



muylothina takila-ti Le:wun tunk-ungai tuldangk tunk-ungai
Ola ma tumau i le alofa' 사랑 안에서 살기 Tinggal di dalam Kasih
Nofoma'u i he Ofa 愛中合居



B19 UNITINGWORLD

1. WE HAVE OPEN AND ROBUST PARTNERSHIPS

The 15th Assembly was a moment of truth for the quality of church-to-church partnerships that UnitingWorld nurtures on behalf of the Uniting Church. Twenty-three leaders from partner churches across Asia, Africa and the Pacific witnessed the UCA wrestle with some challenging issues. Despite the controversial nature of some of the decisions, each one of our partners reaffirmed their commitment to relationship with us, expressing their admiration for the courage with which the UCA tackled tough issues.

2. WE'RE WEAVING A WEB OF GLOBAL NEIGHBOURS

Building on the landmark Statement from the Partners at the 2015 Assembly, we have built our regional strategy around creating opportunities to bring together our church partners. We have hosted fifteen regional conferences in this triennium.

These regional conferences covered subjects of strong common interest, chosen by our partners. They ranged from the profound (theologies of gender equality, child protection, and disaster resilience in a changing climate), through the urgent (protecting women and children and vulnerable people in ministry) to the practical (tools for managing finances). Each conference has reinforced communities of shared learning and practice, cultivating connections and relationships and encouraging direct collaboration between our partners.

We invited leaders from the UCA to attend these conferences, to share stories from the UCA and most of all, to learn from and build bridges with our partner churches.

3. OUR PARTNERS ARE WONDERFULLY GENEROUS

The unprecedented bushfires of the summer of 2019/20 put UnitingWorld in the unusual position of having our own church in the middle of a humanitarian emergency, and being inundated with calls and messages of concern from our partner churches.

These expressions of concerns were followed up by gifts towards the UCA Disaster Relief Fund. Our partners from Fiji, Bali, Tonga and Korea all reached out to us with donations towards bushfire relief, as did the UK Methodist Church and the US Churches of Christ/Disciples.

4. WE DELIVERED OUR MISSION

We continued working with our partners to address the causes and consequences of injustice and inequality. In all our projects we seek to remove the structural barriers that prevent change and to introduce measures that can bring about lasting change.

Our poverty alleviation programs target structural barriers that prevent human flourishing. Depending on country and context, these barriers include access to education, health, capital or human rights.

- In Bali, Zimbabwe and Papua New Guinea remote communities accessed improved water and sanitation and training in hygiene and health.
- In India, girls and boys from poor literacy backgrounds received tutoring that increased their participation in formal education. In Sri Lanka children with disabilities gained access to schools.

- In Indonesia women and people living with a disability received micro-finance loans for income generating activities. In Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia and Fiji people (mostly women) gained access to financial services, financial literacy training and/or small business/income generating activity support.
- In Indonesia, Zimbabwe, India, Sri Lanka and all Pacific partners groups such as ethnic minorities, poor families, women and people with disabilities engaged with local issues, including conflict, family violence, institutional inequality and local corruption to understand their rights and responsibilities.

Our gender equality program in the Pacific is driven by engaging in theological reflection.

- Across the Pacific region, partner churches are engaging in theological reflection and practical action that addresses the major issues of gender inequality, child protection and climate change impact.
- Church partners appointed Church ministers as champions to teach and promote gender equality, and to drive the adoption of policies and processes within church institutions that provided protection and safeguarding for women and girls, and promoted equal and inclusive treatment of women in leadership and employment.

Our climate and disaster resilience program combines the pastoral and the prophetic.

- We led a collaboration of theologians across the Pacific from our partner churches and other denominations to produce a *Theology of Disaster Resilience in a Changing Climate*. This resource formed the backbone of work across our partners and other Pacific churches through the Church Agencies Network Disaster Operations (CAN DO) to equip church leaders to lead, teach and pastor their communities in faithful and hopeful action in response to climate change and disasters.

