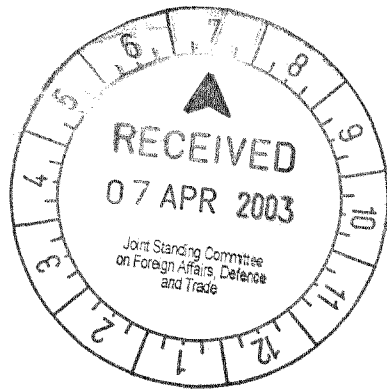# Submission No 25

Inquiry into Human Rights and Good Governance Education in the Asia Pacific Region

Organisation: **Australian Volunteers International**

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8 April 2003

Mr Adam Cunningham
Secretary
Human Rights Sub-Committee
Suite R1. 120, Parliament House
CANBERRA   ACT   2600

Dear Mr Cunningham,

It is with pleasure that I enclose Australian Volunteers International's submission to the Inquiry into Human Rights and Good Governance Education in the Asia Pacific Region.

This organisation has had a long-standing and strong involvement in the area of good governance and human rights education in the Asia Pacific region. AVI recognises that education is key to building good governance and promoting, protecting, respecting and fulfilling human rights.

Importantly, if education is about deepening people's understanding of the issues involved with good governance and human rights, it is absolutely vital that those with the wherewithal to assist or facilitate this process have not only appropriate levels of experience, but also the ability and willingness to connect with the issues at a level deeper than the theoretical. This entails genuine care and commitment, and is where Australian volunteers make a difference.

AVI is founded on the belief that education is a two way process. It is about the *exchange* of ideas and *meaningful* communication, it is about learning by *doing*, it takes *time* and *commitment*, and it ought never be prescriptive. These are the qualities that our volunteers embody, and this is why they have made a unique contribution to this area for over 50 years. Meaningful communication – and therefore effective education - is impossible without respect, trust and an intimate understanding of the complexities and realities of the communities within which our volunteers live, work and learn. Education must be backed by solid long-term action at all levels. These are the true credentials of effective education.

I would like to thank you for your time and consideration in this matter and look forward to hearing the outcome in due course. If you require clarification on any issue raised please do not hesitate to call me on (03) 9279 1707.

Yours sincerely,
AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL

DIMITY FIFER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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**Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Human Rights Sub-Committee**

**Inquiry into Human Rights and Good Governance Education
in the Asia Pacific Region**

1.   Introduction

Since 1951, more than 6000 Australian Volunteers have completed assignments in over 60 countries, the majority of which have been in the Asia-Pacific region. Australian Volunteers International (AVI), Australia's largest and most experienced international volunteer sending agency, has enjoyed bipartisan support and received financial support from the Australian Government since the 1960s.

Most volunteer assignments are for 2 years working for central governments, local governments and in civil society. All are placed in response to specific requests from host employers who, in various ways, take responsibility for the volunteers and manage their presence and contribution. In this way, there are safeguards that volunteers are only placed where they will be welcomed and their skills utilised as planned.

The two key components of the organisation's purpose are:
- To provide long-term, culturally sensitive and effective technical assistance which builds lasting relationships with developing countries and knowledge about Australia
- To facilitate the integration of the cross-cultural experience and understanding gained by its 6000 program participants into Australian culture and life

AVI has had a strong involvement in the area of promoting good governance and human rights in a number of countries, although it is difficult to quantify our work in the area of human rights in particular, given the broad parameter of this sector. Over 100 Australian Volunteers have been directly involved in human rights work in the Asia Pacific region, however many more have contributed to human rights education through promoting human rights awareness. Attachment One provides detail on our assignments in both of these areas. Attachment Two gives detailed accounts of Australian Volunteers' work in public sector development and in support of the concept of "good governance" throughout PNG and the Pacific.

