



Focus on volunteers The human face of aid –
Australian volunteers make a difference Australia's aid
in Commonwealth countries – special supplement

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COVER Street markets in Papua New Guinea form a hub for commerce and social interaction. Markets slowly reopened in the Aitape region after a tsunami devastated the area in July 1998. Hundreds of Australian volunteers contributed their time and skills to help rebuild after the disaster. Photo: Peter Davis



Australian volunteers play a vital role in the Australian Government's overseas aid program and in the fight to eradicate global poverty. Volunteers provide practical assistance, using their skills to help others.

Focus on volunteers and the Commonwealth

This edition of *Focus* profiles the place of Australian volunteers in the aid program in honour of the International Year of Volunteering. The United Nations has designated 2001 as volunteers' year to recognise, publicise and promote volunteering globally.

Since the 1960s, when the Australian aid program first directly funded volunteers, they have been a key part of the human face of Australian aid. In fact, for many people in poor countries, volunteers are their first contact with Australia. It is estimated that at least 6,000 volunteers have participated in overseas development activities.

The contribution volunteers make to the aid program is enormous. Volunteers undertake short-term tasks of several weeks or become long-serving volunteers – 31 years in the case of one community health worker in India.

Many countries both in our region and further afield have been significant recipients of volunteers from Australia.

Volunteers of all ages assist Australia's aid program to reduce poverty through skills transfer and institutional strengthening, and to enhance community participation in the aid program. For example, under the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development program,



The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, addresses the sixth intake of Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development at the Mural Hall, Parliament House, in June. Mr Downer also launched the Government's Volunteer Strategy at this event. Photo: Irene Dowdy

many young people between the ages of 18 and 30 years are volunteering on short-term assignments of up to one year in developing countries throughout Asia and the Pacific. Meanwhile, people with various business skills are offering their expertise through AESOP Business Volunteers.

Australians from all walks of life have proved quick to respond to calls for assistance – for example, when AVI (Australian Volunteers International) called for volunteers to go to East Timor, it received 2,000 applications in 24 hours; medical and educational volunteers are

making a contribution to services in Vanuatu; an Australian volunteer is training young Sri Lankans to make furniture; and in PNG, Rotary volunteers are helping to construct school buildings.

Volunteers provide training and skills-transfer to enable development to continue after they have returned to Australia. In return, volunteers gain an understanding of the culture in which they work, and the satisfaction of directly contributing to development. Many form strong friendships with the people among whom they have worked.

Funding for volunteers is an important aspect of Australia's aid program: in 2001–2002, the aid program will spend \$18.6 million on volunteers.

THE AID PROGRAM IN COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

This edition of *Focus* also presents a special supplement in the centre pages of the magazine which highlights the Australian aid program's activities in Commonwealth countries, to mark the meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government in Brisbane from 6–9 October. As well as giving readers an overview of Australia's aid programs throughout the Commonwealth, it features articles on Australia's contribution to the Bougainville peace process.

Australia's links with the Commonwealth of Nations go back to our earliest days, so the Commonwealth enjoys a special place in the hearts and minds of many Australians.

Commonwealth countries have much in common. Our legal systems, constitutional arrangements, and political and administrative institutions have many similarities. These similarities can help to strengthen the contributions we make, particularly in capacity building to improve governance, a vital factor in reducing poverty.

Nearly 40 per cent of last year's aid budget of \$1.725 billion, or some \$650 million, was directed towards Commonwealth countries. Papua New Guinea received the largest proportion,

reflecting the strong ties between our two countries and PNG's enormous development challenges. Similarly, our long and close association with the countries of the South Pacific, most of which are members of the Commonwealth, finds expression in assistance to them. We also extended significant amounts of development assistance to Commonwealth countries in South Asia and in Africa.

Commonwealth countries face the full range of development challenges: vulnerability to natural disasters, conflicts, political instability and external economic shocks; heavy external indebtedness; poor transport and communications; weak governance; low standards of education and health; and uneven access to resources and opportunities. As elsewhere, the Australian aid program's responses are determined in partnership with the countries concerned, aiming to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development in the most effective ways possible.

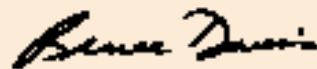
Much of Australia's direct development assistance to Commonwealth countries focuses on improving health, education, infrastructure, rural development and governance. But Australia also contributes to the Commonwealth's own development assistance efforts, mainly through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation.

In relation to volunteering, during 1999–2000, AVI (the largest volunteer program) placed 114 individuals in Commonwealth countries. This was 39 per cent of their total placements for the period. Since the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Downer, launched the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program in August 1998, over 145 young Australians have been placed in Commonwealth countries – 36 per cent of the overall placements.

BOUGAINVILLE

Australia's role in peace-building in the Commonwealth is exemplified in our aid program to the island province of Bougainville. Australia has strongly supported peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction on Bougainville following the island's 10-year civil war. Priority areas for assistance include basic health; primary, secondary and vocational education; policing; civil society/governance; transport infrastructure and agriculture.

In its role as a crucial supporter of the peace process, the aid program has funded key technical and legal advisers to all parties, assisted with travel costs for the negotiations and for facilitating community information about the negotiating progress throughout the island. This aid has helped lay the foundations for peace on Bougainville, restoring a sense of normality and stability that has demonstrated to Bougainvilleans the tangible benefits that will flow if they support the peace process.



Bruce Davis
Director General

The human face of aid – Australian volunteers make a difference

More than 1,100 Australian volunteers worked overseas last year, sharing their skills in everything from seed technology, panel-beating and saddle-making to neurosurgery. Their contributions have enriched Australian society and strengthened the links between Australia and its neighbours.

Without doubt, volunteers are the human face of the Australian aid program. For many people in developing countries, volunteers are their first contact with Australia.

