

Melbourne Overseas Missions

2006
Annual
Report

Melbourne has helped Father James Morova (*right*) minister to more of his parishioners, with this trail bike. The long, arduous treks through the rugged mountain trails have been made easier.



2006 Mission Collection



In an address to thousands gathered in St. Peter's square, Pope Benedict XVI reflected this year, that missions, "if not driven by love, are reduced to philanthropic and social activity," – Christian missions must be inspired by "the words of St. Paul: 'the love of Christ controls us'."

His Holiness concluded: "The mission is, then, a workshop with room for everyone: for people committed to fulfilling the Kingdom of God in their own family; for people who live their professional lives with a Christian spirit; for people totally consecrated to the Lord; ... for people who go out with the specific intention of announcing Christ to those who do not yet know Him. May Mary Most Holy help us to experience... the joy and courage of the mission!"

In 36 Years of our working in Papua New Guinea some five thousand Kamea children have passed through the first schools established. Many of these children have also received Secondary education. Some have gone to University, studied as nurses and engineers; a number have completed Seminary studies. At least ten have entered local government. Three have become Priests.

From a time when infant mortality reached 90%, the number has now been reduced to 30%. Illnesses that in the past could mean death, have become treatable because of the hospital and medical facilities and the training of personnel, however much still needs to be done because of the scourge of AIDS.

Many adults have had opportunities for self improvement, both in skills and language classes. Projects such as cash crops and cattle have improved the health and welfare of all the Kamea people. Some now operate machinery in road making. Young Kamea men and women now staff the schools and health centres in the areas. Over the years, some 100 Catechists have been trained and conduct prayer groups in villages.

All this has been possible because laymen and women from Australia have sacrificed time and money to volunteer their time and energy for the people of the Kamea region. Teachers, nurses, doctors, carpenters, plumbers and electricians have given freely and lovingly of their services. So too priests and nuns who worked hard to establish the Mission – Father Jean Besson MSL, Fr Peter Cullen, priest/pilot, Fr Peter Fulton, Fr Maurice Adams (doctor), Sr Pauline and Vin and Ann Cafarella.

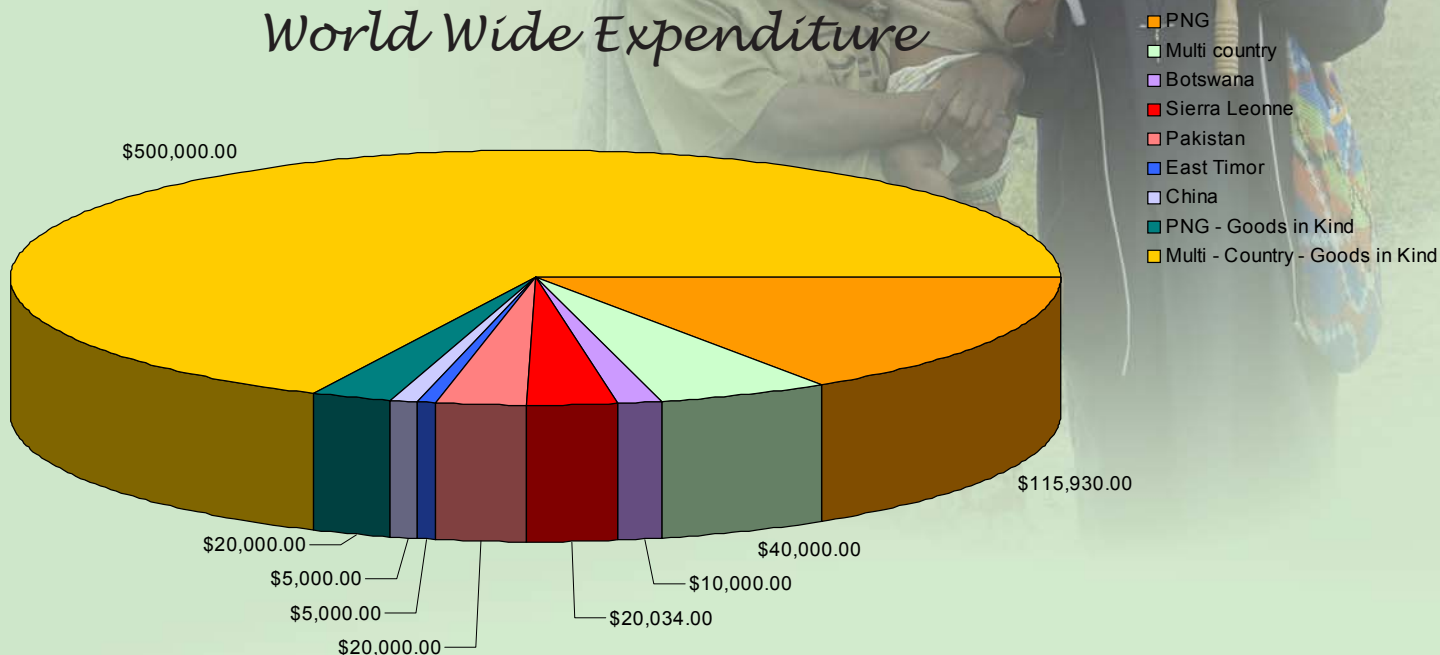
Yes, over the years, how truly the words of Pope Benedict resound: "The love of Christ controls us." From the initial decision of Cardinal Knox in 1964 to the present day, the involvement of Melbourne Overseas Mission has been driven by love – love of God and love of our fellow human beings.

