

Media release

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Thai-Australia Partnerships Provide Assistance to the Needy

I had the opportunity this week to visit two great examples of collaboration between the people of Thailand and Australia. Both underscore the strength and depth of bilateral relations between our two nations.

I visited Professor Praphan Phanuphak at the Thai-Australian Collaboration in HIV Nutrition (TACHIN) project. The Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Centre and the Sydney-based Albion Street Centre deliver the TACHIN project in partnership. The Institute of Nutrition at Mahidol University is a collaborating partner.

The TACHIN project aims to use improved nutrition to enhance the care of people living with HIV/AIDS. TACHIN is funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) – \$600,000 over three years – through the Australian HIV/AIDS Partnerships Initiative.

As HIV affects metabolism and increases the need for nutrients and energy, good nutrition is of paramount importance for those with HIV. Adults living with HIV have 10 to 30 per cent higher energy requirements than adults not affected. The energy requirements of HIV positive children are up to 100 per cent higher than otherwise healthy children.

I also visited the Mission of Sister Joan Evans, an outstanding Western Australian who has worked tirelessly and compassionately to improve the lives of underprivileged children and adults in the Klong Toei slum area of Bangkok since 1992.

Sister Joan, formerly a secondary school teacher, helps children from the slum receive a good education by providing uniforms, food and necessary funds. Sister Joan also supports new babies and mums, the elderly and the seriously ill.

The Australian expatriate community in Bangkok has been a longstanding supporter of Sister Joan's projects. For example, in 2007-08 alone, the Australian-New Zealand Women's Group (ANZWG) donated 100,000 baht (A\$3,700) and raised a further 110,000 baht (A\$4,070) through a "Pie Drive" project.

The Australian Embassy Bangkok made a 100,000 baht (A\$3,700) contribution to help buy school uniforms for children in slum communities. The Australian Embassy Defence section arranged a "spare change" drive, raising 30,000 baht (A\$1,110) for Sister Joan's projects. In 2006, the Australian-Thai Chamber of Commerce helped 45 kids visit a Safari Park.