

# focus

THE MAGAZINE OF AUSTRALIA'S OVERSEAS AID PROGRAM

VOLUME 20 NUMBER 4 » SEPT-DEC 2005

CHANGING AID

THE WAY TO REDUCE POVERTY IN THE ASIA PACIFIC IS TO PROMOTE STABILITY AND STIMULATE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH.



## FROM THE MINISTER

Geographically and economically, Australia is part of the Asia Pacific – this is our patch. Our future aspirations and those of our immediate neighbours are inextricably bound together. The course ahead is rich in cultural diversity, potential and possibilities, but it's not without challenge.

Our region is home to two-thirds of the world's poor – more than 700 million people – yet it receives only about 22 per cent of global aid. In light of this – and our shared future – I believe it makes sense for us to concentrate our aid efforts in the Asia Pacific.

Increasingly I see Australia's aid program as a crucial part of Australia's broader policy of helping build a more secure and prosperous region. Under my direction, our aid contributes in no small part to Australia's national interest by helping to create conditions essential for regional stability, security and growth.

Australians have good reason to be proud of their aid program. It has a long history of adapting to changing circumstances and meeting urgent needs head on, as demonstrated by its rapid response to the Indian Ocean tsunami. It's also worth noting the international community recognises Australia's efforts.

I am particularly heartened by some of our programs that have withstood the test of time and continue to grow in strength – most notably the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program which I launched in 1998 and the Australian Development Scholarship Program which has its roots in the Colombo Plan of 1951.

I am encouraged that recent efforts to refine the methods and function of the aid program are resulting in innovative and flexible ways of delivering aid. AusAID increasingly draws upon expert knowledge and skills across Australian government departments, regional partners and public and private institutions.

The emphasis I have placed on governance is an example of not only the aid program's shifting priorities but also AusAID's capacity to deliver. Laying down good governance practices in the Pacific is one of the aid program's highest priorities. This is because we know, without first establishing law and order, we cannot successfully tackle poverty. Without the fundamentals in place – such as workable government administrative systems and people feeling safe on the streets – communities can't function or economies prosper.

Two years ago, Solomon Islands was a Pacific island nation facing grave fiscal and administrative difficulties. Yet, through RAMSI, a regional cooperative effort led by Australia, law and order is restored and the Government of Solomon Islands is once again in control of its finances. Basic services are running and confidence in the country's national institutions is steadily returning. The Government of Solomon Islands last year recorded a 40 per cent increase in revenue.

There is no doubt this turnaround in fortunes is in large part due to the emphasis the aid program now places on good governance. But while governance activities absorb more than one-third of the \$2.49 billion aid budget, they are still only one part of the poverty solution.

Long term hope for the world's poor – in Africa as well as the Asia Pacific – depends on removing trade barriers and creating a more vibrant and open global economy. Australia has a high level of coherence between its aid and trade policies but this is not the case with all nations. Trade liberalisation is one of the key factors for sustained global prosperity.

In March 2005, I announced to Parliament I would present a White Paper on Australia's aid program in early 2006. The overall objective is to outline a medium-term strategic blueprint for the aid program in the Asia-Pacific region. AusAID will manage the process of informing the White Paper, which will also explore important linkages between poverty, stability and sustainable economic growth.

Development of the White Paper represents a long-term investment by the Australian Government to address the challenges facing our region in a robust, practical and sustainable way.

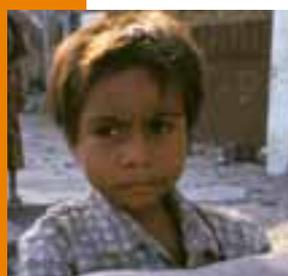
Alexander Downer  
*Minister for Foreign Affairs*

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, at the regional forum during the 12th Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) conference in Vientiane. Mr Downer announced \$75 million over five years for landmine clearance, a sizable portion of which will go to help Laos, the most heavily mined country on Earth. Photo: Laurent Fievet/AFP

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(inside back cover) GLOBAL EDUCATION

**Government aid in focus** The Australian aid program is committed to reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development in the Asia Pacific, Africa and the Middle East. Australian businesses and people play a major role in delivering the aid program. Australian expertise, Australian experience and Australian resources are used to tackle poverty. And by investing in development Australia is investing in its future. In 2005–06 Australia plans to spend almost \$2.491 billion on development assistance. The aid program focuses on promoting regional peace, stability and economic development. Countries with whom Australia is working include Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, Nauru, Tonga, Kiribati, Tuvalu (the Pacific region); Indonesia, East Timor, Vietnam, Philippines, China, Mongolia, Cambodia, Thailand, Lao PDR, Burma (East Asia); Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan, Maldives, Bhutan (South Asia); and Africa and the Middle East.

COVER: Papua New Guinea. A member of Anglicare's STOPAIDS theatre group. The group, which is supported by AusAID, stages plays at local markets, schools and other community meeting places to help educate people about HIV/AIDS. Photo: Rocky Roe

# IN BRIEF

## THE WAY FORWARD 2015



In the lead up to the 2005 United Nations Summit, ministerial delegates from around the region met in Jakarta at *The Way Forward 2015* to assess the Asia Pacific's approach to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Discussion centred on developing practical cooperative strategies to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development.

Australia's aid program concentrates on the Asia-Pacific region which, in recent years, has received less than a third of global aid given to Sub-Saharan Africa. This is in spite of the fact that the Asia Pacific has double the number of people living in poverty

ABOVE: The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bruce Billson, representing Australia in Jakarta. Photo: AusAID

## WHITE PAPER

Members of the public interested in aid and development recently attended public meetings in Melbourne and Brisbane.

The meetings were held to allow citizens an opportunity to engage with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bruce Billson, and senior AusAID staff. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, will present a White Paper to the Federal Parliament on Australia's overseas aid program in early 2006.

The public forums are just one part of an extensive consultation process to ensure a broad interaction with the Australian and international community. So far six analyses of key program directions have been completed – these are Papua New Guinea, the Pacific, Indonesia, Asia, HIV/AIDS and Engaging the Australian Community. The analyses, which are available on the AusAID website, will inform a report of recommendations to the Minister. The report will be made publicly



available through the AusAID website in December 2005.

The Australian Government welcomes public comment and input on the future strategic direction, shape and priorities of its overseas aid program. Two more public meetings will be held in Perth and Sydney and comment can be provided at any stage through the White Paper link on the AusAID website <[www.ausaid.gov.au](http://www.ausaid.gov.au)> via the email address <[whitepaper@ausaid.gov.au](mailto:whitepaper@ausaid.gov.au)>

ABOVE: Public meeting at Brisbane Town Hall. Photo: AusAID

## BHUTANESE FIRE FIGHTERS



AusAID is funding the visit of a group of Bhutanese fire fighters to Australia for training with the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. They're learning how to carry out prescribed burnings, manage community safety and conduct environmental assessments. They're also joining fire crew leadership courses and finding out how to form bushfire management committees. Bhutan is heavily forested and loss of tree cover by fire can cause masses of soil to wash into the country's rivers. Mud and silt build-up can also block hydro-electric turbines. One of Bhutan's main exports is electricity, so damage of this kind is a huge financial setback for the developing country.

Bhutanese fire fighters meet AusAID staff. Photo: AusAID



## INDIAN OCEAN TSUNAMI



Construction of the access road to Ulee Lheue Port, Aceh. Photo: AusAID

The Australian Government has released its second report on Australia's response to the Indian Ocean tsunami.

The report shows that the Government's immediate humanitarian commitment of \$60 million was fully spent by 30 June 2005.

It also shows that further funding has been committed to reconstruction – a complex task requiring the careful allocation of funding and close cooperation between governments and donors over many years.

Australia's response to the disaster reflects the generosity of both government and the wider community. The Australian Government announced a further \$8 million in funding for

Sri Lanka through the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank in June. The Australian public has contributed more than \$338 million through non-government organisations. Australian state governments have also contributed, with Queensland and Victoria pledging \$10 million each, New South Wales \$2 million and Tasmania committing over \$1 million. Australia's corporate and private sector responded with free goods and services, conservatively valued at over \$10 million.

Challenges, such as land title, national planning requirements and building standards remain. Nevertheless, the long-term task of rebuilding people's lives and communities has begun in earnest.

## ALL ROUND EFFORT

The Government of Vietnam presented AusAID with a 'diploma of merit' to acknowledge the important contribution Australian aid makes to Vietnam's agriculture and rural development. The disaster mitigation program is part of this (see page 27 *Safer at Sea*).

'We are very proud to receive this award,' says AusAID's Andrew Rowell. 'It not only reflects the efforts of AusAID staff but the many players involved in the aid program, including local Vietnamese employees, volunteers, and Australian and Vietnamese researchers.'

## RUBBISH MONSTERS

TONGA: When the plastic bag rubbish monsters first took their recycling message to schools, children ran away terrified.



Actors inside monsters' clothing, playing out links between rubbish and disease, were just a little too graphic for some children. These days the message is the same but the actors have toned down their antics. Although equally enthusiastic, the rubbish monsters now delight rather than scare children through song, verse and pantomime. The central message is clear and easily remembered.

AusAID's Solid Waste Management Project uses theatre groups to spread the word that proper waste management is everyone's business. The troupe moves around schools and communities and often livens up important events, such as World Environment Day. The core message is, 'Don't throw your rubbish around, recycle and compost'.

Head teacher at Popua Government Primary School in Nuku'alofa, Vale Tuini Fainga'anuku, explains the school's catchment area includes the nearby Tukutonga rubbish tip. Several squatter settlements are scattered in the vicinity. Some people pick through the rubbish to make a living. 'To protect them and those nearby it's important the different types of rubbish are properly sorted beforehand,' she explains, 'otherwise there are serious health implications for everyone.'

So far the results are encouraging. Rates of recycling, proper disposal of waste and composting are all up. AusAID is helping Tonga regain its reputation as a clean, tidy and healthy place to live.

