The Provision of Medical Services in an Anarchy

by

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and
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The Chairman of the meeting was Mr. William Wilson.

MS WYNN-POPE. It's a great honour to be here tonight to talk to you about Somalia and the United Nations' role of peace-keeping. I will focus more on the anarchic side of overseas aid than the medical side in which I am not a specialist. This year has the potential to be the beginning of momentous change which could have impact throughout the world. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has handed down his recommendations for wide-ranging changes and reform of the United Nations' systems, not only the administrative functions of the United Nations which are cumbersome to say the least, but also with regard to the United Nations' peace-keeping operations and their humanitarian affairs.

The UN until now has been rendered ineffective due to the veto power of the Security Council and the ongoing deadlock engendered by the Gulf War, but in the last few years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Gorbachev has ended the ideological stand-off between East and West and a new role is being cast for the United Nations. It's a role that the United Nations hasn't really worked out, but hopefully Kofi Annan will be able to meet the challenge. Since the end of the Cold War the UN peacekeeping forces and humanitarian agencies have had to work very closely together. I've had the opportunity to work with many peacekeeping forces around the world; American and Australian troops in Somalia, British troops in the former Yugoslavia and French troops in Zaire and Rwanda. Each of these circumstances was different, and in each of them there were a great many stories to tell, some success stories, but unfortunately not all of them.

In Somalia I learned very quickly one of the greatest lessons of aid work - communication. We had CARE staff coming from many different countries around the world. There were people from India and Bangladesh and from New York and California who spoke many different languages. Some of the problems that we faced were best summed up by an international quiz competition that was held a few years ago. In the final of the quiz competition there was an American, a Brit, an Australian and an Irishman. The big question was "Old McDonald had a -" and the contestants had to say what Old McDonald had and spell it. The American, being brash and rash and very quick to jump in said, "Oh, that's so easy. Old McDonald had a ranch, r-a-n-c-h." Obviously not right. The Brit was very standoffish but he said, "Old McDonald had an estate, e-s-t-a-t-e." And that clearly wasn't right. And the Aussie gets in there and says, "Well, I reckon Old McDonald had a property, p-r-o-p-e-r-t-y." And that clearly wasn't right. And the

Irishman's thinking, "This is from my home country. I know this, I can do this." And he says, "Old McDonald had a farm." "And can you spell it for us, please?" "EIEIO."

So in Somalia we started off with this incredible lack of communication within own team but also between all the visitors to Somalia and the Somalis themselves. It's an astounding country, and it's still suffering an enormous number of problems, many of the problems it was facing when we were there in 1992. When I arrived I was stopped. I flew out of Kenya and landed in North Mogadishu, and at that time the city was divided between North and South Mogadishu. The South was run by General Aideed of whom we've all heard, I think, because the UN took him on head to head and lost, and the North was run by Ali Mahdee who claimed to be the president of Somalia. We arrived on this dirt strip on North Mogadishu because the main Mogadishu airport was in the South. There was a corrugated iron shed which was the customs shed which was amazing. We filled out customs forms which were the old Somali forms from the Italian days and they were in Italian and Somali, so that was a challenge in itself. We got to the bottom of the form and we'd done all the normal stuff, name and date of birth and place of birth and at the bottom it says, "Arms, what calibre and how much ammunition?" At the time I asked myself whether I should declare my Swiss Army knife which was all I had to defend myself. I wasn't too sure whether the Somalis had enough of a sense of humour to handle it but I later learned that they probably would have.

We crossed the green line and went into South Mogadishu which was where our office was. We had to communicate by radio which is of such importance in places that are at war. Handsets were held, we had radios in the car and a base station back at our office in South Mogadishu, and we had to walk between the North and the South because we couldn't have the same staff working over the entire of the city of Mogadishu. We walked into the compound where we had our office and our houses which was protected by guards at the gate and on the roof and I was astounded by the number of guns that were around. We travelled with three gunmen in the car. It used to change from two in the car and one on the roof to one in the car and two on the roof, but they were all there constantly with their AK47s and M16s.

Mogadishu had been a beautiful city and also one of the safest in Africa in 1988/89 before the war. As I travelled across and saw the effects that the famine was having and saw the parks being ripped up and covered with fresh graves, it really struck me that anarchy

is not such a great thing. I know that people say we have too much government but thank goodness, in many ways, because a country where there is no government is frightening. In Somalia it all reduced down to an old Somali saying, "I am Somali, my country against the world. I am Somali, my clan against my country. I am Somali, me and my brother against my clan. I am Somali." It's a tragic saying, and it's a saying of such truth that it's frightening; that society in Somalia had got to the point where brother was fighting brother in order to support their own family, or maybe for no reason at all. It was a country where there was no government. There was no administration. There was no legal system. There was no judiciary. There were no police. There was no army. There were no jobs. The only job that you could have in Somalia was with an aid organisation, and CARE was the biggest employer because we ran the port. And it struck me some years later that we're all promoted as individuals to do what we like with our lives and get on and not worry about anybody else but what you're seeing is a society where individualism gets to the point where we don't think about who is affected by our actions, and then that's what we come out with, a Somalia.

