



Why are we friends of Baguia? This picture of a "good" schoolroom says it all. They deserve better!

HOW DID FRIENDS OF BAGUIA START?

As the result of a resolution, passed on 20th September 2004, "That Council supports the development of a Friendship Agreement with Baguia in East Timor", a passionate group of community members have been working to make the friendship agreement a reality within the City of Stonnington.

The 'Friends' want to make a meaningful contribution to support the East Timorese community as they establish the foundations of their independent nation.

COMING EVENTS

1. TETUM FOR BEGINNERS. At University of Melbourne, likely dates are 30 Jan to 3 March 2006, 3 hours in morning. Contact: Prof. John Hajek, j.hajek@unimelb.edu.au 8344 5168. (Tetum and Portugese are the official languages of Timor Leste, Tetum is only spoken, at present)
2. U3A Stonnington are planning a series of talks about East Timor next March. Details later.

COMMITTEE MEETING

The Working Group and supporters met on 8 November and resolved to create a formal Committee, having completed preparatory work to get the friendship group established.

Derarca O'Mahony was elected as President, Rod Amos (Council Liaison Officer) will continue as Secretary, Doug Quick was elected Treasurer, and working groups were formed for fund-raising, publicity and newsletter.

The meeting included a talk by Padre Marcus, whose parish includes Baguia. He spoke about the problems of an under developed region, isolated from the capital, short of education, health and transport facilities.

For instance, the Indonesians forced people out of the mountainous areas. With independence, they went back, and quickly started trying to educate the children. But there were no teachers, no books, no buildings, no money. This year, Baguia has two government primary schools, a community junior high school with no school building, and some church schools.

Most of the school buildings erected by communities are not high quality, due to the shortage of cash, and problems of actually transporting proper materials to site. One in Rufagua has already blown down. (See Projects - page 3).

Padre Marcus told us how the people had no cash because the roads were so bad that most possible crops could not be sent to any markets. The economy of Baguia was mostly barter and subsistence.

Revenue from the gas/oil fields goes into a trust account, the interest from which will fund the operations of government, including schools and roads.

Health Services: They are very rudimentary, nurses move around on motor bikes.

Padre Marcus thought our initial planned projects were a good start, but stressed that there are many more of equal importance.



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STONNINGTON FRIENDS OF BAGUIA - PUBLIC MEETING

This was attended by Mayor Sarah Davies and 20 others at Malvern Town Hall on 19th Oct 2005, in a room decorated with a display of traditional and distinctive weavings (Tais) recently brought back from the area of Baguia.

1. Three members of the interim organising committee told us about the present position.

Susan Cosgrave.

The purpose of a Friendship Agreement with an area in East Timor is to connect with the people for mutual support and cultural understanding. Typical projects include school supplies, scholarships, and buildings, local radio stations, medical supplies, and other building repairs.

Susan provided a short history of the initial work involved in setting up the Friends of Baguia in Stonnington. Starting in 2004, the formalities of signing the agreement between Stonnington Council and the Sub-District Administration in Baguia have now been completed, information about local needs gathered, and a framework for future action prepared.

Derarca O'Mahony.

Derarca recently travelled to East Timor, spending most time in Baguia. She described the area, its people, buildings, and environment, illustrated by many photos.

She found that most of the villages around Baguia need local schools, etc, because they can only be reached by foot-track taking two or more hours. More than half the population is aged under 21, and the people put high priority on education.

Transport from Baguia to district centre Baucau and beyond is not good, so access to cash markets is difficult. As a result, the area is dominated by subsistence farming, most families have little cash, and much commerce is by barter.

Many of Derarca's pictures showed the spectacular mountain scenery.

Tony Dawson

Tony described the potential projects which the committee had identified from information brought back by Derarca.

These were: bread for the orphanage, desks for the school, teacher salaries, and student scholarships.

The estimated cost of these is about \$6500 per year.

2. Presentation

Council had previously written to the Sub-District Administration in Baguia, offering a Friendship Agreement. Derarca obtained and brought back the reply to this offer, and formally presented it to Mayor Sarah Davies. The Mayor confirmed continuing support from Council, and praised the work of their representative, Rod Amos, on the friends committee.