Let us continue in the spirit of love in our mission that has allowed us to so generously share!

Denis J. Hart

Most Rev Denis J Hart DD
Archbishop of Melbourne

World Wide Expenditure



2006 in the Highlands

Late last year, Melbourne's own Bishop Christopher Prowse (pictured below left) visited MOM's missionary stations in Papua New Guinea. Because clouds prevented his planned flight to the mountains of the Gulf Province, the visit was limited to the lower altitude parish – Bema.

Bishop Prowse had planned to visit Mgr John Flynn – known to all as Father John. Unable to visit Kanabea, Bishop Prowse was nevertheless able to speak to Fr John by radio. "Via others, I sent him some small gifts that included a letter from Most Rev Denis Hart, the Archbishop of Melbourne".

Spending most of his time at the parish of Bema, Bishop Prowse says, "Bema has been the grateful recipient of generosity from Melbourne via MOM – many of the facilities that I inspected – schools, parish buildings, hydro-electrical equipment, tractor, and so forth – are all gifts from the organisation."

"Wherever we went, the simplicity of lifestyle, the friendliness of the shy parishioners, and the educational opportunities offered to an isolated culture were omnipresent, and so was the practical help of MOM!"

However, Bishop Prowse also noted the uncertain future that Papua New Guinea seems to face. "Political inaction, corruption, and violence continue there (*in major cities*) unabated. "

Bishop Prowse concludes, "Yet, the work of evangelisation continues. How happy I was to experience first-hand the Melbourne Archdiocese's small, but significant contribution in the Gulf Province of PNG and beyond!"

Up the Mountain Path...

Dave Tacon (*above right*) travelled to PNG with Bishop Prowse; in many respects, to document the people and the journey. Most of the images in this annual report are courtesy of his photographic talents. While the Bishop stayed in the lowlands, Dave ventured, by foot, on an eight hour trek through dense forest paths to reach the isolated mission station of Kanabea.

Barely forty years ago, the Kamea were living as a loose collection of stone age tribes. The region itself is so remote

that Father John was still establishing first contact with some inhabitants in the late 1980's. Although clothes from Melbourne have made their way into the wardrobe of the locals, grass skirts and tapa clothes – bark capes – are common. Bows and arrows are still used for hunting. The Kamea have geography to thank for their isolation. With its jagged forest mountains, the region features some of the most difficult terrain in the world and is rightly considered one of the last frontiers.



Father Flynn was a gracious host, albeit a camera-shy one. On the second day of Dave's visit he jokingly said, "If you're after a celebrity, you've got the wrong man!" He is very modest of his achievements such as helping to build a school and health centre for the community.

Although reluctant to talk about himself, Fr John's face lights up when talking about the people of the area surrounding his mission. He is most excited about a community initiative to build a road to link Kanabea with outside areas.

Spending five days among the Kamea, Dave found them to be a very welcoming people with pride in their traditions. Departure from the region was sudden and unexpected. As visibility improved on the sixth day, the mission radioed North Coast Air with an unusually positive weather report. A small plane touched down on the grassy airstrip an hour and a half later. As the plane taxied for take off, the clouds started to move in again, enveloping the region once more and closing the airstrip.

Below: Bishop Christopher Prowse and Kamea parishioners, on the Bishop's recent visit to Bema in Papua New Guinea's highlands.

Above: Dave Tacon, in Kanabea, higher up the mountain.



From Father John...

