

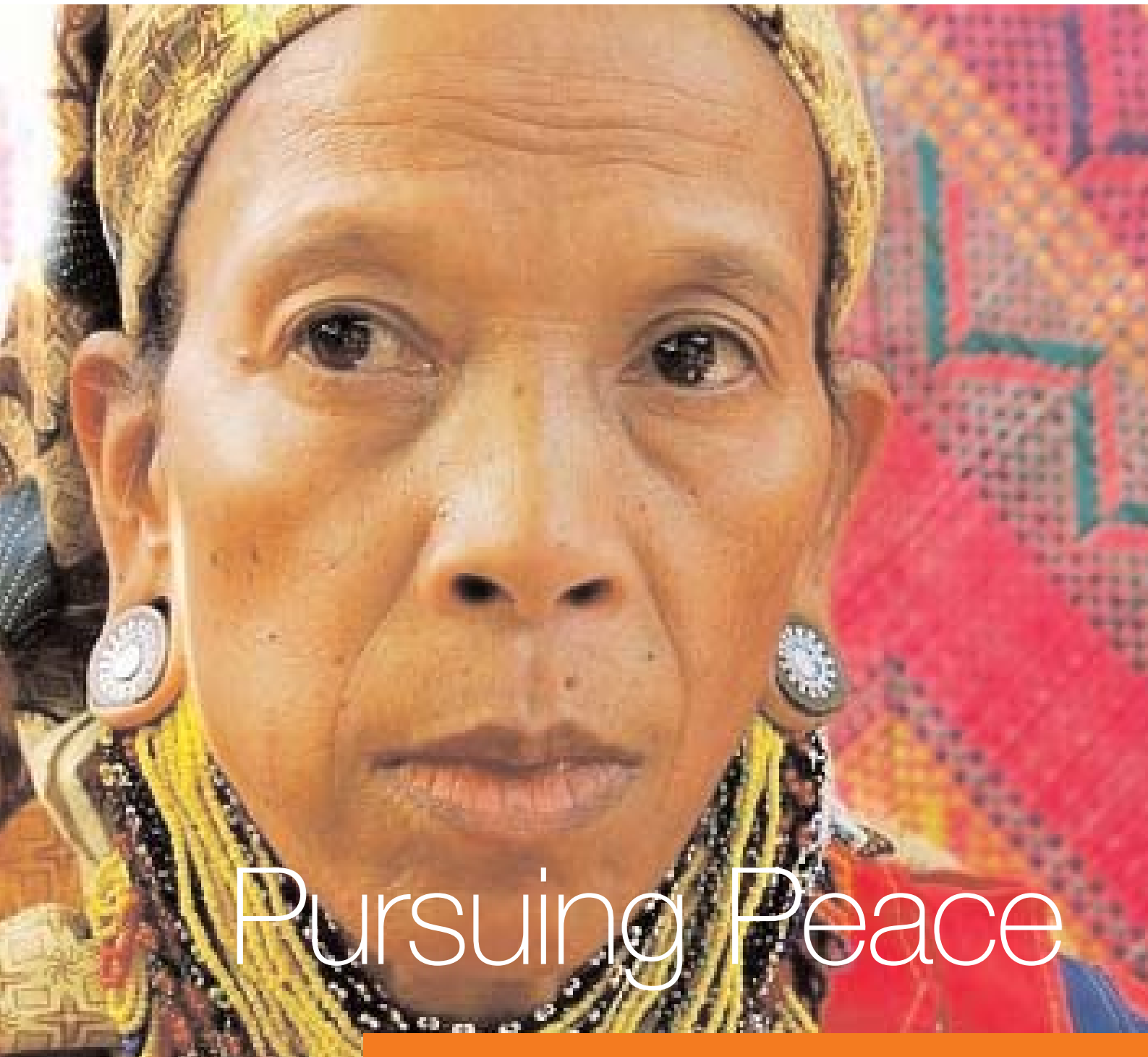
infocus

A Christian World Service Newsletter



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

Winter 2007



Pursuing Peace

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Our cover



Bai Bibiyaon, Mindanao Woman Chieftain, Southern Philippines - read her story on page 8.

