

FOCUS ON MERCY

Oct - Dec 2003

CONTENTS:

- Road trip
- The impact of urbanization
- Forbid not these little one come to me
- ARMS Darwin child sponsorship program

By David Skeat



Houses make an impression in East Timor.

Hekan houses are making a difference in East Timor. Since June of this year two houses have been built that provide replacement housing for families whose houses was destroyed by militia bands in 1999. These houses were funded through the generous efforts of the Illawarra Uniting Church at Bulli.

The first Hekan house was opened by President Xanana Gusmao who said in a speech that was televised on the East Timor National News; that housing needs in East Timor are huge and many families are getting impatient about their circumstances. President Gusmao also remarked that he liked the design of the Hekan houses. To our knowledge Hekan is the only housing project in East Timor to receive such public praise from the President! Hekan also received many favorable comments from the many people who viewed the first house at the official opening.

President Gusmao has challenged us to build up to 50 Hekan houses as quickly as possible in order see more families housed. This is a challenge we are taking seriously and ARMS is seeking partners who will help us raise the funding needed for such houses. We anticipate

that to build 50 houses we will need to fund raise more than \$500,000. Hence we are looking for churches, businesses, and other sponsors who would consider donating to this project. (All donations are tax deductible.) If you, your church or business are interested in being part of this exciting project then contact the ARMS National Office.

Meanwhile our friends at Mobile Mission Maintenance (MMM) are continuing to refine the design of these houses so that each new house that is built will be better than the last! Don Langley from MMM was on hand at the building of the second house and is now researching where improvements to the design can be made so as to speed construction and reduce costs. Our dream is to set up a non profit business in Dili that would do all the pre-fabrication work there and would provide employment for unemployed East Timorese citizens. We are hoping and praying that we can start to do this some time in 2004. The setting up of this side of the project is expected to cost approx \$US50,000. However we are confident that the success we have experienced with Hekan in 2003 will be greatly multiplied in 2004.



President Xanana Gusmao opened the first Hekan House In Dili

The Hekan Housing project also offers a unique opportunity for building teams to further engage local communities. By building a house in a local community teams have the attention of the local community and after the construction phase abundant opportunities exist for teams to further help the communities in other ways, such as education and healthcare. A two to four week trip to a community in East Timor can be very enriching for both the team and the local community.

Donations to the Hekan Housing Project are tax deductible and can be made through the response form on the back page, donation details are also available via our web site www.arms.org.au.



Road trip to the refugee camps.

Road trip to the refugee camps.



By Sirisak Pituck

I looked out the front window of the four-wheel drive; accompanying me were 3 workers from the *Partners* office in Chiang Mai. We were travelling on our way to the Mae-la refugee camp on the Thai – Burmese border. A Thai soldier was waving his hand at us in order to make us stop at a checkpoint. Security was tight. This was due in part to the nervous atmosphere created by the recent Asia Pacific Economic Conference being held in Bangkok. I was very concerned because a team travelling a few days before us had been turned back. We began to pray that God would grant us safe passage, clearing the way ahead of anything preventing us from reaching our destination. God faithfully answered our

prayer. Not only were we allowed through the first checkpoint but through ten other checkpoints along the way.

Rain was falling as we arrived at the Mae-la camp. We rushed up the hill to the orphanage which is located towards the back of the camp. About half way there some of the children ran down to meet us with umbrellas. Pehlu, (who runs the orphanage) came out to greet us with children surrounding her. Some of the children were very excited at our arrival and were very talkative. Other children however were very quiet and withdrawn. This is not surprising considering many of the children Pehlu cares for have experienced horrible traumas as they and

their families, fled to the safety of the border.

After the death of Rose Mu many of the children from her orphanage were cared for by Pehlu and her staff at the preschool. Soon Pehlu had both a preschool and an orphanage to run. I was amazed at how very small the building was considering the 40 children between 1 and 4 were living there. Despite this Pehlu and her team are doing a wonderful job.

All the children seemed to be in good health due to the food, medicine and other supplies made available through generous donations by ARMS donors. I had met some of these children before and was excited to see how much they had grown. They were thriving. Pehlu asked me if ARMS had received her letter of thanks and I told her that we published it in our last Focus On Mercy. She was delighted.

