UNITINGWORLD

UPDATE
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IS POVERTY EVER GOING TO END?



Kadek and Gede: extreme poverty has ended but there's more to do!

I read recently that Australians have never been more generous – some of them, anyway.

Super wealthy, generous individuals are giving like never before. Their projects of choice? Things with measurable outcomes and big legacies. Medical research is a good example. Let's find a cure for a disease and say: "We did that."

Tick. Done.

Sadly, overseas aid is less popular. That's because the issues are wickedly complex and appear to go on forever. Is poverty ever going to end? Will we ever be able to tick a box beside our donation and say, "Done!"?

The answer is both yes and no. I sat with a family high in the remote mountains north of Denpasar last month, watching chickens peck and a wary dog assess me from a doorway. For Kadek and Gede, life has never been better. A few simple, reasonably low-cost initiatives have changed their lives forever: a goat breeding project to provide income; regular visits from a doctor; access to a toilet and teaching about clean water. These things mean Gede worries less about her children going hungry and falling sick. Poverty, in its meanest form, has fled. But Gede's own health is still fragile – she has a thyroid condition they can't afford to have treated and she's so unwell that she hasn't been able to take part in the women's groups that might have helped the family make a little more money.

Gede dreams of more for her children, the way that all mothers do. Our work is far from over.

I looked around this proud, gracious family's garden, artfully tended with love, and I thought about how the human spirit is determined to flourish. How ending poverty isn't a simple box to be ticked but a lifelong struggle we embark upon alongside people who live the reality of small gains and hard-won triumphs. I felt both gratitude and single-mindedness to persevere.

There are literally millions of families like Kadek and Gede's. Hardworking and resilient, the day they raise their first piglet to sell so their daughter can stay in school will sound another nail in the coffin of poverty.

You and I, if we choose to, can celebrate alongside them. Because for real families every single day, the projects we support genuinely put an end to measurable suffering.

The scale of global poverty might appear to be astronomical, but working together, our progress has also been huge. Each family adds up. Since the turn of the century, the number of people living in extreme poverty has halved. So too has the maternal death rate, child mortality and deaths from malaria.

*In order to receive Australian Aid funding, we are required to contribute $1 for every $5 we receive from the Australian Government. This means your donation can go up to six times as far helping end poverty. You can make the most of this opportunity and secure your tax deduction by giving by June 30.

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

Through the combined work of smart, capable people who dream big, plus governments, philanthropists, not-for-profits and people like you. **We're better together.** Our goals are achievable. Right now, your gift can have up to six times the impact supporting families like Kadek and Gede's, across West Timor, West Papua, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka and India.

Poverty won't end with a single tick. But it will end, and we'll do it together.

Please make your gift at **unitingworld.org.au/together** or call us on **1800 998 122**.

UnitingWorld
connecting communities for life

UnitingWorld is an agency of the Uniting Church in Australia.

MISSION THAT LIVES ON

We recently caught up with Rev Neil and Mrs Lynn Peters from Melbourne, who've made the decision to dedicate some of their estate to the work of UnitingWorld.



Rev Neil and Mrs Lynn Peters want to continue to make a difference to the lives of others after they die.

"We both grew up in families that generously supported the overseas work of our church. Our parents believed that the stewardship of their resources included support for those who lived overseas as well as for those who lived close to home. We deeply valued that upbringing.

We married a decade after the formation of the Uniting Church and as we shared our experiences of what we understood ministry and mission to be, we decided to make our own commitment to the overseas work of what is now UnitingWorld. We have a particular interest in the local church across Asia and the Pacific, and with community development in those regions.

We recently decided that it was appropriate to leave a portion of our estate through our Wills to three organisations that we support, and UnitingWorld is one of them. We feel that we are making a real difference to the lives of others and we would like that to continue after we have died. We hope that our example is an encouragement to you too."

Thanks so much to Lynn, Neil and countless others who are helping build God's kingdom in this way. If you're interested in talking to us about how you can leave a bequest, call us on 02 8267 4267 or email info@unitingworld.org.au



International Programs Manager Aletia Dundas with Reverend Afereti Uili and Ms Helen Vavia.

THE BIBLE TOLD ME SO:

EQUALITY FOR WOMEN IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Biblical training continues to help unlock chains of oppression for women in Papua New Guinea, one of the toughest places on earth to be born female.

Many of you have heard about our gender theology work for women's equality. Last month thirty-four men and women from all seven of the mainline church denominations in Papua New Guinea met together to continue to champion the cause. Each received intensive training in gender equality from the Bible and is passionate about influencing gender awareness and equality among individuals, churches and government.

"The participants were pastors, theologians and people who are voluntarily committed to social change," says International Programs Manager, Aletia Dundas.

"They all come from different theological and doctrinal backgrounds, but they're all committed to working from their Christian faith to respect the dignity and human rights of all."

As is the case across much of the Pacific, women in Papua New Guinea experience high rates of domestic violence, have few opportunities to earn incomes and are seriously under-represented in politics. But PNG is also a deeply religious society, and churches are leading the way toward challenging cultural practices that hold women captive. Our partners are working to train leaders in the 'Ten Pillars of Gender Equality' using the Bible, casting the relationship between men and women in a transforming new light.

"Each day the workshop began with Bible Study, led twice by Rev Dr Afereti Uili from Samoa and once by a team from the PNG Anglican Church," Aletia reports. "The group was incredibly open to discussing tough topics like household codes and how culture influences gender roles."

Participants spoke of the ways they have sought to share gender equality theology in their work or church. One participant from the United Church in PNG described the challenges of not being taken seriously as a lay woman offering to lead a Bible study. Others shared about confidently responding to challenging questions with equally challenging answers.