Despite all of this we were able to set up and run a reasonably effective aid program, although it wasn't without some interesting moments. Within the first week of being in Somalia I had guns pointed at me because I was trying to organise the air lift from Australia and what materials we needed and what staff we needed. I was up very late every night with a car running in the courtyard of this little hotel which had the water delivered by donkey. The car had the bonnet up and I had plugged my computer and my printer and my satellite telephone into the battery. It was the hub of Australia's aid operation in Somalia for quite a long time but the Somalis were not happy about having their car batteries run flat night after night.

We had an extensive program in Somalia. We had a food distribution program. At one stage in Bidoa we were receiving eight to ten US Hercules aircraft every day and shipping that food out to the villages. We had a supplementary feeding program which was largely for women and children and for the severely malnourished. Three or four of those high protein biscuits a day will be enough to keep a child alive although they're not for much more than that, they did make a big difference a few times while we were there with different communities. We had health programs, with nurses coming across from Australia, and we also had water supply programs and the distribution of seeds and tools

as soon as we could, as soon as people were strong enough to plant and work in the field.

One of the problems that we faced in Somalia was looting. I think it was heavily reported and it was very much a feature of Somali society. Because there was no marketplace and there was nothing, there were no jobs and people had no income, whoever had the biggest gun won. We didn't have any guns, for lots of reasons, and it was before the gun buy-back. We only had our Swiss Army pocketknives and we were extensively looted. Sometimes trucks of food would just be driven straight out of the airport straight down to the marketplace. But putting this into perspective, those people who were looting, very many had no food for their own families and if they had no jobs and they had no income then their own families would die. Ultimately, the excessive looting in Somalia meant that you could buy a 50 kilogram sack of wheat in the market for the equivalent of $2 which made food fantastically accessible to the entire population, not only to those people who were at the end of the distribution lines. We did have one looting of our warehouse where it was totally cleaned out overnight. We had twelve security guards on the warehouse with their guns but they decided to loot the warehouse and there's not much you can do about that. But the worse thing was that Owess, who was the warehouse manager, arrived at our house at 5.30 in the morning to tell us and was totally distraught. To put it all into perspective, one of our international staff members who was in charge of the warehouse said, "Well, if it had to go why did they have to find out so early in the morning?" Having said all that, we did get most of the aid through. I think on balance about 95 per cent of the aid that came into Bidoa actually reached the people that we intended it for,

After the first couple of months we started seeing the light come back into the eyes of the children. We started to see people moving from Bidoa back to their villages and get going. Our water program and food distribution in the villages was working but the security situation deteriorated dramatically. It is hard to imagine how it can deteriorate from anarchy, but it got to the point where General Morgan, who was Siad Barre's former son in law, took Baderi, a town about 100 kilometres west of Bidoa. General Morgan had been in Kenya with about three hundred thousand Somali refugees who were hiding there after the fall of the Siad Barre regime, and it was a shock to wake up one morning and find that Baderi had been taken. We had a very early morning radio call, again the radio was so important in these situations.

Being the team leader in Bidoa I was called to the radio and I sprang out of bed and grabbed off the laundry table a pair of jeans and raced out and chatted to Bob and came back down. I have to say when I put on these jeans I thought, "Gosh, I've lost a lot of weight. This is rather good." And Gael came in and said, "Have you got any greens I can wear?" And I said, "Why?" And he said, "Well, I think you're wearing mine." So I had to strip. We shared a house and there were eight of us in this house. I stripped off and grabbed another pair of jeans and thought, "These have shrunk, how can they manage to make Levi 501s shrink in cold water in the middle of the desert in Somalia?" Anyway so I didn't worry about it and then someone else came looking for their jeans a bit later and I had theirs on, so it was not always easy just getting normal things happening. In view of the fact that the security situation was seriously deteriorating we evacuated and scaled down our team in Bidoaand all the women were evacuated. Very soon we were suffering desperately on the beaches of Mombassa eating chilli crab while the situation stabilised a little bit in Somalia.

