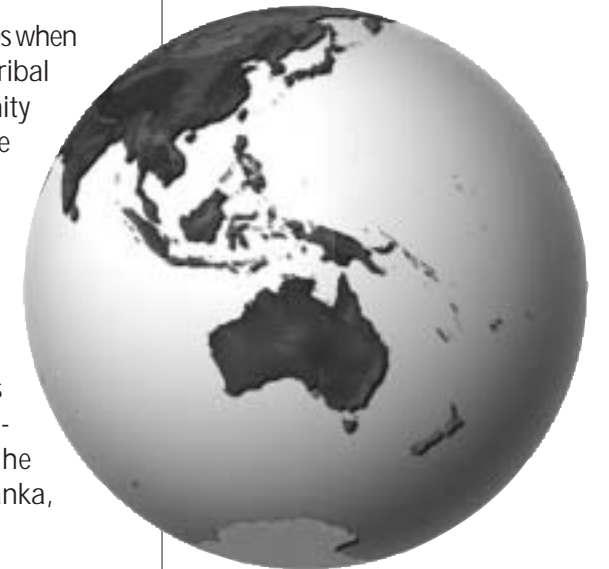


# REGIONAL PROFILE: ASIA & THE PACIFIC

## THE PRIMATE'S FUND AT WORK

PWRDF began its involvement in Asia-Pacific in the mid-1970s when concern grew over extraction of resources from the Tiruray tribal community lands in the southern Philippines. The community was displaced and experienced violent ethnic strife. The Philippine Episcopal Church initiated a co-operative movement for the betterment of the rural population and invited PWRDF to join them as partners.

For more than two decades, PWRDF has supported people in the Asia/Pacific region who are building peace, justice and development in an inter-faith context. PWRDF maintains long-term partnerships with many faith-based and non-faith-based organizations in countries in Asia, including the Philippines, the Thai-Burma border, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and the Solomon Islands in the Pacific region.



## BUILDING A MORAL ECONOMY AND WEAVING A CULTURE OF PEACE

In Asia-Pacific PWRDF supports the work of marginal farmers, fisher folk communities and small producers, as they struggle to obtain a fair share of their produce and gain ownership of land and resources. We support the aspirations of indigenous people to reclaim their heritage, and gain access to ancestral lands and resources. We work with civil society organizations on the Thai-Burma border to free all ethnic groups in Burma from the yoke of oppression under the Military Government. We support partners fighting large-scale poverty in Bangladesh. We promote racial and ethnic harmony and peace in Sri Lanka and the Solomon Islands. Support also goes to much needed legal services and counseling of migrant workers in the region who leave their homes and families in search of income, mostly in menial and dangerous jobs abroad. Behind all these initiatives lie the underlying objectives of the Fund to build a moral political economy so that everyone has enough, so that peace with justice can prevail.

### THE PRIMATE'S FUND

*Not about money  
About people.  
Not about hand-outs  
About partnership.  
Not about charity  
About dignity.  
Not about them  
About us.  
The Primate's Fund:  
it works for all of us.*

(Brian Pearson)



### The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund

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PWRDF is registered as a federal charity and our number is: 8664 34640 RR0001. The work of PWRDF is supported by a generous contribution from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

## ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA PARTNERS IN MISSION IN THE ASIA/PACIFIC REGION

*If once we acted as though there were only givers who had nothing to receive and receivers who had nothing to give, the oneness of the missionary task must now make us all both givers and receivers*

—(Anglican Consultative Council, 1973)

*Partners in Mission of the Anglican Church of Canada "promotes and develops mission, with enthusiasm and prayer, in a manner which engages the church in circles of partnership locally, nationally, globally and ecumenically".*

—(General Synod Strategic Plan, 1995)

*Our mission includes "proclamation of the Good News; teaching, baptizing and supporting new believers; responding to human need by loving service; seeking transformation of unjust social structures; and striving to safeguard the integrity of creation".*

—(Anglican Consultative Council, 2002)

Mission is people working with people working with God. The priority of the national Partners in Mission program for Asia continues to be the building of relationships for mission within the church in Canada, and with Asian Anglicans and ecumenical church organizations. Through regular visits, mission personnel, consultations and grants, Partners in Mission serves with churches in India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Philippines, Malaysia, Peoples' Republic of China, Japan, and Republic of Korea.



Theological education, leadership development, evangelism, church infrastructure, and international relationship are mission priorities identified by partners. As many Anglicans around the world live in situations of civil war and communal violence, reconciliation and peace with justice are also important priorities. These are critical issues of faith and church for Canadian Anglicans also.

The development of Asian Anglican leadership for church ministry is supported by Partners in Mission through scholarships and funding of seminaries, while the development of Canadian church leadership is supported through such programs as the international internship for Canadian Anglican theological students. Students spend a summer with Asian partners learning about parish ministry in a cross-cultural context. Close partnerships between Canadian dioceses, Asian Provinces and theological colleges make these experiences possible. Encouraging women's gifts and skills for ministry and supporting Asian contextual theology are important emphases.

Justice and human rights concerns continue to be significant. Many partners in Asia experience the violence of armed conflict, poverty, ethnic, gender and religious intolerance, and natural disaster. It is in justice advocacy and peace building that Partners in Mission works most closely with The Primate's Fund. Although much of Canadian Anglican social justice advocacy takes place within KAIROS and other ecumenical structures, Partners in Mission and PWRDF consult closely at all levels toward a complementary strategy of solidarity with Asian partners.



