

FRIENDS AND PARTNERS WITH EAST TIMOR PRESIDENT'S REPORT - 05-12-2011

Overview

As we come to the end of the tenth year of FPET, I have pleasure in presenting my eighth and final annual report.



I was elected President in November 2003. It was a time of atrocious communications to East Timor, no volunteers on the ground in Atabae, a shambolic infrastructure and a desperately poor population who, nevertheless, were very enthusiastic about their new independence. We were planning our friendship visit by James, Joel and Anna, and we still had security concerns. East Timor has made significant progress in some areas, but deficient infrastructure and poverty are still the norm outside Dili. 2012 will be an interesting year as democracy is tested by the election process. We pray that it will be peaceful.

FPET's 2011 was not easy. After 5 years, our working relationship with our volunteers, Margaret and David Hall, deteriorated and eventually broke down entirely. FPET terminated support last month. There was disagreement about the process of transitioning the Health Programme to local control and we finally concluded that we could no longer work with the Halls to advance our relationship with the Atabae community.

Counterbalancing this disappointment, we were delighted by the acceptance and success of our Education Programme run by our new volunteer, Anne Chapman. There has been high demand for English lessons, and Anne is now starting computer lessons.

We have also strengthened our relationship with the local OJC Youth Group. They really seem to understand what FPET is about, and we can leave a lasting legacy by working with these young people who are the future of their country.

Parish Relationship

Fr Siprianus Kakut was appointed parish priest and has made numerous requests for assistance. We paid for drilling and equipping a bore to provide a water supply to parish buildings, replaced unsuitable bunk beds in the girls' dormitory, provided materials so that the community could build a chapel in the village of Limonaro, provided a first installment of \$5000 towards new classrooms at the parish school and provided cement for a slab for an outdoor celebration area used for the ordination of the two deacons from Atabae. Unfortunately we have not achieved a direct and continuing communication with Fr Sipri, and the Parish Council has proved an ineffective body to deal with, so the partnership falls far short of what it should be.

FPET has developed a relationship with Bishop Do Amaral of Maliana Diocese. On our January visit, we provided a donation of \$2000 to help set up the Diocese Office with a photocopier/printer. At the Bishop's request, we provided



Margaret & David Hall
with Fr Sipri - blessing
the chapel site

funds for a needy student from Maliana at Baucau Teacher's College. Our delegation met the Bishop again in October at the Ordination in Atabae.

At this end, our key parish of St John's Wood / The Gap has seen continuing support from Fr Tuong and the Parish Pastoral Council. Lyn Dudgeon attends meetings to represent the PPC. FPET participated in the Parish Expo in March. Deacon Gary Stone preached at all parish masses on our FPET Appeal Weekend in May. Lindsay Stokes was involved this year and used his fundraising expertise to good advantage. Nick Delaney wrote an item about 10 years of FPET for the Parish Magazine "Grapevine".

We continue to receive welcome support from our parish schools. Mater Dei students exchanged letters with Atabae students, with Anne providing the much needed coordination in Atabae. Anne visited Mater Dei and St Peter Chanel in August. Mary Hodge has organised ongoing activities and we should be able to build on this.

Direct Interaction with Atabae Community

- ◆ **Local radio network:** FPET's donation continues to support the maintenance of the CET 2-way network for another year.
- ◆ **Living allowance to Baucau Teachers College graduates:** This ceased at the start of the year but fortunately the 3 graduates were successful in obtaining local teaching jobs. Our strategy of supporting them as volunteers in Atabae schools paid off and their training will now benefit the local community.
- ◆ **Scholarships – Baucau College, SOLS:** FPET is supporting a number of students at these institutions and it is hoped to expand this, and resume trade scholarships to Don Bosco.
- ◆ **OJC Youth Group:** We have developed an excellent relationship with these young people and have provided a computer, chairs and notice boards; we have continued our regular grants which match their quarterly subscription totals; we receive regular reports on their activities.
- ◆ **Sewing Machines :** Four additional machines were purchased at a very good price using money specifically donated for this; it is hoped that the Women's Woven Art Group from Dili will be able to provide tuition for local ladies next year.
- ◆ **Agricultural Project:** \$750 was provided to Chris Mali for irrigation equipment to set up a project of better agricultural practices for local crops.



FPET Operation

Since the 2010 AGM, eleven general meetings have been held on the first Monday of the month. The Halls attended in July and Anne Chapman attended in August. The Management Committee met on 8 occasions, one being a debriefing meeting with Anne on July 31.



