

FRIENDS AND PARTNERS WITH EAST TIMOR PRESIDENT'S REPORT - 06-12-2010

Overview

The political situation in East Timor seems fairly stable with the next elections not due until 2012. However, there are smouldering problems of widespread poverty (especially outside Dili), government and public service incompetence, and poor employment prospects for a very young workforce.

Our 2010 Strategic Review reinforced our priorities -

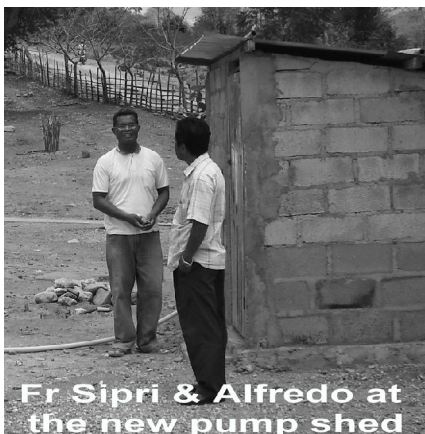
- Supporting our PALMS volunteers and their team in their programmes of Community Health and Development in Atabae, but working towards a transition to local funding and management by engaging with the ET government and with Bairo Pite Clinic.
- Support for the youth of the parish – awarding scholarships and improving contact and follow-up with students being supported; grants to the local Youth Group
- Repairing the relationship with the parish priest and the Atabae Parish now that the long-awaited change in local clergy has occurred.



With regard to outside funding, FPET's application for a further GRM grant for the health programme was unsuccessful, but we were encouraged to apply to AUSAID's Community Assistance Scheme and have been promised a response this month.

Parish Relationship

The new Diocese of Maliana was proclaimed early in the year with the ordination of Bishop Do Amaral and subsequent celebration taking place in April. Atabae Parish is now part of Maliana Diocese.



Fr Siprianus Kakut took over as acting parish priest in March and has proved to be very energetic. He has made numerous requests for assistance and we have agreed to pay for drilling and equipping a bore to provide a water supply to Atabae parish buildings. We have also agreed to replace unsuitable bunk beds in the girls' dormitory, and to provide timber and cement so that the community can build a chapel in the village of Limonaro.

It was agreed that the Community Committee would be superseded by the Parish Council as the vehicle for communication between FPET and the community.

FPET considers the best way to foster our relationship is to organise visits between Atabae and Brisbane. Plans are advanced for an FPET delegation to travel to Atabae in January, with Fr Sipri and a member of the Parish Council making a reciprocal visit to Brisbane early in 2011.

At this end, our key parish of St John's Wood / The Gap has seen continuing support from Fr Neil and the Parish Pastoral Council. Lyn Dudgeon attends meetings to represent the PPC and facilitate the two-way flow of information with FPET. Deacon Gary Stone preached on FPET's mission at all parish masses on our FPET weekend in May, resulting in a boost in membership.

We continue to receive welcome support from our parish schools. Mater Dei students exchanged some letters with Atabae students, and members of the FPET Youth Committee visited the school. Plans are underway for expanded activity next year.

Direct Interaction with Atabae Community

- ◆ **Local radio network**: In response to an appeal from Connect East Timor, FPET made a donation to CET to maintain the 2-way network for another 2 years.
- ◆ **Living allowance to Baucau Teachers College graduates**: When a dysfunctional Education Ministry could not offer jobs to the 3 new graduates, they approached FPET; having supported them through College, FPET encouraged the graduates to become volunteer teachers in Atabae schools to gain experience and hopefully paid employment in 2011; FPET paid them an allowance throughout 2010.
- ◆ **Travel expenses for Music & Dance Festival in Dili**: In response to an appeal from the new Village Chief, Alberto Fontes, FPET helped with expenses for a group of Atabae youth to participate for the first time in this cultural competition.
- ◆ **TV Re-Transmitter**: In response to an appeal from the Sub-District Administrator, Sidonio Fontes, FPET agreed to provide funds for this equipment which would allow Atabae residents to receive Timor TV broadcasts; only Indonesian programmes are currently received.