ABOVE: Audience and actors enjoying the show. Photos: Peter Buckley/AusAID



Papua New Guinea. Markets at Mount Hagen. Photo: Rocky Roe



# CHANGING AID

AUSTRALIAN OVERSEAS AID ONCE COMPRISED A FEW SMALL-VALUE GRANTS TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE COLOMBO COMMITTEE. FROM MODEST BEGINNINGS IN THE LATE 1940S, AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE HAS EXPANDED INTO A SOPHISTICATED MULTI-LAYERED AID PROGRAM. ITS AIMS AMID INCREASING GLOBAL PRESSURES ARE TO REDUCE POVERTY, PROMOTE STABILITY AND STIMULATE ECONOMIC GROWTH. GLOBALISATION, URBANISATION AND PANDEMICS, INCLUDING HIV/AIDS AND SARS, ARE PRESENTING NEW CHALLENGES. TO MEET THEM, AUSTRALIA IS WORKING HARDER THAN EVER TO FIND BETTER, SMARTER AND MORE FLEXIBLE WAYS OF PROVIDING ASSISTANCE.

OPPOSITE: Philippines. Quirino Atienza inspects the ripening seeds of an experimental rice variety grown at IRRI (International Rice Research Institute) in Los Banos, south of Manila. Rice is the staple food of billions of people. AusAID supports the important research conducted at the institute. Photo: Jay Directo/AFP

# ...BUT THE AIMS REMAIN THE SAME

## AID FACTS

In parts of the world, there have been remarkable changes in poverty levels over the past 50 years. Even since 1990, 800 million people have gained access to improved water supplies and 750 million to improved sanitation. Fifty-seven of the poorest countries, with half of the world's

population, have halved hunger or are on track to do so by 2015.

Fifty-one countries with 41 per cent of the world's people have achieved, or are on track to achieve, universal primary enrolment.

Since 1999 alone, Australian aid has been responsible for

training almost 45,000 primary and high school teachers, and built or refurbished 1,200 schools and learning centres. It has trained 1,900 health professionals and built or refurbished over 700 hospitals and health clinics. Literacy levels have risen and fewer women die as a result of pregnancy or childbirth.

The world has changed. Technology has revolutionised travel, global communications and international trade. Some countries have become richer, while others in the developing world have fallen further behind. Climate change has increased temperatures but also caused severe floods – yet water in some parts of the world is more precious than gold. Land once fertile and green has turned to sand through overuse or been laid waste by armed conflict.

Some problems are simply getting larger and harder to solve not only because of uneven growth and development, but population pressure, diminishing resources and unsustainable practices. The emergence in recent years of transnational crimes, for example, terrorism, endemic corruption, drug smuggling and human trafficking, threaten regional growth and stability. Natural disasters, such as crop failures and cyclones – and pandemics, such as HIV/AIDS and SARS – also play their part. And when adversity hits, it's the poor who suffer most.

While demands on Australia's aid program have changed and, arguably, intensified, its aims have remained pretty much the same. 'The purpose of Australia's





LEFT: Vietnam. Mark Hoey, a community development adviser, with Bui Ngoc Tuan, both part of an AusAID-funded agricultural project. Over the past 20 years the aid program has based its activities more on partnership arrangements whereupon recipient countries express their view of the type of aid that will most benefit their communities. Photo: Will Salter  
CENTRE: Vietnam. A mother and her two small daughters make a living by selling fruit at a floating market near Cantho. Photo: Mark Henley/Panos Pictures

aid program has always been to reduce poverty,' says Bruce Davis, Director General of AusAID. 'How we do this and, to a certain extent, where, has changed.'

## BRIEF HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA'S AID

In the 1950s and 60s, under the Colombo Plan, Australia awards thousands of scholarships to students from the Asia Pacific.

The Colombo Plan marks the beginning of Australia's official aid program. 'In 35 years [1950–85], more than 40,000 people from Asia came to study in Australian institutions,' says AusAID Deputy Director General Murray Proctor.

The embodiment of regional intergovernmental cooperation, the purpose of the Colombo Plan was the social and economic development of the Asia Pacific. The key to achieving this, or so went the prevailing view, was education – a view equally potent today.

'In almost every way, education is the bedrock of development. It's through gaining knowledge and skills that people find a path out of poverty. Training and new

skills lead to better jobs, a decent income and an improved standard of living,' says Murray.

The ideals of the Colombo Plan live on in the Australian Development Scholarship Program. As in the early years under Colombo, students return to their own countries to make valuable contributions (see page 30 *Education: Putting principles into practice*). Around 2,000 students each year arrive from developing countries to study at Australian or regional universities. Recently the Australian Government announced 500 new scholarships for Pakistan. It also announced, as part of the \$1 billion Australia–Indonesia Partnership for Reconstruction and Development (AIPRD), 600 scholarships for post-graduate students from Indonesia. They will help meet professional skill shortages in Aceh caused by the deaths of so many people in the tsunami.

The rapid changes in information and communication technologies are also radically altering the way people receive and take part in learning. The Virtual Colombo Plan which, since 2001, Australia has co-funded with the World Bank is spreading knowledge across the developing world. Students join virtual

classrooms over the Internet and learn through interactive computer technology.

In the 1970s and 80s Australia expands its aid program to more than 70 countries.

During the 1970s and 80s Australia placed greater emphasis on forging strong bilateral partnerships and funding specific aid projects. Together Australia and recipient countries decided which sectors – health, education or infrastructure for example – needed most attention and what form that attention would take. In other words, what would most boost social and economic development.

Broadly speaking, this was the era of the 'aid project'. Capital aid was given for big activities. Examples include building wharves in the South Pacific, water drilling in India, road works in Solomon Islands and buying boats for Tonga and Samoa to improve inter-island trade.

While not all projects were equally successful and no-one denies there was sometimes room for improvement, the 70s and 80s were, nevertheless, a time of energy and expansion. From small post-war beginnings in a handful



## EMERGENCY AID

The ability to provide urgent assistance when and where it's needed has always been a high priority of the aid program.



Through AusAID's humanitarian, emergency and refugee programs, Australia helps vulnerable populations survive civil conflicts and natural disasters.

It's a worrying trend that the number of disasters has risen sharply in the past few years. Their scale and impact, mainly on poor countries, have been overwhelming and stretched meagre resources to the limit. The outstanding example is the recent Indian Ocean tsunami that caused massive loss of life, devastated large areas of coastline and wiped out many people's livelihoods.

'Since the beginning of 2005, AusAID has given more than \$68 million in aid to help thousands of people in dire

circumstances after the tsunami,' says Alan March, AusAID's humanitarian coordinator. 'AusAID's early assessment work ensured Australia was among the first into disaster areas shaping our emergency efforts. Immediate funding helped provide food, water and shelter to those in greatest need in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. We were also quick to send in Australian medical teams.'

Shortly after the tsunami and the second earthquake which hit the island of Nias, Australia announced funding of \$10 million for a program to strengthen Indonesia's disaster management and response systems.

'Our emergency relief efforts are also directed towards the

Pacific,' says Alan. 'When thousands of people were forced to flee a volcanic eruption on Manam Island in Papua New Guinea earlier this year, we ensured they had access to safe drinking water and health services. We're always at the ready to help when cyclones hit.'

Through an arrangement with France and New Zealand, known as the FRANZ Agreement, AusAID assists Pacific island countries affected by cyclones. 'We're also working with the Government of Solomon Islands in earthquake and cyclone preparedness,' says Alan.

While the aid program concentrates its humanitarian and emergency efforts in the Asia-Pacific region, it retains an ability to respond flexibly as required to emergencies further afield. It has demonstrated this over the past 20 months with the crisis in Sudan, the Bam earthquake in Iran and floods in Bangladesh. More recently the aid program is responding to the appalling conditions in Niger.

During 2005-06, Australia is setting aside \$155 million for humanitarian and emergency relief and \$15 million to assist refugees through the International Refugee Fund. The funding is allocated on a needs basis.

ABOVE: Indonesia. Following the Indian Ocean tsunami – one of the injured from remote villages in northern Sumatra is brought to Banda Aceh for treatment. Photo: Dermot Tatlow/Panos Pictures





Solomon Islands. Honiara Police Station. Establishing law and order is the first priority – even before tackling poverty. Photo: Peter Davis

of nations, Australia's aid program was now making a difference in 70 countries.

'By the late 1980s we started to see an increase in the number of children attending school and receiving basic health care,' says Murray Proctor. 'Roads, schools and hospitals were being built. Agricultural projects were underway. Australian companies working in-country were becoming more skilled in their own right. Real development progress was being made.'

Projects aimed at the village community level, always important, achieved greater success as more women's voices were heard. Engaging local people, but particularly women and giving them a sense of ownership in a project's design and implementation ensured

**Vietnam. Crowds swarm across the My Thuan Bridge after a spectacular dragon boat race. The bridge, which straddles the Mekong, has opened up trade, commerce and travel in the region. The building of the bridge typifies the large construction projects funded and managed by AusAID in earlier decades. Photo: Hans Kempf/ AusAID**

sustainability. During this time environmental awareness took on sharper focus.

**In the past 15 years aid delivery becomes central to the national interest.**

The Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s caused a severe downturn in growth. Thousands of people living borderline existences fell into poverty. For those already trapped, conditions worsened.

Other unsettling cracks also appeared. In the Pacific, Solomon Islands began sliding into civil conflict and lawlessness. Security and corruption issues were overshadowing social and economic growth in Papua New Guinea. Pacific island nations, such as Nauru and Vanuatu, showed signs of administrative and fiscal instability.

Australia's concern that the Asia Pacific was becoming a haven for terrorists, corrupt officials and crime lords provoked a radical rethink of the aid program. From casting a wide beam across 70 nations Australia reduced the sweep. These days Australia concentrates on its own backyard, where its responsibilities are strongest, it can be most effective

## REGIONAL COOPERATION

**SOLOMON ISLANDS:** During the ethnic tensions piles of letters of complaint lay untouched in the Office of the Ombudsman, Honiara. This was characteristic of the general malaise that had taken over the country. With RAMSI (the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands) came a commitment to rejuvenate the public sector, including the Ombudsman's Office.



**P**eter Peraki is the former head of the Complaints and Administrative Investigations Division at the Ombudsman Commission, Papua New Guinea. He's now employed by AusAID under RAMSI to help investigations into government departments and officials, state-owned enterprises and key public institutions. His main task is overseeing a review of the backlog of complaints sent to the Ombudsman's Office between 1997 and 2004.

From an office on the top floor of the main Post Office in Honiara, Peter Peraki and his team systematically sift through hundreds of letters. 'Most complaints are about general administration,' he says, 'but people sometimes believe that an ombudsman acts as a lawyer for a complainant.'

