



## **Australian Volunteers International submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry**

### ***Into the delivery and effectiveness of Australia's bilateral aid program in Papua New Guinea***

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## 1. AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL

Australian Volunteers International (AVI) is Australia's most experienced international volunteer sending agency. Since 1951 more than 10,000 assignments have been completed in 90 countries throughout the Pacific, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America working with 2,500 partner organisations. Partner or 'host' organisations include government agencies, peak bodies, non-government organisations and civil society groups.

AVI is a partner in the Australian Government funded Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program. The value of the international volunteering program, as part of Australia's overall aid program, was recognised in the Office of Development Effectiveness evaluation of the AVID program released in February 2014.

*The evaluation confirmed that AVID is making an effective contribution to Australian and partner government development objectives. It is also an effective public diplomacy mechanism. Volunteers benefit from their experience and bring expertise and professionalism that host organisations value highly; they are often compared favourably to volunteers from other countries or paid technical advisers. Volunteers contribute to the capacity of host organisations, develop people-to-people links and generate goodwill for domestic and foreign diplomacy.<sup>1</sup>*

## 2. PROGRAM IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

AVI has worked in Papua New Guinea (PNG) for more than 50 years, building strong relationships with key government agencies, churches, corporate and philanthropic, and non-government organisations. These relationships have enabled AVI to partner with host organisations (HOs) from the highest levels of government to isolated village communities.

In 1964, through AVI, (formerly Overseas Service Bureau (OSB)), eight Australian volunteer teachers were welcomed by PNG schools in Morobe, Madang, Milne Bay, East New Britain and Oro provinces and Port Moresby. Their goal was to live, work and learn with PNG communities as part of a two year volunteer assignment. Initially possible with funding from Australian organisations including Community Aid Abroad and the Myer Foundation, in 1965 the program expanded with funding support from the Australian Government, and more than 70 Australian volunteers travelled to PNG over the next two years.

Today, the Australian Government continues to be a major supporter of Australian volunteers in PNG through the AVID program. Since 1964, with almost 300 partner host organisations, AVI has managed over 1400 volunteer assignments in PNG through the volunteer program, and delivered various other projects funded by DFAT and other bilateral and multilateral organisations, including:

- The Indigenous Women's Leadership Tour (2009-2010) funded by FACHSIA;
- The PNG Youth Project (2001-2006) in partnership with Youth Challenge Australia (YCA);
- Bougainville Medical Personnel (2004-2005; AusAID (DFAT));
- AVI-WVA Bougainville Sustainable Livelihood Project (2000-2002);
- PNG Disabled Sports Project (2000-2001), funded by Community Aid Abroad;
- The Bougainville Microfinance Project (1999-2000; AusAID (DFAT)).

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<sup>1</sup> DFAT ODE, *Evaluation of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program*, January 2014, pp 1-2.

### *Sectoral focus areas*

During the past 5 years of the Australian Government-funded volunteer program, AVI has managed 80 volunteer assignments targeting increased capacity in staff skills and knowledge, organisational strategy, planning, systems, processes, advocacy, networking building civil society. Assignments have been spread across a range of sectors:

- Health (38%)
- Governance (27%)
- Environment (14%)
- Education (12%)
- Infrastructure (9%)

Health and Governance have historically been and continue to be important priorities in AVI's programming in PNG, in alignment with Australian aid objectives and PNG development needs. Over time the nature of the support provided by volunteers has shifted from direct service delivery to longer-term capacity development approaches. For example under the Governance focus area, PNG was the first country to receive an Australian volunteer in the law and justice sector, with a Legal Studies Lecturer commencing with the University of PNG in 1968. From the early 1980s a series of five volunteer Provincial Lawyers supported provincial administrations across the country. From 2005 onwards, AVI began to receive requests to partner with civil society actors engaging on issues of governance. For example, a volunteer Environmental Law Program Director worked with the Centre for Environmental Law and Community Rights (2005-2006), and three successive Legal Assistants worked with Transparency International (spanning 2005-2007) to develop project submissions, in particular relating to anti-corruption legislation.

### *Australian Partner Organisations*

Australia-PNG linkages are further extended through the contribution of Australian Partner Organisations (APOs) to AVID in PNG. Since 2010, eight APOs have provided support for 11 assignments, enhancing development outcomes through AVID in ways that most suit their resources and interests. Some APOs provide financial contributions towards volunteer allowances; others provide technical mentoring to volunteers and host organisations, or circulate volunteering opportunities within their sectoral networks. Australian organisations having participated in the AVID program in PNG in this way include the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, Australian Doctors International, Anglican Board of Mission, Sexual Health and Family Planning Australia and Zoos Victoria. AVI finds that there is a high level of interest among Australian Partner Organisations to support assignments in PNG relative to the global AVID program.

### *Geographical focus*

Historically, assignments have been spread widely across the mainland and Islands, however in the past few years there has been a shift in programming that sees AVI retaining key relationships with several partners on the mainland whilst shifting to a more specific location focus on New Ireland, Bougainville, & East New Britain. In late 2014 AVI's program management team relocated from Port Moresby to a new program office in Kokopo, enabling greater ease of support to HOs and to the volunteers.

### *Operating context*

More than most other AVID program countries, risk and security considerations in PNG present significant constraints to program management, impacting on the locations and kinds of work that volunteers can undertake. Over a number of years, AVI in conjunction with DFAT and the other volunteer agencies, has developed a comprehensive risk management strategy for the program in PNG, including Standard

Operating Procedures to which volunteers are required to commit. Security in Port Moresby, and the resulting high cost of appropriate accommodation was an important reason for the geographical re-location of the program focus and the AVI office to the islands.

With partnerships now located outside of the nation's capital, a greater proportion of assignments are within small or grassroots organisations rather than national level institutions meaning that volunteers are potentially more able to see the direct results of their work on the ground. A benefit of the geographical and strategic re-shaping of the program due to program constraints has been seen in the potential for deeper relationships with a smaller number of more closely located partner organisations – leading to capacity for greater level of strategic planning and assignment development.

Despite some of the operational challenges of the security environment (largely reduced in the PNG islands), with appropriate program strategy and management in place, volunteers are able to experience a fulfilling time in PNG while making significant and worthwhile contributions to the capacity of their host organisations. At times PNG has been a challenging country in which to 'fill' assignments, based on perceptions around risk and lack of knowledge of the country, however increasingly AVI is finding that well-developed assignments in the new locations combined with the essential sharing of knowledge by current and returned volunteers are contributing to a greater level of engagement with PNG opportunities by potential candidates.

### **3. CONTRIBUTING TO THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OBJECTIVES OF AUSTRALIA'S AID**

#### *Public diplomacy and people-to-people links*

AVI's 50 year history of facilitating productive linkages between Australians and communities and organisations in PNG is an important feature in building engagement and positive perceptions between Australia and its nearest neighbour. In addition to long-term capacity development partnerships involving placement of volunteers, AVI has endeavoured to provide a range of opportunities for Australians and Papua New Guineans to develop mutual understanding. In 1995, AVI (then OSB) brought the PNG Ombudsman to Australia on a speaking tour, as part of its 'Diversity Next Door' awareness campaign; and between 2001-2008, 63 young Australians participated in 7 community development projects with AVI's partner organisations through the self-funded team-based Youth Program.

