

Charlie Pahlman, a long time friend and colleague of the Oxfam Community Aid Abroad community in Canberra, died on January 20 in an accident while holidaying with his family in Samoa. He was a true humanitarian and a mentor for many of us.

Charlie worked and lived in Laos and Thailand for ten years with a number of non-government organisations. He was the Community Aid Abroad field director in Laos and established the field office there. He played an important role in supporting the Lao staff in setting up the great development program that continues to this day.

On his return to Australia he continued to work on issues concerned with the sustainability of people's livelihoods in the Mekong region.

Charlie came to Canberra in the mid 1990s and worked as a community campaigner in the ACT office of Oxfam Community Aid Abroad. In this role he campaigned energetically on a range of development issues. He had a great talent for making the connections between local issues in Australia, and global issues around the world.

Many times he brought together people from different places and backgrounds, such as when he led a group of people from the Mekong to see the Snowy River and meet with communities there. The two groups discovered they had many concerns in common.

Charlie's networking capacity, fearless campaigning and sheer personal energy were legendary. His loss is immeasurable, both to his friends, for whom he was such an inspiration, and to the communities of people he touched wherever he worked: those in Laos and Thailand, the Oxfam Community Aid Abroad community, and the local community in Canberra.

The terrible shock of Charlie's accident and passing is traumatic for all of us, and our deepest thoughts are with Pam and the family at this time.

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