



Friends of Suai Port Phillip Australia Suai, East Timor



Private Bag 3, St Kilda 3182

The Port Phillip community entered into a ten-year partnership in 2000 to help rebuild Suai, a coastal town near the West Timor border, which suffered some of the worst excesses after the pro-independence vote in 1999. Friends of Suai is doing all it can to support the people of Suai in their efforts to claim a new future. We provide funding to the Suai Community Centre and the Suai Youth Centre. East Timor is the world's youngest country and has the youngest population of any country in the world. It's still very difficult but people are working together to create a new future for Suai and East Timor.

New chairs for Suai Secondary

Friends of Suai recently donated funds for 18 local carpenters to make 300 chairs for the Suai secondary school where students were taking classes sitting on the concrete floor.



Official handover of the school chairs between Friends of Suai Coordinator, Pat Jessen and the Principal Suai Secondary School (right). Students trying out the new chairs (top left) and Snr Sao Paulo, Head Carpenter shows his wares (bottom)



Reflections on 2007 visit to Suai

It was a very timely visit to Suai and enabled good face-to-face meetings with the community centre staff & management, the youth centre and district administration. I met with community members and visited projects funded by Friends of Suai/Port Phillip.

Life in E Timor since April 2006 has been very distressing for people throughout the country but especially in the capital Dili which has been extremely difficult with people a year later still living in tents, frightened to return home due to the civil unrest.

The Suai community continue their daily lives with meagre resources and welcomed the friendship and support from Port Phillip. The leadership of the community and youth centres is having positive impact and hopefully will continue to build sustainable programs into the future. We are reporting on some of the achievements in this newsletter.

Friends of Suai looks forward to the visit by the community centre coordinator Simao Barreto to Port Phillip in August 2007 when he will have the opportunity to report first-hand on what is happening in Suai and East Timor.

**Pat Jessen, Friends of Suai
Co-ordinator 9209 6598**

Friends of Suai meet first Wednesday of the month 6pm at St Kilda Town Hall

Media and Suai Theatre Group

The Suai Youth Centre works with young people to build their skills and self esteem. Forty three per cent of the Suai-Covalima district population is aged between 15 - 34 years; twenty-six percent of this group are illiterate. Our donations have helped establish a mobile media unit, a simple and strategic way to provide community education programs to illiterate communities. A youth theatre group have also been trained and are actively engaging through performance. Both projects provide excellent opportunity for youth self-expression.



The Suai youth centre has established a media team to make community education DVDs on social issues and formed a theatre group to take important HIV AIDS & health messages into the villages

East Timor Election Update June 2007

The majority of East Timor voters who will vote on the 30th of June, in what is effectively their first election for government, will be struggling with a preferential system of voting and fourteen political parties. The lesson learnt from Presidential two rounds of voting is that the political parties appear to be able to exert voting discipline on their supporters.

On the basis of the voting trends from the presidential rounds, coupled with the announced intention of at least five of the political parties that they will enter into a coalition with any party but FRETILIN, it seems likely a coalition government led by the Xanana led CNRT will form government. The coalition partners will probably be the Fernando Aruajo led PD (the students party), ASDT led by Xavier Amaral and the Mario Carrascalao led PSD. All of these parties have huge support in the west of the country where the majority of the population live. However, if FRETILIN receives support from some of the 'leftist' parties that maybe enough to allow them to form a coalition government, particularly if there has been a serious diminution of support for Xanana.

Electioneering has begun in the east of the country with already three deaths, one of these by a PNTL (police force) officer; scores have been injured. Australian reporting of events in East Timor is often unreliable, but it appears that most of the trouble so far has been caused by FRETILIN cadres, operating on their own initiative, in their stronghold areas of Lospalos, Baucau and Viqueque attacking supporters of CNRT. It is clear that the FRETILIN leadership is not supporting violence, but it remains to be seen if they are able to exert discipline over some of their supporters.

Patsy Thatcher

Acting Chairperson, Friends of Suai

For further information on the East Timor elections see website: www.ip.alp.org.au

East Timor needs your ongoing support

Suai Nursery Agro Forestry Project

A plant nursery with 10,000 seedlings was established in May 2006 in Suai with funds from Friends of Suai. Dangerous landslides prompted villages to request support for restoring their agriculture lands in the sub district 2 hours from Suai. The problem of erosion is further exacerbated by two rainy seasons, which can clear away all topsoil. Native trees including fruit bearing varieties were transplanted to protect topsoil and control erosion and resulting landslides.

The nursery agro forestry project is a real success with 10,000 seedlings being planted out. The main focus of the project was the 6,000 seedlings at Lela village and a further 4,000 seedlings were distributed in other sub districts. The media team at the youth centre are documenting this on video and can be used for agricultural education. The agricultural officer would like to replicate the project with the aim of a permanent nursery. A new proposal building sustainability to deepen the impact will be considered for the new growing season.

We are looking at ways we can assist to make this nursery permanent & financially viable, ensuring ongoing conservation of the environment. If you have technical expertise and ideas please contact us.



Working in partnership with Australian Volunteers International donations from the people of Port Phillip are helping to rebuild vital community services for the people of Suai. You can send a tax deductible donation to P.O Box 350 Fitzroy 3065 directing your donation to Friends of Suai or online <http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/portphillipgives.html>

Photos of the nursery beginnings and planting out the healthy seedlings in the village of Lela 2 hours from Suai.

New Suai Community Centre Building

The Suai community centre is moving buildings. The district administration has provided a new building which is a good swap and an appropriate building for the new community centre. The building has plenty of light, good size rooms for the office, meeting and workshops. The staff at the centre are fitting out the new building which should be operation in June. There is also land where additional buildings can be erected if required. A long lease through the Department of Land and Property year lease is being developed.



Scholarships

Friends of Suai have presented 10 scholarships for orphan children for the duration of the children's education in 2007. Further scholarships are planned for students in 2008.

In 2007 ten orphaned children and one young man with a disability were recipients of Friends of Suai education scholarships. A grant of \$5,000 has secured these children their education. Scholarships provide essential uniforms, shoes and school books. Life in East Timor has been very difficult and basic needs remain a struggle for the people, especially in rural communities.

Providing scholarships for some of the many orphaned children in Suai will ensure these children have access to opportunities for a full life that will enable them to contribute to their new nation.

In Suai, young girls often remain at home to help the family rather than finishing school. Through this program fifty percent of the scholarships will be awarded to girls. This will help increase the opportunities for young women to take their rightful place in society.

For \$80 you can ensure one of these children will receive a primary school education for one year, \$100 will provide a secondary education for one year.

Call us to join this program 9209 6598 or tax deductible donations online via the Port Phillip website <http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/portphillipgives.html>



Suai Community Centre staff at the new building. From left to right above: Alberto Barros Finance & Administration, Graciano, Technical Officer, Pat Jessen, Coordinator Melbourne, Simao Barreto Coordinator Suai, Alberto de Jesus (Chairperson) and Alex driver.



Onorio is a survivor of a venomous snake bite who was in need of a prosthetic limb. Friends of Suai contacted a new organisation ASSERT who provided Onorio with a new limb and ongoing services for his condition. Jewish Aid Australia are providing a scholarship for Onorio ensuring that his disability will not preclude him from receiving a good education.

Members of the Alternative Technology Association, a not-for-profit organisation installed solar panels at community centres, a health clinic in the mountains nearby which has no power at all. Donations of \$25,000 through Friends of Suai contributed towards the cost of these panels. Volunteer Natalie Toose reported back that 'training up local people to put in and maintain the solar panels is one of the most important things we did.'



ATA Volunteers and Suai Solar Team