Since the 1960's Australian volunteers and returned volunteers (RVs) have been a key source of knowledge for their home communities about life and development in PNG, and vice versa. With significant pre-conceptions regarding life in PNG, particularly in relation to security and risk, RVs and current volunteers remain a vital source of information and support to new volunteers preparing to undertake assignments in PNG, and to candidates considering PNG assignments through AVID.

### **4. WORKING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Following the 22nd Papua New Guinea–Australia Ministerial Forum in 2013, DFAT has indicated plans to increase focus on and involvement of the private sector in Australian aid to PNG<sup>2</sup>.

AVI sees a relevant role for international volunteering in promoting the growth and development of the private sector in overseas communities and supporting the participation of private sector organisations in overseas volunteering for international development.

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<sup>2</sup> DFAT, 2014, *A new direction for Australian Aid in PNG: refocusing Australian Aid to help unlock PNG's economic potential*, <http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/papua-new-guinea/development-assistance/Documents/png-aid-assessment-summary-paper.pdf>

Volunteer assignments can foster economic growth by targeting bottlenecks, including human resource constraints. In addition to supporting the creation of a healthy and skilled workforce generally, through the provision of health and education services, volunteer assignments can contribute to specific skills development via vocational education.

Volunteers can also make very significant contributions to the creation of an environment that promotes and facilitates investment activities that will, in turn, stimulate further economic activity and growth. Much of the work that volunteers do in the area of governance contributes directly to improving the attractiveness of countries to foreign and domestic investors. Transparent and effective government administration and regulatory processes are crucial to the promotion of direct investment. For example, AVI's partnership with Transparency International seeks to make a significant contribution to the development of a more conducive investment environment.

In PNG, Australian volunteers have contributed to women's economic empowerment through micro-finance opportunities for women in Bougainville, and are currently supporting the Bougainville Women's Federation to develop a range of income generation activities for the network.

AVI has also been able to provide partner organisations in PNG with access to small grants through a partnership with the Australian-based private sector Planet Wheeler Foundation. Through the Planet Wheeler Community Grants Scheme, more than \$40,000 AUD has been distributed to seven AVI partner organisations since 2010, for activities ranging from women's income generation, to disability inclusion to providing safe water for a health clinic.

***Case study: volunteering and private sector partnerships in PNG***

The Oil Search Health Foundation was established by the oil and gas exploration and development company, Oil Search Ltd, in part to meet corporate social responsibility objectives and also to provide an efficient mechanism to fund small health services for communities living alongside the extensive liquefied natural gas pipeline. Funding is sourced predominantly from Oil Search Limited and the Geneva-based Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

AVI has worked with the Foundation to develop local staff capacity on a reproductive health project and both parties are keen to extend the partnership into other maternal and child health projects to benefit villages along the liquefied natural gas (LNG) development pipeline.

AVI and the Foundation are discussing future programs for Australian volunteer placements in rural health projects developed and implemented by the Foundation and donor partners to meet the needs of local communities. A long-term partnership with the Oil Search Health Foundation provides another avenue for skilled professional Australian volunteers to contribute to community development and inclusive economic growth in PNG. Oil Search Ltd has been operating in Papua New Guinea since 1929. Most of the Company's assets are located in PNG, where it holds an extensive spread of oil and gas production and exploration licences. The Company's main growth asset is its 29% interest in the PNG LNG Project, a world scale development operated by ExxonMobil.

***Case study: AVI and ANZ in the Indo-Pacific region***

AVI was pleased to note the new Memorandum of Understanding between DFAT and ANZ Bank, signed 18<sup>th</sup> February 2015<sup>3</sup>.

AVI has had a collaborative relationship with ANZ, through a partnership delivering benefits to ANZ and local non-government organisations across Asia and the Pacific, during 2012. The 'Super Regional Volunteer

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.dfat.gov.au/news/news/Pages/australia-teams-up-with-anz-in-the-pacific.aspx>

Program' was designed to provide organisational capacity development for AVI partners and to align with the ANZ strategy in the Asia-Pacific region. ANZ employees were given the opportunity to undertake a three month skilled volunteer placement with long established AVI partners.

Drawing from a select pool of ANZ staff already identified internally for their leadership characteristics and skills, the volunteer assignments were designed to meet the needs of three long-term AVI partners that were well-placed to benefit from targeted short-term placements. Bringing together the unique expertise of AVI, ANZ and the host organisations themselves, the collaboration delivered invaluable outcomes for the partner organisations.

**Solomon Islands** – Volunteer with human resources expertise designed a human resource management system for the Solomon Islands Development Trust; an employee handbook including child protection policies was launched; processes were improved and managed gained increased confidence in HR issues.

**Fiji, Kiribati and Solomon Islands** – Volunteer with financial services expertise worked with the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation, based in Fiji, to develop financial literacy materials; delivered workshops for small business owners including women in business; participants demonstrated strong sense of empowerment and confidence after the workshops.

**Indonesia** – Volunteer with marketing expertise supported a fair trade group, Pekerti, to improve their sales by developing, launching and promoting an ethical shopping website; staff were coached on communications planning and writing; overseas enquiries and sales increased.

The program added new dimensions to the ANZ 'licence to operate', and contributed to a better understanding of the communities in which they work. It also provided emerging leaders with a unique opportunity to develop personal capabilities, to enhance leadership skills and to develop a 'wide angle lens' as global citizens.

The partnership was valued and supported at the highest levels of ANZ. In June 2012, Chief of Executive Officer, Mike Smith, said:

*"For ANZ to realise the full potential of our super regional strategy, we need our leaders to have well rounded experiences, capabilities and an international mindset to create real value for all our stakeholders."*<sup>4</sup>

## 5. SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Under the AVID program, AVI develops partnerships with a range of host organisations directly aligned with the development priorities of the Australian and PNG Governments. For example, AVI collaborated closely with DFAT (formerly AusAID) staff within provincial offices to provide programmatic support to the Australian Government's Sub National Strategy (SNS) program throughout PNG; and is the DFAT-nominated lead partner for AVID in Bougainville.

In 2010, AVI complemented its work for disability inclusive development under the volunteer program with a successful application to the Australian Government's Australian Leadership Awards Fellowship (ALAF) program for the Chair of PNG's National Assembly of Disabled Persons (the Assembly). The Fellow, recommended to AVI by Dame Carol Kidu, then PNG's Minister for Community Development and Patron of AVI since 2013, visited Australia for 5 weeks for a program of short professional attachments to Australian disability peak bodies, NGOs, state government departments and NGOs. The Assembly was an AVI partner organisation, hosting two Australian volunteers in the areas of financial administration and organisational development.

