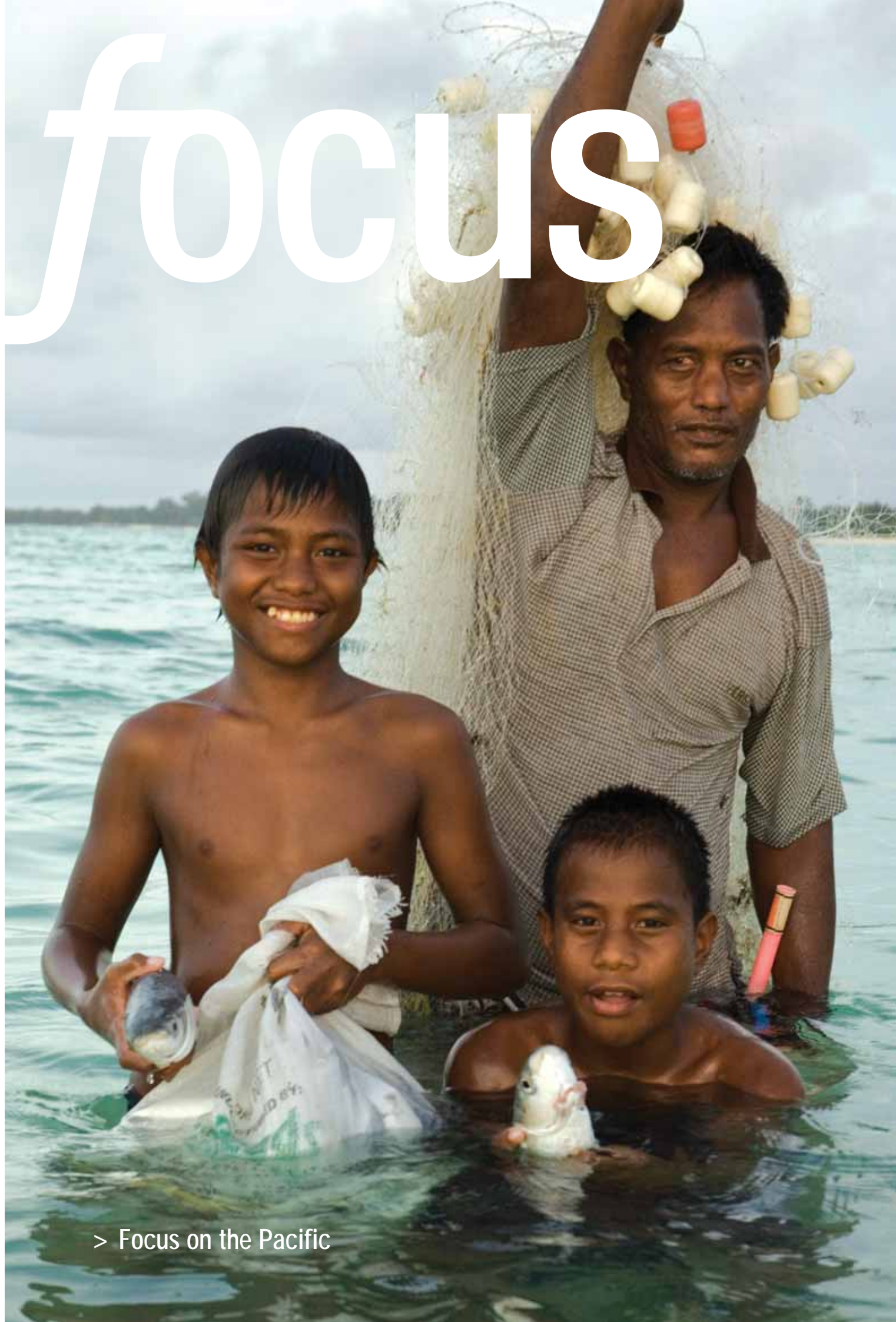


focus

THE MAGAZINE OF AUSTRALIA'S OVERSEAS AID PROGRAM

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 3 » OCT-DEC 2009



> Focus on the Pacific

About AusAID

The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) manages Australia's overseas aid program.

The aid program

The Australian Government, through AusAID, provides official development assistance to countries mainly in Australia's own region, the Asia-Pacific, but increasingly also in Africa. Development assistance is delivered as part of well-planned, long-term sustainable programs across a range of sectors—health, education, infrastructure, gender equality, law and order, rural development and the environment.

In times of emergency, AusAID has both the flexibility and expertise to respond swiftly and effectively. The agency has a proud record of delivering humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations caught in conflict zones or natural disasters, such as cyclones, floods and earthquakes.

Reasons for giving aid

Australia is committed to helping developing countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set out below. These aim to alleviate world poverty by 2015.

Millennium Development Goals



1 END HUNGER & POVERTY



2 UNIVERSAL EDUCATION



3 GENDER EQUALITY



4 CHILD HEALTH



5 MATERNAL HEALTH



6 FIGHT DISEASE



7 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY



8 GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

Poverty is one of the greatest challenges of our time. We know that poverty not only blights the lives of individuals but contributes to national instability and conflict.

Australia's development assistance focus on poverty is guided by the MDGs and Australia's objective to assist developing countries to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development in line with our national interests.

Australia's standing as a good international citizen is critical to promoting and advancing Australia's foreign policy and national interests.

A strong and effective aid program advances Australia's reputation and our influence in the international community.

It is strongly in Australia's national interest to support stability and economic development in our region and throughout the world through assistance to the people and governments of developing countries.

The way AusAID works

AusAID competitively contracts aid delivery work to Australian and international companies and non-government organisations (NGOs). These bodies work in partnership with local people to implement projects and, most importantly, to help transfer skills. This approach maximises the chances of activities continuing long after the contract has expired and the Australians and others have gone home.

Size of the aid program

In 2009–10 Australia plans to spend \$3.8 billion on official development assistance. This is 0.34 per cent of our gross national income (GNI). The Australian Government is working towards a target of 0.5 per cent of GNI by 2015.

Calendar of theme days



October to December

5 October	UNESCO World Teachers Day
11–17 October	Anti-poverty Week
15 October	International Day of Rural Women
16 October	World Food Day
17 October	International Day for Eradication of Poverty
24 Oct–1 Nov	Children's Week (Australia)
24 Nov–1 Dec	AIDS Awareness Week
1 December	World AIDS Day
3 December	International Day of Persons with Disabilities
10 December	Universal Human Rights Day
20 December	International Human Solidarity Day

ABOVE: Teacher Ms Invanh helps students Mek and Nek, Ban Dakduang, Dakcheung, Lao PDR.
Photo: Jim Holmes, AusAID

contents



19



20



28



Government aid in focus: Australia's overseas aid program is committed to reducing poverty and advancing the Millennium Development Goals in the Asia-Pacific, Africa and the Middle East.

COVER: Many communities depend on the sea for a living but experts warn global warming may cause migratory patterns of fish to change as they seek cooler waters. Photo of Kiribati fishing family by Lorrie Graham for AusAID

- 2 **AID MATTERS**
- 7 **AID IN FOCUS**
- 7 Pacific Islands Forum pushes for progress
by Kim Biedrzycki, AusAID
- 8 Giving heart to sick kids
by Andrew Gavin, AusAID
- 10 Growing organic rice reaps rewards
by Heather Ellis, Plan International Australia
- 12 Microfinance transforms lives
by Constantine Carluen, PACAP
- 13 Catalysing the movement to end poverty
by Hugh Evans, The Global Poverty Project
- 14 Spotlight on aid
by Cathy Reid, AusAID
- 20 **focus ON THE PACIFIC**
- 22 Working together for a better future
by Dominic Morice, AusAID
- 25 Thinking locally about a changing climate
by Dr Sarah Park, CSIRO
- 26 Pain in paradise
by Ajay Chhibber, UNDP
- 28 Nurturing young women leaders
by Julie McKay, UNIFEM
- 29 What are you thinking?
by Tom Perry, RAMSI
- 30 Sport for development
by Kylie Bates, Australian Sports Commission
- 32 AusAID scholarships making a difference
by Rachel Ingwersen, AusAID
- 33 Preview of *Pacific economic survey 2009*
by Elizabeth James, AusAID
- 33 **GLOBAL EDUCATION**

Improving road safety in Vietnam



Each day 3,500 people are killed in road crashes worldwide, nine out of ten of them in developing countries.

In Vietnam, a developing country spanning more than 3,000 kilometres from north to south, more than 30 people a day die in road crashes. Most are motorcyclists and many are young people aged between 10 and 24.

Australia is helping to tackle the road traffic crisis in Vietnam by funding an International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP) that is inspecting and assessing the condition of more than 3,500 kilometres of Vietnamese roads.

iRAP is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to saving lives in developing countries by promoting safe road

design. Worldwide, iRAP inspects high-risk roads to identify where affordable programmes of safety engineering can prevent thousands of deaths and serious injuries.

Launched in March 2009, the iRAP project in Vietnam is funded by AusAID through the World Bank Global Road Safety Facility. It involved a team of local and Australian engineers travelling along 3,500 km of high-risk roads in a vehicle equipped with the latest digital imaging technology.

The team collected video images at 100 metre intervals of 30 design features that are known to influence the likelihood of a crash and its severity. They include intersection layout, road markings, roadside hazards, facilities

for motorcyclists, footpaths and safe crossing points.

