

# Friends of Suai

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2011 EDITION



*We need  
your help...*

Working in partnership with Australian Volunteers International donations to Friends of Suai are helping to make a difference in education, training and women's livelihoods in Suai & Covalima District in Timor-Leste.

You can send a tax deductible donation to P.O Box 350, Fitzroy VIC 3065 directing your donation to Friends of Suai or online [www.ourcommunity.com.au/portphillipgives](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/portphillipgives)

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**Roadside  
Street  
Theatre**

## Water Tank for Suai Public Secondary School.

The Suai Public Secondary School in East Timor has over 1500 students until recently the school had no water supply to the student toilets. The new water tank made in local materials was provided by the City of Port Phillip with proceeds from the shower swap program and has been welcomed by the Principal and the students at the school.



The infrastructure in East Timor was destroyed in 1999 by the Indonesian militia and the government has been struggling to refurbish vital infrastructure. Friends of Suai is working with the residents of Port Phillip to support our Friendship City. See [www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/environment\\_programs.htm](http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/environment_programs.htm)

# Teaching English

On 23 May, after months of preparation, our two volunteer English teachers arrived in Timor for a six month stay.

Lyn Wallace-Clancy and Dermot Clancy are both highly experienced and enthusiastic ESL teachers. During their time in Covalima they are providing language training for English teachers (Secondary and Pre-Secondary) in the district.



This initiative is part of an ongoing Friends of Covalima (Suai) program designed to enhance English language competency throughout Covalima and it comes in response to feedback and a request from the Timor teachers who participated in the four week pilot program in September 2009.

The training will be flexible and tailored to the specific language needs of the Timorese teachers. It will be provided in a number of hubs to allow teachers in remote parts of Covalima to attend on Saturdays and at other times when teachers are free from their normal classroom duties.

Lyn and Dermot will also consolidate their teaching by giving mentoring and support to teachers. This will involve travel and overnight stays in various subdistricts where they will observe teachers in their classrooms. In their spare time (!) they will also provide English classes at the Covalima Community Centre for young people, and other targeted people.

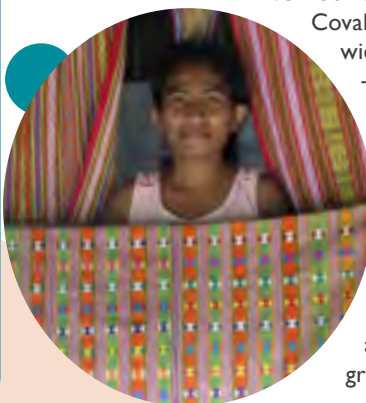
# Womens' Project



'Taking Steps' is a project to support women's livelihood development.

Covalima Community Centre and Friends of Suai run the project with funding from International Women's Development Agency (IWDA).

Through this project six women's groups have started small scale livelihood activities in the sub districts of Covalima. The range of activities is wide and includes making of crafts – tais, baskets, woven mobiles; agriculture – vegetable gardens and rice production; food processing – making of banana chips and tempeh; chicken rearing and even a small shop in one village. Project staff visit the groups regularly to give support, organize skills training and help resolve any problems the group may face.



# Building a Library

During three months in February two determined women visited Suai and set about transforming a mountain of books and the newly refurbished building into a working library.

Librarian, Sandra Whitbourne, and Friends of Covalima committee member Desleigh Kent arrived in Suai on 8 February. With the assistance of two young local people recruited to work as librarians, they checked books for relevance, sorted them into the four language groups (Tetun, Portuguese, Indonesian, and English.) Where there were gaps in subject matter they began investigating sources in Dili and elsewhere.

Innovation and creativity were essential skills. Large rocks were used as bookends when books were organized onto the shelves. An appropriate and workable system of classifying books and regulating borrowing was needed, so a single central register and a simple borrowing system were devised.

The library is to be operated in conjunction with the secondary school and services over 1500 staff and students. There is still work to be done. The system needs to be tried and assessed. The two young librarians need to complete their training. The process of accessing new books in the four different languages needs to continue. The library will eventually need a computer network to bring the students into the digital age (hopefully powered by solar energy).