Australian volunteers overseas contribute their time, skills and experience to benefit communities in developing countries. Some work for local salaries and under local conditions, some work for no payment other than costs.

The decision to give time and talents to help a poor community overseas can mean hardship and deprivation. It can even place a volunteer in danger, especially those who provide emergency relief after a natural calamity. But they maintain that the rewards from the experience far outweigh the hardships.

Since the 1950s, when young Australians worked with newly independent Indonesia as part of the fledgling overseas volunteer movement in Australia, an estimated 6,000 Australians volunteers have given their time and expertise to help developing countries. Based throughout the Asia-Pacific region, in countries from Samoa to Nepal, from Tonga to Mongolia, 60 per cent of volunteers are women.

When they return home, volunteers share their experiences with family and friends, helping to generate support for aid activities in the wider Australian community. Recognising this, the Australian Government has increased funding for volunteer organisations from \$11.3 million in 1997–98 to \$60 million for volunteer programs over the next three years.

This funding covers the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program and other volunteer organisations, including Australian Volunteers International (AVI), AESOP Business Volunteers, Interserve and PALMS.

RECOGNITION FOR VOLUNTEERS

In addition to funding the work of Australian volunteers overseas, the Australian Government has implemented an important program of recognition for returned volunteers.

Nearly 900 Australian volunteers have already been given special recognition this year for their services to overseas development. Newly returned volunteers have been presented with commemorative certificates at official ceremonies held by Members of Parliament in local electorates around Australia.

Launched in 1998, the Certificates of Appreciation program has provided certificates to over 2,500 returned volunteers. The Certificates of Appreciation represent the thanks of the nation for the altruistic service of volunteers who, through more than 30 development and volunteer-sending agencies, have made significant contributions.

Each year, these agencies are invited to submit names of volunteers who returned from overseas service in the previous calendar year. This year, as part of the United Nations-designated International Year of Volunteering, many Members of Parliament conducted special recognition ceremonies.



Penny Jones, of Hamilton, Victoria, was one of the youngest recipients of a Certificate of Appreciation for her work as a volunteer teacher last year in Nepal with World Youth International. Photo: Damian White, *The Standard*

One of the 90 ceremonies planned for this year was held in Warrnambool in July where the Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Senator Kay Patterson, and David Hawker, MP, awarded certificates to 11 returned volunteers from the electorate of Wannoo.

Penny Jones was one of the youngest recipients of a Certificate of Appreciation award. During 2000, aged just 18, Penny worked as an English teacher in Nepal with World Youth International and believes she contributed valuable skills and ideas as well as gaining much from the experience.

'I went to a school where they used corporal punishment. The principal and I talked several times about this, and I was so pleased that before I left she had abandoned the practice,' Penny says.

'I had the opportunity to show people other ways of doing things and I emphasised that learning should be fun – that the children shouldn't be frightened of getting the wrong answer for fear of being hit.

'The whole experience of living in another culture was amazing. It made me realise how much you need to respect other cultures and religions and I had not realised this before I left Australia. I also appreciated Australia so much more when I returned – I feel we are such a lucky country.'

CONTRIBUTION ON MANY LEVELS

Volunteers make a valuable contribution across all priority sectors of the aid program – in education, health, rural development, infrastructure and governance. At a most basic level, volunteers extend the dollar value of the Australian aid budget.

But the contribution goes much further than that. For example, volunteers also make vital contributions where government-to-government assistance is either not possible or not practical.

On another level, volunteers help to give our aid an Australian identity. Volunteers exemplify Australian community participation in the aid program. Within the Australian community, they generate support for Australian aid activities by sharing their experiences and knowledge of other countries when they return home. – PC ■

Ordinary Australians with extraordinary spirit

Australian volunteers who have worked in East Timor have been recognised by the Australian Government for their contribution to the rebuilding of this new nation.

The Australian Government has recognised the efforts of Australia's East Timor volunteers at ceremonies conducted around Australia.

As part of the International Year of Volunteer celebrations, over 400 Australians were identified as having served in East Timor since the establishment of the United Nations Mission to East Timor in May 1999.

Honouring volunteers at the Sydney ceremony on behalf of the Australian Government, Senator Marise Payne said Australians had played a vital role in the rebuilding of East Timor.

'Immediately after the crisis, Australia helped bring home 170,000 refugees, reunited 267 children with their families, helped build 17,000 homes and rebuilt almost 1,000 schools. And in many of these projects, volunteers played a key role,' Senator Payne said.

'By sharing your skills and expertise, you have not only had a practical impact. You have built significant partnerships and have strengthened even more the bonds between Australia and the new nation on its doorstep.

'You should be very proud of what you have achieved, and that your determination to make a difference has well and truly paid off.

'All of you – those who went, and those who supported them – are outstanding Australians. You are ordinary Australians with extraordinary spirit.'

Public interest in East Timor has been enormous. When Australian Volunteers International first advertised for volunteers,



Senator Marise Payne congratulates East Timor volunteers at a special recognition ceremony in June at Sydney's Hyde Park Barracks. Photo: Mark Williams

it received 2,000 applications in about 24 hours. In addition, Australians have donated \$15 million in cash and kind since East Timor's independence ballot in 1999.

Recognition ceremonies for returned East Timor volunteers based in Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Darwin were held to coincide with the Queen's Birthday weekend. These were followed by ceremonies in Hobart, Canberra and Adelaide. Ceremonies were hosted by Senator Chris Ellison, Attorney-General Daryl Williams, Senator Richard Alston, Mr Warren Truss and Senator Grant Tambling. ■

Pacific islands reward those willing to give

Australian volunteers in the Commonwealth countries of Tonga and Vanuatu donate their time and many skills – from medicine to law and from teaching to information technology. Peter Davis reports.

