shouldn't be asked to speak for each other. It's an important lesson to learn,' says O'Dwyer, 'especially in the area of development assistance.'





Gender more than any other characteristic determines our lives.

Goal:	Promote gender equality and empower women
Target:	Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015
Indicators:	1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education 2 Ratio of literate women to men, 15–24 years old 3 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector 4 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament.

In South-East Asia, products made or grown by women dominate two-thirds of the region's export industry. So it's not just a matter of fairness to support women, it's obvious economic sense. Giving women a fair chance is good for business, economic growth, and poverty reduction. 'We must help women to develop their skills, be allowed to own land and to get hold of the resources they need,' says AusAID's Senior Economics Adviser, Peter Van Dierman. 'It benefits everybody if women are allowed to realise their full potential.'

Gender is integral to all MDGs

Policies and actions that do not take gender into account will not be able to meet any of the Millennium Development Goals. Socially and economically, societies will pay dearly.

It can so easily happen that all the disadvantages associated with gender inequality are passed on from one generation to the next. It's called the poverty cycle. In many developing countries, women's low status translates into chronic standards of living, poor health prospects for the whole family and an almost zero expectation that their children will attend school. A country's long-term prospects for economic growth cannot be encouraging if large sections of its population suffer poor health and nutrition, is uneducated and has low work skills.

The Asia-Pacific Region on MDG3

The Asia-Pacific region has made progress towards MDG3. Literacy rates have improved and roughly equal numbers of boys and girls are attending primary and secondary school. In this respect, the Asia-Pacific region, as a whole, is doing well.

When looking at further education however, the picture is not quite so rosy. At tertiary levels women are still at a significant disadvantage. Not all countries provide the relevant data but only 21 countries out of 43 show equal numbers of young women and young men in higher education.

What's Australia doing?

Gender equality is a strongly held principle within the aid program. In 2006–07, over \$63 million was spent pursuing its cause.

MDG3 Indicators 1 and 2 – Enrolment and Literacy

- > *AusAID's education policy.* By 2010 the Australian Government will have increased by 10 million the number of children attending school in developing countries. Programs and initiatives laid down in the education policy will stimulate this expansion. The policy will also guide the quality of education for an additional 50 million children, paying equal attention to boys and girls.
- > *In partnership.* The governments of Australia and Indonesia are working together to increase entries into junior secondary schools (current enrolment level is 57 per cent) by improving the quality of education and by funding construction of up to 2,000 new school buildings.
- > *Australia–Pacific Technical College.* The new technical college spread over four campuses in Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa and Papua New Guinea will continue to provide various training opportunities. Pacific Islanders are graduating with qualifications that meet Australian standards, enhancing their employment prospects both at home and in international labour markets.

FAR LEFT: The Australia–Pacific Technical College offers a number of courses, including hospitality. There's equal opportunity for female and male students across the Pacific to pick up work skills and qualifications. Photo: Rob Maccoll
LEFT: Vietnam. Women working on a food production line, shelling shrimps for export. Photo: Mark Henley/Panos Pictures

Employment of women has done more to encourage global growth than increases in investment and productivity improvements.

MDG3 Indicator 3 – Women’s share of non-agricultural employment

Microfinance programs are of particular support for women and Australia’s aid program can cite a number of successful examples, including:

- > *Vietnam.* The Capital Aid Fund for Employment of the Poor is based in Ho Chi Minh City. Between 2000 and 2008 AusAID has provided \$6.7 million to the microfinance institution with the result that the mainly female client base has more than doubled and thousands of women have been lifted out of poverty. Many now have their own small businesses, buying and selling.
- > *China.* The Tianjin Women Business Incubator continues to create economic opportunities. Since its establishment in 2000, the centre has helped scores of women-owned businesses employing over 2,700 people (80 per cent of which are women).

MDG3 Indicator 4 – Proportion of women in national parliaments

- > *Solomon Islands.* The RAMSI Machinery of Government Program is encouraging women to participate more directly in both representative and administrative government. The objective of its *Strategy for Advancing the Position of Women* is to increase the percentage of women at every level within the Public Service, and to build up numbers and expertise in organisations that can elevate women into elected decision-making positions.

ABOVE: Bali, Indonesia. Threshing rice. Women are capable, hard working and used to pulling their weight alongside men. Photo: Chris Stowers/Panos Pictures



Asia Pacific Region – Report card MDG3

Indicator	Progress
Education	
Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education	Encouraging. The region is generally very close to gender parity. A joint United Nations and Asia Development Bank ‘tracking analysis’ has found that more than three quarters of countries in the region are making good progress in narrowing gender gaps in educational enrolments. Best Performing Countries: Philippines, Indonesia, East Timor, Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati Worst Performing Countries: Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands
Literacy	
Ratio of literate women to men, 15–24 years old	Going well. Steady decline in the literacy gap between men and women – and with more girls now attending school the gap will continue to close. Best Performing Countries: Philippines, Samoa, Tonga Worst Performing Countries: Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Laos
Wage employment	
Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector	A good result. Women make up around half the non-agricultural workforce in several countries in South-East Asia, including Thailand and Vietnam. Best Performing Countries: Cambodia, Vietnam, Vanuatu, Samoa Worst Performing Countries: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Solomon Islands
National parliaments	
Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	Could do better. Globally the proportion in single or lower houses of parliament tends to be quite low, around only 17 per cent. Some countries in the region have gone beyond this – achieving more than one-quarter, for example, in Afghanistan, East Timor and Vietnam. Best Performing Countries: Vietnam, East Timor, Laos, Philippines Worst Performing Countries: Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Vanuatu, Kiribati



'The old [prisons] legislation actively discriminated against women, because it prevented them getting the experience to work on the ground supervising male prisoners, and that then stopped them being able to argue, when it came to interviews for a job promotion, that they had done the full range of duties.'

Correctional Service Commissioner, Barry Apsey

♀ Breaking the barriers

The famous American social anthropologist Margaret Mead (1901–78) once said, 'Every time we liberate a woman, we also liberate a man.'

A group of women in Solomon Islands is proving this to be true. As women take on challenging frontline jobs in prisons they're lifting not only their own status in the community but also helping to shift attitudes and behaviours among inmates, especially the young men.

For many years female employment in the prison service has been confined to the administration stream. Earlier this year however, the vocal women's network of the Correctional Service of Solomon Islands achieved a major breakthrough. It secured, with the introduction of the new Correctional Services Act, the right for women to work in the male accommodation areas of the country's prisons.

Women have campaigned long and hard to overturn the job exclusion ban. They complete exactly the same training as men yet the majority of the jobs in the prison service are not open to them. 'Breaking down the barriers has been a big fight,' says Senior Sergeant Cathy Kere, 'but it's been worth it. It's a big thing for us because, in our culture, women are not usually allowed to tell the men what to do.'

There are 40 female correctional service officers working across

Solomon Islands – seven of whom are now in the men's accommodation areas at the main correctional centre in Honiara.

Senior Sergeant Cathy Kere is second-in-charge of Block 1, a maximum security wing where the new inmates receive a week-long induction to prison life.

The male prisoners have accepted the women staff but, says Kere, 'Some of the male officers didn't want us to go in because they feel that men are the boss.'

Strong support from the executive branch of the Correctional Service, and its endorsement of a new women's network action plan, is steadily challenging traditional attitudes. 'Although the male officers understand that if the executive wants it, this is the way it will be, our action plan has strategies to educate the male staff about gender equity, and this is helping to bring changes.'

And there are real benefits.

