

Used bras uplift school community

Students at one Melbourne school have certainly been keeping abreast of issues in the Third World by donating spare bras to needy women, writes **Nicole Azzopardi**.



Caption

FROM A cup to F, one woman's trash has become another's treasure since Mooroolbark College began participating in an aid effort that has seen female staff and students alike donating their second-hand bras. Over recent months, the school of 1200 students has been busy raising support for Project Uplift, a unique charity by Rotary International, which has sent 330,000 second hand bras to women in the Asia Pacific region since 2005.

"I thought it was such an unusual and practical way of helping women," said teacher and organiser Patricia Hammond. "It was also something that everybody could give to – most women have got a spare bra or two."

Project Uplift began because women in Fiji were asking aid workers and tourists for bras. In heat and humidity, rashes and fungal infections occur between the breast and chest wall. Bras help by allowing air circulation. Despite the discomfort, disadvantaged women in the Third World often live without a bra. Often a new bra can cost 10 to 30 hours' wages – making these wardrobe essentials beyond the reach of many.

However, thanks to schools like Mooroolbark College, Project Uplift now ships bras to women in Vanuatu, Tonga, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Samoa. "It took off at our school in a huge way," Ms Hammond said. "We also got a lot of local participation from surrounding schools and community groups."

Within weeks, bras of all sizes, shapes and colours flooded into the school. Teachers had a house competition and did appeals at their local gyms; parents put the word out at work and 45 brand new maternity bras worth more than \$2700 were donated by a Dandenong company.



Now, thanks to community support, the current bra count at Mooroolbark is at more than 1000 – not including the 94 nappies and 30 swimsuits that were also donated. "It's been a real community effort and we're really pleased with the results," Ms Hammond said. "I've been surprised that what started off as such a small thing became such a huge thing in the school. It's inspirational to see how successful it's been. This is an extremely positive experience and it's lovely to think that so many women are going to benefit."



For more information on Project Uplift, visit www.upliftbras.org