

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT
GOYA FOUNDATION - AGM 2006**

As we all can appreciate, an organization cannot operate efficiently and grow without the selfless contribution of many people. So firstly, I must thank most sincerely, all the GOYA committee members who spend many hours discussing issues, planning events, purchasing goods, collecting items, promoting the issues and completing the many tasks asked of them. I also thank Ms Rosa Storelli and the staff and students of MLC who continue to support our work and who contribute generously to both ours and the efforts of others in the assistance of the people of Timor Leste and their valiant attempt to develop into a healthy, democratic nation.

As I prepared this document I felt greatly saddened as I'm sure many of you do, by the recent events that have inflicted so much pain and loss on those who have lived with trauma for most of their lives. At the time of independence and with the accompanying jubilation at the birth of the youngest nation on earth, we all thought that those dreadful times would rapidly become a faded memory never to be repeated and we set about creating a new beginning with the belief that the new generation would never have to experience such violence and deprivation again. I sincerely believe that these recent events were politically motivated and used to exploit the frail balance of Timor's newly found peace. However, rather than allow these events to weigh us down, it reminds us that,

“These unexpected and tragic events reinforce the precarious and fragile nature of life in Timor Leste and other developing countries and how important it is for us to respond with practical and spiritual support.”

I see this as an opportunity to galvanise our efforts and respond generously and with hope. To this end, Jill Forsyth, our Vice President is currently on her way to Timor and has taken the many generous donations contributed by our membership to Mana Lu and her community.

On another front, this has been a busy year for developing our technology and improving our communication with both our members and the wider community. I would like to thank Scott Fraser for his refurbishment of our website and his patience in assisting me with the development of our first newsletter. We now have a news link, photo gallery, links to sponsors and very soon a section on our fundraising merchandise (just in time for Christmas!) of Gift Vouchers, GOYA caps, greeting cards and soap that is hand made in Timor. The newsletter will be posted on the GOYA web site as will reports from the leaders of our projects and information of future functions. I encourage everyone to visit this site regularly and provide us with both feedback and any contributions that you feel the membership would like to share. Our first newsletter was enthusiastically received by everyone and the winter edition will be out shortly.

In June-July of 2005 another group of teachers and students from MLC journeyed to Timor Leste to visit our communities so that they could see at first hand what was being achieved and how they could actively contribute to assisting our various projects. There was of course some time for relaxing and sight seeing, but overall it was a very busy and interactive visit. At Sr. Aurora's kindergarten, after she had explained her program to us all and taken us on a tour of the new buildings, the students were placed in the various classrooms to work and talk with the pre schoolers. Despite the many problems Aurora copes with, toilets that don't work, a septic system that requires replacing, little and sometimes no fresh water, a play ground that is barren, the classes are overflowing with enthusiastic and happy faces. We saw a lot of other children milling about and were informed that the parents of these children cannot afford to send them to kinder and even if they could there are more than 300 pre schoolers requiring places for a facility that can barely operate with 65. We have also just heard that the preschool was looted during the current crisis as it became a refugee camp for many thousands of people.

The foundation has committed itself to a project organised by Aurora to bring several childcare workers to Australia for training. They will then return to Timor in order to train other preschool teachers across Timor. Knowledge is a precious and valuable commodity. Due to the current crisis the visit has been postponed until March 2007. Another project we are developing with Aurora is the establishment of a community garden for the children and their parents. However, like everything in Timor, the simple often becomes complicated as the water situation must be resolved before we can proceed with the establishment of the garden. This commitment relates back to our original goal of fostering the capacity of the Timorese in order for them to attain self-sufficiency in order to survive.

To facilitate our efforts, we encourage everyone to get a table together for our Gala Dinner on the 1st of September at the Hawthorn Town Hall at 7.00pm. The theme of the occasion is 'Seed Food Life' and Stephanie Alexander will be our guest speaker. A great evening of food and entertainment has been planned and we will have both a live and a silent auction of the fabulous hampers prepared by the staff and students of MLC.