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<sup>4</sup> ANZ Super Regional Volunteer Program Report, June 2012

Three case studies follow highlighting examples of Australian volunteer partnerships contributing to sustainable development priorities in PNG.

**Case study: Australasian College for Emergency Medicine and Divine Word University**

A partnership between AVI and the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine (ACEM) is contributing to improved health care in PNG through the provision of specialist training and expertise to medical students and staff at The Divine Word University (DWU) in Madang. DWU has a large student base in the health sciences, with a clinical campus at nearby Modilong Hospital. Local doctors, being overwhelmed with service provision, have minimal time to teach students, and neither the university nor hospital has capacity to employ extra doctors with primarily teaching responsibilities.

Volunteer assignments developed in partnership with DWU and ACEM are bringing Australian doctors to PNG to conduct academic and clinical training for students at the university and in the hospital. In 2014 the first in a series of short-term volunteer Clinical Lecturers in Emergency Medicine was placed with DWU, conducting teaching in the university and tutorials and bedside teaching to hospital staff.

Out of this partnership, PNG doctors have travelled to Australia to enhance their knowledge and skills, and Australian doctors have supported them to present at international conferences and share their work achievements as well as highlights of the program.

The relationship is ongoing, with two additional Clinical Lecturers supported by ACEM set to depart in mid-2015. This relationship created possibilities for AVI to facilitate other health specialists to support DWU, with a Clinical Lecturer in Obstetrics and Gynaecology also placed at DWU in 2014.

**Case Study: Supporting Women's Political and Economic Empowerment in Bougainville**

The Autonomous Region of Bougainville (ARB) is a post-conflict region in PNG. Between 1988 and 1998, Bougainville experienced the most serious conflict in the South Pacific Region. Women in ARB played a vital role in the peace process initiatives during the decade long conflict and in post-conflict reconciliation processes.

Established in 2006, the Bougainville Women's Federation (BWF) has quickly become recognised as a leading organisation representing the women of ARB, promoting leadership and encouraging greater representation in decision-making in government and non-government institutions<sup>5</sup>. AVI has worked with BWF since 2011, placing two AVID volunteers: an *Organisational Development and Program Support Mentor* (2012-2014); and a *Small Business & Entrepreneurship Trainer - Women's Group* (2013-15). As part of BWF's capacity development plan with AVI, the first volunteer focused on organisational development and establishing good governance; while the second assignment, currently underway, seeks to build technical capacity through business entrepreneurship and development.

When AVI provided BWF with its first AVID volunteer, *Organisational Development and Program Support Mentor* (2012-2014), BWF was still in the early stages of establishing itself, building linkages and getting recognised in the community. There were no paid staff and all the work was being done by volunteer members. Three years later, BWF has a central office situated next door to the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) Minister for Women and Community Development. BWF also has five full time staff whom the volunteer helped recruit. The volunteer mentored BWF's Board Members and district representatives, helping them understand their roles and organisational responsibilities. She also

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<sup>5</sup> Pacific Leadership Program/ IWDA *Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development Scoping Study final report*, <http://www.pacificwomen.org/resources/research/pacific-womens-scoping-study-final-report/>

coordinated BWF's first official conference in September 2012 which brought together 100 women from 13 districts to map priority areas for the future.

AVID volunteers have contributed to the profile and networks of BWF, through which the organisation now receives significant cooperation and support from the ABG Government, UN, NGO and civil society partners. An important connection, developed as an initiative of the volunteer, was made with International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) in Australia. This resulted in IWDA providing core funding to the BWF Secretariat which continues today.

The second AVID volunteer, *Small Business & Entrepreneurship Trainer - Women's Group (2013-15)*, was placed in BWF to assist in the development of small to medium enterprise (SME) and fundraising activities. The volunteer's work will provide a means to build a sustainable organisation that can eventually be self-funded. The volunteer has been working with a small team of women to establish income-generating initiatives, such as:

Sewing and cooking classes.

Establishing a feminine hygiene project to train the women in making and selling hygiene kits.

Establishing a café and public toilets in Buka Market.

AVI's support to BWF encompasses a broad partnership approach beyond the placement of volunteers. AVI's Country Manager regularly meets with BWF for strategic planning, attends their board meetings and maintains good relationships with BWF's external funders and supporters, such as IWDA. AVI was also able to facilitate funding for BWF's office set-up through the Planet Wheeler-funded Community Grants Scheme.

#### *The Autonomous Region of Bougainville*

The Autonomous Region of Bougainville is planning to hold a referendum on its political status within the next five years. AVI feels it is important for AVID to increase its presence in Bougainville to support the ABG and civil society during this time. AVI has a long history of working with organisations in Bougainville, with the first Australian volunteer teachers placed there in 1969. During the Bougainville peace process, volunteers placed by AVI worked alongside the Peace Monitoring Group, and the long-standing contributions of Australian volunteers are well-recognised and respected by government and civil society stakeholders.

As the nominated lead AVID Core Partner in Bougainville, AVI is working closely with DFAT to identify further opportunities for volunteer assignments with a particular focus on increasing women's political empowerment in ARB.

#### **Case study: Anglicare PNG Child Protection Program**

Anglicare PNG Inc. is a national NGO which seeks to minimise the social and economic impact of HIV and AIDS on individuals, families and communities. Anglicare PNG has branches in Port Moresby, Mt Hagen, Popondetta, Wabag and Lae. AVI has worked with Anglicare PNG since 2004, placing 10 volunteers during this time, many of them with the support of Anglican Board of Mission in Australia as an Australian Partner Organisation.

Recognising the cross-cutting importance of child protection to their work, and seeing a need to diversify and enhance their current programming, Anglicare PNG requested a volunteer Child Protection Program Manager to conduct a mapping exercise of child protection programming in PNG and recommend culturally appropriate responses that could be incorporated by Anglicare.



As of March 2015 when the 12 month volunteer assignment is nearing conclusion, the AVID volunteer has successfully led development and ratification by Anglicare of a Child Protection Policy; trained local staff as Child Protection Facilitators; and supported the policy's implementation through a series of workshops in the provincial branches, with funding provided by DFAT's Church Partnership Program.

The potential for broader child protection impacts across PNG civil society is significant. Anglicare recognises the fundamental importance of child protection in PNG and is keen to establish itself as an organisation that can provide support to the community in this sector. Already the other 6 church groups in the Churches Partnership Program have expressed interest in scaling the child protection program across their operations.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Through the Australian government funded volunteer program (currently known as AVID), volunteers in PNG have played a crucial but changing role over many decades. The program has:
  - provided a core component of public diplomacy and demonstration of Australian good will,
  - helped combat negative stereotypes of both the Australian and PNG peoples,
  - built Australian knowledge of and empathy with state and non-state actors in PNG, and
  - provided highly regarded expertise to support PNG development priorities.

