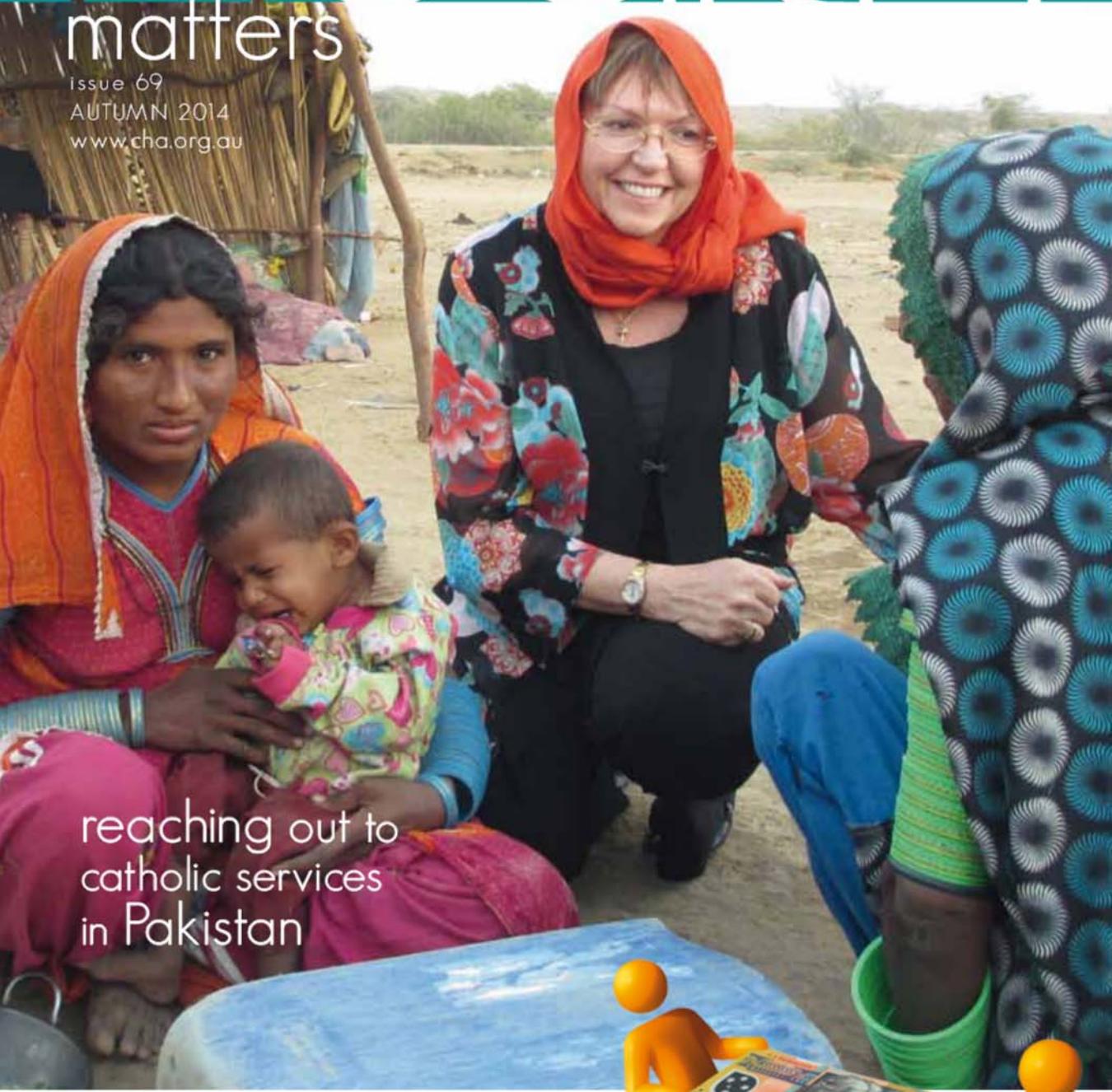


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Health

matters

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reaching out to
catholic services
in Pakistan



- stretching scarce dollars further

health • aged care • sustainability

around the network

australian delegation takes expertise to pakistan

Leaders in the Catholic health sector in Australia have seen first-hand the significant challenges facing Pakistan's health system, including its network of Catholic hospitals and aged care services.

Catholic Health Australia chair Rowena McNally and Cabrini Health's David Nowell joined Australian priest Fr Robert McCulloch, procurator-general of the Missionary Society of St Columban, on a 10-day trip to Pakistan in January, visiting hospital, church and government officials in the Sindh and Punjab Provinces and the Islamabad Capital Territory. The visit was at the invitation of Archbishop Joseph Coutts of Karachi, who serves as president of the Pakistan Catholic Bishops' Conference.

The first stage of the party's visit including inspection and meetings at the Holy Family Hospital, a 250-bed capacity maternity and general hospital, School of Nursing and associated work forming part of the ministry of the Catholic Archdiocese of Karachi. They met the board, management and staff of the Holy Family Hospital and School of Nursing.