They do it because it feels good, because they believe they have something to give and because they want to learn about other cultures. Many of them make considerable material sacrifices.

They are the volunteers. And they form an integral part of the development equation.

Some are recent graduates; others have been in the workforce for a long time. They arrive under various Australian Government schemes, including the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development program, and spend between six months and two years working in schools, hospitals, community programs and government institutions.

SKILLS OFFERED IN MEDICINE AND LAW

Paul Brooks is a doctor working in Vanuatu through Australian Volunteers International (AVI). He graduated from Melbourne University medical school in 1997. 'As a student I spent some time in Samoa. There I met some AVIs and I decided that's what I wanted to do.'

His first posting was on the island of Malekula. 'There had been no doctor on that island for three years. It was an extraordinary experience. I learnt so much and the people were incredibly grateful.'

Paul is now based at the hospital in Port Vila. He's worked in the emergency area but he prefers being in the children's ward. 'I want to specialise in paediatrics and practise in a country town when I return to Australia.'

Paul's posting is for two years. 'I've had experiences here that I could never have in Australia but by far the best experience is



Paul Brooks, a volunteer doctor with Australian Volunteers International, visits Grace Lim at Port Vila Hospital, Vanuatu. Photo: Peter Davis

knowing that I am really contributing something.'

Felicity Herbert is a law graduate from Griffith University and is currently engaged as an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development with the Public Service Commission in Vanuatu. Her quiet dedication is typical of many volunteers.

'There are considerable changes being made to the public service here and my job is to help interpret legislation and draft contracts,' says Felicity. 'It's actually exciting work. I'm learning the language and getting to understand the culture. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to live and work in a foreign place rather than just

visit. It means I can develop a much deeper understanding of how things work.'

TEACHERS LEARN IN VANUATU

Volunteer teachers often claim they learn as much as their students. Eva Ford, Ruth Davidson and Sandy Sterling are volunteer teachers at Onesua High School in an isolated region of Efate Island, Vanuatu. They are employed through the Vanuatu Australia Secondary Teachers Education Project.

'Every day is a new lesson for us,' says Eva. 'We've learnt so much about the culture and about the climate. We've learnt not to panic in a cyclone.'

'And I've learnt not to walk under coconut trees,' jokes Ruth, a geography teacher from Tasmania.

Onesua High School has received new classrooms as well as teacher housing as part of Australia's support for the education system. 'Because we live on the premises we become very much a part of the community and we get to know the students well,' says Ruth.

The teachers begin their teaching at 7.15 am and often work late into afternoon. 'It's fairly isolated up here,' says Sandy. 'Emails and faxes often don't work and it's sometimes difficult to get into Vila on the weekends. So we've learnt to be resourceful. It's all part of the experience and I wouldn't swap it for anything.'

EXPERIENCING THE TONGAN CULTURE

In Tonga, four Australian Youth Ambassadors are contributing to four very different aspects of development.

Nicky Seaby works with the Chamber of Commerce helping to organise and revamp information systems. Susan Greenbank is based at the hospital in Nuku'alofa where she is building a registry of people with diabetes. Beth Egglestone works with the Tongan Community Development Trust, a non-government organisation that supports a range of community-based activities. Colleen Daniels has been working with the regional authority on the Ha'apai group of islands.

'The best part about this experience is getting to know another culture,' says Nicky. 'You also learn a lot about yourself. Things happen so differently here and every day brings many new experiences.'

Beth has been working with a young people's theatre group that aims to communicate social messages. 'The energy of the group is wonderfully infectious and the work they are doing is very important,' says Beth. 'I feel so privileged to be allowed into the lives of these people.' ■



Volunteer teachers Eva Ford (left), Sandy Sterling and Ruth Davidson at the teachers' house which was funded by the Australian Government for the staff of Onesua High School. Funding was also provided for new classrooms. Photo: Peter Davis

The right stuff for business volunteering

What motivates someone to volunteer abroad? Why do people want to leave the comforts of home to work from four to 20 weeks in a tropical environment? These are questions AESOP Business Volunteers' Judy Tier asks most Friday mornings.

As an AESOP volunteer, Judy Tier spends each Friday conducting telephone interviews to assess potential volunteers.

'I talk to so many inspiring people,' she says. 'They come from all states in Australia and they all want to volunteer for an overseas project for AESOP Business Volunteers.'

The assessment Judy conducts is based around four major areas: motivation, skills and knowledge, resourcefulness coupled with a sense of humour, and effective communication skills. Judy's comments are passed on to AESOP staff to make the final selection decision.

'Let's say the applicant is you,' Judy suggests. 'Let me take you through a fairly typical interview. I've read your CV, the application form and two referee reports (these often tell me more about the applicant's achievements than the applicant). I have a small photo that I occasionally glance at to reassure me of a presence.

'First we discuss where you live, the weather and share a few laughs. I have so many questions to ask you about your long work and life experiences. However, my job is to identify the suitability of my interviewee as a volunteer so I must get a little serious.

'I want to know how difficult you are going to find adapting to different food, language and customs. Are you in a situation where you can leave your home and maybe also your partner, and receive no more than a living allowance?'



Judy Tier, a volunteer herself, interviews a prospective AESOP Business Volunteer over the phone at the AESOP office in Canberra. Photo: Irene Dowdy

According to Judy, volunteers are motivated by their desire to pass on their skills and knowledge to others. They are frequently at a stage of their life when giving to others is far more important than pursuing their own endeavours.

The qualities, skills and knowledge AESOP searches for in identifying an effective volunteer are evident in Judy's report of an interviewee called Lyndsay Shume, his project and the outcomes.

'I interviewed Lyndsay and explored the resourcefulness he has put into his own business, his sense of humour and bassoon-playing skills. Lyndsay owns and operates a herbal medicine business in NSW,' says Judy.