Very soon we were able to commute from Mombassa to Somalia on the United States Hercules aircraft. It was a two and a half hour flight so we had to be up at 3.00 in the morning to jump on the plane. We'd fight for our wheat sack to sleep on till we got there, and one day I arrived there and was told that this was the last plane to be in Bidoa that day and I would have to go out on the same plane that I had arrived on. That was fine. There was 40 minutes on the ground. I had to talk to my boss who was the team leader in Mogadishu so we went and sat under a tree and had our discussion and before I had to get back on the plane I said, "Look, I've just got to dash around the back here, just pop behind this shed." And Rodri said, "Fine, fine, not a problem." So I popped around behind the shed and my driver came screaming up and said the only word of English I heard him say in three and a half months. He said, "Dangerous," like this. I didn't know what was going on, being behind the shed, but Rodri being a former soldier looked to the ground and discovered we were in the middle of a minefield. He said, "Phoebe, I think you'd best come back. You're in the middle of a minefield," and I said, "I really can't. This is not a good moment." And he said, "Well, if you can't come back, pee gently then."

The fact that there was no legal system, no police, no rule of law in Somalia made even things like sacking a staff member very difficult. We had legally flimsy contracts saying to people that "This is how much you would be paid, this is the duration of your employment, and

if we don't like you and you don't like us we'll pay out your contract and you can go." We discovered that one of our radio operators was not fulfilling his task and he was sacked while I was out of the country and came back to discover that death threats had been made on the fellow that had sacked him. I went immediately to the Governor of Bidoa who was a crooked warlord at best, and something more frightening at worst, and sat and discussed for three hours the fact that this death threat had to be withdrawn from our staff member and that we would not re-employ the radio operator. I made no ground. The staff member was taken out of Bidoah that day while negotiations continued. One of General Aideed's men came down from Mogadishu. I continued negotiations with him and finally I said to him, "Tell me would you take onto your staff somebody who had threatened your life?" And he looked at me and he said, "No, I quite see what you mean. I will speak to the child's family." I am talking about a nineteen year old. So he spoke to the child's family. In two days he came back. With great hope I had brought our staff member back into the country. Two days later he came back to me and he said, "I think your staff member had best leave." He said, "There's nothing I can do." So it was a deadlock. It was either take on the radio operator again or remove our staff member. To me it was a very clear decision. We removed the staff member. I was not going to be held to ransom in that way. But overall it makes our dismissal laws look rather tame, doesn't it?

Through all of this we had lots of success in Somalia. I visited one village three or four months after we first arrived in Somalia. When we first arrived one of our staff members went there and there was a woman and two children and they were eating their clothes. There was nothing. The water was destroyed. There were no crops. There was nobody. It was a ghost village. Four months later there were ten thousand people living there and as we drove in we were greeted by the wonderful African voices singing the song of the Conch and the stamping of feet. We had done this through the help of the Australian public, the United States Air Force, the United States Government and the Australian Government. All these people had contributed to our program and made it possible for us to get these people who only months before had been starving, back into their village.

But having said that, the security situation deteriorated even more and the Americans stepped in. George Bush was in the dying days of his presidency. Operation Restore Hope began as a humanitarian mission. It's one of the United Nations' missions that is seen now as

a big disaster, but it began as a humanitarian mission to assist the aid organisations in the delivery of aid, even if it did mean sitting on our roof protecting us. Where it went wrong was that they decided that they were going to have a military solution to a social problem. Having resolved the problem of the famine, having resolved the majority of the immediate humanitarian disaster, the military in Operation Restore Hope decided that it would establish democracy in Somalia and resolve the anarchy and put a government in place. It started by disarming the population. Now when you have a young man with a gun and the gun is his only livelihood because there are no jobs and someone takes the gun away from him because he says, "It's not good to have a gun" but puts nothing in it's place, it's doomed to failure. And that is what happened to Operation Restore Hope. Much more was required. It needed a full and comprehensive plan. It needed something that would work with the Somali people, that would establish some sort of agreement between the North and the South of Mogadishu that would enable some sort of political solution to the problem which was so deep and so entrenched that it was not going to be solved by the US Marines taking guns away from the young children.