This was followed by a five-day intensive training course where participants from Vietnam roads and research agencies developed their expertise in safe road design and assessment of the digital images using specialised software.

The information collected will form a valuable resource for asset management engineers, road safety engineers and the road safety research community in Vietnam. It will also be used to produce road safety star ratings for car occupants, motorcyclists, pedestrians and bicyclists. A 1-star road will represent a road with very poor road safety conditions, while a 5-star road will represent a road with very good safety conditions.

A detailed economic analysis of potential road safety counter measures is planned to identify treatments that will save lives across the country. The crash costs avoided by these treatments will be many times the cost of implementing them.

For more information on iRAP and the project in Vietnam, visit www.irap.org.

ABOVE: Nine out of ten people killed on Vietnam's roads are motorcyclists. Preventing accidents through projects like iRAP Vietnam is also central to AusAID's disability strategy. Photo: Cao Hoàng Cần, Vietnam Roads Administration (VRA)



Rebuilding Afghanistan's education system

Afghanistan has one of the world's lowest school attendance rates and correspondingly low literacy rates. A training project for Afghan teachers marks the beginning of a partnership between Australia, Malaysia and Afghanistan aimed at rebuilding the country's neglected education system.

Under the Malaysia Australia Education Project for Afghanistan, 30 Afghan master teachers, including three women, travelled to Kuala Lumpur to take part in a 14-week education

program that will equip them to educate other teacher trainers when they return to Afghanistan.

Australia has committed \$1.7 million to the project, which is expected to strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's teacher training colleges, swell the numbers of qualified teachers and improve the quality of teaching and learning in the country.

LEFT: The Afghan master teachers arrive in Kuala Lumpur. Photo: Sue Majid, GRM International

Better radio reception for PNG



Radio remains the most accessible form of communication in Papua New Guinea (PNG), so a new satellite system launched in Port Moresby last month by Australian High Commissioner to PNG Chris Moraitis means the PNG National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) is now at the cutting edge of technology.

The satellite was funded through AusAID's Media for Development Initiative (MDI) and promises to deliver Radio NBC much more clearly and easily to more Papua New Guineans than ever before by increasing the reach, reliability and quality of the signal sent the length and breadth of PNG and beyond.

"This is a great outcome for NBC but more importantly it's a great outcome for the people of PNG. As PNG moves forward so must communication keep pace," said Communication and Information Secretary Henao Heduru at the launch.

Meanwhile AusAID and the Media Council of PNG signed an agreement valued at \$500,000 to continue training PNG journalists and focusing on building a strong, skilled media.

ABOVE: AusAID Democratic Governance team members with Henao Heduru, PNG Department Secretary for Information and Communication (standing 5th from left) and Chris Moraitis, Australian High Commissioner to PNG (standing 7th from left) with a gift from NBC. Photo: Francina Thomson, AusAID

UNIFEM partnership aims to empower women



AusAID and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) have signed a partnership agreement that is aimed at empowering women and achieving gender equality in the developing world.

Australian Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance Bob McMullan signed the partnership agreement with UNIFEM Executive Director Dr Inés Alberdi on 12 August during her recent visit to Australia. Through the partnership, Australia will provide more than \$17 million to support UNIFEM in its work to advance the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) over the next six years.

"There is much work to do," Mr McMullan said. "Almost 100 countries remain off-track to achieve the MDG of eliminating gender disparity in all levels of education by 2015. More than 500,000 women in developing countries die annually in childbirth or from maternity-related complications. Globally, one in three women experience violence. Almost two out of three employed women are in vulnerable or unpaid jobs."

ABOVE: Dr Inés Alberdi and Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance Bob McMullan sign the partnership framework in Canberra. Photo: Angus Braithwaite, AusAID

AusAID farewells Bruce Davis



Bruce Davis has left AusAID after a 30-year career with the agency and ten years as Director General. During that time he was responsible for significant changes, such as presenting and implementing the White Paper on Australia's aid program, setting up the Office of Development Effectiveness and progressing the Government's commitment to increase Australia's official development

assistance to 0.5 per cent of gross national income by 2015-16. He played a key role in setting up the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development. AusAID wishes him well in his future career.

Peter Baxter, formerly of the Department of Foreign Affairs, is now acting Director General.

LEFT: Former AusAID Director General Bruce Davis built a strong, influential aid agency. Photo: AusAID

Inaugural World Humanitarian Day

In 2008, 260 aid workers were killed, kidnapped or seriously injured. On 19 August—the inaugural United Nations World Humanitarian Day—Australians reflected on the contribution of aid workers throughout the world.

Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Stephen Smith said, “Six years ago, on 19 August 2003, the United Nations office in Iraq was bombed and 22 people lost their lives. Among them was Brazilian United Nations diplomat Sergio Vieira de Mello, the United Nations’ High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Iraq. Australians recall his exceptional work in our region as the UN Transitional Administrator in East Timor.

“To honour the sacrifice of Mr Vieira de Mello, his 21 colleagues in Iraq and humanitarian workers around the world, on 11 December 2008 the United Nations General Assembly passed a Resolution designating 19 August World Humanitarian Day. World Humanitarian Day allows us to reflect on the contribution aid workers make to alleviate the suffering of the world’s poorest, and the ultimate sacrifice made by some,” Mr Smith said.

Mr Smith noted that over the past five years Australia had responded to more than 60 humanitarian emergencies. In the past year, Australia had provided \$180 million for humanitarian emergencies, including Pakistan’s internally displaced populations and conflict-affected areas in Somalia, the Philippines, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Gaza. In the same period, Australia had provided more than \$91 million to the World Food Programme.



MDG stickers symbolise aid commitment

Australia is sticking to its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as reflected by the set of eight brightly coloured icons that now adorn the front of the AusAID building in Canberra.

The MDG stickers were launched on a cold and wintry morning by Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance Bob McMullan who said that with the global recession forcing more people into poverty Australia is even more committed to achieving these international goals.

“Even though our own economy is under pressure,” he said, “withdrawing or reducing aid would be the worst thing we could do. That’s why the Australian Government has increased the aid budget. We also have a responsibility to communicate the urgency of the Millennium Development Goals to the Australian public. These icons will remind people about global poverty and the Australian Government’s commitment to the MDGs.”

ABOVE: Mr McMullan reflects on Australia’s commitment to the MDGs. Photo: Angus Braithwaite, AusAID



Disaster risk reduction a safe investment

Disaster risk reduction can save lives, protect livelihoods, safeguard development gains and reduce the cost of responding to disasters in our region.

AusAID launched a new policy, *Investing in a safer future: a disaster risk reduction policy for the Australian aid program*, on 15 June at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva. This event was attended by more than 300 international disaster risk reduction professionals including Margareta Wahlstrom, the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Australia is at the forefront of international efforts to encourage

greater investment in disaster risk reduction. The new policy aims to reduce vulnerability and enhance the resilience of countries and communities to disasters. It provides a framework to integrate disaster risk reduction into the Australian aid program, assist developing countries to reduce disaster risk, support and enhance leadership and advocacy on the issue and coordinate policies and programming for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

ABOVE: AusAID's Lisa Staruszkiewicz at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, Geneva. Photo: Anna Dorney, AusAID

Calling the community to action

AusAID is enlisting the Australian community's support in the fight against global poverty through the Community Call to Action initiative. Launched by Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance Bob McMullan at the One Just World public forum in Brisbane on 22 July, this pilot initiative aims to raise awareness of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and global poverty.

Mr McMullan stressed the important role that community organisations not traditionally involved in development assistance could play in spreading the anti-poverty message.

"The Community Call to Action will provide up to \$1.5 million in small and medium grants to community organisations wanting to help raise awareness of global poverty and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) within their communities and will support the global push to halve extreme poverty by 2015," Mr McMullan said.

The types of activities likely to be funded under the initiative include networking events, conferences, seminars, workshops and special events run by community groups, professional and peak bodies, membership-based not-for-profit networks and small business. Successful applicants are due to be announced in mid October 2009.



Relief in sight wins award

An AusAID touring exhibition, *Relief in sight—Australia's international disaster response in pictures*, has won first place in the Australian Capital Territory section of a major public relations award run by the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA).

The 22-month campaign, which ran from February 2007 to November 2008, put a human face on the suffering natural disasters cause and highlighted

Australia's compassionate response to disasters in our region. It was a huge success, reaching 6,411,290 people through the media, attracting 180,000 website visitors and 698,000 exhibition visitors and engaging thousands of school students.

In the light of this success, AusAID is now in the running to win a national PRIA Golden Target Award.

Training gives PNG mine workers job security

In a global climate where tens of thousands of mine workers have lost their jobs, electrician Philip Benial feels his training at the Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC) has ensured his future.

"I have job security," he said. "I have done all I can to be at the top of my profession and provide for my family."

Philip is one of 80 PNG mine workers who recently graduated from a two-year APTC course. The workers now have internationally recognised trade certificates in diesel fitting, fitting, boiler making, carpentry, electrical, plumbing and refrigeration.

Their training has benefited from a partnership between Ok Tedi Mining Ltd and AusAID that recognises the importance of business in achieving development outcomes.



