



## Carmelite Friars of Australia and Timor-Leste

### MISSION COORDINATOR UPDATE 12.05.06

*Greetings to everybody! I hope you are all well and filled with the spirit of new life from the Easter Season.*

Timor-Leste has been in the media quite frequently since the last Update. Many people have been touched by the story of two month old baby Maria who had a hole in the wall of her tiny heart and has been successfully operated on in Sydney. We heard also that sixty years after Australian commandos dropped leaflets to the East Timorese saying "We will remember you", three of their Timorese companions, known as "criados" came to Australia to be honoured on Anzac Day.

#### APRIL 2006 VISIT TO TIMOR-LESTE

Wayne, Bruce and Peter Appleton, the Business Manager returned from a visit to Timor-Leste on Friday 28th April. Yes it was the day of the Dili riots but when people have no money and no work, it can be understood why they riot.

As Jose Ramos Horta himself said "Mass unemployment, endemic poverty, corruption and suspicions that millions of dollars in oil and gas income is being misused, are all reasons for the ugly scenes played out along the once picturesque waterfront. Add to that a growing resentment against an increasingly autocratic and aloof government that has failed to deliver justice for thousands of victims of the 1999 militia violence and you have a big social powder keg."

Bishop Alberto da Silva of Dili and Bishop Basilio do Nascimento of Baucau have made public statements condemning violence and urging people not to believe all the rumours that have been circulating. The bishops, whose two dioceses cover the whole country, urged that those responsible for crimes be investigated and called on the government to address the dismissed soldiers' grievances justly.

When visiting Timor-Leste and from the recent events in Dili, it can clearly be seen that the country is still very poor. Progress is happening but very

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slowly. When people have been severely traumatized and deprived of education it can take generations for change to occur. The East Timorese people and the Carmelites especially are seeing and taking ownership of their projects by naming their needs and what needs to happen in Timor-Leste to implement these needs.

Let us continue to work and pray for just solutions in Timor-Leste.



#### EASTER MOBILE HEALTH CLINIC

This was organized for the first time by Antonio Olavio O.Carm. He was able to organize it as a result of partaking in and observing the two clinics from last year. The Carmelite Sisters in the team were also new as the main organizer has now returned to Indonesia. In the remote south west villages of the Zumalai Parish the mobile clinics are held in schools, churches or traditional houses that the people make available. When the Carmelite team visits each village they work long hours and into the evening using candlelight. The people never complain about waiting and always dress in their very best clothes for the clinic visit.

Twenty-six villages have now been named in the Zumalai Parish so it is wonderful that different villages were able to be visited for the Easter Clinic.

The people coming to the clinic are often very sick and have to walk long distances. The Carmelite team treats numerous patients, has education sessions for mothers and babies and visits the schools in the villages. There is poor health and nutrition amongst the whole population but particularly amongst the children. Many diseases are caused from unclean water. The clinic treats the people for dengue fever, malaria, tuberculosis, cuts and respiratory tract infections. Many of the diseases are foreign to us as westerners. Sixty percent of the population in Timor-Leste suffer from tuberculosis and I do not know any East Timorese person who has not had malaria. In Timor-Leste, one in seven children die before the age of five. The mortality rate is two hundred times higher than Australia.

### AGRICULTURE

Zumalai town is situated in Covalima district and Zumalai sub-district. The parish crosses into another district and covers three sub-districts. Much of Zumalai sub-district is on flat land. You could call it one big rice field with traditional irrigation. Buffalo and hand tractors have been used to trample the ground for cultivation. In some areas of the parish though much of the land has not been cultivated since Indonesian times. Before 1999 the Indonesians owned the land and cultivated it. The Timorese were never taught agricultural skills during the Indonesian occupation of their country. They always did the menial work and so when the Indonesians left Timor-Leste, the Timorese had very few agricultural skills. They were left with the trauma of the way they had been treated after twenty-five years of occupation and with what seemed the mammoth task of managing the fertile land in the remote south west.

One of the Carmelite Support groups donated a tractor to help with the cultivation of the land in one of the poorer villages. The tractor remained idle for a long time. The good news is that tractor accessories: plough plates and wheels have now been purchased and it is being used in a number of villages.



### FORMATION HOUSE AT HERA

The Formation House at Hera has been 3 years in the planning but it is now going ahead in leaps and bounds. Many people from the area have been able to be employed. Wayne, Bruce and Peter have spoken highly about the standard of the building. Both the foundations and brickwork are nearing completion. The construction of the roof is scheduled to be commenced by the beginning of May. The building is therefore online to be completed by the end of October. A major milestone has been the successful sinking of a bore. When Peter tasted the water he was surprised by its excellent quality. Electricity has also been connected to the town supply. In Timor-Leste it is the owners that have to pay for the connection to public infrastructure even though it crosses other property.

*Could the updates be photocopied and given to each person in the parish mission support teams or other friends. They can be downloaded from the Carmelite website.*



**TRACTOR WITH SPECIAL PLOUGH WHEELS**

*Rosemary Patterson*

Timor-Leste Mission Coordinator