Two newsletters were produced. Thanks to Nick Delaney for his editorial skills, and also for maintaining the high-quality FPET website.

Jose Asaca & Servacio do Nascimento

Our friends finally achieved their IELTS scores mid-year, but struck a hitch in their plans to start at UQ Gatton. The end result was that the Sahariv Scholarship administrator sent them to Cairns TAFE at very short notice to study a Certificate in

Horticulture. We missed their contributions to our meetings, their schools visits and their participation in the local ET community.

They have maintained contact with FPET. On their Christmas holiday, they have offered to explain the FPET position to the Atabae community leaders and to try to set up a community committee to deal with FPET.

Two new Sahariv students, Abel Leite from Atabae and Abia Yanis from Los Palos started studying English at AICOL, Southport. They arrived in April and have attended most FPET meetings. FPET contributed towards laptop computers for them. Abel is not coming back in 2012 but Abia expects to continue.



PALMS Volunteers - Margaret and David Hall

This is not the place to detail the accumulation of circumstances that led to FPET ending its arrangement with the Halls. It has been partly covered elsewhere in this report. Despite successfully applying for a \$20 000 Ausaid grant to run the Health Programme, it is now in limbo and it falls to the new management team to help FPET decide the future direction of the programme.

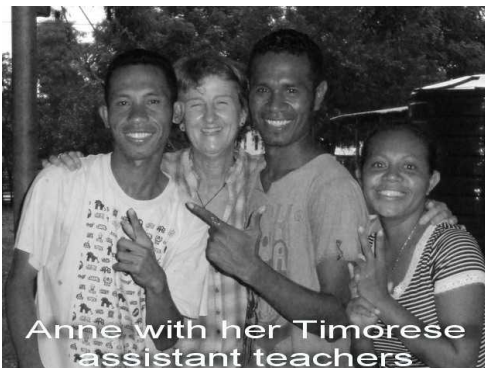
We acknowledge the good work done by the Halls in Atabae over the years, and it is really sad that it has come to this unhappy end.

New PALMS Volunteer – Anne Chapman

The exciting development of funding an additional PALMS volunteer in 2011 has been a great success. Anne has cheerfully put up with the difficulties of her situation, and has made wonderful progress in assessing and meeting educational needs of the Atabae community. Her placement was initially planned for one year, but she has asked that it be extended to two years – we readily agreed.

Anne's statistics speak for themselves –

- A Graduation in September of 35 students, presented with their certificates by local dignitaries, plus speeches, performances and afternoon tea.
- Another Graduation of 60 students planned for this month.
- 3 local assistants/counterparts [Maria, John and Afon]: massive skills transfer; plans for the education programme to continue during January while Anne is in Australia.
- Maria to U.S. – after attending Leli English Teacher Training Course in Dili, Maria was awarded a scholarship for a 2-week TESOL course in Philadelphia in March, plus an offer of a position with Leli helping improve local English teachers.



- Taking responsibility for FPET Scholarship Programme – main success has been increased numbers [14] at SOLS – our first Dili graduate, Atoy, now a volunteer teacher with SOLS – plans to establish a firm relationship with Baucau Teachers' College and Don Bosco.

- Trial Computer course to start in December, with OJC members teaching [under Anne's guidance].

- Close relationship with OJC Youth Group – advising and passing on administration skills.

Congratulations to Anne. Her success has helped keep us going when other difficulties threatened to make us lose heart. We have high expectations for 2012 as Anne builds on the solid foundation laid, with the significant bonus of the Land Rover solving her transport deficiencies.

Visits

There were two official FPET visits to East Timor this year in January and October, plus two other visits.

1. Jan 10-19 - FPET Delegation [Gary Stone, Eric Muir, Mary Hodge]

AIMS –

- Check transitioning of the Health Programme to local control – little progress plus worrying attitudes from the Halls – agreed to supply 10000 umbilical cord clamps as an emergency measure to assist Dr Dan at Bairo Pite – also agreed to supply vaccine refrigerators for Government Clinics.
- Check other community development projects – little to report
- Meet Fr Sipri and Parish Council – established priorities of water project and new classrooms
- Meet the Bishop of the new Maliana Diocese – good rapport established
- Meet OJC Youth Group – very positive interaction.

2. March – Eric Muir visited Dili on other business but met with newly-arrived Anne Chapman to offer support and encouragement.

3. September – Gary and Lynne again assisted Michael with Tour de Timor, but Gary found time to meet with Anne (first meeting!) and with Halls to discuss concerns with milestones and Ausaid grant money.



