

A Christian World Service Newsletter

infocus



CWS is the international humanitarian and development agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia

Autumn 2007



looking to the future

Christmas Bowl and Partners4Peace

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Our cover



The small rural village of Fera Kabi Kabi (Solomon Islands), was destroyed in the ethnic violence in 2003. Today, after rebuilding their village and receiving vital community health education from CWS's partner, the Solomon Islands Christian Association, villagers look to the future.

Credit: Kaylea Fearn

2007 Calendar

**Details for all activities are on our website:
www.ncca.org.au/cws**

20 – 27 May	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – Breaking the Silence on HIV/AIDS
27 May – 3 June	Week of Prayer for Reconciliation – reflecting on the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australian citizens
3 – 9 June	International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel (ICAPPI) – 40th anniversary of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza
16 – 19 June	Voices for Justice (with Micah Challenge) – a chance to remind our leaders to keep their eye on the goal as we hit the half-way mark of the Millennium Development Goals
17 – 24 June	Simply Sharing Week – our school education program about ensuring all children around the world have the opportunity to attend primary school (currently around 115 million children do not). We are aiming for over 40 000 responses from school children
7 July	MDG Half-time events nationally to ensure we keep our eye on the Goal and Offering of Letters initiative (with Micah)
8 – 25 July	National Christmas Bowl/Partners4Peace visit of Sylvia Haddad , Executive Secretary of the Joint Christian Committee, Lebanon
26 August	Refugee and Migrant Sunday – focusing on current conflicts in Burma, Palestine/Israel, Sri Lanka and Sudan/Darfur
17 October	Stand Up and Speak Out . Last year, almost 92 000 Australians (and 23 million people worldwide) stood up against poverty. This year even more will be involved in speaking out against poverty and showing our leaders that Australians want them to take action
November 2007/ January 2008	Act for the Christmas Bowl!

If you would like to receive *In Focus* in pdf format by email, or download it from our website, rather than have a paper copy mailed, please let us know by emailing chodge@ncca.org.au. If you would like extra paper copies for distribution please email, phone freecall 1800 025 101 or write to Locked Bag 199, Sydney NSW 1230. Any comments and suggestions would also be welcomed – please tell us what you want from *In Focus*.

From the Director

Welcome to our first edition of *In Focus* for 2007 – looking to the future.

Thank you so much to all who supported the recent Christmas Bowl program. We have had a wonderful response. This edition gives an overview of what your support will enable in 2007 in the 23 countries where the Christmas Bowl and Partners4Peace are at work.

Christmas Bowl Survey

Enclosed is a Christmas Bowl Survey. This is an important part of looking to the future – getting a greater sense of what Christmas Bowl supporters are most interested in. Please spend a few minutes to complete the survey so we can improve the Christmas Bowl program. We are committed to increasing support of our partners' programs and to better meeting your needs.

Events for Supporters

Another important part of the Christmas Bowl and Partners4Peace is providing the opportunity for active participation. Events for supporters in 2007 are listed opposite, with details on our website (www.ncca.org.au/cws). There are some very exciting plans for 2007, which have a good chance of making a real difference. These aim to take steps towards:

- achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and

- fulfilling our Responsibility to Protect those at risk of atrocities while working to prevent conflict and displacement.

The main focus for our MDG activities over the next three years is to ensure:

1. education opportunities for all primary school children (for example, see the *Simply Sharing Week* resources and *Voices for Justice*);
2. the spread of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria starts to reverse (for example, see the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* resources and the letter-writing opportunity on our website); and
3. a fairer trading and financial system is developed (for example, see the MDG half-time and *Stand Up* events)

The main focus for our Responsibility to Protect activities over the next three years is to ensure:

1. the protection of those at most risk and to prevent further conflict, especially in Burma, Palestine/Israel, Sri Lanka and Sudan/Darfur (for example, see the upcoming *Refugee and Migrant Sunday* resources, *International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel* events and our 2007 visitor Sylvia Haddad); and
2. refugees are treated fairly and humanely wherever they are in the world.