Electrician Philip Benial with his wife Mathilde, son Laurie and Australian trainer Ian Strachan at the graduation ceremony at Tabubil, PNG. Photo: AusAID, Port Moresby



Reducing violence against women, reducing poverty

The Australian Government has launched a new framework for action to reduce violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor. It follows the AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness report featured in the last edition of *Focus* which found that violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor is severe, pervasive and constrains development. Violence against women severely limits women's social, political and economic participation and puts significant strain on national economies.

Australia's framework for action—set out in the new *Stop Violence: responding to violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor* report—will support Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu and East Timor to stop violence against women. You can download the report from www.ausaid.gov.au.



TOP: Detail of artwork prepared by participants at the Women for Peace conference hosted by the Alola Foundation in Dili.

Making a stand against poverty

On Saturday 17 October, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, the United Nations Millennium Development Campaign is hoping to set a new Guinness world record for the most people to stand up against poverty in 24 hours.

"Stand Up" is a unique global action aimed at raising awareness about poverty. Across the world, groups of people representing community, school,

business and religious groups and non-government organisations have been organising millions of people to Stand Up against poverty for the past three years, with 23 million people participating in 2006, 47 million in 2007 and a record 116,993,629 people participating in 2008.

AusAID is supporting Stand Up 2009 through a partnership with the Australian Stand Up organisers, Make



Poverty History. Free public events are planned for Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. For more information go to www.standupagainstopoverty.com.au.

Pacific Islands Forum pushes for progress

Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is keen to see progress on the Millennium Development Goals in the Pacific.

by Kim Biedrzycki, AusAID



During his year as Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is determined to see real progress being made towards countries in the region achieving their Millennium Development Goals. The 40th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting was held in Cairns in August 2009, and brought together leaders and government representatives from across the Pacific.

The main agenda items discussed included better development coordination in the Pacific, the effects of the global economic crisis and climate change, a new trade agreement between Pacific countries and the success of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The key outcomes were:

- > the development of the Cairns Compact on Strengthening Development Coordination in the Pacific, to accelerate

- progress towards the Millennium Development Goals by driving more effective coordination of all development resources—both donor and government—in the Pacific
- > the Pacific Leaders' Call for Action on Climate Change for world leaders to redouble efforts to secure a successful agreement at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009
- > agreement to commence negotiations for a new trade and economic integration agreement with Forum countries through the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus
- > maintenance of the strong line on Fiji remaining suspended from the Forum and a continued call for the country to return to a democratic government
- > a \$26 million funding commitment for grassroots and higher level sport in the Pacific to boost participation

in sport and achieve improved health and social outcomes

- > a \$25 million four-year funding commitment for initiatives in clean and affordable energy through the framework of the Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility
- > the signing of three Pacific Partnerships for Development, with Tuvalu, Tonga and Nauru, bringing the total number of partnerships signed to eight in 12 months.

The final Forum Communiqué with complete details on the Forum outcomes can be downloaded from the Pacific Islands Forum 2009 website at <http://www.pif2009.org.au/>.

ABOVE: Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd chaired a successful 40th Pacific Islands Forum leaders' meeting in Cairns on 5–6 August 2009. Photo: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Giving heart to sick kids

by Andrew Gavin, Communications Officer, AusAID

Australian medical volunteers in Papua New Guinea are repairing heart defects in children and building up local health services.



Elizabeth Turmut finds it difficult to express her gratitude to the Australian and Papua New Guinean doctors who saved her daughter Joyline's life. "Thank you for operating on my baby," she says haltingly, breaking into a smile. "My baby is happy."

Joyline is sitting up and playing with a teddy bear just two days after her heart operation in Port Moresby General Hospital, Papua New Guinea (PNG). A 5 cm scar on her back is the only sign of the procedure that repaired a blood vessel defect in the 18-month-old's heart.

Before the operation, Joyline struggled to play and was not growing as quickly as she should have been because her heart wasn't circulating enough oxygenated blood to her body. She was vulnerable to infections and would probably have died as a teenager at her Manus Island home, 800 km north of Port Moresby, if not for Operation Open Heart.

Hosted by Sydney Adventist Hospital and supported by a range of organisations including AusAID, Operation Open Heart brings teams of Australian volunteer doctors, nurses,

ABOVE LEFT: Sydney physiotherapist Kate Henschell helped three-year-old Sophia Antonette start moving again after her heart operation in Port Moresby during Operation Open Heart. Photo: Rocky Roe, AusAID

ABOVE RIGHT: Elizabeth Turmut's baby, Joyline, is breathing better after heart surgery. Photo: Andrew Gavin, AusAID

OPERATION OPEN HEART BRINGS TEAMS OF AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEER DOCTORS, NURSES, PHYSIOTHERAPISTS, PATHOLOGY TECHNICIANS AND BIOMEDICAL ENGINEERS TO PORT MORESBY EACH YEAR TO PERFORM VITAL HEART SURGERY.



ABOVE: Dr Noah Tapaua, left, performs open heart surgery with assistance and mentorship from Dr Graham Nunn, right. Photo: Rocky Roe, AusAID

LEFT: Operation Open Heart builds skills and friendships for Australian and Papua New Guinea nurses Leah Harvey, left, and Naomi Tuba, right. Photo: Rocky Roe, AusAID

physiotherapists, pathology technicians and biomedical engineers to Port Moresby each year to perform vital heart surgery. During their ten-day visits, the Australians also train and mentor PNG surgeons and nurses to perform heart surgery and care for people with heart conditions.

Before the program began in PNG, children like Joyline were not generally diagnosed with a heart condition. Of those who were diagnosed, only two a year were chosen to travel to Australia for surgery. Operation Open Heart has visited PNG 17 times and transformed the lives of more than 450 children and 150 adults through surgery. AusAID support for the program since 2002 totals more than \$580,000.

Sydney nurse Russell Lee brought Operation Open Heart to PNG in 1993. Born in PNG and a regular visitor to the country, Russell had known there was an unmet need there to repair congenital heart defects. In its first year, the Australian team performed 15 heart operations.

In 2009, the Australian and PNG surgical teams operated on 57 people. The PNG doctors, led by Dr Noah Tapaua, performed 25 operations, ten of them open heart surgery which involves stopping the heart and putting the patient on a heart-lung bypass machine. It was the first time a local surgeon had performed such a large number of open heart operations during an Operation Open Heart visit. Previously, Australian surgeons performed most or all of these procedures.

Dr Tapaua said Operation Open Heart provides valuable training for PNG doctors, nurses, pathologists and other medical staff. "Apart from giving this service and helping our patients, there is a lot of transfer of skills to the local team. We are being trained in how to do this type of surgery. It improves pathology, the nursing side of things and intensive care, and equipment is donated," Dr Tapaua said.

Russell Lee hopes that PNG health services will be running their own sustainable program of heart operations

within five years. He said, "The PNG doctors and nurses are growing in ability, skills and knowledge. One of the highlights of the visit this year was to see the local team being passionate about forming their own cardiac team in Port Moresby."

The Australian medical staff are amazed that the children recover from the heart surgery in days compared to weeks for patients in Australia. Physiotherapist Kate Henschell, who helps the children start moving after surgery, said it restores energy to the youngsters. "A lot of the time they didn't really realise why they were so sick. Now that they breathe better, everything is a lot easier," she said.

For Dr Tapaua, the most rewarding thing was the difference Operation Open Heart had made to the lives of the children. "Seeing the patient, putting a smile back on their face and seeing them go home—that is the finest thing," he said.

Growing organic rice reaps rewards

by Heather Ellis, Plan International Australia

Farming families in the Philippines are reaping rewards from bumper rice harvests after changing to low-cost organic farming methods.

"WHEN MY FATHER WAS USING COMMERCIAL FERTILISERS, HE SPENT TOO MUCH MONEY IN BUYING THESE FERTILISERS SO WHEN HARVEST TIME CAME, THERE WAS LOW PROFIT... NOW WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE GREAT CHANGES IN OUR LIFE."

These are the words of Maria, the daughter of a farming family from Isabela district, north east Luzon, the Philippines.

The new prosperity enjoyed by Maria's family is the result of a four-year sustainable livelihoods project run by Plan Philippines and its local partners, MASIPAG and UMFI, and supported by Plan International Australia. It started with a grant of \$325,000 from AusAID and just over \$280,000 in additional donations from the Australian public, including the Greenlight Foundation.

In many rural areas of the Philippines, most families are subsistence farmers. They are often trapped in poverty by a cycle of ongoing poor rice yields, depleted soils and indebtedness to moneylenders to pay for chemical fertilisers, pesticides and hybrid rice seeds.

Plan saw organic farming as the answer to empowering farming families to improve their livelihoods and lift them out of the poverty cycle. Its sustainable livelihoods project which started in Isabela in August 2005



and is due to finish in July 2009 has empowered 3,700 farming families by improving their nutrition, especially that of their children, and improving household incomes.

The farmers were supported to increase their crop yields by growing native rice using organic fertiliser made mostly from buffalo manure. This

can be done at a fraction of the cost of growing hybrid rice from commercially bought seeds using chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

The 3,700 farming families in Isabela are now growing native rice organically on just a few hectares each. They are also enjoying increased incomes and enough food to eat all year round. More



money means families can afford to send their children to school and then on to college and pay for their household and farming needs. As well as making more money, the farmers and their families say their health has improved.