The presence of women staff is having a calming and positive influence in the care and rehabilitation of young offenders. 'We have many young people who come into prison and they need anger management, and it works very well when the female officers are here,' says the women's network chairwoman, Phylistus Fafoi, a senior sergeant with more than 20 years' prison experience. 'The young prisoners tend to think of the female

officers as mothers and sisters – they feel safe with them, and when the women talk to them they listen, and they really do try to improve their ways.'

The women's network has been pushing for change within the prison service since 2006 but few doubt it has been the support from Deputy Corrections Commissioner Francis Haisoma that has made the difference. He fought hard to have the old legislation changed. 'He saw that women had a positive role to play and that they were being disadvantaged in their employment opportunities by the existing legislation,' says Fafoi.

Under the newly-launched action plan, the network will continue to pursue other goals, including better support for female officers with families and more flexible working hours. It's also part of the plan that women staff will have the same access to training opportunities as their male colleagues, and the chance to act in higher roles.

The Commissioner of the Correctional Service, Barry Apsey, has observed that the fight for gender equity in the prison system in Solomon Islands mirrors that of Australia, and he urges the women's network to keep banging on the doors of the executive and making sure that their voices are heard.

The RAMSI Law & Justice Program is contributing technical assistance to the Correctional Service of Solomon Islands to build a professional and effective prison service that respects prisoner rights and promotes rehabilitation.

Last year at the Pacific corrections conference in Honiara, which brought together 13 smaller Pacific island nations, the Correctional Service of Solomon Islands was recognised as a regional leader in addressing gender equity issues, particularly through the new legislation.

ABOVE LEFT: Planning day. 'I would like to work towards being a commandant, and I now feel supported by the executive and the action plan to follow that path,' says Senior Sergeant Cathy Kere.

ABOVE RIGHT: Women's network chairwoman Phylistus Fafoi and Correctional Service Commissioner Barry Apsey with the newly-launched *Action Plan 2008–09*. 'We want women to feel more confident at work to talk about things that are on their mind,' says Phylistus Fafoi. The women's network has also produced a domestic violence booklet and an anti-harassment policy.

Photos: AusAID



MID-TERM REPORT

[1] India. School may be a rickety open hut but education is taken seriously.

i (MDG2) Africa and the Pacific are not on track. Asia is doing the best but the bottom line is 75 million primary school-age children are still not in school, including about a million from the Pacific. More needs to be done to increase accessibility and improve quality. Photo: Ami Vitale/Panos Pictures

[2] Kiribati. A pregnant woman has her blood pressure measured at a prenatal health clinic.

♀ (MDG5) Almost all maternal deaths occur in developing countries. Supervised births with a qualified attendant have a profound impact on survival rates but many mothers in developing countries don't have access to this kind of assistance. Births attended by skilled health staff is especially low in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific. Photo: Giacomo Pirozzi/Panos Pictures

[3] Bangladesh. Fatima lives in a tiny one-room shack in a city slum with her husband and daughter. Rusty corrugated iron sheets are all that separate her from her neighbours.

😓 (MDG1) The rate of those falling into poverty is expected to drop from 29 per cent (as recorded in 1990) to 10 per cent in 2015. The number of extreme poor has fallen by about 280 million since 1990 – the total number is now just under a billion. However, the global numbers mask considerable regional variation. Photo: Zed Nelson/Panos Pictures



We are at the half-way point in the great global campaign to address the unacceptable divide between rich and poor.

The 2000 Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – agreed by 189 governments – have provided a global framework to measure the world's progress to reduce poverty by the year 2015. It is unique for two reasons. First, because it has specific measurable goals and, second, because it is a 15-year campaign.

Where do we stand on the MDGs?

Some progress has been made. Fifteen years ago, one in three people lived on less than a dollar a day. We are now at one in five. More children have enrolled in primary education and the incidence of child mortality has declined globally. The tuberculosis epidemic appears to be on the verge of decline and key interventions to control malaria have been expanded.

However, this is not enough. We have only seven years left and a billion people still live in extreme poverty. More than one billion people lack access to safe drinking water. About two billion people have no regular access to reliable energy services. 6,000 people die of AIDS each day. 750 million adults cannot read. Moreover, one of the most striking statistics comes from sub-Saharan Africa. The odds that a woman will die from complications in pregnancy in this region are one in 16 over the course of her lifetime, compared to one in 3,800 in the developed world. In addition, those who carry almost zero responsibility for climate change are enduring most of its effects, while the gap between the haves and the have-nots is widening.

What can we do to ensure these stark statistics turn into positive progress in the next few years?

According to the United Nations report on the Millennium Development Goals (2007) rapid and large-scale progress is feasible. The know-how exists to advance human development. And the analysis shows that a breakthrough on each and every one of the MDGs demands concentrated attention and action on improving the social, cultural and economic position of women. This cannot happen without strong governments leading pro-poor policies and actions, coupled with the international community's financial and technical backing.

Remarks by Abdullah Saleh Mbamba, Director, United Nations Information Centre for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, from his speech at the Australian launch of the International Year of Sanitation 2008, Parliament House, Canberra, (abridged and slightly modified)



4

To meet all the MDGs by the year 2015 rich countries need to more than double current aid levels.



5



7



6

[4] Indonesia. A transmigrant rice farmer from Java ploughs his land on the exposed south-east coast of West Papua.

🌱 (MDG7) Environmental sustainability needs much greater attention. Since 2000, the scale of the challenge and the global response required to deal with it has expanded dramatically.

New science reveals climate change poses a far greater threat to long-term development than was thought even just a few years ago. The poor and those least able to cope will bear the brunt of human activities like deforestation and rapid urbanisation as well as events such as frequent and severe droughts, floods and cyclones. As a result, many developing countries and donors, including Australia, are already looking beyond MDG targets.

A great deal of work is occurring around adaptation (preparing for changes in the climate) and mitigation (taking action to reduce emissions and climate change) programs. Photo: Rob Hubers/Panos Pictures



[5] Nepal. A subsistence farmer struggles home with fodder for her animals. Without an education or skills women have few choices.

👤 (MDG3) Most regions are broadly on track to eliminate gender imbalances in schools, except Africa and the Pacific. Photo: Gopal Chitrakar/Reuters

[6] Ethiopia. A malnourished baby in his mother's lap, near Sheshemene.

👶 (MDG4) The number of children dying (before the age of 5) has been reduced from 13 million in 1990 to 10 million in 2006. But, based on current rates of progress, Africa, the Pacific and South Asia are unlikely to reduce mortality rates by two-thirds. In times of crisis – such as food shortages due to failed rains and high prices – the smallest and weakest have virtually no chance. Photo: Radu Sighet/Reuters

[7] Zimbabwe. An HIV-positive woman is comforted by her son in hospital.

🏠 (MDG6) While the spread of serious diseases is a global issue, 99 per cent of people who die from AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria live in developing countries. In 2007, there were 33 million people living with HIV, 2.5 million newly infected cases and 2.1 million people who died from AIDS. On a more optimistic note, prevalence rates have started to decline moderately, including in Africa. Photo: Giacomo Pirozzi/Panos Pictures

🏢 (MDG8) This is different to the other MDGs. MDG8 is not a development outcome, but rather a way of working to achieve MDGs1 to 7 through more and better aid, fairer trade and debt relief.

OUT OF AFRICA

At the midway point, Africa remains off-track to meet most of the Millennium Development Goals. The list of grim statistics continues to trouble the African and international community but it's not all bad news.

