



Melville Friends of Lete-Foho and Hatolia Inc

Helping our friends in the north west highlands of Timor-Leste

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MFLH CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AGM 2011

I know that AGM's are not usually the most exciting event on the annual calendar, but it is a good time to sit back and review our accomplishments for the year, pat ourselves on the back and think about how to build on our successes this coming year.

As somebody once said, "a few people can change the world - indeed it has always been a few people that have changed the world," and while we have not quite changed the world, we have certainly made a very major difference to one small part of it that is very needy.

To sum it up, the district of Hatolia emerged from 400 years of colonisation, 25 years of occupation and the trauma of the independence vote, wanting a better future for their children. They were keen to have a Sec School built in their district so that their children could stay in Hatolia and complete their education without leaving home. That has happened this year and all of you helped to make it happen.

Of course we must not forget our partners in this effort, the Hatolia Community; the very capable school management committee, our guides in the process Xisto and Joao Martins, and the man with the vision, Fr Adriano Ximenes.

Reviewing this past year, much of the activity of MFLH has revolved around raising money for the development of the school and sending supplies to improve the resources.

The St Francis Xavier Professional/Technical School has certainly leapt ahead. While still maintaining our commitment to support teacher's salaries (\$14,916.00 this financial year), we made a critical total contribution of \$30,000 needed to build the school. Currently the school consists of 6 classrooms, a teachers' office and computer room and a block of toilets. While it is true that it is not yet a Scotch College or St Hilda's, it is on its way to being one of the best Secondary schools in East Timor. The range of subjects offered, mainly in business and admin, the advanced teaching philosophy (I refer you to the last school report), the dedication of the teachers and the motivation of the students all attest to this. We can only expect great things from this school under the direction of Fr Adriano.

There are certainly challenges ahead. Registration for the school has moved a step closer, but full registration and financial support from the Ministry of Education has not yet occurred. The vision for the school and along with that the number of students (156 last year) are expanding, one might say faster than our budget can keep up. This means some of their projects, for example a dormitory for 'out-of-town' students, may have to go on the back burner if MFLH cannot find additional sources of funding. The ability of TL to provide suitable jobs for our graduates is another dark cloud on the horizon. Nevertheless, TL is

getting onto its feet- its relationship with Aust and Indonesia is improving and economically for once the situation in developing countries is actually more promising than in the developed world. So don't think our efforts are in anyway in vain; we **are** helping to rebuild TL and repay a debt of honour (more of that later.)

At the risk of being pulled up on my chronology we opened last year with Wendy's highly successful fund-raising dinner. With the help of all of you, we raised \$6,293. Not only that, but the dinner gave MFLH a much higher profile, involving the Federal Member of Parliament, and all the while delivering a great time. I believe all concerned had an enjoyable afternoon as well at the Chimes of Freedom Concert, raising \$3,270. Which goes to prove that saving the world can be fun. Fundraising took many other forms for MFLH, the highly successful Little Hands & Jacaranda Festivals, involving Barry, Margaret, Alan and Juanita, the, the many sausage sizzles, Joy's cards and jams, and Nola's Melville Art Awards.

And while the money generated for the school was important, we must not forget the vast quantity of school supplies sent not only to "our" Sec. School, but also needy schools in Hatolia and the outlying district. Roger and others have been involved in all the organisation and moves. Under Roger's leadership we moved to our storage depot to Wireless Hill, and started our new arrangement of containers going directly from the West. Things are running smoothly thanks to Roger. I was involved with one or two of the pickups and we really are sending tonnes of supplies to the Hatolia district.

Other special mention needs to go to Alan and Barbara for their efforts to promote this group. Their excellent newsletter, informative and colourful, gives the profile of the group a sorely needed lift, and Alan has spoken about us to a number of groups around Perth. In addition, the two of them have been instrumental in promoting the teaching of English in TL, and as a result this group has donated \$5000 for the teaching of teachers in EFL (that's English as a Fourth Language, for those of you who are not in the know).

Our profile has also got a big lift with Barry's work behind the scenes with Rotary. As a result of his efforts, we now have an MOU with Rotary Applecross and with it the potential to tap into sources of funding and project management-RCA will be a valuable ally in our work.

Finally, the members of the Management Committee; I need to thank them for their tireless work. Andrew for his up to the minute tallies of our accounts, arrangements for sending funds to TL, arrangements with the Auditor, and all this on peddle power. Margaret: "thank you" for the excellent Minutes and keeping all the notices and paperwork in order in the face of my frequent organisational lapses. And to our newest Management Committee member Graham, thanks for keeping the flame alive for Lete-foho. Also, thanks to Barry and Alan for making trips to Hatolia this year at their own expense to check on progress and communicate directly with our Timorese partners. Apologies if I failed to mention anyone by name – all of you have played a valuable role.

So what of the coming year? It looks to be another big year. Andrew has plans in hand for a Quiz Night, and if anyone wants to jump in and hold the Fundraising Committee together, Alan would like to take a rest from running it. Wendy and I are about to head off with Nola and Juanita to view the progress on the school, and meet with the Hatolia community to plan the coming year.

And finally an exciting development with the WA Museum. The Museum will be presenting a major exhibition, Debt of Honour in Feb. next year, an exhibition of the 2nd /2nd Battalion's involvement in the TL during WW2 and following on to the present. The Museum has agreed to allow us 1 panel which they will put together for us professionally. In addition they have promised us space in the foyer to sell our wares. From their point of view, our work in TL shows that Australia is honouring this Debt of Honour to the Timorese, and from our point of view, it is a major lift to our profile in the Perth Community, and beyond as the exhibition will travel to Darwin, Victoria and Canberra.

So all in all, there is a very important year coming up for us. Our school will continue to develop, supported by all your efforts, small and large. As someone said, "There are 3 types of people in the world, those that make things happen, those that watch things happen and those that don't know what is happening." All of you are helping to make things happen in Hatolia and TL.

Ari Antonovsky

September 2011