AVI is founded on the belief that education is a two way process. It is about the *exchange* of ideas and *meaningful* communication, it is about learning by *doing*, it takes *time* and *commitment*. Australian Volunteers live and work in communities for extended periods, which enable them to form long term working relationships, gain an intimate understanding of the complexities and realities of those communities, and connect with the issues at a level deeper than the theoretical:

> "... the key to effective... development work (is) acquiring a sympathetic understanding of the values and beliefs of local counterparts. What was important was.... the relationship that developed over time between the individual volunteer and the local populace. In those instances where the volunteer is perceived as empathetic with the local culture and interested in participating in it as fully as possible is the mutually beneficial influence."[1]

This focus on building relationships alongside the provision of technical assistance underpins the development of timely and culturally appropriate interventions. These interventions serve to identify and build on current strengths of organisations and institutions, to transfer skills and to apply strategies which support partner sustainability. AVI believes that these elements are foundational to sound educational processes which contribute to the achievement of the widest possible development outcomes.

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[1] Dane Smith, "Building relationships – ending conflict through mutual self-understanding", *Worldview Magazine*, National Peace Corps Association, Vol. 15, no. 2

2.   Human Rights

Democratic government and the protection of human rights are vital for reducing poverty and building stable and independent nations. Education of government officials, civil society organisations and citizens will encourage understanding and action in accordance with good governance principles.

Given the technical complexity of many human rights issues, these can tend to be beyond the comprehension of most people without a legal background. However, non-government organisations (NGOs) have always played a key role in placing the issues at a human level and keeping them alive within the broader public, through the basic education of local people and communities and directing the public's attention to particular issues. Human rights can only become a reality through a process of education and advocacy and ensuring that a public consciousness of what human rights really entails is not lost in technical complexity. This is where NGOs can make a difference.

It is often forgotten that under the United Nations Human Rights Conventions, there are actually four elements which governments are required to 'take steps towards' – respect, protect, promote and fulfil. The work of agencies in human rights education can add value by giving breadth and depth to the achievement of action in each of these areas.

Furthermore, human rights education should not be thought of as being confined to specialist human rights organisations, because basic rights are at the very centre of people's development. While some development workers may be directly involved in human rights projects, for others the link is less direct. For them, it is about an approach: working with people in ways that are informed by a rights perspective. In some cases, when volunteers encounter what they might consider to be human rights infringements during their assignments there will be nothing they can do, but just by being there they can support national colleagues in their efforts to promote an awareness of people's rights.

Respect for and promotion of civil and political rights are also vital elements of governance and sustainable development. In China and Mongolia our volunteers have worked with partners to develop awareness of international treaties and protocols, Australian practices in human rights monitoring and legislation, and Australian practices in community mediation and child rights.

Respect for human rights and participatory principles is generally a force for stability. It moderates political behaviour and helps ensure government accountability and effectiveness. Australian Volunteers in China and Mongolia have worked to develop training programs whereby vulnerable groups are able to participate in processes to monitor human rights abuses and to achieve legal redress. Volunteers in China have also worked on HIV/AIDS issues with government officials to educate them in less discriminatory approaches to people living with AIDS.

AVI has also placed many volunteers within civil society organisations involved in the promotion and defence of human rights. Examples include:
- Thailand, with organisations combating the effects of and working against the trafficking of young women. Also, with organisations active in promoting the rights of Burmese refugees and advocating on their behalf.
- in Indonesia, with various civil society organisations. For example, we are about to place a volunteer with Rahima, an Islamic organisation which promotes the rights of Muslim women in Indonesia.
- East Timor, with the Alola Foundation and the NGO Forum, both of which promote human rights development. Importantly, AVI's program in East Timor to date has been centred around responding to the promotion of fair and sustainable development.

Development workers do however need to be realistic in their approach to human rights. What might first appear to be clear cut issues, are often very complicated because of competing rights and priorities. We also need to be careful not to equate human rights and civil society with the forms of democracy we know in the Western world. It is far more important to examine the ways citizens are encouraged to participate in their communities.

