

act for peace

reduce poverty
prevent conflicts

protect refugees
empower communities

act for peace is the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

Winter 2009

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Credit: ACT International

Become an **act for peace Partner!**



It is through strong partnerships that lasting change will take place. Working in partnership is critical to empowering people and communities to act for peace. Innocent people like the many thousands forced from their homes due to conflict in Northern Sri Lanka, not only need the assistance of our partners on the ground, they need your partnership as well!

Thank you to all our supporters, especially our **act for peace Partners** who have responded so compassionately to the plight of people affected by poverty and conflict. Please consider joining this group of committed regular givers if you can.

The brutal and disheartening images throughout the media in recent months have documented fighting in Sri Lanka, Gaza, Iraq, and many parts of Africa. The unnerving number of conflicts are set in the startling context of financial and food crises around the world. You may wonder how local communities caught in conflicts beyond their control can really act for peace.

The first steps toward peace are to ensure that a community can protect their most vulnerable people from the conflict and have enough food, water and shelter to survive. The next steps are to resolve tensions in the community, especially through working together to improve livelihoods, skills and health. As communities within a region develop, tensions, which once seemed insurmountable, are reduced and sustainable peace becomes possible. This has happened in many areas our project partners work in, such as Southern Sudan and Mozambique where the main peace agreements were brokered by the National Councils of Churches.

Each month our **act for peace Partners** receive a Peace Mail report on how a community caught up in a different conflict around the world, has been empowered to act for peace. A sample Peace Mail is enclosed with this Newsletter for people who have yet to join our dedicated group of regular givers.

Your prayers and understanding are just as important as your gifts. You are

welcome to commit as much or as little as you wish to help people who seek safety, security and a more fulfilling life. For example, over one year:

- \$20** a month can provide life-saving medicines for 12 children in Gaza
- \$30** a month can train three literacy teachers to educate disadvantaged Solomon Islanders
- \$50** a month can provide six months of food for a family living in a refugee camp on the Thailand-Burma border
- \$100** a month can provide vital training for 55 Zimbabwean farmers in methods of sustainable crop agriculture

If you are unable to make a regular gift, please consider making a single gift. Simply fill in the form on the letter enclosed or call Howard, Jordan or Edwyn on Free Call 1800 025 101 or email them at actforpeace@ncca.org.au. They will be pleased to hear from you!

Yours sincerely,

Alistair Gee

Executive Director, **act for peace**

Focus Conflict: Sri Lanka

In response to the almost 200,000 people displaced by the fighting in Sri Lanka, **act for peace** and its partners are providing food, shelter, water and sanitation, trauma care, health and protection for internally displaced persons.

Thank you to **act for peace**

Partners and our other supporters for their prayers and assistance through our Sri Lanka Crisis Appeal. A gift of:

\$32 can provide five blankets and mosquito nets for families arriving in displaced persons camps

\$97 can provide one month of specialist medical assistance to injured and sick women and children

\$254 can pay for nutritious, cooked meals for ten families for a week

act for peace and its partners are providing food, shelter, water and sanitation, trauma care, health and protection for internally displaced persons.

Whenever and wherever a conflict occurs, **act for peace** will respond through its partners on the ground. Please consider promoting such appeals in your church or community. You can give:

- online at www.actforpeace.org.au
- via Free Call 1800 025 101
- by cheque or Postal Money Order addressed to:

act for peace-NCCA, Locked Bag 199 SYDNEY NSW 1230 (eg 'Sri Lanka Crisis').

ABN: 64 493 941 795



Credit: ACT International

act for peace Representatives

Exploring ways South Australians can act for peace together

By Edwyn Shiell, Marketing & Communication Coordinator

On Monday, 24 March, 37 people from various churches across Adelaide gathered to discuss deepening the engagement of South Australians in ecumenical aid and development work globally.

The event, hosted by the South Australian Council of Churches, encouraged members of the Adelaide church community to get more involved ecumenically with the critical work in areas of ongoing conflict that **act for peace** undertakes, by becoming an **act for peace Representative**.

Some of the most poignant points of feedback followed after Patricia Garcia, **act for peace** International Program Director, told of her experiences working in a Sudanese refugee camp.

Help us to spread the word about the critical work our partners do ...

During this time she was held at gun point and detained due to the government's distrust for agencies delivering aid to refugees. Being placed in this horrific situation made her realise what these displaced people must endure every day of their lives.

Prayer, advocacy, fundraising and public speaking in churches across South Australia were some important suggestions that this first gathering of potential **act for peace Representatives** had for making a meaningful difference at the local level.

act for peace is encouraging

Christmas Bowl supporters to become Representatives in their congregations and communities. Help us to spread the word about the critical work our partners do in conflict affected regions worldwide.

If you are interested in becoming an **act for peace Representative** in South Australia, contact Geraldine on (08) 8215 0300 or sacc@picknowl.com.au

An **act for peace Representative** session will be held at Burwood Uniting Church, Victoria, on Sunday May 17, please contact Stan on (03) 9650 4511 or soxworth@vcc.org.au for further details.

Sessions in other States will be announced shortly. You can Free Call 1800 025 101 or email actforpeace@ncca.org.au for enquiries. It will be great to hear from you!

Indochina Study Tour shows great work by Project Partners!

act for peace Partners' Coordinator
Howard Graham

Nineteen **act for peace** supporters enjoyed a 24-day visit to Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia in February 2009. The group appreciated the opportunity to visit project partners and learn of their work first hand.