Despite the doom and gloom, there are glimmers of optimism on the horizon. Peace is slowly creeping across the continent, with far fewer conflicts than a decade ago, and new emerging democracies are taking root in their wake. Parts of Africa are experiencing economic growth levels not seen for decades. Higher oil revenues, increased debt relief and expanded development assistance are creating the financial opportunity for African governments to address the Millennium Development Goals and invest in the long-term future of their countries.

Australia is keen to help Africa harness opportunities for change. As part of its pledge to the MDG Call to Action, the Australian Government will target food security (MDG1), maternal and child health (MDGs 4 and 5), communicable diseases (MDG6), and water and sanitation (MDG7).

'Most of our development assistance is concentrated in our own region, the Asia Pacific, so we are a small player in Africa,' explains Chris Tinning, AusAID's Assistant Director General, Development Partnerships Branch. 'We therefore target our funds where they can have the greatest impact.' In the main, Australia collaborates with established expert bodies to deliver its assistance – United Nations agencies (notably UNICEF and the World Food Programme), Australian and international non-government organisations, the World Bank, and African institutions.

And this method has achieved some standout successes. For example, the Australian non-government organisation CARE has been

working at the community level with pastoralists in northern Kenya and with small-scale farmers in Malawi on a seed bank scheme. CARE's assistance has made a real difference to food security (MDG1) by improving crop and livestock diversity, helping farmers to access credit and markets, and raising the quality of crop yields.

In the area of disaster relief Australia also has a strong track record. 'Our humanitarian assistance is a very important part of our aid to Africa,' says Tinning. 'It is carefully targeted to make a difference. In 2006 and 2007 we were the fourth largest bilateral contributor to the World Food Programme in Sudan, delivering much-needed food aid to the war-torn region of Darfur.'

HIV/AIDS

Of all the world's HIV-positive children, nearly 90 per cent live in sub-Saharan Africa and an estimated 14 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS.

Australia has assisted over 100,000 orphaned and vulnerable children in Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania (MDG4) through its partnership with UNICEF. The United Nations agency runs a multi-faceted program which distributes thousands of anti-mosquito nets to help protect against malaria, trains health and social workers, and creates community centres. It also provides basic materials for households headed by children. Such interventions give young people whose families have been shattered by HIV/AIDS a chance to consolidate their lives and pick up some life skills.

In addition to this support, Australia backs much broader efforts to tackle this disease that has ravaged large parts of Africa (MDG6). Australian non-government organisations have run a number of successful programs to educate communities about prevention measures. They've also provided counselling and community-based care, and social and economic opportunities for people living with HIV/AIDS.

'At the institutional level, we have also funded research into the economic and social impact of the disease and provided scholarships in public health and specifically in HIV/AIDS,' says Matthew Williams, who has recently returned from Pretoria where he served as AusAID Counsellor, Development Cooperation.





Water and sanitation

Along with the World Bank and governments in southern and eastern Africa, Australia is helping to deliver water and sanitation services to poor rural and urban communities (MDG7). 'For example, in Tanzania our support for planning and financing structures helped leverage \$1 billion in funding for the sector,' says Andrew Edge, First Secretary Development Cooperation in Pretoria. 'What this means is that a small investment in planning enabled the Tanzanian Government to negotiate a major funding package to improve its urban water infrastructure. This will ultimately make a real difference in people's lives.'

Access to clean drinking water is often a critical element in emergency situations. As part of AusAID's humanitarian relief programs in Africa in 2007–08, Australian non-government organisations provided access to safe water supplies and hygiene services to communities in Uganda, Ethiopia and southern Africa which were affected by widespread flooding. Such programs also assisted people displaced by the ongoing conflict in Darfur.

Maternal health

Pregnancy remains the number one cause of death for women aged 15–19 years. For many years, the Australian Government has supported the Hamlin Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital.

- Sub-Saharan countries make up 38 of the 40 worst-performing countries in terms of under-five mortality rates
- Maternal mortality rates in sub-Saharan Africa are almost twice that of the second-worst region (920 deaths per 100,000, compared to 500 in South Asia).
- An estimated 2.8 million adults and children in sub-Saharan Africa became infected with HIV in 2006, more than in all other regions of the world combined. Communities are plagued by poor nutrition and hunger, and the majority of people live without access to clean water and sanitation.

ABOVE: Zambia. There might be a few tears but vaccination programs have achieved an amazing 75 per cent decrease in measles cases and deaths, paving the way for similar health initiatives. Photo: Mackson Wasamunu/Reuters
ABOVE LEFT: Mothers wait in line for food aid at a distribution centre in north-west Niger. Since this picture was taken three years ago, there has been no change in the country's urgent need for aid. Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly/Reuters

Fistula hospital



Obstetric fistula is a hole between a woman's birth passage and her internal organs resulting from an obstructed labour. Not only do 90 per cent of babies of fistula mothers die during or shortly after birth this little-known condition can lead to lifelong bladder and bowel incontinence. Due to the unpleasant nature of the disability, such women are ostracised by their community and frequently also by their own families. An estimated two million women suffer from fistula globally.

The Hamlin Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital in Ethiopia is the only hospital in the world specialising in the long-term care and prevention of fistula. Founded in 1974 by two Australian obstetricians, Drs Reginald and Catherine Hamlin, the Hamlin Fistula Hospital has restored the lives of thousands of women who would have otherwise died or suffered lifelong complications. The hospital now provides free fistula repair surgery to more than 2,500 women annually and cares for a number of long-term patients. It also provides training to medical staff from Ethiopia and other developing countries.

The Australian Government has provided funding to the Hamlin Fistula Hospital since 1984. 'Our most recent funding of \$2 million helped establish five rural clinics across Ethiopia which will provide care for those mothers most vulnerable to the condition,' says Chris Tinning, who accompanied AusAID Director General Bruce Davis on a visit to the hospital earlier this year. With Australia's support, the hospital is also expanding into midwife training.

Increasing the number of skilled birth attendants is a specific MDG target that will not only reduce the incidence of fistula but will lower the number of pregnancy-related complications and deaths.

ABOVE: Inside the fistula clinic in Bahir Dar, a branch of the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. The clinic performs thousands of free operations to repair women with the humiliating injury which usually occurs in young undernourished women who have endured prolonged labours. Photo: Eliana Aponte/Reuters

Beyond Geldof

Dr Margaret Bowering from the University of New South Wales made visits to north-west Tanzania in 2007 and earlier this year.

Early in February 2007 I was walking near sunset with two colleagues along a narrow, tall grass-fringed path in north-west Tanzania when the talk urged me to be ready. Ready for what I wondered – another group of school children? A laden bicycle? A new valley? A hungry lion?

And then there it was – a calm, pale blue almost incandescent inland sea. Known to us as Lake Victoria it was to form part of the stunning and beautiful backdrop to our work on a grassroots education project.

Looking back now, my appreciation of the countryside is in strong contrast with the disquiet that I had felt before leaving. Over recent years media sources have given a very bleak picture of Africa as a doomed continent. And no documentary from Irish activist Bob Geldof proclaiming the ‘variety, the exuberance, the happiness’ can dispel this. However, like him, I was struck more by great beauty rather than desolation.

Yet despite its great physical attractions, this part of Tanzania is certainly not an idyllic place. Lack of resources and infrastructure, coupled with distance and poor soil, means that people find it difficult to move beyond their present poverty and unrealised potential. This is the situation which led Associate Professor Alan Watson in 1998 to return to the area. Thirty years earlier he was training teachers here. Over the past 10 years he has expanded the work of the Katoke Trust, which is, in his words, ‘a sustained, multi-pronged attack on extreme poverty in the Kagera region of Tanzania – one of the poorest countries in the world’. Financial support comes from a



number of different sources, including from AusAID.

