



Memo from Myanmar by Derarca

Yet again I seem to have more head-space when I'm working overseas to pull a Newsletter together. But of course not having a TV and no addictive ABC programs also frees up a lot of time!

I started this newsletter while working as an Australian Business Volunteer in Yangon with the Myanmar Women Entrepreneurs' Association. Officially I was developing their strategic plan, but I spent lots of time admiring the amazing full length traditional outfits (longyi) these successful women wear. Not to mention getting a few made for myself so I fitted into the office!

But the most interesting part was getting to know the people and their culture. Naturally, I spent as much time comparing their customs to Timor-Leste as to Australia – there is lots of different traditional customs, but of course underneath it all we are all much the same – striving for a better life and happiness.

Modern technology – viber and email enabled me to stay in daily contact with the Friends of Baguia Committee and of course run proposals past Leopoldina. Skype even worked from Laos, where I was having a relaxing break, to connect to the April Committee meeting back in Malvern – it's just sheer magic! I have to thank the committee members for all the extra tasks they happily take on in my absence.

I'm now up in Baguia and finally putting the last article – by Leopoldina into this newsletter!

FACEBOOK

Thanks to Meagan Lowe – Friends of Baguia now have a Facebook page.

Meagan resigned as a Committee Member when she moved to New Zealand last year to follow the Kiwi love of her life! She was delighted to stay connected with Friends of Baguia by setting up and being the administrator of our Facebook page.

So please LIKE us and follow our updates on Facebook. Currently loading regular pics from Baguia!

Therese Dawson



Therese & Tony with Benvinda from Baucau

We are saddened to have lost one of the founding members of Friends of Baguia - Therese Dawson. Therese and her husband, Tony have been very active Committee members since we first started in 2004. We were saddened by Therese's death in February this year. Therese was such a gentle but strong person with a beautiful smile and warm heart.

Therese was a lifetime advocate of educational opportunities for women, so Tony has generously set up a special scholarship fund within Friends of Baguia in memory of Therese. The income from this fund will be used to provide Therese Dawson Scholarships to women from Baguia for educational and training opportunities that will bring benefits back to the Baguia community.



Transport trials and tribulations

by Leopoldina

A few weeks ago I was in Dili hospital supporting the care of my sister's daughter, Benvinda who was in intensive care after a motor-cycle accident. I went directly from the hospital to the Dili bus which left at 1.30am for Baucau. A street-vendor came on the bus so I bought 3 apples and we arrived in Baucau before 6am in time to catch the morning truck to Baguia.

For four hours I walked between the bus station and the market trying to see if there was any truck going to Baguia - but none. At noon I carried my bags the half kilometre to my sister's house and sat on the verandah, as she was still in Dili and I waited for her children to come from school. At 12.30 my nephew rang to say there was a truck for Baguia and he came and helped me quickly carry my bags back to the bus station. I stood in the truck as it drove around Baucau town for 30 minutes, but there were only 3 passengers, so they said "we will not go to Baguia today". I walked back to my sister's house and after a while my nephew rang that the truck had found a load of cement and was now going to Baguia. Back to the truck where I sat on top of the cement bags feeling ill. But at Larisula village I was the only passenger left, so the truck driver said he would not drive the extra one hour to Baguia. I had three bags and a small box, which was too much for one bike on the very rough and pot-holed Baguia road. So I rang a family member and teacher who have bikes, but they were further past Baguia and took a long time to get down to Larisula. But with two bikes I finally arrived home at 8pm. I was exhausted and felt weak having only eaten the 3 apples all day. My girls greeted me with rice porridge before I fell into bed after my 19 hour ordeal to travel a mere 195 kms!

PS: Benvinda is now out of hospital, but it will be a long, slow recovery.



Trucks that leave on time rarely have a lack of Baguia passengers, as pictured here

Stonnington Grant – Training Teachers

In Timor many Primary School teachers in rural schools have not had formal teacher training and some may not have even completed High School. There are high dropout rates in primary school and an extremely low level of literacy for those that graduate.

Hence, in news just to hand – we are delighted to have received a Community Grant from the City of Stonnington, with the largest portion of these funds providing a five week hands-on teacher training course to the main Primary School in Baguia.

These teachers generally have not had formal teacher training and SDRA is a local certified training organisation that uses qualified Timorese teachers to introduce creative teaching techniques into the classroom. The trainers will live in Baguia and introduce teachers to modern interactive teaching concepts and then spend every day in the classroom with the teachers assisting them to implement these methods.

Fintona Girls School



Last year, Leopoldina Guterres visited Fintona and met with the Principal Suzy Chandler (*pictured above*). We are now delighted to announce that Fintona has offered to support girls scholarships at some of the newer schools in Baguia sub-district. They will also fund a voluntary teacher at the Independent Junior High School in Osso Huna village. We thank the students and the teachers for this great effort.

Rotary Club of Hawthorn

In June, Rotary Hawthorn signed a three-year MOU with Friends of Baguia, and has committed funding for University and Technical College Scholarships. We are delighted with this partnership and greatly appreciate their support.

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Youth off the Street–ORF support for Baguia Computer Training Program is greatly appreciated.