Our website also has details about:

- our new appeal to support the *Darfur Emergency Response Operation*. The Christmas Bowl has supported this, run



Gabriel Manyangadze from the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, with Alistair Gee. Credit: Nicholas Kerr

by Action by Churches Together/Caritas, for the past three years. Every week ACT/Caritas provide 22,500 antibiotics and treat 1,200 cases of malaria in Darfur camps; and

- the new global ACT Development alliance, which was launched in February. ACT Development involves 55 church-based agencies with 14 223 staff working on 901 development programs in 157 countries. CWS is the Australian member of ACT Development.

Thank you

Thank you for supporting the Christmas Bowl in 2006 and we hope you will be able to ACT! with the Christmas Bowl and Partners4Peace in 2007!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alistair Gee".

Alistair Gee, Director, CWS



Sylvia Haddad. Credit: James Thomson

Sylvia speaks

Sylvia Haddad is the Executive Secretary of the Joint Christian Committee in Lebanon. She has accepted CWS's invitation to visit Australia from 8 to 25 July 2007.

The JCC is one of the five regional committees of the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees of the Middle East Council of Churches. (The other four are in Gaza, Jordan, Nazareth and the West Bank.)

Sylvia will speak about her experiences with JCC over the past 10 years.

"In 1997, I was offered the job I hold now. The JCC was a challenge as it needed someone with a background in education, mixed with a love for social work", says Sylvia.

"I think I made the right decision although I often feel that there is no light at the end of the tunnel for the

Continued page 8

The Christmas Bowl



**ASSISTANCE IN
EMERGENCIES**

Middle East

The Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees of the Middle East Council of Churches has promoted an inter-religious meeting with Christian, Jewish and Moslem leaders to address issues of the current occupation and the absence of a genuine peace position and ways to overcome these challenges; and the World Council of Churches will launch an *International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel*. Both events will be in June as part of the 40th anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

Sri Lanka

Roadside blasts, suicide bombings, land and sea battles have killed thousands of Muslims, Sinhalese and Tamil people in the north and east, as well as combatants and military personnel, since Sri Lanka's cease-fire between the army and the Tamil Tigers. The new chapter of the two-decade conflict bodes ill as calls from the international community to cease

fighting are ignored. It is feared that the bloodshed will get worse. The Christmas Bowl will continue its partnership with the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka and \$ 40 000 will be sent to expand peace-building programs.

Sudan

Darfur is described as one of the worst humanitarian disasters of our time. Over 200 000 people have been killed and 2.5 million people have been forced to flee their homes. Four million people need assistance and aid agencies have been prevented from assisting up to one million.

Timor Leste

CWS's partner, Yasona, has been assisting displaced people in and around Dili, which has become a city with thousands of tents teeming with people who left their homes, because of recent violence. Yasona fears that it will be several months before it is safe for people to return home. The Christmas Bowl will send \$ 40 000 to enable Yasona to maintain its focus and special attention on small groups in villages and camps outside Dili and distribute food, clothes, household materials and firewood.

Zimbabwe

The All Africa Conference of Churches has expressed concern about the most recent violence in Zimbabwe. All rallies have been banned by the President, following the decision to delay elections from 2008 to 2010. The AACC says this can only worsen the internal situation and delay meaningful dialogue regarding the political and economic problems and further aggravate the country's international isolation.

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches has expressed dismay about the escalation of politically motivated violence which is provoking an ugly face in the provinces.



**INJUSTICE
RESPONSE**

Fiji

- The "Just Peace" program of the Ecumenical Centre for Research Education and Advocacy focuses on the pursuit of social justice through four programs, economic justice, faith and society, peace and social empowerment. In 2007 the Christmas Bowl will support youth camps which offer conflict transformation in a time when recent coups have destabilised community life.

