

Special Edition

Provision for Young People with Disabilities by **AHISAUN:** *The Light of Friendship*

'If rubbish can be useful all the more so can human beings!'

These are words written by the founder of *Ahisaun*, Fr Adri Ola, a priest of the Diocese of Dili, East Timor, in an early (2009) issue of the organisation's Bulletin. He continued:

'The existence of *Ahisaun* is to give value to all human beings especially those with disability. In our Rehabilitation Centre we try to build the self confidence of the young people through formal education, skill training, and therapies. Every school day *Ahisaun* staff accompany disabled children to school, some making the journey on their wheelchairs. In the afternoon we organise craft classes for them knowing that their heart's desire is to be useful. In this class they are taught to recycle paper, plastic, wrapping, bottles, etc. We discover that we can turn rubbish into something useful'.

The meaning of AHISAUN

In East Timorese culture this word is traditionally used to describe the



Some Residents and Helpers Ahisaun Dili. Fr Adri is back row, second from left

equal relationship between two kingdoms. In the past Timorese (regional) kings would light an 'Agreement Fire' when forming an alliance. This fire was called *Ahisaun*. Following the lighting of the fire they would endeavour to live in peace recognising each other's worth and dignity.

At the formal launch of the organisation in 1999 the founders agreed to use this word as an appropriate name or title for its purpose, *viz.* to encourage the development of an equal partnership between those with disabilities and the able-bodied. This is the 'spirit' which motivates all its enterprises ever since.

A Short History of Ahisaun

In 1996 during a census in the parish of Same in the Manufahi district of East Timor the attention of the pastor, Fr Adri Ola, was drawn to a number of disabled



Typing and Information Technology

people. He shared his concerns with the then Bishop, Carlos Belo, who supported the idea of concrete action and asked for further investigation as to the numbers and whereabouts of disabled people, and how best they could be looked after. Initial discussions were held with *Caritas Dili*, and with the NGO *Timor Aid*.

In 1999 *Ahisaun* was founded - and subsequently registered with the Government of (newly

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.

independent) Timor Leste as an official organisation dedicated specifically to the welfare of young people with physical disabilities. In October 1999 a donor offered a house in Fatuhada - rent free - for use as a Rehabilitation Centre. In 2001 the Centre moved to better accommodation, provided by the same donor, in Delta 3 area of Comoro district in Dili. Latterly a new *Ahisaun* residence in that locality has been established in new premises with financial support from **The Peter Trust** particularly for improvements to drainage and sanitation.

To this day too many young persons with physical disabilities in East Timor are unable to participate fully in the life of their community, benefit from education and training, and make a contribution to society. But *Ahisaun* has continued and has expanded its work beyond the capital Dili with other bases now under development - all with the support of **The Peter Trust**.



Signs at entrance to the Hostel;

Aquiring Skills

Literacy and Numeracy The physically disabled are helped to read and analyse texts, and acquire letter-writing skills, and to improve their arithmetic. Funding from **The Peter Trust** has facilitated the running of a small shop or 'kiosk' for the management of which the young residents are responsible.

Typing and Information Technology The young people in the *Ahisaun* Centres are taught touch-typing and also the use of computers. They have developed these skills to the extent that they now offer classes to other able-bodied people in the vicinity. A photo gallery of these students numbered over 200 at a recent visit by our Trustees to the new Residence in Comoro.

The Peter Trust has funded the purchase of a number of computers with their keyboards/monitors, and recently the provision of a power point projector and accessories.

Spiritual Ministry. *Ahisaun* members offer Intercessory Prayer for any petitions entrusted to them and undertake Meditation in their Dili Hostel Chapel.

Carving, Drawing, Music Among the young residents at *Ahisaun* centres are those with natural artistic abilities in carving, drawing, and sculpture. These are encouraged, as are any musical and singing talents. **The Peter Trust** assisted with the purchase of a range of musical instruments and a group of current and former residents of *Ahisaun* are regularly engaged as musicians for social events such as significant birthday parties, weddings etc.

Shoe making and Repair have been amongst the skills shared within *Ahisaun* and have been a useful source of income for the Centre as well as of enhancing the personal dignity of the practitioners. Equipment for this work has been part funded by **The Peter Trust**.



Ahisaun Dili Hostel Chapel



Computers and PP Projector provided for Manleu Hostel by Peter Trust



The Peter Trust helped provided musical instruments



Shoe Making and Repair



The vegetable garden



Managing the small shop



The Hostel at Kakao



Motor Bikes purchased by The Peter Trust with their Ahisaun riders outside the new Hostel at Manleu



Some more Residents Ahisaun Dili



Kitchen Garden at Manleu with Ahisaun Management Team leaders.