**Recommendation:** *That the Australian Government continues to recognise the unique value of the volunteer program to development in PNG and to Australia-PNG relations with specific funding that will enable the program to expand.*

- AVI has an enviable reputation in Bougainville, not least in the attitudes of John Momis (President, ABG) and the administrators around him. They have expressed their appreciation of the contribution volunteers have made from 2000 until now. This contribution is particularly apposite in the current period as Bougainville prepares to conduct a referendum on its future political status.

**Recommendation:** *That the Australian Government recognises the singular contributions of volunteers to Bougainville development, and their potential to do much more with specific funding enabling a well-resourced and planned expansion of collaboration in Bougainville.*

- AVI notes and applauds the recent decision by DFAT to provide funding through its ANCP program (Australian NGOs) to the Bougainville Youth Initiative. AVI believes this activity can be enhanced. It is worth noting that the Asia-Pacific Peace and Development Service Alliance was launched in Bangkok in November 2014 with AVI as a Founding Member. This alliance is entirely focussed on linking youth activities and organisations across the entire Asia Pacific region and is supported by ESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific). This represents an important opportunity for the youth of PNG and Bougainville to learn from socially engaged youth in the region participating in local development.

**Recommendation:** *That the Australian Government provides funding to enable PNG and Bougainville youth, through AVI, to access and interact with youth represented in the Asia-Pacific Peace and Development Service Alliance.*

- Volunteers and staff of AVI are fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn at first hand from PNG colleagues and partners about the diverse realities of life in PNG's communities and organisations. This knowledge goes beyond the stereotypes of poverty, corruption and violence and leads to a nuanced appreciation of the aspirations of and the challenges faced by PNG people.

**Recommendation:** *That Senators seek opportunities to visit PNG and travel beyond Port Moresby to develop a first-hand appreciation of the country and its communities. Senators' appreciation will be enhanced and deepened by meeting on location with volunteers and their local colleagues.*

## 1.1 ATTACHMENTS – supporting information

The following attachments are articles from the Australian Volunteers International website – *Stories from the Field* section:

1. Margaret Gibson: Reflecting on PNG (PNG 1968/69)
2. Rural health training enhanced by visiting lecturers (PNG 2014)
3. Tourism strengthening PNG's cultural identity (PNG 2010/11)
4. Rebecca Walker, PNG: There were five Aussies, a nun, a priest and a skipper... And five days! (Bougainville 2008/09)
5. The Women of Bougainville (Bougainville 2012-2014)
6. Dame Carol Kidu: Supporting sustainable nation building efforts in PNG (December 2012)

## *Attachment 1 - Margaret Gibson, reflecting on PNG*



*Australian volunteer Margaret Gibson, Nurse, Papua New Guinea, 1968.*

### **Margaret Gibson**

Age now: 71

Assignment: Maternal and child care nurse with United Church in Papua New Guinea health clinic, Gauvone District, Central Province,

When: January 1968 to December 1969

*"I would love to be involved and to reconnect with my Papuan family of 1968-69. I started up and conducted maternal and child health services throughout the Gauvone District during this time which enabled me to feel very connected to families in the district. Because of the way Papuan people relate, I had a Papuan mother, father, grandfather, daughters, siblings that came about through circumstances and the nature of my work. My experiences in PNG really helped me understand the importance of community. I look back and marvel at their tolerance of a young inexperienced nurse and doubt that I made any significant contribution to their lives, but I loved them and still do."*

### *Inspiration to volunteer*

"A long standing interest in other cultures probably engendered by my father's tales of Maori culture. (Then there were) stories about missionaries and adventurers at school, early reading and a fantastic geography teacher who had traveled widely, shared her experiences and showed us many films of other countries. I wanted to become involved or share in another's culture and life. I felt I had to have something to offer. It was one of several reasons for undertaking nursing. It could take me places I wanted to go!

After completing my general nursing training at the Royal Children's Hospital and Midwifery at the Royal Women's Hospital Melbourne, I was working in midwifery at a local hospital when I learnt of Australian Volunteers Abroad (an Australian Government funded program delivered by AVI) through a colleague and sought further information through Australian Volunteers International (then known as Overseas Service Bureau). I resolved to do Infant Welfare training in preparation for service in PNG where I

<http://www.australianvolunteers.com/volunteer/stories-from-the-field/margaret-gibson-reflecting-on-png/>

expected/hoped to do Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Clinics in the villages.

### *Becoming a volunteer*

After completing Infant Welfare I applied and was accepted as a volunteer. I spent a week's live-in inservice at Trinity College with fellow volunteers before flying to Papua with two other nurses assigned to Papua Ekalaria (Papuan Church renamed London Missionary Society). We all spent two weeks acclimatising and orientating on Gemo Island, a leprosy and tubercular colony/hospital off Port Moresby, which was great fun. The nursing staff there were warm, welcoming and helpful. Here the patients (the younger stabilised male patients) dived out of hospital windows into clear tropical waters, somewhat different from the starched discipline of Melbourne hospitals at the time! I spent some time in the wards and when not on duty taught the kids of the families working/living there to do back dives, somersaults, "bananas," and "eggs" off the pier. Turtles swam in the beautiful clear warm waters.

Heather (one of the other nurses) stayed at Gemo, the other nurse went out west to a hospital there and I went to Gavuone Mission Station. Part of the orientation included visits to Hanuabada (a large Motuan village, from where most of the Gemo workers came from) and Kwikila (the only secondary school in Papua at that time) some miles out of Moresby to meet other members of the mission. Disconcerting were the beetles and insects that swarmed around the kerosene lantern and the large green toads that plopped in ones path at night and the huge carpet snake that lived in the roof of the mission house where we stayed in Hanuabada. Those that lived there permanently were very happy to have the snake as it kept the rats down; I had some adjusting to do!

Before leaving Moresby I met with the Medical Officer of Health for the Territory and the Infant Welfare/MCH Advisor to discuss the work I would be doing and the reports and statistics required by the Government. I also picked up a delivery kit (for delivering babies). It was compact and portable and with slight modification I later found it very useful when doing deliveries in the village.

### *Duties*

At the Gavuone Mission I was to establish and conduct MCH clinics there and in the surrounding district. Before starting at Gavuone I spent three weeks at Iruna Mission Station at Amazon Bay where there was a Bush Hospital and regular patrols into the surrounding villages to conduct clinics and give immunisations. It was here that I learnt the ropes! It gave me an understanding of how MCH could operate in the Papuan context.

On the way down to Iruna we flew over Gavuone and "buzzed" the village and mission station. It was a large picturesque village that edged Marshal Lagoon; brightly coloured flowers surrounded bush material houses, canoes were moored along the muddy shores of the lagoon, I couldn't wait to get there.