Kanabea, PNG

This year has been dominated by the weather. Kanabea and its surrounding area have experienced five months of continuous cloud and misty rain. The ground has become very soggy and as a result food gardens are producing very little. Many families are struggling to find enough food. They depend almost entirely on their gardens for their daily rations. They do not have the money to buy from the stores. Thankfully the weather has now changed for the better but it is still hard to know how long it will take for the gardens to regenerate. In the meantime the government is making noises about sending in some supplies. The Station is already assisting the most desperate families with the help of MOM funds. The people cannot remember a time when food gardens were in such poor shape. They have been really fed up with the continuous rain just as the poor farmers in Australia must be with the big dry.

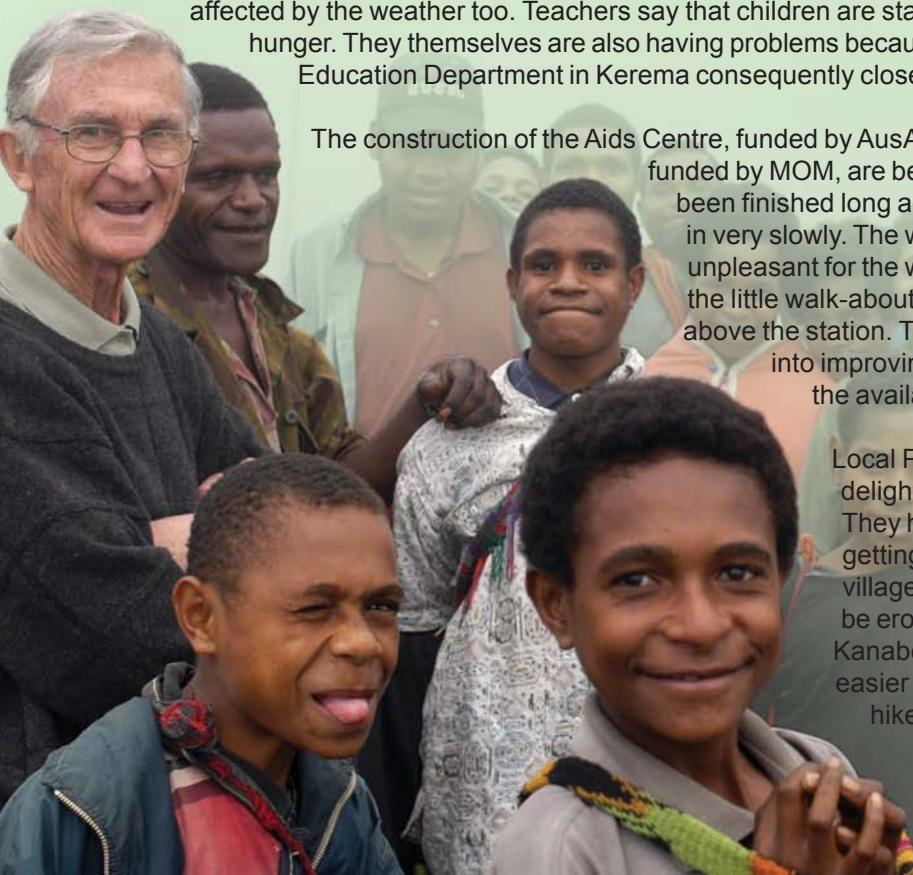
To give some idea of what the Kamea people face, one kilo of rice in Lae, PNG, costs \$1.77. Add freight expenses for a flight into the mountains, and the price in Bema escalates to \$4.97 / kg. In Melbourne, the same rice would cost you less than \$1.50.

Communities still strive. To raise funds for the Self-Help Road Project, with the objective of connecting the existing road from Lae to the mountains, each local family gave as much as they could. This equated to 50 cents per family. While they were proud of their efforts, this was nowhere near enough to finance the tools and supplies required. Efforts continue with picks and shovels between the bad weather. The people know that when complete, the road should help to lower the price of food – specifically freight – for their families.

The fifteen Elementary, Primary and Literacy Schools in the Kanabea and Kamina Parishes have been affected by the weather too. Teachers say that children are staying away from classes because of hunger. They themselves are also having problems because the village markets have closed. The Education Department in Kerema consequently closed the school year four weeks early.

The construction of the Aids Centre, funded by AusAID, and the new Parish House, funded by MOM, are behind schedule. Both should have been finished long ago but the sawn timber is coming in very slowly. The weather has made conditions unpleasant for the workers cutting up timber with the little walk-about sawmill up on the mountains above the station. The mill has been a great asset into improving the mission's buildings with the availability of sawn timber instead of raw logs and bark.

Local Priests, Fathers Philip and James (pictured) are delighted with the two motor bikes donated by MOM. They have been riding them around the station getting used to them before venturing out to the villages. Although tracks are rough and may often be eroded by heavy water flows, visitation of the Kanabea and Kamina Parishes will be so much easier with the bikes, rather than the day long hikes they have been making.



