



MEDIA RELEASE

Austcare continues to work with tsunami survivors two years on

ACEH, 12 December 2006 - Poverty and concerns about corruption remain the two toughest challenges facing aid agencies in Indonesia two years after the tsunami but for Australian aid agency Austcare, neither appears to be a problem.

According to Deborah Leaver, head of Austcare's program in Aceh, Indonesia - the most severely affected region following the tsunami - innovative solutions are needed when working with the most vulnerable and excluded people in Aceh's struggle against poverty.

"There is no easy solution to poverty. Our approach involves high levels of community ownership and participation in our projects. We consult with the community; we listen to what they have to say. It is important that they gain the skills and knowledge to continue to improve their own lives over the long term," she said, adding that Austcare has established excellent working relationships with Indonesian government authorities.

In the past, Austcare has assisted in the reconstruction of brick factories, which were essential in the post-tsunami re-building. Today, Austcare's projects focus on agricultural development and income-generation, and many are based on ongoing partnerships with the Australian community, such as Austcare's Farming for Aceh.

In areas where Austcare works, worker income has increased from between 20 and 130% compared to pre-tsunami income. The increased local economic activity has also supported the development of many new small businesses such as coffee shops and grocery stores.

"Austcare remains committed to increasing its efforts and work in the future. We're here for the long haul," said Ms Leaver.

This year, Austcare spent over one million dollars on projects in Indonesia. And in a country where corruption is raised as a big problem, Austcare's program remains unscathed.

"Austcare recently passed an independent audit on all projects with flying colours. Our projects are transparent and above all else, we make sure that our support goes to the people that need it," she said.

Austcare's proven track record in Aceh was vital for the granting of permission by the Indonesian Government to extend Austcare's work in poverty reduction throughout Indonesia, in partnership with the Department of Social Affairs. Austcare is the only Australia-based non-government organisation (NGO) registered by the Indonesian Government to operate across Indonesia. Austcare Indonesia and is working to develop the capacity of local partners and communities in disaster preparedness and response.

For media enquiries contact:

ACEH - **Deborah Leaver** on +62 812 6989 348 or email dleaver@austcare.org.au

SYDNEY - **Elektra Spathopoulos** on 0422 204 709 or 02 9565 9106

Visuals and quotes are available on request. Email espathopoulos@austcare.org.au

For more information visit www.austcare.org.au