3.   Governance

Governance can be defined variously but according to AusAID it includes democratic government and the protection of human rights:

"Effective governance means competent management of a country's resources in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to people's needs. Governance cuts across all parts of the development agenda and all aspects of aid investments."[2]

"It means the ways through which citizens and groups in a society voice their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. Essentially it is the economic, social and political fabric of a country."[3]

A continued emphasis on effective and equitable governance is strengthened by conceptualising governance beyond what appears to be a focus on capacity to reform public institutions and on systems of government. Key here is noting the distinction between good government and good governance.

A broad perspective on good governance allows a more cohesive view of the role of civil society and traditional systems in governance, and recognises the multiple roles of non-state actors in community affairs, in particular their central role in making government more effective, accountable and transparent. In light of this, strengthening civil society should be seen as an important target for the aid program, rather than simply an alternative mechanism for aid delivery. This would serve to reinforce the rationale for a focus on civil society in the aid program, while also providing alternatives to support current initiatives that promote more effective and accountable governments.

The strength of civil society organisations and networks needs to be seen in terms of their roles in community affairs and governance, rather than as deliverers of aid programs. There is value in recognising the current strength of civil society organisations in the Asia Pacific Region, particularly in the context of a broad view of governance, and there is value in recognising the role these organisations play in conflict prevention and their potential for enhancing the outcomes of inclusive growth.

A democratic political system, the rule of law, freedom of speech and a free media are all building blocks of good governance. Many Australian Volunteers have been heavily involved with these aspects of good governance. Volunteers in Mongolia have been working with journalists in print and radio media to further understandings of an open and independent press. Volunteers have supported their colleagues in the Asia Pacific Region to undertake further training in journalism and have run training programs for colleagues.

It is important, however, to be mindful of the fact that the concepts of good governance and democratisation are not synonymous. It is not enough to merely educate people about democratic ideas and processes. Good governance is essentially about building a government's responsiveness to the needs of the people, and there are persuasive arguments which suggest that true accountability in government can only be built from the local level upwards. It is therefore vital that education be provided at all levels of community, and that local initiatives be supported through the aid program. This often involves a Catch-22 situation as smaller local NGOs may not have the capacity to access these programs. If basic administrative infrastructure needs are not met this can impede the ability of local organisations to link into wider support networks and access information and support, and share ideas. While providing education in skills acquisition such as submission writing is important, it is crucial these other basic educational needs are met. This requires a deep understanding of the cultural assumptions and imperatives which operate in the region. If the push towards "good governance" is to have constructive resonance with government institutions and civil society then the environment within which governance is to be expressed needs to be part of the solution equation.

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[2] http://www.ausaid.gov.au/keyaid/gover.cfm accessed on 04/04/03

[3] http://www.ausaid.gov.au/media/release.cfm?BC=Media&Id=4381_2753_4767_8315_2020 media release - Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer

4.   Conclusion

AVI believes that designing and implementing educational programs cannot rely solely on government to government interaction or on short-term commercial project delivery. The development of relationships which engender trust and goodwill are essential to the achievement of agreed development outcomes. This takes time. The work of Australian Volunteers International rests fundamentally on this principle, as our presence in Asia and the Pacific for over forty years will attest. Much of this effort has depended on building goodwill and trust through community development and capacity building according to local need. AVI's bipartisan approach to work in Bougainville, for example, during the conflict and now during reconstruction, is testament to the importance of creating a meaningful foundation in the community through relationship building. It is this foundation that achieves positive development outcomes. Australian Volunteers build relationships, create international support networks, and extend understanding about the issues and challenges facing developing countries at an institutional and community level. The value of international volunteering as a development outcome is in the inherent importance of working with local partners to identify need, to build on existing strengths and to design strategies which are appropriate to the cultural and socioeconomic circumstances in-country.