Once at Gavuone it took two months to get the clinics up and running. An old boarders' house was converted into a clinic by some village carpenters. It was a flat iron building on stilts with a thatched roof, three small rooms and a verandah. A tiny room at the rear was used as a storeroom. A desk was built into the middle room from where I could consult. Examination couches, benches and shelves were built in the two outer rooms. Couch is somewhat of a misnomer they were hard wooden structures but made more comfortable with pandanas mats woven by the village women. Helai (my appointed helper) and I then painted them white. Helai, who didn't see painting as nursing duties, complained copiously that it was men's work.

Medical and other supplies gradually arrived by K-boat from Port Moresby, also a metal patrol box and a

<http://www.australianvolunteers.com/volunteer/stories-from-the-field/margaret-gibson-reflecting-on-png/>

thermos flask for carrying ice and vaccines. Before starting the clinics I organised meetings in all the 24 villages that we would be visiting regularly, men and women. I wanted all the people to attend so they would understand and support what we were doing, have the opportunity to ask questions and be involved. Each month I sent notices of clinic schedules to the pastor and councilor in each village so they could let the village people know when we were coming. It was important because the women went to work in the gardens each day and it meant staying back on clinic days.

There were some records of previously given vaccinations held at the administration centre three miles away. I searched through these and where I could followed up those children and completed their immunisations. Triple antigens (diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough), CDTs (combined diphtheria and tetanus) and BCGs (for tuberculosis) were given at monthly clinics held in each of the 24 villages in the district. Tetanus toxoid was given to all pregnant women that attended.

We were on patrol five days a week, sometimes away for three days at a time. Along the Maopa coast we refreshed the ice for the vaccines at the trade store run by an Australian couple, he a retired patrol officer. At Cape Rodney the people at the timber mill helped out, and we stayed over at Helai's father's home when we patrolled in this area. Otherwise we stayed at the pastors' houses. The mission consisted of the District Minister and his wife and children who were from New Zealand, an Australian teacher and myself. The teacher and I lived together in an open bush material house with a large verandah and a corrugated iron roof. We had a water tank, bucket shower, a kerosene fridge and iron and port-a-gas stove. The generator operated from 6-10pm. The first night we ate our meal under the fluorescent light with village people about four rows deep observing us. It was like being on stage. After a few nights they tired of the spectacle.

Each child or baby was weighed, fully examined, given appropriate immunisation, iron mixture and cod-liver oil at monthly visits. All details were recorded on their individual history cards and statistics prepared for the Health Department on the number of enlarged livers and spleens and swollen glands found. It was a very comprehensive health service. Ultimately approximately 2000 were enrolled and about 1000 were seen each month. The number of children seen at each clinic ranged from 10-115. One to two clinics were conducted in a day depending on the number of children seen and the distance between villages.

After two to three months Helai left to get married, so girls from the village were invited to apply for the job as my assistant. Four girls applied all were accepted and after some rudimentary training. I took two at a time with me on patrol. We made up a roster and I made up some toilet bags for each of them to take on patrol from bits and pieces sent by people from supportive churches in New Zealand. They were very much prized, as soap was difficult to obtain. When not working, the girls helped their families in the gardens. Each of the girls had been educated to grade six; Helai had been educated to form two.

I managed to sew a number of things required for the clinic and uniforms for the girls to wear on patrol on the old treddle sewing machine that Barbara (District Minister's wife) had up at the "big house". Peter and Barbara and their children left for a posting in Moresby six months after Margaret and I arrived and was replaced by Numa who had been the pastor, he was very supportive of the work we were doing and was a wonderful seaman.

When I was back at the mission station/village at night or in the weekends I was called upon to conduct deliveries, administer to the occasional snakebite victim, suture wounds, dress sores and treat various illnesses. The kids would come up after school to have their sores dressed when we were returning from patrol and trying to clean up. They just loved being daubed with gentian violet or Mercurochrome, which made an awful mess of our beautiful "white" tables and benches. Every now and then I repainted them

<http://www.australianvolunteers.com/volunteer/stories-from-the-field/margaret-gibson-reflecting-on-png/>

but the colour still came through.

Once the MCH clinics were bedded down into a monthly routine I started some school clinics to check the health and development of the school children at administration and mission schools in the district. Mantoux tests were given to test for tuberculosis or antibodies to tuberculosis and those with negative results were followed up with BCG immunisation.

The people were amazingly accepting of immunisation as penicillin injections had been so successful in treating Yaws, so they were keen to have their children protected.

### *Life in a different culture*

The most wonderful thing about life in Papua was the people who related in a family way. I had mothers, fathers, grandfathers, siblings and the girls that helped me decided they would adopt Margaret (the teacher) and I as mothers, so I had daughters too! Family relationships were complex and extensive in Papua and were involved with specific responsibilities. I can only say I had a rudimentary grasp of it all. But I was fortunate to feel very much a part of the environment and still see myself as a Gavuone Vavine (Gavuone girl).

I learnt the local language whilst there as it was the only way I could communicate with the mothers and young children as they didn't speak English and Pidgin English was not spoken much in Papua, it was in the New Guinea "side". Neither did the women speak police/pidgin Motu, which was a trading language spoken along the Papuan coast.

Peter, the District Minister, knew the language and helped me with the grammar. I made lots of mistakes but gradually improved and increased my vocabulary, not enough to have in depth conversations, but enough to take medical histories and get by. There were odd times when I missed my own culture. (I didn't know that I had one until I went away and saw it from a distance.) I thought about the depth and traditions of European culture, music, language and art. But, I had such fun there, every day was an adventure, there was always something unexpected in a day, or a new challenge, and so much work to do. Fortunately, I thrive in tropical weather and was never sick. The only problem I had was when I took some medication for hookworm which made me feel very nauseated for a day or two and a migraine I experienced on one long patrol which was probably from too much sun and not enough water. I also loved the outdoor life and being by the sea and patrolling in canoes and dinghies and through jungle and grasslands.

### *When I returned*

I returned with an understanding of the meaning and importance of community and family and a knowledge that one can live with infirmities. I had never experienced an extended family as both my parents had come from New Zealand and settled in Melbourne while their families remained in New Zealand. So I never knew grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. Family and community have been very significant in my life since returning from PNG.

When I returned I went back to working in a busy local midwifery hospital, married within three months, had the first child 14 months later, the second child 17 ½ months after that and the third child 23 months later. I continued working in midwifery between having the children, served on the kindergarten committee for five years, the school council for two years and started studying maths at night school. I did a refresher course for Maternal and Child Health in 1980 and started relieving in centres during the week while working in the hospital on the weekends. In 1983 I resigned from the hospital and started full-time work in MCH.

That year I also started a Post Graduate Diploma in Clinical Nutrition, home based study with weekend seminars, which I completed early in 1984. I later did further studies in maths, physics and chemistry. I

<http://www.australianvolunteers.com/volunteer/stories-from-the-field/margaret-gibson-reflecting-on-png/>

worked one year full-time at Dingley MCHC, three years at Williamstown MCHC, almost 13 years at Brighton and am currently at Sandringham MCHC where I've been for almost three years.