Credit: Carlos H. Conde

2007 Calendar

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

26 August	Refugee and Migrant Sunday – focusing on current conflicts in Burma, Palestine/Israel, Sri Lanka and Sudan/Darfur	
21 September	International Day of Prayer for Peace - an opportunity for church communities to pray and act together to nurture lasting peace in the hearts of people, their families, communities and societies. See http://overcomingviolence.org/en/about-the-dov/international-day-of-prayer-for-peace.html	
30 September	Social Justice Sunday - IN WHOSE INTEREST? Australia as a global citizen	
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	
24 October	United Nations Day	
November 2007/ January 2008	Act for the Christmas Bowl!	
1 December	World AIDS Day	
8 December	Global Climate Campaign	
10 December	Human Rights Day	

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Any comments and suggestions would also be welcomed – please tell us what you want from *In Focus*.

From the Director

Thank you to all who have been involved in recent activities with CWS: whether providing gifts for our AID programs, completing the Christmas Bowl survey or taking part in Simply Sharing Week, the Canberra PeaceWalk, Voices for Justice or other anti-poverty activities coinciding with the half-way point of the Millennium Development Goals (7 July).

We are now approaching another two important dates: International Day of Prayer for Peace on 21 September and Refugee and Migrant Sunday, focusing on "Peace and Protection", on 26 August. The pursuit of sustainable peace (in its many forms) has become a more significant aspect of our work. An example of this is the wonderful response we have had to Partners4Peace, which celebrated its second anniversary on 1 July.

In the past two years, Partners4Peace have been involved in peace-building and poverty-reduction work in Sudan, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Zambia, Bangladesh, Burma and Burmese refugee camps, Timor Leste, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Philippines, India, China, Egypt, Gaza, Lebanon, the Pacific, Solomon Islands, Fiji, and refugees in Australia.

In this time, Partners4Peace have provided \$550,000 directly to these projects which has made a considerable difference to people's lives considering:

- \$12 clears land mines from 10 square metres in Cambodia
- \$17 facilitates an education program for a woman in a refugee camp in Lebanon

- \$35 brings safe, clean water and sanitation to an Ethiopian family
- \$80 provides a resettlement kit for returning refugee families in Sudan
- \$183 provides a year's food for a refugee from Burma in a Thailand border camp
- \$240 a year establishes a nutrition group in Mozambique, giving local families education, seeds and tools

Through monthly Peace Mails, Partners4Peace connect with the project workers and people they assist, such as Sinath – a Mine Action Controller in Cambodia, Afun – who has organised humanitarian assistance for those displaced by Timor Leste riots, and Gabriel – whose church council is involved in building thousands of community water tanks in rural Zimbabwe.

As a mainly direct-debit initiative and without glossy publications, we are able to keep administration and fundraising costs low. A guaranteed minimum 80% of gifts goes to the projects. As Partners4Peace grows, the administration, fundraising and monitoring costs will become an even smaller percentage of gifts.

There are so many more projects in which Partners4Peace will be involved over the coming year, so please, be a part of this life-changing work if you can.

Speaking of the year ahead, we are pleased to say that after a series of



Alistair Gee and John Gilmore, Chair, CWS Commission

Credit: Howard Graham

significant changes to the way we operate, the 2007/8 financial year will see a 32% reduction in administration and fundraising costs compared to 2006.

2006 Annual Report

The CWS 2006 Annual Report is now available online (www.ncca.org.au/cws) or in hard copy by request. In 2006 we were able to provide \$4,032,051 for overseas AID programs and \$441,993 for Indigenous and refugee programs in Australia. In 2006, we passed the \$50 million mark to AID programs since we became known as CWS in 1994.

Thank you for your very important part in this work!

Alistair Gee, Director, CWS



Mark Hobson (centre), Pacific Program Officer, was farewelled in June by CWS and NCCA colleagues and Pacific partners.