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ATTACHMENT ONE

OVERVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEERS
IN THE SECTORS OF HUMAN RIGHTS & GOVERNANCE
IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

1.   HUMAN RIGHTS

Over 100 Australian Volunteers who have been involved in human rights work in Asia and the Pacific region, however this is a significant understatement of the total number of people who have been engaged in a broader definition of this area.

Examples of countries where Australian Volunteers have worked in human rights are:
        Afghanistan, Cambodia, China, East Timor, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand

There have been significantly more Australian Volunteers working in the area of human rights in Asian countries than in the Pacific region.

These assignments have included work with displaced populations such as the Tibetan community in Dharamsala in India, and Burmese refugees on the Thai-Burma border. There has also been involvement in post-conflict situations, for example, in Afghanistan, Cambodia and East Timor. Other assignments have involved working with people who are discriminated against on other grounds such as HIV status, disability, gender or sexual orientation.

Examples of positions that Australian Volunteers have filled include:
        Capacity Builder; Human Rights Adviser; Human Rights Assistant; Human Rights Documentalist; Human Rights Education Project Officer; Human Rights Education Worker; Human Rights Monitor; Human Rights Officer; Human Rights Researcher; Lawyer; Legal Adviser; Program Manager; Project Officer; Researcher; Training Adviser

A majority of these placements would have included components of education and training amongst counterparts in the workplace.

2.   GOVERNANCE

Assignments in governance form a significant proportion of the Australian Volunteers program, with one-third of Australian Volunteers currently on assignment working in this sector. 126 of these volunteers are working in countries in Asia and the Pacific region, including large programs in Afghanistan, Cambodia, East Timor, Papua New Guinea and Viet Nam.

Examples of the current volunteer placements in this area include:
        Accounting & Finance Adviser; Audit Adviser; Business Adviser; Capacity Builder; Documentalist; Financial Administrator; Management Adviser; Program Officer; Researcher; Technical Adviser; Training Instructor

The primary focus of these assignments is capacity building and institutional strengthening, involving training and education activities amongst local counterpart workers.

As a measure of activity in this area, there have been approximately 500 assignments in the Asia Pacific region where the occupations related to management, administration, computers, finance, economics, business, marketing and tourism.

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ATTACHMENT TWO

OVERVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL'S WORK IN SUPPORT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE PACIFIC REGION

1. Overview

Australian Volunteers International (AVI) has worked in public sector development and in support of the concept of "good governance" throughout PNG and the Pacific over many years. Volunteers have been placed as accountants, planners, lawyers, engineers and information technologists. The program has also responded to the need to strengthen the non-government sector and civil society through the placement of educationalists, project coordinators, administrators and human resource managers. In the last four decades Australian Volunteers International has assigned close to 2500 Australian Volunteers in the Pacific region, comprising more than 1300 in Pacific Island states and more than 1100 in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

2. Building Capacity in Government

2.1 National Government

2.1.1 Financial Management Improvement Program - PNG

AVI co-sponsored two Australian volunteers to work on the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Financial Management Improvement Program (FMIP) The program aims to strengthen the capacity of the Government of Papua New Guinea to make responsible financial decisions by providing professional advice and training. The FMIP is part of a three tiered project funded by AusAID, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The volunteers work as Financial Training Specialists applying their knowledge to a variety of roles including: adviser to the Provincial Treasurer; training at all levels of Provincial Government; and diagnostic support.

These positions are part of a project which aims to enhance government accountability by extending the computerised budgeting and accounting systems (PBS and PGAS) and their manual counterparts down to 89 Districts and 281 Lower-level Governments throughout PNG. This is being implemented through a large-scale training program. The volunteers monitor and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the training programs and provide advice to local counterparts. The volunteers provide continuity of support for institutional strengthening at the local level by spending about 80% of their time on training follow-up, on-the-job coaching, and by providing occasional seminars and workshops.

