

NEWSLETTER - AUGUST 2004

Dear Members and friends

The year is flying by and there is lots happening at *Standing Tall Australia* and in the mine action world. It is a busy time for the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) in the lead-up to the first review conference of the Mine Ban Treaty in November as we increase the pressure on governments for more resources for mine action and assistance to the victims of landmines. In this newsletter we will start to introduce you to some of the key issues and activities in the mine action world. Janecke Wille, one of our directors and the Landmine Monitor Mine Action Research Coordinator will explain some of the basics of humanitarian mine action. There is also a map showing the landmine problem in the world (from *Landmine Monitor Report 2003*). And as promised in the last newsletter I will share some of my experiences from the visit to Afghanistan.

But first, the news of *Standing Tall Australia*... McKay Wood, our intern from Canada, has arrived and is enthusiastically raising our profile in Brisbane. McKay has also started work on the production of a portfolio entitled "101 Great Ideas for the Socio-Economic Reintegration of Mine Survivors" which is due for release at the Nairobi Summit for Mine-Free World. More about McKay and his activities follow, including details of our launch in cyberspace with a new website - www.standingtallaaustralia.org!

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, *Standing Tall Australia* is receiving royalties from sales of the book, *Commentaries on Arms Control Treaties*, Volume 1, by Dr Stuart Maslen, to enable us to support mine survivors and other people with disabilities in mine-affected countries. Well, we have received the first royalty cheque from Oxford University Press for about \$3,850! The plan is to make the first beneficiary of the funds a small local organization working with mine survivors in Cambodia; we will keep you posted.

The book was officially released in Geneva, Switzerland on 25 June. At the release, *Standing Tall Australia* received cash donations of 115 Swiss

Francs (about \$125). This money was given to the AABRAR (Afghan Amputee Bicyclists for Rehabilitation and Recreation) based in Kabul, Afghanistan, and will be used to buy three sewing machines and materials to enable three disabled women to start on the road to economic independence.



The appropriateness of our name was reinforced to me recently when I read an open letter from a colleague at Handicap International in Brussels. Kevin Bryant suffered a below-knee amputation in July 2002 after he stepped on a landmine in southern Lebanon where he was doing mine clearance work. Kevin was writing about the words on Handicap International's logo, "...It may be two simple little words and it may just be another logo to some people. For me it is representative of the most important goals... 'Standing Tall' means more than getting up and walking again....it's also about being accepted by yourself as well as others. It's about being able to feel useful again, the regaining of your pride and confidence..."

The aim of *Standing Tall Australia* is to make a positive difference in the lives of people living in mine-affected communities. We believe that we have the potential to achieve that aim - but we can't do it alone. We need your continued support to ensure that our young organization can grow and through positive actions, really make a difference!

One area where you can help now is by encouraging your friends to become members. We've included a membership form which can be photocopied and distributed. Or we'd be happy to send you more!

So read on.....we hope you find the newsletter interesting and informative.

If you have any questions or comments we would be pleased to receive them.

Sheree Bailey

Email: info@standingtallaaustralia.org

New Website

We are very pleased to announce that we now have a beautiful website that will assist us getting our message out to the world. So please visit us at

www.standingtallaustralia.org

and register your interest by adding it to your "favourites". And tell your friends so they can learn more and maybe support our work through becoming a member. The website has been a tremendous step in linking us to the world and making us visually real.

Landmine Working Group

In an effort to create awareness in the local community we are forming the Queensland Landmine Working Group. It is our hope that we can form a committed and effective base of volunteers to plan activities to support small projects in Cambodia, Afghanistan, or the Asia region. Here is our poster.



Invites you to join the

Queensland Landmine Working Group



This year we aim to make a difference in the community and internationally

We will engage our skills and apply them in a collaborative effort for social change

Our work will assist victims of landmines with their social and economic reintegration

As volunteers we pledge to support each other as we support those in need

What: Please join a meeting of the **Queensland Landmine Working Group** as we discuss possible events and goals for the coming year. Landmine Working Groups have been effective in other countries raising awareness, engaging the media, and community to take positive actions to development. We want a world free of landmines – a weapon that does not discriminate between soldier, mother, or child. We aim to focus our attention on supporting mine survivors and their families to assist with their economic independence.

When: Planning meetings are held every couple weeks in preparation for planned events.