So is the money being spent wisely to produce skills and bring about self-sufficiency? If you had been with me, you would be surprised to find that the Katoke Trust has no physical presence. The enterprise is run out of a small house in the grounds of the Katoke Teachers’ College, and the main work of organising and providing service is carried out on a shoestring by dedicated Tanzanians and a handful of Australians who visit once or twice yearly. This team of Tanzanian and Australian leaders do almost everything – from making school improvements, running a small dispensary, and organising malaria and AIDS prevention, to experimenting with new crops for villages (such as vanilla and oil palm), acting as buddies for primary school teachers in remote villages, and monitoring the extensive scholarship program.

Hope, enthusiasm, courage and determination – the very opposite of what we see and hear constantly in our media – were a daily feature of my interactions with local leaders and teachers attending professional development sessions. Although these qualities are not easily measured, I can only conclude that they emerge from something that the trust does very well.

Let me give you two examples.

Four years ago a retired principal of a craft school proposed a new venture to train adolescents to revive local handicrafts. With initial seeding money of only \$8,000 from the trust he set about designing, building and equipping a four-roomed workshop-come-showroom for producing bamboo wares and musical instruments. The centre is still flourishing taking in young people for intensive training each year.

Educational improvement has always been the centrepiece of the trust’s work. The next priority is to build and support a much needed secondary school as a consolidation of its village primary school improvement. With the guidance of a local committee and employment of local villagers, construction of the first five school buildings is underway and the first intake of 120 students is planned for early 2009. Over half a million dollars has been raised in Australia for this project, of which AusAID has provided \$50,000 for a four classroom block.

In his documentary series on Africa Bob Geldof revealed his love and insight into African cultures. In my view, however, he failed to create a positive view of what could be done to remediate the problems. Furthermore, even in his public interviews he



The power of local action is both uplifting and astounding

adheres to the necessity of centralised action through the political systems. In contrast to this I believe the Katoke Trust presents a much more optimistic template. It exemplifies on a small scale what productive support from the outside could look like. Our more materially advanced society can make a difference if we work alongside and gradually entrust the work over an extended period of time to the skill and knowledge of the local people.

For more information about the Katoke Trust for Overseas Aid contact A.Watson@unsw.edu.au or phone (02) 9524 0268.

ABOVE LEFT: Umula School of Handicrafts – reviving local techniques.

ABOVE RIGHT: Maths class, Katoke Primary School. Education is the centrepiece of the trust’s work.

Photos: Alan Watson

Dr Margaret Bowering has spent a number of years working and living overseas on TESOL aid projects at secondary and tertiary levels in countries such as Cambodia, Indonesia and China but this was her first time working in Africa. About 200 teachers participated in her training sessions.



MDG4: Child mortality

Reduce child mortality



Every year, an estimated 9.7 million children under the age of five die from mostly preventable causes. Two thirds of neonatal and under five deaths – over 6 million deaths every year – are preventable. Existing low-cost, low-technology yet high impact interventions, such as vaccines, antibiotics, and micronutrient supplements can make all the difference. ‘Something as inexpensive as a bed net treated with insecticide, or as simple as breastfeeding correctly is quite literally what’s between life and death,’ says AusAID’s Principal Health Adviser, Jim Tulloch, ‘and of course good hygiene standards, such

as washing hands, particularly after visiting the toilet, are essential.’

Too many children die from dehydration, diarrhoea and malnutrition brought about by poor sanitation, unsafe water and inadequate hygiene practices.

Health is a cornerstone of economic growth and social development. When life expectancy rates are relatively high and infant deaths are low a society is usually doing well. Healthy people make for a productive robust workforce that can contribute to a nation’s economic wealth.

Most infant and child deaths are caused by a combination of

Reaching the target means reducing the number of child deaths from 9.7 million in 2006 to around 4 million by 2015.

malnutrition and preventable or treatable diseases, such as acute respiratory infections, diarrhoea, measles and malaria. ‘If we could reduce poverty, improve living standards and provide adequate healthcare children wouldn’t die in these horrifying numbers,’ says Tulloch.

Of the 10 countries with the highest child mortality rates, seven are in the top 10 for poverty. There’s also a strong correlation between child deaths and how much partner governments spend on health, the extent of measles immunisation, and the level of access to clean water.

Global funding for maternal and child health represents just 3 per cent of official aid whereas an estimated US\$10.2 billion is needed annually to ensure long-term financing for health systems, and targeted interventions for mothers and children. For the Asia-Pacific region this equates to an additional US\$4.2 billion annually.

The good news

Globally, child mortality has fallen to a record low – dropping below 10 million for the under-fives for the first time. In 1990, the figure stood at 13 million.

The Asia Pacific has seen some successes but there are large variations.

Afghanistan has the worst child mortality rate in the region with 257 out of every 1,000 children not reaching the age of five. Significant progress however has been made in Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Laos has reduced its under-five mortality rate by almost two thirds while East Timor has halved its rate since 1990.

What’s Australia doing?

Australia supports a number of international health organisations which focus on child health, including the World Health Organization, UNICEF and GAVI. AusAID provides core funding to these organisations and support for specific initiatives. This approach extends Australia’s reach in global matters, and improves access to international health expertise and information.

In the Philippines, an Australia–UNICEF program has helped to achieve high rates of polio vaccination and distribution of vitamin A capsules to children.

Australia has also recently expanded activities in women and children’s health to South Asia. Maternal and child health indicators here are among the worst in the world. ‘Working with other development organisations and partner governments, we will use our funds to strengthen national and regional capacities in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal to deliver essential maternal and neonatal health services,’ says Tulloch.

GAVI

Australia contributes at a global level to the GAVI Alliance, a public–private partnership to increase access to vaccines for children in poor countries. In 2006, the alliance protected an additional 38 million children with basic vaccines and prevented more than 2.3 million premature deaths worldwide.

ABOVE: China. Seven-year-old Qiao Sisi and six-month old Qiao Rui manage to keep healthy and safe in a temporary shelter following the massive earthquake in Sichuan Province earlier this year. Photo: Qilai Shen/Panos Pictures



MDG5: Maternal Health

Improve maternal health



LEFT: A Cambodian mother quietly contemplates the future while her newborn baby sleeps. Photo: Mark Henley/Panos Pictures

'The scale of maternal mortality is catastrophic. Every minute a woman dies in childbirth or from complications of pregnancy. . . well over 500,000 women a year... 95 per cent are in Africa and Asia. . . This is global health inequality on a shocking scale.'

Paul Hunt, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to health



ABOVE: A poster on a health clinic wall in Vanuatu openly encourages family planning. Photo: Rob Maccoll

For every woman who dies from obstetric complications, approximately 20 more survive with some form of injury or disability.

According to the *State of World Population 2005* report, released by the United Nations Population Fund, it would be possible to avert up to 30 per cent of all maternal deaths from unintended pregnancies if women were able to access family planning services. This measure alone could save well over 150,000 lives each year.

Population spikes a grave concern

Several developing countries are struggling to support sudden increases in their populations (for example, some African nations, East Timor, Philippines and Solomon Islands), while an estimated 137 million women would like the opportunity to plan the size of their families. An additional 64 million women continue to use traditional methods of contraception with high failure rates.

There are over 200 million women globally with an unmet need for modern contraceptives.

Achieving the goals

The international campaign for the Millennium Development Goals states that an estimated \$6 billion is needed on an annual basis to meet MDG5, plus an extra \$1 billion for family planning. This is what it takes for women to have access to emergency obstetric care, skilled birth attendants, and family planning services – all of which will prevent women in their child bearing years from dying.