This is not correct of course. An ombudsman is an independent arbiter, seeking justice when and if it is due. 'We try to find good and legally acceptable solutions to problems and try to work things out. Quite often people think an ombudsman is on a witch hunt. We need to change this perception because it's in everyone's interest that the Ombudsman's Office works as well as it can.'

Once the review of the backlog of cases is complete Peter will work alongside his Solomon Islander colleagues, giving them further training in investigating, interviewing and report writing. This will help with transferring skills and knowledge he has brought from Papua New Guinea.

The work is important, for, as Peter says, 'The Office of the Ombudsman underpins democracy. It helps keep governments and decision-makers accountable to the people.' And he adds, 'I'm very pleased to be working with AusAID and RAMSI to help build up the office here. I like the idea of one Pacific island country using its experience in a similar jurisdiction to assist another.' EJ

**ABOVE:** Peter Peraki (left) in the office. 'Most complaints are about general administration,' he says. Photo: AusAID

and the aid program is perhaps most needed.

The Asia Pacific is now Australia's primary focus and building political and economic governance its chief activity. Helping to create strong capable governments and societies serves two urgent purposes. On one hand, sound administration lays firm foundations for growth and investment, and on the other, it's the best insurance against regional instability.

Aid goals of reducing poverty, promoting a secure and stable region, and stimulating growth remain the same, but ways to achieve them have changed. In recent years the aid program has moved from a single government agency responsibility to a whole-of-government one. AusAID increasingly draws upon expertise from a range of government departments – for example, Treasury, Finance, Taxation, Attorney-General's, Defence and the Australian Federal Police. An integrated whole-of-government approach eliminates duplication of effort and ensures involvement from a range of experts. More than any other factor, intergovernment cooperation demonstrates a shift in aid delivery and the greater degree of flexibility now required of the aid program.

At a regional level, Australia is also working cooperatively with its neighbours to improve the overall standard of public service management and administration. Training electoral officials, setting up voter registration systems and developing intelligence databases are just some examples (see *Regional Cooperation*).

'Basically it's all about good governance,' says Murray Proctor, 'It's very clear well managed and stable institutions benefit a country overall. There's a ripple effect.



**Nepal. Female Maoist guerilla fighter. Conflict is one of the main causes for holding back development. Photo: Dermot Tatlow/Panos Pictures**

For instance, public confidence in the legal system grows if law and justice is maintained and people see criminals are punished. If officers of finance departments have the proper skills and resources to turn in credible budgets, it's more likely they'll be able to raise revenue for basic services, such as health and education. If fisheries officers are able to uphold the law and arrest illegal fishing crews, the fishing industry will be protected.

## WAYS OF AID

The aid program is working smarter through:

- » drawing on the resources of other Australian government departments
- » Australian companies established in recipient countries to manage projects
- » international organisations, such as the World Food Programme and UNICEF which provide emergency relief assistance, especially during and after natural disasters
- » Australian non-government organisations and international partners, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, that work with communities in developing countries on wide-ranging projects
- » multinational institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank
- » universities and other institutions with special and similar interests
- » volunteers who offer their time and skills to build up expertise with counterparts in developing countries.

## VALUE OF RESEARCH

**AusAID recognises research is a vital part of development assistance. The ways and means of effectively delivering aid rely on quality findings. Take water.**

The recently published *Safe Water Guide* is a result of international collaboration and AusAID's own experience. For 30 years AusAID has been improving water quality and access in the Pacific, Asia and Africa. In a world seeing an alarming decline in safe drinking water, the guide is an invaluable resource for water quality managers.

Problems are never the same and rarely elicit the same response. In Bangladesh, for example, the presence of dangerous levels of naturally occurring arsenic in groundwater causes serious illness and sometimes death.

In Manikganj district, near Dhaka, AusAID is working innovatively. It can't beat the problem so it's helping to secure alternative supplies of safe drinking water. One option involves harvesting rainwater off roofs and another is creating protected shallow wells (often referred to as 'dug wells'). But that's not the end of it – even solutions carry risk.

Alternative water sources must be looked after correctly, otherwise they can do more harm than good. It's very easy for microbiological contaminants to enter poorly-maintained dug wells and cause serious illnesses, such as cholera and typhoid.

Villagers in Manikganj are keeping their new water supply systems operating by following the principles of the *Safe Water Guide*. No longer exposed to the dangers of arsenic poisoning, people are, for the first time in about 20 years, enjoying safe clean drinking water.



Bangladesh. Roof water system – the roof is the water catchment, the gutter and tank are the delivery and storage systems, and the tap at the bottom is the point of use. At each stage in the system there are hazards that must be managed. AusAID's *Safe Water Guide* shows how. Photo: Simon Buckley/AusAID

Sustainable development, social stability and economic growth are achievable.'

A White Paper on Australia's aid program will be tabled in Federal Parliament in early 2006. Its purpose is to examine and contest the future directions of Australia's aid engagement, particularly in its key development partnerships – namely, Papua New Guinea, the Pacific, Indonesia and Asia. The White Paper will provide a medium-term blueprint for Australia's future strategy.

## MEETING TODAY'S CHALLENGES

For many people aid is mainly about supplying commodities, such as food, water and shelter, to people in crisis, such as those caught in a natural disaster. While this is enormously important and central to the aid program, it's not the only part.

Today aid means regional development cooperation. Australia's purpose in giving aid is quite unambiguously to encourage stability and sustainable economic growth in the Asia Pacific. Success

relies on secure partnerships and such factors as political will, social acceptance and cultural sensitivity. There is no one way of delivering aid.

**Not so very long ago, many feared that development in the world's poorest countries was in danger of being given up as a lost cause. Some held that extreme poverty was a sad but inescapable aspect of the human condition. Quite rightly, that view is now seen as intellectually indefensible and morally untenable. Today, it is widely recognised not only that poverty must be defeated, but that it can be.**

*Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary General*

Meanwhile the fight against poverty goes on. Over the past 50 years or so, Australia's aid program has made considerable advances and literally transformed lives. Yet improvement to the quality of life of individuals is often overlooked in light of the – sometimes daunting – bigger picture. There is always so much more to do.

Pessimists may subscribe to the belief that 'the poor will always be with us' and accept the imbalance of fortunes is 'just the way it is' but it's not a view held by the United Nations or the Australian Government's overseas aid program. PG/EJ



# STATE OF THE NATION

**PAPUA NEW GUINEA:** It's 30 years since Australia's nearest neighbour gained independence. To mark the anniversary, His Excellency Charles Lepani, Papua New Guinea's newly appointed High Commissioner to Australia, looks back on the past three decades. Anna Awasa from AusAID Port Moresby asked the questions.

**ANNA AWASA:** *In my preparations for this interview I learnt you were one of the so called gang of four, 'a group of influential young civil service chiefs who played the leading role in holding together public administration and public policy in the formative decade or so after independence in 1975.'* (The others were Sir Mekere Morauta, Sir Rabbie Namaliu and Sir Anthony Siaguru.) *What was your vision for Papua New Guinea and what kind of role did you see Australia playing in the country's future?*

**CHARLES LEPANI:** I think at independence, sharing in the euphoria of managing and developing public policy for an emerging nation, we felt we had the opportunity to learn from other developing countries' experiences – and we could avoid the pitfalls. My vision then as now, though circumstances have altered, is Papua New Guinea's future is one of great optimism and opportunity. Back then, there were even times when I convinced myself that nothing could go wrong. In that period, the degree of consensus to do the right thing for the country between the political leadership and the



bureaucratic support was one of the most inspirational aspects of the years immediately before and after independence. This sense of unity of purpose for the national good was a driving force for us.

As for Australia's role in our future – I, like my colleagues, had thought Australia's role was transitional. We had worked out that Papua New Guinea's political independence would be driven by fiscal self-reliance. But the fall in copper prices in the early 1980s, combined with natural disasters over the recent past, and a period of spending beyond our means, have combined to prolong our dependence on Australia's bilateral aid program.

What is clear – Papua New Guinea must continue to make



the effort to move away from dependency on Australia's large financial aid program currently running at 17 per cent of our total resource envelope. This form of relationship has no place in international relations today. We

are two sovereign friends. We need to enhance our bilateral relationship and move on with new initiatives, based on increased bilateral flows of trade and investment and commerce.



LEFT: Papua New Guinea's High Commissioner to Australia. Photo: Lepani family

CENTRE: The Kassman Pass between Lae and Goroka provides some of the country's most spectacular scenery. Photo: Rocky Roe

**ANNA AWASA:** *Many people talk about a love-hate relationship when describing Papua New Guinea and Australia. What are your thoughts about the way the two governments and people have interacted over the past 30 years?*

**CHARLES LEPANI:** The short answer is this. We've had our bad days and our good days. The dependency relationship has stirred negative sentiments among young Papua New Guineans. It's not uncommon to hear calls of 'boomerang aid'. Fortunately, there are also signs of young Australians and Papua New Guineans developing greater awareness of each other's countries and cultures. There's an understanding of the long and unique association between us.

The important thing is government policies must reflect people's wishes. Both countries, more often than not, have risen to the occasion and jointly made decisions which have sustained our bilateral ties.

**ANNA AWASA:** *Has Australia played any role in your personal growth and development?*

**CHARLES LEPANI:** I have a relatively long association with Australia and Australians. I went to high school for six years (1961-66) at Charters Towers, Queensland, and part of my university education was in Australia. Unlike my experience in colonial Papua New Guinea, I was never scarred by racism at school. In Queensland I met and played sports with Australians who invited me to their homes, farms and cattle stations. This experience provided me with the single most important insight of my life – which is to respect, understand and be confident in my dealings with

other people, and to expect them to behave in the same way towards me – be they Australians, Chinese, Americans or other.

I have come to know many Australians and regard them as friends – though I still harbour a dream that one day soon, Papua New Guinea will thrash Australia at rugby, soccer and cricket!

**ANNA AWASA:** *Since independence, what would you describe as some of Papua New Guinea's strengths and successes?*

**CHARLES LEPANI:** The continuing resilience of our people is one of our strengths, particularly those Papua New Guineans who manage to sustain themselves on subsistence production. They are the silent achievers of Papua New Guinea's independence and fortunately they are still the majority. If what public policy commentators and detractors say about Papua New Guinea as a developing country were correct – with our alarming comparative infant mortality rates and \$1 per annum income for some sections of our populace – most of the 80 per cent of our rural population would have perished since independence. These purveyors of gloom and doom would also have us believe that releasing land from customary ownership would be the solution to our development woes. Papua New Guinea's political and economic independence and indeed the very essence of its sovereignty and statehood as a nation, is intrinsically interwoven with how we develop and manage our policies for our customary land tenure system.