Where: We meet in the Brisbane area.

Why: Be apart of an international movement and support war-affected people.

For more information and to register your interest please contact:

McKay at (07) 3511 6430 or 0415 066886 or email: va@icbl.org or visit www.standingtallaustralia.org



Afghanistan

Visiting Kabul from 21-31 March this year was definitely one of the highlights of my work with Landmine Monitor. I don't believe anyone can visit the country without being moved by the courage and determination of a people that have suffered war and oppression for more than two decades - and the enormous amount of work that needs to be done to improve the standard of living.

Flying into Kabul was an experience in itself on an old Russian Tupolov aircraft. Apart from the stewards telling business class passengers (not me!) to get off the plane now - as we were still hurtling down the runway - it was a little unnerving to see the mine clearance teams at work beside us as we taxied in!

Kabul looks a desolate city from the air as the mud-brick houses blend into a sea of brown. On the ground there is destruction everywhere you look with bomb-damaged buildings dating back to the Russian invasion in 1979. In parts of the city it was like stepping back in time with donkeys and carts used for transport. Many houses do not have



running water or electricity and we saw women down at the river doing the washing. I was also surprised by the number of women still wearing the burqa

- the head-to-toe covering enforced by the Taliban. I was told up to 80 percent of women still wear it, mostly out of fear.

I had the opportunity to visit a few health facilities and was shocked by what I saw! The best equipped hospital in Kabul is the Italian NGO, Emergency's surgical hospital. The hospital has the only fully equipped intensive care unit in the country (apart from the facilities for soldiers with the international force). On the day I visited there were two young children in the unit with serious landmine injuries - one with head injuries was not expected to survive. There were several other children and adults at the hospital recovering from mine explosions.



Most of the doctors at the hospital are Italian volunteers. I think they thought I was a doctor too as they invited me to observe surgery on a woman that was having her arm amputated after a mine incident - I declined! The hospital was very clean and well-equipped so I was unprepared for the next hospital I visited.

The Indira Ghandi Child Health Institute is one of the main hospitals for children in Kabul. The hospital lacks equipment and medical supplies but when I asked what their greatest need was the reply was food! The children have such poor nutrition that they are too weak to respond to treatment but the hospital doesn't have the resources to buy enough food to feed them. A big problem in Afghanistan is cerebral palsy. Just this hospital alone has 2,500 children with CP registered but they don't have the facilities to treat all who come.



The government military hospital was in a similar state with a lack of medicines and supplies even though it is the main public trauma hospital for military and civilians in Kabul. When I arrived with my translator, we couldn't find the doctor I was meant to meet so we spent a lot of time walking from ward to ward. I'm sure I saw sights that a foreigner was not meant to witness. The conditions for patients were extremely poor and I will never forget the smell!

I also had the opportunity to visit the Afghan Amputee Bicyclists for Rehabilitation and Recreation (AABRAR). AABRAR has been doing great work for people with disabilities in Afghanistan since 1992. Men are trained to ride and repair bicycles and women are trained in sewing. One of their latest endeavours is the Disabled Cycle Messenger Service (DCMS) with all amputee messengers. DCMS services include the pick up and delivery of letters and parcels at a cost of 25 Afghanis (about 70 cents) or pizza delivery at 50 Afghanis (about \$1.40).



The main purpose of my visit to Afghanistan was to participate in the Landmine Monitor meeting for researchers from the Asia-Pacific Region. The meeting was a great success, particularly in allowing researchers to see first-hand one of the

most mine-affected countries in the world. It also presented an opportunity to raise awareness on the landmine issue in Kabul. At the opening ceremony participants included the Vice President, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Ambassador of Canada, the United Nations, and representatives of the King, an ex-President, mine survivors, deminers, and the media.



As part of the meeting we visited the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) orthopaedic centre. The majority of staff at the centre are themselves people with a disability. The ICRC has six centres in Afghanistan and in 2003



provided more than 100,000 physiotherapy treatments, fitted 3,887 artificial limbs and distributed more than 18,000 other orthotic and

assistive devices.

We also visited the Mine Detection Dog centre (MDC) where several mine clearance agencies put on demonstrations. There are more than 6,000 deminers in Afghanistan. MDC has a breeding program for the dogs but it was hard to imagine the playful puppies we saw turning into efficient mine detection dogs!