I had such a wonderful time with the children at the Mae-la orphanage. I pray continually that God's mercy will be with them, will meet all of their needs, and fulfil all of their hopes and dreams. Perhaps one day they too might grow up to serve Him.

Christmas is coming up...!!



The ARMS National Office are selling Christmas cards and wall calendars in order to raise funds for its work amongst the poor.

The Christmas card is similar to the one sold last year and has a color photo of a refugee child and an inscription inside the card.

The calendars are beautiful, they are in full color and each month has a photo that will remind you of some of the many projects that are being served by ARMS.

The cards are 50 cents each and the calendars are \$10 each. Profits from the sale of these items will go towards the work of ARMS. Orders can be placed by contacting the ARMS National Office.

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The Impact Of Urbanization

The Impact Of Urbanization

By David Skeat

“...problems facing governments of developing nations...are far more complex than just housing.”

Over the past few decades there has been a strong impetus for people to leave rural areas and to relocate to the cities. This can be seen in Australia where some rural communities are losing services because there is no longer the population base to support them. Once they are old enough, many rural young people head for the *bright lights* of the city where employment, and study opportunities are more plentiful. This situation has been discussed widely in the Australian media, and as critical as the situation is, it does not *hold a candle* to similar problems being experienced in the developing world where the population movements are measured in millions.

Most of the movement towards the cities is by poor rural families who are seeking better education or employment opportunities for themselves and for their families. But poverty brings with it its own set of complications, and governments that are being burdened by excessive amounts of debt, unlike their Western counterparts, do not have the capacity to cope with the effects of such large population shifts. This is further exacerbated by dramatic increases in population in the developing world.

The impact of large movements of people into any one area increases the need for

more infrastructure and services. Schools, hospitals, public transport, water and sanitation, electricity, roads and employment are all essential to harmonious community life. But many governments in the developing world are not equipped enough to cope with these large migrations and the result usually means the formation of slums and ghettos within the precincts of the city limits of some of the world's largest cities.

Because of the lack of employment and essential services these slums and ghettos become the breeding ground for crime, drugs, and vices such as prostitution and gambling. This in turn means that the residents of these slums and ghettos experience health problems such as high infection rates of HIV/AIDS, other STDs, tuberculosis, upper respiratory infections, malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and hepatitis. Life expectancy is usually low.

Hence the problems facing governments of developing nations where such population shifts are experienced are far more complex than just housing. Some governments have taken an aggressive approach to the formation of slums and ghettos. In the Philippines the Smokey Mountain garbage dump drew some 40,000 displaced people who lived in shanty-type accommodation around the dump site, taking up about a square kilometer of space. The majority of the population would fossick amongst the garbage for recyclables and sell what they found to a middle man who would sell to the larger companies. These people were just managing to scratch a living out of the dump; but the government took a different view and on many occasions sent in bulldozers to destroy

the shanty town in the hope that the people would disperse and go back to where they came from. They didn't, and eventually the government relented and the people were allowed to stay on the dump. Other governments have just tried to turn a blind eye to the situation. In one slum I visited in India, electricity was not supplied because the government was ignoring the slum, so the people scavenged wire from somewhere or other and shimmed up electricity poles and provided themselves with free electricity. Both of the approaches of these governments to this problem have proven not to work – so what is the answer?

I believe that the answer to this aspect of urbanization is a two fold. Firstly work needs to be done in the rural communities so that people do not find the city to be such an attractive option. This means that governments must begin to put major infrastructure and investment into rural areas that will increase services and job opportunities. Somehow the flow away from the country areas into the cities has to be reduced.

The second thing that needs to be done is that people living in the slums and ghettos around the world need to be given a better quality of life, and an opportunity to improve their circumstances. There are recognized minimum standards that need to be observed so that people have access to adequate shelter, clean drinking water, medical services and employment opportunities. In Thailand I met a family that came from a horrible background of drug abuse and crime and their children were heading exactly in the same direction, but in recent times this family had come in contact with a Christian family and had themselves become committed Christians. They were now trying to change their circumstances to be consistent with the teaching of the Bible. The father gave up his relatively well paying job in the drug



trade and took up work as a laborer. The wife could not find work, but saw a business opportunity selling fried bananas. She took out a loan from the Christian family and set up the business. It was so successful that the father quit his job and came and worked for his wife! Soon they had enough income to move out of their slum into a better slum that had running water and electricity. They could now afford to send their children to school. Opportunities exist for people to make it, one of the jobs we need to do is to try and connect these opportunities to the people in need who will take them.

