

Asian Aid

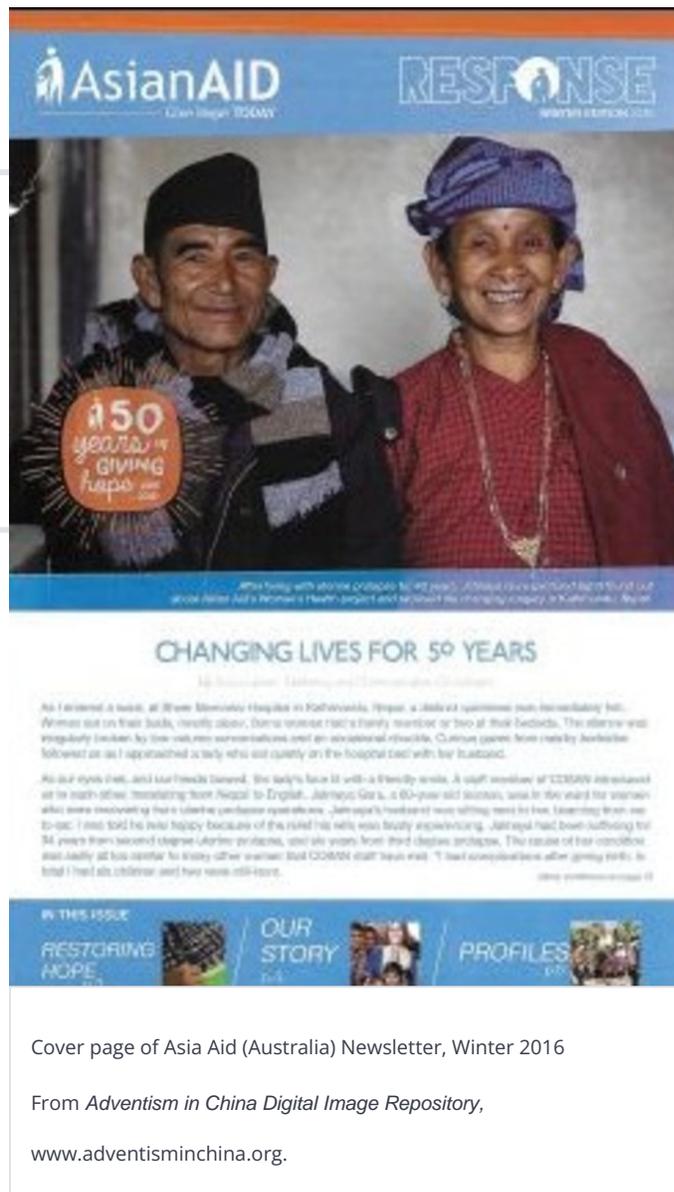
JOHN HAMMOND

John Hammond, Ph.D. (Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand) retired in 2010 as National Director of Adventist Education, Australian Union Conference, Melbourne Australia. Dr Hammond served the Church for 41 years as a teacher, Principal and, administrator. He is a frequent speaker at Church conventions and has conducted over 110 school Week of Prayer programs and has been featured in over 200 television broadcasts. John is married to Sue with three adult children and five grandchildren.

Asian Aid, often known by its full name as Asian Aid Organization, is a private International Non-Government Organization (INGO) that has supported humanitarian activities in many Asian countries including Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Korea, Nepal, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. Founded in 1966 by Maisie Fook, a member of the Sydney Chinese Seventh-day Adventist Church, the original organization was affiliated with the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a supporting ministry.¹ In 2009, a separate and independent entity, Asian Aid USA, organized in America with its own board of governance and local registration as a 501(c)(3) organization which was later renamed Child Impact International in 2017.² While operating independently, the two organizations have collaborated on many projects and complement each other in their focus on improving the welfare of children throughout the world. In particular, Child Impact International has expanded its vision to include developing countries beyond Asia. Both organizations are fully accredited supporting ministries of the Seventh-day World Church.

Humble Beginning - The First Ten Years

Asian Aid began within the chaotic poverty that marked the aftermath of the Korean War. Masie Fook (nee Hon), a compassionate Australian Adventist of Chinese heritage,³ felt the need to help the many war orphans that were a casualty of that war. In 1966, she visited the orphanage at the Seoul Adventist Hospital, South Korea, and



felt inspired to adopt two orphans, Margaret and Jeffrey, whom she was able to gain government permission to bring to Australia a year later. She was so affected by what she saw during the Korean visit, that on her return, with help from husband Dennis Fook and the Long, Hon, and Wong families, Maisie registered Asian Aid as a nonprofit company in Australia later in 1966 in order to get the shipping concessions needed to send warm clothes, patchwork quilts, and rugs to Korea.⁴ It was an important step that led Asian Aid into wider humanitarian work.