For details about all our projects and events please see the website and for the GALA DINNER please direct all enquiries to sastele@bigpond.net.au

Another major part of the tour was a visit to Mana Lu at her headquarters in Dare in the hills above Dili. This is her training college as well providing shelter and food for up to 70 young people at a time. No one is ever refused and we witnessed a young family who looked cruelly poor and malnourished wander into the dining hall and sit down to bowls of rice gruel, staring at us with huge eyes. The smallest boy compared his bowl to his sister's and to our surprise did a quick switch! The students spent many hours talking with Mana Lu and actively engaging in the life of

the Institute. We visited remote villages to help with the collection of water, clean and prepare food. The students cooked on the open fires until their eyes watered, picked coffee beans, gardened and carried heavy bottles of water up steep hills. They taught English, sang songs, danced, played and made weavings. Every experience deepened their understanding of life for the poor in Timor. We visited a site at Tibar that Mana Lu was planning to develop into an ‘Open house for the poor and suffering’ and she spoke to us of her future hopes for such a place in every district of the country. It is an enormous, overwhelming task and when I expressed my concerns she simply said “I have finally found what I need to do with my life and how best to serve my people”. Mana Lu sustains her activities solely through donations and the ability of her community to develop self-sufficiency.

I think the benefit of such an experience was clearly expressed in this email I received from a former MLC student, Catherine Rowe:

“Hi Mana Felicity,

It's Mana Catty here (2004 Timor trip) and I would like to congratulate you receiving the Humanitarian Award! It's fantastic! Also, I thought I would keep you posted on what I am up to these days and I am so excited to tell you that I have been offered a place to study medicine in Queensland. I would just really like to thank you for opening my eyes to life in Timor and providing me with a definite focus of where I one day hope to influence their health care (or lack of !). Please stay in touch, Love Mana Catty”

Upon our return to MLC we threw ourselves into the Timor fundraising lunch. The students spoke about their experiences and showed many beautiful photographs of their time with our communities. The MLC Hospitality Department provided wonderful food and service and the Silent Auction was a major success. In total we managed to raise \$17,000-00.*

Another surprise in August, for myself particularly, was becoming the recipient of the 2005 Humanitarian Award for Charity, organised by the Altruism Foundation of Australia. The awards ceremony was held at Leonda in Hawthorn and I felt extremely humbled by the many recipients who are doing so much to improve the lives and welfare of others. Many of the committee members, family and friends were in attendance and it was a lovely occasion to both celebrate and be validated for the work of all who are involved with GOYA.

As an extra bonus, during the presentation evening, Christine Wilson, the Director of the Australian College of Applied Psychology, approached me and generously offered GOYA a scholarship which would enable a Timorese community worker to come and study counselling in Melbourne. Filomena Pinto has been selected to visit Melbourne for six months and study English and counselling with the college. Jill Forsyth, our Vice President, has kindly offered to accommodate Filomena for the duration of her stay with additional assistance from the committee members. GOYA is paying for her airfare and a living allowance while she is studying. If anyone would like to become involved with her visit or contribute to Filomena’s experience, please email me directly at the foundation felicity.fraser@goyafoundation.org

During the current crisis we were asked to assist Rosaria da Cruz, who heads up the HIAM Health maternal and infant welfare project in Dili, by contributing funds for an airfare that would enable an assistant to join HIAM in Dili. Rosaria was in a terrible state due to so many refugees requiring help within the confines of the hospital where she is based. Many babies have died due to a lack of medical supplies and expertise and the babies are being left for Rosaria to transport back to their villages for burial. Terminally ill patients with little or no medication are needing transport to go home, sometimes up to an eight hour drive from Dili. There were thousands of people needing shelter, food and water. Megan has since arrived in Dili and is now working with Rosaria and proving to be of enormous assistance.

Palmira Pires is the director of the East Timor Development Agency and we were assisting her with the delivery of vocational education courses that will help unemployed women to earn some income. Unfortunately the Timorese teacher returned to Melbourne to nurse her mother and is now ill herself and unable to return so this project is on hold at the current time. However, in the future there has been some discussion of assisting Palmira to develop a youth training project similar to that in Vietnam – Know One Teach One, where young people are trained in Hospitality in order to find employment. Based along similar lines to our TAFE system where there is a student training restaurant and food is prepared and served by the students for a paying clientele.