In Rwanda the mission of the United Nations peacekeepers was different from that in Somalia and it was also unclear. At the time that the civil war started there were five thousand peace keepers in Rwanda and the United Nations knew that there was trouble brewing and they were desperately trying to find more troops and couldn't. So when the trouble did brew and boil over the peacekeepers were totally powerless (a) through mandate and (b) through inadequate numbers to do anything about it, and five thousand people were massacred in the process. The aid program that resulted and the 1.2 million refugees in Zaire that resulted was something that could have been avoided if proper preventative action had been taken. In the former Yugoslavia the United Nations also had a very limited mandate which made it very difficult for the aid workers and for them and for the warring parties to get on and do their respective jobs. The mandate was so limited that the French Army was ordered at a checkpoint to open the back of one of their armoured personnel carriers. Under the UN mandate they had no right to refuse. They opened the back of the armoured personnel carrier in which a Bosnian minister was travelling and the Bosnian minister was shot. It was said that the British did not always adhere to the rules of the mandate and were much more tough on the warring parties but it was also a difficult war for aid workers. There were always stories

of aid workers driving into Bosnia. Especially in the winter when the warring parties would be up in the hills desperately trying to keep warm in their sleeping bags, people would hear a vehicle going along the road below, not bother to even get of their sleeping bags to see who it was, and just pop a round in the mortar and fire on the road below. You were just lucky if it missed you.

One of the key things in looking at peace keeping and these war situations is that if we want to aim for world peace then we must also fight poverty. Willi Brandt, the former Chancellor of West Germany, said that re-shaping north/south relations was one of the greatest social challenges to mankind for the remainder of the century. He said, "While hunger rules, peace cannot prevail. He who wants to ban war must also ban poverty." Morally it makes no difference whether a human being is killed in war or is condemned to starve to death because of the indifference of others. The aid community and organisations such as CARE are working towards peace through the eradication of poverty, and one of the things I wanted to touch on very quickly is the sort of work that CARE does which is not the high profile Rwanda and Somalia but the development work we do. And that's where the pigs come in. We have micro enterprise projects. Sometimes all it takes is just a loan to somebody of 40 or 50 dollars to buy a few pigs and the whole process starts. They are able to breed from the pigs, they're able to sell the pigs, and they are able to start an economic process that actually brings them out of poverty. Something that we are probably all familiar with in Australia is the difficulty or maybe the ease of access to credit. In many countries poor people don't have that and so the grind just grinds on. There are also infrastructure problems, and CARE works with infrastructure. We had a project building dykes in Vietnam. In the centre of Vietnam there are a lot of problems with hurricanes and cyclones every year that come in and destroy the crops, and if we can try and work with the people to improve the infrastructure then maybe there's some hope.

CARE is also working with refugees. One in two hundred people around the world every day are a refugee. If you think of the world's population 1:200 is not very many. People who have fled their home from fear, from danger, from whatever and they are refugees. One of the things that people often ask is, "Why go overseas when there's so much need in Australia?" And it's a good question. There is an enormous amount of need in Australia which I think in some degree is being addressed, but the fact is this, that if we don't work to

eradicate poverty globally we will have no world as we know it. That sounds very dramatic, but environmentally 80 per cent of the world's population live in the developing world and they are destroying the environment, as are we.

From a security point of view, again going back to this population issue, we cannot sustain the increasing divide between the rich and the poor in the world, and I think socially and morally we can't allow a child to die from a disease such as measles when it's so easily prevented. I would hope that soon we'd be able to move to the situation where the United Nations may actually be able to achieve what they set out to do in the preamble of their charter. It says that:

We the peoples of the United Nations, determine to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.

That's what organisations such as CARE are all about and if we're going to look to a happy 21st century, we all need to say, " Let's put out a hand and do something" and walk into the 21st century together.

SENATOR HERRON. I met Phoebe for the first time in Goma in a hell-stricken situation which I'll recount to you shortly. I was stimulated to tell my only story for the night by Phoebe's story of Old McDonald's farm. I was at dinner in Darwin the other night and there was an Aboriginal comedian Rupert Walley with an Aboriginal audience. He told the story of three young Aboriginals walking along the street and a police car pulled up. The policeman pulled up and he saw these three brothers walking along the road and he said to one of the brothers, he said, "What's your name?" And the fellow said, "Myers." And he said, "Smart guy, eh, stand over there." He said to the next one, "What's your name?" And the next one said, "David Jones." And he said, "You go and stand other there. Another smart guy." And he said to the next fellow, "What's your name?" He said, "Ken." He said, "Oh, Ken, you're a nice fellow." He said, "You're the only straight one amongst you." He said, "What's your other name?" He said, "Tucky Fried Chicken."