For the past four to five years I've been undertaking a master's degree in Public Health with Monash Department of Epidemiology and Preventative Medicine and hope to complete that at the end of this year. In each of the centres that I've worked I've tried to make the centre a focal point for community life and endeavour to facilitate my clients/families participation in community life and enrich their family life and relationships.

I have an incredibly tolerant husband and three great kids of whom I am very proud. They've all completed university, are fit and compete in sports at elite levels; Stephen in canoe polo, Nickie in triathlons and Tammy in athletics.



<http://www.australianvolunteers.com/volunteer/stories-from-the-field/dr-rob-mitchell-and-dr-rebecca-iser-png/>

## *Attachment 2 - Rural health training enhanced by visiting lecturers*

The delivery of clinical training to health extension officer (HEO) students in Papua New Guinea's Divine Word University have been given a boost with access to skilled clinical lecturers through Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID), an Australian Government initiative.

With the support of AVID, the Divine Word University (DWU) has worked with Australian Volunteers International and two Australasian medical organisations – the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists - to supply the two clinical lecturers to the University's Department of Rural Health in Madang.

Dr Betty Koka, Head of the Department of Rural Health at DWU, said these sorts of partnerships were key to improving health outcomes in PNG.

*“There is great benefit in clinicians and academics sharing their knowledge and experience. We are grateful for this partnership, and hope that it results in an expanded network of Australians and Papua New Guineans who are working together to improve healthcare for PNG's rural majority.”*

The visiting Australian doctors will contribute to the teaching of HEO students, but will also deliver clinical services at nearby Modilon General Hospital.

The first two Australian volunteer doctors to visit Madang through the partnership, Dr Rob Mitchell and Dr Rebecca Iser, have recently completed their six-month AVID assignments at Divine Word University.

From Townsville in North Queensland, the two doctors are training specialists in emergency medicine and obstetrics and gynaecology respectively. During their time in PNG, they supervised HEO students undertaking placements at Modilon Hospital, and also delivered lectures on the university campus.

Dr Mitchell said working in PNG was a wonderful experience, and he was very impressed with the work of staff at DWU and Modilon Hospital to provide high quality teaching to rural health students.

*“There are many challenges in delivering training to healthcare workers in PNG, but Divine Word University is working hard to deliver the best possible education to its students within the available resources.*

*“The partnership between the University and Australian Volunteers International established through AVID, will be of benefit to all parties, and we hope that ultimately it will result in improved health outcomes for patients in Madang Province and beyond.”*

Although Drs Mitchell and Iser have returned to Australia, they will be replaced by other visiting volunteer Australian lecturers in coming months.

*“We were warmly welcomed into the University and Hospital communities, and hope to maintain an ongoing relationship with PNG. Madang Province is a beautiful and vibrant region, but there is lots of work to do to improve the quality of healthcare services.”*

*Dr Rob Mitchell and Dr Rebecca Iser, Returned Volunteers, PNG  
Assignment date: February 2014 to August 2014*

*This is a position of the **Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID)** program, an Australian Government initiative. AVI is working in partnership with the Australian Government to deliver AVID.*

<http://www.australianvolunteers.com/volunteer/stories-from-the-field/elizabeth-brennan-tourism-strengthening-pngs-cultural-identity/>

### *Attachment 3 - Tourism strengthening PNG's cultural identity*

Elizabeth Brennan has found the island's rich cultural practices and local customs are a source of unrealised potential for local communities to generate sustainable income in a way that does not affect the preservation of natural resources or cultural heritage.

The strong cultural traditions in all areas of PNG life provide an anthropological treasure trove and unique marketing opportunity for sustainable tourism options. In recent years however, some of the traditional ways of life have fallen by the wayside and community pride has been forgotten.

After experiencing snapshots of traditional cultural practices at last year's Warwagira and Mask Festival, a nine-day event showcasing masks, dancing and music from all over PNG, I saw an opportunity to use these events as a way of assisting the community in building up its cultural identity, increasing overall community participation and developing more sustainable livelihood options. Local group members also realised the importance of fostering the growth of events, not only as a tourist drawcard but also as an opportunity to cultivate their culture. Starting almost from scratch, the East New Britain Tourism Authority built a new committee of dynamic local individuals, calling forth members of the tourism industry to take part in creating a unified public-private partnership to breathe life and passion back into the annual festivals. Industry members have long been promoting the festivals as a huge pinnacle on the tourism calendar, but they did welcome a more united and sustainable approach to management of the events. My role was to facilitate the process, maintaining momentum throughout, and upskill the local committee in event management, sponsorship and marketing.

Instead of little businesses trying to move mountains on their own we worked together to build an industry which combined resources and shared thoughts on the local community's vision for tourism in the province, and collaboratively set about achieving these goals. By keeping communication channels open and free flowing, we were able to bring together provincial departments, local businesses and various community groups, raising PGK136,000 (AUD\$57,500) in fundraising, and helping communities to realise the importance of putting on a spectacular cultural show.

The event itself saw hundreds of musical enthusiasts flock to the Takubar Sports Field to enjoy the fun and frivolity of the opening weekend of the Warwagira. Melodious tunes echoed through the streets as traditional string bands strummed soulful rhythms and in the evening the Baining Fire Dancers amazed tourists from around the world with colourful displays of traditional dance. For the remainder of the festival groups from all regions of PNG showcased their own unique costumes, cultures and traditions, while local businesses benefited from the swelled numbers of visitors.

Aside from the financial success and sustainability of the Warwagira and Mask Festival, the most rewarding outcome was having industry members, whom were not previously actively involved in the community, all come together and assist in the huge success of the event. The strong support shown from the performers, community, business networks and organisers alike have proven the passion for maintaining and nourishing the culture and sustainable tourism opportunities within PNG.

Being a volunteer can translate very differently depending on the context you are in, particularly if you are a woman operating in a patriarchal society. Purely because you come from a different background, you will never fully understand the intricacies of an unfamiliar culture, of which there are many in PNG, and because of this, you may be seen as an outsider. I believe as is the case with many people working in these types of roles, it takes a very long time for the community to accept you and for you to earn their trust.

This was a steep learning curve for me as trust is something I value quite highly, and give quite freely. Although I don't pretend that I will ever fully comprehend the culture and custom of this land, through my patience and practiced intuition, I have earned trust not just within the tourism industry but also the wider

<http://www.australianvolunteers.com/volunteer/stories-from-the-field/elizabeth-brennan-tourism-strengthening-pngs-cultural-identity/>

community. The most profound experience I've had in my time in PNG, has been during my involvement with the Warwagira and Mask Festival.

Historically a man's domain, having a young, white, female outsider come into the committee and facilitate the event revival, was a challenging undertaking. On the closing night of this year's Warwagira and Mask Festival there was a meeting of the community elders, and being a man's realm, I respected this was not something I should be attending. Whilst in the process of considerably departing, the most senior elder grabbed my arm giving me a shock, but nowhere near the shock I received after hearing his remark – 'Eli, you are an honorary man. Stay.

