

EAST TIMOR UPDATE

Bulletin of the Peter Trust

- Registered Charity No. 1080159 -
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Secretary's Visit to East Timor August – September 2011

'During the three weeks I spent in East Timor I was able to see for myself how the projects our Donors have been assisting have developed, and I discovered – inevitably – others very worthy of our support.

On my first full day in the territory I visited the ALMA Convent in **Dili** which has been expanded - to house not only the small community of four religious Sisters but also offer temporary accommodation for those in need of in-patient care. There is also plenty of space for the instruction which the Sisters give to parents and other family members in basic skills in physiotherapy.

I joined the Sunday lunchtime group of 12 severely disabled youngsters and was delighted to see the very positive relationship which they enjoyed with their parents. One of the most

important features of the Sisters' pastoral work - which they undertake in the homes of as many as 70 children as well as in their Convent meeting rooms - is helping the families to accept and care tenderly for their handicapped children. Previously most of these youngsters languished hidden away in back rooms, often not even regularly washed or properly fed.



In the first week I travelled out of Dili to **Hera** where the Dominican Sisters have established a large kitchen garden (bigger than a football pitch). Here

they engage the orphans they care for in raising crops and livestock for their own nutrition and for income generation. The orphanage is in Dili itself, but now the older boys can live out at the Hera garden in premises which *The Peter Trust* has helped to equip. All the youngsters spend weekends and holidays there, tending to the wide range of plants and the animals - which include chickens, goats, cows, and (soon) pigs, each with their own pens.

I visited them on a National Holiday and took many photographs of the whole community of 60 boys and girls (aged 6 – 18) busily engaged in tidying, irrigating, pruning, and making further progress in building the boundary wall.



Part of the 'garden' is a sizeable plantation of very fruitful trees – banana, mango and coconut. *The Peter Trust* has helped with water supply (the well bore and pump), and with the provision of toilets, laundry, and a basic kitchen to prepare and cook food, as well as with seeds and seedlings for the garden itself.

It was not possible this year for me to travel to the East Timor enclave of Oecusse in (located in Indonesian West Timor) but I was able to meet with Fr Ricardus Pasang SVD, through whose initiative the *asrama* or hostel in **Baocnana** was established to accommodate young people from mountain villages so that they can attend secondary school. This hostel is now complete – thanks to funding

from *The Peter Trust* – and 50 girls and 25 boys are happily housed in term time, learning domestic and social skills, and also becoming computer literate on the several lap tops powered by the generator (also funded by the *Trust*).

I had time to travel to the south of the country to stay with the Sisters of St Paul of Chartres at their hospital in **Suai**. *The Peter Trust* donors fund the salary of the hospital doctor, two nurses, and a lab technician, and provide all the medicines which are needed annually, not only in the hospital (which specialises in mother and child care, and in the treatment of TB) but also for the mobile clinic which travels each week to five villages in the vicinity which are too distant from the hospital for their people to avail of its facilities.

I went with the clinic to the village of **Wetabu** where as many as 200 people of all ages came to receive treatment from the Sisters and their helpers - and also to express their deepest appreciation to *Peter Trust* donors for their continuing generosity. This provision is still the only medical care offered to the people in these villages, all five of which I have now been able to see for myself.



I travelled to Suai by way of **Railaku** – a small township in the hills to the south of Dili – where the *Trust* has been assisting with the education of secondary level pupils in the parish school. The solar panels funded by the *Trust* have enabled the 200 students to

develop IT skills, and also for the girls to acquire facility with powered sewing machines – an important means of making a future livelihood. 11 of the 20 students for whom the *Trust* has provided scholarships so that they can attend the school presented me with tokens of their gratitude to all the donors I represented. Sadly, another of these 20 had died of asthma just a week or two before my visit, and the rest could not get to the school on that day because of personal sickness or travel difficulties.



The school functions between 8.30am and 2.30pm when the students set off for home, some having to walk a long distance, and all of them too tired to learn any more – a symptom of the malnutrition that is endemic in East Timor.