Gaza and Jerusalem

- The Near East Council of Churches' Committee for Refugee Work in Gaza is part of the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees. Christmas Bowl and Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) funds of \$ 77 330 will support health services, providing basic care and education to more than 21 000 families, and in-service training for women – in collaboration with the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

- Christmas Bowl funds of \$ 12 000 will also assist the DSPR Office in Jerusalem as it provides advocacy, oversight and staff support to all DSPR programs in the Middle East.



In a Gaza Refugee Camp. Credit: Paul Jeffrey/Action by Churches Together

at work in the world



Burmese refugees on the Thai Burma Border. Credit: Charlie Ocampo

Myanmar

The Christmas Bowl with the Myanmar Council of Churches through its Urban-Rural Mission Program provides technical and leadership training seminars to workers in regions outside Rangoon dealing with internally displaced population, and advocacy. The skills developed offer significant support as people are deployed in different programs in the regions. In 2007 \$ 45 000 from the Christmas Bowl will be available.

Philippines

The National Council of Churches in the Philippines provides program support for the education and empowerment of women to provide skills in rural development, the strengthening of civil society, and in advocacy for their basic rights in Philippine society. The Christmas Bowl will continue its support with \$ 20 000.

Thailand Burma Border

The Thai Burma Border Consortium of 10 aid agencies provides food, shelter, clothing and household items, and

capacity building support to 165 901 Burmese refugees and displaced people. Christmas Bowl and AusAID funds of \$1.36 million will be sent in 2007.



**DEVELOPMENT AND
POVERTY REDUCTION**

Africa

The All Africa Conference of Churches supports HIV/AIDS projects of member churches across the continent, sending pastors and church leaders to Zambia for training. A core budget is required to assist staff based in Nairobi and regions of Africa to carry out programs and the Christmas Bowl will provide \$ 45 000 for this.

Bangladesh

In 2007 the Christmas Bowl will continue to work with the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh in its enhancement of the skills of practising traditional birth attendants (TBAs) to increase the rate of hygienic and safe delivery of babies and to increase awareness of reproductive health. The Christmas Bowl and AusAID will send \$ 76 660 in 2007.

Cambodia

Christian World Service Cambodia, with the support of local government authorities, recently completed the task of handing over local assets to village development committees in Svay Rieng Province to build up self-reliant village organisations and local leadership. Following an assessment process, CWS has agreed to undertake a new program to provide basic water supply and sanitation in a number of remote villages. The Christmas Bowl and AusAID will provide \$ 80 000.

China

The Amity Foundation Village Doctors' Training assists in maintaining acceptable levels of health care and improves the level of proficiency of Village Health Workers. Close to 2 628 paramedics have been trained since 2003 and have been given government accreditation to continue working in the villages. This year \$ 80 000 will be sent from the Christmas Bowl and AusAID funds to support training of a further 1 000 village doctors.

Egypt

The program of the Bishoprpic of Public Ecumenical and Social Services (BLESS) now works from the ground up as villagers recognise and state their own needs. Two field workers are assigned to a village. Working in 30 villages, programs include pre and post natal care, income generating projects, training of health workers, and literacy. In 2007 the Christmas Bowl and AusAID will provide \$ 80 000 towards the work in 31 communities in all regions of Egypt.

India

In 2007 the Christmas Bowl will continue its partnership with the Organisation for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation. OfERR works with government hospitals and volunteer doctors to provide basic health care of refugees in 103 camps in the Indian southern state of Tamil Nadu. People attend regular medical camps where they

The Christmas Bowl at work in the world



Bangladeshi mothers and children. Credit: Kim Cain

access advice about disease prevention and diagnosis, health awareness education, and supplementary feeding to children under 14 years old. The Christmas Bowl and AusAID will provide \$ 80 000 this year.

Lebanon

The Middle East Council of Churches' Inter-Church Network on Development and Relief in Lebanon will be supported by Christmas Bowl and AusAID funds of \$ 40 000 for agricultural extension work with cooperatives, which has benefited 120 farmers, helping them control plant diseases, increase productivity, receive technical advice on drip irrigation and pest control, and improve their bookkeeping.