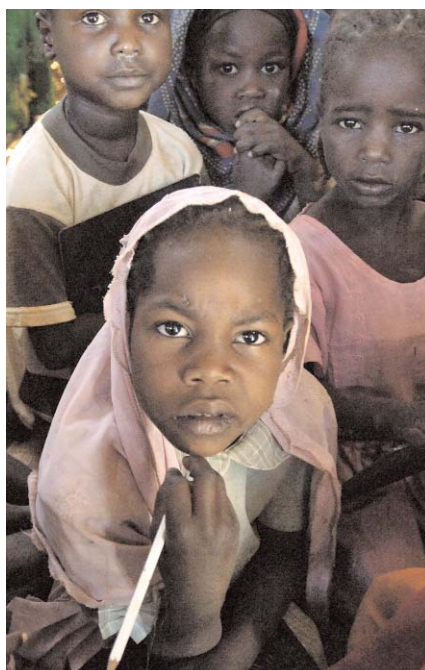
Credit: Kirsty Robertson

Our shared “Responsibility to Protect”

The conflict in Sudan's remote Darfur region is a shocking indictment of the international community's failure to provide protection.

In 2005, world leaders agreed on a groundbreaking new principle for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Called the “Responsibility to Protect”, or “R2P” for short, it states that all nations have a responsibility to protect their citizens from genocide and war crimes, but if they are unwilling or unable to do so, then the responsibility falls on the international community to act.

Yet just two years after its introduction, more than two million people have been forced to flee the genocidal violence in Darfur, and are living in camps for the internally displaced along Sudan's western border. Another 200,000 have fled to refugee camps in neighbouring Chad. Four million people are dependent on aid, and over one million live without help in Darfur's “no go” zones, areas so unstable they are beyond the reach of aid agencies. Relief workers are targeted by both sides of the conflict.



Credit: United Nations

Cause of the Conflict

The conflict in Darfur has been brewing since the 1970s. It started with land disputes between African farmers in the south and nomadic Arab cattle-herders in the north and escalated as Darfur's once fertile lands dried-up due to climate change, forcing farmers to

fence off their crops as nomadic herders delved deeper into farming areas in search of grazing lands.

But the conflict did not erupt until 2003, when the government began arming Arab militias, known as the Janjaweed, and launching joint offensives to “clear out” the African civilian population in Darfur. The coordinated attacks were deadly. Typically, government aircraft were sent in to bomb villages and then Janjaweed – known as devils on horseback – would move in, burning villages and crops to the ground and killing off livestock to ensure no one returned. Survivors reported indiscriminate killing by machete and automatic weapons, torture, rape, kidnap, and the brutal, targeted murder of children.

Christian World Service continues to provide strong support for refugees and the internally displaced through our partner organization, Action by Churches Together/Caritas Darfur Emergency Response Operation (DERO), and by helping to resettle Sudanese refugees in Australia. In 2007, we are seeking the most important change: an end to the conflict.

Refugee and Migrant Sunday: 26 August 2007

This year's theme for Refugee and Migrant Sunday is the “responsibility to protect”.

To help our 15 member churches, and the wider community, celebrate the day, the National Council of Churches has produced a free R2P education kit for parishes.

It includes a poster to advertise the day, a special liturgy and education sheets which explain the R2P concept, how it applies to the conflicts in Darfur, Burma and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and what it means for us as Australians and as members of the global Christian community.

Help Celebrate!

- Use the liturgy to celebrate refugees in your church !
- Use the education kit to give a talk or hold a discussion !
- Arrange a refugee speaker for the day !
- Organise a movie night to show a film or documentary about refugees !
- Send funds to help CWS support refugees !

Everything you need is on our website!

- Download a free education kit
- Get extra resources
- Find out what's on in your state
- Spice up your newsletter or get images for your flyer for the day!

See our website for all the details!: www.ncca.org.au/cws/rdp/rms

To order kits, arrange a speaker or find out more!

Call your State Ecumenical Council:

NSW/ACT: 02 9299 2215

fmansour@ncca.org.au

VIC/TAS: 03 9650 6811

vsanyu@ncca.org.au

SA: 08 8221 6633

sacc@picknowl.com.au

QLD: 07 3369 6792

qctcws@tpg.com.au

NT: 08 8927 6084

paulwebb4@bigpond.com

WA: 08 9385 5477

administrator@churcheswa.com.au

the world's most vulnerable people

What is already being done?

In 2006, the United Nation's Security Council agreed to deploy 20,500 peacekeepers to Darfur to assist the 7,000 outnumbered and under-resourced African peacekeepers already stationed in Darfur, an area the size of France. However, over eight months later, the UN troops have still not been deployed. Sudanese delay tactics and China's protective diplomacy have stalled the UN planned deployment.