2.1.2 Ombudsman Commission Institutional Strengthening Project – Technical Monitoring and Review Group 1998 – 2002 - PNG

The purpose of the Ombudsman Commission Institutional Strengthening Project was to enable the PNG Ombudsman to improve its management, professional skills and systems so that it can more effectively carry out its operations. The Technical Monitoring and Review Group (TMRG) provided high level independent assessment and advice regarding the design and implementation of the activity. The TMRG provided AusAID and the Ombudsman Commission with a formal appraisal of the Institutional Strengthening Project Design and regular assessments of implementation progress. AVI supported the Ombudsman/Anti-Corruption Specialist to undertake short term assignments under the direction of the Australian Managing Contractor for the project. The technical adviser was released regularly from his Assistant Ombudsman role with the NSW Ombudsman's office to undertake this role.

At the same time AVI also supported an Australian Volunteer to work with the Ombudsman Commission in Port Moresby. This role included production of a monthly internal newsletter, speech writing, preparation of media releases and design of information pamphlets. The volunteer was also responsible for implementing the commission's external relation's plan. This included the development of communication strategies for the

release of key reports such as the Cairns Conservatory Report thus ensuring wide media coverage, both in PNG and Australia. The volunteer worked with a counterpart towards the end of the assignment to consolidate efforts to increase public awareness of the commission and its role.

2.1.3 Pacific Technical Assistance Facility (PACTAF) - Regional
AVI manages the Pacific Technical Assistance Facility (PACTAF) which places Australian personnel in selected Pacific Island nations to assist in meeting human resource needs, and to contribute to building local capacity in the workplace. It provides specialist recruitment, placements and support of people with a dual capacity to provide professional expertise and the motivation to work effectively and co-operatively in the Pacific. PACTAF is funded by AusAID and appointments are agreed at a government to government level.

The principal objective of PACTAF is to provide an effective, efficient, timely and appropriate service to the governments and communities of Pacific Island countries for the specialised recruitment of qualified and skilled Australian technical personnel. Primarily personnel occupy middle or senior level positions. A key outcome is the development of the human resource capacity within the agency concerned, through the transfer of skills. Placements include education specialists, health practitioners, financial advisors, economic and social planners, change management specialists and senior legal advisors.

2.1.4 Building Human Resource Development for Environment Departments of Pacific Island Countries - Regional
It has long been recognised that national capacity for environmental management needs considerable strengthening across the South Pacific. National Environment Departments are often lacking in basic HRD tools such as position descriptions, training plans, policy and procedure documentation, or if they do exist are lacking the skills to use these tools effectively. Environment Departments of many Pacific Island nations are under-staffed and yet they have to respond to a wide range of significant environmental management issues. Environmental education and community awareness raising on a range of environmental issues is increasingly important including concerns such as waste management, natural resource conservation and coastal resource management. For example, specialised skills for areas such as material production, media campaigns and newsletter preparation are in very short-supply and yet staff within national environment departments are called upon to produce material, usually in local languages to raise community awareness. The NGO sector suffers from similar issues and constraints. In particular the skills to develop awareness raising materials and run effective campaigns and activities are in very high demand. This is exacerbated by the fact that the mechanisms for information sharing and cooperation between NGOs and Government Departments are underdeveloped or non-existent.

Environment Departments which are Members of the South Pacific Regional Environment Program (SPREP) frequently request assistance for capacity building of their staff and human resource development through on-the-job training, not only for effective implementation of specific projects but to enhance institutional capacity to effectively carry out the core roles and work of the Department. For several years, SPREP has worked closely with AVI, to identify suitable Australian Volunteers for one to two year placements in response to specific requests from governments. A three-way process of financial and in-kind assistance involves SPREP, AVI and the host government. AVI identifies a suitable candidate and provides travel and mobilisation, recruitment and briefing, in-country support and monitoring, and insurance; SPREP provides, through donor funds, the volunteer's salary at national rates of pay and the host government provides housing. This type of program addresses a major constraint in environmental agencies amongst SPREP Members. It recognises the need for a systematic training approach and training plan that links human resource development to critical business objectives and needs.