Report card

Some countries in the Asia-Pacific region are making significant progress towards targets – for example, Sri Lanka.

Countries not doing so well include Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Solomon Islands. Slightly further afield, Afghanistan is performing poorly and Pakistan is even worse – maternal deaths have risen by 47 per cent since 2000.

Outlook

Achieving MDG5 by 2015 looks doubtful with a global annual decline in maternal mortality rates at an average of less than 1 per cent – far off track from the 5.5 per cent considered necessary for reaching the target.

What's Australia doing?

The health needs of women and children are among the aid program's highest priority areas. Along with a particular focus on maternal health, there's a need for safe and effective contraception services, based on education and informed choice.

AusAID has established a broad range of partnerships and funding arrangements with multilateral agencies, such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations Population Fund, and non-government organisations, such as the International Planned Parenthood Foundation.

There are a number of countries across the Asia Pacific where AusAID is working with partner governments to fund maternal and reproductive

VOLUNTEERING

Multi-skilling

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: Australian Youth Ambassador for Development Kylee St George has recently spent nine months as a nurse educator at the St Barnabas School of Nursing. She's also worked in Alotau General Hospital.

'When I arrived in Alotau, I thought I'd landed in a tropical paradise. If you look to the left there's mountainous beauty and if you look to the right there's the breathtaking bay.'

But with the country's health system in an almost state of collapse Kylee was under no illusion that she was there for a holiday. Doctors, medicines and testing facilities are in short supply. It was a case of stepping in and helping where she could.



ABOVE: Kylee's main role at the nursing school was teaching student nurses and supervising ward rounds but sometimes it was necessary to take time out to wonder at new life. Kylee is second on the left. Photo: Kylee St George

TOP: The student nurses helped Kylee organise the World AIDS Day event – an education forum in the market square followed by a march. Photo: Mark Fallon/Production Hub

For more information on becoming an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development email <ayad@austraining.com.au> or go to <www.ayad.com.au>

health activities. They include Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, East Timor, Solomon Islands, Philippines, Kiribati, Cambodia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Afghanistan.

The Improving Maternal Health in Eastern Indonesia project, funded by AusAID and implemented by UNICEF, in nine districts of eastern Indonesia from 2004–07 has made a vast

difference to people's lives. Building on this project, the Australian Government announced in June this year a \$49 million program (over four years) for further maternal and neonatal health improvements. The program will help to make pregnancy and childbirth safer for women in Indonesia's poorest areas by, in particular, giving women easier access to trained midwives.

A safe birth

Rini Poespoprodjo is a paediatrician who works in mother and child health programs in Papua, Indonesia. She firmly believes that if women are educated and have access to good quality information about pregnancy and childbirth, they are much more likely to have safe deliveries.

'I know of a woman who went into a forest near her home to give birth to her baby. According to local beliefs, birth is a secret process which happens far away from men. The woman gave birth with the assistance of a traditional birth attendant and although there were some complications, the baby was born safely. The umbilical cord was cut by a piece of bamboo. After the delivery, the woman continued to bleed so the birth attendant put some leaves into the woman's womb to help expel the placenta. That didn't work so the family walked two hours to get help from the nearest health centre. The staff gave her some oral medication. That too was unsuccessful and the woman became progressively weaker and died in the afternoon. This needless death shows what happens if a woman is poor, uneducated and health services are not readily accessible.

'I am pleased to say that in Mimika, the district in which I work, we now have a regular mobile clinic program that takes trained medical staff to every village. This would not have been possible without a strong political will to improve maternal health. The good thing about the Millennium Development Goals is that maternal and child health problems are being recognised worldwide and the international community is committed to supporting them.'

Rini Poespoprodjo is a recipient of the inaugural Allison Sudradjat Scholarships awarded by AusAID to outstanding scholars and leaders in the Asia-Pacific region. She was speaking at Parliament House at the recent MDG3 Torch Champion ceremony to highlight the importance of gender equality.

BELOW: At her health clinic in Papua, Dr Rini Poespoprodjo teaches a new mother how to breastfeed. Photo: AusAID





MDG6: Diseases

Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases



LEFT: Vanuatu. No one is too young to know about HIV/AIDS or to join the campaign to prevent its spread. Photo: Rob Maccoll

BELOW: Papua New Guinea. Male workers on the Indonesian border are a target group for HIV prevention messages. In Papua New Guinea the incidence of adult HIV is likely to rise to over 2 per cent of the population by the end of the year and in the neighbouring Indonesian province of Papua, it is even higher. Photo: AusAID



ABOVE: Vanuatu. A child tests one of the anti-malaria nets supplied by AusAID. The aid program is making cost effective prevention and treatment programs readily available across the Pacific. Malaria kills more than a million people a year and is a major cause of anaemia, low birth weight, and premature births. A person with malaria is also more likely to succumb to HIV transmission while HIV decreases a person's ability to respond to anti-malaria treatments. Photo: Rob Walker/AusAID
TOP: Kiribati. On the TB ward. Although tuberculosis is on the decline health workers remain watchful as the disease can quickly spread in crowded living conditions. Photo: Lorrie Graham

In 2001 Australia pledged to stop and push back the spread of HIV, malaria and other major diseases by 2015.

Five years later the commitment was extended to include universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and support by 2010. Despite renewed global efforts and more resources, this year the number of new HIV infections is still 2.5 times higher than the number of people receiving treatment.

'Australia is scaling up HIV prevention for populations most at risk,' says Murray Proctor, Australia's Ambassador for HIV/AIDS. In Papua New Guinea where the number of people living with HIV is particularly high, the Government of Papua New Guinea with Australia's help, is implementing national awareness programs.

In Thailand, Cambodia and Burma – the formerly most affected countries in the Asia-Pacific region – increased funding and a good national response to prevention campaigns have brought about a decrease in the rate of HIV infections.

But of the 33 million people globally living with HIV, nearly five million are in the Asia-Pacific region. The

epidemic is expanding in Papua New Guinea, China, Indonesia, Fiji and Vietnam.

In Indonesia, the focus is on leadership, harm reduction, and prisons. In the Pacific, Australia is intensifying its efforts against HIV and sexually transmissible infections by building on the achievements of past programs. 'We will continue to find innovative ways to encourage people to change their behaviours,' says Proctor. 'We know this can work if we use the right vehicle. For example, the *Love Patrol* television series produced in Vanuatu and now shown around the Pacific is enormously popular with audiences and is a very effective way to break down the stigma around HIV.'

Tuberculosis

Debilitating and potentially fatal, tuberculosis (also known as TB) affects the respiratory system. It is an airborne disease that spreads quickly in overcrowded and poorly ventilated conditions, usually by coughing and sneezing.

Although tuberculosis is still a major cause of death worldwide, incidence rates are stable or declining

in all regions. Most parts of the Asia-Pacific are on track to meet MDG6 targets.

But where tuberculosis has re-emerged as a threat it is due in large part to the rise in the number of people living with HIV. People with the virus are 50 times more likely to develop active tuberculosis.

Malaria

Malaria is characterised by dangerously high fevers and sweating. Infection is caused by mosquitoes.

Malaria remains a problem in many parts of the world. Although in several countries in the Pacific it has decreased, overall the Asia-Pacific region still accounts for 10 per cent of malaria deaths globally. Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu are the worst affected.

'Australia is tackling malaria in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and soon Papua New Guinea,' says AusAID's Principal Health Adviser, Jim Tulloch. 'We are working with partner governments and the international community to provide anti-mosquito bed-nets to every mother and child in malaria-affected areas by 2010.'