Back in Dili I spent a very interesting day in the Salesian Technical College at **Comoro** – which has been greatly expanded since I first visited it in 1995, shortly after it had been established. A range of training is offered for young people 16 plus years of age, boys and girls – of which there are currently 300 in total.

Courses are primarily in the trades related to the construction industry – building, carpentry, plumbing, electrical wiring, etc – but also in computer literacy, and in car maintenance and repair. The tuition is of a very high standard and includes not only technical skills but also in self-discipline and a positive work ethic.



The Director of the College asked if the *Peter Trust* could sponsor a number of students. This is certainly the best way to support the very excellent work that is being done there. A full year's tuition, supply of uniform (work-overalls), food, and residential accommodation is only \$350 (!), \$250 for non-residents - but the \$100 difference could go towards the provision of individual tool kits. Truly value for money!

Admirable Collaboration

It was encouraging to find close collaboration between several different organisations devoted to the care of the disabled. I met a number of older young people who had previously been in the care of the ALMA Sisters. They are now accommodated in a specialist hostel '*AHISAUN*' set up by a young priest of the Diocese of Dili. This quite recently built institution provides residential accommodation for 36 boys and girls aged 15-21 and offers them training on computers, in shoe-making, horticulture, and in running a small general store.

Several of the disabled young people at *Ahisaun* are talented musicians and generate an income for themselves and their fellows by entertaining at social functions such as weddings, birthday parties, etc. *Peter Trust* help in the development of this well managed hostel would be much appreciated.



Also linked with the ALMA pastoral work, and the *Ahisaun* hostel is the ASSERT institution for the care of disabled people set up by Dr Peter Carey of Oxford University and others. A particular service of this organisation is the manufacture on site of prosthetics from polypropylene.

Repairs to wheelchairs and other aids are carried out in a small workshop set up by two Maryknoll Sisters in *Aileu*, a township in the hills to the south east of Dili, on the road to Suai. At this workshop various kinds of useful equipment is produced – such as hand powered tricycles for those without use of their legs, special small size wheel chairs for children, and dental chairs for use in villages. The Sisters have asked for \$5000 to replace equipment and re-house the workshop generator.

Some patients require long stay hospitalisation, and this is offered by *Klibur Domin* – a facility set up west of Dili by the Cheshire Foundation.

These several charitable foundations have come together in a *Disability Working Group* which ensures that there is the minimum of duplication and the maximum of shared expertise and specialisation.

Our Lady of Lourdes School

I had the chance to make a short visit to the parish Primary School of Our Lady of Lourdes in the coffee-growing district of Ermera, south west of Dili. I was able to meet with the head teacher in person, along with the newly

appointed parish priest, and apprise them of the special funds that had been raised to benefit the school in accordance with the list of priorities previously provided to us.'

Sickness among the Trustees

It is distressing to have to inform all Friends and Supporters of *The Peter Trust* that two of our longest serving Trustees have been taken ill. Peter James, our Treasurer since the foundation of the Trust over 10 years ago has been diagnosed with terminal cancer and has had to resign from office. Tom Marshall, another founder member, has also been laid low and is awaiting advice from the medical professionals. Please pray for them.

New Trustees

On a happier note, good news is that Kevin Grundey has very willingly agreed to take on the office of Treasurer. Norah Small and Michael O'Donnell, who have been active in their support of *The Peter Trust* for several years, have also formally joined the Trustees. All of them are members of the community at the *Church of the Holy Name of Jesus* in North Leeds and so are well informed about the situation in East Timor and the projects of the Peter Trust in that territory.

Many thanks to all our Friends and Supporters and to all donors whose generosity is enabling an increasing number of projects in health care, education, income generation, technical and leadership training to be established and maintained in East Timor. The need for your assistance continues to be very great: it will be at least a generation before the people of East Timor can develop their country so as to provide adequately for their basic needs – until then all that we can do to help is much appreciated!