This type of hands-on training assistance has been in high demand. Each year the demand for skilled volunteers exceeds the ability to supply such volunteers with available funding. This scheme is well regarded and increasingly in demand. The reported outcomes from volunteer placements include the:
- provision of appropriate technical assistance and the completion of specified tasks which is generally of high quality;
- positive provision of additional inputs by volunteers beyond the immediate requirements of the position;
- delivery of a skills transfer process which enhances sustainability of the partner organisation;
- growth of cross-cultural relationships, understanding and ongoing international networks.

2.2 Provincial Government

2.2.1 Placement of Economic Planners

AVI currently supports two economists working with PNG provincial governments in Manus and Bougainville. These positions were requested by the respective provincial governments to assist in a range of areas including:

- establishing local level government and provincial data systems;
- training local officials to operate and sustain the data system;
- development of sound economic advice and planning;
- policy development;
- development of appropriate training; and
- identification and promotion of sound investment opportunities.

These positions are designed to facilitate capacity building and skills transfer at the same time as having a role in building the strengths of the provincial administration in forward strategic planning.

2.2.2 Placement of Legal Advisers

In recent years AVI has supported the placement of provincial Legal Advisers in, Sandaun, Morobe and Milne Bay Provinces. The responsibilities of these placements have included:

- provision of legal advice to the Provincial Government;
- assisting in drafting legislation;
- conducting training, workshops and seminars;
- representation on high level committees for the Provincial Government;
- production of materials which explain local government laws;
- reviewing the Village Court system;
- the establishment of a computer database of provincial Legislation; and
- raising awareness of public officials and Members of Parliament in relation to the laws, which govern local and provincial governments. For example the position in Milne Bay played a key role in briefing new local Members of Parliament on legislative process after the 2002 election.

2.3 District Government

2.3.1 Community Planning and Small Business Development

The District level is often the most challenging for volunteers and employers. These placements are often isolated and generally under resourced, yet have the potential to support significant change at the local level. This was aptly summed up by two young volunteers employed by the Bulolo District Government, in Morobe Province in PNG. *"The beauty of working and living in a small community is that the work we do directly affects the lives of the people that we live with."* These volunteers worked respectively as a town planner, the first to have been engaged at a District level in Wau Bulolo, and as a Business Development Officer. The town planner's primary task was to build the capacity of local staff to produce a plan to guide future community and infrastructure development. The volunteer soon realised that diarrhoea and dysentery were a common cause of death in the region and that this was a key priority for planning, resulting in the development of strategies to provide a drinkable water supply. This work was managed back up through the provincial government to the national government water authority, as part of a push to improve water supply in the region. Similarly, his partner worked with local people to establish new business ventures or to strengthen existing ones. This role included providing assistance with funding applications, business registrations, money management and micro credit.

3. Supporting the NGO Sector through Capacity Building

3.1.1 Building Regional Capacity – Supporting the work of PIANGO

AVI has had an ongoing interest is supporting the work of Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) both directly and indirectly. It is viewed as an illustrative example of the potential for NGOs to network and collaborate on a regional level. It is one of the few such networks operating in the Pacific. AS PIANGOs website states it is:

- a regional network of NGO focal points drawn from Pacific Island countries and territories. PIANGO was formally established in 1991 to assist NGOs in the Pacific to initiate action, give voice to their concerns and work collaboratively with other development actors for just and sustainable human development;

- "a catalyst for collective action, to facilitate and support coalitions and alliances on issues of common concern, and to strengthen the influence and impact of NGO efforts in the region".

- enabling a network of Pacific NGOs to more effectively promote and advance the interest and well being of their people; to facilitate communication; provide a common voice at regional and international forums; and assist NGOs to strengthen and develop Pacific identities, unity, cultures and forms of social action; and to improve the well being of the communities they serve.