We responded to other emergencies as well as COVID-19

- In Fiji, Papua New Guinea Vanuatu and Indonesia, disaster response work has seen the rebuilding and recovery of communities and the restoration of food supplies. In Tonga a preparedness facility was constructed after Cyclone Gita. Through ACT Alliance, we also extended support for the Beirut explosion in Lebanon, a cholera outbreak and Cyclone Idai in Zimbabwe.

5. WE'RE PARTNERING IN A COVID WORLD

Since January 2020, we have been working with our partners to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Never before has every single one of our partners been impacted by a crisis at the same time, alongside our own staff, church and supporters.

The pandemic disrupted every aspect of our work, both locally and overseas. Remote working, the difficulties in meeting with supporters and congregations and the inability to visit our partners overseas were just the practical aspects of the situation. In addition, there was the fear and anxiety experienced by our staff and far more so, by our partners and their communities as they faced the pandemic with minimal resources.

Facing the challenges of raising funds and delivering programs, we reached out to our partners to advise them of our funding constraints for 2020-21. All we received back were messages of solidarity and friendship from our partners, reassuring us that our partnership was worth more than money.

And we persisted. Our partners didn't give up, nor did we.

The global pandemic disproportionately affected the poor. Isolating is a luxury few of them can afford. Many communities lack clean water to wash their hands, not to mention information on

infection control. Millions faced the choice between staying at home and starving or going to work and contracting COVID-19.

Our partners responded to the urgent need in their communities on both fronts: public health messaging AND emergency economic relief.

Reaching people that governments just could not reach, our partner churches worked on distributing food and hygiene packs in countries that lack a social safety net for people unable to work. They printed government health messages, educated people in infection control, and created/implemented public information campaigns to prevent domestic violence. Using their position of trust to fight misinformation about COVID, churches in the Pacific used explicit theological messaging to rally people. Using poster campaigns, TV and radio they taught that COVID-19 is not a punishment from God, that faithful action is staying at home and following Government Health directions; and that violence against women and children, even in these stressful times, is never acceptable.

While every single project had to pivot to address the demands of COVID, we are grateful for the additional funding we received from the Australian Government, and the collaboration with the other Australian Church Agencies in CAN DO, that enabled us to do this work.

6. WE MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF MANY PEOPLE

In FY2018-19 our programs touched the lives of **202,305 people**. This work was made possible by **16,662 donations** from individuals and congregations, supplemented by grants and investment income.

In FY2019-20 our programs and our COVID-19 emergency responses reached **400,026 people**, including **160,275 people** reached between March to June 2020, with COVID-19 support. The work was supported by **14,367 donations** and supplemented by grants and investment income.

The final figures for FY20-21 are not available at the time of writing, but we believe that we will maintain a similar level of reach as the last year, as COVID-19 responses remain a significant component of our work.

7. WE CONNECTED THE UCA WITH OUR PARTNER CHURCHES

We strive to enrich the life of the Uniting Church by nurturing meaningful connections between people. Over this triennium we have:

We facilitated multiple visits by leaders in the UCA to our partner churches. The President, Dr Deidre Palmer, attended our South East Asia regional conference as well as attending the Assemblies of our partners in Fiji, Vanuatu and Tonga, the Pacific Conference of Churches Assembly, a second South East Asian regional workshop and the Pacific Church Leaders Meeting via Zoom. The NSW/ACT Synod Moderator attended the Assembly of the United Church in PNG and the Qld Synod General Secretary came to another South East Asia regional conference, as did a minister from South Australia.

We were thrilled to assist the President to host her President's Conference in Fiji on the theme 'For All of Creation'. The conference was a wonderful opportunity for 60 leaders from the UCA to see and hear from our Pacific church partners of their work in fighting climate change and gender inequality.

