

## NEWSLETTER - AUGUST 2005

Dear Members and friends

The months have flown past since the last newsletter. As usual it has been an extremely busy time as I spent about 5 of the first 6 months of the year overseas conducting research in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and Cambodia, and attending meetings and conferences in Belgium, Canada, Kenya, Switzerland and the United States. Since arriving home on 1 July, the editing period for the *Landmine Monitor Report 2005* has been in full swing. The report is due for release on 22 November. This year the victim assistance-focused release will be held in Kabul, Afghanistan, one of the most heavily mine-affected countries in the world. Hopefully President Karzai will participate in the event. But instead of talking about the future I'll share a few of the events of the past few months.

On 8 March I spent a very enjoyable evening with the ladies of Soroptimist International of Brighton and Southern Districts in Melbourne to celebrate international women's day. It was a great opportunity to talk about the needs of mine survivors around the world and show how we can all make a difference in the lives of individuals in mine-affected communities. The Soroptimists is a worldwide organisation for professional women working to advance human rights and the status of women. Their current four-year project is called "Independence, Women Survivors of War."

On 16 June, "101 Great Ideas for the Socio-Economic Reintegration of Mine Survivors" was released at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Victim Assistance and Socio-Economic Reintegration in Geneva, Switzerland. Since then, there has been a lot of interest in the portfolio and we hope that it will continue to increase awareness and

funding for the many programs that were

presented. AusAID and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided the funds for printing and distribution. Special thanks to Loren Persi and McKay Wood for their efforts in making "101 Great Ideas" a reality. An online version is available at [www.standingtallaaustralia.org](http://www.standingtallaaustralia.org)

In Geneva we also released the 104-page report "Landmine Victim Assistance in 2004: Overview of the Situation in 24 States Parties." This report presents information on States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty identified as having hundreds or thousands of landmine survivors - Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Croatia, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Perú, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uganda and Yemen. AusAID provided the funding for the production, printing and distribution of the report. An online version is available at [www.standingtallaaustralia.org](http://www.standingtallaaustralia.org), printed versions are also available on request.

I will keep this newsletter brief and hope instead that you enjoy reading "101 Great Ideas."

Thank you all for your continued support. If you have any questions or comments we would be pleased to receive them.

Sheree Bailey - Director

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### SPECIAL THANK YOUs

Soroptimist International of Brighton & Southern Districts donated \$500 which is being used to support disabled children in Cambodia.

An anonymous donor contributed \$1,500 to support the work of DDSP (Disability Development Services Pursat) in Cambodia.

The Physiotherapy Department of the Royal Children's Hospital Brisbane donated educational toys for a program for disabled children in Cambodia.

If you would like to support projects please contact us for more information.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Effects of the Tsunami in Sri Lanka

The 26 December tsunami captured the attention of the media and the world. In Sri Lanka over 35,000 people were killed and about 800,000 left homeless. Something that wasn't so widely reported was the devastation caused to the health sector, particularly in the north-east region, with several major hospitals damaged, a large number of smaller health centres completely or partially destroyed, and the loss of a large number of ambulances, medical equipment, and supplies. The tsunami also resulted in the death or injury of large numbers of trained healthcare personnel. In the mine-affected districts of Trincomalee, Mullativa, Jaffna, Killinochchi, Batticaloa and Ampara, 30 health institutions were completely destroyed and 22 partially damaged. The losses have caused a breakdown of the health system and there is an urgent need to strengthen the healthcare infrastructure. The tsunami has also impacted on mine survivors and other people with a disability as those injured in the tsunami will increase the demands on existing rehabilitation services which were already limited.

### Visit to Mlob Mith Komar (children's friend's shade) in Pursat, Cambodia

In March, I visited the MMK program for disabled children in Pursat to deliver two suitcases of educational toys donated by the Physiotherapy



Department of the Royal Children's Hospital. MMK is a drop-in centre for severely disabled children (mainly cerebral palsy) and their mothers at

Pursat Hospital. Disability Development Services Pursat (DDSP) started the program in November 2004. MMK is aimed not just at the children but also at their care-givers (usually the mothers), who often face social exclusion and increased poverty as a result of having a severely disabled child. Every Wednesday morning about 20 mothers from the surrounding districts bring their children to the physiotherapy room at the hospital for rehabilitation and social interaction. Two



physiotherapists and two volunteer teachers work with the children. Activities include physiotherapy exercises and training for care-givers; provision of aids for sitting, standing and walking; play activities for physical rehabilitation, speech and mental development; health, hygiene and nutrition advice



and education; and psychosocial support for the children's carers, including group counselling and encouragement. The day I arrived some of the children were being taught how to



use a toothbrush but that was soon forgotten as the toys were unpacked! It was a wonderful experience to see the simple pleasure on the faces of children. The toys are now being circulated between the children who can take a toy home for a week and then bring it back the following Wednesday to exchange for another.



### Standing Tall Australia working with AUSTCARE in Cambodia

AUSTCARE is designing a new integrated mine action program, due to start in early 2006, in Banteay Meanchey province in Cambodia with funding from AusAID. Standing Tall Australia has been invited to assist in the development of a victim assistance component for the project to ensure that mine survivors and other persons with disabilities benefit from the activities in their community.

### Australia Announces a Further \$75 Million for Mine Action

On 29 July, the Australian Government announced that it would commit another \$75 million over the next five years to address the "horrific" effects of antipersonnel landmines and explosive remnants of war. Over the last decade, the government has spent more than \$100 million on mine action. The funding will support programs in victim assistance, mine clearance, mine risk education, and advocacy.