*Elizabeth Brennen, Returned Volunteer, PNG  
Assignment date: February 2010 to December 2011*

*This is a position of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program, an Australian Government initiative. AVI is working in partnership with the Australian Government to deliver AVID.*

<http://www.australianvolunteers.com/volunteer/stories-from-the-field/rebecca-walker-png/>

## *Attachment 4 - Rebecca Walker, PNG*

### *There were five Aussies, a nun, a priest and a skipper... And five days!*

Living in Bougainville for two years was amazing, tough but not without its golden times and friendships. I was living in the bush in a rehabilitation centre that was run by a congregation of local sisters, and while life was basic, and at times very challenging, it gave me a unique insight into the Bougainville community - which is still recovering from 10 years of a bloody internal conflict.

Three other volunteers (Andrew Roberts, Linda Duncan and Mick Zuino) decided to join me and Kirstin Lange to celebrate Easter. One of the beauties of living with a congregation of nuns, within the Diocese of Bougainville, is that Easter is one of the biggest celebrations of the year. So when deciding what to do with my friends, I decided to:

- a) Go somewhere that is not readily accessible to the usual tourist
- b) Go somewhere where we could enjoy a true Catholic celebration of Easter...

I decided and planned for us to go down the West Coast, one of the most inaccessible parts of Bougainville, as the only access is by boat. I also planned that we would visit three different parishes, and stay the four main Easter days with a dear friend, Father Louis Lobosi in his parish of Kurio.

The three volunteers that were not based in Bougainville all flew in on the Wednesday before Easter, and we stayed at the Nazareth Centre, Chabai - where I was based for two years.

On Holy Thursday we all headed out early by boat - tanks full of fuel and friends ready to wind down and enjoy some well-earned time out, our first stop was Tsimba to see Fr Victor. He is based at a small parish which sits on top of a cliff looking out to the ocean. This is fairly usual for the parishes along the west coast which is lined with tall cliffs. Where the cliffs meet the ocean, the most amazing black beaches stretch out with waves crashing on the shore. When we arrived in Tsimba, Fr Victor gave us a tour, some coconut to quench our thirst and a few laughs.

The first night, we stopped at the large mission station at Sipa and spent the night with a visiting priest, who was helping Fr Victor out with Easter services and duties. Fr Andrew Billy is a Bougainvillian priest who is working on Papua New Guinea's mainland. He is coming up to retirement, and told us captivating stories about his time as the defence force Chaplain! He gave a wonderful homily, and the first of many Easter services, and community reconciliations.

Sipai is a large mission with a school (which can be loosely called an aid station). It has a large church and 100 steps to get to the top of the cliff. Before that little end of the day exertion of energy, we had to moor the boat somewhere safe. As we transited from ocean to river, feeling like we were in an Indiana Jones movie, with skipper resisting the temptation to don the life jacket, we headed upstream. Andrew has keen eyes and as we moved upstream, he was the one who spotted the croc. It was big enough, not huge, but certainly not small. We all scrambled for cameras and were happy to be in the safety of the boat as we moved slowly along.

A little disconcerting was the fact that about 20 meters upstream I saw a block of rocks, so I knew we couldn't stay in the boat and move through. I turned and asked our skipper, Phillip what was next, as he pulled up at the rocks. He smiled, somewhat nervously, and told me we were close to where the boat would be moored, but we all had to get out and push. With a sweet smile, I looked somewhat surprised and asked whether we should be worried about the fact that there was a croc in the water.

Don't worry, not at all, was the response - it's tame. Ha... yeah right! So we all jumped out and pushed the

<http://www.australianvolunteers.com/volunteer/stories-from-the-field/rebecca-walker-png/>

boat... quickly... laughing and really not thinking about what in fact we were doing, and got to dry land as fast as possible. We were in blissful ignorance until we were told that it was croc season, and kids can be taken, but not adults, apparently the crocs are too small. Little comfort! But quite the adrenallin rush.

We climbed the steps and settled in for the night. Mass in the afternoon was full and nice. We were witness to a large reconciliation between a number of clans, which was a special occasion, and as the two lines of people shaking hands came to shake hands with us, I really felt that we were there representing Australia - and helping these communities to reconcile with Australia. What I have come to discover is that reconciliations are key to this culture - especially to deal with the trauma that was caused during the crisis - family members killing family members, communities traumatised by violence. And as we were about to find out, reconciliations hold a very special and significant part of the ongoing healing of this small island community.

The following morning we were up and out early. Phillip came to me in the morning and told me that the women would stay on the beach (where we saw a shark cruising up and down the coast) and the men would help him with the boat. Given the croc the day before, I was happy with the gender differentiation! We waited on the beach and were eaten by sand flies. The boys came, and sure enough, the croc had made an appearance.

We headed to our final destination of Kurio and as I had remembered it from an earlier trip in February, it did not disappoint. I have been lucky enough to find a few places in the world that really make me feel at peace, and this is one of them. Sitting on top of the cliff looking out to the ocean, it is very special.

Father Louis was there when we arrived. It was the morning of Good Friday and we settled in, had something to eat and took a look around. I sat with Fr Louis and told him of our experience in Sipai, with the reconciliation and the profound effect that it had had on us Australians. The following days were filled with swimming at the river, laughter, walking and visiting local villages, catching up with local friends, sleeping and resting - and of course heading to church. We all agreed that the house would be the perfect place for a horror movie setting. It is beautiful and given its past (with accompanying graffiti from the crisis times) you just know it's haunted!

The highlight of the trip without a doubt came at the end of Saturday Mass. The mass was wonderful. Fr Louis had used some amazing symbolism and had given a great homily. We had been there three hours into the night, at the end of the Easter Vigil service, when Fr Louis got up and made mention to the congregation of the fact that Australian friends were with us during this time.

He proceeded to comment that the relationship with Australia and Bougainville was a good one, that many parishes across the island had raised money for the bush fires, but that the relationship was not without its past. He mentioned the Australian involvement with the crisis and the Australian support of the PNG Defence Force during 'the time of revolution', and that this had brought great sadness to Bougainville, but that Easter was a time of reconciliation. He invited any of the congregation, in this time of reconciliation, to come and shake hands with the Australians (in this culture the hand shake is very powerful and means PEACE, and reconciliation). We were dumbfounded and were not expecting this at all - Fr Louis is a man of few words but very graceful and powerful when he talks. He has an amazing presence about him, and this was very very special. The service finished, and over the next hour, the congregation came and shook hands, at least 500 people came.

It was powerful, it was unforgettable, and it was the first time this community had had a chance to reconcile this relationship in this manner since the end of the crisis. It was amazing and we all felt really privileged to be part of it.

That night was spent talking and talking. The other volunteers wanted to know about what happened here; about the crisis stories; about what they had just experienced and been witness to. Also to hear stories

<http://www.australianvolunteers.com/volunteer/stories-from-the-field/rebecca-walker-png/>

about the trauma, but the incredible positivity and openness of the people to heal.