Jennifer Mondia, who established the Office of Status of Women in the Highlands Region of PNG and is based in Goroka, continues to bring hope and support to both the women and communities of this area. We were able to secure a donation for a four wheel drive vehicle for Jennifer which has enabled her to reach the more remote communities that are greatly disadvantaged due to their location. Jennifer recently organised a successful conference to educate the community leaders about the increase in HIV/AIDS and the need for immediate action. Her full report is on the website and demonstrates her dedication to her people and the desperate need for the continuation of her work. September will see a follow up workshop to ensure that the leaders are carrying out the actions expressed in the workshops. She is responsible for 22 wards, each consisting of 5 big villages. Jennifer faces a daunting task. Unfortunately due to a lack of funding, Jennifer has had to give up her own studies at the Victoria University which she was completing by correspondence. She would have been the first woman in PNG to obtain a PhD. GOYA continues to support the Office of Status for Women by paying the office administration costs each February and hopefully with extra funding, we can actively support the continuation of the workshops and other important initiatives.

Our Friendship Raising Function at the QPO restaurant in Kew on the 13th March, was a lovely evening with members bringing along their friends to chat with the committee and we now welcome 13 new members to GOYA! We also received some substantial donations and Sally Steele organised a fabulous raffle for some lucky winners. Roz Howard showed us some beautiful wines from Austins and Will Studd wowed us once again with some perfect French cheese. The lovely venue was

generously made available to GOYA for the evening by Kevin and Peter Rush. In our enthusiasm we forgot to take photos for the website, so we will have to hold another one in March next year!

An informal Christmas Champagne Brunch and Friendship raising function is planned for early December in the beautiful gardens of "Tay Creggan" a peaceful campus on the banks of the Yarra River in Hawthorn owned by Strathcona College.

Over the years I have worked with many young people and have enjoyed their energy and enthusiasm not to mention their dedication to the assistance of others. Many have travelled with me to Timor Leste and have then continued their fundraising efforts upon their return. They have also made friendships that have changed their lives. To this end, a GOYA Youth committee has been formed and they are organising a 'Splash of Compassion' stellar event at the Melbourne Aquarium on the 23rd February 2007. I attended a meeting with the committee last night and was impressed with their enthusiasm and organisational skills. I was also greatly touched by their concern for others and their continued support of GOYA.

Functions require a huge amount of organization and rely heavily upon the goodwill of many volunteers. Whenever I think of hampers, I will think of Janet Lee who is a member of the foundation and until recently a member the GOYA committee. Janet has been assisting with our functions for many years and her wisdom and energy have been greatly appreciated. While Janet has resigned from the committee she remains a valued member of the foundation and I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for all her hard work and valued advice.

I would also like to thank wholeheartedly, Libby Proud who has been our Treasurer since the foundation became incorporated in 2004. Libby has been a most patient and diligent Treasurer. She has guided us all on what has been a steep learning curve in establishing the correct systems and procedures we require in order to operate in an efficient, viable and accountable manner as a foundation.

Thank you to Tony Barta for his contribution as community liaison. Tony has been an enthusiastic member of the foundation and he will remain a valued supporter.

"Everywhere you look there is need. Everywhere there is suffering in all its forms and yet everywhere there is hope. Every time I visit and take others to experience Timor it reinforces my belief in assisting these brave and generous people in rebuilding their lives and creating opportunities where formerly there was none."

We can't do this without the support of our members. Your contribution and goodwill is not only greatly appreciated but essential if we are to continue this valuable work assisting women in positions of leadership in Timor Leste and PNG. On behalf of the GOYA Committee, my sincere thanks.

Felicity Fraser 2006

* Please note that this event was a joint function and the proceeds were shared with the Methodist Ladies' College who then donated this to Sr Lourdes and the ISMAIK community. The work of Sister Lourdes is also one of the projects supported by the GOYA Foundation.