We are currently experiencing the re-emergence of sound public policy making and macro-economic management. Sound

economic performance can be attributed to the relative success of domestic economic, and in particular, fiscal management.

At the political level, while on one or two occasions, we have gone perilously close to serious political instability, we have been very successful in maintaining democracy and the institutions of democracy in our own unique way.

**ANNA AWASA:** *In a recent press release regarding your appointment, Sir Rabbie Namaliu said, 'Mr Lepani's extensive experience in both the private and public sectors will enable him to establish vital contacts within Australian government circles, academia and the media to effectively promote Papua New Guinea.' What areas will you look at?*

**CHARLES LEPANI:** I will be promoting trade, investment and commercial flows between our country and Australia. I'm also keen to pursue employment and sporting opportunities. These are achievable. Along with others, I'll be ensuring Papua New Guinea's development policies are conveyed clearly to various stakeholders in government, civil society including churches and non-government organisations, and the private sector.

Australia and Papua New Guinea are on the threshold of very exciting and challenging times as the Gas Pipeline Project nears fruition. Once the pipeline comes into production it will be a significant milestone, benefits of which will include the rebalancing of bilateral relations. I feel honoured and privileged to be part of these developments in my role as Papua New Guinea's High Commissioner to Australia.



# MAKE ME VISIBLE



ABOVE: 'This is a working boy – is he old enough to work? Dhaka means hardship. There is no rice without hardship,' says Tarikul Islam who took this photograph.

LEFT: Breaking bricks for the construction industry. Bangladesh has some of the world's highest levels of hazardous child labour, child prostitution and human trafficking. Without family support or a regular income, street children are particularly vulnerable. Photo: Dieter Telemans/Panos Pictures

IT'S ESTIMATED THERE'S OVER 600,000 STREET CHILDREN LIVING IN BANGLADESH\*, 75 PER CENT OF WHOM LIVE IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL, DHAKA. IN A COUNTRY RANKED 138TH ON THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX AND WHERE 50 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION IS LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE, THESE CHILDREN REPRESENT THE ABSOLUTE LOWEST LEVEL IN THE SOCIAL HIERARCHY. IN THE WORLD'S MOST DENSELY POPULATED NATION, THIS TRANSLATES INTO SOCIAL INVISIBILITY.

\*Without birth registration or a national census, figures range from 500,000 to 2,000,000. Statistics also depend on the definition of 'street children'.

Digital photography is doing more for street children in Dhaka than anyone could have anticipated. What project coordinator Melissa Hurd started as a bit of fun and a way of overcoming the language barrier has grown into **VISIBLE** – an important communication project.

[1] A man makes garlands while a child places one around the neck of another and a baby sleeps on a mat. Polly Akhter, the photographer, says, 'I like this photo because they are a family – and also because the man said he'd make a garland for me and he is.'

[2] A workshop session with a professional. The obvious psychological distress under which many street children live often translates into low attention spans and high mobility. Participating in aid initiatives, such as literacy development or vocational training, is often problematic as street children lose interest or move to a new area. 'The thing that struck me about the photo workshops is that children who are normally frustrated and impatient in other learning sessions had no problem concentrating for five hour stretches,' says Melissa Hurd.

[3] Most people loved having their photos taken. Photo by Polly Akhter

[4] Saddam Hossain sets up a picture in Golapbagh. When asked what people will make of the **VISIBLE** exhibition he says, 'They will understand how the children of Bangladesh work, sleep on the streets, and eat rotten food.'

[5] Talking pictures (from left) Milon, Rubel, Melissa and Sujan. 'As I watch the children eagerly learning more about taking photographs and communicating ideas, I think **VISIBLE** is helping them to form better opinions of themselves. Hopefully this will mean it's less likely they'll make poor life decisions,' says Melissa.

[6] A couple of girls take a break not from school or playing but collecting rubbish. Photo by Tarikul



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## SEE MY WORTH

**BANGLADESH: VISIBLE is offering a rare opportunity for self expression, creativity and self development. Under the guidance of Melissa Hurd, street children are learning what it is to achieve and to feel self worth.**

The children were jumping about with enthusiasm. For weeks they had become accustomed to Melissa-*Appa* (elder sister) taking photos, but now one of them had the camera. The flash went off and everyone rushed to have a look at the playback. Crowded over the display screen, one of the children said, 'It's just like Appa's photos!' Melissa Hurd looked down to see a perfectly framed photograph, and Milon standing there beaming with pride.

'Initially, some of the kids took to directing or organising photographs for me. After each shot I would show them the playback. They enjoyed thinking about ways I could improve it! Their enthusiasm got me thinking about opportunities for them to express themselves,' explains Melissa, who is in Bangladesh as part of the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) Program. 'I realised the potential of photography. It doesn't require literacy and the immediacy

THE VISIBLE PHOTO PROJECT IS SHOWING KIDS WHAT THEY CAN DO, RATHER THAN WHAT THEY CAN'T. IT'S NOT REMINDING THEM ABOUT ALL THE THINGS THEY DON'T HAVE OR NEVER WILL – IT'S CONCENTRATING ON THE POSITIVES.

Melissa's relationship with a group of street children is special. It's built on affection, trust and mutual respect. Through her guiding care the children are on a voyage of discovery. They're learning about themselves, their surroundings, each other and the possibilities life offers, if given half a chance.

As part of her volunteer's job, Melissa was asked to take photos in and around the drop-in centres regularly attended by Dhaka's street children. Fascinated by the playback feature on her digital camera, the children started making shy approaches. It wasn't long before an easy rapport developed between them.

of digital playback captures and sustains interest.'

Affected by the impact of Milon's first photograph, Melissa decided to organise a series of workshops on photo techniques, creativity and self-awareness – and so VISIBLE was launched. Initially eight street children were invited to think about telling their stories through images. Melissa was supported by staff from the drop-in centres and two Bangladeshi photography students.

'The aim of the workshops is to teach the children about the power of visual imagery and how photographs can be used to express ideas and feelings,' says Melissa. The children



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receive a one-hour technical training session with two Canon Powershots before they go out to explore their local area. They take turns with the camera but the idea is they search out likely 'shots'. After each session, the photographs are loaded onto a laptop and used to prompt discussion. The talk is about the pictures but sometimes it leads into other areas, such as social issues and the daily difficulties the children face.

'VISIBLE is about giving street children a voice,' says Melissa. 'By listening to them, passing on tips and appreciating the photographic work they produce, the project is building self confidence and a sense of optimism and possibility.'

Those who've been through the workshops are consolidating what they've learnt by sharing their experiences and know-how with others in the drop-in centres. The initial group of eight participants has expanded to include five more.

It's only the beginning but VISIBLE is already a success. It emphatically shows even those

most disadvantaged can be creative capable individuals if simply given a chance.

For the past five months, Melissa Hurd has been in Bangladesh as part of the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) Program. She is working for a local non-government organisation called the Population, Services & Training Centre (PSTC), which helps poor and socially disadvantaged people. An aspect of Melissa's work is taking photographs to assist with research and marketing for PSTC's street children project ARISE (Appropriate Resources for Improving the Street Children's Environment). For more information contact Population, Services & Training Centre <[www.pstcbd.org](http://www.pstcbd.org)>

**For more information about the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) Program contact <[www.ausaid.gov.au/youtham](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/youtham)>**

ABOVE: The young photographers – on the other side of the camera. Photo: Melissa Hurd



#### UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S DAY – 20 NOVEMBER 2005

Two photographic exhibitions are planned to showcase VISIBLE images.

- » 18 November 2005 at Kulcha Multicultural Arts WA Inc, 1st Floor, 13 South Terrace, Fremantle, Perth, Western Australia <[www.kulcha.com.au](http://www.kulcha.com.au)> The exhibition will be officially launched on Universal Children's Day – 20 November 2005. It will run for a month and during this time aims to raise awareness about the issues facing street children in Bangladesh. The exhibition will also help raise money to improve resources at the drop-in centres.
- » Unconfirmed but likely early 2006 in Dhaka, which will give street children an opportunity to see their own work exhibited. 'It's also a move,' says Melissa, 'aimed at getting people to think about the lives of these kids. By illustrating their capacity to make a meaningful contribution to the arts, the exhibition hopes to reduce some of the stigma street children suffer in Bangladeshi society.' For further details see <[www.pstcbd.org](http://www.pstcbd.org)>

## INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY – 5 DECEMBER 2005



The United Nations  
International Volunteer Day

**In 2005–06 the Australian Government is providing \$26.5 million to support volunteer programs – \$16 million for the general volunteer program and \$10.5 million for the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program.**

The Australian Government has supported Australian volunteers overseas since the 1960s. Volunteers are an important and effective part of the aid program helping to:

- » expand abilities and capacities of individuals, organisations and communities in developing countries through sharing skills and knowledge
- » foster links and partnerships between developing countries and Australia
- » raise public awareness of development issues

#### AUSTRALIAN YOUTH AMBASSADORS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Youth ambassadors are aged between 18 and 30 and gain overseas professional development experience by taking on short-term assignments (3–12 months) in the Asia Pacific. Youth ambassadors have the opportunity to experience another culture, exchange skills and knowledge with local counterparts and contribute to overseas organisations and communities.

One of AusAID's most successful programs, the

Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program was launched by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, in 1998. It has made a significant contribution to building networks between partner organisations in Australia and overseas.

T: (08) 8232 3050

<[www.ausaid.gov.au/youtham](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/youtham)>

#### AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS VOLUNTEERS

The Australian Business Volunteers Program, established

## ENGLISH IS THE WORD

**INDONESIA:** Collaboration between Australian and Indonesian teachers is improving English language lessons in Islamic schools in East Java.

**A**mber Earles is a teacher trainer working at Darul 'Ulum *pesantren*. This is an Islamic school campus comprising 14 different educational levels, from primary to university. Over 7,000 students attend the *pesantren* and the schedule is hectic. Students rise at 4 a.m. and don't go back to bed until 10 p.m. Most students live in dormitories on-site. About 30 students sleep in one small room.

