

A Christian World Service Newsletter Spring/Summer 2006

In Focus

Christian World Service is a Commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia

act for the christmas bowl



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The theme of this year's Christmas Bowl program is *act – give – and be part of the christmas bowl in 2006*



Resources have been distributed to churches and groups. If you have not received these or you would like additional copies of the Christmas Bowl kit (with worship and church, school and youth group resources and clip art), envelopes, posters, corflutes and bookmarks, please contact your State Ecumenical Office or the Christmas Bowl team (see our contact details on page 8).

We regret we did not receive sufficient orders to make production of a CD cost-effective. You can download the resources from our website www.ncca.org.au/cws/christmasbowl.

Your comments and suggestions regarding the resources will be welcomed.

Front cover:

Francis and Dheena, Sri Lanka

Photo: Jan-Ake Thorell, Church of Sweden/ACT International
Mary, Palestine

Photo: Paul Jeffery, ACT International
Abraham, Zambia

Photo: Jo Lin, CWS

The Christmas Bowl program is now in its 58th year! Thank you so much for your support over the years – it is very much appreciated and it is making a real difference to communities in 23 countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, as well as for refugees and Indigenous communities in Australia. Reports on the Christmas Bowl at work in the world are available on our website: www.ncca.org.au/cws.

This year we are asking people to *act* for the Christmas Bowl. This can mean a variety of things, apart from your gifts, such as using the Christmas Bowl resources to discuss justice and development issues with your family and friends, and letting your voice be heard by participating in Christmas Bowl related activities through to the end of 2006. Details of some suggested activities are in the Christmas Bowl kit and on our website.

to set up *ACT Australia* (in the place of *forceten*). It has been a very exciting year and 2007 promises to be even better.

You are also likely to hear two other shorthand terms used to describe the other dimensions of the Christmas Bowl: *AID* and the *4Ps*. For those who loathe acronyms – I apologise, though young people who are not familiar with Christmas Bowl, tell us we need to explain it simply. While “act” describes who is involved in the Christmas Bowl, the “AID” dimension explains what the Christmas Bowl works on: *Assistance in emergencies; Injustice response and Development and poverty reduction*. These terms are explained in this edition of *In Focus* and on our website. The approach to AID includes full recognition of the importance of local participation, developing capacity, non-discrimination, gender equality, cultural and spiritual

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The term *act* also means “action by churches together”, which is a very important dimension of the Christmas Bowl. This action involves us all as congregations and families. It also involves a fantastic range of Australian churches. This year we received requests for over 7,000 Christmas Bowl kits from Uniting, Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic, Churches of Christ, Salvation Army, Orthodox, Apostolic, Assyrian and Congregational churches and the Religious Society of Friends. The Christmas Bowl helps these churches to work together in Australia and around the world. You are likely to hear the name *ACT* often in the future, as this year we have joined with ecumenical partners around the world and the World Council of Churches to set up the *ACT Development* alliance and joined with Australian church overseas aid agencies

sensitivity, protection of human rights, advocacy, promotion of peace and reconciliation, effective communication and environmental sustainability. This way of working can be summarised in the “4Ps” acronym: *Partnership, Programs, Policy, and Public awareness*. The ACT, AID and the 4Ps dimensions are also integral to our year round initiative, *Partners4Peace*, which is further described later in this edition.

Thank you again for your wonderful support of the Christmas Bowl over many years and we look forward to informing you of the progress being made through the 2006/7 Christmas Bowl in the coming months.

All the staff at NCCA Christian World Service and all our partners wish you a very blessed Christmas!



act for the christmas bowl



Assisting in Emergencies in Sri Lanka and India



Photo: Jan-Ake Thorell, Church of Sweden/ACT International

CWS's partner in Sri Lanka and India, the Organisation for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR) was established to care for Tamil refugees fleeing Sri Lanka, who

took refuge in India – a non-government organisation of refugees, by refugees and for refugees, motivating them to live in the hope of returning to their homeland.

Immediately after the tsunami OfERR staff and volunteers in Sri Lanka and India provided help to survivors, and motivated refugees close to the affected areas to rush in and do what was possible to help.

Francis Thxtas took his son, Dheena, on his back and climbed up in a tree to survive the tsunami. OfERR people were able to give counselling and psycho-social help to people like Francis and Dheena – spending hours with many who were in shocked, despairing and traumatised states of mind.