'Lyndsay's project was to refine the process used in making herbal medicines by St Theresa's College of the ICM Sisters Community in Cebu City, in the Philippines. The college gives medicines to needy, poor patients in the hospitals and manufactures herbal medicines as nutritional supplements for in- and outpatients, impoverished children and adults.'

Judy interviewed Lyndsay on his return from Cebu City.

What were his achievements on this project? In a short time, he taught the sisters improved ways to process herbs and refine medicines. He suggested drying herbs under the trees on hessian instead of buying expensive gas bottles to fire the ovens. He redesigned the factory layout to meet health authority standards and negotiated with a cardinal, a local army general and the police for the ICM Sisters Community.

Lyndsay will continue to support the Sisters and has brought back medicines for testing in his own factory so he can advise improvements.

Like Lyndsay, Judy is proud to be an AESOP Business Volunteer and feels privileged to be a part of the selection process.

'If you are in a position to volunteer your time, your skills and knowledge, then maybe we will talk some Friday morning,' Judy says. ■

A couple of paramedics help people back on their feet

A diabetes awareness program and care for Samoans in need of rehabilitation after accident or illness keep two Australian volunteers busy, as Peter Cotton found out.



Chris Hagerty, podiatrist with Australian Volunteers International, examines a patient in the foot clinic at Samoa's National Hospital. – Photo: Peter Cotton

Podiatrist Chris Hagerty helps save the feet and legs of patients that might otherwise have to be amputated. A member of Australian Volunteers International (AVI), Chris works mainly with diabetics at the National Hospital of Samoa. He is the first podiatrist to set up a clinic in Samoa.

According to Chris, Samoa has one of the highest rates of diabetes in the world. As he explains it, Samoa was traditionally a hunter-gatherer society where people exerted a lot of energy collecting food.

'These days, they're not as active and eat fatty food high in complex carbohydrates,' he says. 'As a result they store too much fat and that predisposes them to high amounts of sugar in their blood, a precondition for

the onset of diabetes.'

Diabetics lose feeling in their feet and so are not aware when their feet are injured.

'Samoa is very humid and infection spreads rapidly,' says Chris. 'This means we have a lot of people coming to us too late with big holes in their feet.'

'When I arrived here two years ago, diabetics commonly had limbs amputated. We work with the community and staff to encourage alternatives to amputation and I hope I've saved a few limbs since I've been here.'

Soon after his arrival in Samoa, the Australian High Commission in Apia gave Chris a grant for podiatry equipment.

'The Australian Government is a huge

supporter of my work,' he says. 'Although I have no formal link with the Australian Government, they're always there when I need to make contact with the right people in the Samoan Government. They help promote my diabetes awareness program and are generally very supportive.'

Chris met his partner, occupational therapist Sally Baker, when she went to Samoa two years ago as an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development (AYAD).

'Our eyes met across the crowded clinic, and that was that,' says Chris with a laugh.

When Sally's time as an AYAD expired, she was recruited by AVI to continue her work in Samoa.

Sally's job at Samoa's National Hospital has her working with disabled people – helping rehabilitate car accident victims and people who have suffered a stroke.

'Chris and I do separate jobs,' says Sally, 'but we often work on the same patients. He does the wound care and I do the rehabilitation. And we always talk a lot about patients we have in common. I think we provide better health care for people because of our relationship.'

Sally says the Australian Government recognised the need for occupational therapists in Samoa when it placed the profession on the list of study areas for which it offers scholarships in New Zealand or Australia each year.

'The Australian Government is clearly supportive of our work here,' she says. 'If there's anything they can do to help, you know that they'll do it.' ■

Young Aussie gets some inspiration from Cambodian ‘Friends’

When James Fitzpatrick became Young Australian of the Year, he quickly got used to people asking him what he'd won. Phnom Penh-based reporter Bill Bainbridge finds the answer is unusual, but inspiring.

'I always tell them, "opportunity"; says the 27-year-old medical student from Western Australia.

For James, that opportunity has seen him take a year off study and plunge straight into writing proposals, travelling and public speaking, all with the aim of promoting the issues he cares most about.

'Usually people who win this award win it as an encouragement to keep doing what they are doing, but I am a bit of an oddity because instead I've decided to give all my time to promoting the things I care about,' he says enthusiastically.

James impressed the judges with his passion for delivering health care to rural Australia, his desire to improve the lot of young people in remote areas and his practical approach to reconciliation. In his role with SPINRPHEX, a student-run rural health club, James has been instrumental in bringing members of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities together through the Carnarvon Children's Festival in Western Australia.

So when he received an invitation from Save the Children Australia to tour some of their programs throughout Cambodia, programs that reflect his deepest concerns – children and health – he jumped at the chance to compare notes.

'I see a lot of parallels between the problems in Cambodia and those in rural Australia,' he says, after a week-long tour of remote health centres. 'There's a difference in magnitude, but there are similar issues – access to health care, the tyranny of distance and a paucity of trained personnel.'



Young Australian of the Year James Fitzpatrick meets some of the children involved in the work of Save the Children Fund Australia in Memot district, Cambodia. Photo: Shanti Graham

But at the end of his tour, James also found reason to be inspired by what he's seen in Cambodia. Over Asian-style *tapas* at the Friends restaurant, he finds lessons to take home.

The airy restaurant is one of Phnom Penh's brightest and best, painted in bright yellows and blues, set with art deco furniture and decorated with children's drawings. In just a few months of operation, it's become a haven from the dust and heat for weary travellers.

More impressive for James is the fact that the chefs, the waiting staff and the decorators alike, are all drawn from Phnom Penh's population of 20,000 street kids, and that the restaurant forms the public face of a program which houses and trains some of Cambodia's most vulnerable children.

The program is the brainchild of Frenchman Sebastien Marot, a man whom James says he would like to emulate.