I want to talk to you about my present role which I've been in for 18 months. I was driving around Brisbane one day and it came over the radio that CARE Australia was appealing for doctors and nurses

to go to Rwanda and I thought, "Well, why not. Very difficult to get a doctor to give up their practice because most of them are constrained by wife, children, practice, patients and so on. I was in this extraordinary situation I was in the Senate. Nobody would miss me whether I was there or not, you know. So I thought, "Well, why not?" I rang my wife and she said, "You're mad." And then I thought about, "Well, I am a bit mad," so I rang CARE Australia and asked them to send me the forms and I thought, "They won't know who I am." I'd like you to put yourselves in the same position. You're leading the comfortable lives in law or medicine. You're driving around in the car and you hear this appeal. In a moment of madness you decide to go, and that's what I did. CARE accepted me and off I went to Rwanda. It's down there in Africa. I hadn't the faintest idea where the hell it was when I answered. I'd seen on television those terrible pictures, of people walking along the road and dropping dead. It all happened very quickly. It happened in about ten days from go to whoa.

Rwanda is in Central Africa. It's surrounded by other countries. Uganda to the north and Tanzania to the east, Zaire to the west and Burundi to the south. Now you may wonder how big it is. It's about from Melbourne to Ballarat or Bendigo or Wilson's Promontory. It's 140 kilometres, that's all. 140 by 140. Before all this conflict started there were 7 million people there, so if you just imagine 7 million people, now poverty stricken. I went with two nuns. The fellow in this slide who looks like a priest actually was the very reverse. Jacques Matheur is a Frenchman and he was taken along because they speak French in Rwanda. But one of his other attributes was that he tried to seduce these two nuns while we were there - unsuccessfully. Or so he tells me. They were very clever people. There were a couple of young doctors, a most remarkable woman doctor and a psychologist

Off we went. Our first sight of the place was smoke haze. We went along the road from Goma to this incredible sight. There was smoke and it stunk. I thought it was dead bodies but in fact it was a volcano and the sulphur from the volcanoes, and if you've been to New Zealand you'll know what I mean. We went up a hill and there were a million people scattered across this volcanic rock. People talk to me about a million dollars, I don't know what that means but there were a million people. There were storms and there was smoke and smell. This slide is of the burial pits with the Red Cross signs. There were little huts built up on the hill. They were living in blue tents scattered across the hillside and that stretched as far as the eye could see, over 70 kilometres. These

were distributed by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. In one area I saw the OXFAM water supply system. Because it was a United Nations situation the Germans were purifying the water from a stream and OXFAM was distributing the water. The tanks were on the hill, the water was reticulated down and they were coming with whatever they could get to collect water. Water is a very basic thing in life and that's what was being distributed there. They would walk for kilometres to get the water in whatever receptacle they had. The water came from the stream, and of course there were kids swimming in it, defaecating in it, drinking it. 80,000 died of cholera just before I went there. They were still dying at the time I was there.

One of the paradoxes I saw was a girl in her white school uniform. I didn't twig immediately. They said they fled in the clothes that they were in. I didn't really appreciate that, and I'll come back to it in a moment. I got to a place called Katale which was the end of my line, 70 kilometres north of Goma, and CARE Australia had been given the responsibility to look after the unaccompanied children. The word "unaccompanied" was appropriate because they didn't know whether they were orphaned. Often when they fled from Rwanda across into Zaire the parents died, but in some cases the children were just separated. There were a thousand children in this camp. At the time I arrived they were digging trenches, erecting tents or just standing around. It was bedlam.

A barrister from Sydney called Patrick Burgess whom I've kept in touch with was teaching the kids songs. He had a guitar and he used to play songs and the kids were clapping their hands. One of the eerie things at night was the kids singing these songs. He was teaching them Elvis Presley songs; he was a bit of a Presley fan, Patrick. The water truck would come in, and just for a bit of light relief the fellow who was running the water truck would spray water over the kids, and like all kids they'd run around and get under the water. My French is probably like your French, it was schoolboy French, and my accent was terrible, but I'd walk around and I'd play with the kids because they were just lovely. Kids are kids the world over. I walked up to this kid and I said, "Bonjour, monsieur," and this kid looked at me very askance, and lifted up the t-shirt and I said, "Pardon, Madame." And she smiled. But you couldn't tell what they were. They just had clothes that were sent to them from all over the world.

For light relief, I'd pick up babies around the place. One fellow was very well fed. He grabbed the food from every other kid in the place and I used to cart him around. I sort of adopted him. I adopted

two actually, Richard and Felicity. They were named by the Rwandan people. Nobody knew who they were. Felicity just cried all the time, and I was two months there and I felt I would never get through - I got through to her eventually. I'd walk into the tent at lunch - when I say lunchtime, we never had lunch. We worked seven days a week wherever we were, we could keep going between night and day. And she'd stand up and put her arms out to me. I was a bit worried that she might get attached to me but a psychologist told me it was better to do that for her than nothing. I left her behind, obviously. The terrible part was the kids who were suffering from trauma. God knows what they'd seen, presumably their parents beheaded; terrible things that went on. They just sat there.