The humble Asian water buffalo or “kalabaw” has played a key role in this new prosperity. Farmers learnt how to produce a low-cost, nutrient-rich organic fertiliser by composting the abundantly available buffalo manure and other animal manures mixed with rice husks and other plant products.

Plan’s partner MASIPAG—a Philippine-based organisation that brings together farmers and scientists in research on sustainable agriculture—supplied the farmers with native rice seed from their stock of 1,800 varieties. Selecting the best seed varieties that suited soil and growing conditions not only meant higher yields but also that the farmers could harvest several crops a year.

Instead of being locked into purchasing hybrid rice seed from commercial seed companies, farmers now use seed from the previous harvest

and also exchange native seed varieties with other farmers.

But converting to organic rice farming is a gradual process. Yields from a native rice crop can be lower than some hybrid yields at first, since it takes about two years for the organic fertiliser to build up nutrients in the depleted soils.

“During the transition from chemical-based to organic farming, the farmers do struggle to make ends meet,” says program manager Katie Ramsay from Plan International Australia.

“While hybrid rice seed can yield up to 120 tonnes per hectare in the first year, gradually it depletes the soil, and more and more fertiliser needs to be applied. Over time, organically grown native rice can match or even surpass the yield from hybrid rice and it is sustainable long-term,” Katie explains, adding “and all this for only a fraction of the growing cost!”

“The first couple of years are hard going,” she says. “The farmers and their families really have to pull together and support each other until the rice yields improve.”

FAR LEFT: Native rice grown with organic buffalo manure fertiliser has produced bumper crops for Isabela farming families such as the Gancena family.

ABOVE LEFT: Vegetable gardens like this one are an important source of nutrition and secondary income for the Magbual family.

TOP RIGHT: Organic rice produced by Isabela farming families is marketed in Manila as “high fibre” rice.

BOTTOM RIGHT: The Gancena family grows native rice and a diverse range of vegetables using organic farming methods.

Photos: Plan International Australia

But the comparison should not be made on tonnage alone, according to Katie. “In Manila, where demand outstrips supply, organically grown native rice is marketed as ‘high fibre’ rice and sells for double or triple the price of hybrid white rice. As more people realise that organic rice is more nutritious, grown chemical-free and a lot more filling, it is expected that the demand will increase further.”

Organic farming, which was first introduced to Isabela by Plan Philippines in 1998, is only one aspect of the sustainable livelihoods project. Farmers also have access to microfinance loans and training in farm management and business planning for new farming ventures such as fish farming, raising pigs and growing organic vegetables.

These are all important secondary incomes for families and they have mostly been developed and managed by women using loans and surplus income from rice harvests.

Technical advisors from Plan’s partner, local NGO Upland Marketing Foundation Inc. (UMFI), have also provided farming families with marketing support, especially to supply the increasing market for organic high fibre rice in Manila. Plan Philippines has also helped to establish farmers cooperatives that mill, transport and sell the rice to guarantee that more profits are returned to the farmers.

Following the success of the four-year Isabela project, AusAID is now helping to fund the project’s expansion into five municipalities in Northern Samar, Samar Island, about 600 km south of Isabela.

Northern Samar is one of the poorest provinces of the Philippines and the prevalence of child malnutrition there is high. Over the next financial year, 125 farming families in Northern Samar will receive training in growing organic rice and other produce, assisting them to achieve a sustainable livelihood.

Microfinance transforms lives

by Constantine Carluen, Philippines-Australia Community Assistance Program (PACAP)



In the bustling metropolis of Manila with its population of 20 million people, microfinance is a simple yet powerful tool that can lift the entrepreneurial poor out of poverty.

Sally lives in one of Manila’s poorer communities. She expanded her “sari-sari” or small groceries store into a home-run bakery with help from Tindig Komunidad Inc. (TKI), a local microfinance institution supported by the Philippines-Australia Community Assistance Program (PACAP).

As one of Australia’s longest-running development initiatives in the Philippines, PACAP has been providing opportunities for economic growth to poor communities for more than 23 years.

The initial microfinance loan of just \$130 helped Sally realise her dream of sending her children to college despite immense financial hardships.

After the birth of her third child 15 years ago, Sally gave up her career as a laboratory assistant to look after her family but, she recollects, “I couldn’t just stay at home and look after the children while my husband worked long hours.”

Sally knew that her husband’s earnings would only be enough to support their growing family’s everyday

needs and not enough to save for the future. “In the little spare time I had, I sold assorted groceries,” she said.

Four years ago, the microfinance loan from TKI gave Sally the capital she needed to quadruple her income and she earned enough to buy an industrial oven, making it possible for her to start a home-run bakery.

“The bakery’s profits have helped me help my children. Without the business I wouldn’t be able to afford to pay their boarding fees at college or buy their textbooks. The low interest rates and not being part of a group payment system was also very attractive to me. I enjoy the freedom of working from home and know that one day all my children will go on to be college graduates.”

PACAP supports microfinance activities all over the Philippines and has recently produced books on Microfinance and Social Enterprise Development to assist NGOs in the implementation of their projects. See www.pacap.org.ph

ABOVE: Sally used her initial \$130 loan to establish a small home-run business and after years of hard work was able to live her dream of sending her children to college. Photo: Constantine Carluen, Philippines-Australia Community Assistance Program (PACAP)

Catalysing the movement to end poverty

by Hugh Evans, Director, The Global Poverty Project

A team of young Australians is providing 1.4 billion reasons to take action to end extreme poverty.

Globally, one billion, four hundred million people continue to live in extreme poverty. The mere idea of 1.4 billion impoverished people can seem like an insurmountable situation. It is not. Significant progress has been made already but more needs to be done to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

That's why The Global Poverty Project was established. With the help of AusAID and in collaboration with NGOs, the UN Millennium Campaign, academics, a range of development experts, the corporate sector and civil society, we have been taking a presentation around Australia and New Zealand to communicate the realities of extreme poverty and what everyday people can do about it.

In a similar vein to former US Vice President Al Gore's 2007 climate change film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, our presentation, *1.4 Billion Reasons*—reflecting the number of people around the world who live in extreme poverty—is aimed at educating Australians and New Zealanders about this major issue of our times.

The idea behind The Global Poverty Project is to inspire individuals to take action personally and help achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We are doing this by reaching out to people in their communities, with 45 presentations in 42 days, and in the process reframing the media debate on poverty. Our aim is to have audiences walking away with these thoughts:

- > extreme poverty and the issues around it are important, urgent and related to me



- > our generation can end extreme poverty and I can play a part in making this happen
 - > to overcome these challenges, it's got to be a global movement, bringing together people from around the world
 - > it's not going to be quick or easy, but I am committed to playing my part so we can achieve our global goals.
- The Global Poverty Project has set our goals high, but through this project we aim to:

- > educate more than 200,000 people in Australia and New Zealand through live presentations, deepening and reframing their view of extreme poverty
- > reach upwards of 50 million Australians and New Zealanders through media and publicity and enhance their awareness of extreme poverty.

Globally, we aim to engage another 50,000 people to take direct action.

Whether it's through donating to an NGO that you are passionate about, or volunteering your time and skills overseas, raising awareness of extreme poverty in your community, buying fair trade products or simply taking the time out each day to read and stay informed about what's going on in the world, our collective efforts can make a difference.

Since our Australian and New Zealand tours took to the road, there has been a groundswell of interest and energy gathering amongst people who think it is not okay that a person dies every three and a half seconds due to hunger.

If you or your organisation, educational institution or social or community group would like to get involved or if you would like to find out where you can see the presentation, go to www.globalpovertyproject.com

ABOVE: The Global Poverty Project's Hugh Evans is taking *1.4 billion reasons* on the road.

Spotlight on aid

by Cathy Reid, Broadcast Media Manager, AusAID

Sky News shone the spotlight on Australia's aid program in the Asia-Pacific region with a series of special reports produced by AusAID. The five-minute television reports highlighted a range of development issues in our region, from "women-power" in the fledgling nation of East Timor to rebuilding Aceh five years after the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. The reports were screened by Sky News during prime time news bulletins in mid September. They highlighted Australia's work assisting some of our poorest neighbours as they progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Some snapshots from the series appear below and you can also watch them on AusAID's YouTube channel (see www.ausaid.gov.au).

"Women-power" in East Timor



Fernanda Borges MP, East Timor's only female political party leader. Photo: Joao Vas, AusAID

MDG 3. Promote gender equality

As a child Fernanda Borges witnessed the horrors of war first hand. Now she is one of East Timor's leading politicians and a strong campaigner for human rights and the empowerment of women. As one of eight female politicians in the fledgling nation, she says in ten years of independence East Timor has made good progress towards gender equality. "Prior to independence we never had women in Parliament. Now there is a strong commitment by all

political parties to ensure women are well represented in parliament, enabling issues to be tackled from the top down."

The other seven leading women politicians are holding important positions such as Minister of Justice, Minister of Finance, Minister of Social and Solidarity, Prosecutor General, Vice Minister of Health, Secretary of State for Promotion and Equality as well as the Vice President of the National Parliament.

Australia's aid program in East Timor has a strong gender focus. An example of this is in the justice sector, where AusAID is supporting civil society organisations that address violence against women and improve access to information and services. However, there are still many problems to be tackled, including high levels of infant mortality, domestic violence, unemployment and alarming literacy rates.

