



### Independence Day in Dili by Derarca



Four on a bike with flag and bananas!

I'm writing this on 20<sup>th</sup> May – The celebration of **Independence Day in Timor-Leste**. Dili is so colourful - festooned in flags and banners. Most cars and bikes are flying flags. This is my first time in Dili on Independence Day and it is wonderful to see the enthusiasm and pride of the Timorese people for this developing nation.

### An update on Baguia by Derarca

I'm in Timor working as an Australian Business Volunteer with a Timorese NGO. I have visited Baguia for a long weekend and for Easter – but that 8 hour journey is an exhausting drive! I will also spend a few weeks in Baguia at the end of my assignment in June. It has been lovely to reconnect with Leopoldina and other members of the community. They always give me such a warm welcome. This is my 11<sup>th</sup> time in Timor, so there are many familiar faces.

It is over a year since the death of her husband, John, but Leopoldina is still grieving his loss. Hence, with support from donors of the *John Gusmao Fund*, Leopoldina's oldest daughter Lely was able to return from the Philippines, where she is studying medicine, to spend her long summer Uni holidays with her sisters and brothers in Baguia. I drove Lely and Leopoldina from Dili to Baguia and it was very special to see all the family together, even if John's absence is still so noticeable.

Leopoldina continues to work tirelessly for her community and is always expressing her thanks to the of Friends of Baguia supporters for enabling Baguia children to gain a better education.

In April-May Leopoldina organised a Science and Sport Competition for 16 schools in the Baguia sub-district. Friends of Baguia provided the cash prizes for the competition winners and volleyballs for the volleyball winners in various categories. The schoolgirls were delighted to be able to compete for the first time, as the annual inter-village senior competitions are male only!

### Trivia Night by Judy Lowe



Jane Crouch with her winning team!

Another very successful trivia night was held in early May at the Malvern Town Hall. The evening was opened by Stonnington Mayor, Cr Adrian Stubbs and once again Stonnington Council generously donated use of the hall. Over 200 people participated in the trivia rounds and games with great enthusiasm. Teams even danced their way to more points for their table during one of the rounds. Every item in the silent auction was sold and some real bargains were to be found! **The night raised \$10,333 which will support our ongoing scholarship programs** for high school students, university students and school infrastructure projects. To all those who supported the night, we thank you for your generosity towards the people of Baguia – **You make a real difference to this community.**



Mayor Cr. Adrian Stubbs with Stonnington Councillors



## Sergio's Story

Sergio da Silva Simoes was the first Baguia recipient of a **Friends of Baguia University scholarship** in 2009. Sergio is 28 years old and studying Education and Chemistry at UNTL. He will graduate at the end of 2014 after completing his 6 year course.



Sergio moved to Baucau to attend Senior High School, living with relatives there. In 2006 he finished High School, but the political "Crisis" interrupted his education. He returned to Baguia where he worked as a volunteer teacher at the Junior High school for 2 years. FoB's scholarship finally enabled him to go to University in Dili. Since 1988 his father has been the *Xefe de Suco* (village head) of Hai Coni village in Baguia. This is an elected position with a government salary of US\$140 per month – not enough to support uni level studies.

Sergio lives in Dili with his oldest brother Joshua, who is married to Agrafina and has two children. Joshua works to support his own young family as well as his 3 younger brothers and 1 sister. All 7 live together in a home in Dili. All the siblings are at University except for the 2nd oldest who graduated last year in Agriculture, but has not yet secured a job. Agrafina is also at university studying Chemistry with Sergio. Her oldest child is 2 and has been living with the grand-parents in Baguia since 6 months of age. Her second child is 11 months, so Sergio and his siblings look after the baby when Agrafina needs to be at Uni classes. Sergio's sister Rita has funding for uni by a private donor. Joshua hopes to start university once all his younger siblings graduate and get jobs to support him.

During the early years of the Indonesian occupation, there was much famine in Baguia as the mountain villagers had been forced to move into Baguia town and

could not access their land to grow crops (or support the guerrillas in the mountains). In 1980, **Sergio's parents had the unimaginable heart-break of seeing all their children die of malnutrition within a one month period** – their 5 year old son and then their 3 year old twin boys. Later that year, Joshua was born.

For the last 3 years Sergio has been elected Student Representative of his Faculty and feels this has given him some good experience. He hopes to get a teaching job next year and would love the chance to work with his community in Baguia. On his summer vacations in Baguia, Sergio's help with youth/school activities is much appreciated by local teachers, as is his excellent electric organ skills accompanying the choir at church.

**Sergio gives a 'thumbs up' and his heartfelt thanks to those who have enabled him to complete his studies by contributing to his 6 year scholarship.**

## Jean Ling (20/7/29 – 8/11/13)

We were saddened by the loss of Jean Ling last November. She was a founding member of the Friends of Baguia Committee and was truly passionate about Baguia. She loved to spend time with Timorese visiting Melbourne. Jean was a truly amazing woman and will be missed by those who knew her in both Australia and Timor-Leste. Her legacy will live on in Baguia.

**Jean after cooking up a banquet for John Gusmao from**



**Baguia; when he was hosted in Melbourne by FoB.**

## Melbourne Conference – 25 & 26 July

### **Working Together with Timor-Leste: The Next 10 Years**

For more information and to register, go to [www.timorlesteconference2014.com.au](http://www.timorlesteconference2014.com.au)

*Early bird rates close soon.*

**THANKS** to the **City of Stonnington** for providing a grant to enable Leopoldina and **Baguia Sub-District Administrator, Antonio dos Ramos** to attend this Conference.

### **Contacts for Friends of Baguia Inc**

President: Derarca O'Mahony [president@baguia.org.au](mailto:president@baguia.org.au) 0412 761 763

Secretary: Judy Lowe [enquiries@baguia.org.au](mailto:enquiries@baguia.org.au)

[www.baguia.org.au](http://www.baguia.org.au)

Incorporation No: A0050160K

Council's continuing support of Friends of Baguia is greatly appreciated.