- governed by a Council which meets every three to four years and is responsible for establishing policy. PIANGO operations are managed by the PIANGO Executive Committee which meets every four to six months. The PIANGO Secretariat is based in Port Vila, Vanuatu;

- PIANGO's membership is made up of national bodies called National Liason Units (NLUs). These are organisations or networks of NGOs which are broadly representative of NGOs in their country. With one NLU per country or territory, each NLU has one vote in the PIANGO Council. Where there is no NLU, interim membership may be issued to an NGO group working to establish an NLU. Regional networks of NGOs can also be invited to take up associate status within PIANGO.

3.1.2 Working with the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre

AVI has placed several volunteers to work with Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC) which is the secretariat for the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) campaign. PCRC is a regional NGO that advocates on issues of decolonisation, demilitarisation, the environment and development, which face the people of the Pacific.

For example, the placement of a current volunteer supports development of the 'resource' component of the organisation. This involves working closely with campaign desk staff on updating current resources and developing new and improved campaign and promotional materials including media releases, action alerts, briefing papers and information kits. PCRC is focussed on the development of ideas and on providing the opportunity for communities to advocate on their own behalf and to voice their concerns at a local, regional or international level. For example, as recently as February 2003 the NFIP Regional meeting agreed to open a "youth desk" to focus on issues affecting young people in the region.

3.1.3 Building the Capacity of The PNG Institute of Medical Research (IMR)

The Papua New Guinea Institute of Medical Research (IMR) was established in 1968 as a statutory Body of the Government of Papua New Guinea. The activities of the Institute are directed towards the primary goal of conducting research into the key health problems, which impact on Papua New Guinea's development. The aim of the IMR is to provide effective interventions, leading to improvements in people's health and the control and prevention of disease. The IMR has developed an international reputation in health research through its work from laboratory and office complexes in Goroka, Madang and Marprik employing over 250 people in its operation. This work includes:
- Respiratory disease
- Malaria
- Malnutrition,
- Sexual health
- Women's health and
- Emerging infectious diseases

The Institute of Medical Research secured funding through the PNG Incentive Fund for an Institutional Strengthening Project in February 2002. In Association with AVI six Australian Volunteers will be incorporated into the project over 3 years to provide technical assistance and capacity building in infrastructure, information technology, human resource and library systems development. Australian Volunteers have also worked in research, information technology, community education, statistics and training positions with the IMR.

4. Supporting "good governance" through small scale development

4.1 Working in a Post Conflict Situation

4.1.1 Bougainville Haus Moni - Bougainville

The volunteer program in Bougainville delivers a highly visible and practical contribution to development, engaging with many different levels of the community. This ability to sustain effective working relationships adds substantial value to Australia's support for Bougainville's long-term development.

AVI's program has enabled Australians to build trust and establish collaborative relations by offering bipartisan support to the people of Bougainville during the conflict. AVI has continued to respond to the needs of Bougainville through consultation with the Department of Bougainville, Bougainville Peace and Restoration Office, NGOs and the Government of PNG, seeking to build working relationships with other agencies in Bougainville to optimise coordination and cooperation in restoration efforts

AVI's current program in Bougainville responds to the needs of partner agencies through a variety of mechanisms including management of a series of projects. These projects have relied on the development of strong and collaborative relationships with local partners including the Government of PNG. The good will and cooperation engendered through this process is most evident in the ongoing implementation of the Bougainville Microfinance Project. AVI and the Credit Union Foundation of Australia (CUFA) continue to work in partnership with Bougainville Haus Moni to provide technical training in microfinance management, and good governance procedures, under the second phase of the Bougainville Microfinance Project. The objective of the scheme is to foster financial self reliance enabling social and economic development in grassroots communities throughout Bougainville. The scheme promotes the establishment of community-based saving cells with the aim of building an increasing pool of savings that can be loaned to members for small-scale enterprise. The scheme promotes self-help and aims to assist communities to become financially independent and self-sustaining.