While there is still a long way to go, progress towards empowering women is being made, as is evidenced by the actions of women like Fernanda who are engaging with these issues at a political level. "People are now hearing women discuss issues to do with their lives—international interest, service delivery for the public—and they are asking good questions because they come from a sensitive background of being mothers," she says.

"I'm very confident and hopeful because the people of East Timor have an aspiration and they are resilient. If we can eliminate corruption, bring in private sector investment, educate our people, have sufficient healthcare services and have agriculture at a sustainable level so that there is food security, I think East Timor can survive."

Giving back to the people of Kokoda



MDGs 4, 5 & 6. Reducing child mortality; Improving maternal health; Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

A team of health workers has trudged for hours on muddy tracks through the mountainous countryside of Papua New Guinea (PNG) to set up a health clinic in Kanga, a village not far from the Kokoda Track.

The Kokoda Track has a special significance for Australians thanks to the efforts of the PNG people who carried sick and wounded soldiers out of combat zones during the Second World War.

Now Australia is giving something back to the people of the Kokoda region. With funding from AusAID, the health team is setting up clinics all through the area and training villagers in hygiene and the importance of basic health care and immunisation.



TOP LEFT: Kanga villagers greet the health team from the AusAID-funded Kokoda Clinic.
TOP RIGHT: A health worker puts up a poster to raise awareness of tuberculosis (TB), a disease that, like malaria, is rife in remote areas of PNG.

ABOVE: Mobile health clinic nurse Bessie Harike (left) performs basic health checks for Kanga villagers.

Photos: Roger Wheatley, AusAID



"We are exactly like a paramedic with a bit of doctor's training and we do everything from antenatal care to a bit of surgery," said Kokoda Clinic health action officer Leon Sime. "We go out on immunisation patrols and do coordinated health care."

The health teams are particularly welcome in the remote villages, where there is a high incidence of tuberculosis, malaria and asthma.

Kanga village chief Michael Lucas believes the education programs run by the teams are beneficial. "Trying to educate people, I think that will help us, because too many people still die when they shouldn't," he said.

In a province where many villagers still believe in witchcraft it is challenging to get them to go to a health clinic rather than a witch doctor. To address this, another part of the program is training community members to become village health volunteers so they can administer basic medical assistance and refer people to clinics and the Kokoda Hospital if necessary.

ABOVE: John Daire is a village health volunteer. He is trained to give basic medical assistance and refer people to clinics and the Kokoda Hospital if necessary. Training locals is aimed at addressing a reluctance to go to health clinics in remote areas where many villagers still rely on witchcraft for curing the sick. Photo: Roger Wheatley, AusAID

Ridding Laos of a lethal legacy



THERE WERE TWO TYPES OF BOMBS DROPPED ON LAOS: HEAVY IMPACT BOMBS DESIGNED TO DESTROY BUILDINGS; AND CLUSTER BOMBS DESIGNED TO KILL OR MAIM PEOPLE, EUPHEMISTICALLY KNOWN AS "ANTI-PERSONNEL DEVICES."

MDG 1. Eradicating extreme poverty

Lao villager Naovanglee Norvaly can't stop smiling. For the first time in 18 years he is wearing a pair of shoes, thanks to a professionally made prosthetic leg provided by the AusAID-funded Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE) Rehabilitation Centre.

For almost two decades Naovanglee had been hobbling around on a succession of hand-made wooden legs produced by woodcarvers in his remote village in Laos. "The legs would last only six months to two years, depending on the quality of the wood," he said.

The people of Laos are living with a lethal legacy of the Second Indochina War, known in Australia as the Vietnam



OPPOSITE: This sculpture of a mother and child running from a bomb blast is a poignant reminder of the lethal legacy of war in Laos. Crafted out of bomb scrap metal and located at the entrance of the AusAID-funded Cooperative Orthotic and Prosthetic Enterprise (COPE) Rehabilitation Centre in Vientiane, the work draws attention to the millions of unexploded ordnance (UXOs) littering the countryside of Laos that are still causing death and devastation when disturbed. An estimated 300 people are killed or maimed each year from bomb blasts. About 40 per cent of them are children.

TOP RIGHT: The estimated 270 million bombs dropped on Laos during the war have created a moonscape of rural hillsides like this one at Dakcheung, near Sekong. Some 30 per cent did not detonate, leaving 80 million bombs in the countryside ready to explode.

ABOVE (LEFT TO RIGHT):

1. The clearance of UXOs in Laos was traditionally a male profession but now more women are being trained to perform this dangerous task. Vilayphone Yengpalong and her team from the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) methodically sweep a field with metal detectors so that it can be cleared of UXOs and planted with crops.
2. FSD Provincial Operation Manager Stefan De Coninck inspects an unexploded bomb near Sekong, Laos.
3. Families gather under a building at Taoun, near Sekong as a precaution against flying shrapnel from a bomb being detonated kilometres away by an FSD clearance team. The bomb was found in a paddock the villagers wanted to cultivate for rice crops. Since 1964,

more than 50,000 men, women and children have been killed or maimed by accidental detonation of UXOs.

4. Lao villagers use scrap bomb metal in many ingenious ways, including as raised garden beds like this one at Taoun. After being dropped from a plane this BLU 26 anti personnel device would have split open and fired out hundreds of "bombies".

5. A bombie casing. Hard to see but easy to disturb and valuable for their metal content, when detonated these insidious devices blast out hundreds of ball bearings, blowing off limbs, blinding victims and causing horrific injuries.

6. A COPE Rehabilitation Centre display simulating a cascade of bombies being dropped from a war plane.

Photos: Jim Holmes, AusAID



War, when more than 270 million bombs rained down on the country. Some 30 per cent of these bombs did not detonate, leaving about 80 million unexploded ordnance (UXOs) contaminating rice fields, school yards, hillsides, rivers, roads and paths and even the centres of provincial towns.

There were two types of bombs dropped on Laos: heavy impact bombs designed to destroy buildings; and cluster bombs designed to kill or maim people, euphemistically known as “anti-personnel devices.” The cluster bombs contained hundreds of tennis ball-sized “bombies.”

The bombies are particularly insidious because of the damage they cause when unsuspecting villagers pick them up. As soon as they are disturbed the bombies blast out hundreds of ball bearings, blowing off limbs, blinding victims and causing horrific injuries.

About 300 people are killed or injured in this way each year. About 40 per cent of them are children. Farmers and scrap metal dealers are also vulnerable.

As well as the human carnage, the presence of these UXOs is severely inhibiting the country’s development.

Australia is amongst a number of donors playing a role in the enormous task of ridding Laos of UXOs, working with international teams to train Lao operators in bomb detection and clearance. Australia is also providing support for programs that educate Lao villagers about the dangers of handling UXOs and rehabilitate victims like Naovanglee.

ABOVE: Naovanglee Norvaly is fitted with a new prosthetic leg by Mr Sommai at the COPE Rehabilitation Centre. He will receive ongoing support from COPE. Photo: Jim Holmes, AusAID

Tackling climate



MDG 7. Ensuring environmental sustainability

Kiribati President Anote Tong believes that climate change is “perhaps the most challenging task ahead of us as human beings on this planet.” At only four metres above sea level, the small island nation of Kiribati is one of the countries most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and sea level rise.

“We are getting severe erosion on the coastlines,” President Tong said. “In some areas the villages that have been there for many, many decades are being relocated and we seem to be experiencing higher than usual giant tides.” Drought is also an ever-increasing problem and President Tong believes that climate change impacts could become critical in as few as 20 years. “It seems it might be a lot earlier—2030 might be more realistic.

change in Kiribati



"PRESIDENT TONG BELIEVES THAT CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS COULD BECOME CRITICAL IN AS FEW AS 20 YEARS."

But the response has to be much earlier than that," he said.

Kiribati's response involves managing water resources better, monitoring groundwater quality and improving sanitation to reduce groundwater pollution, with help from the World Bank Kiribati Adaptation Project (KAP II). Australia is a major contributor to KAP II which has the overall aim of reducing Kiribati's vulnerability to climate change and sea level rise.

ABOVE: The island of Kiribati is vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Photo: Jodi Gatfield, AusAID

Life after the tsunami



MDG 1. Eradicating extreme poverty

Communities have regathered, cities and towns are bustling and the people of Aceh are thriving, five years on from the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. The huge earthquake and tsunami waves claimed 167,000 lives, flattened hundreds of thousands of homes, destroyed 800 km of coastline, washed away 3,000 hectares of land and devastated roads, bridges, ports, schools and other vital infrastructure.

While there are still some physical, economic and emotional scars, the reconstruction work is all but complete. Australia has contributed significantly to Aceh's recovery, rebuilding infrastructure and assisting people to rebuild their lives, but much remains to be done. Australia is committed to supporting Aceh's success beyond the reconstruction effort and to ushering in a new era of prosperity for the province.



TOP: The children of Aceh face a brighter future five years on from the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Homes, schools and hospitals have been rebuilt and essential services restored. Photo Rob Maccoll, AusAID.

ABOVE: Concrete pads where buildings once stood in the tsunami-affected villages of Aceh now have grasses and bushes creeping across them. Australia has contributed \$252 million over five years to help the recovery of affected communities in Aceh. This formed part of the \$1 billion Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development. This is the single largest aid contribution Australia has ever made. Photo: Kirsten Mee, AusAID





focus on

THE PACIFIC

AUSTRALIA IS WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES TO HELP THEM ACHIEVE
THEIR MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS.