Now a system is in place the library is operating and providing a great new asset to the community.



# Visit to Maliana Women's Project

This was a very special event and it's rare for people to travel between districts in the poorer rural areas.

The Women's Project of the Covalima Community Centre together with Alberto de Jesus Barros, Coordinator of the Friends of Suai in Suai, took some 30 women from Suai to share information and ideas with other women's groups in Maliana. In all, 85 women participated in the event.

Maliana is in the Bobonaro district – north of Suai. The community centre car and the youth centre car, both donated by City of Port Phillip were used to take women from Suai.

In Maliana they saw, among other things, the making of a fuel efficient stove made from local clay, the making of banana chips and local pesticide production.



In fact, the road to visit one of the projects was a real mess but the women were not put off and walked the 16 kilometres. The visit was an exciting learning and sharing event for the participants.

# Visit to Suai

By Pat Jessen, Coordinator,  
Friends of Suai – City of Port Phillip



In 2011 Covalima and the whole of Timor-Leste was affected by ongoing rain, the same weather pattern affecting northern Australia in 2010/11. The farmers did not have a planting season for maize and rice this year, however the Saturday markets were plentiful with greens and other vegetables more than I have seen before. The variety of vegetables has improved and the quantity has improved, also a greater variety of other merchandise was available including pots, pans, bike inner-tubes, fly wire screens, plastic toys indicating there was more ready cash available for some. The number of people trading working and buying in the market had increased. There was even a roaming boy selling chicken satay at the market!

There is more money in the community due to increased economic activity. New houses are being built, kids are now on bikes and people have access to secondhand clothing at Suai market. Some families now can afford to send their children to school and access the increasing range of products now available in local shops.

## Infrastructure

The Covalima-Dili roads (both roads) are in the worst state ever due to the rain, although construction of bridges across the rivers, which have cut Suai off from the rest of the country in previous years, is now in progress. This is affecting the movement of the usual traffic, so there were less people coming to Suai.

The governing structure continues to be highly centralised with little decision making by the District Administration. Community infrastructural projects are being supported through the Local

Development Program which enables Suco Chiefs to identify priority projects (roads, schools, clinics etc) for funding, with final decisions resting with the government. All projects are contracted out and a number of new local construction companies have formed to fulfill these projects. Consequently new economic activities such as brick making and timber yards are evident in the town of Suai, as well as a considerable amount of house construction.

Little is known about the infrastructural projects in the town as information that exists is contradictory. The consultation processes has only involved Chefe de Sucos but there still appears to have been no consultation (by them or the government) within the communities whose land is likely to be affected. The District Administration report that 300 Koreans are due to arrive in Timor for geological survey work this year, but how they will be housed and fed is not known.



Road to Suai



## Development

There is a flurry of 'development' coming with the electricity power lines approaching Suai and the Portuguese Telecom crew erecting a new communications tower. With the promise of the oil and gas supply base, a new wharf, two new run-ways for the airport and talk of implementation of the

Polytechnic plan for the 'school of petroleum and tourism' there is a new anticipation in the air, although public information from Dili is slow to penetrate to the local community.

FOS/CCC is well placed to open the debate about impacts of the developments particularly in relation to minimising the potential dangers to women with large numbers of male workers arriving in town requiring accommodation and food services.



Orphan Scholarship beneficiaries pictured above, Julio and Julietta at monitoring and evaluation workshop pictured below.



## SUAI CHURCH IS CHANGING

The iconic unfinished church is changing shape too. The three-pointed façade has gone and some of the locals are not happy about that. It is being built with local donations and church money and other funds and will become the main church in the town. The Ava Maria Church rebuilt in 2010 cannot accommodate the hundreds of churchgoers overflowing into the grounds each Sunday to take communion.



Community Centre Crew

*Suai media space  
puts culture and creativity  
at the centre of friendship.*

Check it out at  
[www.suaimediaspace.org](http://www.suaimediaspace.org)

CAN YOU HELP? Talk to Pat if you think you can help in some way on [pjessen@portphillip.gov.au](mailto:pjessen@portphillip.gov.au) or 9209 6598