

Nourishment for Body, Mind and Spirit

The projects funded with the help of The Peter Trust respond to basic needs of the people of East Timor, especially the young who comprise the majority of the population. This support is as necessary today as it was when the Trust was first registered with the Charities Commission in 2001

The importance of proper nutrition - a story, and some facts

[The following information is garnered from recent reports provided by the UN World Food Programme, and The World Bank, March/April 2016]

‘Like many mothers in Timor-Leste, Fatima had simple hopes for her baby: that she would enjoy a happy and healthy future. But by the age of only fourteen months her daughter Delisa had suffered from an abdominal pain, fever, cough, and diarrhoea for many weeks. Her condition got so bad that Fatima, a subsistence farmer living in a mountainous region, had to stop working her vegetable



Children receiving nutritional supplement during a visit of the SPC Mobile Clinic, funded by the Peter Trust

gardens and stay at home with her ailing baby. Fatima couldn't work out why Delisa was constantly sick. "She had no energy and her face was pale. It was so sad".

‘Then a visiting nurse explained that the cause of Delisa's illness was a particular kind of malnutrition called ‘wasting’ - where a child's weight is too low for their height. Delisa had not had enough nutritious food to support her development and fight off diseases. Although Fatima grew a variety of vegetables in her garden - such as corn red beans, green beans and pumpkins - she didn't realise that they could provide a wealth of micronutrients crucial for Delisa's health. Like many parents in the region, and throughout rural East Timor, she believed a rice-based diet to be sufficient to meet the nutritional needs of her baby. She didn't know that a healthy diet is not just a matter of providing

Delisa with regular meals, but also making sure that what is provided on her plate is nutritionally appropriate.

‘Fatima was then taught by the nurse that a balanced nutritional intake requires much more than just carbohydrates. She learned that babies and small children need to be fed with food that will provide them a mix of energy, protein, fat, and essential micronutrients such as vitamin A, iron, iodine and zinc.

‘Fatima was amazed at the speedy recovery of her child - who changed from being apathetic and lacking energy - to being full of life and activity.

Timor Leste has one of the highest rates of malnutrition in Asia, 11% of children suffering from ‘wasting’. Moreover, 58% of

Peter Trust Priorities

From its inauguration in 2001 The Peter Trust has prioritised projects in health and education. In this issue of Update we look at the continuing need in East Timor for our assistance in these areas.

children under the age of five are too small for their age - a condition known as 'stunting'. This poses a significant threat to Timor-Leste's children because it affects brain development, and leads to lower physical and mental capabilities. Stunting is the leading cause of child mortality.

Even if they recover, the damage to children's health continues. Studies have shown that rapid weight gain after age two among stunted children can increase the risk of becoming overweight or obese later in life, and can contribute to heart disease, stroke hypertension, or type-2 diabetes. People with childhood stunting also tend to have learning challenges. As a result, they are less prepared to enter the job market. This in turn gives rise to reduced economic productivity.

It is most important to address the underlying causes of malnutrition: it's not just a matter of not having enough to eat. In fact, many children in families that have escaped poverty continue to suffer from inappropriate infant feeding, a lack of healthy food choices, poor sanitation, and inadequate healthcare services.

For ten years *The Peter Trust* has given significant annual support to the Mother and Baby clinic provided in the hospital established by the Sisters of St Paul of Chartres in the southern coastal township of Suai.

The *Trust* has also funded the weekly visits made to several villages in the surrounding countryside by a Mobile Clinic. This is staffed by the Sisters who are professionally qualified, and by local nurses they have trained. Heading up the team is Dr Benilda de Gula - a Filipino with specialist knowledge of health issues related to maternity - who is

An SPC Sister gives out a nutritious meal to children



closely associated with the Sisters and shares their community life.

On a daily basis, in the hospital and out in the villages, expert guidance is being given to mothers in the raising of their children, and nutritional supplements provided along with any other medication that is needed.

The Peter Trust meets all the costs

associated with this very important service - including the wages of the driver and the nurses, Dr Benilda's own salary, the provision of all the medication/supplements, and the petrol for the 4x4 vehicle. These expenses currently amount to some US\$20,000 each year. Many thanks to all our donors who make this much-needed support possible!

Food for the Mind

The Peter Trustees have received detailed Reports from Fr Roberto Boholst SJ (Fr Bert), Principal of the Jesuit-run Parish High School of Our Lady of Fatima in Railaco, located in the hills forty miles south of the capital city Dili. The following are some passages from his recent updates.