China has major investments in Sudan's oil industry, and imports over 80% of Sudan's oil. China has been under increasing pressure to stop

supporting Sudan in the lead up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, in particular to stop selling the Sudan Government the weapons used to carry out the attacks. However, the Chinese Government has recently built three weapons factories in Sudan, thus formally ending the weapons trade, without stopping the flow of deadly arms into the hands of the Janjaweed.

CWS is pressing the Australian Government to push for the full deployment of the peacekeeping operation, to put pressure on the Chinese Government to act, and to increase foreign aid for the region.

The "Responsibility to Protect"

CWS is not stopping there. It is launching a broader campaign in support of the "the responsibility to protect". It is clear that the Government of Sudan is unwilling to protect the population of Darfur. Therefore, according to the principles of R2P, it is the responsibility of the international community to act.

At CWS, we are working to ensure that countries like Australia, as part of the international community, accept their new responsibility to protect civilians in countries like Sudan and Burma, especially when their governments are complicit in the atrocities being committed.

"So there is peace – but it's fragile"

Nicholas Kerr, met Bishop Joseph Gasi, of Tombura-Yambio diocese in Yambio, Southern Sudan, in 2002, when the Government of Sudan was bombing Southern Sudan almost every day. Nick was part of a CWS delegation to Sudan. Now the bishop is visiting Australia. Nick interviewed him in Adelaide.

Bishop Gasi's diocese was devastated in the long years of war between the Arab, Muslim North and the African, mainly Christian South. Much of it was destroyed. Now refugees who had fled to neighbouring countries and displaced people who had hidden in the forest are coming back home.

"More than half our people fled from the shooting and the bombing – about 45,000 refugees and displaced people have now returned to the diocese. They're coming back, very sick, very weak," Bishop Gasi said.

"Food is priority number one. When the people arrive the UN gives them food for about a week – a bag of grain, some beans and some vegetable oil. But if a family has many children, that little bag of grain doesn't go far. So people turn to the church. They think the bishop is able to



Credit: Nicholas Kerr

help them because they believe the church in other parts of the world is sending help. But that isn't always the case.

"I wish I could work the Lord's miracle and multiply the loaves and fishes!"

"Medicine is the second priority."

Bishop Gasi is particularly worried about the children. "We have hundreds of orphans, whose families have been killed in the long war," he said. "HIV-AIDS is becoming a pandemic in our area." The diocese has a centre for AIDS victims as well as providing food and shelter for the orphans.

"We also need food for the mind," he said. "We need education, not only in our diocese but in the whole of Southern Sudan. Bishop Gasi has sent some of the brightest children to school in Uganda. Some are now coming home as nurses

and teachers.

All of Southern Sudan needs help.

"We've come to thank Australian Christians," he said. "You've taken many refugees. You've accompanied us through very difficult times.

"We've been through these hardships. We knew there were other Christians who were supporting us with their prayers. We didn't feel alone. That was a comfort.

"At last, after the long years of suffering, now we have relative peace.

"The next point is, please continue to pray and to use your influence with the Australian Government and the international community that the people of Sudan may live that spirit of peace. We're pleading with you to see how you can help and support us so that the peace can be strengthened through the reconciliation process.

"So there is peace – but it's fragile."

Partners4Peace June Peace Mail was from Florence Bayoa, the Women, Youth and Gender Program Facilitator of the Sudan Council of Churches – see www.ncca.org.au/cws/partners4peace

A new ecumenical advocacy initiative launched at the culmination of a World Council of Churches (WCC) conference in Jordan in June, is to help churches worldwide work for a just peace in Palestine/Israel.

Called the "Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum," the initiative intends to be an instrument to "catalyse and coordinate new and existing church advocacy for peace". While aimed at "ending the illegal occupation in accordance with UN resolutions," it will be an expression of churches' "commitment to inter-religious action for peace and justice that serves all the peoples of the region".

In his closing remarks to over 130 representatives from churches and Christian organisations from six continents attending the conference the WCC General Secretary, the Reverend Dr Samuel Kobia said the forum will be a "participatory group of churches and organisations meeting, interacting and cooperating in order to further a common cause".

