



Bondia Baguia



Leo & Derarca with scholarship student

What's Been Happening by Derarca

Well there has been a lapse in our newsletters – but mainly because the Friends of Baguia committee are holding down day jobs while still trying to manage and support our programs in Baguia. However, there has been a lot happening over the past year – Baguia's first kindergarten, 85 scholarships provided across all 5 high schools in Baguia, two new university level scholarships, desks and blackboards for Osso fulari mountain school, leadership and solar training and many other initiatives, including hosting John Gusmao from Baguia in October.

Margaret Norris our wonderful Australian Volunteer finished up her 18 months living and working in Baguia to return to her teaching role in Queensland this year. Then on her first holiday, she returned to Baguia with two friends for 10 days in July to spend time with all the people she had befriended. Naturally we gave her a few jobs to do as well!

Although we have not had a volunteer in Baguia in 2010, there has been a steady stream of Oz visitors to Baguia doing some great things to assist the community. Directly associated with FoB, Meagan Lowe (from our committee) visited for two weeks in June with three uni friends – due to unseasonal constant rain, they gave English language classes in both the morning and afternoon - which made Leopoldina very happy!

In August I spend two weeks in Baguia assessing our projects and gathering information for new ones. After which I attended the 'Strengthening Friendship: People to People' conference in Timor, along with Antonio dos Ramos (Baguia Sub-District Administrator), and Leopoldina and her husband John. José Ramos-Horta (President) opened the conference and Leopoldina was the first one up to fire a question to him; asking why they wouldn't fix the appalling state of the road to Baguia. But like a true politician he amused the audience and never directly answered the question!

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Meagan & Mayor Tim Smith at Awards night

CONGRATULATIONS!

CONGRATULATIONS to Meagan Lowe for being awarded the City of Stonnington 'Young Citizen of the Year' for her work with Baguia. Meagan's interest was sparked as a 15yo student at Korowa, when she took part in the letter exchange program with Baguia students. Due to there being no postal service in rural Timor, these letters are today still carried back and forth by hand! Meagan has been thrilled to meet up with her penpal on her two visits to Baguia.





Reflections by Margaret Norris

It's January and reflecting on my nearly year and a half living in Baguia village; it has been quite challenging trying to put my experience into perspective.

Perhaps the thing that stands out most is that it has been a wonderfully varied time, in terms of the activities I have been engaged in, the people I have met, the challenges of balancing modern and emerging needs with traditional beliefs, as well as the emotional ups and downs.

After a career as a classroom teacher I have reveled in the different things I have had the opportunity to try. Of course, as a teacher you get used to always working with large groups, and I have had to realize that much effective community work is done one-on-one, and immediate outcomes are not always evident. I have welcomed this change of pace, as well as the opportunity to work more with adults than children.

I have also enjoyed the great range of people I have come across, from

both the Baguia community and amongst the wider, loosely NGO community. It has, for example, been most humbling to work with some of our Aussie soldiers and to discover that their previous stints have been in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Whilst I am aware that many Australians believe the country would fall apart without Xanana or Ramos-Horta, I would have to say that I have been impressed with the numerous good East Timorese people working at all levels of government and for NGOs. Programs are rolling out, new schools and clinics are being built, the roads gradually repaired, and social support programs are slowly being put in place. The ability to administer all this is still a challenge, because many places like our Baguia, lack what we in Australia take for granted as basic infrastructure. Also, as I have been gradually coming to understand, there are many younger people



Margaret enchanting Baguia children

who could have been the junior administrators, but who are only now getting their lives back on track after stopping their education to join the clandestine movement.

They are fine young people with the best

interests of their country still their main motivation. They all appreciate greatly the assistance offered them. This brings me back to the humbling aspect of my work. I know that many of the things I have been able to help with are very small and to Australians would seem insignificant, but to local people who have so little and are just getting back on their feet, these things are tremendously appreciated.

My congratulations to Friends of Baguia who are committed to long-term assistance and friendship. One of the things that has really stood out is how much the community of Baguia value return visits. Thank you for letting me join you in Baguia for a wonderful and unforgettable experience.

www.baguaia.org.au

Our website is where you can get lots more information and pictures of Baguia and our projects over there. You can also download your wine order form, or get past copies of our newsletters. Check it out!

Thank you to our supporters who enable us to deliver our programs for the community of Baguia. (Donations over \$2 are tax deductible - <http://www.baguaia.org.au/becomeinvolved.html>)



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

CONTACTS for FRIENDS of BAGUIA

ENQUIRIES: Catherine Hempensall (03) 8290 1333
chempensall@stonnington.vic.gov.au

PRESIDENT: Derarca O'Mahony 0412 761 763

NEWSLETTER: Design & layout by Amy Mitchell - www.peacockspaperie.com.au

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