Namibia

Christmas Bowl funds of \$ 40 000 will assist the Capacity Building Initiatives of Namibia (CABIN) program as it provides early childhood teacher training, curriculum preparation, and English studies for teachers, students and workers in the commercial sector of the country (as English is now the trade language). CABIN also teaches adults to read and write in their native language.

Philippines

Negrito People's Alliance of Zambales (LAKAS) has a Community Integrated Development Program with three main focus areas, sustainable agriculture which assists in the economic needs of communities, non-formal education and training for literacy graduates, and a health and nutrition program for undernourished children and elderly people. The Christmas Bowl will provide \$ 20 000 in 2007.

Solomon Islands

- The people of the Solomons Islands have the lowest literacy rate in the Pacific. Community-based literacy programs of the Solomon Islands Christian Association, through existing church networks, targeting communities which do not have access to any literacy programs, are the most effective way for women to gain literacy skills. The program develops local resources and aims to enrol 1 000 new students.

- SICA's Community Health Education program aims to bring a holistic approach to development through the church's extensive network at the grass-roots level and to see communities

transformed and individuals experiencing positive changes in lifestyle and living conditions. A training program supports community volunteers who promote good health practices, HIV awareness and village beautification programs.

Sudan

The New Sudan Council of Churches and the Sudan Council of Churches have recently agreed to amalgamate as the Sudan Council of Churches. Programs will be identified in the north and south of Sudan and ongoing support of \$ 76 000 from the Christmas Bowl will continue.

Zambia

- The Council of Churches in Zambia has established the Makeni Centre in Lusaka for HIV/AIDS testing, training church and community leaders concerning AIDS, and caring for those affected and infected with the pandemic.

- Wells have been constructed in various areas bringing potable water close to homes – resulting in improved health and water also being available for small-cultivated plots.

Christmas Bowl and AusAID funds of \$ 53 330 will support both these projects.

Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches began a Rainwater Harvesting Program in 1996. The Christmas Bowl has supported the program since that time, in conjunction with AusAID and in 2007 \$ 75 000 will be provided. Over 2 000 tanks have been constructed, originally with bricks, now built from ferro-cement. Women and men have been trained in tank construction and maintenance, in water conservation and hygiene. Washing sinks, bio-gas pits for power and heat, and smokeless ovens have been built, and floor polish and jam making projects are an ongoing development – fruit and shade trees are being provided for households in targeted villages in the program.

Construction has slowed due to the escalating cost of materials and lack of fuel for transport.

Partners4Peace Projects Span the World

Each month the gifts of Partners4Peace go to work in building peace. Partners4Peace become a real part of this work through Monthly Peace Mails.

Peace Mail introduces the people working on the projects or beneficiaries to our Partners4Peace. The focus is on people meeting people through the sharing of gifts and stories. It is a joy to have feedback from Partners4Peace to relay to project workers. We all have things to share!

Here are some of the stories from the last few months that have created particular interest:

- In January, we visited Mozambique and met Joana. She is living with HIV/AIDS and has found new energy from growing and consuming nutritional herbs supplied by Christian Council of Mozambique. The care and interest in her welfare have also given Joana new hope.
- Sinath told us of his work in clearing mines in Cambodia in February. Sinath also trains villagers in this dangerous, exacting work.

His story captured the imagination of the congregation of Devonport Uniting Church, who give the proceeds from their "Cabbage Basket" – their home-grown produce sharing initiative featured in *In Focus* Autumn 2006.

The Devonport UCA car park is being marked out to show how many square



metres are cleared by every \$12 raised for this project.

Heather Cumming, who coordinates the Cabbage Basket, (as well as playing the organ), is keen that the congregation feel an affinity with the Cambodian villagers by having a "mine-free safe zone" created through their gifts. Heather and her friends can only imagine the fear that Cambodians live with each day of injury or death if they or their children or livestock, step outside cleared areas, but they are working to expand the zone of safety in villages far away from lovely Devonport.