Australian HIV funding has doubled over the last two years and has made a significant contribution to reducing the spread of HIV.

Under the Pacific Malaria Initiative, \$25 million has been marked for eliminating malaria through prevention programs, disease management and by bolstering the region's health systems. 'It's an ambitious program but we will work in partnership with the World Health Organization, regional governments and other stakeholders,' says Tulloch. 'And we will first target

those most at risk, such as children and pregnant women.'

Key achievements so far include helping to conduct a major malaria survey in Vanuatu and working with Pacific countries to integrate grants from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria with regional efforts.

Through the needle

Australia is helping to pioneer harm reduction approaches to HIV prevention in Asia. The latest effort is an eight-year commitment which will concentrate on reducing the spread of HIV among drug users in six countries – Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Burma, Philippines, and two provinces of China.

Through a regional program implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Australia is also supporting enlarging HIV prevention among injecting drug users, and their partners, in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan.

Love Patrol



VANUATU: Since the first series of *Love Patrol* was broadcast, the program has been a smash hit throughout the Pacific.

Love Patrol is a soap drama that deals with some of the gritty issues of everyday life. Its storylines and the fascination with the cast make for compulsive viewing – the husband who has multiple partners, the wife who is sad, pregnant and possibly has a life threatening disease, the person who can't find a job.



The program has been particularly successful in breaking down barriers around HIV. 'People are far more at ease talking about HIV and AIDS now that it's discussed openly on television and they're also getting the messages about prevention, harm reduction and testing for infection,' says one of the leading actors, Annette Vira.

The show is produced by the well-known theatre group, Wan Smolbag, which has for many years received funding from AusAID. Established nearly 20 years ago, the travelling theatre group has gone from strength to strength performing plays that grapple with topics of social significance – reproductive health, corruption, voting and the rights of citizens, unemployment, and the environment.

HIV/AIDS is a recurrent theme and has figured in several Wan Smolbag productions. The video *Like Any Other Lovers* tells the story of a young man who discovers he is HIV positive when his girlfriend insists he goes for a test. The story examines the reaction of others to his condition and the altering relationship with his girlfriend.

'Theatre is a very powerful way of communicating with people especially in Vanuatu,' says Wan Smolbag Governance Program Manager, Michael Taurakoto. 'A lot of customs and traditions have been passed on orally so it is very easy for communities to relate to the way we work.'

ABOVE: Vanuatu: Stephanie Copus Campbell formerly of AusAID with Annette Vira from *Love Patrol*. The stars of the program are recognised in the streets of Port Vila and grilled about forthcoming plots. The popular drama conveys important social messages to a wide audience. Photo: AusAID

LEFT: Rehearsals for a Wan Smolbag production highlighting the dangers of HIV. Photo: Rob Maccoll



MDG7: Environment

Ensure environmental sustainability



BENEFITS OF GREEN FEED – STYLO 184

- > A readily available source of green feed means women and children no longer need to spend hours each day collecting plants and leaves from an over-used forest.
- > The green feed is so good that the sows don't have to be let out to scavenge around the village for extra nutrition.
- > With the sows and other pigs secured together in their pens at all times, it's easier to prevent disease outbreaks. (The ability to practise good animal husbandry also helps farmers to become more 'market focused' and commercial.)
- > Improved nutrition means families are able to handle more pigs. Onkeo's family is now raising 14 sows at a time. It's a big increase but, as Onkeo says, 'Pig production is good business. It provides more than half my family's income. Stylo 184 has made this possible.'

In the pink

LAOS: Subsistence farmers in the country's mountainous and remote north are watching their livestock thrive on legumes.

In traditional systems, farmers feed their pigs starchy foods supplemented with green leaves and plants collected from the surrounding forests. Women and children spend hours each day looking for greenery. It's an arduous tedious task, plus the demand for forest leaves and plants is beginning to outstrip supply. Forests are being laid bare.

But, agricultural research, mixed with a bit of good luck, has found a solution.

'While we were applying results from an earlier AusAID project to help cattle, buffalo and goat farmers we became aware of a bonus spinoff,' explains research project leader, Dr Werner Stur. 'We knew forage we'd developed in the form of high quality legumes and grasses was helpful, especially as it could be grown near

where people live, but then we noticed innovative farmers were also feeding these legumes to their pigs.'

Onkeo, a typical pig farmer from a village outside Luang Phabang, was an example. He and his family used to raise four or five sows at a time. Each sow produced litters of up to 10 piglets. At 13 kilos Onkeo would sell the piglets to neighbouring farmers, and any he couldn't sell, he'd raise himself.

Under the traditional system, Onkeo's sows and piglets would roam about the village scavenging for food. This ad hoc diet was supplemented by green plants and leaves collected from the forest. The greenery would be cooked with rice, bran, cassava and maize, and fed to the sows and growing pigs at night, once they had been safely herded back into their enclosures.

Following this regime, it took about 10 months to fatten pigs to their 'ready for slaughter' weight of 60 kilos.

But since joining a small group of farmers who started growing the

For all sorts of environmental reasons forests are important – they maintain biodiversity, prevent erosion, provide timber and are also a rich source of foods, such as nuts and berries.



YEAR OF SANITATION



forage legume *Stylosanthes guianensis* – also informally known as ‘stylo 184’ – Onkeo’s fattening regime has changed. It’s now shorter, much easier and gets him better results.

What is stylo? It’s a bushy tropical legume used as feed for animals which is easily established from seed. It’s rich in protein, grows well in poor soil and, unlike forest greenery, needs no cooking before it can be fed to pigs. What’s more, it grows well in the early part of the wet season when rice, bran, cassava and maize are in short supply.

Like other innovative pig farmers, Onkeo at first couldn’t believe the difference between the pigs that were given a few handfuls of fresh stylo each day and those that missed out. After just six months (as opposed to the usual 10), ‘stylo’ pigs were reaching their optimal selling weight of 60 kilos.

And so, Onkeo made some changes.

The Lao National Agriculture and Forestry Institute and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture work with and are supported by the Australian Government through ACIAR. Together they are developing a new project which is evaluating ‘best-bet’ legumes for pigs. The team is also working with other partners to expand the use of stylo 184 in further smallholder pig production systems.

ACIAR (Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research) is an Australian Government statutory authority that operates as part of the Australian Government’s overseas aid program within the Foreign Affairs portfolio. It shares AusAID’s objectives of working cooperatively with regional partners in the Asia Pacific to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development. <www.aciar.gov.au>

TOP LEFT: Preparing legumes – a better alternative than spending hours in the forest collecting greenery. Photo: ACIAR
LEFT: Onkeo’s pigs have never been healthier since he’s introduced stylo 184 into the diet. Photo: Brad Collis/Coretext



Waste matter – the true story

It’s generally agreed that of all the developments in the past 150 years the sanitary revolution has had the most profound effect. The introduction of clean water and sewage disposal has transformed the health of people right across the Western world – more so than the introduction of antibiotics and anaesthesia.

No surprise then that when we, as an international community, turn our attention to improving the health and life chances of people in developing countries, we say we want to extend the revolution.

Mainly for investment and policy purposes, we tend to lump together ‘water and sanitation’ – so when we tackle the subject everyone says ‘yes, water and sanitation is very important,’ but notice when people go on to talk about it they only mention water.