Transformation is another factor that needs to be considered here. How can we see a family or a small community transformed from being in total abject poverty (and all that that implies), to achieving a state of relative harmony where the minimum standards of food, shelter, employment and healthcare are being met?

The issue of transformation takes time, there is no quick fix; and transformation must happen from within the community / family not be imposed on it from outside.

Transformation begins by establishing trust and dialogue. Small communities develop their own internal structure and generally there is a head man or council. It is these councils that hold one of the keys to *community transformation*. If the local community leadership can be given a sense of hope that things can change for

their people then they may be energized enough to draw the community together for its own good and begin to bring about change one small step at a time. In Weberek, East Timor, the village council told us that their number one need was water. We looked at the problem and although they have many other problems that include agriculture, health care, education etc. We worked with the local council to address the water situation. Once the water situation was fixed, the village leadership became energized and full of hope that if this one thing that had depressed for so long could be fixed then anything can be fixed. We are now planning more projects in Weberek. The community leaders and the people are full of new vision as to what their community may look like in 5 years time. Other communities nearby are also observing the changes and now want to do something in their communities also – in Weberek, transformation has begun.

Transformation however does not just address physical needs, it is deeper than that. It transforms community life. When transformation has occurred the community should be above the minimum standards of living and gradually progressing upwards, but for true transformation to have occurred social indicators, such as crime rates, should also have fallen.

In order for social indicators to change there must be personal change, and here is where the debate rages. Some sociologists say that the education alone is the key. But does education

alone reduce crime rates or do we need something more? I think that the lessons we are learning in the west should convince us that education is not enough. We are highly educated, very affluent, and socially in trouble. In fact we tend to muddy the waters a little by re-defining some crimes (such as wanting to decriminalize the personal use of marijuana) and thus reducing the statistics so that things look better than what they actually are, but in reality the problems still exist.

There is no doubt that education helps, but education alone does not redefine one's personal values so that crime is less of an option. My personal belief is that the answer for this part of transformation lies in Jesus and allowing a personal relationship with Him to change our values and priorities. Values of strong families, fidelity in marriage, generosity, care for the poor, looking out for the needs of your neighbor, taking responsibility for one's actions, the value of children, maintaining a caring and loving community environment, and a high view of women are all core values that were strongly taught and practiced by the New Testament church. It is to these values that we must call a society. In the west this will happen through revival, in the developing world it will happen through church planting. But whatever the venue these changes will not happen without commitment to long term relationships with a community / individual that is founded in love and humility, and does not override them as being in need of the divine revelation of the *great white hunter!*



The Impact Of Urbanization

Another issue that needs to be looked at in helping a community is increasing the communities' income. This can be done through micro enterprise development. In the developing world micro enterprise banks are doing a great job in making funds available to low income groups so that they can start small businesses and increase their family income stream. Two things need to be said here. Firstly micro enterprise only works well where there is some kind of macro enterprise nearby. As some micro enterprise relies on trying to attract the spare change that people have in their pocket, if there is no employment that is giving people wages so that they have the spare change to spend, then the success rate will be lower. So encouraging investment into areas that have large slums and ghettos areas will produce jobs that will have a flow on effect to into the larger community. Larger corporations as part of their effort to be *good corpo-*



Garbage Dump Dwellers at Smoky Mountain

family has. Therefore it is usually the women in the community who respond quicker to business opportunities and who have proven over time to being more faithful in their financial dealings than men. Therefore in the process of transforming a community, women are a key. Once they show the way the men usually catch on and follow.