My job was to do an outpatients clinic. One fellow was an ambassador for Rwanda who had been to Paris, spoke 13 languages he told me. I don't doubt him. He spoke perfect English. Felix was his name. I told him the story about Felix the Cat, which he'd never heard of. He was quite tickled by that. 700 people would queue up every day to come to our little aid post. A lot of them were fit young males and they would complain of symptoms. I had an interpreter there. There was everything known to man and beast, tuberculosis, cholera, dysentery. I discovered after a short time there that they were coming along so we'd give them antibiotics so they could sell them on the black market outside the place. There was nothing wrong with them. But, you know, you could only go on history. It was dispensing things as you saw it, and using your wits. Gunshot wounds, machete wounds and so on. One of the things that they'd do with the machete was to chop their legs off. One kid had disturbed a few robbers in a refugee tent and he lost his legs. It stormed every night. One of the terrible memories I have is of dying people lying on plastic on the floor. There was a tropical downpour one night and these people were washed into the corner of the tent with the water washing over them. We pulled them out of the water so they didn't drown. And then we had what we called the body snatchers. There was a little baby's body on a stretcher. I just couldn't bring myself to take a photo of it but these fellows would turn up and throw the bodies in a truck. Now I've got some horrific slides and I'll tell you just before I show them, but I think the truth has to be told.

My operating theatre was a tent. I did minor procedures, mainly abscesses. Just stick a knife in. I had minimal equipment as you can imagine. One of the terrible things that happened was that aid trucks would speed past and people would hitch a ride on a truck and they'd

have their legs hanging out, and as two trucks passed they'd clean all the legs up and I'd get compound ankles and smashed legs. All I had was a bit of local anaesthetic. It wasn't set up for that sort of situation. Col Carling was running the operation at that area. He came down from Goma.

Phoebe and Rodri were running Goma which was 70 kilometres away, and I was very grateful when Phoebe came through because it was some contact with civilisation. We had terrible problems with radio contact and we felt a bit isolated. Then the revolution came. I was in Zaire. I was 70 kilometres across the road and I had no idea what it was about. I badgered Col Carling saying, " What the hell is it all about?" I went in this vehicle across to Rwanda. There were extinct volcanoes, some active volcanoes. I was out at Katale which was a little village. The Hutu were just above us where we slept, we evacuated the place at night because it was just too dangerous there. They came and looted the place at night because all they were worried about was staying alive and they didn't care how. A million people were scattered along the road down to Goma. I went across to Kigali which was the capital of Rwanda about 70 kilometres. To my amazement, it was absolutely beautiful. It was a very fertile area but there were semi-trailers, trucks and burnt out vehicles along the road. We were warned not to take photographs because there were roadblocks along the way. It's called the Switzerland of Africa and is physically one of the most beautiful places I've seen. There were farms and tilled fields. People walking along the roads and then congregating in markets to exchange things. You can see buildings of quite reasonable physical dimensions. This is an aerial view of Kigali itself, the capital. There were television and radio stations. But there were buildings that had been shot out. This slide shows the victorious Tutsi. I was actually speaking to a twelve and a thirteen year old with AK47s who were "controlling" the situation there. There are landmines around the place. It was anarchic. No question. As Phoebe said, it was the rule of the gun and if you had a gun you were in control. Age didn't matter. Didn't matter where you belonged. And these were the conquerors.

I was asked to go down with the CARE team to look at an orphanage in another town. It was the university town. I came back with an ambulance that broke down outside an army base and I got held up. My vivid memory is of having an AK47 stuck up my neck and the only time in my life where I claimed to be an Englishman. I am actually Irish by origin but I had this CARE Australia T-shirt on, fortunately, or

unfortunately, doesn't really matter. He spoke in French and he said, "Who are you?" and I said, "Australie, Australie," thinking everybody knew Australia. And he looked blankly at me and he said, "Francais, Francais," and of course they hate the French. He had this AK47. I said, "Non Francais, non Francais." I was terrified. I thought, "God, they're going to find me, another body in the ditch," and all the rest of it. And then I had a moment of inspiration. I said, "Anglais, Anglais." He said, "Anglais." And he relaxed. I thought, "I'm going to need a dry cleaner after this." But anyway he walked away and then he said, "Arretez," and I thought, "He's telling me to go. Where the hell do I go?" And then I said, "Moi, moi?" Then he said, "Non, non, I'm going." Well, I stopped. That's right, "I'm going." And he left me.