Gardening The *Ahisaun* centres have a designated area for the planting of vegetables which are tended by the residents and in part provide for their meals. Support from **The Peter Trust** has assisted with the purchase of seeds, bulbs, etc.

Education The belief of *Ahisaun* is that their members have the capacity for learning and personal development just as do able-bodied young people and so every effort is made to arrange for their participation in mainstream schools and in higher education. **The Peter Trust** has funded the tuition fees for several *Ahisaun* residents at tertiary level institutions in Dili. Such beneficiaries are now engaged in the day to day management of the *Ahisaun* centres.

Expansion of Ahisaun beyond Dili

In recent years efforts have been made to establish other simple Centres for young people with disability in other locations in East Timor. In each instance the aim is to bring able-bodied and handicapped young people

together to be of mutual assistance - physically and spiritually. It is the conviction of *Ahisaun* that young people with disabilities who are determined to overcome their limitations and be of service to others can be inspirational to young people who do not have such difficulties to contend with.

In Manleu (**Metinaro**) a Training Centre is now established and has been visited this August by representatives of **The Peter Trust**. Along with the existing large vegetable garden at this site it is hoped to develop a piggery and a fish farm. The organisers delineate several objectives of this significant enterprise:

To help young people in Metinaro to graduate from Senior High School; to give jobs to Ahisaun members who graduate from University; to promote the rights of people with disabilities (e.g. access to buildings, transport, work; voting in elections, etc); to minimise the discrimination of people with disability in the local community; for the *Ahisaun* Centre to become self-supporting.

The Spirit of Ahisaun - excerpts from the foundational Charter

Everyone who works in *Ahisaun* - able bodied or with disabilities - must appreciate the dignity and creativity of others. Meditation is to be practiced to help control feelings of frustration. Everyone is to regard themselves as the servant of others. Violence must not be used. No one should take advantage of those with disability but should act always for their benefit. Co-operation with the family of the physically disabled is an obligation. All persons in *Ahisaun* should show appreciation to one another and strengthen one another. There should be continual

dialogue in a Spirit of Fellowship. *Ahisaun* is not a place for the disabled to be lazy or to be spoiled - rather it is a place where they can build on their ability and knowledge. They have an obligation to think and work for the benefit of others, including the able-bodied. Those with healthy bodies still have their personal limitations and handicaps, and spiritual defects. Therefore no one should humiliate those with physical disability. Physically disabled people who accept their condition and then dedicate themselves to care for others will have a positive strength to offer in the community.

At **Kakao** (Gleno) a simple house has been built to serve as a base for training in IT and for spiritual reflection. This is a work in progress.

At **Betano** (Same) another IT training centre is being set up with land to develop a kitchen garden and small scale animal husbandry (e.g. pigs, chickens).

In **Airame** (Ainaro) a facility is being planned as a simple 'Retreat House' for developing reflection and meditation and for a sizeable vegetable plantation.

The development of these facilities is being headed up by *Ahisaun* personnel who have themselves benefited from the provision made over the years in Dili and are committed to seeing such opportunities being more widely available. **The Peter Trust** has purchased several motor bikes (some needing special adaptations) to enable these *Ahisaun* leaders to move between these several locations to promote their establishment.

Ahisaun members visit families and villages to promote the ethos of the organisation: *viz.* every person is of value.



Some Members and Staff Ahisaun Dili



Ahisaun Musicians with Fr Adri Ola (left)

APPEAL TO THE PETER TRUST AND DONORS

Ahisaun have expressed their deep appreciation of the help that **The Peter Trust** has been able to give to their work since 2004.

At each visit of a Trustee evidence of progress in this important area of social concern has been very evident. Particularly impressive is the engagement of young people with disabilities in managing and promoting the *Ahisaun* enterprise, and the spirit of collaboration and mutual respect between the able-bodied and those with various - sometimes very severe - physical handicaps.

Ahisaun keeps **The Peter Trust** informed of developments and gives good account of expenditure of funds provided by the Trust.

The Trustees favour further support of the *Ahisaun* enterprise - and hope for your support!



Ahisaun Dili - some Residents and Staff with Peter Trustees Fr Pat and David Wilkinson (2017)

Many thanks to all our donors!

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

Donations can be made in cash or by cheque to The Peter Trust.

If you are a Tax Payer please use the **Gift Aid envelopes** provided so as to enhance the value of your gift by 25%!

Put your donation in the Collection basket at church, or via the Presbytery letter box, or at the Administration Office of our parish school/s of Holy

Name, and St Mary's.

Donations can be made by **direct transfer** to the Peter Trust bank account: HSBC Sort Code - 40 39 21; Account No.713 893 00.

Mandate Forms for setting up **Standing Orders** are available at our OLK parish churches and schools. Such arrangements help the Trustees to plan our support prudently keeping it within our budget while allowing for further developments.

Our sincerest thanks to all our donors - past, present, and future!