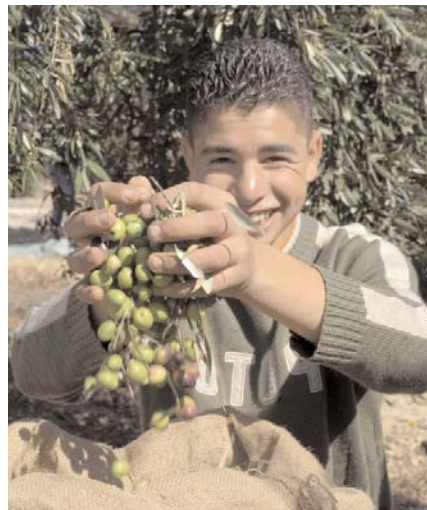
As a "journey to seek peace," Kobia said, the forum ultimately "depends on everyone here and on the many churches looking with expectation to what we have begun in their name". The promise that the forum encompasses is that "wherever it is made, a united and credible witness of churches together changes the course of events".

An olive tree offered by Christians from Palestine was planted on the banks of the Jordan River at a place traditionally considered as the site of Jesus' baptism, to mark the launch of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum.

Churches in Jerusalem welcome initiative for peace

Heads of churches in Jerusalem have welcomed the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum launched in Jordan. They voiced satisfaction with the new advocacy initiative at meetings with Kobia during his visit to the Holy Land.

The need for mutual understanding between the peoples in the region was



Credit: Paul Jeffrey/Action by Churches Together

A young man from a vocational training program harvesting olives on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem.

highlighted by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem and All Palestine, Theophilos III.

He stressed the crucial role of dialogue among Christians as well as with people of other faiths, something particularly important in a city like Jerusalem, which holds a particular significance for all three monotheistic religions.

The Maronite Archbishop Paul Sayah said inter-religious dialogue had to go down to the grassroots level and involve young people. In Palestine/Israel, Sayah said, nine out of 10 hours spent on inter-religious dialogue and cooperation should be dedicated to young people.

Armenian Apostolic Patriarch Torkom Manoogian said "Peace and justice are necessary. If they prevail, there is hope for both Israelis and Palestinians to live together side by side as children of God."

The Anglican Bishop, Suheil Dawani, affirmed the importance of building peace from the bottom up. In particular, he highlighted the need to include education for peace in schools for all the people in the region.

For Lutheran Bishop of Jordan and the Holy Land, Dr Munib Younan, the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum showed that churches worldwide were taking seriously the issue of a just peace in the region.

Australian aid to Palestinians

It was announced in June that Australia would provide \$4 million in emergency aid to the Palestinian government, plus \$3 million to help refugees in Gaza and Lebanon.

The Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, visited the Middle East and said Australia's contribution to the emergency Palestinian government would provide essential supplies to keep hospitals open and children in school.

"The formation of the emergency government presents a valuable opportunity to revive the peace process and ensure that the actions of violent extremists do not derail the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people," he said in a statement.

Mr Downer said he welcomed the comments of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who said the emergency government would be regarded as a partner for peace.

Australia would continue to engage with the emergency Palestinian government to promote peace and provide humanitarian assistance, he said.

"Australia remains deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation in the Palestinian Territories, particularly Gaza, following the recent violence," he said.

The humanitarian assistance includes \$2 million in emergency food aid for an estimated 158,000 refugee families in Gaza and \$1 million for food, health services, housing, water and sanitation services for 27,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

Partners4Peace July Peace Mail was from Sylvia Haddad, Executive Secretary of the Joint Christian Committee in Lebanon – see www.ncca.org.au/cws/partners4peace

2007 Christmas Bowl Survey

Thank you so much to over 3,000 supporters who responded to the survey sent with the last issue of In Focus, or who completed it on line through the link on our website.

Your opinions and suggestions are very much appreciated, as is your candour in telling us where things could be better. An apology to those who received their In Focus late and thus the survey about the time we had asked for its return. Making the forms personal to you took a little longer than expected. Please be assured that your responses are included in the analysis. The excellent response has meant a big task in data entry, but that's great.