OPPOSITE: Boat is a common form of transport on the populous island of
Malaita, Solomon Islands. Photo: Rob Maccoll, AusAID

Working together for a better future

by Dominic Morice, AusAID



Australia and the Pacific are working together to make more rapid progress towards the Millennium Development Goals.

Pacific island countries face a multitude of development challenges, including small economies, limited access to essential basic services, geographic and economic isolation, vulnerability to natural disasters and the growing impact of climate change. The Pacific is also one of the most culturally and

linguistically diverse regions of the world.

At the August 2009 Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Cairns, Pacific leaders expressed their determination to make faster progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

At this meeting, leaders agreed to the Cairns Compact on Strengthening



Delivering better health outcomes

Australia is working closely with Pacific island countries to strengthen health services and funds a range of programs designed to achieve better health outcomes for the people of the Pacific. These include providing support for mothers and children and preventing diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

The \$25 million Pacific Malaria Initiative is an example of the leading role Australia is playing to combat malaria in the region. We are working with the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu Governments on the ambitious target of permanently eliminating malaria, island by island.

In Solomon Islands, Australian support has seen malaria incidence more than halve over five years. In 2003 there were 199 cases of malaria

per thousand people. By 2008, this had dropped to 82 cases per thousand people. In Vanuatu the progress has been even more dramatic. Malaria incidence has dropped from 74 cases per thousand people in 2003 to 14 cases per thousand in 2008. This is a significant achievement of genuine public health value.

Preparing for and responding to natural disasters

As the 2009–10 Pacific cyclone season approaches, Australia stands ready to provide humanitarian assistance to Pacific countries affected by natural disasters.

Disasters can undermine and even reverse hard-won development progress. AusAID supports work to strengthen disaster preparedness plans at the community level across the region and also funds organisations like the Red

Cross to respond immediately when disasters do strike. We are also working with a range of Pacific and Australian organisations to establish early warning systems like the Pacific Tsunami Warning System.

In June 2009, Australia launched *Investing in a safer future: a disaster risk reduction policy for the Australian aid program*. This policy provides a framework for current and future spending aimed at lessening the impact of disasters on Pacific countries.

Investing in disaster risk reduction not only saves lives and livelihoods but also helps reduce the costs involved in responding to disasters, protects developing economies and safeguards critical infrastructure like hospitals, schools, roads and bridges.

ABOVE: AusAID is helping the people of Kiribati address environmental, health and education challenges. Photo: Lorrie Graham, AusAID

Thinking locally about a changing climate

by Dr Sarah Park, Cropping Systems Scientist – Climate Change Adaptation, CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems

CSIRO and AusAID are working on a research project with Pacific Islanders to respond to future climate challenges.



In November last year, my CSIRO colleagues and I began working with representatives of 15 Pacific island countries and East Timor to assess the likely impacts of climate change and other factors on rural livelihoods in the region. While it is interesting to know which countries face the greatest risk from a changing climate, it's more important to understand why and work out what can be done to face future challenges in light of climate change.

Through this research we are working towards finding opportunities to respond to the factors that will affect food security for Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau, Fiji, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and East Timor.

Previous research has taught us that if you don't capture the knowledge and ideas of those living and working in the Pacific, what you end up with is a poor understanding of the impacts and their consequences on livelihoods and therefore a poor chance of developing workable strategies. Our approach therefore was to talk at length with Pacific island representatives from the water engineering, conservation, meteorological services, natural resource management and primary production sectors during a Sustainable Livelihoods Analysis workshop in Nadi, Fiji.

We asked the workshop participants to identify the key things that would enable them to adapt to the changing climate. Unsurprisingly, they ranked access to education and reliable health and sanitation infrastructure as top priorities. Next were the strength of community groups, traditional governance, availability of terrestrial and marine resources, reliability of communication infrastructure and access to credit schemes. This gave us "indicators of vulnerability" to use in our analysis.

We then asked the workshop participants to rank the vulnerability of individual countries to climate change impacts like extreme weather events and a possible decline in the land available for food production. For volcanic island countries, the rankings from the most to the least vulnerable were East Timor, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Federated States of Micronesia, Vanuatu, Fiji, Palau, Tonga and Samoa. Of the atoll and coral islands, the order of vulnerability was Nauru, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Tokelau, Palau and Niue.

We found the debate between workshop participants on how much or little to score each indicator for a particular country incredibly valuable because it painted a vivid picture of the key drivers underlying vulnerability. Clearly, climate change is only one of

many factors that affect the resilience of rural livelihoods in the Pacific.

As a scientist, this research has been really exciting because rather than merely measuring the impact of a single aspect of climate change like increased salinity due to sea level rise, we now understand the broader context of Pacific island people's dependency on activities like agriculture, forestry and livestock production. We have also been able to identify ways that national and regional decision-makers like AusAID can help create a social, economic and physical environment that will support Pacific islanders and organisations to prepare for and adapt to a changing climate.

ABOVE LEFT: CSIRO's Dr Sarah Park is helping AusAID understand the likely impacts of climate change in the Pacific. Photo: CSIRO

ABOVE RIGHT: Sea level rise in countries like Kiribati could cause a decline in the land available for food production. Photo: Jodi Gatfield, AusAID

The rural livelihoods project is part of the newly formed CSIRO AusAID Research for Development Alliance. This is a \$14 million strategic partnership that aims to improve the impact of aid. Phase 1 began in 2008–09 with a range of projects in the areas of responding to climate change, integrated water management and sustainable urbanisation. To find out more click on the "climate adaptation" photograph on the Alliance website at www.rfdalliance.com.au

Pain in paradise



Poverty is on the rise in the Pacific. Higher food prices coupled with stagnant or falling household incomes are causing serious hardships. Photo of Seventh-Day Adventist markets, Solomon Islands by Rob Maccoll, AusAID

by Ajay Chhibber, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific and UN Assistant Secretary-General

The islands of the Pacific conjure images of sun, clear blue waters and sandy beaches, untouched by the ravages of the global recession. Reality is very different.

Although small, scattered and isolated, Pacific island countries are amongst the most integrated with the global economy, making them vulnerable to the current economic slowdown. These island nations have open economies, with trade often exceeding the value of gross domestic product, and they need to import necessities like rice, flour and oil products for power and transport, building materials and consumer and manufactured goods. Poverty is on the rise, with about a third of the people in the Pacific islands living below their national “basic-needs” poverty lines. The situation is worse in Papua New Guinea (PNG), where nearly 60 per cent of people are living in poverty.

What does this mean? As domestic unemployment levels rise, household incomes are declining. As a consequence, higher food prices coupled with stagnant or falling household incomes are causing serious hardships. Furthermore, with few natural resources and limited domestic employment opportunities, many households in the Pacific are relying on remittances from family members living or working overseas. The Reserve Bank in Fiji, for example, has estimated that the value of remittances fell by 25 per cent between 2007 and 2008, and is forecast to decline by a further 15 per cent in 2009. Many of these migrant workers are employed in seasonal work or low-wage industries and services and are themselves vulnerable to losing their jobs.

Families are feeling the crunch. Food prices are well above those of only 18 months ago. A family in Tuvalu can

expect to pay two-thirds more for rice and one-third more for flour. Across the region there have been media reports that current-year school fees have not yet been paid for many children, and increasingly, students are going to school without proper lunches as parents struggle to afford the food.

While some households start home gardens, others launch small businesses to bring in income. Urban and overseas migration also takes place, but leads to problems for those left behind. Rural villages and outer islands are depleted of young people, leaving children in the care of aging parents or relatives. This can reduce food security in rural areas because the elderly are unable to do the heavy lifting required for cultivating crops.

Traditional social safety nets are weakened as families are split by migration. For some, especially the elderly and single mothers with young children, the future prospects can be very bleak indeed. Some turn to commercial or transactional sex for survival, increasing the risk of HIV transmission in their communities.

While there are no quick fixes, UNDP with AusAID and other development partners are working together to assist Pacific governments to monitor the effects of the recession and to develop policies that mitigate its impact.

In Tuvalu, UNDP and AusAID have agreed to fund a project to ensure development assistance is fully in line with development priorities. UNDP has assisted AusAID and NZAID to review Tuvalu’s fiscal policies and resource allocations in the health and education

sectors. Policy support has also been given to identify ways in which Tuvalu’s limited resources might be best used to mitigate the impact of higher food prices on vulnerable households. Similar analyses will be done in Samoa and Kiribati over the coming quarter. In addition, policy support has been provided to Kiribati as it comes to terms with the impact of the crisis on its reserve funds.

UNDP and AusAID are considering initiatives that empower poor and vulnerable communities to strengthen their livelihood opportunities. Other efforts will help to improve governments’ ability to allocate resources more effectively and efficiently.

Separately to its work with AusAID, UNDP Pacific Centre is leading the analysis of poverty and the impact of the recession in the region. It remains focused on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and urges Pacific island countries to balance investment in economic recovery and the social sectors. In Vanuatu, UNDP is assisting the government to ensure its 2010 budget allocates funds to areas which will best achieve the MDGs. This pilot effort will be applied in other countries in the Pacific.

