

Calling Australia home? Shifting public opinion on refugees

In March 2004, a brainstorm was held to develop strategies to engage the church and other communities about changing perceived attitudes to asylum seekers and refugees.

The participants proposed images, themes and slogans to better convey the hopes and hardships of refugees and asylum seekers and the aspirations they hold in common with the wider Australian community.

CWS's Refugee and Displaced Peoples program will increase funding this year for educational work to assist church members to face and question community anxieties and the political messages which have created harsher attitudes towards the vulnerable "outsider".

The brainstorm recommended RDP explore opportunities for training more speakers because passionate, well-informed communicators have most impact on audiences. The group also identified a series of eye-catching and thought-provoking poster images and themes and information areas to include in communication tools.

Contact RDP staff for the Refugee and Migrant Sunday kit available mid-year: email James Thomson at jthomson@ncca.org.au, telephone 02 9299 2215 or 1800 025 101.

Iran earthquake update

The massive loss of lives in Bam (Iran) has left deep scars on the local communities. People are trying to cope with the loss of family members and friends, homes and personal belongings and there is great trauma which requires urgent attention.

Action by Churches Together, the global alliance of churches and relief agencies, is providing counselling with staff of the Middle East Council of Churches. They are also working to provide prefabricated shelters and semi-permanent, earthquake resistant housing, space for vocational training of women and young people, and training for Iranian non-government organisations.

A gift of \$ 20 000 was sent from the



Photo: Chris Herlinger CWS/ACT International

Middle East Council of Churches staffers Dvim Khodaverdian and Hamlet Sarkissians in Bam.

the Christmas Bowl to assist in this work and further funds will be forwarded to continue the program which is expected to continue into 2005.

Simply Sharing

Five years ago, Australians reached out to help the people of East Timor achieve independence after 24 years of Indonesian occupation. On May 20 East Timor will celebrate its second birthday. What will the next years bring?

Today, East Timor is a new, tiny nation of 800,000 which relies on aid to provide for its people. Food is still in short supply after the destruction of crops, tools and animals by militia groups; and drought has made the problem worse.

Simply Sharing Week seeks to tackle this basic issue. Our kit contains

information about food issues plus background information on East Timor PLUS ways to raise money for community garden projects that will get communities on their feet.

Simply Sharing Week will be held 16-23 May this year and it will focus on East Timor and our partners working there to provide food security. Please contact Kirsty at forceten on 02 9299 2215 or kr Robertson@ncca.org.au for more information or a free education kit.

A Living Trust

A Living Trust is a promise to include a gift for the Christmas Bowl in your Will. To find out more information on how this will help people to have hope for a better future, please telephone 1800 025 101 and ask for Living Trusts or visit www.ncca.org.au



Photo: Nick Kerr