Amber is working intensively with Indonesian teachers from four junior schools. One of her first tasks is showing them how to make classroom resources that aren't too expensive and don't require a lot of preparation. 'Making the teaching materials is great fun and is adding spark to our English lessons,' says Amber. 'Some teachers even ask to stay in at recess to do extra!'

Enthusiasm is high. It's not uncommon for Amber to receive phonecalls at 5 a.m. asking teaching-related questions. To help fulfil the appetite for learning, Amber and her colleagues are running workshops and intensive professional development programs. They're proving very successful in lifting English skills and in generating fresh teaching ideas. 'We've also established English classes on the Internet and formed an English club for cross-cultural exchanges.'

Amber is finding the teacher training experience is throwing up all sorts of challenges but she's also finding many rewards – there's the friendships and mutual respect that develop between colleagues, and it's not possible to go past the simple enthusiasm of the classroom.

Amber Earles is in Indonesia with the Islamic Schools English Language Project (ISELP), which is funded by AusAID and managed by Australian Volunteers International (AVI). It has placed 13 teacher trainers in *pesantren* (Islamic schools) in East Java. Few teachers in the Indonesian school system have tertiary training and professional development opportunities are scarce. ISELP allows for on-the-job training and mentoring of local teachers.

TOP LEFT: Amber Earles (right) in a one-on-one lesson with Indonesian counterpart, Ibu Fitriyah, who says, 'I am very happy that I can work with an ISELP teacher trainer. I get a lot of input and knowledge about how to manage a class, prepare material and make classes more interesting.'

LEFT: One of the school buildings. Photos: Amber Earles/AVI



in 1981, places volunteers in approximately 13 countries around the Pacific and South East Asia. Volunteers may choose from a range of assignments in micro, small and medium-size businesses, civil society organisations and government agencies. Each carries the overall aim of reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development.

Promoting good governance within governments, businesses and organisations is a priority of Australia's overseas aid program. Consequently, most business

volunteer assignments concern governance.

T: (02) 6285 1686

<[www.abv.org.au](http://www.abv.org.au)>

### AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL

Australian Volunteers International recruits, prepares and supports hundreds of Australian volunteers who live and work in developing communities. It works with partner organisations in host communities to ensure placements are able to respond to locally-identified

needs. Volunteers are skilled professionals from all walks of life – education, health, community development, finance, information technology, communications, rural development, trade and engineering.

T: (03) 9279 1788

<[www.australianvolunteers.com](http://www.australianvolunteers.com)>

### VOLUNTEERS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FROM AUSTRALIA

Also known as VIDA, Volunteers for International Development from Australia is a new program. It gives Australian citizens and

permanent residents age 18 years and over the opportunity to take on assignments in Asia, the Pacific, Africa and the Middle East. VIDA aims to reduce poverty and help achieve sustainable development mainly through skills transfer and institutional strengthening.

T: (08) 8232 3050

<[www.vidavolunteers.com.au](http://www.vidavolunteers.com.au)>



2005 The United Nations International Year of Microcredit

About 500 million families around the world are not able to obtain basic financial services simply because they are too poor. Microfinance can help rectify this.

Microfinance describes financial services such as savings, credit, payment transfers and insurance, for poor and low-income people. By using microfinance poor families are able to lead themselves out of poverty.

Microcredit is a sub set of microfinance. It works by providing small collateral-free loans to the poor for self employment. Clients invest these loans in small businesses, which generate income growth. By making money, clients are able to repay their loans together with a commercial interest rate. This allows lending institutions to cover their expenses – making microcredit a highly cost-effective approach to development.

Opportunity International's co-founder is Australian David Bussau, AM – one of the first and most influential implementers of microfinance. David's journey began in 1976 in Bali when he realised the poor needed more than temporary assistance provided by traditional approaches to development. He began making small personal low-interest loans to assist enterprising local people to help themselves. Applying business thinking and entrepreneurial principles, David gave poor people the power and means to live sustainably, provide for their families and transform their own lives. In the process he helped form a new methodology known as Micro Enterprise Development (MED).

AusAID supports many non-government organisations specialising in microfinance activities. Among them is Opportunity International.



Thirty years on, David's continuing contribution to enterprise development has been recognised. He's become the first social entrepreneur to be awarded the prestigious Australian Entrepreneur of the Year Award, sponsored by Ernst & Young. In the 18 years these awards have run, none of the 35 participating countries has ever given their national title to an entrepreneur from a not-for-profit sector. But then again, no previous World

# GIVING A LITTLE CREDIT

THE IMPACT OF MICROFINANCE IS GREAT, YET THE COST OF IMPLEMENTATION IS RELATIVELY LOW. 2005 – THE UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MICROCREDIT – IS HIGHLIGHTING BOTH THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF MICRO-ENTERPRISE IN EFFORTS TO END WORLD POVERTY AND ACHIEVE THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS.

Entrepreneur of the Year – never mind national winner – can lay claim to creating over two million jobs world wide and lifting 20 million people out of poverty.

Yet this is exactly what David's organisation, Opportunity International, has achieved. At the award ceremony Brian Schwartz, Chief Executive Officer, Ernst & Young Australia, said, 'David Bussau is the ultimate entrepreneur. By providing the resources for others to become

entrepreneurs he has positively impacted millions of people and served as an inspiration for us all.'

ABOVE: David Bussau in East Timor. Micro-enterprise is a 'working solution to poverty'. Photo: Opportunity International

# GROWING IDENTITY NOT DEPENDENCY

**EAST TIMOR:** During the violence that followed the 1999 independence vote more than 80 per cent of houses, hospitals, schools, banks and essential utilities were destroyed. Crops and manufacturing equipment were ruined. Trust and confidence were broken and unease and insecurity spread. These elements combined to make East Timor a very challenging place for microfinance.

In the past four years, despite the many difficulties, Opportunity International has, through its implementing partner, overseen the disbursement of more than 10,000 loans worth over \$2 million. To date 94 per cent of them are being repaid in full and on time. The staff has grown from eight to 48 full-time employees, all of whom are local East Timorese.

The challenges for microfinance in East Timor remain great in a still volatile environment. Regardless,

Opportunity International plans to provide effective, long-term services appropriate to the needs of each community. Its aim is to continue the steady growth of the past 4 years – establishing new branches, increasing client outreach, and developing and training staff.

Not only is microfinance giving poor people a chance to choose and plan for their own future, in a post-conflict society, it's also helping to regenerate community trust – and this is a vital first step for a society rehabilitating itself.



With independence East Timor's sense of national identity has grown. After the trauma of conflict it just wants to grow strong, free and independent.

East Timor. Children scavenging for food on the streets and in destroyed buildings. Photo: Jim Holmes/Panos Pictures

## FUTURE PLANS

Inacia De Castro has invested two loans in her fruit vending business and is sending five of her seven children to school with her increased income.

In 1999, with her children in tow, Inacia fled her country. For three months she and her children lived in a refugee camp in West Timor, all the while worrying about her husband left behind.

Returning to East Timor meant beginning life again.

With the assistance of the loans, Inacia has steadily grown her small fruit vending business. Through mentoring, financial advice and training from Opportunity International, she's learnt better business management practices and has been able to expand her product range. With some help and

a great deal of hard work, Inacia has seen her income nearly triple. She is able to save for her children's futures as well as cover the family's daily expenses.

And having never been to school, it's with great pride that she watches her children progressing with their education. Her forward planning includes sending them to university – and giving to them the opportunities that were never available to her.

**Opportunity International (OI) is a global leader and expert in the provision of microfinance. Over 30 years, it has improved the lives of over 20 million people living in poverty. For more information about Opportunity International go to <[www.opportunity.org.au](http://www.opportunity.org.au)> or phone 1800 812 164**



Inacia De Castro – not afraid to think big and realise dreams. Photo: Opportunity International

# PATH TO PEACE



**PHILIPPINES:** In almost every way Mindanao lags behind the country's two other major islands – Luzon and Visayas. Several decades of conflict caused by a separatist movement have held back development. Yet, recently – with well-considered and carefully targeted international assistance – there's change. Peace is returning and with strong potential for growth based on its vast natural resources, the future for Mindanao looks hopeful.

The village of Delabayan in Lanao del Norte Province, Mindanao, was at the centre of the armed conflict between separatist Islamic rebels – known as the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) – and government soldiers. After a long and damaging period of polarisation, Muslims and Christians are once again reunited, largely through the efforts of the local authorities, international donors, and non-government organisations. Villagers, forced to leave their communities during the conflict, are returning and rebuilding their homes. Delabayan has become a model of political tolerance and economic activity. Muslims and Christians live in peace and harmony.

In nearby Zamboanga del

Norte Province, the town of Dinas was once a stronghold for the MNLF and a haven for high-powered weapons. No outsider ever dared enter. Today Dinas is an example of a thriving agricultural community. Instead of weapons, former combatants carry farm tools and spend their time usefully growing crops.

The soil around the town of Muñoz in Zamboanga is rich and fertile. During the years of conflict it couldn't be cultivated but today it's helping the local people make a decent living. For example, villagers have set up a cassava production and marketing business.

Cassava is a tropical plant cultivated for its tuberous roots. Muñoz farmers sell cassava chips to the local cooperative, which,

in turn, sells the produce to the country's largest food company. Cassava is used for making flour and starch and world demand for it is strong.

These three places – Delabayan, Dinas and Muñoz – have something in common.

Each is a 'peace and development community', established under the Government of the Philippines–United Nations Multi-Donor Programme. This program, set up in 1997, a year after the signing of the peace agreement between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front, is working well.

So far there are 150 peace and development communities across 15 provinces in Mindanao. Each comprises a cluster of *barangays* (villages), formerly under the influence of the MNLF. To qualify they have to show willingness and ability to change by:

- » strengthening local organisations, such as farmers' cooperatives and women's groups
- » rebuilding ways to make a living through sustainable

agriculture and micro-enterprises. The cassava production in Muñoz is a prime example

- » bolstering links with local government agencies, such as the agricultural office and health office. In the past, the poor haven't been encouraged to approach local or national government agencies.

Through the peace and development communities, former fighters are learning how to be successful farmers and business people – and they're also learning how to live in peace. For example, they're learning conflict management skills.