Even before the crisis, the Pacific performed only slightly better than sub-Saharan Africa in progress towards the MDGs. The impact of the recession is now undermining that little progress. It is imperative that Pacific island countries maintain, and even consider strengthening, their commitments to the MDGs and to the future human development of their countries.



Author photo courtesy of UNDP

Nurturing young women leaders

by Julie McKay, Executive Director, UNIFEM Australia



Author photo courtesy of UNIFEM

With AusAID'S support, UNIFEM Australia is encouraging young women from across the Pacific to hone their leadership skills and network with each other.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Australia recently provided 120 top future female leaders from Australia and the Pacific with an opportunity to strengthen their leadership skills and capacity to engage with their communities.

The young women, aged between 18 and 35, were chosen to attend the Young Women's Leadership Forum in Sydney based on their demonstrated leadership abilities and commitment to the advancement of women around the key priority issues of UNIFEM of:

- > ending violence against women
- > reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS
- > strengthening women's economic security and rights
- > achieving gender equality in democratic governance.

UNIFEM works in more than 100 developing countries to ensure women's empowerment and gender equality.

Participants at the UNIFEM Australia forum in Sydney learnt about some of the issues facing women in developing countries, particularly related to the Millennium Development Goals. They discussed violence against women and the Beijing Platform for Action, a set of international commitments to support women's empowerment. They also participated in workshops on media and communications, corporate lobbying, political advocacy and awareness raising, and movement building.

Special presentations were made by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and the Pacific women at the forum about specific issues facing their communities.

The forum concluded with a segment where participants devised strategies that would contribute to achieving the MDGs in the region and made a commitment to implement the following projects when they returned home.

Young women from the Pacific established a Pacific Women's Leadership Network to communicate with each other after the forum. This online network will link young women from the Pacific who want to share information and promote discussion about gender issues. The network will be accessible through the UNIFEM Australia website and is due to go online in September.

One of the participants, Raela Wari, is the editor of a women's magazine in PNG called *New Age Woman*. She will run a monthly column for the next 12 months on maternal health to provide information, education and advice to PNG women readers.

Sisters in Sexual Health is a program designed to develop a buddy system that will link sexual health services in Australia and the Pacific. It will involve contacting established services to invite them to participate in the program. Once established, services will share information, resources and skills with their sister clinics via email and skype calls.

The participants began a Facebook page called "7 Steps to MDG 7" to promote individual action for environmental sustainability. It contains information about ways of ensuring sustainability at a local level. To log in, simply search for "7 Steps to MDG 7" on Facebook.

Throughout the forum, participants were given the chance to hear about women's different leadership experiences in the public, private and political sectors and to talk to the speakers about their experiences.

The Forum also provided an opportunity to network with and learn from Pacific and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women about the particular issues they face.

Many of the young women were surprised that this was the first conference of its kind. They encouraged UNIFEM Australia to continue providing opportunities for young women to come together to share ideas and build networks to overcome development issues.

Participants were generally inspired by what they learnt. For instance, Jo from Canberra said, "I knew that there were major development issues for women in the Pacific. However, until now, I hadn't realised the role young women can play in overcoming those challenges. Meeting young women from PNG who are involved in public education and the police force and young women working to raise the profile of women's rights in Fiji has really inspired me."

Another young woman from Adelaide said, "...meeting these young women and hearing about their lives, work and experiences has really changed my focus. I know now that I want to be an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development (AYAD) in the Pacific and I want to support organisations that work to empower women through education in the Pacific."

“Wat nao tingting blo iu?” (“What are you thinking?”)

by Tom Perry, Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)

Thousands of people across Solomon Islands are having a say on how their country is run.

Learning to listen so effectively that complete strangers are willing to trust you with their views has been one of the unexpected benefits of working as a People's Survey interviewer, says Precilla Maa'u, one of the 70 Solomon Islanders who carry out interviews for the People's Survey each year.

Ms Maa'u, from the Solomons capital, Honiara, says being part of the People's Survey over the last few years has taught her much about her country and herself. “When I go out and meet so many new people, so many new faces, it is a wonderful opportunity to hear their opinions on life in this country,” she says. “It has taught me a lot about the important skill of being able to listen and encourage discussion.”

She is about to embark on the 2009 People's Survey, which will see interviewers travelling to Solomon Islands communities to talk to people about their views on public accountability, household budgets, business and employment opportunities, access to medical care and police assistance and personal safety and security.

Men and women from villages and towns across the 900-island nation will discuss these things in individual and small group settings, as well as the current economic situation in the Solomons, gender inequality, domestic



violence, traditional justice, voting and elections.

Participating in the survey is voluntary and confidential and this encourages people to talk freely. “As interviewers, we don't want to talk or interrupt discussion. We want to encourage people and make them as comfortable as possible to share their ideas and opinions. Listening is the key,” Ms Maa'u explains.

This year's survey is managed by ANU Enterprise, a commercial arm of the Australian National University (ANU). It is the biggest survey yet, with 5,300 people across five provinces expected to take part. The People's Survey was started in 2006 by the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), a partnership between the people and Government of Solomon Islands and 15 Pacific countries that aims for a peaceful, prosperous and well-governed Solomon Islands.

The survey is one of the main ways the Solomon Islands Government and

RAMSI measure the effectiveness of their work. Once the survey is completed, ANU Enterprise will compile the results and report to RAMSI, the Solomon Islands Government, the media and the people of Solomon Islands.

Results of previous surveys are used by various parts of the Solomon Islands Government as well as RAMSI to set goals for their work. For instance, a recent planning workshop by the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force used the results of the survey to measure its own performance. The matters included Solomon Islanders' confidence in their police force and how safe they feel in their communities.

The survey's role will expand next year when, under the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI Partnership Framework, the Government will be directly involved in the development of the survey.

ABOVE: Hilde Kii interviews women in Maluu, Solomon Islands, for the 2009 People's Survey. Photo: AusAID

Sport for development

by Kylie Bates, Manager, International Relations, Australian Sports Commission



Australia is partnering with Pacific nations to harness sport as a powerful development tool.

Sport can improve the lives of individuals, families and communities. It promotes and facilitates healthier lifestyles and greater community cohesion. It engages young people in leadership roles and gives them role models to look up to. It gives girls, women and people with disabilities the chance to participate, become leaders and assume decision-making roles.

The Australian Sports Commission is recognised as a leader in supporting sports development. This support is now being expanded to encompass our near neighbours in the Pacific thanks to a \$26 million funding commitment over five years from the Australian Government that will support the use of sport as a tool for community development in the Pacific.

This commitment continues to help make the vision of leaders who gathered for the meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum in 2001 become a reality. At that meeting leaders recognised sport as a viable and significant opportunity that could improve the quality of life of their people through better health, education and employment outcomes. "Sports also create pathways for young people of the region to achieve better standards of education and job opportunities abroad, a trend which will be essential to the future survival of Pacific island nations," the leaders said. They agreed that "sport must therefore continue to retain a significant place in the overall development strategies adopted by the governments of the Pacific region."

At this year's Pacific Islands Forum held in August in Cairns, the Pacific leaders underscored the positive role that sport can play in building communities and the ability of sport to reinforce positive social and

health messages in communities and strengthen relations between countries.

The new funding will build on existing programs such as the Australian Sports Outreach Program. The program partners with local organisations to achieve social benefits that are a priority in the community. It is managed by the Australian Sports Commission and AusAID. Staff from both these agencies will work in partnership with Pacific island authorities and communities to plan and deliver sports activities that address locally identified development priorities in the Pacific.

This will involve the existing village-based sports activities in Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa, Fiji and Vanuatu being expanded, new activities being developed in the Solomon Islands and Tonga, and small grants for other community-driven sports activities being provided until 2014.

In the Solomon Islands the Australian Sports Outreach Program



is partnering with local NGOs and communities to facilitate healthier lifestyles and to assist young men and women to take on income-generating activities.

An activity in Vanuatu involves building the skills of youth leaders to set up sports programs in villages under the guidance of traditional leaders. Another example involves Sport Ambassadors from the Matua Sports Program educating teachers and children from Fiji's special education centres about the benefits of sport and advocating to increase opportunities for people with disability to get more involved in both sport and community activities.

A key outcome of this year's Pacific Islands Forum was the creation of five new sports partnerships to develop sports programs for sports that are popular in the region, such as rugby league, rugby union, soccer, cricket and netball. These partnerships were formed between the Australian Sports Outreach Program, Australian sporting

organisations, Pacific regional sporting bodies and local federations. The aim is to use each agency's strengths to provide better support to Pacific island communities.

The partnerships are based on equity, transparency and mutual benefit. They will create opportunities for improved participation in sport and physical activity for all people in the region, including players, leaders, administrators, coaches and officials. As well as strengthening grassroots sports activities in Pacific communities, the partnerships will provide opportunities for those involved to progress to levels beyond community competitions.

OPPOSITE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Netball allows girls and women to get involved in sport and physical activity.

Developing sport in villages like this one in Vanuatu will have benefits for local people.

The Australian Sports Outreach Program builds on activities that are already popular in Pacific countries like rugby union in Samoa.

Photos: Australian Sports Commission

Football partnership a big win for Pacific countries



A major outcome of this year's Pacific Islands Forum was the signing on 5 August of an agreement between the Australian Government, Football Federation Australia (FFA) and the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) to work together to plan and deliver football-based activities in Pacific island countries. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd signed the agreement on behalf of Australia with FFA Chief Executive

Officer Ben Buckley and OFC President Reynald Temarii.