In order to compare the Catholic health care services in Pakistan with others, the group visited a number of other

hospitals. Aga Khan University Hospital is a large, very modern charitable hospital established in 2001 to allow mustahiq patients – those with insufficient financial means – to access high-quality medical treatment at the hospital, its clinics and medical centres. The centre offers its services to the broader population.

The group also met with the senior doctors, staff and the chair of trustees at the Memon Medical Institute Hospital in Sakoora Goth, Karachi, a modern 332-bed multidisciplinary not-for-profit hospital established by the Memon community and 100 per cent donor funded to provide medical services to people regardless of caste, creed, colour, religion or ability to pay.

"These tours were valuable in informing us as to the availability of trained personnel, resources and equipment, as well as providing a comparative of other health care facilities in Karachi," Ms McNally said.

A number of meetings with government officials, including Governor of Sindh Dr Ishrat ul Ebad Khan, Nishan-e-Imtiaz, afforded the opportunity to discuss the work of the Catholic Church in Pakistan. A number of possible opportunities for



A mobile medical outreach program is helping deliver health care to people still recovering from devastating floods in 2010 and 2011.

collaboration between the government and the Catholic Church's health services in Pakistan were also identified.

From Karachi, the group travelled to visit the St Elizabeth Hospital in Hyderabad, meeting the hospital administrator and staff, including Patras Inayat, who trained in Australia in palliative care. St Elizabeth's is a 100-bed hospital established in 1958 that serves the people of Hyderabad and the lower areas of Sindh province, where it is the sole medical provider for 12,000 people in nearby villages. The hospital also has a School of Midwifery. It is owned by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hyderabad and is run on its behalf by the medical board of the Diocese.

At the request of the chairman and administrator, a further report will be provided on the hospital and nursing facilities, with comments and recommendations.

The Columban Missionary Society, St Elizabeth's Hospital and other donors also support many of those still homeless after the floods of 2010-11 and living in Sindh province in southeast Pakistan. This is done through mobile medical outreach and other projects. One of the projects visited has been the purchase of four acres of land at Jhirruk,

30 kilometres south of Hyderabad, where more than 30 permanent two-roomed houses have been built on the land. Many more are under construction and there are plans for a school.

The group's planned visit to St Joseph's Hospice in Rawalpindi, which provides care for up to 60 sick, aged and disabled adults and children, was postponed due to a bombing in a nearby containment and bazaar, but they were able to tour the hospice the following day. Over several days, formal and informal meetings were held with a wide range of board members and key staff and stakeholders of the hospice and the diocese, including hospice administrator Sr Margaret Walsh, MFF.

In a subsequent meeting with Saira Afzal Tarar, Pakistan's Minister for Health Sciences Regulation and Coordination, her director-general and her departmental secretary, the group briefed the minister on Catholic Health Australia and on the work that was being undertaken for the Pakistani people by the Catholic Church through the many health, community and aged care institutions run by the Church in Pakistan.



Saira Afzal Tarar, Pakistan's Minister for Health Sciences Regulation and Coordination, met with, from left, Fr Robert McCulloch, Rowena McNally and David Nowell during their visit to Pakistan.

Leaders from St Elizabeth's Hospital in Hyderabad.

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The visit culminated with a series of meetings and workshops in Islamabad with personnel from Catholic institutions across the country including bishops, priests, hospital administrators and board members, leaders of religious congregations and staff from the apostolic nunciature.

"Importantly, these meetings provided the first ever opportunity for institutional personnel to meet and explore opportunities for collaboration," Ms McNally said.

Some of the issues covered in the meetings included maintaining the standards and Catholicity of the ministries, the nature of the health services as works of the Catholic Church, the development, training and formation of staff, the formation and development of hospital governance boards, strategic planning, business development, performance measurement, budgeting and other matters of good administration and governance. The likely benefits of co-operation between members that might be realised by the formation of a Pakistani network of Catholic health providers was also discussed.

"There is much that can be done to assist the various Catholic health and aged care services in Pakistan and

assistance has begun already and no doubt will continue to flow from the various individual health and religious bodies in Australia," Ms McNally said.

"From the perspective of Catholic Health Australia, there is a valuable and important opportunity for support to be provided in those areas in which CHA already has developed resources, particularly in relation to assisting in and supporting the establishment of a Catholic Health Pakistan network or association.

"I believe that this was a very valuable and successful visit which has and will continue to bring benefit to the individual health services."

The travelling party will be providing a number of reports and recommendations based on what they saw and heard during their visit in an attempt to further support the work of Catholic health and aged care in Pakistan – a country with one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world and one of the smallest health budgets in terms of percentage of GDP.



Rowena McNally and the Australian delegation speak with Dr Ishrat ul Ebad Khan, Nishan-e-Imtiaz, Governor of Sindh province, second from left