Western society has a short attention span. However, if we are to bring about transformational change, and seriously address the needs of poor communities that have formed out of the great migration from the rural areas to the city then we must have medium to long term approaches. And we must see the task we are doing as part and parcel of the greater work of transformation. If we know what we are aiming for tomorrow we know better how to do our job today.

rate citizens need to invest in these areas and produce the means through which greater numbers of people caught in the poverty trap can have the opportunity to move ahead in life. A second consideration here is that in the initial phases of community transformation many men spend their time drinking, gambling and participating in vices that waste the meager resources that the



Christmas Presents

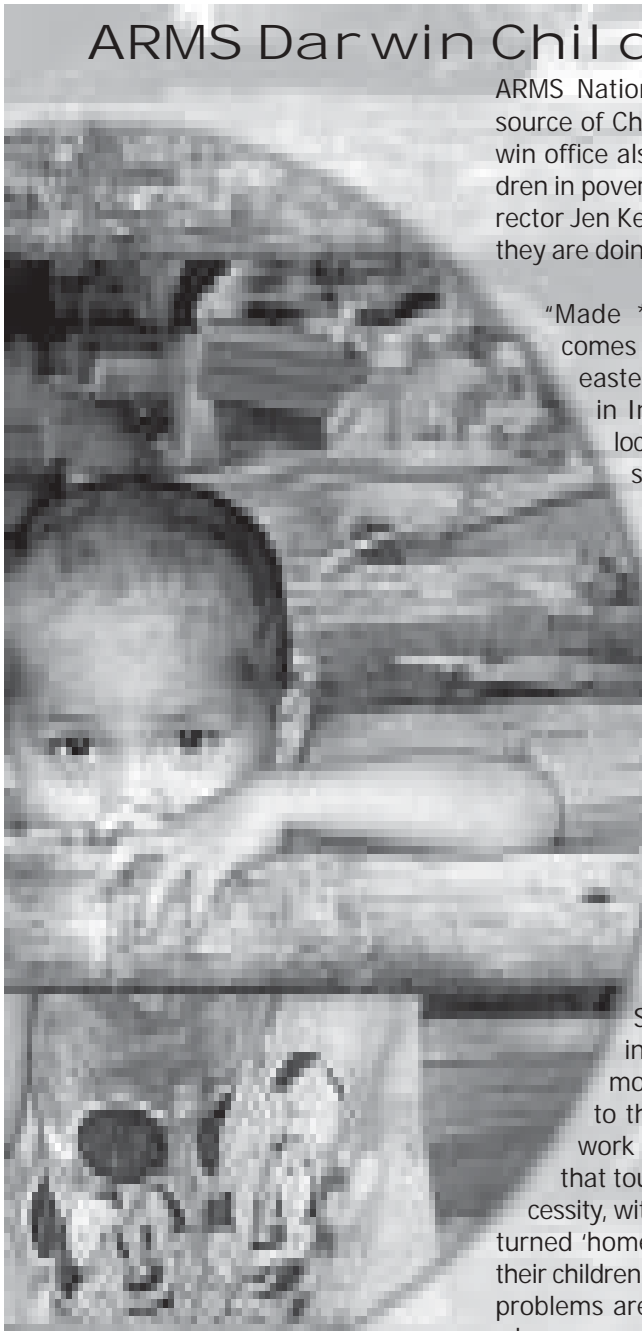
For Refugee Children

ARMS is seeking donations to give refugee children a happy Christmas this year. Each year ARMS donors together with Partners donors send thousands of small Christmas presents to the children found in refugee camps inside Thailand and the IDP communities in Burma. It really is a special time for them. When you live in a war zone and your future is very unstable, or when you have escaped out of a war zone and are in a traumatized state one small Christmas present can mean a lot. Imagine thousands of children receiving a small present sent by someone they do not know, yet if you could see the looks of amazed joy as they unwrap it you would know what a difference it makes to them. (Some photos can be seen in the photo gallery on our website www.arms.org.au.)

One of the things we have come to appreciate is that people in these desperate situations find hope in practical expressions of love. Hope is what gives them the courage to keep going. The children especially have their value reinforced as they receive their present and participate in a special Christmas meal that is not Turkey and potatoes, but special rice, meat and vegetable dishes that they do not have often because of the lack of finances. Christmas amongst the refugee and IDP communities is at time of hope and joy. Each toy costs about \$1.50 and we ask everyone to give in multiples of \$2.00 so that we can use the extra \$ 0.50 to buy extra food so that the children and their families can have a Christmas meal. Donations can be sent to the ARMS National Office via the response form on the back page.



ARMS Darwin Child Sponsorship Program



ARMS National Office is not the only source of Child Sponsorships. Our Darwin office also runs a program for children in poverty in Bali. ARMS Darwin Director Jen Keatch tells us a little of what they are doing.