Marot, a former corporate sales representative, visited Cambodia for what he thought would be a three-month holiday. He was horrified by the number of children begging or scratching a living by shining shoes or collecting aluminium cans. With some friends, he began feeding the children they met on the street until he suddenly realised that by giving them three square meals a day, he was giving them no incentive to change their lives.

'When we realised that,' he says, 'we decided that we either stopped feeding them or did something that would really help.'

Eight years later, the result is that every day 1,600 children, from small babies to teenagers, seek refuge, counselling, health care or training at the Friends centre. Some street kids learn the hospitality trade in the restaurant but others become motorcycle mechanics, hairdressers or electricians. For most, it's the only hope they have in a life that affords them few opportunities.

With the help of Save the Children Australia, private donors and aid agencies including AusAID, Marot has been able to provide opportunities for kids who would otherwise have none. That includes a large number of HIV-positive children, some as young as nine years old.

James Fitzpatrick recognises a kindred spirit in Marot. He sees his mission as Young Australian of the Year to use his platform to engender self-belief in the youth of rural and remote Australia. ■

Volunteer sports coaches kick goals in South Africa

AusKick coach Dale Alsford and touch football coach Craig Strudwick are the latest Australian volunteers to take their sports and skills to South Africa. So what exactly do a couple of Aussie sports coaches have to do with our international aid program?



Packing his bags for South Africa, volunteer Dale Alsford left Canberra in July to work as the first Australian volunteer football development officer. Photo: Peter Wells, *The Canberra Times*

Craig Strudwick, a 28-year-old sports coach from Tamworth, went to South Africa in July to work as an Australian volunteer sports facilitator. Craig is based in Manenberg, on the Cape Flats area of Cape Town. He says that South African schools often struggle to maintain good sports programs.

'In areas such as Manenberg,' he explains, 'class sizes range between 40 to 100 students, and teachers have little time for physical education. Sporting opportunities outside schools are also very limited.'

According to Craig, Manenberg also has one of the highest rates of gang-related crimes in South Africa. The country's Sport and Recreation Directorate is seeking to reduce crime levels by offering Manenberg's youth positive recreation activities.

Craig is the coordinator of the Sport Stepping Stones Scheme, a program designed to re-establish a vibrant sports participation culture in local schools. The scheme trains young men and women in sports coaching, event management, first aid, workshop facilitation and organising recreational games. Participants, called sports assistants, then work with local schools to organise team sports such as soccer, rugby, netball, athletics and cricket. They also run community sports events and school holiday programs.

As coordinator, Craig recruits and trains sports assistants, and places them in schools. He also designs the holiday programs and ensures that they involve the whole school community, rather than just a few skilled players.

Craig says that so far, 14 schools in Manenberg have become involved in the scheme. Teachers report that regular sport has helped students to become more focused in class.

Australia's own football code, 'Aussie Rules', is also set to become part of South Africa's sports curriculum. In July 2001, Australian Volunteers International and the Australian Football League sent Dale Alsford, the first Australian volunteer football development officer, to the Mafeking region.

Dale, a 21-year-old from Canberra, has been an AusKick coach for several years, and plays with a local football team, the Gungahlin Jets. He will work with Sports Coaches Outreach (SCORE), another sports development organisation, to set up AusKick programs in primary schools. Dale will also train program coordinators and umpires.

Aussie Rules was first played in South Africa by Australian visitors at the turn of the century, but has since lost impetus. The AFL hopes to re-establish the game in schools, with Australian volunteers as coaches. 'I hope to set up a fully functioning competition within the schools, and get the game running beyond the year that I am there,' says Dale.

With Australian volunteers such as Craig and Dale leading the way, community sport is really set to kick off in South Africa. — ZD ■

New understanding and cultural exchanges reward volunteers

Volunteering overseas has many faces and many skills. Lawyer Lorraine Kershaw brought her legal skills to Vanuatu, while Sean Scanlain shared his furniture-making knowledge with young trainees in Sri Lanka.

'Think Vanuatu and images of tropical reefs, palm-rimmed beaches and lush rainforests spring to mind,' says Lorraine Kershaw. 'But the reality of "paradise" is more eye-opening. Vanuatu is only four hours from Australia, but in rural areas, many households live without electricity or running water.'

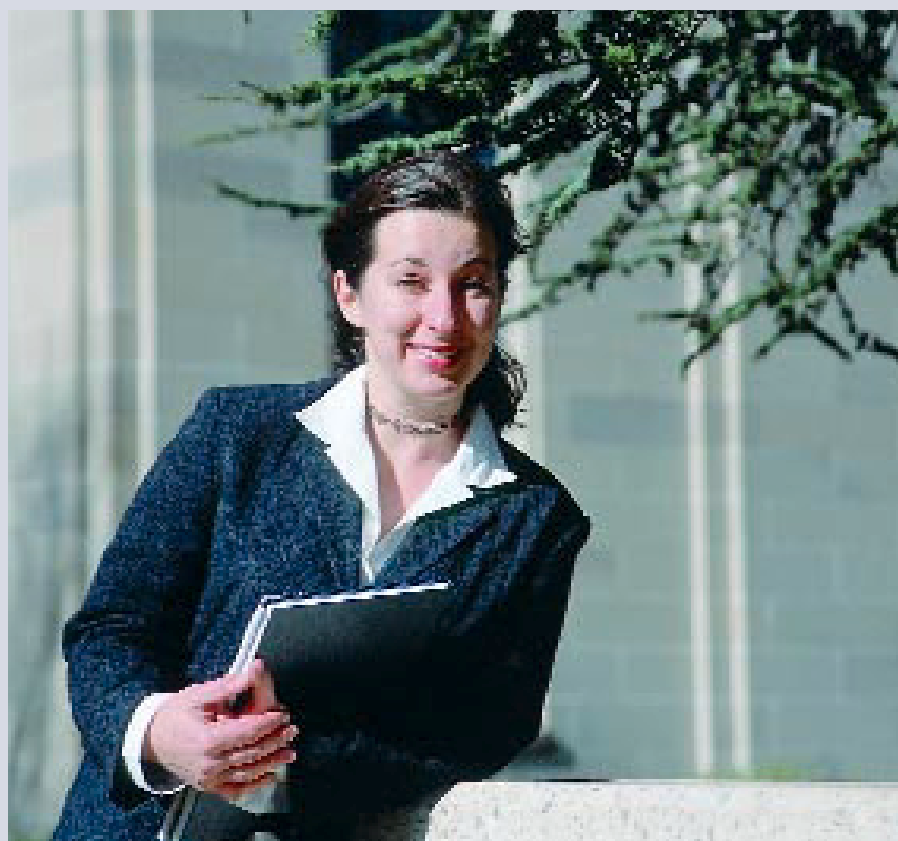
Like many overseas volunteers, Lorraine found 12 months in a developing country both enlightening and rewarding. 'I didn't have much of an idea about our Pacific neighbours before I went to Vanuatu,' she explains. 'But during my stay, I got to meet people and understand the society in a way I never could have by travelling.'