As well as paying for their trip, group members were most generous with gifts totalling \$16,000, which were distributed to the project partners.

The Study Tour provided the opportunity to rub shoulders with local people at project sites, really setting it apart from being just a tourist trip. Projects visited included our partners work in:

- **The Burmese Refugee Camp at Tham Lin** - the optimism and resilience of the long-term Camp residents was impressive.
- **Klong Toey Slum in Bangkok** - this was an inspirational example of Christian living and work by Ash and Anji Barker. They live in the slum alongside the people to build self-esteem and help develop small enterprises providing opportunities for a future beyond the slum.
- **Water and Sanitation in Cambodia** - this showed villagers totally involved with the construction of wells, water filters and hygienic latrines. Dot Cant, a tour group member found it a very rewarding opportunity to "meet and get to know something of the lovely Cambodia workers"
- **De-mining in Cambodia** - our partner gave a very professional de-mining demonstration which is extremely dangerous work. We were kitted out with protective gear for a walk through the minefield. The visit really brought home that when military forces move out, the frightful legacy of mines and



The happy group at Angkor Wat

unexploded ordnances remain to kill and maim innocent people.

We also visited the War Museum and Re-unification Palace in Hanoi which were very sobering and the Killing Fields of the Khmer Rouge near Phomn Penh were chilling. As group member Bill Harris recalls the impact, "our Cambodian guide stood in front of one of the graves in the 'killing field' and told us that her mother had come from a family of ten and said

'now I have no family.'

The group flew back to our privileged land with many memories to sift through. We had happy times over shared meals, discussions on what we had seen and experienced and total admiration for the partners who are working for a better life for local people. Our project partners really do act for peace and we were proud to support them, to encourage their efforts and most of all, to be inspired by them.

Our Sudanese Guest Now Visiting in June

The Reverend Peter Tibi, General Secretary of the Sudanese Council of Churches set to visit Australian congregations



Due to travel restrictions in Sudan's capital Khartoum following the indictment of President Al-Bashir, The Rev. Peter Tibi postponed his trip to Australia from March to June 2009.

The Rev. Tibi, will promote the work of **act for peace** partners in Sudan and speak about the immense challenges and opportunities facing his people.

Rev. Tibi will be presenting to congregations in New South Wales on Sunday June 7 and in Victoria on Sunday June 14. If you are interested in attending any of these events, please visit our website at www.actforpeace.org.au for confirmation of location and time, or Free Call 1800 025 101.

It's Time for Peace in Palestine and Israel

World Week for Peace in Palestine Israel 4-10 June 2009

By Debra Porter, NCCA
 Communications Officer & Assistant
 to the General Secretary

More and more churches are joining this annual week of action each year. It began with a handful of churches following the World Council of Churches Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil (2006). Last year it reached out through over 40 countries.

In keeping with decades of ecumenical and church policies, the focus is to work towards a

negotiated peace that secures the rights and future of all people in the Palestine Israel conflict.

The week calls participants to seek justice for Palestinians so that both Israelis and Palestinians can finally live in peace. It is now more than 60 years since the partition of Palestine hardened into a permanent nightmare for Palestinians. It's more than 40 years since the occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza overwhelmed the peaceful vision of one land, two peoples.

What can you do?

- **PRAY** along with churches around the world for a just peace and an end to the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.
 - **EDUCATE** yourselves and others about actions that make peace and about facts on the ground that do not.
 - **ADVOCATE** with political leaders to promote peace with justice.
- Visit www.worldweekforpeace.org for more information or contact the National Council of Churches in Australia, (02) 9299 2215, to ask for an Invitation and Fact Sheet.

Stand Up for the Millennium Development Goals

October 2008 saw 116 million people around the world **STAND UP** in support of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to halve extreme poverty. Of these 116 million, about 20,000 people participated in churches in Australia. On Sunday 18 October 2009 we can do much better than this!

This year **act for peace** is urging over 100,000 Australian churchgoers to **STAND UP** for the MDGs. There has been impressive progress towards achieving the MDGs, however the deepening financial crisis and escalating food crisis is threatening to undo much of this work.



Why STAND UP?

The **STAND UP** initiative strives to remind governments of their promises to end poverty, inequality and hunger. The promise to stop children dying from preventable diseases. The promise to ensure basic education for all children. The promise to stop women dying during pregnancy and

childbirth. The promise to provide water and sanitation and to protect the environment.

How to STAND UP?

On Sunday 18 October, join millions of church goers and others around the world by standing up and speaking the **STAND UP** Pledge calling on our leaders to take action now. For more information on how you can **act for peace** through **STAND UP**, visit us online at www.actforpeace.org.au.

A faster receipting system!

We recently implemented a new database to speed up receipting and gift processing and eliminate duplicates of records! Thank you to everyone for your patience in any delay with receipts during this change. Please let us know if you have received multiple copies of the newsletter on Free Call 1800 025 101.

Share Your Christmas Bowl Creativity with Us!

We'd love to know how you or your church celebrated the 2008 Christmas Bowl! The Canberra Central Uniting Church got involved by drawing an outline of the Christmas Bowl logo in their hall which church members filled in with gold coins. They raised more than \$1,000 with this activity alone!



Please email us any photos or details and let us know how you got involved to support the Christmas Bowl in its 60th year. Simply email Edwyn at christmasbowl@ncca.org.au or Free Call 1800 025 101.



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