Asian Aid officially began with a budget of just two thousand dollars and no paid staff until Helen Eager, who initially joined Asian Aid in 1968 as a volunteer, and Kerryn Patrick were listed as employees in 1979.⁵ Soon, Asian Aid sponsored children in three different orphanages in Korea.⁶ By the end of the first decade in May 1975, Asian Aid had \$4,098 AUD funds on hand and was operating in two countries (Korea and Vietnam) with about 850 sponsored children in South Vietnam when it fell.⁷ The main focus of Asian Aid during its first decade of existence (1966-1975) was on child sponsorship.

Asian Aid (Australia) – Subsequent Five Decades of Growth

Second Decade (1976-1985)

With the collapse of the South Vietnam government in 1975, it was not possible to continue work in Vietnam. Maisie Fook contacted Leon Powrie, director of SAWS (later called ADRA) in Bangladesh, who was visiting Australia at the time, and who suggested that Asian Aid direct their efforts to help children in refugee camps and village schools. The new project began with food distribution and that led to the teaching of mothers sewing and basketmaking to earn income to become more independent. In some schools Asian Aid representatives taught children marketable skills. Thus, in the second decade the organization began to include institution-based projects.⁸

Helen Eager encouraged the establishment and expansion of schools throughout the southern Asia sub-continent, beginning with India and expanding to Nepal and Bangladesh. With the support of donors in Australia and New Zealand, as well as substantial funding from philanthropists (among them the American Garwin McNeilus),⁹ Asian Aid has enabled the establishment and expansion of many schools, including the specialist deaf and hearing impaired school at Kollegal (Karnataka State) and a school for the blind at Bobbili (Andhra Pradesh State) as well as a number of orphanages (Sunshine and Elim). Fundamental to the entry of Asian Aid on the Southern Asia sub-continent was the work of Dorothy Watts, a Canadian missionary and wife of the president of the South India Union of Seventh-day Adventists, who began to take in homeless babies and small children and established the Sunshine Orphanage near Bangalore in 1979. Dorothy Watts urged Helen Eager to find sponsors for children in the orphanage. When Helen returned to Australia, Asian Aid supplemented and finally took over the work begun by Dorothy Watts.¹⁰

In 1981, Asian Aid joined the Australian Council for Overseas Aid, which enabled it to receive government funding.¹¹ By the end of the second decade in 1985, Asian Aid reported that it had sent \$589,683 AUD to support about 3,000 children, with the Hunter Valley branch accounting for 40 percent of this total.¹²

Third Decade (1986-1995)

As Asian Aid continued to grow, the organization began to feel the challenge of operating solely with volunteers. The 1987 Annual Report noted that “the difficulties and instability of having a large organization entirely dependent on voluntary administration have become more and more evident.”¹³ In 1989, when Maisie Fook retired from Asian Aid, the organization had an annual income of \$850,000 AUD donated by 4,000 supporters. In the same year, the Asian Aid administrative office transferred to Wauchope on the mid-north coast of New South Wales, and Kerry Patrick became the first paid employee. On May 26, 1991, 25 years after its formation, donations to the organization exceeded a million AUD for the first time. By the end of the third decade in 1995 Asian Aid’s income had reached \$1,219,830 AUD.¹⁴

Fourth Decade (1996-2005)

The fourth decade was a period of even more significant changes and progress. In 1997, Helen Eager took over the entire Indian and Nepalese operation.¹⁵ Many new projects started, including schools for children with vision and hearing impairments, leper colonies, and mobile health clinics for women in rural areas. It was also during this decade that Asian Aid began to witness many of the children it had once sponsored and who had graduated with professional degrees now return to Asian Aid to serve other children in need. Sadly, it was also the decade that Asian Aid paid tribute to its founder, Maisie Fook, who passed away in 2002. In 2004, Asian Aid employed its first chief executive officer, Sharon Heise.¹⁶

Fifth Decade (2006-2015)

The fifth decade opened a new and exciting chapter of Asian Aid’s story. Its 2006 annual report noted that it not only sponsored more than 7,000 children in schools, it also provided clean water for villages, basic health care, vocational training, and tertiary education for nurses and teachers. By the end of the decade, Asian Aid had expanded its sphere to include anti-human-trafficking work in Nepal and India, developed a Minimum Standards of Care Program and Child Policy, become an accredited member of the Australian Council for International Development, and expanded its community health and development programs. By 2015, Asian Aid had partnered with 10 international organizations in six countries and implemented 14 projects that affected more than 44,300 people.¹⁷ Asian Aid operates by utilizing a partnering strategy with organizations that have the expertise to function within the local culture. Examples have included: CAED (Centre for Agro-Ecology and Development--Nepal), COSAN (Community Service Academy--Nepal), HHWS (Helping Hand Welfare Society--India), BCSS (Bangladesh Children Sponsorship Services), Forget Me Not, and 3 Angels Nepal.