If you ask public figures, members of parliament and others, to be associated with a media event, and they have the opportunity to be posing next to a nice shiny well, showing people enjoying the benefits of clean

water, they’ll queue up. But if you say ‘Now, we have this alternative proposition, which is we’d like you to speak to people about human waste and sanitation, and maybe you can have your photo taken with a toilet’, the queue gets much shorter. The enthusiasm for leading the debate starts to diminish.

The United Nations is to be congratulated for saying we have to change this attitude.

In our region – the Asia Pacific – poor sanitation affects about 190 million people. What does this mean? Well, let’s give the starkest example: in South-East Asia and the Pacific, approximately 75,000 children will die this year from diarrhoea.

Millennium Development Goal 7 is about access to sanitation. Of the 22 developing countries that Australia provides assistance to in our region, 13 are not on track to achieve the target for water, and 10 are not on track to achieve the target for sanitation. Reaching so many of the other goals, for example, life expectancy

Australia will be working closely with bilateral partners, international organisations and non-government organisations to deliver safe water and effective sanitation where needed.

for children, maternal health, are contingent upon progress in the area of water and sanitation.

The Australian Government is taking the matter very seriously, particularly in this United Nations Year of Sanitation. The federal Budget reflects our commitment to increase aid for water and sanitation by \$300 million over the next three years. It’s a relatively small amount this year while we’re in the planning stage (only \$8 million), but over the next three years, we will make that \$300 million.

Extract from the speech by the Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Bob McMullan, at the Australian official launch of the International Year of Sanitation 2008, at Parliament House, Canberra (slightly modified)

ABOVE: Pakistan. A man takes a sanitary break in the streets of Lahore. Photo: Jerry Lampen/Reuters

It is far from acceptable that over a billion people lack access to safe drinking water and 2.6 billion lack access to basic sanitation.



Abdullah Saleh Mbamba, Director, United Nations Information Centre for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, was the guest of honour at the Australian launch of the United Nations International Year of Sanitation 2008 at Parliament House, Canberra.

Over 2.6 billion people or 41 per cent of the global population have no access to adequate sanitation services. 'No access' is a polite way of saying that 5,000 children under five die every day from diarrhoea for lack of a decent toilet and hygiene, that girls are forced to stay home from school rather than risk indignity and sexual harassment because there are no private latrines, and that raw sewage flows directly into streams, rivers and lakes, fouling the environment and exposing billions of people to disease.

The United Nations General Assembly has put the spotlight on 'waste matter' by declaring 2008 the International Year of Sanitation. The aim is to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. One of the targets is to reduce by

half the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015.

There are 2.6 billion people worldwide who are without adequate sanitation facilities. The lack of decent toilets and the contamination this causes is a root cause of unsafe water. The United Nations has estimated that access to a clean and safe toilet and hygiene education could cut child deaths from diarrhoea by two thirds and could generate US\$66 billion-worth of economic benefits.

There is powerful evidence to show how the humble toilet can drive human development, poverty reduction and women's equality. For example, improved sanitation alone can reduce diarrhoea-related deaths by more than one third, or by two thirds if it's combined with hygiene awareness and changes of behaviour, such as washing hands.

The simple measure of providing private, separate and sanitary latrines in schools can increase girls' enrolment by 11 per cent, while for every 1 per cent increase in female literacy (brought about by this increase in school attendance), a country's economy is shown to grow by 0.3 per cent.

Research also shows that the economic return of every \$1 invested in sanitation is \$9.1. An estimated

\$66 billion-worth of annual economic benefits could be generated through productivity and school days gained, illness and death averted, and savings in related medical expenses, if the proportion of people without access to sanitation is halved by 2015.

Reaching the Millennium Development Goals, including those for water and sanitation, is possible. We have the knowledge and the financial capacity needed to address the water crisis. What is missing now is sufficient political will, and concerted and agreed action. This is where our collective commitment and support is needed.

The United Nations is grateful to the Australian Government for its strong commitment to improving sanitation services in the Asia-Pacific region, and for its support to the United Nations in our fight against poverty and for human development for all.

Remarks by Abdullah Saleh Mbamba, abridged and slightly modified.

ABOVE: East Timor. In the crowded refugee camps outside Dili maintaining hygiene standards is extremely difficult – even the simple activity of brushing teeth has to be thought through. Photo: Beawiharta/Reuters

DISASTER RISK



Sidr and Nargis – same size cyclones but different impacts

Cyclone Sidr that struck Bangladesh in November 2007 was similar to Burma's Cyclone Nargis of May 2008, yet the impacts from these events are worlds apart. Bangladesh lost under 3,500 people while it's estimated more than 100,000 died in Burma.

With similar Human Development Index rankings, similar poverty levels and similar annual gross domestic product, the lives and vulnerabilities of Burmese and Bangladeshi communities living on extensive coastal tributary systems are remarkably alike (see table). Why then did similar cyclone events affecting similar communities result in disasters of strikingly different proportions?

The answer is this. The risk of natural disasters affecting the millions of people living along the Bangladesh coastline has been drastically reduced by the actions of the Government of Bangladesh in partnership with international agencies and donors. Bangladesh has invested in early warning systems, mitigation measures

REDUCTION



LEFT AND FAR LEFT: Burma ravaged after Cyclone Nargis. Photos: jhpix
BELOW: Mangroves, such as these in Vietnam, are a natural line of defence against storm surges and severe winds. Their protective properties should not be underestimated. Photo: Jim Holmes



and community preparedness activities, and Burma has not.

Three key disaster risk reduction measures make all the difference in Bangladesh:

1. Effective early warning systems:

Bangladesh has an early warning system that advises people at risk to evacuate to safe cyclone shelters up to 48 hours before cyclones make landfall. During Cyclone Sidr, over three million people were evacuated and 1.5 million took refuge in purpose-built cyclone shelters.

While the Government of Burma was informed of Cyclone Nargis 72 hours before it made landfall, the country has no early warning system. Vital information was not – nor could be – conveyed to communities in danger.

2. Protective embankments: As

Bangladesh has invested heavily in flood embankments in high-risk areas, many households were protected from the six-metre high storm surge from Cyclone Sidr. Burma has no such structural mitigation.

What's an HDI?

The Human Development Index – known as an HDI – is updated annually by the United Nations Development Programme. It measures social and economic development. Each country is given an HDI measure based on the country's average life expectancy, rate of educational attainment and gross domestic product. Of the 177 countries listed on the HDI, Iceland is ranked number one, Australia is ranked third, Burma is ranked number 132 and Bangladesh number 140.

	Bangladesh Cyclone Sidr, November 2007	Burma Cyclone Nargis, May 2008
Cyclone category	Category 4	Category 3
Tidal wave (and storm surge)	5 m (up to 6m)	3.5 m (up to 7m)
Wind speed	240 km/hr	255 km/hr
Population evacuated	3 million	None
Deaths	3,406	84,537*
Missing	1,001	53,836
Population 'severely' affected	1 million	2.4 million
Cost of damage	US\$1.67 billion	US\$11 billion
Human Development Index (2007)	140	132
GDP (PPP, 2007)	US\$1,400	US\$1,900
Population below poverty line (2004)	45%	33%

Data sources: Cyclone Sidr statistics (World Bank 2008); Cyclone Nargis statistics (USAID, ReliefWeb); Country statistics (UNDP, website)
* Estimated 100,000

3. Preserved mangrove forests:

Bangladesh has worked in partnership with development agencies for over 10 years to protect the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove system and world heritage site. By acting as a protective barrier, mangroves reduce the severity of storm surge and wind. This was very clearly demonstrated during the catastrophic Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004. Were it not for the stabilising and protecting properties of healthy mangrove systems, it is almost certain more communities would have been wiped out. Cultivation of rice paddies has seen Burma destroy its mangrove forest and consequently the country has lost this invaluable natural buffer.

