



Notes from Abroad by Derarca

I wrote this Newsletter from my balcony in the lush tropical Solomon Islands where I was working as an Australian Business Volunteer (ABV) supporting a skills training NGO.

I must apologise to our supporters for the lack of newsletters – it’s mainly because we are really busy with our projects to support East Timor and can’t seem to find the time to communicate all our news. So hopefully this issue will remedy a little of that void.

Prior to the Solomons assignment I spent 5 months in Cambodia with a human rights NGO and thanks to modern technology and a fabulous Committee I was able to Skype into meetings and use email/sms to organise events or decisions, with Committee members obviously taking the lead on many initiatives.

Last year my first ABV role was in East Timor establishing a small computer training centre in the village of Laleia. This was a challenging assignment due to limited electricity, but on a personal note a wonderful opportunity to live in Timor – in the home of a Timorese family for over 3 months. The greatest bonus was the chance to meet up with Leopoldina and John every weekend in Baucau or Dili for long conversations regarding our Baguia projects. Thanks to having a 4WD I was able to steal away each month and make the 4 hour drive to Baguia to spend a long-weekend there catching up on-the-ground with our projects and the local people.

Trivia ‘Hat’ Night

A BIG THANKS to all the people who came along to our Trivia Night in May. The splendid Malvern Town Hall venue was again provided thanks to the City of Stonnington. Our ‘Hat’ theme definitely added a lively and interesting element to the evening – with some amazing and ingenious efforts! The prizes for the Best Hat competition went to someone wearing a “plucked chook” and another exhibiting a “mad-hatters tea party” creation!

Due to our generous supporters, the night raised \$10,672 which will primarily be used to fund our ongoing commitment to scholarships. FoB currently have over 100 scholarships across 6 Junior and Senior High Schools.



Kathy modelling her Mad Hatters creation

In addition 6 University Scholarships go to students in East Timor and Indonesia. Due to limited course options in Timor some students choose to study in Java.

Mayor John Chandler made a dashing Centurion



The 2011 Year in Review!

- Last Year an ABV volunteer worked in Baguia for one month to develop a plan for an agricultural project. It’s hoped this school garden project will be implemented soon.
- The Baguia Community Centre was finally finished – this amazing transformation of a derelict Portugese building is a credit to the great work by Kevin Parker (builder from WA) and his family. They came to Baguia and donated their expertise and time to work with the local carpenters. This project was a coalition of funding which included an AusAid grant of US\$9,000 obtained by FoB, fund-raising in WA and a Rotary Timor donated roof.
- 300 chairs, tables, and an assortment of other things were shipped by FoB to East Timor to provide equipment for the Community Centre, Kindergarten and other projects.
- A desperately needed new roof on St Joseph’s School was donated by Rotary Timor and Kevin again provided the expertise in this difficult job, with Rob Mills (Qld) as his co-worker along with lots of locals. FoB chipped in funds when the project fund-raising by other groups in Oz fell just short of its target.

- 14 blackboards provided to 8 schools.
- 2 schools provided with funds to repair the walls of classrooms damaged by the cyclonic winds (US\$2,025).
- 35 soccer and volley balls provided to schools.
- Transport, food and accommodation costs provided to 8 locals to attend 2 weeks of Kindergarten Teacher training.
- New Kindergarten established in Baguia town – (we also support one in Larisula).
- 5 teachers supported at a new community initiated mountain primary school.



yelled in local dialect, bare feet sliding and gripping, as extra hands grabbed the bamboo poles to avert certain damage – the tank slowly lurched its way up the mountain track. Thankfully, the climb to Ossofulari was a little shorter, while Bubuha was more easily reached along a rough 4WD track.

Schoolchildren excited by the Tanks arrival!

Murray, Judy and Derarca joined these tank processions. They were amazed at the incredible effort to deliver these heavy tanks and were greeted with an enthusiastic welcome at each village. Gulari celebrated with a big village lunch and a special welcome song in English from the school children. It was clear that these communities greatly valued the benefits this project was bringing – a water supply for cooking the primary school (govt funded) lunch and hygienic toilet facilities. In addition, the tank installations will save the school children significant time, which they previously spent carting water to their school from local springs.

Tanks for Timor by Judy

On their first trip to Baguia, Meagan and Judy Lowe (mother & daughter) made the hot, steep climb to Gulari village and after meeting with local villagers a request for a school tank was thrust on them. On returning to Melbourne, Meagan initiated a “Tanks for Timor” fundraising effort through her Glen Waverley Uniting Church. In conjunction with a donation of tanks from Rotary via their East Timor Roofing project, there were enough funds to expand the supply of water tanks to three remote village schools. Frustrating delays in 2010, due to an unusually WET “dry season” frequently causing closure of the only access road into Baguia, convinced Judy’s husband Murray to head to Baguia. So in July 2011 they “detoured” on their northern Australia holiday to support the locals to get the water tanks installed and bring much needed cord-less electrical tools from Australia.

The local truck could only transport one 4,000 litre galvanised tank on each trip and the tanks were set down on the main road at the closest access point to the schools at Gulari, Ossofulari and Bubuha. John Gusmao from Baguia was constantly on the phone co-ordinating all the logistics, so that each village community - both adults and children - were organised to immediately carry the tanks and spouting up to their villages. This was particularly challenging for Gulari. An enthusiastic and noisy team of 15 rotating villagers took over 5 hours to complete the trip up the rough mountain track with the unwieldy 100kg tank strapped to two long bamboo poles. In places the track was incredibly steep and rocky, but with the machetes of villagers at the front hacking the forest undergrowth, lots of instructions being

It is with deep sadness that we mourn the passing of John Gusmao on 28/10/12. His smiling face and tireless work will be greatly missed.
(Refer website for further information)

Thanks to Marianne Hale and the students and staff at Korowa Anglican Girls’ School for providing a 3 year program of scholarships to 35 girls at St Joseph’s Junior High School, Baguia. Their on-going support is fantastic!



Finishing the Trivia night with wild dancing – is that Cr Melina Sehr chair-dancing again!

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