Lorraine worked with Vanuatu's State Law Office in the capital, Port Vila – a role requiring some flexibility in comparison to her work at the Attorney-General's Department in Canberra.

'(In Vanuatu) with limited staff and resources you basically have to be a jack-of-all-trades lawyer,' she says. 'Every day would hold some new adventure – an urgent meeting with the Director General, getting bogged on a muddy road during the search for a witness, or negotiating a settlement in Bislama, the national language of Vanuatu. It was a challenging but also very rewarding experience.'

Former public servant Sean Scanlain, of Canberra, signed up with Australian Volunteers International to spend a year in the holy city of Kandy, in Sri Lanka's hill country.

'I helped train young people in furniture-making,' he says, 'but my students



Canberra lawyer Lorraine Kershaw spent 12 months as an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development in Vanuatu. Photo: Irene Dowdy

also quickly picked up skills in furniture design (which is) helpful for generating income in their local communities.'

Like most volunteers, the satisfaction of passing on valuable skills was important for Sean. Another highlight was what Sean terms the 'wonderful cultural experience'. This involved 'meeting people, getting involved in everyday life, travelling on the buses and trains. Then there are social events and festivals, like Kandy's spectacular full moon parade, where a

hundred elephants accompany pilgrims to the world's biggest Buddhist festival. The whole volunteer experience is as much about cultural exchange as it is about sharing your knowledge and skills.' – CS ■

Rotary volunteers bring a brighter future to PNG schoolchildren

Australian volunteers are making a big difference to the lives of many Papua New Guineans living in remote areas of the country, as AusAID's Caitlin Wilson discovered when she visited Hawabango village in the highlands of Gulf Province.

As you fly over the highlands of PNG's Gulf Province, you might think you are in one of the most remote locations in the world. Dense foliage covers the mountains, and in places the steep terrain appears uninhabitable.

It's not an easy place to reach. The only way to get there from the provincial capital is by light aircraft. But coming closer to the ground, you can start to see some of the many small villages nestled among the lush foothills.

This is a difficult place to deliver essential services, and much of the basic infrastructure has been provided with the assistance of Church agencies, volunteers and the communities themselves. Education is one essential service that continues despite adversity. Elementary and primary schools have sprung up throughout the region, and every day dozens of enthusiastic children line up for class in the hope that they might one day do well enough to go to high school.

In March and April this year, a group of four Rotary volunteers from Tamworth, NSW, travelled to the highlands area of Gulf Province to help with building work in conjunction with the Australian Government-funded Basic Education Infrastructure and Curriculum Materials Program (BEICMP). Ron Allen, Brian Logan, Paul Stevenson and Ian Byles joined one of the 'Fourth Avenue in Motion' teams which are organised by Rotary in Australia to assist with short-term projects in developing countries around the world.

For BEICMP, the Rotary volunteers were



Rotarian volunteer Ron Allen (left) and local Church-based volunteer Maurie Morrison survey their handiwork inside the new library building which they helped construct for the Hawabango community in Gulf Province, Papua New Guinea. Photo: Tom Seta

an ideal resource. Local building contractors and professionals had completed much of the construction work supported by BEICMP in other provinces. But this expertise was not available in the remote highlands of Gulf Province. After many months of organisation and coordination, the project came together.

The result was a group of Rotary volunteers working with the Australian aid program and local PNG communities to construct school buildings for the children of Hawabango community. During a three-week period, the volunteers assisted with the construction of three buildings, including a library building, a large open-plan multipurpose building, and a teacher's house. As well, some construction work was done at another village nearby.

The four Rotarians had diverse

backgrounds. Not all were from the building industry, but all received additional training in building skills before arriving in PNG. They were then able to pass these skills on to the local community.

'As a group we feel that our greatest achievement has been in helping the local community to help themselves. With our guidance and assistance, the local community carried out the majority of the building and construction work. As the buildings took shape, the local people really appreciated what was happening in their community,' explains volunteer Ron Allen.

BEICMP funded the purchase and transport of kit construction materials. But it was the cooperative efforts of Rotary and Church volunteers working with the community that made the building program a successful reality. ■



snapshots

VIRTUAL COLOMBO PLAN ANNOUNCED

The Australian Government and the World Bank have announced a \$1.5 billion partnership to combat global poverty with a state-of-the-art distance education initiative. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, and the President of the World Bank, James D. Wolfensohn, unveiled the new plan to share Australian expertise with developing countries using information and communication technologies (ICTs) at a meeting in Sydney.