- *There are 75,000 children under the age of 18 engaged in 17 armed conflicts currently going on in the region, in countries stretching from Afghanistan to the Philippines.*
- *Two thirds of the world's 1.2 billion poor live in the Asia-Pacific region.*
- *Environmental vandalism and human rights abuses by trans-national corporations are common in almost every country of the region.*
- *Every year thousands of women, children and migrant workers in Asia-Pacific become the victims of trafficking.*
- *The Philippines' foreign debt at the end of 1998 was equivalent to 83.04% of its Gross National Product (GNP).*
- *Burmese migrant workers in Thailand earn \$1-\$2 US/day because factories deduct the cost of accommodation.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Source: the website of Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions: <http://www.asiapacificforum.net/sitemap.htm>

## **PWRDF WORKS BOTH WITHIN SPECIFIC COUNTRIES AND AT A CROSS-BORDER AND REGIONAL LEVEL.**

For example, the Fund partners with Jubilee South, and Asia-Pacific Research Network, a regional group of 39 member organizations from 17 countries. Both these networks are involved in action research, training and response to advocacy needs in Asia. They provide people with good information on fair-trade, debt-free, green and indigenous alternatives to corporate globalization. UBINIG, the Policy Research and Development Alternatives in Bangladesh, and Gami Seva Sevana in Sri Lanka, effectively campaign against genetically modified food and its disastrous effects on food sovereignty, health and the environment. To support initiatives in the protection of migrant labourers' rights, PWRDF supports the Asia-Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM) and the Mission for Migrant Filipino Workers in Hong Kong.



In the Philippines, PWRDF works with local communities of farmers, sugar cane plant workers, fisher folk and indigenous people. They all seek to defend their lives, land and resources that are threatened by their own government's collaboration with foreign business houses. In Sri Lanka, the cease-fire agreement between the government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has brought hope to people. But the peace talks are now stalled, and there is a risk of the country returning to civil war. Reconciliation between communities remains a challenge to the Sri Lankan peace process, so The Primate's Fund supports partners who are involved in ongoing programs of study, dialogue and action for peace in Sri Lanka.



In Burma, reports suggest that mass forced labour, forced relocations, arbitrary detention, torture, rape, summary execution, looting, extortion, systematic destruction of village economy and ethnic culture, and religious persecution are routine. The Fund supports various civil society groups in the Thai-Burma border who document, research, and take action on these social justice issues.



A Victoria, BC, group called Pacific Peoples Partnership (PPP), supports initiatives in the Solomon Islands to facilitate the formation of civil society groups who enable communities to recover from the ethnic strife of the late 1990s. PWRDF, along with other ecumenical agencies in Canada, has agreed to support PPP at a time when most funding agencies are pulling out of the Solomon Islands because of the disruptions caused by ethnic violence.



All PWRDF partners' work is geared toward building gender-sensitive, sustainable models. The EKOTA women's project of the Church of Bangladesh Social Development Programme organizes women in community savings groups and provides micro-credit facilities. Likewise, the *Narigrantha Prabartana* (Feminist Publishing House) of UBINIG publishes and distributes writing on issues that affect the lives and livelihoods of women.



## **MEET A PWRDF PARTNER: AN INTERVIEW WITH FARDEC**

*The Farmers Development Centre (FARDEC) was created in 1989 in the Central Visayas Region of the Philippines in the midst of a growing clamour from farmers for land and human rights. It is a regional peasant support network that focuses on policy research, agrarian issues, and farmers' communications. FARDEC has been in partnership with PWRDF since 1990. Estrella Flores is the Executive Director of FARDEC.*

**PWRDF:** *Tell us about the work FARDEC is doing in your community.*

**Estrella:** All of us in the staff, and management committee members, organize and mobilize communities. This means we really immerse ourselves with the farmers in their communities to deeply grasp their situation and respond to their needs. We provide organizational assistance and training to farmers so they can manage their own organizational and community affairs, especially in launching local campaigns of lobbying, dialogues, and land occupation. We complement the training with research on agrarian policies and issues affecting the lives of the farmers. FARDEC also broadcasts two radio programs, in which farmers can air their untold stories and concerns.

**PWRDF:** *How has The Primate's Fund supported your work?*

**Estrella:** The Primate's Fund is not only our funding partner but also a partner in solidarity with our cause. PWRDF staff, and even members of the Board of Directors, take time to visit us and our farming communities. This in itself is a big thing for the farmers. As you know, farmers, because of living in abject poverty, often think they are not important in our society and nobody cares for them. So it is a great pleasure for them to welcome visitors. They come to realize that many people, even from far countries, are on their side.

**PWRDF:** *How do you see your partnership developing with The Primate's Fund?*

**Estrella:** We are looking forward to a continued partnership and strengthened solidarity with PWRDF. The Philippines partners and PWRDF formed the Philippines Advisory Group (PAG) in 1990. Ever since then, the PAG has

evolved as a model of equitable partnership relationship between PWRDF and its partners in the country, as opposed to a "donor-receiver model" of relationship between western funding agencies and the development organizations of the developing countries.

**PWRDF:** *How can the Fund share the problems faced by your country more widely?*

**Estrella:** Your continued support to our efforts and struggles, and your support to other people's struggles in other countries, is in itself helping to share. In particular, the PWRDF South-South exchange strategy is a good way to share information, expertise and experience at the international level and for us to learn from each other. PWRDF's support for facilitating exchanges amongst and between partners is instrumental in creating global solidarity in support of the communities that are living under the yoke of oppression and deprivation.