

AUSTCARE IN THE FIELD



WINTER 2006

AUSTCARE HELPS TO PROTECT VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN SUDAN

SUDAN: While the crisis in Sudan has eased since its peak, it is far from over. Food and other supplies can be difficult for the UN agencies to distribute, as violence, robbery and extortion continue.

As part of its innovative "PROTECT NOW" program AUSTCARE has sent five Protection Officers to Sudan, to work with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to provide valuable support on the ground, a first for Australian aid agencies.

Melissa Phillips, AUSTCARE's Protection Officer, works with OCHA to collect information about the protection concerns of civilians in South Sudan to share with UN staff working in the field. By creating a more secure environment, aid can be distributed to those in need.



Protection Officer, Jennifer Grover talks to the community, giving them the opportunity to voice their security concerns.

"In South Sudan there are considerable violations taking place frequently with relation to human rights and people often do not know how to protect themselves," Melissa says.

"Protection is intrinsically linked with all of the other aid we provide. If people are given food but have nowhere to safely store it, they become insecure and are vulnerable to looting."

Melissa recently met with community leaders at a camp in Juba, the new capital in South Sudan. The meeting provided people with an opportunity to voice their concerns and propose solutions to improve their own futures. Melissa could then offer advice on how people can better protect their own villages.

"From one of our field offices we learned that women in a camp were being sexually harassed. Working with the women we were able to develop some strategies to prevent this, such as regular patrols in order to ensure they were kept safe," Melissa says.

"Here in Southern Sudan people are excited about peace and are returning to rebuild their communities. Some of the community-based training that Protection Officers have been involved in provides people with just that – the opportunity to help themselves."

Your support will help AUSTCARE continue to protect the world's most vulnerable people.



Secure storage of food is vital to prevent looting.

THE NEED FOR PROTECTION

The conflict in Sudan has forced millions of civilians to become internally displaced in South Sudan and Darfur. Unlike refugees who flee to another country, the displaced within Sudan are particularly vulnerable, as they seek safety within the same country where they have faced threats and persecution.

AUSTCARE works to protect people from further violence so there is hope that they can restore their lives in safety.

REMEMBER WORLD REFUGEE DAY JUNE 20

To protect and improve refugees' lives, visit www.austcare.org.au or phone 1300 66 66 72

A better world for refugees

PROTECTING WOMEN AND GIRLS FROM VIOLENCE



SRI LANKA: Eighteen months after the tsunami, there are thousands of displaced people living in transitional accommodation in Sri Lanka.

“The tsunami affected all of our lives but it affects females specifically – particularly women who lost their husbands and girls who lost their parents,” says Sumanaselee De Silva who works with the Ruhunu Rural Women’s Organisation.

In the coastal areas of Sri Lanka, the tsunami cost many people their

livelihoods. *“Women who worked drying and selling fish lost their income and some men who lost their income from fishing became addicted to liquor which can cause more problems for women,”* Sumanaselee says.

AUSTCARE is partnering with the Women and Media Collective (WMC) which was established in 1984 by a group of Sri Lankan women. Together we are working to protect girls from sexual and gender based violence that often increases

in the aftermath of natural disasters and post conflict situations which can involve displacement – an additional trauma for survivors.

The WMC conducted a two-day train-the-trainer workshop with female social workers, women’s groups and community groups to recognise and deal with incidences of sexual and gender based violence in tsunami affected areas.

Sumanaselee participated in the training program. *“During the sessions, we engaged in activities such as drawings and role plays to depict the situations and emotions involved. The training educated us how to listen, identify the problems being faced and taught us how we can help in such situations.”*

“The most important thing we can do now is use the knowledge we have gained to work with the women effectively. We are now able to help women rebuild their lives,” she says.

AUSTCARE intends to help rebuild lives in Sri Lanka over the long-term with your support.



AUSTCARE’s program with WMC works to improve protection for women and girls affected by the tsunami in Sri Lanka. Photo courtesy UNHCR/ H.J.Davies.

INTERVIEW FROM THE FIELD

Koto Fukushima, AUSTCARE Project Officer, Palestinian Territories



AUSTCARE has been supporting Palestinian refugees in the Middle East for over 20 years in both Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories.

Koto Fukushima, AUSTCARE Project Officer, is working with partner organisation The Bisan Centre for Development in a program to reduce vulnerability to poverty and conflict, and increase self-reliance of refugee and non-refugee women and youth in the Northern West Bank. The project includes the development of

Neighbourhood Corners (community centres) in two refugee camps and five villages in the Nablus Governorate.

Where are you located?

I live and work in the unofficial capital of the West Bank in the occupied Palestinian Territories. Ramallah is a small bustling hub of people, vehicles, shops, and food vendors – a mix of traditional and modern, the destroyed and the reconstructed sitting side by side. I work in the Bisan office with 15 staff who are interesting – and always have a story to tell!