Australia, through AusAID, is supporting peace and development communities. Over the past seven years Australia has contributed over \$17 million, making Australia the largest single donor. This year the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, approved a contribution of \$17 million over the next five years to the 'ACT for Peace Program' – the 'ACT' stands for 'Action for Conflict Transformation'. It succeeds the original 1997 program agreed between the



FAR LEFT: Combatants of the Muslim Moro National Liberation Front guerilla army. Photo: Jon Spaul/Panos Pictures

LEFT: From arms to farms. Former combatants pack cassava and work in the fields. Peace and development communities are doing well in agriculture production. Women are particularly important and active in business enterprises. Photos: Joe Benavides/CDD; Jon Spaul/Panos Pictures

Government of the Philippines and the United Nations.

The new program expands coverage across Mindanao but continues to concentrate on areas dominated by the MNLF.

Counsellor Angus Macdonald, AusAID, Manila, says, 'the ACT for Peace Program continues to develop people organisations. It allows for basic services to be delivered, it promotes enterprise development and helps former combatants to manage conflict.'

Above all, ACT for Peace is promoting a culture of harmony and partnership and as such is relevant for conflict-affected and post-conflict communities everywhere. RI



Tan Sen and his wife in front of their new cement house. Photo: Ma Zhigang/AusAID



# ON THE EDGE

**CHINA:** A few improvements in Gaoshawo township, north-western Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, are making life on the edge of the desert a little easier.

Tan Sen and his wife are enjoying the change. Like other villagers, they've traded in their rundown mud-brick hut for a comfortable cement house.

The good fortune that has come to the village, Tan Sen explains, is thanks to assistance from Australia. In his case, funding by AusAID through the Integrated Community Development Project, has bought him some high quality breeding sheep. 'These new ewes are much healthier and produce

many more lambs than we're used to seeing,' says Tan Sen.

Some farmers in the village inspect the recently installed deep-well irrigation system – also part of the community development project. One farmer, Zhang Wencun, explains, 'We can irrigate our fields in much less time and the new pipes save 40 per cent of water previously lost to leakage.'

In such an arid climate, water is as precious as gold.

The community development

project has also introduced biogas to the village. Biogas is a renewable fuel suitable for cooking and lighting. It's produced when biological material (human and animal waste) is degraded without oxygen to make a mixture of methane and carbon dioxide.

Some of the advantages of biogas are: it's clean, odourless and energy efficient, it negates the need to cut down scarce trees for firewood, and it produces nutrient-rich, sanitised compost.

# WRONG



**INDONESIAN BORNEO:** Australian-backed research supports what many have long argued – modern life is unhealthy. Scientists are comparing the lifestyles of traditional Punan tribespeople with their urban counterparts. They're finding there's no contest when it comes to choosing between the old ways and the new.



Villagers, such as Lu Wenfang and her husband Zhang Peng, are impressed with their vegetable quality and improved yields since they've been using the natural fertiliser. Holding freshly picked prize tomatoes from her greenhouse, a delighted Zhang Peng says, 'These are best eating.'

Another side of the community development project covered environmental management. Villagers have learnt about desert vegetation and the need to encourage regrowth. They continue to build fences to keep livestock away from delicate areas and tend newly planted grasses, shrubs and trees.

Two years on from project completion the ongoing benefits are clear. Villagers are pleased with the support from local and provincial governments. There's a general sense of achievement and wellbeing among villagers – many helped design and implement the project. And there's more. Sand storms are fewer and less severe due to extensive revegetation, farming is more rewarding and, with the new cement houses, home is definitely more comfortable.

**ABOVE: Tan Sen with newly-born twin lambs bought under an AusAID-funded community development project. Photo: Ma Zhigang/AusAID**

Scientists, including from the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), are comparing two Punan communities of the same origin, language and culture. One group follows traditional ways of hunting and gathering in the deep forest. The other lives an urban lifestyle in the mining and timber town of Malinau, near the Malaysian border.

Most Punan gravitate to urban centres, seduced by the trappings of so-called 'civilisation'. It's a migration that's occurred over

the past 30 years as 'progress' threatens forest boundaries. 'They want modern life, they want to wear t-shirts and jeans and drink Coca-Cola, they're attracted to all these things,' says Edmond Dounias from CIFOR, 'but they underestimate what it will cost them in terms of their way of life, their culture and the benefits they gain from the forest.'

According to 2003 statistics, only 4,500 Punan are traditional hunter-gatherers, roaming the lowland forests of East Kalimantan.

# WAY – GO BACK



And of these many are less nomadic than their forebears. Semi-traditional Punan live in remote hamlets and their forays into the forest for vegetables, wild boar and herbal medicines are usually more seasonal than daily.

But, according to CIFOR, even a modified traditional forest lifestyle is better than the 'modern' life of urban Punan. Once they arrive in Malinau, for example, they find it hard to cope. They may live in houses with electricity, wear Western clothes and drive

on tarred roads but working in the coalmines or in the lucrative, but illegal, logging industry is bewildering and stressful. That's if they manage to get a job. Many Punan are discriminated against or find they don't have the skills to adapt to work routines. Consequently, healthcare – one of the prime motivations for moving to town – is unaffordable and they're exposed to social problems, such as drug and alcohol abuse.

No longer able to rely on the rich resources of the forest larder

many Punan are also developing poor eating habits. Instead of a varied and highly nutritious diet of bushmeats, berries and roots, urban Punan tend to eat rice and low quality meats. Rather than snacking on healthy treats from the forest floor they eat fatty processed foods like potato chips and commercial cakes. The result is many Punan are overweight and developing health problems, like heart disease and diabetes.

'What's happening to the Punan who leave their forest

ABOVE: A Punan man still living a fairly traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyle cooks a dish of forest ferns.

Photo: Edmond Dounias/CIFOR

LEFT: Iban warrior – East Kalimantan is home to several tribal groups, including Iban, Punan and Banuaq. Photo: Sarawak Tourism

## COMMUNITY HALLS

**INDONESIA:** In the still of the morning in Aceh, the sound of hammers tapping drifts across the landscape.



communities is a tragedy,' says Greg Clough, a former AusAID officer now attached to CIFOR. 'They're losing not only their cultural values but also their foraging and hunting skills. In Malinau, the roast boar on the dinner table is more likely bought from the local market than brought down in the forest.'

Scientists hope their research will persuade the Punan to go back to forest life – and those already there, to stay put. CIFOR is playing its part. In an effort to stop them coming to town it's working with local authorities to take medical supplies to remote Punan hamlets.

Greg Clough is optimistic the research will influence government policies over land use, particularly in Kalimantan where precious forests are under threat. A big part of the problem is widespread illegal logging. Irresponsible commercial interests, as well as poor land-use decisions by government officials, are pushing indigenous people to abandon the land on which they've lived for centuries. 'These findings will help authorities make more informed choices. They will see how forest felling impacts on local people.'

Edmond Dounias agrees. 'Authorities often feel improving the lives of remote tribespeople means moving them into the

modern world while our research shows the reverse is true.'

Governments, aid agencies and non-government organisations now 'have proof that taking the advantages of modern life, such as dispensaries, to the people in the forest and not vice-versa – will help preserve a diminishing culture as well as provide better development outcomes.'

It just goes to show reducing poverty and improving health and wellbeing are sometimes best achieved by going backwards – not forwards.

**The Australian Government, through the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), provided CIFOR with over \$600,000 in core and project funding in 2004. Australia's overseas aid program recognises the importance of scientific research in providing a sound basis for designing and delivering aid initiatives that save lives, reduce hunger and improve welfare among the world's poorest people. CIFOR's research into the health of the Punan also received considerable support from the French Institute for Research and Development (IRD).**

**ABOVE: Punan in the deep forests of East Kalimantan – following even a semi-traditional forest lifestyle has health benefits. Photo: Edmond Dounias/CIFOR**

**A**s the tropical heat builds, young men clamber over a wooden structure, piecing together what will become the hub of their village – a new community hall.

Here people will socialise and discuss the day's business.

'The tsunami swept away more than lives and buildings. It destroyed the social fabric of entire villages,' says AusAID's Allison Sudradjat. 'People not only lost their families and their belongings but also those links that bind people together and allow them to function as a social group.'

AusAID is funding the construction of 66 community halls in the most devastated areas of Aceh Besar, as well as office accommodation in six sub-districts. The cost will be about \$3 million.

The halls are multi-purpose but in the short term they'll provide much needed meeting places for decision makers and villagers to consult. 'When the community halls are built, it will make it easier for the local governments to inform people about essential services that can help with the daunting task of rebuilding homes and lives. Not having a building of any sort to work from has made this pretty difficult so far,' says Allison. Some of the immediate issues are releasing identity cards, village planning proposals and providing building approvals.

AusAID has sent several engineers to Aceh to offer technical advice and help supervise construction. Many Acehnese have never worked as builders before so they're picking up important new skills. The training aspect

## SAFER AT SEA



can't be underestimated given the devastating loss of local talent and know-how in the tsunami.

'Local people need to have a big say in how the halls are designed. They are for them after all. They know what will suit them best. The process will also give them confidence that they are regaining control of their lives,' says Allison. **EJ**

**ABOVE:** Official launch of construction. Photo: AusAID

**ABOVE LEFT:** Buildings are also going up in the suburbs of Banda Aceh. Photo: Rob Walker



**VIETNAM:** The best way to survive a natural disaster is to prepare for it. Worse things happen at sea only when safety isn't considered.

Life jackets on boats and the means to communicate at sea are legal requirements in most developed nations. In poorer ones, because of costs involved and lack of safety awareness, these things are sometimes left to chance. A recent AusAID-funded survey of 374 fishermen in Quang Ngai Province found less than a quarter of boats carried life jackets or lifebuoys. Hardly anyone knew how to contact marine rescue centres. Some fishermen believed they could use plastic cans as flotation devices if they were swept overboard.

Yet Vietnamese fishing people know only too well the dangers at sea. They still talk about Cyclone Linda in 1999 which killed more than 3,000 fishermen from the central provinces. It's a fact many lives each year are lost off

Vietnam's treacherous southern coast because of poor radio communication and inadequate emergency equipment.