'Our best news this year is that our intake of students has rocketed to 170. Our target is 300 which will make the school more financially stable. As a consequence, of course, we need more classrooms - and funding for their construction! We are dreaming of a new 2-storey building, but in the meantime we have decided to erect a simple house with three rooms for classes. Initially we thought this would be quick and easy to build but we have had difficulty in sourcing the materials like sand, rock and wood. So we have had to ask the students to dig for some earth!

'On Valentine's Day, instead of the usual dancing and singing, the Student Council organised the students to do 'community service' - they walked along the main road and collected garbage. Segregation of wastes is still something to be taught but we wanted to inculcate the value of environmental care in response to the Pope's exhortation *Laudato Si'*. We also wanted to raise the consciousness of the students on how they can love and care for the earth we live on.

'We ended February with another community service, this time working on the parish grounds, pulling out weeds that have grown taller because of the heavy rains. After this labour we returned to the school to re-varnish all the chairs - everyone took turns at handling the brushes!

'Saturdays are brimming with life here, with students moving around



Students walked along the main road and collected garbage.

for various activities. Besides those related to their studies students undertake minor services such as collecting firewood, folding food wrappers, cleaning rice, tidying up the dining hall, washing out

the toilets, organising books at the library, and pulling out weeds in our gardens.

‘Every weekday afternoon is busy with students gathering for group study or sports activities. After class

those who stay here overnight fetch water, collect firewood, and cook rice for their evening meal. They spend the evening studying in the classrooms because there is no room in their living quarter.

‘NOSSEF (Portuguese acronym for Our Lady of Fatima - *Nossa Senhora de Fatima*) is entering into a new phase, one that is moving towards greater stability with more students coming to us, and teachers becoming more faithful to their job, better trained for the tasks, and - most importantly - embracing the vocation of forming young people’.

Spiritual Food

It has been good to learn that on Fridays at NOSSEF, while the teachers are having their Professional Development, the students go for their Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) sharing. Points are prepared for the students to reflect on and share their thoughts and experiences. They are divided into ten groups named after donors and benefactors. BEC No 9 is called *The Peter Trust!* Fr Bert, the Principal, writes:

‘The students need time to reflect and to pray, and during these sessions Ignatian Spirituality is shared and the Catholic identity of the school strengthened. As the teachers are now receiving guidance and encouragement in their own days of reflection they can begin to help in guiding the BEC of the students.

‘This year we changed the format of our **Orientation Programme** for new students. There is more input and reflection on sharing the mission and vision of the school, on Jesuit education, study habits and survival skills, academic programmes, sharing from alumni



and present students, relationships, and sexuality awareness. The students are taught to do the Ignatian *examen* each day, checking over all that has engaged them in order to see room for gratitude and for improvement.’

The Peter Trust has sponsored three cohorts of 20 of the poorest students through this High School since 2001 and has received regular reports from the Principal on the progress of the students year

Fr Bert speaks to a new intake of students at NOSSEF

by year, and - more recently - the provision of whatever information can be gathered about their welfare after graduating. Many have gone on to Higher Education in Timorese institutions, or elsewhere in SE Asia, or into employment in Timor Leste.

Outreach to Disabled Youth

Another enterprise supported by *The Peter Trust* for over a decade has been the hostel in Dili for disabled youth established by Fr Adri Ola, a diocesan priest.

The ethos of the hostel (known as *Ahisaun - The Light of Friendship*) is that youth with disability have their innate worth like everyone else and should be helped to express it. This work has until recently been located only in Dili, but now two other facilities are being set up in locations further afield. To access these places and offer support on a regular basis it is necessary to have the use of motorbikes to cover the distance and cope with the poor roads. The Peter Trust has funded (US\$2700) the purchase of two robust machines for this purpose. Fr Adri has just sent photographs of him blessing them.. (and their riders!)....



Many thanks to all our donors!

The Trustees, pictured opposite, express their deepest appreciation to all who have contributed and are contributing to the Peter Trust funds.



l-r (back) Eddie Lumley; Kevin Grundey (Treasurer); Michael O'Donnell; Fr Pat Smythe (Secretary); Simon Myers (Chairman); Philip Stewardson; l-r (front) Norah Small, Laura Lumley; Philomena Moreland

Despite some creditable developments East Timor remains the poorest country in SE Asia and one of the four poorest in the world - so a little financial help goes a long way.
- Every donation of whatever amount significantly improves conditions for the people.