Australia has pledged \$200 million to what will be known as the Virtual Colombo Plan, aimed at creating opportunities to improve education and access to knowledge across the developing world on everything from primary school teacher training to advanced courses for policymakers.

'As a regional leader Australia is in a unique position to help close the digital divide and offer affordable distance education,' Mr Downer said.

The Virtual Colombo Plan builds on the concepts of the original Colombo Plan that celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. The Colombo Plan is the world's oldest program of cooperation between nations focused on economic and social development. Australia was one of the seven founding members of the initiative that focused on facilitating technical assistance for developing countries.

The Virtual Colombo Plan will provide a package of initiatives that addresses basic and higher education, knowledge infrastructure, knowledge dissemination (Australian research and knowledge extended globally) and new learning opportunities for policy makers.

HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING IN BURMA

The Australian Government is conducting a further four introductory training workshops titled 'Human Rights and Responsibilities' in Burma. The workshops are being held in September/October in Rangoon, and for the first time in Mandalay, the second largest city in Burma. The workshops, which began



The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, announces the \$1.5 billion partnership between the Australian Government and the World Bank aimed at creating opportunities to improve education and access to knowledge in the developing world with the state-of-the-art distance education initiative, titled the Virtual Colombo Plan.

in July, will raise awareness of international human rights standards and relevant United Nations conventions.

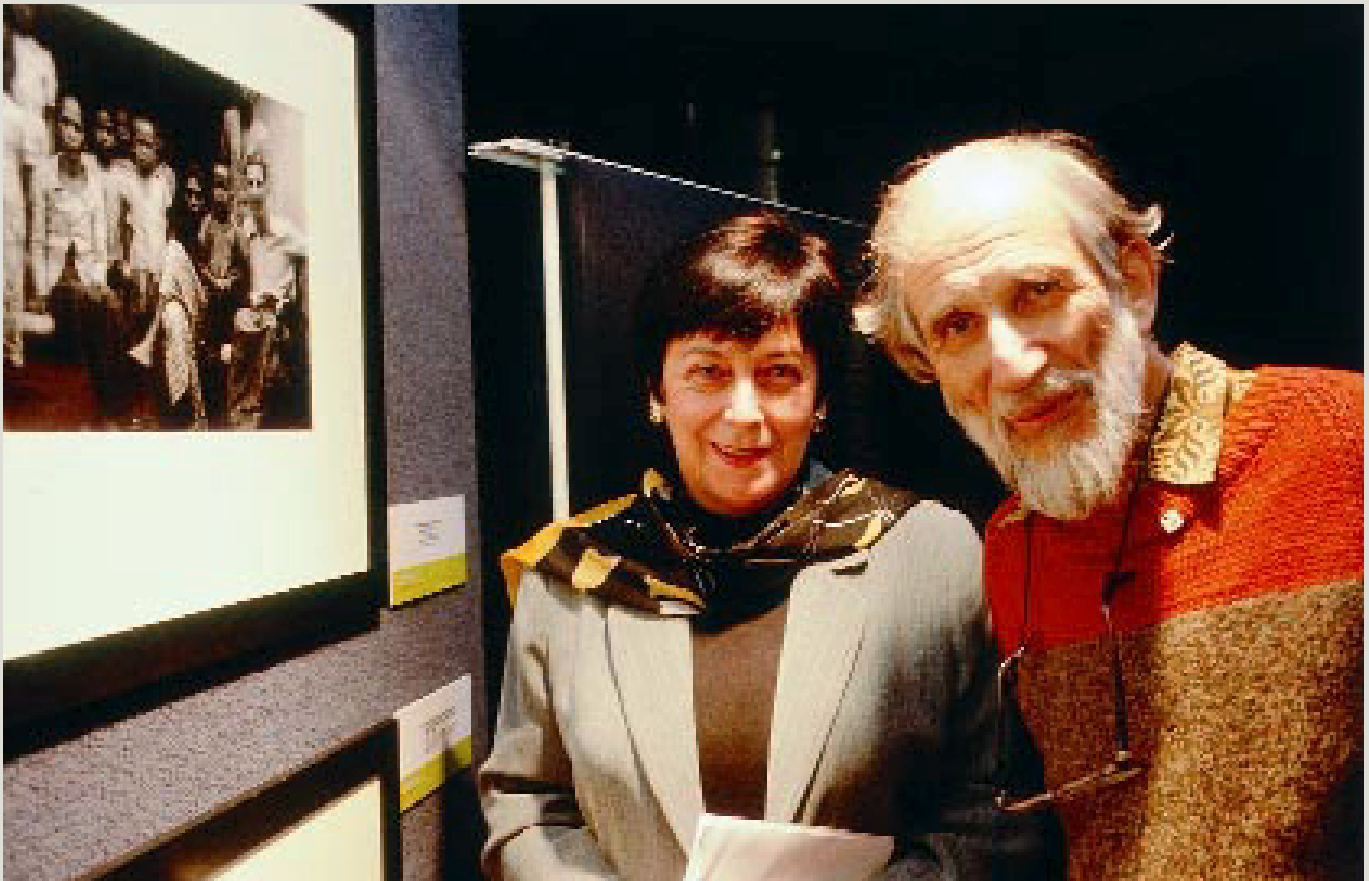
These four-day workshops are being conducted by Monash University with participants drawn mainly from middle level positions in the ministries of Education, Health, Labour and Foreign Affairs. Representatives of Burmese civil society organisations have been invited to participate in the workshops for the first time.

AUSTRALIA SUPPORTS FREE AND FAIR CAMBODIA ELECTIONS

Mr Downer has welcomed the announcement by the Cambodian Government that Commune elections will be held on 3 February 2002, for the first time in 30 years.