From the surveys so far analysed, there are already some clear patterns of opinion:

- A clear majority registered Development as the most important aspect of the Christmas Bowl program
- Africa is the place most want us to work in, with Australian Indigenous programs not far behind
- Partnership with local churches is a key element of why people support us
- Most supporters learn about Christmas Bowl at church, and want to address global disadvantage, but when forced to choose a prime motivation, indicate the teachings of Jesus
- In Focus is clearly how you wish to be informed
- 60% of respondents are aged over

65, and 31% 51 to 65

- 20 people have indicated a gift for Christmas Bowl is in their Will
- 40 supporters joined Partners4Peace, with many more indicating potential interest at some future time
- There was a good flow of gifts accompanying many forms, for which CWS and more importantly, our partners, are very grateful. Thank you.

We also note the comment from many supporters to get on with the task and to minimise costs of administration. These are issues that our Director, Alistair Gee, takes very seriously as you would have noted from his remarks on page 3.

There are several issues that we would like to explore further through focus groups. Thank you to the overwhelming number of people who have offered their help with focus groups. We had expected to have enough response to be able to have small groups in capital cities, however literally hundreds of supporters have offered their help. Thank you so much! Please do not be disappointed if we take some time to be in touch, or fail to contact you. Resources really only stretch to the planned small groups, but your enthusiasm and desire to help are already a great source of encouragement.

Again, thank you for gifts sent with the forms. They will be put straight to work with partners. A special thanks to

those who indicated that they have included gifts in their Wills and to others who have asked for more information. A gift in your Will, means you are not just supporters – you are now regarded as “Living Trustees”, as we celebrate the trust that you display with such deferred giving. This is a wonderful way of ensuring that the work continues.

Thank you also to the 40 supporters who have become Partners4Peace. You have joined a really committed group, whose regular gifts to specific projects of partners each month are making an increasingly significant impact. The projects selected are those with a particular emphasis on building peace, through people's basic needs being met and them having voice to speak out on injustice.

If you are still thinking of this step or would just like more information, please fill in and return the form included with this issue. The monthly Partners4Peace projects reported to Partners over the last 12 months are on our website, www.partners4peace.org.au If that's no help to you, please indicate your interest on the form or telephone Howard or Emily on freecall 1800 025 101.

Everyday Hero supports the Christmas Bowl and Partners4Peace!

Who or what is Everyday Hero, you may well ask? It's an innovative way to present the work we do to a much wider audience than the majority of our supporters, who are affiliated with member churches.

This year, the popular Sydney Sun-Herald City2Surf fun run is being promoted as a community charity event. Runners are encouraged to select a charity and have their friends sponsor them, by making a gift to the charity

they have nominated on the Everyday Hero website, www.everydayhero.com

The Christmas Bowl and Partners4Peace have registered as charities and it's very exciting that we already have “heroes”, who have chosen to commit their sponsored running to help others through our work. This is an opportunity to introduce our humanitarian aid and development work to people who would not otherwise hear of our

appeals. It's also an opportunity for supporters who are fun runners to nominate Christmas Bowl or Partners4Peace for support, by simply going to the website and following the links. Everyday Hero intends to promote similar events throughout Australia. Please help with choosing our ecumenical charities or commending them to friends or family who may be participants in community events.



The Christmas Bowl

Thank you to all our Christmas Bowl supporters. Our partners appreciate your prayers and committed support.



**ASSISTANCE IN
EMERGENCIES**

An “emergency-help” day

In June, CWS's partner in Timor Leste, Yasona, visited the small village of Daralau, just a few kilometers south of Dili in the lower mountains. About 984 people had fled into the mountains because they did not feel safe. The staff of Yasona did a rapid survey about the needs of the population. Rice, noodles, milk, sardines and soap were provided. The people have started agriculture production.

Village “October 12”

Yasona had also received information that a small community of about 1,343 people in the village of “October 12” had difficulties getting enough food.

Normally only 483 people live in this village, which is rather isolated, and situated between the mountains and the sea.

A small team went to meet the village head and received information about the needs of the people. Volunteers prepared quickly 230 family-sized bags with rice, cooking oil, sardines, soap and detergent.

The village head, Senhor Agostinho M. de Araujo told us that he was very happy with the support, because the crisis has disturbed their life drastically. “With so many people from Dili city, it is difficult

to feed everyone”, he said.

“The children cannot go to school because they live too far from the highway. I hope that the government will solve the problems soon, because the people are suffering from the situation.”

Dili

In Dili, the capital of East Timor and the centre of the economic life, many promising developments had taken place after independence in 2002. Now there is another Dili.