Originally it was planned that our group would meet with the President of Afghanistan, Harmid Karzai, but unfortunately he was busy preparing for the international donors conference in Germany. Instead, we were invited to the presidential compound to meet with the King who is still considered by many to be the "Father of the Nation". You may recall that the King was in exile in Italy for more than two decades and only returned to Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban. He is a very old man now but is very supportive of the campaign against landmines. And for our group it was quite an experience - not everyone can say they have had afternoon tea with a King! As you can imagine security was very tight

so I can't show you a photo of the visit as I wasn't allowed to take my camera!

On the last day of our visit, AABRAR organised bike races for disabled men and boys at the main stadium in Kabul. It was a strange feeling sitting in the stadium as this was where the Taliban frequently beheaded and stoned people who were not conforming to their



rigid laws. The bike races were great to watch though, particularly the young boys who seemed unstoppable regardless of their disabilities!

One of the cyclists, Qaher, a double below-knee amputee will be competing in the cycling at the Paralympic Games in Athens in September. Qaher works with the messenger service. There are only two athletes from Afghanistan competing in the Paralympics. The other is a 14-year-old girl, Marina, who will be competing in the running. Marina lost both feet due to burns. This is the first time that an Afghan woman has participated in the games.



The situation for people with disabilities in Afghanistan is extremely difficult. The largest program assisting the disabled is the Comprehensive Disabled Afghans' Program (CDAP) which was established in 1995 as a United Nations Development Program/UN Office for Project Services inter-agency initiative. However, according to the Director of CDAP, for every one disabled person that is assisted by the program, there are 100 more who cannot be helped.

A little money can go a long way in a country like this. About \$140 a month can cover the basic cost of living (not including rent). And for less than \$50 a woman can get a sewing machine and material to start earning a living to support her family.

I want to return next year and to continue to raise awareness of the great needs that exist in Afghanistan. And I hope that *Standing Tall* can play a role in improving the daily lives of people living in this impoverished, mine-affected country.



Humanitarian Mine Action

The term Mine Action is used to describe all activities relating to the elimination or the significant reduction of the threat and impact from landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) on civilians and their livelihoods. The United Nations defines mine action as "activities which, together, aim to reduce the social, economic and environmental impact of mines. These activities comprise mine risk education, demining, victim assistance, advocacy to stigmatise the use of landmines and support of a total ban on anti-personnel landmines, and stockpile destruction."

The term "Humanitarian" is added in some instances to differentiate between mine clearance for military purposes and mine clearance where civilians are the principal beneficiaries. This is achieved directly, through clearance of agricultural fields or allowing access to water, and indirectly through clearance of factory sites that will later create workplaces for civilians.



The *Landmine Monitor Report 2003* identified 82 countries as being affected by landmines and UXO. In the majority of these countries, landmines and UXO have a severe effect on the lives and livelihoods of civilians. Here landmines hinder every day life by hampering access to water, markets, and fields. The majority of mined areas are not marked or fenced, and women, children and men face the risk of stepping on a landmine whilst doing every day activities. It is in these countries that Humanitarian Mine Action will be required for many years to come in order to reach the ultimate goal of the Mine Ban treaty; no more new casualties.

As of 3 August 2004, 47 of the 82 States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty are mine-affected. This means that these countries are obliged, among other things, to have cleared "all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control, as soon as possible but not later than ten years after the entry into force of this Convention for that State Party". For 25 countries, this deadline is 2009 and recently there has been an

increased focus on these countries, to be aware of the impending deadline and to assist them in reaching their goal.

Landmine survey and assessment is the first tool required to start mine action activities. There is a lack of knowledge in many mine-affected countries as to the location of mines and to what extent the various countries are affected. In some heavily mined countries, such as Burma, India, Iran and Pakistan, there is little public information available on the magnitude of the problem. A landmine survey is required to develop a strategic plan for clearance and a variety of surveys and assessments techniques are utilized. A relatively new project, underway or completed in several mine-affected countries, is the Landmine Impact Survey (LIS). This survey is designed to look at the impact from landmines rather than looking at the location of the actual mine fields. The LIS focuses on where the impact to the civilian population is greatest and highlights areas where clearance operations should ideally start.