One young Indian man said to the Sri Lankan volunteers, "For us, the tsunami struck only once and we have lost everything. For you, your difficulties are so much. First you had the war and had to leave home and run without anything. Now you are in refugee camps with hardly anything. Many of you have lost your family to the tsunami in Sri Lanka. Yet you came to console us, great is your strength to give. We feel so much privileged to be talking to you."

Thank you for your gifts to the 2005-6 Christmas Bowl which have enabled continuing support for OfERR's work. CWS has sent \$ 80 000 – \$ 36 500 from the Christmas Bowl and \$ 43 500 from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).



In Palestine, the birthplace of Jesus



Photo: Paul Jeffery, ACT International

Aboud, is a Palestinian town located in Ramallah, on the road which connects Jerusalem with Nazareth. More than 60% of Aboud's population are abroad. Aboud is not unique in this

matter; it is like the other Palestinian cities, towns, and villages. The majority of people are scattered, seeking a better life with dignity. Like Mary, Jesus and Joseph, they have fled their homes, families, lands – yet they long to return to the land of the Holy One.

Aboud is a very romantic place, surrounded by almond, olive, fig and grape trees. Wild plants and herbs grow up in the mountains. Eastern traditions dominate the social life of the people, exchanging visits, gathering for special occasions, and especially harvesting the almonds, olives, figs and grapes.

In Aboud you can see the Palestinian national dress, just like Mary is wearing, although it is becoming restricted to relatively old people over 60. In this small town you are able to smell the mixture of the present and the past. Mary's culture and daily life has been severely changed – and she yearns for the familiar beauty of nature and family life, and hopes fervently for peace, with justice.

Thank you for your gifts to the Christmas Bowl which have helped our partner, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees working in Gaza, Lebanon and the West Bank – \$ 127 148, which includes \$ 77 818 from AusAID, has been given for ongoing projects in the Middle East, plus emergency funds. This year your support is urgently needed to continue our partnerships around the world.



Caring for HIV/AIDS sufferers in Zambia

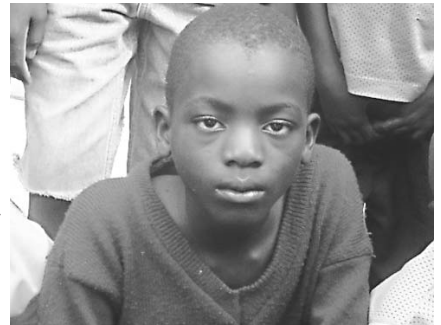


Photo: Jo Lin, CWS

The district of Mufulira is in the copper belt province of northern Zambia – an arid stretch of land that has seen the influence of continuous copper mining over the years. In the mid-1990s copper prices fell dramatically. There is no main industry now and the area has been described as a "depressed" place. When you meet the men, women and children, who call this district home, it is very different.

CWS supports a program of the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ). It is in Mufulira that CCZ provides an intensive training program for home-based carers. The carers are volunteers who seek practical guidance and skills to look after those suffering from HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. In Africa even if you are not infected with HIV/AIDS, you will be affected by it.

One woman in particular is an inspiration, who defines compassion, and selflessness. She is suffering from the HIV/AIDS pandemic, cares for five orphaned children, and a sick husband. She is also a volunteer visitor amongst the sick in the community.

Zambia is a country in Southern Africa gripped by HIV/AIDS. Over 20% of the population suffer, and a million are orphaned children, like Abraham.

Thank you for your gifts to the Christmas Bowl which have helped our partner, the Council of Churches in Zambia – \$ 54 650 (including \$ 41 000 from AusAID) has been sent for the HIV/AIDS program.