"All of us at Football Australia are excited by this opportunity to contribute to capacity building in Pacific island communities and to contribute to improved health and education outcomes through sustained participation in sport," Ben Buckley said. "We look forward to working with the Oceania Football Confederation and Reynald Temarii to achieve outstanding results over the coming years."

Reynald Temarii was also excited about the prospect of using football "to improve the lives of individuals, families and communities throughout Oceania," and, on behalf of OFC and the Oceania football family, expressed his "sincerest thanks to the Australian Government for its role in this partnership."

The football partnership will involve \$4 million of funding over three years

from July 2009 to June 2012. As well as boosting community development through football, it will encourage community involvement and deliver the "Just Play" sports participation program for children from 6–13 years of age.

The funding will also support the organisation of the Pacific Youth and Sport Conference to be held in Manukau, New Zealand, from 8–13 March 2010. At this conference, young people from across the Pacific will discuss how sport can help to improve health, foster community development, reduce anti-social behaviour and promote social cohesion in the Pacific.

ABOVE: At the Pacific Islands Forum in August, Oceania Football Confederation President Reynald Temarii, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Football Federation Australia CEO Ben Buckley (l to r) signed a partnership to promote development goals in the Pacific. Photo: Football Federation of Australia

AusAID scholarships making a difference

In 2009, AusAID will give more than 1,270 Australian Development Scholars the chance to study in Australia before returning home to contribute to the development of their countries and the region. Rachel Ingwersen from AusAID's scholarships section profiles a previous and current AusAID scholar.



Former scholar

Linda Folaumoetu'i graduated with a Masters of Law from Melbourne University in 2000. On her return home, she played a major part in legislative reform in Tonga. She is now Crown Counsel Advisor to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

"I completed my Masters of Law degree nine years ago at Melbourne University. It wasn't easy, as I had a very young baby, six weeks old (John Thomas), and a four-year-old daughter

(Frederika), but I had a great network and my mother came with me to look after the children while my husband stayed at home in Tonga to work. The AusAID scholarship supported my whole family. We lived at College Square on Lygon Street in Melbourne. That was a real treat in itself. There was a great atmosphere and there was always something happening. It was also close to uni so I could study late at night if I needed to.

When I returned home, I worked in Tonga as Senior Crown Counsel for seven years and then in 2007 was appointed Solicitor General of Tonga. I can honestly say I didn't ever envisage myself filling a position so senior, but that is what happened. My AusAID scholarship had equipped me well for the role since most of my papers were on constitutional and administrative law. It gave me the skills and knowledge I needed for a very challenging job at a time when the

political pressures and economic and social change the country was facing were high and there needed to be major amendments to the Constitution and other legislation.

Since July 2008, I have assumed the post of Chief Crown Counsel Advisor at the Attorney General's Chambers, Solomon Islands under the Law and Justice Program of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). This role involves working very closely with my counterparts who are Solomon Island lawyers in the Chambers, especially in the areas of civil litigation and legal advice. Most importantly, I am helping them with capacity building in relation to the work ethics and duties that are required of a legal practitioner. It is my aim that when I leave the Solomon Islands in 2010 at the end of my appointment, the local lawyers can still carry on the work required of them at a high and professional level."

Current scholar

Adérito José Guterres Correia from East Timor is doing a PhD in Linguistics at the School of Humanities and Languages at the University of Western Sydney.



"Before coming to Australia for my PhD program, I worked for seven years as the sub-director of the National Institute of Linguistics at the National University of East Timor and I will return to that job when I graduate in 2011.

I am studying the Austronesian and Papuan languages to help develop and

preserve the languages that are spoken in East Timor. For a newly independent country, this research is an important part of nation building.

Developing a linguistic research methodology has been a challenge because of the limited number of linguists who have experience in Timorese languages and the lack of Austronesian and Papuan resources in Australia. I had to source materials from Portugal and other countries and ask various linguists for help.

During my study in Australia, I have established professional relationships or linkages with people and organisations that I can contact for information and help when I return home. In five years' time I want to

see myself working with all interested parties to prepare basic teaching and learning materials in Tetum for the education sector. I believe that Timorese children must know how to speak, write, read and express ideas in their own language so that they can do likewise in other languages. I want to have language development incorporated into the design of the curriculum and syllabus.

The best thing about doing a research project on Timorese languages is getting to know more about my own languages, culture and identity. There have been ups and downs in the process of thesis writing, but I believe that hard work and relentless determination will yield good results."

Preview of *Pacific economic survey 2009*

by Elizabeth James, AusAID

In Kiribati, new methods are being tested to grow crops on atolls to improve food security. In Fiji, solar panels are powering a refrigerator house to store harvested fish until they are ready for sale. In Tonga, homes can be upgraded with money earned by fruit pickers taking part in Australia's pilot seasonal workers scheme.

Organic products like beef from Vanuatu and coconut oil from Samoa are making their way onto supermarket shelves across the region and the globe. Government reforms to open up the aviation and telecommunication sectors are bringing more tourists and connecting more people in the region.

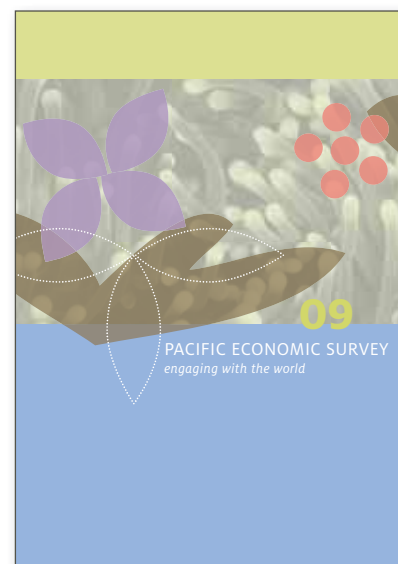
These are just some of the innovative ideas—large and small—that are helping generate economic growth in the Pacific. They are featured in *Pacific economic survey 2009*, an annual survey produced by AusAID and regional experts to document economic and

social progress, including progress towards the MDGs, in the Pacific and East Timor.

This year's survey looks at opportunities for better integration with the world economy, through trade and labour mobility. It discusses the advantages of migration where workers spend part of each year in another country earning money for use back home.

It looks at ways Pacific products can be produced and packaged to fetch premium prices in world markets. It also shows how trade in tourism and labour is driving growth, supporting the development of local industries and providing employment opportunities in many countries. It shows how better management of oil supplies and improvements in food security can help countries manage volatile global prices.

Food and fuel price hikes and the global recession have had significant



impacts on the Pacific. *Pacific economic survey 2009*, available online at www.pacificsurvey.org in mid October, shows how imaginative policies and practices are helping countries deal with some of their toughest obstacles to economic and social development.

GLOBAL EDUCATION

www.globaleducation.edna.edu.au

Pacific neighbours: understanding the Pacific islands

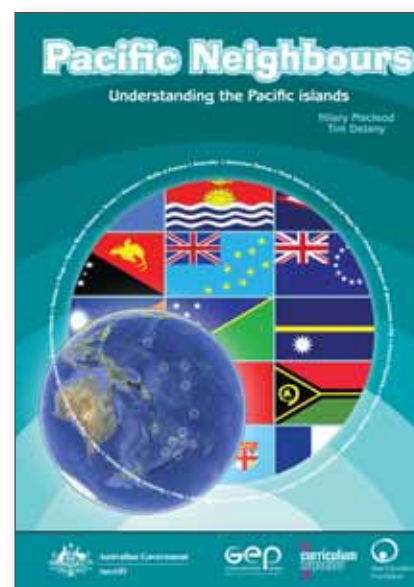
Pacific neighbours: understanding the Pacific islands is a new teaching resource that will help teachers and students understand our near neighbours in the Pacific and Australia's place and role in the region. It goes into the historical, geographical, political and social development of Pacific island nations and includes the challenges they face in achieving sustainable futures.

The publication is available to teachers and trainee teachers who are undertaking AusAID-supported professional development (PD) activities in global education. It is designed to teach students in the middle years of education across all states and territories of Australia.

Each chapter has a theme that enables students from Years 7–10 to engage with a range of issues. There are also extension activities that encourage students to study selected issues in more depth.

Developing an understanding of Australia's place and role in the Pacific region will help put our role as global citizens into perspective.

For more information, please contact the professional development provider in your state or territory via the "PD providers" tag under the green "Support & Networks" heading at www.globaleducation.edna.edu.au





Australian Government
AusAID



VOLUME 24 NUMBER 3 » OCT–DEC 2009

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

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

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

Articles and photographs may be reproduced with permission.

Please send enquiries, proposals for articles and feedback to:

Anthony Mason
Publishing Manager
Communications
AusAID
GPO Box 887
Canberra ACT 2601

Tel +61 2 6206 4208

Email anthony.mason@ausaid.gov.au

Edited by Margaret Metz, AusAID

Designed by GRI.D, Canberra

Printed by Bluestar, Canberra

ISSN 0819–9973

Volume 24 Number 3 Oct–Dec 2009

© Commonwealth of Australia 2009

ORDERING COPIES

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

Email books@ausaid.gov.au