Sixth Decade (2016 and Beyond)

Asian Aid continues to develop its corporate identity as an international nonprofit organization. In doing so, the organization faces many complex administrative, legal, governmental, cultural, and political issues.

The 2020 Annual Report of Asian Aid (Australia) stated that the organization on March 31, 2020, had a total operating revenue of \$5,210,401 AUD, total expenditures of \$3,121,696, and total net assets of \$4,055,205 AUD,¹⁸ a marked contrast to its humble beginning in 1966.

Maturing into An International Nonprofit Organization

The Australian INGO (International Non-Government Organization) group, of which Asian Aid is an example, must remain compliant with Federal and United Nations protocols as well as with the requirements of individual countries in the management of orphanages and the funding of projects. Such constraints increase organizational and management pressures. With western countries tending to reduce funding overseas aid, Asian Aid has had to attract donors by conducting direct promotions at annual camp meetings of each conference and within individual congregations of the Seventh-day Adventist churches.

Asian Aid has developed from a homespun operation to a sophisticated organization operating within a highly regulated sector. Thus, the use of external auditors who monitor finances, and full reporting at annual general meetings, has become established practices. Its board operates under a constitution that ensures compliance with regulatory authorities within both Australia and partner countries.

Asian Aid is a full member of ACFID (Australian Council for International Development) and complies with an internationally accepted code of conduct.¹⁹ This code, supported by the United Nations, promotes sustainable and inclusive approaches to development that recognize such major causes of worldwide poverty as climate change, the rising inequality within and between nations that leads to social and economic problems, as well as discrimination and injustice²⁰.

Following the terrorist attacks of September 2001 in the United States, international terrorism and the way in which charity organizations operate came under scrutiny. Perhaps the greatest advantage of using charities to finance terror is the veil of legitimacy such fronts enjoy as charitable or humanitarian organizations. Asian Aid has employed a detailed accounting system that requires all projects to demonstrate clear planning and financial responsibility right through to the project's conclusion and a full exit audit to ensure that it has carefully used its funds.²¹

In a coordinated approach to be a responsible leader within the INGO community, the Asian Aid board and successive CEOs²² have developed an enhanced child focused approach known as CFCD (Child Focused Community Development) which now permeates the organization's whole operation.²³ Every application for a new project needs to be demonstrably filtered through a matrix that ensures that all Asian Aid work directly helps children.

In 2009, Stephen Baxter, a corporate lawyer and Asian Aid chairman/director, rewrote its constitution and Memorandum and Articles of Association, to enable Asian Aid to reflect Australian governance and procedural requirements. As a result, the organization now has nine elected directors who are eligible to serve three consecutive three-year terms before being required to stand down. The directors appoint the chairman and deputy chairman on an annual basis. Since 2009, further amendments to the Asian Aid organization constitution seek to comply with the requirements of the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission that now largely regulates the operation of charities in Australia²⁴.

Asian Aid USA and Child Impact International

Many of the supporters and donors of Asian Aid are from the United States of America. During the 1990s, a generous donor in the United States helped the Monosapara School in Bangladesh to rebuild along with another large academy, SAMS (Seventh-day Adventist Maranatha Seminary) in the north. In 2002, after years of renting facilities, the Kollegal School for the Hearing-impaired constructed a permanent home in India. With a major donation from Adventist-laymen's Services & Industries (ASI) and partnership with Maranatha Volunteers International, a new school for the blind opened at Bobbili, India, in 2003. A long-anticipated extension was added to the hearing-impaired school in 2005 and a second floor for the Elim School and Home opened in 2006.

²⁵ Such initiatives not only marked a major expansion of the organization's activities, but also highlighted the important role the USA operation plays in the entire Asian Aid organization.

In 2009, with the help of some funding for key personnel from the Australian operation, Asian Aid USA formally became an independent and separate entity with its own office in Tennessee, a board of directors, and full 501 (c)(3) status. For most of the next decade, Asian Aid (Australia) and Asian Aid USA jointly participated in funding the administrative and project costs of its India affiliate, HHWS (Helping Hand Welfare Society). To reflect its wider region of operation and growth beyond Asia, Asian Aid USA renamed itself as Child Impact International²⁶.

At the time of writing, the annual report of Child Impact International recorded a total operating revenue of \$2,518,378 USD and the total assets as at December 31, 2018, were \$1,785,091 USD.²⁷

Key Officers of *Asian Aid*

Presidents/Chairpersons of Board of Directors (Australia):

Norm Long, president, 1966-2004; Carl Ginger, president, 2004-2008; Stephen Baxter, chairperson, 2008-2014; John Hammond, chairperson, 2014-2019.

Chief Executive Officers (Australia):

Sharon Heise, 2004-2007; Richard Greenwell, 2008-2016; Wayne Ulrich, 2017-2018; Paul Esau, 2019-.

Chief Executive Officer (Asian Aid USA and Child Impact International):

James Rennie, 1991-

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