In 2019, we facilitated a visit by the President of the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe and a large delegation from the Presbyterian Church in Korea who came to celebrate the 130th anniversary of the Australian Presbyterian mission to Korea.

In 2019, we hosted the General Secretary of the Indonesian Communion of Churches, the Director of the Sagu Salempeng Foundation from the Protestant Church of Maluku and our very

own Dr Debora Murthy from the Bali Protestant Church in a visit to Australia, meeting our staff, our UCA networks and presenting at the Australasian Aid Conference.

We provided significant professional support to the United Church in PNG this triennium through two volunteers who did a complete operational review of their Development Unit, and the Chair of the UnitingWorld Board who led a workshop on Good Governance through a theological lens for their Development Board.

We continue to provide advice and support as required to the Qld Synod in their relationship with the Diocese of Amritsar in the Church of North India, the WA Synod in their connection with West Timor and West Papua and to the Vic/Tas Synod in their relationship with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

We have expended considerable efforts to support Synod and Presbytery staff in nurturing the Partner churches diaspora communities within the life of the UCA. This work ranges from helping mediate sources of conflict, supporting the welcome of new faith communities into the UCA and being involved in sourcing ministers from our Partner churches to serve within the UCA.

In April 2021 we launched [Seven Days of Solidarity](#) – a week for congregations in the UCA to spend connecting with our partners through stories, prayers and action. We hope that this is both a source of inspiration and encouragement in what are difficult times, as well as call to action to the people of the church to recommit themselves to God's work in the world.

8. GETTING OUR HOUSE IN ORDER

The world-wide push to restore confidence in the aid and development sector, following the revelations of sexual harassment and abuse by aid workers in Haiti has been a significant feature of the last triennium.

The Australian aid sector conducted a sector wide assessment, and followed up with a significant step-up in the required standards of practice to ensure the prevention of sexual abuse and harassment (known as PSEAH). While UnitingWorld did not have any incidents to disclose in the review, we have invested significant time and effort in overhauling policy, procedures and staff training, as well as extensive work with our partners, in response to the new industry standards.

We have trod a delicate balance with our church partners, choosing to work through Bible-based, values-centred conversations to build capacity in protection and safeguarding, while also needing a robust level of compliance within project teams in order to keep working.

9. DIVERSIFYING OUR GRANT FUNDING

Over the last triennium, close to half our operating budget came from Australian Aid funds from the Australian Government. This has enabled us to reach more people and have more impact than would have been remotely possible relying on our own donor base.

In the last triennium, we have expanded our participation in Australian Aid grants, now accessing funding from the Australian Humanitarian Partnership program and having established a relationship with the new Office of the Pacific.

We have also pursued funding from non-Australian Aid sources, and have benefited from a grant from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade for the PNG Earthquake, and an ACT Alliance grant for safeguarding work in the Solomon Islands.

However, maintaining our robust quality systems in order to remain accredited and eligible for Australian Aid funding is a vital part of our ongoing strategy.

10. A LONG-AWAITED MILESTONE

We are pleased to report the completion of a significant strategic goal for UnitingWorld, and extend our thanks to the Assembly Standing Committee who have come on this journey with us every step of the way.

As of March 2020, UnitingWorld is registered with the Australian Charities and Non-Profits Commission (ACNC) as an unincorporated entity under its own ABN, and recognised by the Australian Tax Office as a Public Benevolent Institution (PBI). UnitingWorld moved its operations to the new ABN on 1 October 2020.

This journey started with bringing the entire Agency under a single Mandate as reported at the last Triennial Assembly. Subsequently, it has required streamlining our financial management systems and program architecture, merging the two National Committees to form a single Board, and developing a constitution.

All of these steps have been undertaken with painstaking care to ensure that the governance and control measures have remained exactly the same as before and that we are still able to deliver our mission.

The advantage of the new structure is that UnitingWorld is now eligible for grants from charitable trusts, is able to take tax-deductible donations for all of our program work, and is much more competitive in recruitment because we can offer tax-packaging benefits to all our staff. This latter brings UnitingWorld staff into parity with UnitingCare and Frontier Services staff.