Your gifts are helping support this vital work. The group in PNG will continue to meet together, encourage each other and learn so that more people can be trained to strengthen the voices and roles of women.

MALUKU

"Since the conflict," "after the conflict," "during the conflict." These phrases pepper almost every conversation.

It might be 20 years, but the violence that broke out between Muslims and Christians in Ambon, Indonesia in 1999 is still the watershed event that shapes all narratives.

People died, homes and businesses were burnt down and two communities that used to live intermingled were left segregated and distrustful. How do you come back from that?

Chickens. Garbage. Hydroponics.

Unlikely you say? Not so, says the church in Ambon.

They've been setting up community projects where groups of people work together on an area of common need - women raise chickens to generate income; students clean up garbage pollution in their local river; families without land start hydroponics to grow food.



Thumbs up for hydroponic community gardening in Maluku!

The magic? Each group is half Muslim, half Christian. Friendships are made, trust is rebuilt, the poor have new income. They learn to depend on each other. When friction flares up between individuals, people step in and diffuse it.

Six years since the start of this initiative, the two faith communities are intermingling, doing business and socialising with each other. When there was a flare up of violence during a recent election campaign, it did not affect any of the villages where this project has been running.

If that wasn't enough, our local church partner has been deliberately seeking out the involvement of people with disabilities to include in the income generating and peacebuilding collaborations.

So much hope! If you didn't believe it was possible to turn swords into ploughshares, think again – the Protestant Church of Maluku, with our support is doing it with chickens and hydroponic kale.

WEST PAPUA

Last Christmas many of you chose the 'Magic Beans' gift card from our Everything in Common gift catalogue to give to a loved one. The gift represented one of our projects to tackle food insecurity and grow incomes in the highlands of West Papua.

Earlier this year we got to see the project in action among people in the remote highlands who are growing a new future thanks to your generosity. We met men and women from an initial group who received seeds to grow soy and kidney beans, and they were eager to show the new crops flourishing in their gardens. They spoke about how hard the drought hit them in 2016, and how devastating it was for them when their traditional crops failed.

"We were all worried about the health of the children," said one man. "The new crops grow well up here, and we're able to save a little more money for the future," he said.

They are deeply thankful for the work of our local partners and the generosity of people here in Australia.

UnitingWorld launched an appeal to support and expand our projects in the region including a women's empowerment project in Sentani and a HIV and TB clinic run by our Papuan church partners.

Do visit **unitingworld.org.au/papua** to donate and read more about our work in West Papua!



A keen gardener and her child in the central highlands of West Papua.

DID YOU HAVE YOUR SAY?

A huge thank you to all who gave to Lent Event in 2018



We've already been able to put your donations to work in the Pacific with new workshop participants raising awareness about violence against women; assisting with the clean up after Cyclones in Fiji and Tonga; working with children in the squatter settlement in Fiji. We'd love to hear your feedback on this year's resources – go to **surveymonkey.com/r/LentEvent18** to fill in a 5-minute survey. It will really help us out!

NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR



UnitingWorld facilitating, Pacific women leading: Collaborating on the theology of gender equality.

As we prepare for the 15th Triennial Assembly, I'm reminded of the bold step taken by our overseas church partners three years ago in Perth.

In an unprecedented move, they stepped up and tabled a statement they'd penned in which they offered their resources to the UCA to enhance our mission in the world and committed themselves to each other to share their strengths and challenges to partner in God's transformation of the world.

The statement changed the way we work. Instead of holding independent relationships with each of our overseas church partners, we've increased our facilitator role, encouraging our partners to come together to share resources, expertise and learning opportunities. Over the last three years we've hosted eleven regional conferences covering topics like theology of community development, the protection of children and financial planning.

The past three years have also vindicated our strategy to use the language and lens of faith and Christian teaching to tackle the big issues of gender inequality and climate change. Supporting our partners to engage in theological dialogue and address people's hearts and minds through Biblical teaching has been rewarded by seeing change at the grass roots. Even the Australian Government has acknowledged our approach, re-accrediting us for the next five years and praising our approach on gender, disaster preparation and climate change impact in the Pacific.

I'm delighted to look back over the past three years and note that together we've made a tangible difference to over 250,000 people:

- Clean water and sanitation in Zimbabwe and Papua New Guinea
- Education (particularly for children with disabilities) and professional literacy training for teachers and librarians in India, Tonga, Vanuatu and Sri Lanka
- Micro-credit loans for small business (many for women) in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Fiji
- Theological reflection and practical action on gender inequality and climate change impact throughout the Pacific
- Disaster response work throughout the Pacific as well as famine and refugee responses in South Sudan, among the Rohingya people and within Syria.

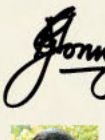
We've also been strengthening leaders and equipping churches both here in Australia and throughout Asia, Africa and the Pacific:

- We helped almost 400 people to visit and work among our partners, including lay teachers and leaders of the UCA
- We mobilised over 1,000 people to participate in the People's Climate March in support of our Pacific Island partners
- We brought global voices to major UCA events such as UnitingWomen, the Wontok youth conference, the UCA Deacons Conference; and we also hosted workshops and took part in UCA national conferences
- Over 300 congregations and church groups participated in Lent Event and Everything in Common.

You can read the full report to the National Assembly detailing our last three years work by heading to **uniting.church/b15-unitingworld**.

In this edition of Update, we tell a story of the innovative way our partners are building peace and forging hope in Maluku. These are the people who continue to stoke the fire of my conviction that God is alive and well within the world, calling each of us to take our place as members of one body working together for renewal. Thank you so much for the part you're playing. We look forward to the next three years with you and the many challenges and joys they will bring.

Peace and hope,





Dr Sureka Goringe,
National Director, UnitingWorld

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