St Joseph of Cluny Sisters

Bema

Because of isolation and remoteness, it is difficult to obtain teachers for schools in these remote areas. Government services are minimal, resulting in many education gaps.

Bema Community this year will consist of three Cluny and two OLSH sisters. They will be involved with teaching in the local schools. The Flexible Open Distance Learning centre – known as FODE – has served the mountain students for the past 9 years. The facility has a fairly large enrolment of students from Bema, Kaintiba, Hawabango, Menyamyama and Saiki at the border of Morobe Province in Papua New Guinea's highlands. Having few alternatives, most of the students walk for several hours to attend the centre.



Bema High School students also come from the surrounding countryside. They are learning through the science laboratory, agriculture, practical skills such as carpentry and cookery, and sports, as well as general class studies.

Last year, Melbourne Overseas Missions assisted in the delivery of a large number of jackets, rain coats, vests, T-shirts and caps donated by the City of Melbourne. Sr Annette Lepcha sends her thanks for this generosity.

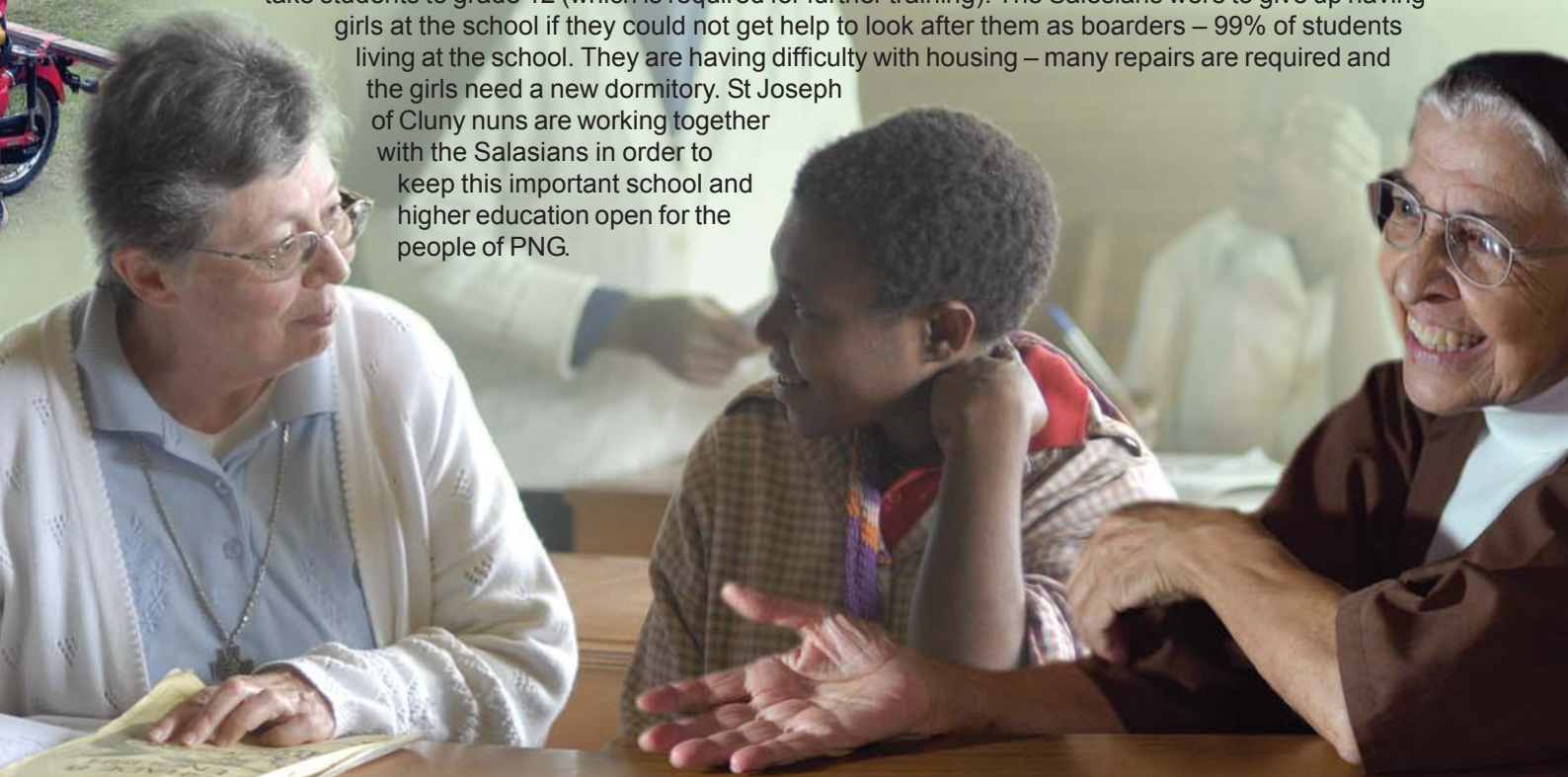


Kanabea

Since the departure and death of Fr/Dr Maurice Adams, the level of health care has seriously deteriorated. Chris Adams (a lay missionary) met with the Health Secretary of Kerema in order to plan improvement. A new HIV/ Aids centre has been built with funding from AusAID to provide for testing and counselling of patients. Sr Dorothy David will act as coordinator, giving advice and assistance which will also cover malnutrition – a problem, particularly with infants.

Araimiri

The school at Araimiri is situated close to the coast and is the only Catholic school in the Gulf Province to take students to grade 12 (which is required for further training). The Salesians were to give up having girls at the school if they could not get help to look after them as boarders – 99% of students living at the school. They are having difficulty with housing – many repairs are required and the girls need a new dormitory. St Joseph of Cluny nuns are working together with the Salesians in order to keep this important school and higher education open for the people of PNG.



Diamond Societies - Dedication Overcomes Hardship

Sierra Leone

In 2005, Dave Tacon brought us the story of Santos, a woodcarver in Sierra Leone. To recap, Santo's right hand was amputated by dissident soldiers when he was in his teens. Santos sought shelter in the Freetown Amputee Camp where he was assisted by the nuns from the St Joseph of Cluny Sisters Catholic Mission.

The Sisters helped Santos to identify and build upon his natural ability as a wood sculptor. The nuns assisted by organising an apprenticeship for him with a local woodcarver. He gradually earned enough to rent a shed, to use as a workshop. With your contributions to Melbourne Overseas Missions, Santos was able to purchase better equipment and further develop his ability.