The university town has a Parliament House. You know, there am I over in the area where there are volcanoes and volcanic rock and they have got a Parliament House. But when you look closely you will see where the rockets have gone through it. They had a football ground and 30,000 were slaughtered in that football ground. They rounded them up. The Tutsis were rounded up by the Hutu and they just killed them. The Tutsis fled to the church because they thought they'd be safe and they were machine gunned in the church and left there.

We discovered in Kigali that there were just as many orphans. And I discovered for the first time in my life that I had a dewlap. First of all the children had a white haired white man whom they had never seen before, and he also had a dewlap and they were all grabbing my dewlap to see whether it was real or not, apart from the kid who was sticking his finger up his nose because he was so overcome by it all. That is my final memory of my couple of months, the children, because ultimately it comes down to the children and what we leave behind of our society. It's not us. We've had our chance. We've done what we can. I came out of that a great admirer of what CARE Australia was doing, and what young people are doing with the idealists of this world who are working hard for our country and for humanity as a whole. It brought home to me the importance that all of us should take an interest in this because as Phoebe said, if one of those children dies there, it is part of humanity as a whole. We have an obligation to humanity. I can't explain all of that. I have a handout which is on the chair as you go out, which tries to explain it. I have a friend who is the editor of the Courier Mail, the local newspaper in Brisbane who said, "Write something down within 3 weeks of getting there because then your memory, your attitudes are fresh." And I wrote that down. That article is at the door there with

that little map that I showed you. My ideas haven't changed 3 years later. It's still apposite, what I wrote. Also with it is an attempt at an explanation from a book that I saw about the reason for this sort of anarchy occurring, and I think it's correct. It's tribalism. How can you explain a 400 year history which it was, where the Hutu started to war with the Tutsi. You couldn't tell them apart. Physically they were no different, but they had an ingrained hatred for each other over centuries. I suppose it's the same as in Bosnia and in Somalia, although there were other reasons for Somalia.

In 1994/95 Australia spent 0.34 per cent of our Gross National Product on overseas aid. In 1984 we spent 0.49, and this year we're spending 0.27. We have halved the amount of our Gross National Product on overseas aid between 1984 and 1997, and I believe it's to our shame because we are almost at the stage of reaching the rock bottom country in the world in percentage of GNP, which surprisingly is the United States. It spends 0.21 per cent of their Gross National Product. And if there are people of Norwegian descent amongst you, Norway is the most generous nation on earth. From a population of 4 million they spend 1.13 per cent of their Gross National Product on overseas aid. So when you see a plea for CARE Australia I would ask you to dig deep in your pockets because we are sitting here tonight in our black ties and our nice dresses and looking at the situation - of which I only experienced a couple of months, and I don't claim any particular thing for that - but it brought home to me that we have an obligation to the rest of the world. We with our wealth, no matter how much it is, can contribute to alleviating the suffering in the rest of the world. I have a lot of regard for CARE. It is a well-run organisation, it is an honourable organisation, it taps the idealism of the youth of this country, and I beg of you to contribute to it.

QUESTION: DR O'DAY. What is the appropriate form of aid for these countries? Should you just be providing a road or access? Should you be providing just a way of finding clean water? The World Bank in Indonesia bought slums and then found a way of financing the people who were there, so that was a banking solution about those sorts of solutions. Each time I've been there I've had this problem that it's a huge thing and we're just doing a tiny thing, and then it all slips back. Is there a way you can see that it won't do that?

SENATOR HERRON. I think that where you provide finance for people to do it for themselves then that's the solution. It gives them the opportunity. Now paradoxically I'm doing that for the Aborigines of Australia. I've spent 18 months with my wife going around

communities in Australia. In this country we have condemned our Aboriginal population to welfare dependency which is different from starvation. But for 30 years since the 1967 referendum they have had money thrown at them and it's not achieved anything really.

I think the only solution to poverty is for people to do it themselves and to provide them with seed money to allow them to become self-reliant. Another Foundation that I am involved with is doing that in many countries where $50 can make a difference to somebody who needs seed capital to set up a little business so that they can earn enough money to provide for their families. Now that's the microstructure. The macro structure is that something like 80 per cent of Australia's aid goes to provision of food for impoverished countries and this actually helps our primary production. It's not that we are just giving money away. We are helping ourselves by giving money away. But Phoebe can add to that, I am sure, because she has a much wider view of it than I have. I can learn to look at it from a political perspective.