In many mine-affected countries there are no mine clearance operations ongoing or underway. In some countries there are only military clearance operations, which have little or no impact or benefit for the civilian population. The *Landmine Monitor Report 2003* noted that Humanitarian Mine clearance had begun in 35 mine-affected countries and 24 States Parties. Although there has been a marked increase in the number of countries with humanitarian mine clearance projects during the past years, there is still a need for greater transparency in reporting on developments relating to demining. With inconsistent reporting it is difficult to identify the actual amount of land cleared and returned to communities and it is difficult to assess the prioritization procedures in various countries.

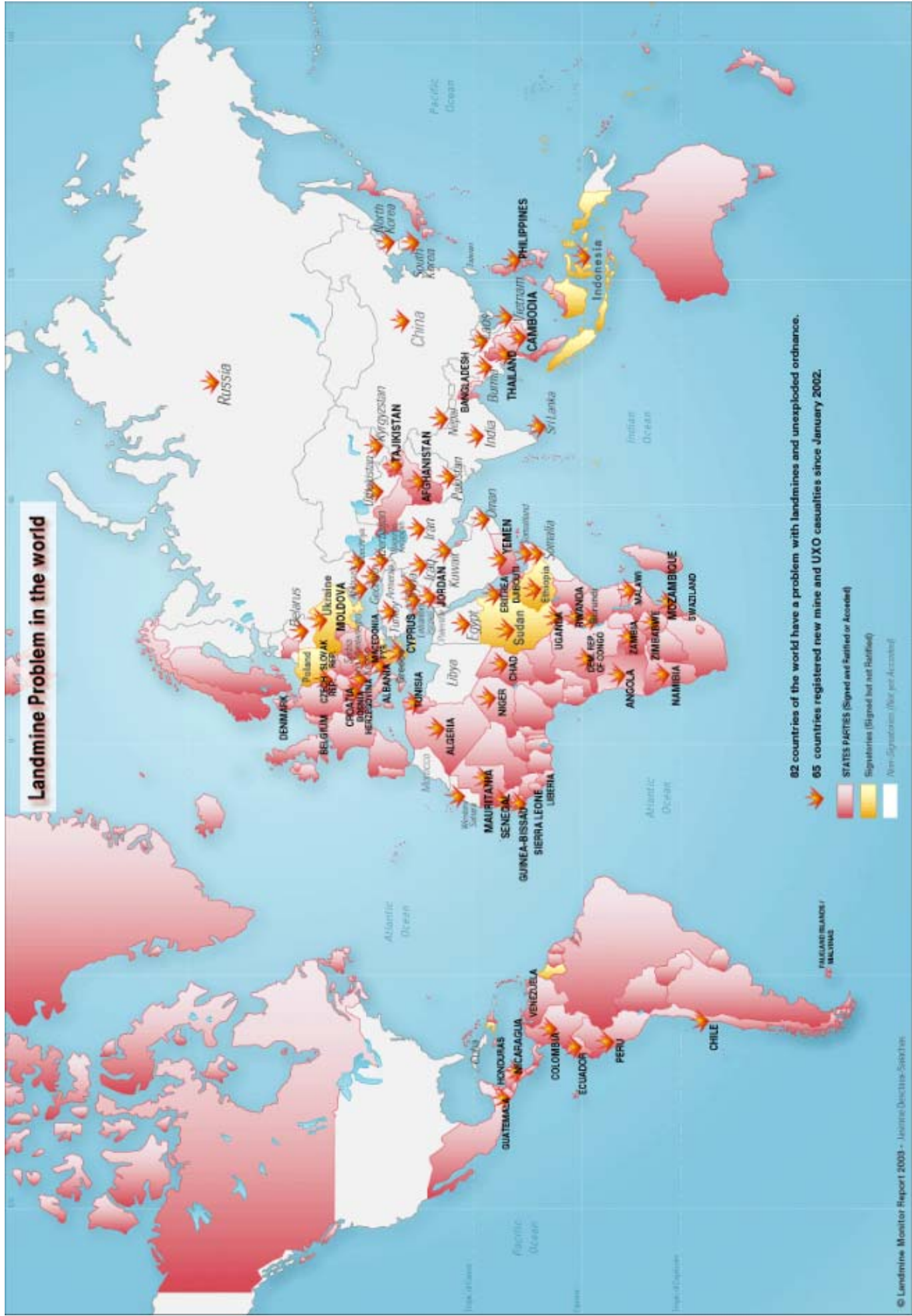
Prioritization of land to clear, and planning and coordination of mine action activities are essential to the development aspect of mine action. The importance of including local capacities in the priority and planning processes will be discussed in the next newsletter.



