

## FRIENDS AND PARTNERS WITH EAST TIMOR PRESIDENT'S REPORT - 01-12-2008

### Overview

FPET is an evolving organisation, trying to adapt as the situation in East Timor develops. Our focus must change to ensure that our partnership achieves the maximum for our friends in Timor. I believe our core activities have reduced to two big ones –



- Supporting our PALMS volunteers and their team to continue their programmes of Community Health and Community Development in Atabae
- Support for the youth of the parish – teaching and trade scholarships, support for Comoning Youth Association activities.

With no evacuations this year, the Team has consolidated and expanded so that we finish 2008 with 4 senior employees and 6 assistants on a minimal wage. We were delighted to get to know members of the Team when they came here for World Youth Day.

We decided to establish a base in Dili, currently in a rented house. This has had major operational benefits. In Atabae, the Team now has a headquarters in the new Community Health Centre, built entirely with FPET funds.

The Treasurer will cover finances in detail, but I would like to make some general comments. To prevent the organisation going broke because of heavy spending, we took some hard decisions – no more payment of a monthly grant towards Atabae Parish running expenses, and no more payment of teachers' salaries – we felt it was time for Timor to take these responsibilities, so we could concentrate on our core activities. Significant boosts to funds came from a very successful Appeal Weekend in St John's Wood/The Gap Parish and a successful application to GRM International for a grant to help run the Health Programme.

### World Youth Day

The month of July was very special in our partnership, but also very exhausting. FPET sponsored Jose and Maria from our Team in Atabae, plus Altino and Adelino from BURADU Youth Group in Dili. The Halls organised private sponsorship for Lepa, also from the Team in Atabae. They arrived July 1<sup>st</sup> for pre-WYD activities in Brisbane, spent 14<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> in Sydney, then back to Brisbane until departure on 26<sup>th</sup> – a packed itinerary! It was a wonderful opportunity for them to achieve spiritual growth, and also to experience Australia and get to know us better. Thanks to all who helped make this a highlight of our FPET year.



### **Operational**

Regular meetings were on the first Monday of each month and alternated general meetings (5) with committee meetings (6). Everyone was invited to the committee meetings and encouraged to participate.

3 newsletter issues were produced. Thanks to Nick and Brendan and contributors.

Nick maintains the high-quality FPET website and keeps it updated and interesting. Thanks, Nick.

### **PALMS Volunteers**

Margaret and David are exceeding all our expectations with their dedication, energy, patience, perseverance and effectiveness in promoting the aims of our partnership. They have moulded an impressive Team and have passed on skills to a high



degree. The Health Programmes are something to be proud of and they have continued and expanded collaboration with other medical workers in Timor so that Atabae benefits from their skills. They have instituted an effective record-keeping system. They are receiving requests to expand activities into other areas. The building and fitting out of the Community Health Centre is probably their greatest achievement. I particularly appreciate the way they keep in contact through e-mails from Dili, text messages from wherever and phone calls when all

else fails. They have asked to continue as our PALMS volunteers for the foreseeable future and intend to acquire their own house in Atabae. A heartfelt thank you to Margaret and David. All our achievements are through them.

### **Visits**

There were no FPET-funded visits to East Timor this year. Gary Stone visited several times with the Federal Police and once privately with Lyn. He was able to keep us briefed on the changing situation in the country.

Other relevant private visits were from Joel Hodge, Peter de Haas, Michael and Sarah Good, and Glen Caitlin. Jack Brady attended the opening of the CHC in August.

### **East Timorese community**

We have continued our links with the small East Timorese community in Brisbane –

- Independence Day Mass & Supper – May 17
- Santa Cruz Mass – November 14

FPET hosted a BBQ at The Gap for the visiting Vice-Minister for Health, Madalena Soares, and established a very useful contact with her office. We raised her

awareness of FPET programmes and laid the foundation for increased cooperation between FPET and the Ministry.

### **Networking**

Useful contacts were maintained through the East Timor Support Group. Meetings were held in February and May, but with the departure of secretary Mary Davies, the Group did not meet in the second half of the year.

### **Thanks**

I want to express the appreciation of FPET to our office bearers - Vice-President Shirley, Treasurer Jack, Secretary Joy (with backups John & Helen) and Project Officer Nick - for performing their jobs with distinction.

Thanks also to PALMS for supporting FPET in our mutually beneficial partnership.

Once again I sincerely thank our regular meeting attenders, and all who have contributed to running FPET. Finally and importantly, thanks to our generous donors who make our efforts possible.

### **Last Words**

East Timor continues to make progress as a nation. Apart from the shocking assassination attempts on the President and the PM, violence has generally diminished. Oil revenues mean that the country has a good income, but poverty is entrenched and there is a lack of ideas and initiatives to alleviate the problem. Lack of leadership, management skills, and ethical standards and good governance in organisations are getting in the way of giving benefits to the people. Our volunteers in Atabae are addressing all these needs and passing on these skills to a group of local Timorese young people who will help provide the next generation of leaders for their country.



Jim Johnson