"Made * (not her actual name) comes from a rural village on the eastern side of the island of Bali in Indonesia. Like many rural locations in Bali her village has seen drought and lack of adequate reliable water supply. In the past the economy of Bali has relied greatly on tourism and the local farmers on their crops, particularly rice. Although, rice is now becoming less and less viable to grow as it's often cheaper to import rice from the overseas markets. Farmers will be looking for productive alternatives, such as coffee or cocoa.

Some of those families, who in hope and optimism, had moved from the rural villages to the slums of the city to find work through the opportunities that tourism provides, have of necessity, with the decline in tourism, returned 'home' struggling to provide for their children and extended family. These problems are even greater for families when a parent has died and there are a number of children to care for. When a mother in Balinese culture remarries she may take her sons to be part of the new family, but must make an alternative arrangement for the care of her daughters. These girls are often given care by

grandparents or the extended family setting. However although these children may have alternative care depending on the new family's financial capability they may not be able to continue their education. ARMS provides sponsorships that give these children the opportunity to complete their schooling and train in a career of their choice.

There are now 12 children in this sponsorship project in Bali, attending kindergarten through to high school with dreams of becoming teachers, doctors or nurses - careers that will also contribute much to the lives of others.

ARMS is also supporting the work of an orphanage in Bali. These children currently live in a large home which is leased and are cared for by three staff, two other staff members are training and will return in the next few months. The needs of this project include sponsors for four of the children, a vehicle (12 seater van) as well as the purchase of a suitable property location where a school and permanent residence could be built for the children. More details can be obtained through phoning the Darwin ARMS office on 08 8981 2424 or emailing armsdarwin@octa4.net.au

Another opportunity also exists to provide sponsorships to support to a new innovative project encouraging high school age students to remain with their families in central Bali and not to seek employment in the already over crowded cities. This project will assist ten students to complete their education locally and will offer training in alternative technologies and farming methods. Sponsorship of a student within this project is \$20 per month."

ARMS Darwin
Child
Sponsorship
Program

ARMS STAFF PROFILE ARMS STAFF PROFILE ARMS STAFF PROFILE



Introducing.....



Jen Keatch

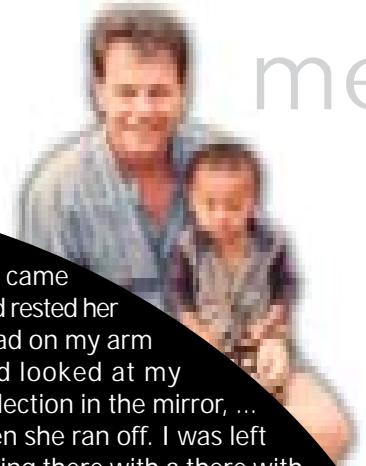
"Jen is the director of ARMS for the Northern Territory. Jen is originally from Bendigo in Victoria, but has lived in Darwin working with YWAM for the past eight years. Jen began working with ARMS in May, 1999 and has facilitated many new projects such as the Street Kids Project in Bali, the Child Sponsorship projects in West Timor, Bali and East Timor and the Fish Farming project in Bali. Jen has a strong passion for mercy ministries and believes that as Australians we have a responsibility to bless other nations from the great wealth God has given us.

She also believes in raising up young people to go into countries where there is great potential for community development projects to extend the Kingdom of God with very tangible and practical outcomes."



forbid not these little ones to come to me.) (Forbid not these little ones to come to me)

By Neville Humphreys



It all started in prayer. We had prayed for a couple of days for a little boy who was only six years old! Then the news came ... he had died. Tears filled my eyes ... it was TB, a disease which I had grown to hate. This took place in a hospital in Pakistan, which our health care team was visiting. Whilst there we were able to watch operations, observe patients, clean and dress wounds, etc. But my attention had been distracted by the little boy who had died. In my heart I was asking God, "Why?" in the quietness of the moment God spoke to me, *"that little boy belongs to me ... all the children of the world belong to me ... claim them as your own"*. To me the statement was powerful because over the past few weeks God had been speaking to me about younger children, and broken my heart for them several times.

Another disease I grew to hate was Polio ... watching children trying to walk or move was just heart wrenching. Jesus had given me such a compassion for the suffering. I began to know the meaning of mercy.

As youth worker I tended to ignore anyone less than 12 years of age; but as a health care worker I was spending a lot of time everyday visiting the children's ward. I was learning new things!