please pray for a generous reponse



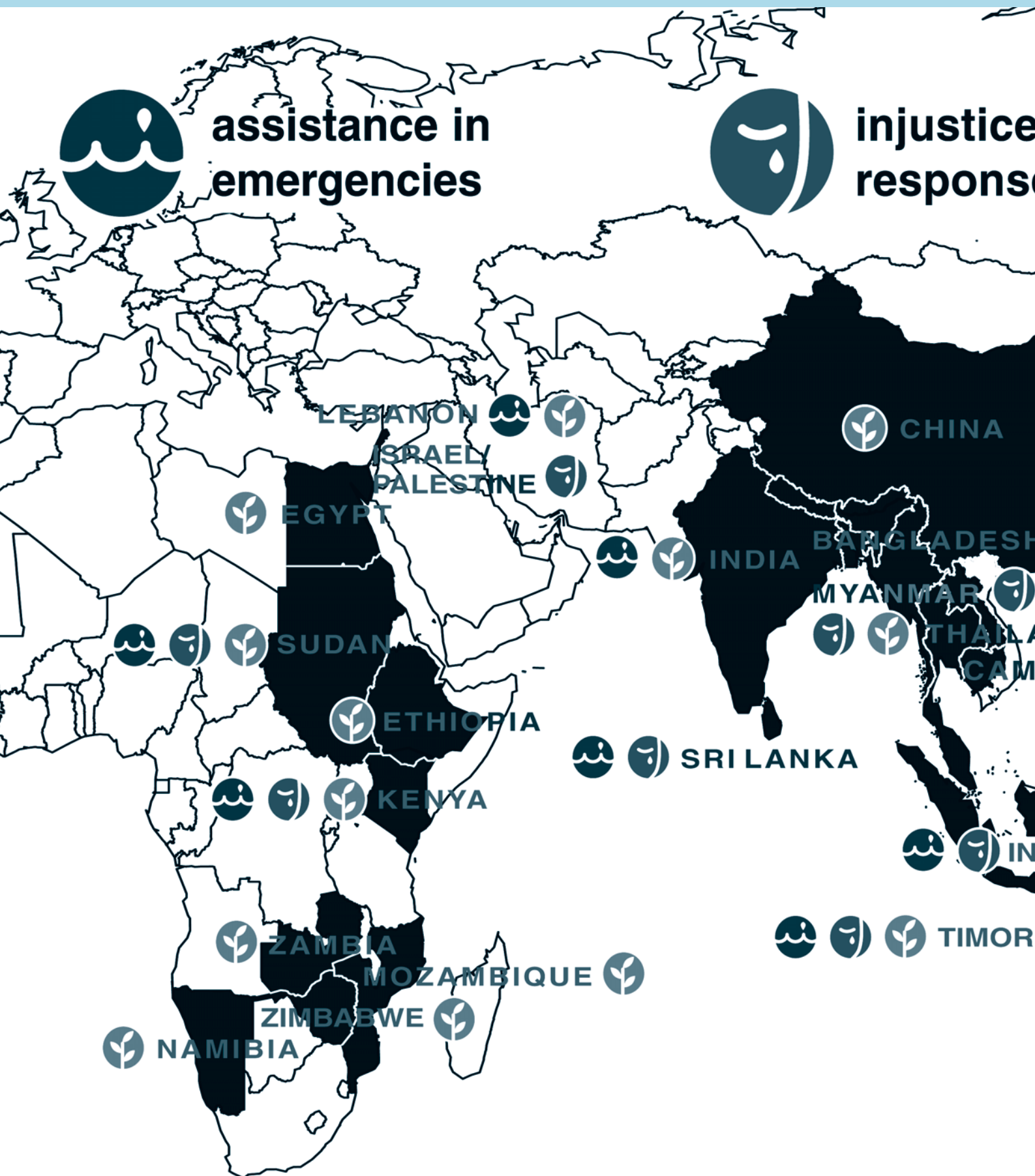
The Christmas Bowl



assistance in
emergencies



injustice
response



... at work in the world



**development
and poverty
reduction**

Programs



Assistance in emergencies

- Humanitarian crisis
- Earthquake
- Cyclone
- Internal and external displacement
- War and conflict
- Food and water
- Tsunami
- Floods and droughts
- Famine
- Rehabilitation and reconstruction



Injustice response

- Demining
- Peace building and social justice
- Civil society building
- Reconciliation
- Human rights training
- Leadership training
- Women's empowerment



Development and poverty reduction

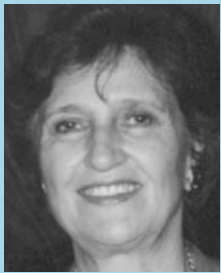
• Education

- HIV/AIDS
- Literacy
- Teaching
- Skills training
- School
- Workshops
- Agricultural sustainability

• Health

- Village paramedics
- Refugee camps
- HIV/AIDS
- Emergency medical supplies
- Birth assistance
- Water and sanitation
- Training of health workers
- Water and food security

Wondering how to get home...



Sylvia Haddad, Executive Secretary of the Joint Christian Committee (JCC) for Social Service in Lebanon, had accepted CWS's invitation to be a Christmas Bowl visitor this year. Sadly the events of July-September have prevented her from coming this year. Sylvia wrote "circumstances dictate our plans as the accumulated work is really unending". We hope she will be able to come next year. Here is her story.



