



**THE SALVATION ARMY AUSTRALIA
SUBMISSION TO THE**

**PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE
HUMAN RIGHTS SUB-COMMITTEE**

INQUIRY INTO THE LINK BETWEEN AID AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Australian community is a strong supporter of human rights given our multicultural society. Many Australians also seek to support the promotion of human rights internationally and in particular in our nearest neighbours in the Pacific and SouthEast Asia. Our interest in the promotion of human rights internationally is really an extension of our own basic values that have been developed over the past decades. However, the promotion of human rights is not entirely selfless and Gordon Bilney (1995) states that there are a number of benefits to any country in pursuing human rights:

- Human rights lie at the heart of stable and tolerant societies which in turn provide the cornerstones of a stable and peaceful international order
- A reputation as a good international citizen on human rights issues can be helpful in pursuing our other international interests
- By embracing the cause of people who have been denied their rights, one guards and defends rights themselves.

Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) play an integral role in the alleviation of poverty and in the promotion of human rights. NGOs have a vital role in increasing popular participation and assisting to make Governments more accountable and representative. NGOs also have a special role in facilitating public debate on human rights issues and in influencing policy. There are many small organisations involved in community based activities such as advocacy and awareness raising. In addition there are currently about seventy (70) NGOs registered with AusAID who assist in the administering of the Australian Aid Program, The Salvation Army is one of those organisations.

The Salvation Army is an international movement and is an integral part of the Christian Church. The Salvation Army is now firmly established in 107 countries of the world and where The Salvation Army operates, it offers practical, skilled and cost effective ways of improving the social and economic conditions of the poor. The Salvation Army's work has predominantly been involved in social services or welfare spheres and our development philosophy is firmly based in those earlier social welfare concerns.

Through the International Projects Office at International Headquarters (IHQ) in London, The Salvation Army has developed an integrated approach to development providing health, education, community development and resource and skills development in many of the countries where The Salvation Army operates. Central to this integrated approach is the meeting of basic human physical and spiritual needs and enhancing human rights, self-determination and community participation and

management. The Salvation Army maintains a deep commitment to the spiritual and physical development of the individual and of communities.

The Salvation Army Australia through The Salvation Army Development Office (SAADO) in the National Secretariat in Canberra works in partnership with donor countries and local communities to promote independence, self-help and quality of life through the implementation of community development and poverty alleviation programs.

Human rights are a central feature of The Salvation Army's mission to promote sustainability in all its community development and poverty alleviation activities. The implementation of activities such as primary health care, water and sanitation, agriculture, vocational training and micro-credit all seek to promote the human rights of individuals and communities. To achieve this objective The Salvation Army Australia seeks to forge strong partnerships and working relationships with Salvation Army offices in developing countries. The transfer of information and knowledge between the offices ensures appropriate design, implementation, and management of project activities.

In recent years, The Salvation Army Australia (SAA) has sought to strengthen its impact in communities by maximising the financial contribution received by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) by developing partnerships with other donor Countries. The SAA has also forged partnerships with organisations outside The Salvation Army, for example: World Concern in Vietnam, Eugene Bell Foundation in North Korea, the YMCA in Lebanon and the Amity Foundation in China. These partnerships not only strengthen the impact of Australia's aid budget but assist in promoting the human rights of individuals and communities in the recipient countries as The SAA is utilising the skills, capacity and knowledge of their partners.

Our main focus however is equity of access to resources, promotion of self-esteem and dignity and reduction of discriminatory practices.

The SAA has developed a number of policies, which influence its development activity and procedures. One of those policies focuses specifically on human rights. The policy states :

The Salvation Army Australia believes that human rights are an inherent, inalienable and universal right of all citizens of the world. They are inherent in the sense that these rights are the birthright of all human beings. People should enjoy these rights simply by reason of their humanity and as such they do not have to be granted or bestowed by another party for them to be enjoyed. They are inalienable in that people cannot agree to give them up or have them taken away from them. They are universal because they do not apply to one group but to all persons, regardless of their nationality, status, sex, race or religion.

We recognise and believe that human rights are a pre-condition for successful, equitable and sustainable development. In many societies throughout the world, people do not enjoy freedom to exercise their human rights, in particular women. Women and girls are often subject to gender inequality, direct and indirect discrimination and coercion or violence, which prescribes how women and girls may live their lives.