FPET Operation

Since the 2009 AGM, eleven general meetings have been held on the first Monday of the month, with an average attendance of 15 – very pleasing. Five committee meetings were held. The Management Committee discussed and adopted an Operational Mission Statement. Margaret and David Hall were able to attend our February and September meetings, and it was very valuable to get their contributions.

There were two additional meetings in January and April. John O'Hara led us through a Strategic Review of FPET, which confirmed our overall Mission Statement and highlighted immediate and mid-term priorities.



3 newsletters were produced. Nick Delaney deserves the credit for driving this, and also for maintaining the high-quality FPET website. Nick also updated the FPET publicity leaflet.

Jose Asaca & Servacio do Nascimento

One of the main achievements of my trip to Timor last year was to help organise scholarship applications from Jose and Serv and bring the applications back with me. The

Sahariv Scholarship trustees approved both applications to study agriculture at UQ, and Jose and Serv arrived in March to start English studies at AICOL at Southport. They sat the IELTS exam last week and hopefully will start their academic programme next year.

They attend all FPET meetings and contribute very positively. They are a very valuable asset to our Youth Committee – visits to schools, translation, communication with Atabae youth.

It is a blessing for our supporters to be able to interact with these young men from Timor.

PALMS Volunteers - Margaret and David Hall

The Health Programme continues to develop with Lepa and Carlita playing increasing management roles, despite both having young children. A pre-requisite of being accepted as full time members of the Team is now to sign a contract.



The Sub-District Administrator's Office is increasingly referring disabled clients to the FPET Health Centre. A large effort was put in to getting patients ready to take advantage of the visit of the USNS Hospital Ship "Mercy" in August.

Margaret and Team have continued to run courses in "Introduction to Preventative & Community Health and Early Detection", with participants from different districts. SVD House was used as a venue to cope with numbers. Natural Family Planning is being taught, with Lepa and Carlita proving excellent instructors.

Dave and Margaret have continued to promote and oversee our scholarship programme with 3 students currently at Baucau Teachers College, one at Don Bosco Tech College, 4 at the Seminary and 6 at SOLS. They report increased interest and motivation this year with 12 applications for Baucau, 10 for Don Bosco and 10 for SOLS. Locally, they have organised Tetun Literacy classes and sewing classes (which will be boosted by the arrival of some new machines in 2011).

Dave has been busy organising security screens for the Health Centre, plus a Security fence – a major undertaking. The fencing has opened the way for a safe outdoor children's play area and a vegetable garden.

Keeping the vehicles on the road is a serious task as district roads have deteriorated further. We are now taking advantage of the offer from PDL/Toll for repairs and maintenance of the vehicles. Thanks to Bill Kenny and John O'Hara, a replacement driver's seat for the Troop Carrier was found and sent.

Once again, Margaret and David deserve our heartfelt thanks for their wonderful efforts in furthering our partnership with the Atabae community.

New PALMS Volunteer – Anne Chapman

A very exciting development is FPET's agreement to fund an additional PALMS volunteer in 2011. This is in response to identified education gaps in Atabae Sub-District, especially in the



areas of English and computer teaching. Anne Chapman is an experienced teacher, and is keen to use her skills to make a real difference in Atabae.

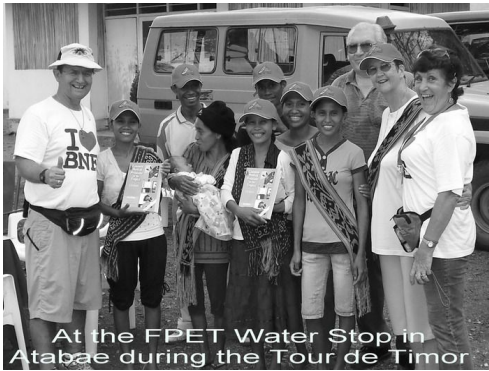
Visits

There were no FPET-funded visits to East Timor this year.