Photos: Colleen Hodge

"On 1 July I took a vacation and headed with my family to Spain, a country I have long wanted to visit.

On 12 July all hell broke loose as the unbelievable happened. Israel reacted to the kidnapping of two of its soldiers at the Israeli-Lebanese borders by carrying out devastating and brutal air attacks. In no time the airports, ports and all roads and bridges connecting Lebanon to the outside world became non-functional. As we pondered the possible options for refuge, my thoughts often turned to the people of Palestine who, 58 years ago, had the same experience I was having – and they are still refugees wondering how to get home...

I will be eternally thankful for the internet and its email program. Through it and some phone calls, all JCC work continued with the help of my assistant, Nabila Haddad, who supplied me with daily reports.

Schools were asked to receive all people who had nowhere to go. The Joint Christian Committee School complied with this request and was soon fully occupied. Computers, laboratory equipment and all sorts of things were quickly stored in one room and the desks pushed to the sides to allow space for mattresses. Families soon filled up all the rooms, happy to have found a shelter in the smouldering heat of July and August.

The Middle East Council of Churches installed water tanks and showers while the bank we deal with installed drinking water fountains. Hot meals were provided daily. We were able to get medical care and medicines, and doctors passed on a regular basis to check on all sick people.

Our small classrooms became bedrooms, the two halls became the dining room and the reception area, and our little playground provided the space for entertainment.

Our little school was an example of a home away from home. Life in this school, in spite of the constant bombings and the drones at night with their loud resounding noises, was an example of people helping people. We are proud to have been able to provide refuge and service to a large number of people.

Our centre soon became a hub of activity where foodstuffs, clothes, medicines and sanitary needs poured in and were sorted into separate portions and distributed. Names of refugees arriving were listed jointly with all organisations. Special attention was given to people suffering chronic health problems.

The materials prepared for our special art summer program were used to include a much bigger number of children. These art classes helped the children forget their problems for a while.

The residents of the camps in south Lebanon, where the Israeli warplanes were bombarding, moved north towards the cities of Sidon, Beirut and beyond. They took refuge in any place they could find. Two of the camps that JCC works in had a big influx of refugees and with other organisations the JCC was able to offer essential services.

Deeper in the south in Tyre is our Farm. The JCC was able to offer at the time of increasing food needs fresh vegetables from the farm.

We are proud of the work that Walid, the person responsible for the farm, carried out. He formed a group of

volunteers who visited displaced people wherever they were, found out their needs and visited different organisations in order to obtain the help needed. They all did the work under the name of JCC. During this time Walid's wife was nearing the end of her pregnancy and we are happy to report that the end of the war saw us with a new JCC member – a baby boy named Mohammad Manhal.

In Dbayeh, the Palestinian Christian camp to the north of Beirut, a nucleus group of young people living in the camp had begun a new JCC program. This group proved their capabilities during the war. People were welcomed in small homes and in a few abandoned rooms that were once part of a school. Every possible means of comfort was extended to them through the efforts of this group. All clothing collected for sale in our second hand clothing shop was distributed and welcomed.

Entertainment programs were arranged for the children and the youth, while special discussions were conducted with the older people. We think that this experience was a model for Christian-Moslem Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue that should continue in the future.

Although the JCC has very limited resources, it proved to be quite rich in its human resources. Its school and all its centres were active with everybody working hard to serve whoever and wherever they could.

We send our heartfelt thanks and appreciation. We are thankful that this war has ended. We pray that no one will ever have to go through such an experience and that justice and peace will one day come to this part of the world."

Why Partners4Peace?

Why Partners4Peace?

- An opportunity for people to give to people all year round – monthly Peace Mails tell the stories of projects supported and most importantly, introduce the people and the partners offering the assistance

- Aim is long-term, sustainable projects which help people achieve self-sufficiency, dignity and a voice against injustice

- All people are assisted, in the name of Christ's church

Because we care, we share!