This project has emphasized the importance of community ownership and participation and its development is clearly defined by the local community. A key facet of the project has been its support for the development of accountable governance by fostering approaches, which are derived from local knowledge and practice.

AVI has developed considerable expertise in negotiating the sensitivities of the post-conflict environment, and in managing the difficulties associated with sustaining individual personnel in socially and geographically isolated postings. The quality and continuity of the program has been a prominent reminder of the Australian Governments commitment to the peace process and now to reconstruction. The program has provided communities with access to basic health, education and other services and facilities, which has enabled a gradual rebuilding of trust between Australia and the people of Bougainville.

4.1.2 Working in the Solomon Islands

Similarly AVI has responded to the emerging needs within the Solomon Islands by placing 10 volunteers in 2002 with the Solomon Islands Government, non-government organisations and international non- - government organisations. As the situation in the Solomons unfolds there will be key opportunities to support peaceful reconstruction through the strategic placement of Australian Volunteers.

4.2 Working in Disadvantaged Urban Communities

4.2.1 Ginigoada Bisnis Development Foundation

The PNG Ginigoada Microfinance Project is a two-year pilot business training and microenterprise skills development program operating in Moresby South. The population in this area is approximately 150,000. Up to 80% of this population are either settlement dwellers or villagers. 80% of the villagers/settlers are dependent on the informal sector for their livelihood, with the chief microenterprise being vending / street marketing. Port Moresby South has high unemployment, limited access to resources and a relatively mobile population, contributing to a weakening of the Wantok system and its related traditional support and control structures.

The overall goal of the project is to improve income-generating opportunities for disadvantaged men and women in the Moresby South area. The long-term purpose of the project is to establish an appropriate and efficient urban microenterprise development program. This includes provision of microfinance services and business skills development programs, with particular focus on disadvantaged groups and microfinance sustainability. This program aims to address an area of real poverty in PNG, and identifies women as one of its main target groups.

The pilot activity has four main components: establishment of the Foundation, and engagement of the local Foundation Manager; the delivery of microfinance to the target population; delivering business skills development; and the incorporation of appropriate monitoring and evaluation processes.

AusAID supports this initiative through provision of funding to support operations and through a Technical Adviser position. AVI manages the Technical Adviser position to work with the Board and Foundation management to strengthen the institution, to further develop good governance practice at a Board and community level and to assist in the development of services which are appropriate to the needs of the community. This project is working with one of the most disadvantaged communities in Port Moresby to develop a concept which has previously been untested in an urban environment in PNG. The incremental success of the initiative for both individuals and communities is evident in examples such as:

One family has commenced an egg selling business and the children are receiving income from each egg that they sell. Another participant, who has been trained in acupuncture, was operating his business without knowing if his pricing was correct. Since attending the Start Your Business (SYB) course he has applied the business skills, restructured his pricing and has rented an office to conduct his acupuncture business. Two participants have actually created accounting documents and records for several community projects in their village.

4.3 Building Cross Cultural Understanding

4.3.1 Papua New Guinea Youth Program
AVI has worked with local Koiari communities along the Kokoda Track over the last two years to develop a short term "youth program". The second group lived with selected Koiari communities in Central Province between September and November 2002. The young people aged between 18 –25 participate in traditional village life in the rural area of Mt Koiari for 8-10 weeks. The Australian participants raise a major proportion of their own funds to undertake the program, indicating their level of commitment to embark on a cross – cultural program within the region. While in PNG the youth team participate in all aspects of village and family life. This program has encouraged and supported local villages to engage in cross-cultural exchange and mutual skills development with young Australians. The local communities have remarked strongly on how the program has rekindled relationships between Australia and PNG which date back 60 years to World War II.