- Judith Vusi is from Vanuatu and works with the Pacific Conference of Churches in Suva. Judith has tremendous drive and energy and her current mission is to train as many women as she can from churches throughout the Pacific with knowledge of effective prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS. The women are then charged with telling their communities and churches, a significant challenge in cultures where talk of sexual matters is often taboo.

They recognise the urgency and importance of their message however, as the best way of averting the disaster that has occurred through the spread of HIV/AIDS in many countries in Africa and elsewhere, and that they know is developing with their own neighbour and ours, PNG.

- April features the great work of the Ethiopian Orthodox Churches that we support in providing clean water and sanitation to remote villages.

- The list goes on and in coming months we



Cambodian demining program.

Credit: Emily Anderson

will learn of work with Indigenous people in the Philippines, post-war rehabilitation of returning refugees in Southern Sudan, post-war work with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and in the West Bank, and development work of the NCCA's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission with Indigenous people in Australia.

Howard Graham, our P4P Coordinator, writes, "Please be part of this vital, life changing work. Partners4Peace are mainly Christmas Bowl supporters who commit to giving year round and are kept informed of how their gifts are achieving real benefits for people. At least 80% of every dollar given is sent to projects."

Becoming a Partner4Peace is easy, just use freecall 1800 025 101 and chat with Emily or Howard, or e-mail to partners4peace@ncca.org.au or visit www.partners4peace.com.au. Don't worry if you feel that monthly giving is not right for you. Any gift, in the manner that best suits you is welcome and a source of blessing. We hope to hear from you soon! Peace be with you!



Mozambique health and education program. Credit: CCM

Continued from page 3

Palestinians in their country or those living in Lebanon and elsewhere as refugees.

"What the JCC is trying in its humble way to do is to help people in any way it can and especially in empowering people with education and skills that will qualify them for employment and jobs. We also encourage Palestinian identity, heritage and culture to be preserved.

"All this cannot be done without the help of our partners with whom we share our Christian values.

"This is my life in a nut-shell.

"Last year's devastating conflict which I wrote about in *In Focus* is still very much impacting on us in many ways - we continue to pray for peace, with justice.

"We are frustrated by limited space and soaring rents which prevent desired

expansion or relocations. Yet a lot of work is being carried out, with continuous plans for improvement.

"I look forward to sharing how the Christmas Bowl and CWS have supported our work and to expressing appreciation and thanks to our Australian friends."

Details of Sylvia's itinerary will be available on our website.

Three simple steps to sharing education

Simply Sharing Week has been an important part of the wider education programs of Christian World Service/NCCA and Caritas Australia for many years.

Because both agencies put a high value on education, they decided that this year's program focus would be on Millennium Development Goal Two: universal primary education. The program is called "Simply Sharing Week: Send My Friend To School".

Whilst many Australian students are now beginning to prepare for midyear exams, the United Nations estimates that there are around 115 million young people who do not have access to school in 2007.

In 2000 all members of the United Nations, including Australia, agreed that this growing figure was far too high and made a promise to see that all children would receive basic education by 2015.

Simply Sharing Week will be held 17-24 June this year and asks for



school and church communities to join together to remind the Federal Government to keep their promise to share our resources so that there may be education for all.

"The Send My Friend To School program has been designed to be a fun community event with everyone

from local schools, local media, churches and Members of Parliament all getting involved," says Kaylea Fearn, Simply Sharing Week coordinator.

Here is Kaylea's guide to getting involved in the Simply Sharing Week: Send My Friend To School program

1 Order a copy of the Simply Sharing Week educational resources or download them at www.simplysharingweek.org.au.

2 Join thousands of other Australians who are making their commitment to education known by creating an online cut out "friend" to send to the Federal Government. Go to www.simplysharingweek.org.au.

3 Place an order for recycled pencils. At only \$1.00 each, they are a great way to support the program and are a constant reminder of how important basic literacy is. Call Kaylea on (03) 9650 6811 or email kfearn@ncca.org.au, (minimum order of 20 pencils).

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