- Belief in Christ's call to give to benefit others

- Be they small or large, our gifts make a difference

- Being sensitive to injustice in the world, we respond with generous hearts

Commitment to helping to change the world

- Currency, in the form that suits you – credit card or bank account debits or

Photo: Yasona



Afun Marcal of Yasona, our partner in Dili, checks the loading of emergency goods.

deposits, cheques or money orders – is the best medium in which to convey our gifts – it is convenient, efficient and when conveyed to our project partners,



effective – 80% of all gifts go to projects

- Coming from our pocket or purse, we are really giving of ourselves – the time and effort in gaining the money we give – the self-denial of not spending on things for ourselves

- Convenience is a keynote of Partners4Peace – your commitment can be tailored to suit you – a gift each month, every other month, once or twice a year – whatever suits your situation is welcome and appreciated

Together we are working to change the world we live in – if you are already a Partner4Peace and 875 supporters are – thank you very much – your support is so important and really valued.

If you're not already a Partner4Peace, please join us, we need you!

Tell us now how you would like to help: please call 1800 025 101 and talk with Howard or Colleen, E-mail: partners4peace@ncca.org.au – or visit www.partners4peace.org.au

Traditional Birth Attendants in Bangladesh

For almost 20 years the Christmas Bowl and the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB) have worked together in community development projects, especially training of traditional birth attendants (TBAs). In the past year the project has enhanced skills, promoted hygienic and safe delivery of babies, and increased awareness of reproductive health.

A large majority of people living in the rural areas of Bangladesh still depend on traditional health practices. About 50 women die every day because of pregnancy related complications, many of them still very young. Promotion of safe motherhood is a big challenge.

Awareness-raising contributed to the delay of having a first baby among young married couples. Teachers now discuss reproductive health, sexually

Photo: Kim Cain



transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS issues with students and encourage teenagers to postpone marriages.

Pregnant women have been trained in ante-natal, natal and post-natal care, and proper nutrition.

In the past year, 1 442 practicing TBAs received basic training in 48 courses, 2 916 trained TBAs attended refresher courses, 2 513 pregnant women and their husbands, 902 early married couples and 357 high school teachers participated in training workshops.

CCDB aims to help people and communities achieve a degree of self-sufficiency and sustainability. The program tries to build better relationships with health institutions and professionals, local leadership and government administrators.

Christmas Bowl and Partners4Peace funds of \$ 22 868 and AusAID funds of \$ 57 500 were sent to the CCDB this year. Thank you to everyone who has supported the Christmas Bowl and Partners4Peace in 2006 – this project is one of over 40 which has received gifts from you.

The Rising Pacific

Photo: Jenny and David Willis



At a church leaders' consultation in September, leaders of the member churches of the World Council of Churches in the Pacific, the Pacific Conference of Churches, the Pacific Theological College and the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools recognised that rising sea levels pose a direct threat to the way of life and possibly the very existence of many Pacific island people.

"We recommit ourselves to the 2004 Declaration on Climate Change, and stand in solidarity to accept and address the moral and ethical challenge of climate change. We will continue to engage in responsible stewardship of God's creation with an emphasis on the effects of climate change in the region, focusing on linking disaster preparedness, emergency relief, rehabilitation and development."

Mark Hobson, CWS International Programs Officer for the Pacific Region, who participated in the consultation, said the increasing effects are causing anxiety and stress to many people on the small islands, some of which have experienced an annual sea level rise of 21.4 mm since 2001.

Climate Change poses a significant threat to achieving sustainable

development in developing countries, and directly challenges the successes arising from the Millennium Development Goals process.

The Australian Climate Change and Development Roundtable, of which CWS is a member, was recently formed in recognition that developing countries are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and to highlight the need for international aid and development agencies to consider the implications of climate change for their programs and advocacy.

In its recent report the Roundtable has called for "action now or the region will lose the fight against climate change."

"Unless the Australian Government takes urgent action to tackle climate change and prepare for its effects, efforts to end poverty amongst Pacific and other neighbours will fail – and threaten the region's economy and security. Millions of lives will be at risk from dengue fever, malaria and other infectious diseases, while tropical cyclones will increase deaths, chronic food and water insecurity, and epidemic diseases will hit hard in local and regional economies."

For further details see www.ccdr.org.au

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Simply Sharing Week 2007

Following the success of Simply Sharing Week: Simply Hoping For Health in the Solomons, next year's resources will embrace the Global Campaign for Education to bring the "Send My Friend To School" program to Australian schools and churches.

Simply Sharing Week will be held 17-24 June in 2007 and will focus on our spiritual motivation to seek

education for all children and young people.

Education resources will be available in January. SSW will be a lead up to International Literacy Day on 8 September and Anti-Poverty Week beginning 14 October.

For more information, contact Kaylea Fearn on (03) 9650 6811 or email kfearn@ncca.org.au.