Collecting water can be a dangerous activity in Luena, Angola. ©Tim Grant

For more information contact janecke@standingtallaustralia.org

Landmine Problem in the world



82 countries of the world have a problem with landmines and unexploded ordnance.
 65 countries registered new mine and UXO casualties since January 2002.

- States Parties (Signed and Ratified or Acceded)
- Signatories (Signed but not Ratified)
- Non-Signatories (Not yet Acceded)

Standing Tall Australia's Board of Directors

Sheree Bailey was one of the founding directors. Since 2001 she has worked with Handicap International Belgium as the Landmine Monitor Victim Assistance Research Coordinator. Through this work she has seen the suffering caused by landmines first-hand in places such as Afghanistan, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Croatia, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Ethiopia, Kosovo, Serbia, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Sheree is a strong advocate in international forums on raising awareness on the rights and needs of landmine survivors and in pressuring governments to ensure that sufficient resources are available to provide adequate and appropriate assistance for the physical rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration of landmine survivors and other people with a disability.

Sheree has a Masters in International Relations which focused on issues such as the socio-economic impact of aids in Sub-Saharan Africa and the impact of war on children. She is also working on her PhD through the University of Melbourne on the role of civil society and the media in the international campaign to ban landmines.

Sheree is currently living in Brisbane, Australia.

Merren Bailey was one of the founding directors. She is a physiotherapist with extensive clinical experience throughout Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong in both the public and private health care sectors. She has a strong commitment to physiotherapy and health care issues within Australia and in developing countries.

Involvement with the Australian Network of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines led to a willingness to assist landmine survivors and raise awareness of the needs in Australia.

Since 1989 Merren has been part of Operation Heart to Heart undertaking annual short term Cardiac surgery projects in China, Nepal and Vanuatu. In 2001, she visited a rehabilitation facility in Haiphong, Vietnam which provided extra motivation to assist disabled people in developing countries.

In 2002 Merren was invited to be the Ambassador for Handicap International Belgium in Australia. During this time she visited their projects in Tibet to experience first hand the issues relating to people with disabilities in a developing country.

Merren lives in Brisbane, Australia, and works with Queensland Health as a clinical physiotherapist.

Janecke Wille was one of the founding directors. Since 2000 she has worked with Norwegian People's Aid as the Landmine Monitor Mine Action Research Coordinator. Through this work she has travelled to mine-affected countries all over the world and acquired more knowledge of the inhumane suffering, both physical and psychological, that landmines cause. Countries such as Azerbaijan, Armenia and Sri Lanka have made a special impact on her.

Janecke is a sociologist focused on development issues. Her interest in humanitarian aid and development grew after spending time as a volunteer in Angola. This interest led her back to Angola to conduct research for her thesis in sociology, which was focused on the impact of landmines on a small community in northern Angola. The thesis, entitled "Social capital and Humanitarian Mine Action in Cassua, Angola" was part of a research project at the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO).

Janecke is originally from Norway but lives in Hobart, Australia, with her partner Brett and their baby son Joachim. She is fluent in Norwegian, English and Portuguese after periods in Angola, Brazil and Portugal.

Reuben Nogueira-M^cCarthy joined the board in March 2004. Since 2003 Reuben has been working within the Global Landmines and Small Arms Team of UNICEF in New York, a team which is dedicated to the identification of risks to civilians of landmines and other explosive remnants of war, the provision of risk education, assistance to the survivors of accidents and advocacy to prevent the use of landmines and other indiscriminate weapons.

Reuben holds two degrees in moral and political philosophy, and has specialised in international humanitarian aid and development since 1996. He began working in the field of humanitarian landmine action in 1997, when he took up a position with the Demining Agency for Afghanistan. Following three years in Afghanistan and a brief period in Albania, Reuben moved to Cambodia where he worked with Handicap International as coordinator of the Disability Prevention Department.

Reuben is married to Maraisa, a Brazilian national, who is an occupational therapist working in the field of HIV. Reuben and Maraisa currently live in the United States.