Now, two years on, we are reminded about the situation in Sierra Leone by the release of the film *Blood Diamond*. The country is still coming to grips with the bloodshed and damages caused by eleven years of civil war – showing that the damage cannot be repaired 'overnight'. The conflict was financed to a high degree by diamond smuggling – such is actually shown in this movie.

Chopping off right hands or even whole limbs was a strategy used by rebels to promote their power and spread fear. Many innocent victims, like Santos, are still struggling to regain their place in society.

Although money from diamonds may have contributed greatly to the conflict, very little of the profits remained in Sierra Leone. The continent of Africa supplies 65% of the world's diamonds annually, but many areas still remain poor. Victims go unseen and are used by the financially superior. One alleged

example of this being a peasant who found a diamond in her local potato patch. She sold the stone for the equivalent of \$35. It was eventually

resold for more than 40,000 times this original price!

In our own small way, MOM and the Cluny Sisters are attempting to undo this evil. Shining a light on the unfortunate and praying for a glimmer of hope.

Santos now has a steady job at the Tacuguma Chimpanzee Sanctuary, making carvings which are sold to the public. He is independent, happy and in great shape. At the end of last year, Santos and his wife Isata (both pictured above) became parents to a beautiful baby girl - Fiona - ever increasing their happiness. Thus proves that, with true encouragement and support, all sorts of hardship, can be overcome.



Above: Santos with his wife Isata & daughter, Fiona.
Below: Children in Botswana

Constant Faith

Botswana

Despite Botswana's high rate of economic growth, wealth raised through the country's diamond mining and cattle industries is not fairly distributed. Over one-third of the population still live in poverty. 47% of the population must survive on less than a dollar per day. Many people are still marginalised and ignored in rural areas.



Sr Frances Boston (OSU), from East Brighton, is working with the underprivileged, educating people about how they can raise their own financial positions. St Joan of Arc Parish in Brighton has contributed much to this cause. Among other things, most recent donations are being used to purchase sewing material/ threads, clothing, food, kitchen equipment/utensils, Bibles, hymn books and will also assist in the payment of equipment repairs and school expenses not covered by the government. The images (*above right*) show three of the many children assisted by Sr Boston and her team – enjoying the task of washing the family dishes, and playing with toys (in this case an old tyre).



Day by Day... Sindh, Pakistan

Pakistan has unfortunately been in the news in the past year due to floods and earthquakes. There was an initial outpouring of help from within the country but preoccupation by local people to celebrate lavishly in their annual holiday Ramadan, resulted in funds being diverted from those in need.