MS WYNN POPE. I think that part of what I alluded to is the whole development process which has emerged over the last 30 or 40 years. The World Bank has done a lot of things that are not altogether helpful in the development of a lot of nations. But the United Nations Development Program and organisations like CARE are looking at development of countries, and an incredible amount of progress has been made. Access to safe water in rural areas has gone from 25 to 60 per cent, bringing all the subsequent benefits of safe water. In the last 30 years infant mortality has been halved. 80 per cent of children have been immunised. Polio has been eradicated in 110 countries around the world. And all of this has happened because things have been put in place which enables a country to work for its own development.

In the 50s the West thought that if they poured in enough money that that would solve all the problems, and so you would put in a well but you wouldn't teach anyone to fix it if it broke down, or you'd bring food into a village but didn't take into account what impact that would have on the local agricultural market. Development has become a lot more complex, there is much more talking about empowerment. There are lots of these politically correct terms to try and enable people to work for their own development, and that involves, for example, $50 which was given to a Cambodian woman who started her own wood-selling business. She was a subsistence farmer, and just selling enough wood by the side of the road every day to buy food for that day and to buy enough wood to sell tomorrow. That was her life. There was no way out of it. She didn't have a house. She squatted on government land.

CARE came along with a micro enterprise program and gave her $50. She spent the entire $50 on firewood and is now wholesaling firewood in the province that she comes from and also to Phnom Penh. She is shipping firewood down the Mekong River. There are over 2,000 of these stories of people whose cycle of poverty has been broken. What CARE has been able to do with this particular project is to set up the fifth largest financial institution in Phnom Penh dealing with micro credit and providing loans to people. This institution now is being totally run by Cambodians with a little international input and it is expected to be totally self-financing by the end of next year.

There are things that you can do that are totally sustainable and will work in the long term, and are not just band aids, which is - let's face it, emergency food. If you've got a child starving to death and you feed it it's going to save the child's life but it's not going to stop it starving next week if you're not there to feed it as well. That's what some other programs try to do.

QUESTION: MR MEEHAN. Gerard Meehan, Barrister. The example of doctors going to these places is of course inspiring but it could make lawyers feel a bit inadequate. We can't go and sew someone's eye back in or put their hand back on. What can lawyers do that could help, apart from giving money?

SENATOR HERRON. When I came back I thought to myself, "What the hell did I achieve?" I was throwing these antibiotics at people. I was letting abscesses out. Babies with AIDS who were doomed, and so on. And then I saw a story in the paper where this man was going along the beach and he saw this child who was picking up starfish and throwing them into the ocean and the old man said to the boy, "Why do you bother throwing those starfish back into the ocean? Won't make any difference." He said, "Look around behind you, there's a whole kilometre of beach with starfish on it. Won't make any difference." The little boy picked up the next one and threw it back into the ocean and he said, "It will to this one." And I think that is what I did. I saw it achieve that.

Now to answer your question. I think the rule of law is lost there. In anarchy there is no rule of law, as Phoebe was saying. It's the rule of the gun. And when you let guns in the hands of 12 and 13 year olds who survive because of that you've got anarchy. The rule of law is coming back into Rwanda. I keep reading about it. But nothing has been achieved in that regard. What can you do back here? I think there is very little, to be honest with you, that you can do. The law is a noble

profession. We are in a wonderful country that operates under the rule of the law, and I know that all of us here believe that that is the way it should be and it's the only way we survive and it is one of the great things that the British have given us, in that we have the system of law under which we operate, but I can't answer your question. I suppose that's the honest answer. I don't know. I will hand over to Phoebe.

MS. WYNN POPE. I think that all of us can do something. One of them is to stop this government from reducing overseas aid any more, and that has got to come from the electorate. We've got to say, "We believe that this is the right thing to do." And that is the first thing that we can do. That's very easy. We can write bombard letters. We can get angry. We can do something - talk to the Senator. The other thing that we can all do is believe and talk and spread the message that if we don't do something to eradicate poverty then there will be no world as we know it. And it's not even a huge financial commitment. If everybody in Australia gave $1 that's $17 million. It's a huge amount of money.

Not everybody can go overseas although if you are looking for that avenue, if you are keen to volunteer as lawyers, of course you can volunteer. I'm an Arts graduate and I've managed to scrape myself around the world into all sorts of hot spots. There are things that need the skills that lawyers have. Patrick Burgess went over as a logistician. He was organising where the tents should go. He was organising all sorts of things I am sure he doesn't do in court in Sydney, but he was fantastic, and very useful from that point of view. But I think in Australia, and politically, if you like, there is such a need for people to understand that this works, to understand that this is important, to understand that we must eradicate poverty - and it is possible. The United Nations Development Program has estimated the cost at just $40 billion which seems an enormous amount of money, but we just gave Thailand a billion dollars last week. So we could give that to the eradication of poverty and we might be one quarter of the way along.