Since the end of May, Dili has become a city with thousands of tents, where people now live, after their houses were burnt down during the violence that broke out. Some people do not feel safe in the houses that were not damaged and they are also living in the tents. Yasona fears that it will take several months before that stage is reached.

Immediately after the violence broke out, Yasona provided relief aid from resources that were quickly made available by Christian World Service and Uniting Church Overseas Aid. Other organisations have offered financial support for relief aid in the coming months.

Yasona is a small organisation, and checks carefully where help is needed. Special attention was provided to small groups and villages in camps outside Dili.



Credit: Carlos H. Conde

rarely emerge in Indigenous peoples' communities. Bai Bibiyaon comes from a royal lineage of datus or tribal chieftains. Her recognition as a leader came when, in her early young age, she demonstrated skills in resolving conflict, showing prowess in tilling vast fields, and being proficient in the knowledge of the medicinal value of herbs grown in forests.

For years, Bai Bibiyaon has been in the forefront of her tribe's struggles against militarisation, and a government-instigated plan for an oil palm tree plantation, and exploration for big-scale mining in Nabunturan. The paramilitaries, she says, have been used to drive them away from their lands to facilitate the entry of the plantation and the mining companies.

The most recent horror that jolted the community was the killing of the village's literacy school teacher when paramilitaries strafed a group of 28 schoolchildren doing work in the field.

“It was clear that there were many children and women civilians who were around but paramilitaries strafed our house and farmlands. My niece, who was a volunteer teacher, was killed,” decried Bai Bibiyaon.

The literacy school has been assisted by CWS's partner, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines and its Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Program.



Credit: Eleanor Trinchera



**INJUSTICE
RESPONSE**

Bai Bibiyaon Likayan Bigkay is the Woman Chieftain of the Ata-Manobo tribe from the village of Nabunturan in Mindanao, Southern Philippines. She bewails the human rights violations hitting her village.

“Paramilitaries forcibly searched my house and sexually harassed my niece. They threatened me that they will come back to kill me. Many other women have been harassed. Although we sought help from the Commission on Human Rights, they simply ignored us claiming we had no proof,” she said.

The “Bai,” as she is called, is a term of reverence to women tribal chieftains. They

at work in the world

Together we pursue peace, with justice, so to celebrate life in all its fullness.

Bai Bibiyaon participated in the Mindanao Inter-faith Forum on Children to narrate her community's ordeal.

Before the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and other non-government organisations, Bai Bibiyaon expressed her community's demand for justice and indemnification of victims among her tribe.

Despite her tribe's tribulations, Bai Bibiyaon continues with her advocacy for human rights and ancestral domains. She is a convenor of the Women's Committee which strives to bring together more and more Indigenous women leaders, to raise their capacities and leadership potentials, and to advance their land and gender rights.

In 2007 it is hoped that A\$ 20,000 from the Christmas Bowl will be available for the Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Program and others like it.



DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION

Charles Devere is a senior staff member of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, another of CWS's partners. In addition to his work with the ZCC he has been studying Herbal Medicine and Nutrition with the dream of practicing his profession to help people who are unable to afford traditional methods of treatment. He has already established most of his herbal garden for this purpose and is due to complete his studies in the next six months.

Another of CWS's African partners, the Christian Council of Mozambique, has a similar program in Zambezia province and it was recommended that Charles visit the staff there to see what was being achieved in the growing of medicinal plants and the production of herbal medicines and lotions. Charles travelled to Zambezia in March to learn more of what can be done in his home context.



Credit: Lutheran World Federation
Mozambique/ACT International

Sadly a cyclone hit the coast of Mozambique in February, causing major damage to homes and crops.

On his return to Zimbabwe Charles presented his findings and a proposal to the ZCC for a training program to be included in the curriculum of the Council's training centre in Harare.

It has now been decided that an herbal medicine and nutrition program will be included in the curriculum of the ZCC Training Institute, offering training to the countries of Southern Africa.