MOM received a request from St. Elizabeth's Hospital where the day to day medical care in Sindh, goes on side by side with treatment of victims of these natural disasters. A palliative care programme for the terminally ill was recently set to begin after six months of planning – **the first palliative programme in all of Pakistan.**

Recently, Rarnesh, a twelve-year old boy, was brought 200 kms from the desert by Sister Teresa, one of the Pakistani sisters of the Daughters of the Cross. The surgeon gave him a 10% chance of surviving. Rarnesh did live and became one of the first recipients in the palliative care programme. The cost for his 28 days in hospital were equivalent to AU\$862. The hospital charged AU\$36, so you can see the sort of budget the facility is forced to work on. Fortunately the generosity of donors is able to assist with medicine and the surgeon's expenses.

At the same time last year, the hospital desperately needed six new surgical beds – most of the existing beds being close to 40 years old. The Australian High Commission gave the hospital funding for a new operating table, increasing the hospital's capacity. With an increase of cases, additional surgical beds became urgent. As donors in the local area were concentrating their assistance towards the needs of earthquake victims, Melbourne Overseas Mission was asked to assist. Six manually operated surgical beds, complete with mattress's were purchased – each costing the equivalent of AU\$978. Father Robert McCulloch and the Sisters at St. Elizabeth's acknowledged MOM's donation with much gratitude.



Above & left: St Elizabeth Hospital, Hyderabad, after the recent flood.

Below: students at the Don Bosco Technical College in Fatumaca, East Timor.

Education Rebuilding the Country

Fatumaca, East Timor

This year, another five thousand Australian Dollars has been sent to the Salesian Mission use at the Don Bosco Technical School. Brother Marcal Lopes, of the school, has gratefully acknowledged receipt of these funds. The school provides introductory training for carpenters, electricians and motor mechanics. About 250 students board at the school located about 20 km south of Baucau and 150 km from Dili.

Student fees are very modest; for the past year they have not been charged because of the troubles in the country, parents just don't have the money.

It is no simple matter to feed 250, 16-20 year olds three meals a day, purchase fuel to run the generators, obtain the materials required for our carpentry, electrical, machine tools and electronics workshops, maintain and repair equipment and cover other expenses associated with the day-to-day running of the school.

There is no doubt that schools like this have a very important role to play in helping provide East Timor with people skilled in the building, metal, electrical and motor trades. Most of the students who have graduated are able to find work – some as carpenters, and electricians. Some ex-students have set up electrical repair shops, and others are now working at the airport and with the United Nations.

Last years donations from MOM were used to upgrade and repair school equipment, including electrical motors, generators and computers. Brs Lynch SDB and Lopes SDB extend their thanks for making the school's difficulties easier to manage.



Melbourne Overseas Missions Fund Inc.

ABN No 21 755 961 164

Chair: Archbishop of Melbourne:
Most Rev Denis Hart DD

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East Melbourne VIC 3002



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Web Site: <http://www.mom.org.au>

Number of Staff:

Full Time: 1
PartTime: 21 (Volunteer Organisation)

History: MOM is a humanitarian organization staffed by volunteers, founded in 1968, to provide assistance to developing countries as an outreach of the Catholic Church community in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Membership: Members are appointed by the Archbishop of Melbourne and include persons from church agencies, individuals and 212 parish priests.

Funding Sources: Annual appeal held on the second weekend in December in all parishes of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Tax Deductibility: Endorsed by the ATO - 1st July 2000 - item 1 of the table in section 30-15 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

Focus of Work: MOM concentrates mainly on Kamea people in the remote mountain villages of the Gulf province on Papua New Guinea. MOM personnel are located at a face-to-face level with villages and espouse principles based on a Christian motivation of commitment to the poor with strong objectives of gender equality, encouragement, self-help and self-reliance including development of local project management and localization of staffing.

Country of Regional Focus of Program Activities: Papua New Guinea, Africa, India, Philippines, Indonesia, East Timor, South America and Pacific Islands.

Educational & Resources: Information on MOM history, objectives and activities is available from the secretary.

Pamphlets and general information is promulgated through parish priests to parishioners throughout the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Linkages and Affiliations:

Partnership is developed with local indigenous people.

Regular Publications:

Annual Report.

General: MOM strives to improve the poor through education programs covering literacy, health, hygiene, agriculture, cottage industry and small business cooperatives.