Our new ABN is 47 817 183 926.

11. A STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

Our last strategic plan concluded in June 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not practical to launch a new strategic plan last year, and we committed ourselves to focussing on supporting our partners and focussing on business continuity.

As this report is written, we are finalising our new strategic plan for FY2022-24.

The impact of the pandemic is far from over. As a consequence of COVID-19, the world has seen for the first time in 20 years, an increase in global poverty and a genuine threat to hard-won development outcomes. Furthermore, the assumptions of economic prosperity and democratic stability are no longer valid in our region. A date for the resumption of international travel remains both elusive and uncertain.

Against this backdrop of uncertainty, our new strategy will focus on who we are, because what we do may need to change in response to future realities.

Some of our key strategic drivers are:

- Strong UCA/UnitingWorld/Partner relationships are the bedrock of our existence and must be nurtured at all costs
- The balance of power in programming must shift towards partners and their communities
- The complexity of our project designs should be scaled to our partners' appetite and capacity
- We must move money out of Australia and to our partners and their communities
- More program funding will give us a higher return on our governance investment
- Regulatory compliance must come with values alignment
- We need agile, user-friendly operations to remain efficient and effective in a rapidly changing context

12. GOVERNANCE

The new governance arrangements for UnitingWorld were introduced after the last Assembly and involved the creation of a new Board combining the functions of the two old National Committees for Relief and Development and Church Connections. A new Constitution was approved to govern the Agency. The newly constituted Board had a very experienced group of members who had served on earlier national Committees. These new governance arrangements have worked well and the new system is now “bedded down”.

13. A COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The new Board has been committed to a smooth succession as several of our Board members completed their nine-year service, the maximum period under the Constitution. The UnitingWorld Board has been actively recruiting over the last triennium to bring fresh talent onto the Board. The objective has been to maintain a strong suite of skills while increasing diversity in life experience.

The last triennium has seen two young professionals from the millennial generation come on board, as well as member from an international partner church join the International Programs sub-committee. The gender balance on the Board has been maintained at approximated 50/50, and the next round of appointments is set to increase the ethnic/cultural diversity. The recruitment process for the Board has concluded and several names will be put to the Assembly Standing Committee for approval. Subject to this approval, the new Board will be more culturally diverse, younger and have a higher level of skills while preserving the gender balance at 50/50.

We note that the Chair of the UnitingWorld Board, Dr Andrew Glenn will be concluding his term this triennium, and a Minute of Appreciation is being put forward to recognise his invaluable contribution to UnitingWorld.

14. LOOKING AT THE ROAD AHEAD

Three years ago, we emphasised the fact that we are a church and not a charity. Our programs are not just about plans, budgets and contracts – they are built on strong resilient relationships that have been handed down from generation to generation by people spending time with each other, listening attentively, sharing honestly and with vulnerability, being willing to change our minds and our hearts.

This remains truer than ever. The only reason we have been able to carry on with life-changing work even in the throes of COVID-19 is because of the deep love and trust that exists between our partners, our supporters and ourselves. Having care and concern for our church partners also means providing advice, support and skills in helping the other councils of the UCA in their engagement with diaspora communities.

Because UnitingWorld has always taken this relational approach to working with church partners, our efforts have required much more in terms of people, time and money than the mere management of projects. Financing this remains a significant challenge.

This is a dilemma for the whole of the Uniting Church, not just UnitingWorld. The staff of UnitingWorld is committed to engaging with every council of the church, to cast the vision of the revival and renewal that comes from living our calling as members of the global church.

We call on the members of the 16th National Assembly to reflect deeply on the best use of the resources of the Uniting Church, so that we may invest in what is required to respond to the call of our partner churches, God’s people in our region.

Sureka Goringe
National Director

Andrew Glenn
Chair