

The UPLIFT! Project
www.upliftbras.org

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What's the problem?

Disadvantaged women across the Pacific often live without a bra. Second hand bras are sometimes available cheaply, but are rare, particularly in larger sizes. A new bra, if available, can cost 10-30 hours wages, beyond reach for most. In a subsistence economy, a huge proportion of income is spent on food.

In heat and humidity, rashes, fungal/thrush infections and abscesses (intertrigo) occur between the breast and the chest wall. Bras will help by allowing air circulation. Nursing mums everywhere leak, and bras allow the dignity of a dry shirt, and the comfort of support. A thrush rash on a mother's skin may spread to her baby's mouth, and then back into the breast itself. In some regions the lack of a bra is a badge of poverty, and women appreciate the common dignity of wearing one, particularly to church, business or social occasions.

What does Uplift do about it?

Uplift collects and ships second-hand and new bras, and coordinates their distribution.

Uplift started in 2005, collecting and shipping second hand bras to Fiji through Rotary Australia World Community Service. To April 2011 Uplift has sent 400,000 bras to Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga, PNG, the Solomon Islands & the Philippines. Uplift is collecting bras in Victoria, NSW, ACT and Tasmania at present. Uplift's corporate partner is Intimo, who donate thousands of bras annually, and assist with shipping.

In 2008 Uplift started working with women's organisations in the recipient countries, ensuring culturally appropriate distribution and fitting services. Uplift currently works with PNG YWCA, Red Cross Vanuatu, Tonga, and Solomon Islands.

What does Uplift need from you?

Donations of good condition second-hand bras and new bras. Nursing bras, mastectomy bras and Size 18+ are desperately needed. Any swimwear is also appreciated. Recently Uplift has started collecting second hand fabric nappies, and nappy pins/clips also. IN some areas women buy one disposable at a time.

The bra donated will often become the only bra a particular woman owns.

Where do the donations come from?

Many Australian women have a bra in the drawer that was not comfortable. It is near new, too good to throw away, but they are never going to wear it. There are the bras we grew through and shrank through, and nursing bras we've finished with. There are the bras we left when we passed away. They are all better used through Uplift than in landfill. So don't send your spare bras to heaven, send them to paradise!

Bras are relatively expensive, complex in construction, and specific in fit. Good quality lasts. Australians cheerfully wear op shop clothing, the environmental imperative is the same for these bras.

Where is this project appropriate?

There is a narrow band of situations where this project is appropriate. Uplift does not send bras unless they are requested, and ships only in biodegradable materials. We do not wish to create rubbish disposal problems. Uplift does not wish to supply bras regularly and put local businesses at risk.

How are bras received?

To spread the donations around many women are offered one bra each, and agonize over whether to choose a sensible one or a pretty one. Sometimes the half-cup push-up wins. Women will often use this bra only for social & business occasions.

Uplift receives thank-you letters from the women, some of which are transcribed on our website.

"We give our thanks too, to each and every women from Australia who donates us bras, they all fits us very well and we all happy about it, we say that we can't pay back your love and we pray our good lord Jesus Christ to help your country and your family and your club, Rotary, to be strong and guide you every day in your life: And we looking forward to see each and every face of you sometimes," Namuamua village chapter, Fijian Women's Society.

The bras are appreciated much more than Australians would expect.

In PNG bras were given to women attending aids information lectures, and to those bringing children in for immunisation. Both projects got higher than usual attendance rates.