ACFID Code of Conduct: MOM is a signatory to the Australian Council For International Development Code of Conduct. This Code requires members to meet high standards of corporate governance, public accountability and financial management. Code of Conduct information can be obtained on the ACFID website: www.acfid.asn.au or Email: main@acfid.asn.au

Committee Members

Chair Most Rev Denis Hart DD. Archbishop of Melbourne

Vice Chair Mons. Les Tomlinson Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Melbourne

CEO & Public Officer Mr Peter Moore
DipT(Prim), BEd, Grad Cert(RE), MRE
committee member since 1995

Secretary Mr Kevin Blake ME RMIT. MIE (Aust)
(Retired) committee member since 1969

Treasurer Mr Jack Purcell Qualified Accountant AASA
(Retired) committee member since 1982

Privacy Officer Sr. Bernadette Gauthier SJC,
Congregation Leader Missionary Sisters
of St Joseph of Cluny.

Members

Very Rev Trevor Trotter SSC,
Regional Director St
Columban's Mission
Society.

Mrs Pat Robertson,
Administrator of St
Paul's Overseas Aid.

Mrs Shirley Blake, Appeal
Director, committee
member since 1980.

Mr Jim Grealish, Victorian
State President of
St Vincent de Paul
Society.



INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF MELBOURNE OVERSEAS MISSIONS FUND INC.
Registered Number A0010312L

SCOPE

We have audited the special purpose financial report of Melbourne Overseas Missions Fund Inc. for the year ended 30 November, 2006, as set out on pages 2 to 11 of the full report. The Committee is responsible for the financial report and has determined that the accounting policies used and described in Note 1 of the full report to the financial statements are appropriate to meet the needs of the members and the Associations Incorporation Act (Vic) 1981. We have conducted an independent audit of the financial report in order to express an opinion on it to the members. No opinion is expressed as to whether the accounting policies used, and described in Note 1 of the full report, are appropriate to their needs.

The financial report has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of the associations Incorporation Act (Vic) 1981. We disclaim any assumption of responsibility for any reliance on this report or on the financial report to which it relates to any person other than the members or for any purpose other than that for which it was prepared.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

Audit Opinion

In our opinion, the financial report gives a true and fair view, in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements and the Associations Incorporation Act (Vic) 1981, the financial position on Melbourne Overseas Missions Fund Inc. as at 30 November, 2006 and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended.

**CHAUNDY AND HENRY
Chartered Accountants**

**P. W. SELKRIG
Partner
Melbourne**



For the full audit report, financial statements and notes contact

Melbourne Overseas Missions Fund Inc.
Cardinal Knox Centre, PO Box 146
East Melbourne, Victoria 8002

Note 2: During the financial year, St Paul's Overseas Aid Fund (OAF) Committee packed and forwarded to 96 Mission Stations a total of 403 boxes (2005: 661 boxes) each weighing 16.0kg (average) and valued at \$322,400 (2005: \$528,000). Melbourne Overseas Missions Fund Inc (MOM) assisted St Paul's OAF in meeting the large freight costs on these boxes by contributing \$40,000 (2005: \$47,000). Any extra freight costs were borne by St Paul's OAF from its own resources. The boxes contained various items of medical supplies, such as, wound dressings and bandages, soap, sheets, blankets and clothing. In addition to the above, Melbourne Overseas Missions Fund Inc. sent 14 boxes to Papua New Guinea containing items of clothing, toys, computer equipment, blankets and books. The value of these items was \$5,000.

PURPOSE: To encourage self help and self reliance through education programs of literacy, gender equality, human rights, health, hygiene, agriculture, cottage industry and small business cooperatives.

It is stated that there was no single appeal or other form of fund raising for a designated purpose, generating 10% or more of total income for the period under review.

**INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE
YEAR ENDED 30 NOVEMBER 2006**

	2006	2005
	\$	\$
REVENUE		
Donations and Gifts (2)	509,040	897,658
Legacies and Bequests	24,160	20,000
Grants		
AusAID	0	0
Other Australian	0	0
Other Overseas	0	0
Investment Income	46,641	48,271
Other Income	0	0
Total Revenue	579,841	965,929
DISBURSEMENTS		
Overseas Projects		
Funds to Overseas Projects (2)	542,647	889,371
Other Project Costs	0	0
Domestic Projects	0	0
Community Education	14,842	3,924
Fundraising Costs		
Public	12,025	3,924
Government and Multilaterals	0	0
Administration	13,627	13,379
Total Disbursements	583,141	910,598
Excess of revenue over disbursements (shortfall) before extraordinary items	-3,300	55,331
Extraordinary items	0	0
Excess of revenue over disbursements (shortfall) after extraordinary items	-3,300	55,331
Funds available for future use at the beginning of the financial year	750,217	694,886
Amounts transferred to (from) reserves	0	0
Funds available for future use at the End of the financial Year	746,917	750,217

**BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR
ENDED 30 NOVEMBER 2006**

	2006	2005
	\$	\$
ASSETS		
Cash	742,885	748,993
Investment	0	0
Property, Plant & Equipment	17,431	17,431
Other	3,729	4,918
Total Assets	764,045	771,342
LIABILITIES		
Trade and other Payables	0	4,198
Provisions	17,128	16,927
Total Liabilities	17,128	21,125
Net Assets	746,917	750,217
EQUITY		
Reserves	0	0
Funds available for future use	746,917	750,217
Total Equity	746,917	750,217

Cash Movements for Designated Purposes for the year ended 30 November 2006

	Cash available at beginning of Year	Cash Raised During Year	Cash Disbursed During Year	Cash available at End of Year	Comments
Annual Appeal	748,742	251,191	258,549	741,384	Normal Annual Church Appeal
Tsunami Donations	251	1,250	0	1,501	Tsunami Donations
Total	748,993	252,441	258,549	742,885	

A Kanabea Experience - "NOGAT KAIKAI"

Kevin Williams was among a group of three Melbourne Seminarians who went to Papua New Guinea to gain some experience of what mission life entails. This account of Kanabea Mission is seen through Kevin's eyes.

A typical day (weather-wise) is when the sun rises in a bright blue sky over the surrounding mountains (most mornings I would wake up, leave our hut, and look down on the clouds – so we were quite high up). The temperature would reach 20 - 25° Celsius by the middle of the day. Then by 2 - 3 pm the rain clouds would sweep in and cover the mountaintops. It would then rain almost continually throughout the rest of the afternoon and into the night.

Subsistence farming provides food for each family. Pigs (and occasionally chickens) roam freely around the gardens. Cattle grazed freely in a large fenced area around the mission station. Most of their gardens had been washed out by many months of torrential rain, resulting in major food shortages. The local Government was in the process of flying in rice to supplement the people's diet. When performing his priestly ministry, Monsignor Flynn was frequently met with cries of "Nogat kaikai" ("no food").

The locally built huts were usually small round structures with bark panels or woven matting for walls. The roofs were conical and made up of leafy branches. A circle of stones in the middle of the hut is used for cooking. The local people also sleep in these huts, which can be a recipe for disaster. During our stay, a young man rolled into the fire one night. His grass skirt caught fire and he suffered horrendous burns to both legs and thighs. At least two huts burnt down, during our stay.

I cannot speak highly enough of Monsignor John Flynn, our host for most of the five weeks. He has served in PNG for over thirty years, the last ten in Kanabea. Monsignor Flynn now stays in the vicinity of Kanabea, while two local priests (Father James and Father Phillip) take care of the outlying villages. Despite this, it was not uncommon for us to wake in the morning to find that Monsignor Flynn had been up since 5:00 am visiting a nearby village.

Walking between the scattered villages dominates most of a priest's life when serving in this area. The mission station at Kanabea is roughly in the centre of a vast track (Monsignor Flynn half-jokingly referred to it as a "highway") that had been hand dug along the mountains by the local residents. I still find it mind-boggling to consider the awesome feat it took to dig out and level such a vast area with picks and shovels.

During our stay, we walked about five hours northwards to the village of Wemewa. A second trip southwards took us about four and a half hours to reach the village of Aminawa. On both trips, the journey severely exhausted us. By contrast, the local lads tend to walk about five hours in the morning, spend the afternoon playing volleyball, and then walk home again in the evening! They are absolutely Indefatigable!

The people of Kanabea were generally shy, but when you made it past this initial reserve, you found them very warm and welcoming. Just as an indication of this, when it was dry, the plane would land up to three times a day every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Each time the plane landed, the local residents would generally stop whatever they were doing and head down to the airstrip. It was always an impressive sight to see this vibrant mass of people, dressed in different coloured clothes or traditional grass skirts and bark cloaks. I was sickened at the sight of so many children running about with their bellies distended through malnutrition. One young man (a teacher) explained how this part of the Gulf province was the most primitive in the country due to the lack of a road. He argued that if it was connected to the rest of the country by a road, then materials could be trucked to Kanabea at much less cost than flying it in on planes.

In conclusion, although I found my time in Kanabea incredibly rewarding, I would be reluctant to say that I enjoyed the experience. This is because I find little joy at the thought of people living in close proximity to Australia who are existing in such primitive conditions. I do thank God for the work of Melbourne Overseas Missions in the area.

More information is available on the website <http://www.mom.org.au> or by request:
Email: secretary@mom.org.au

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