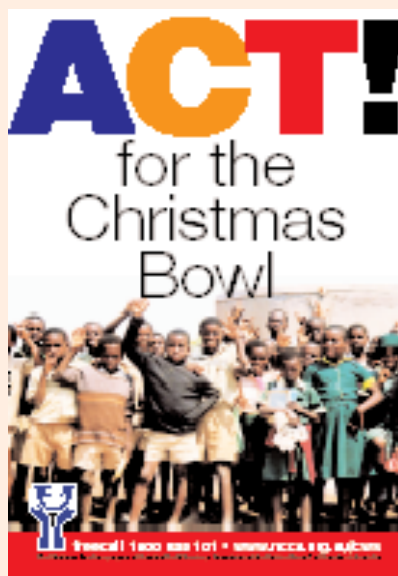
The Christmas Bowl

image for 2007 shows Christmas Bowl partners from Penemene Village in the Beitbridge District of Zimbabwe

These young people are celebrating the construction of a large rainwater tank at their school. The provision of clean water has made significant improvement to their health.

In 1995 village women in Beitbridge, in the southern part of Zimbabwe, identified access to clean water as the top priority of their major concerns. The Zimbabwe Council of Churches supported them and began a Rainwater Harvesting Program in 1996. Over 2,000 tanks have now been constructed, originally with bricks, now built from ferro-cement. Women, men and young people have been trained in tank construction and maintenance, in water conservation and hygiene.

The Christmas Bowl and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) have



supported the program since that time and in 2007 \$ 75,000 was given.

The program has proved successful in providing clean drinkable water for schools, clinics, churches, and now households.

It has also allowed for growth in other areas, like providing washing sinks, bio-gas pits for power, and

smokeless ovens which enable food and jam making projects – in turn people's incomes slowly improve and they become more self-reliant.

Your gift to the Christmas Bowl will ensure that the vital work of our Christmas Bowl partner, the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, will continue to provide this community and surrounding neighbours with safe and clean water – water which is essential for good health and well being – it will also support all our other ecumenical AID partners.

Order your Christmas Bowl resources now !

Kits with worship resources, activities and stories, bookmarks, clip art, A4 poster – and envelopes and corflute signs – will be available in August – if you haven't ordered yours download the order form from www.ncca.org.au/christmasbowl or phone 1800 025 101 and speak with Emily Anderson.

Students have come together from all over Australia to participate in Simply Sharing Week: Send My Friend to School. Held in June, the Simply Sharing Week program aims to educate Australian students about the lack of schooling opportunities for over 100 million children around the world. Students are then invited to respond to this injustice by creating a cut-out "friend" they would like to send to school to present to the Australian Government.

Over 12,000 people across Australia have already become involved by creating "friends" to send to the Australian Government as a call for the Government to increase spending on aid to basic education.

When asked what Prime Minister John Howard might do when he receives thousands of cut-out "friends" in the mail, one seven-year-old student said, "He might want to buy a bigger letterbox!"

The tremendous outpouring of concern



for increased spending on education by Australians has been heard by the Government. In early June it launched a new policy promising better education for young people in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Government has promised to double its commitment to basic education to around \$244million by 2010. The Send My Friend To School program was asking for a guaranteed

commitment of \$200-300 million a year for basic education until 2010. The new policy is seen as a great step towards education for all.

The best news of all is that it's not too late to get involved! You don't need to be a student, anyone who cares about seeing young people enjoy their right to basic education can participate.

Go to www.simplysharingweek.org.au to create your own online virtual "friend" to send to school. It's fun, meaningful and takes less than a minute! We look forward to presenting these in Canberra on your behalf sometime around World Literacy Day on 8 September.

For more information contact our friendly Simply Sharing Week coordinator, Kaylea, on (03) 9650 6811 or kfearn@ncca.org.au. Simply Sharing Week is a joint program of Christian World Service/National Council of Churches in Australia and Caritas Australia.

Farewell from Colleen Hodge

"This is the last issue of In Focus which I will edit. I have greatly enjoyed working with CWS for the last five years and I thank our wonderful partners and supporters and volunteers for their generosity and encouragement. I've been blessed by many friendships, new and old, and I will continue to enjoy these. The Christmas Bowl has been part of my



life since it began and telling the stories of its work in the world has been a privilege. It's now time for a sea-change!

**Thank you all.
Colleen Hodge**

Left: Launching the 2006 Christmas Bowl in Hobart Mall with students from St Michael's Collegiate School.

Credit: Hobart Mercury

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NCCA CWS is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct.

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NCCA CWS is a member Australasian Religious Press Association