3 Deacons - Gary, Hipolito and Pascoal

4. Oct 3-7 – FPET Delegation [Gary Stone, John O'Hara, Lindsay Stokes - it is worth noting that this was Gary's 25th visit to ET]

AIMS –

- Attend ordination of FPET-supported Deacons from Atabae – Hipolito and Pascoal
- Check milestones in transitioning Health programme
- Investigate tensions between Health and Education Teams
- Ensure sharing of resources between Teams
- Meet with community leaders to explain FPET strategy
- Check with Ausaid on status of grant
- Consolidate relationship with OJC Youth Group

The difficulties of continuing to work with the Halls became obvious during the visit. The delegation reported back that the local situation was intolerable and in need of immediate intervention.

In contrast, they reported that Anne Chapman highly regarded and has a flourishing Education Programme.

Brisbane East Timorese community

Interaction has diminished since Sr Eufemia left. FPET was represented at Independence Day celebrations in May, but little else.



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Youth Committee

The departure of Jose and Servacio was a setback, but Mary and James have soldiered on in spite of busy study schedules. Main activities were linking schools in Atabae and Brisbane and working with the OJC Youth Group. Mary will report separately.

Thanks

As this is my last report, I am going to risk the dangerous step of thanking some individuals.

Special thanks to my two gurus – Gary Stone and Peter deHaas. They were always ready to provide advice and guidance, and they inspired me during the tough times.

The Management Committee membership has changed over the years. I appreciated the support and wise counsel of Vice-Presidents Shirley Roiter and Brendan Carroll. The vital job of Treasurer can be difficult, especially with our complicated financial structure, but Jack Brady and Eric Muir always put in the hard yards, applied their accounting skills and kept us well clear of financial trouble.

I have served with three Secretaries – Helen Murphy, Joy Richards and John O'Hara and I am very grateful that they were able to produce accurate minutes from some very unstructured meetings. Thanks to Helen who readily steps in whenever John is away.

I want to say a special thankyou to my old friend, Nick Delaney. Nick has been my “Mr Fixit” especially in project applications, newsletters and FPET website. With his wife Von, they have been tremendous supporters, always ready to provide accommodation or a venue for a BBQ or a meeting. They always contribute thoughtful input on the issue of the day, and have faithfully coordinated supper arrangements and opening and closing the meeting room.

One of FPET's strengths has been our commitment to involving young people, both in Brisbane and in Atabae. I want to thank our Youth Committee members who have managed to find time to keep this activity going – Joel, Sam and Mary Hodge and James Johnson. Jose and Servacio greatly enhanced the Committee while they were with us.

I want to recognise our regular meeting attenders for their vital role in keeping FPET running. Sincere thanks to you all. I am going to highlight one member, Mike Dooley, for his particular fidelity to the cause. Supporters do not come any more faithful than Mike, who needs a major catastrophe to prevent him from maintaining his 100% attendance record. Thanks, Mike. With more like you, we would move mountains.

Thanks also to PALMS for supporting FPET in our mutually beneficial partnership. Christine and Roger O'Halloran are wonderful allies.

Thanks to Toll for their assistance with vehicles and transport, and to Paladin for their help in our current difficulties.

Finally, thanks to our donors who have made it all possible. The faithfulness and generosity of our supporters has been wonderful and has enabled us to forge a relationship which is making a real difference.

Last Words

My FPET Presidency has been a roller-coaster ride, but despite the alternating highs and lows, we are still here. We have an enthusiastic membership and a core of dedicated workers who are prepared to put in the many hours necessary to make the organisation function.

Now it's time for new blood and new enthusiasm. I wish the incoming management team all the very best as they take their seats in the roller-coaster. I predict the ride will be frustrating but character-building, difficult but rewarding. By necessity, you will develop the virtue of patience.

I am very pleased that our FPET deliberations have always been respectful and we have avoided the petty politics that afflict many organisations. We have made it integral to our meetings to ask God to give us wisdom in our decision-making. We always end meetings with a prayer of thanks. I believe this helps a lot.

Our Vision Statement is our beacon –

An ever growing mutual relationship in Christ between FPET members and supporters in Australia and the people of the western border region of East Timor that bears witness to Christian love by each group being sensitive, understanding and responsive to the needs of the other.

The latest communications from Jose and Servacio in Atabae lead me to believe that we are now approaching our vision of a true friendship and partnership with our brothers and sisters in East Timor.

Jim Johnson