Derarca presenting the letter from the Committee of Baguia to commence the establishment of the Friendship Agreement to Mayor Davies

3. The meeting ended with a lively question session about the whole project, and some offers to help. Having worked our way through the rather lengthy setup process, we can now look forward to some practical results.



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WILL YOU DONATE TO THE PROJECTS IN BAGUIA?

The Friends of Baguia have identified four projects from the information gathered by Derarca during her visit to Timor. The following projects were chosen based on a number of criteria including that they met a pressing need in the community and could be quickly implemented, once funds were raised.

1. To employ two ladies who are widowed to bake bread for breakfast for the 60 children living in Baguia's orphanage. Cost \$1500 per year.
2. To pay a local carpenter to make desks and blackboards for the Rafaguia primary school, which a remote village community is building themselves. Cost \$1500.
3. To provide salaries for two teachers for the Osso Huna Community Junior High school. (This school has no government or church funding.) Cost \$2000 per year.
4. To pay school fees for up to 20 students to attend Junior High school. Cost \$1500 per year. If you would like any further information on these projects, please contact Rod Amos.

Any donation - no matter how small, will support the efforts of this community to improve itself!

Please send a cheque made out to **City of Stonnington - Friends of Baguia.**

and post to:

Rod Amos

City of Stonnington,

PO Box 21, Prahran, 3181

Donations are tax deductible.

East Timorese Organic Coffee for sale - \$7 per 250gm vacuum pack

East Timorese 2006 Colour Calendars for sale - \$10

All profits go to supporting Friends of Baguia projects.

To purchase please contact Jean Ling on 9824 7385.

AN AUSTRALIAN CHIROPRACTOR IN BAUCAU.

(Thanks to Katie Moss for this information.)

Some interesting notes by a chiropractor, Dr Heneghan, from the Chiropractors Association journal. He is working as a Volunteer Abroad in Baucau, the District centre for Baguia.

He reports that the hospital has a real problem with maintenance- "no one is really trained to look after the machines, with the result being many carcasses of once useful devices left sitting there." He mentions X-ray and oxygen machines, refrigerators, sterilizers, industrial washing machines, and photocopiers. Just another area needing help.

Dr Heneghan found the language ability of the people is amazing, with most pretty fluent in 3 or 4 languages. However, he has found that details of a patient's problem can involve 2 or 3 translators.

Something for travellers: He reports that Baucau International Airport (Indonesian built) could be reopened soon, with luck.



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MEETING OF FRIENDSHIP GROUP REPS. WITH VISITORS FROM EAST TIMOR

The Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) coordinates the activities of the many friendship Groups around the State sponsored by local government. Stonnington Friends of Baguia hosted a meeting for representatives of these groups with guests from East Timor at Prahran Town Hall on Nov. 17th.

evening was a promising starting point for our connection to Baguia and our future projects.

With thanks to all involved, especially Stonnington Council for providing the venue and other support and to Emanuel Braz, East Timor Project Officer with Friends of Baucau for his skilful translating!

Photo shows Friends of Baguia with (left) Lino Torrezao (Director of State Administration, Timor-Leste Government) (centre) Luis Guterres (Baucau District Administrator), and (far right) Benvinda Rodrigues (Friends of Baucau Women and Development Projects Coordinator) with Lorraine McBride, (Friends of Baucau Community Development Officer).



Following a warm welcome to Stonnington by our President Derarca O'Mahony, the visitors each spoke about their own area of interest, current projects and perspectives for the future, co-operation with Friendship groups having a significant role in Government Planning.

A lively Q and A session covered topics as diverse as mosquito eradication, alternative technologies, and communication without a postal service and phone coverage.

It was particularly interesting to hear about Benvinda and Lorraine's successful workshops for women at the Baucau Community Centre, and plans for the Sub-district including Baguia. One micro-project for a peanut farm was started with seeding money of \$21 and has now expanded into growing mulberry trees for a silkworm project. Clearly, much can be achieved with small resources and initiative; altogether the

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(who welcomes interesting contributions)

On behalf of the Friends of Baguia

Feliz Natal

(Happy Christmas)