A SIMPLE WAY TO PROVIDE HOPE



NEPAL: AUSTCARE has been working in Nepal with the Bhutanese refugees for over a decade. There are over 104,000 refugees in 7 refugee camps in Eastern Nepal. The current political turmoil in the country further exacerbates the concerns for these refugees who are seeking a long-term alternative to staying in the camps where they have no rights to movement, work or citizenship.

Life in the camps is difficult for the refugees. Although they are involved in running the camps they are still reliant on food and shelter provided through UN agencies and other Non Government Organisations (NGOs). Access to fresh vegetables outside has been reduced, and recent cuts to kerosene supplies make cooking over camp stoves difficult and reduces the lighting in the camps at



Balaram Adhikari now supports his wife and five children by making and selling clothes in the camp.

night. With one health centre per 10,000 refugees, medical workers are overstretched facing high rates of stress-related illness, depression and suicide in the camps.

AUSTCARE, through Lutheran World Federation–Nepal and Bhutanese Refugees Assisting Victims of Violence (BRAVVE), is supporting vital skills-training programs for adults in tailoring, weaving and bag making to provide them with a productive way to use their time and skills to earn an income in the future.

Through this training, the health of the most vulnerable refugees, particularly women and those who have suffered violence, has improved. Depression and physical ailments have been reduced. The results prove that every small step makes a difference.

A local doctor recommended that **Balaram Adhikari** participate in the training to find a productive pastime to alleviate his headaches and back pain. He now makes clothes for his family and others in the camp. *“My health situation has definitely improved now that I can earn a small living in the camp and support my family,”* he says.

Gyanu Koirala, a refugee living in the camp, works as a micro-credit trainer for the BRAVVE social empowerment program,



Gyanu Koirala now helps to manage nine different savings and loans groups within the camp.

teaching adults how to save small amounts of money and take out loans in order to better their lives and economic situation.

The one-year-old micro-credit program has so far met with great success. Gyanu says, *“The program is so successful because the women in the group set their own rules. They decide the annual interest rate, loan and repayment amounts and when the loans should be repaid”*. The group members participate in other BRAVVE training activities and many are hoping to establish small businesses in the camps.

“As the conditions in the camp get worse we need other ways to earn an income and to provide for our families. This program is making a positive change to our lives and we really want it to continue and to grow,” says Gyanu.

What does your work involve?

I am working with Bisan to assist them to understand which areas of their work can be strengthened so they can respond most effectively to the needs of the communities they work with.

One of the programs we’re developing will help vulnerable women access our micro-credit services so they can start their own small businesses. This will provide a source of income, often to families who have been severely affected by the lack of employment or other opportunities to earn money.

What part of your job do you find most difficult?

Seeing the impact of the broader political situation for ordinary Palestinians under occupation is frustrating.

Seeing the daily challenges for people such as farmers being repeatedly denied permission to pass a checkpoint to transport their fruit to the markets.

Or school children who’ve waited hours to travel to school, then finding class was cancelled because their teacher was denied access through the checkpoint.



Photo courtesy Jennie Milton.

THANK YOU

Our new Ambassador for People with Disabilities, Michael Milton, joins us in our thanks for your generous donations to our winter appeal. Your support will help people like those in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya.

AUSTCARE WELCOMES NEW AMBASSADORS

We are delighted to announce our new ambassadors. Michael Milton, who recently set an Australian record for speed-skiing and is a gold-medal paralympian, is now AUSTCARE's Ambassador for People with Disabilities. Lieutenant General John Sanderson AC (Retd), former Governor of Western Australia, brings his professional involvement in Cambodia to the role of AUSTCARE Ambassador for Cambodia.

NEW CORPORATE MEMBERS

AUSTCARE would like to welcome our new corporate members ANZ and Walker Wilson Associates.

CAMBODIA ADVENTURE TRIP

There are still some places on the fascinating World Expeditions Trip to Cambodia on 5-17 November 2006, led by Gio Tatti, where travellers will have a chance to see the results of our Landmine Action program. Contact World Expeditions on 1300 720 000 for details.



HELP AUSTCARE REDUCE COSTS

We aim to keep our costs as minimal as possible. If you have email access, and would like to receive your newsletter electronically, email us at donations@austcare.org.au, or visit our website and go to the "Get Involved" page to select how you would prefer us to communicate with you.

OUR MISSION

To assist refugees overseas, displaced people, returnees and those affected by landmines to rebuild their lives and to reduce poverty through the expert delivery of development programs in partnership with local communities and other agencies.

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Ambassador for People with Disabilities

Michael Milton

Ambassador for Cambodia

Lieutenant General John Sanderson, AC (Retd)

AUSTCARE Contact Details

HEAD OFFICE:

69-71 Parramatta Road
CAMPERDOWN NSW 2050
Locked Bag 5515 CAMPERDOWN NSW 1450

Telephone: +61 2 9565 9111

Facsimile: +61 2 9550 4509

Donations: 1300 66 66 72

Email: info@austcare.org.au

Website: www.austcare.org.au

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ABN 87 001 251 930

Locked Bag 5515 Camperdown NSW 1450

Tel: (02) 9565 9111 Fax: (02) 9550 4509 Email: info@austcare.org.au www.austcare.org.au

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