And as if to illustrate – earlier this year, two fishing boats from My Tan Village in Quang Ngai Province along the southern-central coast of Vietnam were damaged in heavy seas. They were hundreds of kilometres away from home. One of the boats sank but the 46 fishermen on board survived. The men floated in the waves, supported by their life jackets, until fellow villagers were able to rescue them. 'Marine two-way radios and life jackets saved them,' a local fisherman later commented.

That the incident didn't end in tragedy is proof an AusAID-funded disaster mitigation program, recently put in place, is working.

The program is helping Vietnamese fishermen buy lifejackets at subsidised prices. It has also given and installed marine two-way radio sets in five villages on the Quang Ngai coast. 'With these radios, communication with local fishermen is maintained



and therefore they are much safer while at sea,' says Chris Milligan, the program leader.

One set went to Bui Van Luong, the shore-based radio station operator who handled the My Tan incident. He received the distress signals from the two fishing boats, 'It was the first time we really understood the importance of communication between those of us on land and those of us at sea.'

More than this, the two-way radio sets allow passing of vital information. 'Now we can track fishing vessels by communicating with them several times a day and giving them the latest weather forecasts. During bad weather and storms, operators work in shifts to provide communications around the clock,' says Bui Van Luong.

**TOP LEFT:** Fishing boats offloading their catch. Photo: Peter Barker/Panos Pictures

**TOP RIGHT:** Bui Van Luong knows the marine two-way radio can save lives. Photo: AusAID

# GENDER AND VOLUNTEERING



A peasant woman takes a rest. Photo: Mark Henley/Panos Pictures

## WOMEN IN NEED

**CHINA:** Elizabeth Loughnan from near Geelong in Victoria, is working with other volunteers at the Maple Women's Psychological Counselling Centre in Beijing. It's a place where hundreds of women, traumatised by years of domestic abuse, seek comfort, advice and mental healing.

Experience of domestic violence is a stark reality for millions of women in both the developed and developing world.

In China, family members who suspect a relative is abused look the other way. They regard such matters as private, between man and wife. For countless victims, the fear of social stigma is worse than the physical and emotional abuse. Victims are either too ashamed to speak out or too afraid the public won't support them – or both. In some sections of Chinese society, domestic violence is a hideous dark secret.

But as China modernises and becomes more open to outside influences, attitudes are changing. The Chinese Government, for example, has made it clear violence against women, in any form, is against the law. The amendment to the Marriage Act in 2001 forbids domestic violence and cites it as grounds for divorce.

A growing number of people agree with Wang Xingjuan, founder of the Maple Women's Psychological Counselling Centre in Beijing and a fierce advocate for women's rights, 'We need determined action by police, prosecutors and local communities – we need a network of change – to help victims of domestic violence.'

Statistics released in a national newspaper state one in every three women has been beaten, raped or emotionally abused by her partner. Yet, as Wang knows only too well, 'Many people believe it is better not to wash dirty linen in public and most domestic violence victims choose to keep quiet.'

The Maple centre is countering this attitude by offering practical help. For the past decade it has run a crisis hotline. It's in constant use as more women are breaking their silence. Not so long ago these same women may have resorted to suicide. With nowhere to turn and at the end of their tether, what were their options?

Now they're ringing the hotline for advice and emotional support. The phone offers comforting anonymity but it still takes enormous courage to take the first step, especially for those who've suffered horrific mistreatment.

Typical of hotline callers is a 29-year-old rural woman from Hebei Province whose story was recently reported in the *China Daily*, China's leading English language newspaper. She told the hotline her boyfriend had formed the habit of beating her whenever she fell pregnant. The beatings had caused eight miscarriages yet she still hopes he will marry her. Her fear is no one else will

because she's had too many miscarriages and abortions.

Another woman in her late 50s living in rural Beijing told how she suffered beatings from her husband for 32 years and in all that time never felt she could speak about it. She didn't realise she could report her husband's abuse to the authorities.

The need for the crisis hotline and the Maple Women's Psychological Counselling Centre is self evident. Wang Xingjuan, who is almost 80 years old, established it in 1988 with a

group of like-minded Chinese intellectuals. In the beginning Wang used her state pension to run the place.

Today it has grown into an important centre for women in crisis and for gender research. The highest priority is given to helping government departments formulate policies that assist women and raise their status in Chinese society. The centre recognises it's through education and advocating for fair legislation that they can reach the largest number of people.

Over 100 volunteers and eight full-time staff run the centre's hotline. Trained counsellors give guidance on a number of issues but domestic violence, women's psychological health, and social services for single-parent families are the most pressing.

The demand for these services will no doubt grow as China progresses to a more open and transparent society. While the increased need for such centres is distressing, it's also reassuring that women in desperate plights will be able to seek professional

help – and through this help, education and, most importantly, legislation, change will occur.

- » Suicide is the leading cause of death among women between 20 and 34 years
- » Nationwide four people kill themselves every minute
- » 90 per cent of Chinese who have committed suicide have never sought psychological care.

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A VOLUNTEER



As soon as I arrive I start researching through the Maple centre's past case studies. I have a small working space in front of the room where the counsellors operate the hotline phones. I hope what I find may help with the drafting of a proposal I'm about to send to a potential donor. The centre has three projects it wants to get off the ground but can't without first finding funding.

My morning is broken by an impromptu visit from a foreign journalist. People from overseas are particularly interested in the centre's work. I tell the journalist as much as I can and give him



our brochures. He's lucky the centre's director can spare him a few minutes. On the way out he stops to buy several brightly coloured hand-cut Chinese cards. These and other merchandise are fundraisers for the centre.

Lunch is called at 11:30 a.m. and it's an important break. It's always an opportunity to theorise and plan more work with colleagues but it's also when we turn on the television. A daily broadcast by a famous Chinese psychologist and client is compulsive viewing for the centre's counsellors. The broadcasts are useful teaching sessions. Although most of the

volunteer counsellors are trained psychologists they undergo regular refresher courses. It's important, they say, to keep up to date with the latest therapies.

In the afternoon I help finalise a speech the director is giving in English to members of some overseas organisations similar to our own. One of our main aims is to publicise the centre more broadly – not only to women who could benefit from our services but also to policy makers, other service organisations and the international community.

Various colleagues help me with my Chinese translation – and we laugh together as I practise my reading skills. My mastery of the language is still shaky but I'm working hard to improve. In turn I help my Chinese friends with English pronunciations and spellings.

By the end of the day I feel pleased I've in some way contributed to the centre. I

thoroughly believe in the work. Some people may view what we do is not, strictly speaking, aid – it's not feeding people or providing shelter – but it's definitely providing vital human assistance. When I leave I may be replaced by another volunteer from overseas – and they, like me, will continue to support the strong dedicated base of local volunteer women.

**Elizabeth Loughnan is in China at the Maple Women's Psychological Centre in Beijing as an Australian Youth Ambassador for Development. For more information about the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development (AYAD) Program contact <[www.ausaid.gov.au/youtham](http://www.ausaid.gov.au/youtham)>**

**ABOVE LEFT: Elizabeth Loughnan (second on left) with Wang Xingjuan, the Maple centre's founder (third on left) and colleagues.**

**ABOVE RIGHT: A working lunch at the centre. Photos: Elizabeth Loughnan**

## PUTTING PRINCIPLES INTO PRACTICE



**PHILIPPINES:** Each year AusAID makes it possible for thousands of students from all over the Asia Pacific to study in Australia. Since the 1950s, under the Colombo Plan, Australian development scholarships have proved an effective way to deliver aid. After completing their studies in some of Australia's best institutions, students return to their own country where usually they make considerable contributions. Franco Villaruel is one such example.

Franco Villaruel remembers well where he was when he heard the news that he'd been awarded a post-graduate study grant by AusAID. 'I was working as a volunteer in the Jesuit Prison Service, which helps prisoners in the new incarceration units in Bilibid. I remember one of the Jesuit priests asking everyone to pray for me. It was a great day. I had wanted to do further studies in development for a long time.'

Before taking up social work Franco worked for a short time in a multinational company in

Manila but the problems of mass poverty and ignorance started to haunt him. 'I'm from a fairly poor background but I was brought up in the country. Nothing prepared me for seeing life's realities in a big city. It started to get to me. I couldn't reconcile people living in shanties and slums in the shadows of skyscrapers.'

Franco spent almost three years at Monash University where he completed a Master of Arts in development studies. He looks back at this time as invaluable and among the best years of his life. 'I experienced real learning, freedom

and responsibility. Best of all, I learnt how to appreciate my own culture and identity.'

His first job on returning to the Philippines was working as a project officer at the Commission on Indigenous Peoples in Mindanao and in the Visayas. Diverse and fragmented even among themselves, the Indigenous Peoples exist on the margins. They live in the uplands without access to basic social services and depend largely on forest resources. Much of Franco's work was in mediation between tribes and various cultural groups. It's the kind of work that requires great cultural sensitivity. 'Indigenous Peoples see the world differently. It's almost as if they live in a different world,' says Franco.

Understanding the plight of Indigenous Peoples came, Franco says, directly from his studies while in Australia. And he used this knowledge along with his skills in negotiation to great effect. For example, within 18 months he'd helped clear the way for policy dialogue between the disenfranchised Indigenous Peoples and the Government of the Philippines at both national and regional levels.

He's now working with Environmental Science for Social Change (ESSC), an action-research institute that was formerly the environmental research division of the Ateneo de Manila University. 'My work here reflects my bias,' says Franco. 'I want to move what's being achieved at the grassroots level

with communities to the national level. I want to implement policy dialogue. Ultimately, I want to see good sound social policies created that improve lives for everyone.'

Australians may feel a touch of pride giving Franco Villaruel a helping hand through the Australian Development Scholarship Program to achieve his ambitions.

### DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIPS

The Australian Development Scholarship Program is contributing to Asia-Pacific economic integration, influencing political reform and accountability in sensitive areas, and meeting Australia's whole-of-government interests. During 2004-05 there were 2,476 Australian development scholarship students in Australia (as at 31 March, 2005)

- » 80 per cent were enrolled in postgraduate courses
- » One-third were studying in governance-related fields, in line with partner government and Australian program priorities
- » During the year, about 1,000 students from 37 countries, primarily in the Asia-Pacific region, commenced their scholarships in Australia
- » 900 students successfully completed their studies and returned home to contribute to development efforts of their countries.