To my delight one of the hospital doctors asked if I would like to work in outpa-

tients with him. This doctor took time to train me. He soon had me diagnosing some of the children and was asking me to name the Drug of Choice for the situation. This gave me new confidence in my skills and training as a Primary Health Care worker. It wasn't long before our team was running its own clinics where we treated hundreds of people.

After several weeks in Pakistan my team travelled to Nepal where we ran clinics in remote villages. We learned of one man who walked three days to get to our clinic! Again God was at work – children were just running to me. Boy, Jesus just loves these little ones! Working in Primary Health Care was giving me such a deep appreciation for young children.

After a few weeks in Nepal, it was time to return to Australia, via, India, where I had the opportunity to visit some old friends for a few days. Even there I found myself dressing wounds and checking ears, as my friend's wife ran clinics in several villages.

Even after I arrived back in Australia, God continued to teach me about the value of children. Children would wander up to me on the street and in shopping centres. I wasn't smiling at them or saying 'hello'; tears would well up in my eyes because I knew it was Jesus drawing them and touching my heart. One time I was having a haircut, and a little girl about 5 years

old came and rested her head on my arm and looked at my reflection in the mirror, ... then she ran off. I was left sitting there with a tear on my cheek.

When I was flying back home I began to ponder the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. This story outlines the basis of primary health care. In another place Jesus says *"whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me"* (Matthew 25:37-40). It occurred to me that we are God's hands, His feet, and His voice to those who are the *'the least'*.

When Jesus was on this earth He saw the suffering and first He had compassion and met needs in a practical way. He didn't wander around going "Zap! Be healed, be saved!" When we were on our Primary Health Care outreach in Asia we got to pray for many people and saw some healing and some saved, but none of this would have happened without practical ministry.

This outreach opened my eyes and changed my heart by me being involved in practically meeting the needs of children.

A FUNDRAISING

IDEA FOR KIDS ARK



On September 29th 2003 Soraya opened the doors of her Preschool in Hera for the first time. Soraya has 41 children coming each day to her preschool. Soraya has found that Kids Ark has been given an enormous amount of favor both with the local community and also with the East Timorese Education Department.

Kid's Ark has many needs for funds and educational materials suitable for the children of Hera - one way you can help the work of Kid's Ark is to consider purchasing creative, educational toys for the

children in your family through Modern Teaching Aids (MTA). MTA have two catalogues available "Chalk" and "Kangaroo" and will give credit vouchers of 20% of the value of our total order towards Kid's Ark. Catalogues are available from MTA, you can contact them on 1300 139 956 or order on line at www.chalk.com.au and www.parentdirect.com.au when you order nominate Australian Relief and Mercy Services Darwin as the fundraising recipient. The current catalogue is valid until April next year.





Name: Suthida Sangpraisan
Nick Name: Auu
DOB: 16/11/89
Age: 14
Class: Grade 8

Suthida lives with her grandmother and 6 other people in a small rented room. Her father died in accident shortly before she was born and her mother has a mental problem and hasn't been able to take care of Suthida. Her grandmother is the one who tries to keep the family going by working as a clearer at a school in Ladyaw, Jatujak. Suthida is very close to her grand mother. "The money is short, but the relationship isn't."

Suthida is a sweet girl, teachable and responsible. She loves drawing and going to school. Would you consider helping this little girl to continue her school? Your sponsorship can change her life, giving her so many opportunities and a chance to know the love of Jesus.



The staff at the ARMS National Office would like to wish you...

A blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Focus On Mercy

is the newsletter of the National Office of Australian Relief & Mercy Services Ltd.
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A Ministry Of Youth With A Mission Australia

The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Response Form



I would like to become a supporter of ARMS and will regularly pray for its ministry and /or give a monthly gift of \$ per month. I enclose a gift of \$ towards:

- National Office Support Karen Children Appeal Australian Mercy Fund
- Kid's Ark Child Sponsorship Hekan Housing

Name.....
 Address.....
Post Code
 Contact Number

Please debit my credit card (circle one) Visa Mastercard Bankcard

□□□□ □□□□ □□□□ □□□□

Expiry date/..... Signature

Return to Australian Relief & Mercy Services Ltd 1 Kent Rd Surrey Hills Vic 3127

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