Early Sunday we were up and said goodbye to Fr Louis, Phillip and his sister (three siblings who have a very close and special bond). It made me think of and miss my own brothers, and I told them this. They promptly adopted me as one of their own. I now have two new brothers who look out for me, and make sure I am OK in Bougainville - and a new sister. The siblings went for Mass at Torokina, Father's home community and one of the other parishes he looks after. They were to arrive back the next day to take us all home.

So we swam, slept as we hadn't had much from the night before, we ate and generally were just happy to be there. And we had lots of local visitors drop by.

Monday morning we got up early, having been told several different times that the boat would come and that we would leave. We wanted to be prepared, but not rushed, and we were in no rush!

Heading home it seemed surreal. Easter was over and tomorrow Andrew and Linda would fly out as they were both working the next day. We slowly made our way home; almost running out of fuel, going for a swim, the boys caught a big Mackerel on the way - quite the fighter that fish!

What an amazing place, of extremes, and no shortage of golden people and wonderful memories.

*Rebecca Walker, Returned Volunteer, Bougainville, PNG.  
Assignment date: January 2008 to December 2009*

<http://www.australianvolunteers.com/volunteer/stories-from-the-field/marilyn-havini-the-women-of-bougainville/>

## *Attachment 5 - The women of Bougainville*

Vivid memories reveal the terror, the violence, destruction and dislocation they suffered at the height of Crisis, which rocked Buka and Bougainville Islands, both situated in the North Solomons Province of Papua New Guinea, for almost a decade until the conflict ended in 1997.

Tears are wiped from their lined faces, a joke is shared, and the smiles start to creep back again. Two decades on, rebuilding the lives and communities that were affected by the crisis is a shared passion for these resilient women.

For Australian Volunteer and now Buka local, Marilyn Havini, the Federation has already played a very significant role in giving women a voice and helping to address major social and development issues.

“The BWF brings together women leaders from Buka, Bougainville Island and other small atolls in the region, as well as ex- combatants who have chosen the path of peace. Together we are working to empower other women, to represent government level decision-making processes and to take on new leadership opportunities,” she said.

“All of our members and executives are voluntary and have no source of income as they are rural subsistence farmers. Communications and travel are our biggest and most expensive hurdles, but the women from isolated communities are still very eager to meet and set up local level government organisations for women’s groups to network and connect.”

Joining BWF as an Organisation Development and Program Support Mentor in January 2012 through the Australian Government's Australian Volunteers for International Development initiative, Marilyn has already helped secure AUD\$10,000 in funding from the AVI/Planet Wheeler Foundation Community Grants Scheme. This money has been used to set up an operational office space in the Minister for Women’s Office in

Buka, and to provide transportable office kits allowing Federation members to continue their valuable work when operating remotely. The BWF’s first official conference, held in September last year, saw 100 women from the 13 districts come together to map out priority areas for the organisations future. Addressing serious issues relating to human development, human rights, security, maternal and child health, family and sexual violence, health, education, environment, economic empowerment and gender equality issues, were all part of the agenda.

“Our real work is just beginning. We have already started delivering reconciliation workshops, gender and elections training, HIV/AIDS and STI forums, creating edible gardens and mentoring our women leaders, amongst other things but there are many other elements we would like to cover,” Marilyn said.

“We are excited about potentially establishing an income generating business at the local airport, but most importantly we are proud to finally have recognition as an association representative of women in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and in the state of Papua New Guinea.”

The Bougainville Women’s Federation is a united women's umbrella organisation aimed at representing all women of Bougainville. This group of truly inspirational women aim to unite, empower and uphold human dignity while respecting a developed, educated, healthy and safe family environment.

*Marilyn Havini, Returned Volunteer, Bougainville, PNG - Assignment Date: January 2012 to January 2014*

*This is a position of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program, an Australian Government initiative. AVI is working in partnership with the Australian Government to deliver AVID.*

<http://www.australianvolunteers.com/about-us/news/dame-carol-kidu -sustainable-nation-building-efforts-in-png/>

## *Attachment 6 - Dame Carol Kidu: Supporting sustainable nation building efforts in PNG*

Papua New Guinea (PNG), Australia's nearest neighbour, has been described by one of its senior Members of Parliament as an island of gold sitting in a sea of oil. PNG's natural resource base has positioned the country for a future economic boom far exceeding past and present mining booms.

The ICD policy is about developing communities from inside out and developing PNG from the bottom up to balance top-down development. It is about building from and strengthening what already exists and works on the ground and encompassing a human rights framework to development. It is about government working in partnership with and strengthening the work of churches, NGOs and civil society activities.

The ICD policy recognises that sustainable development with long- term change can only be achieved when communities own their future. "Mobilisation should start from national leaders but sustainability depends on continuing community participation" James Grant, former Director, UNICEF 1980 -1995. The key is in the community. There is a need for a shift in attitudes at all levels so that our families and communities have access to opportunities to take ownership of development and build their communities from inside out.

The development of the policy took five years of hard work by the Department for Community Development but continued implementation will be even harder. Community-driven Community Learning and Development Centres (CLDCs) are central to the policy implementation and the District Focal Point Coordinator of the Provincial Divisions for Community Development is the connection between the CLDCs and government.

The ICD policy does not provide an instant remedy to the multitude of social problems in PNG today. However it does recognise the strength and resilience that already exists in communities throughout the nation and provides a framework for growing the nation from that foundation. It is framed in a 50 year vision for generational change recognising that introduced socio-economic, religious and cultural paradigms are often a thin veneer over complex and diverse traditional cultural psychologies and lifestyles. It recognises also that there is little attention given to the impact of the interactions between the layers and multiplicity of culture and a need for further indigenous sociological research to underpin policy and legislative interventions.

In the post-Independence development process there has not been enough focus on the micro-issues which require endless patience and dialogue and often end up in the "too hard" basket. There is a need to re-think community development knowing that sustainable developmental can only be achieved when communities own their future. Sustainability is a social process and must be based on cultural understanding and cultural relevance. Community development in PNG has a history of mismatched expectations and priorities with disappointing outcomes. The ICD policy of the Department For Community Development aims to change that history. I encourage any volunteers working at the community level to visit the Department For Community Development to see how they can contribute to making that change happen.

***About Dame Carol Kidu:*** *Dame Carol Kidu is a member of Parliament in PNG and is a former Minister for Community Development. Dr Kidu is the second female cabinet minister in PNG, and she has been re-elected to parliament three times since 2002. In 2002, Dr. Carol Kidu was appointed as a Minister for Welfare and Social Development, and between 2002 and 2007 she served as a Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee on Urbanisation and a member of the Ministerial Appointments Committee. Her particular interests are in areas of social justice, including poverty reduction, access to learning for all, development strategies for the informal sector, and human rights with special focus on women's, children's and indigenous rights.*

*Wednesday, 12 December 2012. Note: Dame Carol Kidu became a Patron of AVI in 2013.*