I made a private visit in November 2009, and managed to spend several days with the Halls before they flew out for holidays in the UK. It was good to see the Team at work, and to meet some of the students we are supporting. I met with the Community Committee and brought back the request for another PALMS volunteer in the area of education.

Gary and family spent Christmas with Michael in Dili, and managed to negotiate some help from PDL/Toll who agreed to assist with repairs and maintenance of FPET vehicles and with transport of goods from Darwin to Dili.

Peter de Haas and family visited in July and Peter was able to meet Fr Sipri and welcome him on behalf of FPET. They discussed some development priorities.



At the FPET Water Stop in Atabae during the Tour de Timor

Gary and Lynne returned in September to help Michael run the Tour de Timor bike race. He organised FPET banners and door signs for the vehicles, which will continue to raise our profile in Timor. They were very effective at the FPET Water Stop on the first day of the race. Gary, Lynne and the Team organised and ran the official Water Stop in Atabae. Gary found time to have follow-up discussions with Fr Sipri about his Parish plans.

East Timorese community

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

- FPET members were present when the East Timor Centre at “Benarrawa” at Graceville opened on November 21 (2009) – the Centre aims to be a focus for local Timorese, and to interact with the Australian community.
- FPET members were present at the Farewell to Sr Eufemia – March 5 – Sister has been an effective organiser of the ET community and a bridge to Australian supporters, so it was a sad occasion to farewell her to Darwin. We hope to develop a similar friendship with Sr Odete.
- FPET was represented at important Timorese remembrances –
 - Independence Day Mass & Dinner – May 22
 - Santa Cruz Day Mass & Dinner – Nov 13
 - Christmas Mass & Dinner – Dec 4

Youth Committee

This has been boosted in enthusiasm by the arrival of Jose and Serv. Main emphasis has been on –

- ◆ Keeping a letter exchange going between Mater Dei and Atabae
- ◆ Limited visiting of local schools (Mater Dei and Loreto)
- ◆ Establishing contact with FPET-supported students in Timor

Thanks

I want to express my appreciation to our office bearers for performing their jobs with distinction. Our management committee has been remarkably stable from when I became President in 2003 up to this year. However, Jack Brady declined nomination for another term as Treasurer, although he continued as Acting Treasurer until a replacement was found in Eric Muir, who took over in May. So, I want to pay tribute to the years of conscientious work that Jack put into FPET – he was the first and only Treasurer until this year. He was there from the start and provided impeccable accounting and careful counsel over the years. Thanks, Jack. You have earned a rest.

Vice-President Shirley Roiter has foreshadowed that she will not accept nomination for another term at this AGM, due to the demands of her business. Thanks, Shirley for walking with me over the last seven years and being a wonderful source of support and wisdom.

2010 was a sad year in that we lost two of our faithful supporters - Joy Richards (who was FPET Secretary from when I started until bad health intervened), and Mollie Dooley. We miss their cheerful participation.

However there are lots of positives. Eric is an able and enthusiastic Treasurer and I thank him for taking the office. He has thrown himself into the job and has worked hard to come to grips with our complicated financial structure. Thanks, Eric.

Thanks also to Secretary John O'Hara who manages to produce a set of minutes from some fairly unstructured meetings. Thanks also to John for arranging a consignment of donated air compressors to Timor and to Dave for finding them good homes.

Thanks to emergency Secretary Helen Murphy who can be relied on to fill in whenever John is unavailable. Thanks to Project Officer Nick Delaney who, as well as formulating project proposals, also wears the hats of newsletter editor and website manager. Special thanks to Deacon Gary Stone. I rely on Gary for inspiration, advice and guidance.

Thanks also to PALMS for supporting FPET in our mutually beneficial partnership. Thanks to PDL/Toll for their assistance with vehicles and transport.

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

Last Words

The first informal group in our local parishes started working on the relationship with East Timor in November 2000, so the partnership can be said to have reached double figures.

As our relationship with Atabae Parish matures, we need to keep our Vision Statement in mind –

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.

I believe we really try to be faithful to this vision.

Jim Johnson