There is no question that disaster risk reduction actions, such as those undertaken in Bangladesh, save lives.

It is not so much the size of a natural hazard that puts communities at risk as the failure of governments to take action to prepare for them – and to warn communities when they are about to occur.

What's Australia doing?

Australia is supporting disaster risk reduction efforts in Burma as part of its \$55 million package of assistance to people affected by Cyclone Nargis.

Australia recently provided funds to the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery to support work that will further reduce the threat of natural disasters in Bangladesh.

Disasters such as Cyclone Nargis and Cyclone Sidr not only cause immediate suffering but hold back long-term development, including progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Achieving these important goals will be impossible without taking steps to minimise the impacts of cyclones, floods and other natural hazards that push people back into poverty.

AusAID has committed over \$22 million to reduce the risk of disasters in the Asia-Pacific region over the next four years. The funding is to assist developing countries to integrate disaster risk reduction into their development plans and to build capacity in regional and national institutions.



MDG8: Partnerships

Develop a global partnership for development

Smart business

A new Australian business-led coalition, supported by AusAID, is responding to the International Call to Action on Poverty. Business for Millennium Development – B4MD – is finding ways to grow sustainable development in the Asia Pacific.

Businesses are tuning in to the benefits of corporate responsibility. Companies that invest in the community may be motivated by ethical and moral values in the first instance – the urge to 'do the right thing' – but increasingly they're also finding it makes sound economic sense. Helping the poor isn't about charity, it's now a valid business opportunity.

C.K. Prahalad, author of *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty through Profits*, says it's a mistake to think of the poor as victims or burdens on society. Rather, he suggests, think of the four billion people around the world living on less than \$2 a day – those at the 'bottom of the pyramid' – as resilient, inventive and value-conscious consumers.

'Some people think it's distasteful to profit from helping the poor but that's to misunderstand the prime intention,' says Mark McGillivray, AusAID's Chief Economist. 'The poor

The business sector in Australia has much to offer – experience, creativity, innovation and expertise. New business markets and growth lie in the developing world. This is not a call for more philanthropy. It is a call to recognise the business case for helping poor countries develop. What was once seen only as business risk now needs to be seen as business opportunity.

The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd

don't want to be patronised or handed for or to stay poor. They want to be accorded the same dignity as everyone else and be part of the same economic opportunities.'

As a group, businesses are good at identifying needs (or gaps in the market) and finding practical, commercially-viable ways to fill them.

RIGHT: Tuvalu. Unloading freight and passengers at the deep sea wharf of Fogafale islet. Fairer trade, foreign investment and better business opportunities will help developing countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Photo: Jocelyn Carlin/Panos Pictures



What's B4MD?

Founded by a number of Australian companies – ANZ, Grey Global, IBM Australia, Insurance Australia Group, Visy and World Vision Australia – B4MD is a business-led coalition to respond to the call to action on poverty.

How does B4MD work?

B4MD works with companies, actively brokering initiatives that encourage poverty alleviation and harness business expertise and knowledge. AusAID shares with B4MD an interest in seeing the Australian business community involved in efforts to reduce poverty.

B4MD summit

AusAID is a co-sponsor of B4MD's forthcoming national summit to highlight the role of business in reducing regional poverty. The summit aims to raise awareness of the Millennium Development Goals and stimulate thinking on how they may be achieved.

The summit also supports the International Business Call to Action on Poverty. For more information see <www.b4md.com.au>

What's the Enterprise Challenge Fund?

The Enterprise Challenge Fund helps businesses to develop commercially successful ventures that would not otherwise get the chance to go to market. By providing up to half of the project's funds, AusAID shares the project's set-up costs and some of the risk. Grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$1.5 million are available for business ideas where commercial viability can be established within three years. For more information go to <www.ausaid.gov.au/partner/business.cfm>



GLOBAL EDUCATION

What's global education?

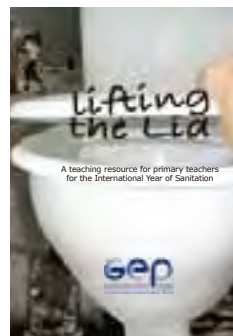
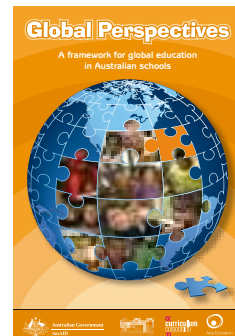
AusAID's global education program is helping Australian school students to understand international issues and the importance of development assistance in reducing poverty. It operates through the formal education system and fits well with a cross-curricular approach.

Global education is interested in:

- > international development issues and ways to reduce poverty
- > peace-building and resolving conflict
- > valuing different cultures, languages and religions
- > human rights and social justice, and
- > working towards environmental sustainability.

Resources

Global Perspectives: A framework for global education in Australian schools
This renamed and revised edition of *Global Perspectives: A statement on global education for Australian schools* offers teachers a concise, practical and philosophical guide to teaching with a global perspective in the classroom.



Rising food prices

An eminent group of Australians with international experience in agriculture and development have formed a national taskforce on rising world food prices and food shortages. The group will look at causes and impacts of the crisis and identify policy options for governments. The Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Bob McMullan, has welcomed the initiative.

While the taskforce, which is arranged by the non-government ATSE Crawford Fund, will work closely with government agencies, its views and recommendations will be formulated independently.

Leader of the taskforce, Jim Ingram, AO, a former head of AusAID and Executive Director of the World Food Programme, says, 'In particular, we will seek to identify how development assistance programs can encourage increased productivity of agricultural land in developing countries, remove

specific constraints to the growth in food production, and what role Australia may play in these efforts.'

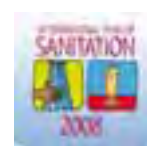
The formation of the taskforce follows record food and grain prices, the rush to develop biofuels, and social tensions caused by the widening gap between rural and urban populations in Asia and Africa.

The ATSE Crawford Fund is a non-government organisation that works to raise awareness of the benefits to developing countries and to Australia from international agricultural research and development. It is named after Sir John Crawford, a key architect of Australia's post-war growth and a passionate supporter of agricultural research.

For more information about the scope of the taskforce and its members see <www.crawfordfund.org>

ABOVE: Papua New Guinea. Mount Hagen Market, recently refurbished by AusAID, draws vegetable buyers and sellers from far and wide. Photo: AusAID

'The program is about helping teachers to teach with a global perspective so students can adapt to an increasingly globalised world,' says Arthur Burch, AusAID's Global Education Manager. 'Our aim is to help young people become responsible citizens of the world ready and willing to shape better futures.'



The International Year of Sanitation 2008 logo represents two sides of basic sanitation – hand washing and toilets.

Lifting the Lid: A teaching resource for primary teachers for the International Year of Sanitation

This A4 48-page booklet provides teachers with ideas and activities to help students understand that adequate sanitation and good hygiene are about human dignity, health and keeping preventable diseases at bay.

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Enquiries, proposals for articles and feedback should be sent to:

Patricia Gibson
The Editor, *Focus*
Public Affairs Group
AusAID
GPO Box 887
Canberra ACT 2601

Tel +61 2 6206 4967
Fax +61 2 6206 4695
Email patricia.gibson@ausaid.gov.au

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For more copies of *Focus* or other AusAID publications contact:
National Mailing and Marketing
PO Box 7077
Canberra BC ACT 2610

Tel +61 2 6269 1050
Fax +61 2 6260 2770
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