We strongly believe and support the Government's view that human rights are an inseparable part of Australia's overall foreign policy, including its overseas aid program. The treatment of individuals is a matter of great concern to Australians including Salvation Army aid workers, because this belief is inherent in our organisational ethos, philosophy and culture.

Through its poverty alleviation and community development activities, we promote and support human rights and the international conventions, which underpin those rights. We focus on programs, which cultivate gender balance and equality, and promote sustainable development. We promote programs that utilise the experience available in communities to support human rights in the design and implementation of programs.

We are involved in the delivery of a portion of Australia's aid program to developing countries across a number of sectors. Each of these programs promotes and supports human rights and encourages equitable social, economic and political development of communities. We achieve this through involvement in health programs which provide information for women on general and maternal health, and which highlight the dangers of HIV/Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases and child health. Water programs focus on the need to provide a convenient, safe water supply and which reduce the burden on women to walk long distances. Micro credit programs enable women and marginalised people to increase household income and to have equitable access to resources and develop self-esteem through community and family participation.

We also believe we have a duty to promote fairness and equity and we encourage participation of disadvantaged groups in order to enable their voices to be heard and to enable a reduction or elimination of discriminatory or marginalising activities.

The SAA has other development policy statements, which focus on Gender and Development, HIV/AIDS, Environment, Population, Community Participation, Corruption, Travel and Evangelism and Development. These policies are interrelated and impact upon one another, however human rights underpin each policy.

The SAA has not been involved in the implementation of pure human rights programs, which relate more to civil and political rights, however each development program that is implemented seeks to raise the socio-economic level of the individual and community. As a result of the partnership with the Australian Government, SAA is able to assist communities to improve health, have access to better water and sanitation facilities, improve crop yields and the local environment, have access to credit through micro-credit loan schemes and to learn new skills by participating in vocational training programs. Each of these different sectors of activities equips individuals and communities with skills and knowledge that in turn impacts upon their human rights. By providing these communities with the opportunity to increase their capacity, they become more confident to handle other issues they currently face.

It is the general view of The Salvation Army Australia that the Australian Aid Program is a medium of engagement between countries, NGOs and communities. The implementation of the aid program provides a unique opportunity for cultural exchange and friendship with local communities and Government officials. This situation is further enhanced by having Australian staff located in-country not only to provide technical assistance, support and advice to local staff but also to learn from the local community and indigenous staff.

The term human rights often encompasses civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Aid is usually directed to the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights, whereas discussion of human rights often centres on civil and political rights. There are often differing interpretations of the definition of human rights from a Western and Eastern perspective based on different cultural and social experiences. The SAA has

sought through its community development and poverty alleviation activities in this culturally sensitive issue to enable both formal and informal exchanges and a deepening of understanding between different interpretations and expressions.

The benefits of this interaction also allow The SAA to dialogue and engage with Government, local communities and individuals in-country. This opportunity enables staff of The SAA, with the assistance of funding support from AusAID to influence policy and to promote sustainable development. For example, The SAA has influenced Government policy in Tanzania towards HIV/AIDS and commercial sex workers (CSWs) through the implementation of the Dar-es-Salaam Street Girls Program funded by AusAID over six years. In addition The SAA has engaged minority groups in China to assist in the development of project proposals for various community needs. By so doing, The SAA has raised the profile of these minority groups to the point that County and Township Government's now support the projects and provide additional financial support (this has brought about greater participation by people in villages in their own decision making and planning for the future).

Other activities of The SAA support human rights in direct and tangible ways. For example, The SAA funds micro-credit (monetary and livestock) type of activities because we understand that by assisting people to improve their income, we are in effect assisting them to achieve their aspirational rights. By this we mean, the right to health and education. By improving the income of the poor we improve their right to self-determination, their right to make their own decisions.

The SAA also encourages the involvement of minorities and women in community consultations and discussions related to the projects. For example in China, a large majority of The SAA's projects are in Western China where a high proportion of the populations belong to minority groups. Projects seek to involve these people in the development process and to bring them to discuss and to make decisions in relation to their families and wider community. Many of these communities now have established community management committees which were set up for the project but have remained after the project as they are a good management and consultation tool. Women are also highly represented on these committees and enjoy a high degree of autonomy in the community as a result.