Mr Downer said the elections would serve as an important milestone in the process of democratisation in Cambodia and deserved the full support of the Australian Government and the broader international community. During the elections, representatives will be chosen for 1,621 communes across Cambodia, providing democratic representation at a local level.

The Australian Government will provide \$600,000 in support of the election process. The Australian Government's overseas aid program contribution will be distributed through the United Nations Development Program.



Senator Kay Patterson, Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister for Foreign Affairs, chats with Professor Herb Feith, the 'grandfather' of volunteering in Australia at the opening of a special exhibition in Melbourne of photographs depicting the experiences of Australian volunteers overseas and in outback communities. Professor Feith, from Monash University, was Australia's first international volunteer under the Volunteer Graduate Scheme, serving initially as an interpreter in Indonesia in 1951. The exhibition of 48 photographs was staged in June as part of this year's International Year of Volunteers. More than 900 Australians have been working as volunteers in overseas aid projects during the past year. The Australian Government has pledged \$60 million for volunteer activities over the next three years. During this financial year, the Government has committed \$18.6 million to support Australian overseas volunteer organisations including Australian Volunteers International and AESOP Business Volunteers. Photo: Mathias Heng

AUSTRALIAN AID TO HELP VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE IN MALUKU, INDONESIA

Australia is to help people affected by the continuing unrest in Maluku, Indonesia. An estimated 4,000 people have died during the conflict and over 500,000 people have been displaced. The \$2.9 million package of activities includes the provision of health care and ensuring food security through the delivery of Australian rice. The Australian Government bought 1,000 tonnes of rice from rice growers in New South Wales to help meet the immediate food needs of displaced people. Worth a total of \$940,000, including freight and distribution costs, the consignment is being distributed by the World Food Programme and Action Centre

La Faim (ACF) (Action Against Hunger). This contribution provided 2.5 million daily rations – enough to feed up to 45,000 people for two months.

Supplementary food items, including cooking oil and beans for those who were still displaced, were provided in addition to \$1 million to ACF for livelihood support for those who were able to return to their homes. ACF's activities have included the distribution of food, seeds, tools and fishing equipment to vulnerable groups, support for income-generating projects, and water and sanitation infrastructure rehabilitation.

OPPORTUNITIES IN COMMONWEALTH CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS

AusAID funds a number of capacity building programs in countries throughout the Commonwealth. These programs generally involve the provision of technical assistance to support national departments and agencies to achieve their development objectives.

For further information about doing business with AusAID, please contact Pacific Contracts and Policy Section: Craig Gallagher, Manager Policy (02 6206 4502) Mal Osborne, Current Tender Opportunities, Consultants Register (02 6206 4790) Email: pcps_ausaid@ausaid.gov.au



global education

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE VOLUNTEER — A CLASSROOM TOPIC

In the Solomon Islands, Emma Stone expanded the existing seed production centre in Honiara to rural regions. In PNG, Lyn Fry taught at a school where kids constructed the buildings, beds and furniture and raised money for the school by nurturing and selling livestock. In Fiji, Peter Vanderwal helped reduce the incidence of diabetes-induced blindness. Then, of course, they went to class!

Emma, Lyn and Peter were international volunteers. They worked with local people in developing countries to solve problems. What does it mean, though, to be a volunteer? What are the benefits for the countries where volunteers work? If you were going to become a volunteer, how would you prepare to work in a different culture, language or environment? The Global Ed. Website <http://gloaled.ausaid.gov.au> has case studies on Australian volunteers that pose interesting questions with cognitive and engaging student activities. These are particularly relevant in the International Year of Volunteering.

REFUGEE WEEK 8–14 OCTOBER

It is difficult to know the depth of a refugee's despair. No permanent home. No state or government protection. Few job prospects. And an identity explicitly tied to being a refugee rather than a person who once had a home, a nationality or an ethnic identity.

Refugee Week is a good time for teachers to encourage students to reflect on the personal and emotional realities of being a refugee. Students can also learn about the factors that cause men, women and children to become refugees or displaced within their own country.

Two new classroom videos, designed for the Australian curriculum, focus on the refugee situation after the 1999 crisis in East Timor. Each video also provides the facts and figures on the world's 22.3 million refugees. Beyond statistics however, the videos show what it means to be a refugee, how refugees survive and most of all, how they yearn to get back home. You can buy the videos from Classroom Video at classvid@classroomvideo.com.au

DID YOU KNOW?

■ Was it a tremor or a big shock? On 26 January 2001 an earthquake registering 7.9 on the Richter scale devastated the Indian state of Gujarat. But why did locations 80 km from the epicentre suffer so badly? And what is the difference between aftershocks and tremors?

- The Mekong River is the 10th longest river in the world. But how long is it?
- As a key characteristic of democracy, I am one of the most comprehensive logistical exercises that will ever happen in a country during peacetime. What am I?

Go to <http://gloaled.ausaid.gov.au> to find the answers! You will also discover case studies on important global issues and developing countries, all written by curriculum consultants specifically for key learning areas in the Australian school curriculum.

NEW CLASSROOM PUBLICATION

What is governance? How do we get it? What does it have to do with civics and citizenship? A new curriculum package, linked to 'Discovering Democracy' introduces the concept of governance to students, looking at the role of private sector, civil society and government. Call 02 6206 4969 for more information.

GLOBAL ED. NEWS

Don't forget to join Global Ed. News for a quarterly update on curriculum resources designed to teach about important global issues. <http://gloaled.ausaid.gov.au/subscribe/subscribe.cfm>

For further information on global education, please call 02 6206 4969.

Get info on volunteering

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AusAID's website

Check out the latest issues, policies, publications, business and general information about Australia's aid program at:

www.ausaid.gov.au



Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development website

Find out all about the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development program – selection processes, contact details and application forms at:

www.ausaid.gov.au/youtham/default.cfm



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