For more on Australian development scholarships see <[www.ausaid.gov.au](http://www.ausaid.gov.au)> and click 'scholarships'

ABOVE: 'I had wanted to do further studies in development for a long time,' says Franco Villaruel. Photo: AusAID



## FILLING THE GAP — AND PRESCRIPTIONS

**VANUATU:** With not enough pharmacists to meet needs, four local graduates of a new pharmacy certificate course are helping to fill the gap.

A new pharmacy certificate course funded by AusAID is an opportunity for ni-Vanuatu to study pharmacy in their own country. Until now students wanting to study pharmacy had to go overseas.

‘I’m delighted with our new graduates,’ says Amanda Sanburg, course trainer and principal pharmacist with the Ministry of Health. ‘Before they began the course the students worked in Central Medical Stores, storing and packing medicines, so they already knew the names of pharmaceuticals. They’re very knowledgeable and they’re also used to the culture of hospitals. This is a great bonus.’

It took a year for the students to complete their training, mainly

through weekly tutorials and on-the-job experience at hospitals in Port Vila and Santo. They learnt about dispensing medicines, storage, the physical interactions of drugs and complying with pharmaceutical handling laws. Along the way they were mentored by Amanda and experienced local staff. They also received help from two Australian-trained pharmacists, both in Vanuatu as part of the Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program.

Perhaps the most critical aspect of the training was learning how to talk to people about their prescriptions. ‘Making sure patients understand everything they need to know about their medications is very important

because not all people in Vanuatu can read. In any case, there are often no instructions on pill packets or medicine bottles as medicines are re-packed,’ explains Amanda.

Filling prescriptions is one thing but demonstrating communication skills is quite another. The new pharmacy officers had to be polite, clear and exact about instructions. ‘Patients must be confident they understand how to take their medication and what to watch out for, such as any side-effects. Pregnant or breastfeeding women, in particular, must know what they’re taking,’ says Amanda.

Deciding to run the pharmacy certificate course was a big step but it’s paid off. As Amanda

says, ‘The course has proved very successful. The new graduates, although not fully-fledged pharmacists, nevertheless fill a big gap in medical services.’

So what’s the next step? ‘We must make sure students who take on pharmacy degree courses overseas return to Vanuatu to help build up the skills base here. We’ve made a very good start with our pharmacy officers. They’re really helping to lift the level of service in our hospitals and I’d like to see them progress further,’ says Amanda. EJ

**ABOVE:** Pharmacy graduate Graig Bani at Port Vila Central Hospital.

**Photo:** Jessica Pelham/AusAID

## OPEN FOR BUSINESS

**SAMOA:** With the launch of a new venture capital fund Samoan companies are getting the financing they need to grow.



Investors have pledged more than US\$1 million to a new Samoan venture capital fund. Small to medium-size businesses, with good growth potential but which are presently starved of risk capital, will now have a chance to meet their goals.

The new fund is backed by the World Bank Group's private sector arm, International Finance Corporation (IFC), along with the Government of Samoa, the European Investment Bank, the Asian Development Bank, ANZ Bank, and the National Bank of Samoa. AusAID is providing funding for administrative set-up costs. The fund is designed to finance local businesses that are either too small or considered too risky to attract conventional financial institutions.

Samoa's acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Misa Telefoni, announced the launch of the fund in Apia earlier this year. It's his vision the fund will 'introduce into Samoa a more creative financing for expansion of existing businesses beyond the normal collateral

and prudential requirements of commercial banks.' The fund is timely for local export-oriented firms seeking to take advantage of new opportunities coming with the creation of the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA).

The fund has been developed with strong support from the Pacific Enterprise Development Facility (PEDF), an IFC-managed technical assistance program for the Pacific islands, Papua New Guinea and East Timor. The organisation, based in Sydney, receives funding from AusAID.

'The key to getting the fund together was finding the right fund managers. We are very pleased with the results of our efforts,' says Rob Simms, PEDF's finance industry specialist. 'We have a management structure which brings together the skills of a large international venture capital firm and the knowledge and expertise of a local Samoan company.'

The fund will be jointly managed by Sydney-based Venture Capital Partners and the Samoan

management consultancy and financial advisory company, KVA Consult. Venture Capital Partners is backed by ING Investment Management, which is part of the ING Group of the Netherlands, one of the world's largest financial services companies.

'We believe we can offer a unique perspective on this kind of funding,' says Managing Director of Venture Capital Partners, David Gemmell. 'Our challenge is to ensure local companies can grow, remain viable and generate a return for our investors. This is an important pilot and if we can make it work, there could be bigger things in the future.'

Rob Wright/IFC <[www.ifc.org](http://www.ifc.org)>

**ABOVE: Small and medium-size businesses have a chance to realise their goals. Photos: Trevor Watson**

## GOING NORTH



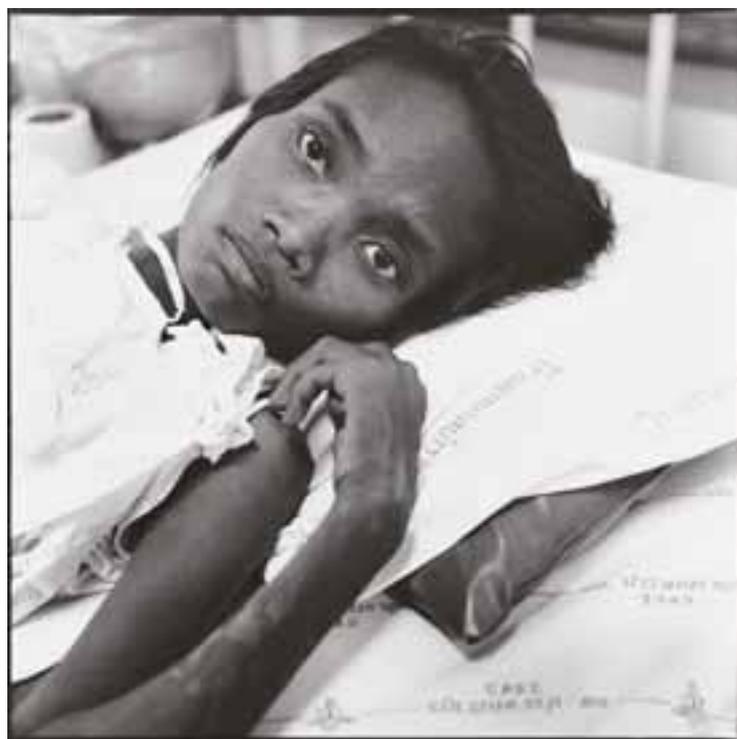
### POSITIVE.NEGATIVE

In many countries around the world, denial and indifference about HIV/AIDS persists. In Australia, the comparatively low infection rates mean many citizens are not well informed about the extent of the global crisis.

Yet more than 2.7 million children under 15 years have the virus today and millions more are at risk. At least 13.2 million children – most of them in Africa – have lost one or both parents to AIDS. According to UNAIDS, the number is expected to grow to 40 million by 2010.

The photographic exhibition *positive.negative*, which continues its tour around regional Australia, highlights the serious problem of HIV/AIDS in the Asia-Pacific. It's also informing viewers about AusAID programs in HIV awareness, prevention and caring for those living with the disease. So far it's been seen by more than two million Australians.

At a recent stop in Normanston in far north Queensland, Julie and Simon Goode, managers of the travelling exhibition, met



members of the local Kurtjar and Yargin tribes. They also welcomed students from the local primary and high schools.

Without prompting, some children reacted to the photos by drawing their own versions. 'The concentration on their faces as they thought about the exhibition was inspiring,' says Julie.

'We replaced stocks of the postcards almost daily. It was clear the students were drawn

to poignant images of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS.'

*positive.negative* goes to Western Australia next. To find out venues and dates go to [www.positivenegative.net.au](http://www.positivenegative.net.au)

ABOVE LEFT: Aboriginal children from Normanston, northern Queensland, take in the exhibition. Photo: Julie Goode/AusAID

ABOVE: Photo from the exhibition by Stephen Dupont

#### ROYAL DARWIN SHOW

AusAID was at the Royal Darwin Show with its tsunami display. Over a hectic few days – the show attracts more than 48,000 people – AusAID staff discussed with Territorians the implications of the Indian Ocean disaster. Knowledge and concern due to Darwin's close geographical proximity to Indonesia was reflected in the number of questions. Many people were interested in the Australian Government's response and its commitment to reconstruction. AusAID staff also distributed thousands of information kits.

The tsunami display can next be seen at the Royal Adelaide Show and Royal Melbourne Show. For details go to [www.ausaid.gov.au](http://www.ausaid.gov.au)

## CATERING FOR THE CLASSROOM

The Global Education Program has produced a number of multi-media curriculum resources for teachers in Australian schools.

#### MICROFINANCE – A GLOBAL RESOURCE

**Format: CD**

With 2005 the United Nations International Year of Microcredit, this CD explores the theme of microfinance. A Powerpoint presentation provides information and questions. Photos and notes can be printed as hand-outs. Other items are 'working in the informal economy', case studies 'Microcredit – small loans big dreams' and a wordbank.

#### TSUNAMI DISASTER – AUSTRALIA RESPONDS

**Format: DVD**

A seven-minute DVD covers the immediate response and relief effort by AusAID in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. A booklet gives teachers background information and a range of classroom activities and themes to explore.

#### PUTTING A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE INTO EDUCATION PRACTICE: A PROGRAM OF STUDY FOR TEACHERS

**Format: CD**

Teachers wishing to gain a broader understanding of global education can either choose to do an individual self-paced study unit or, by registering, access an on-line tutor who will assess pieces of work and provide a certificate of completion.

#### GLOBALISE ME! A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO GLOBALISATION

**Format: CD**

This CD presents upper secondary students with a range of resources to explore globalisation through themes common in English, economics, geography and history classrooms. Each of the six chapters is arranged around a particular theme – people, culture, economy, trade and development, technology, politics and environment.

#### HOW TO ORDER

To order a set of these four resources email [books@ausaid.gov.au](mailto:books@ausaid.gov.au) In the subject line please insert 'Set of global education resources' and in the email state your name, name of school and complete school address. Due to limited supplies class sets are not available.



VOLUME 20 NUMBER 4 » SEPT-DEC 2005

## FOCUS IS THE MAGAZINE OF AUSTRALIA'S OVERSEAS AID PROGRAM

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

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

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

ISSN 0819-9973  
Volume 20 Number 4 Sept-Dec 2005  
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