

ONF

# Ono Niha Foundation

## Newsletter – October 2015



Jill and Peter Hofman (Australian-based project manager for ONF) spent 6 weeks on the Ono Niha Foundation base in south Nias in August /September. Here is their “story” (written by Peter).

We had a very busy but rewarding stay, helping with the Foundation’s programs of local employment, education, children with disabilities, community health and Holidays with Purpose. Sandra Hofman (nurse from Tasmania) spent two weeks with us last year and loved it so much that she came this year for 4 weeks. Amy Fitzpatrick (from Melbourne) was with us for one week. She is a speech therapist with lots of experience helping children with disabilities, including in East Timor.

### Iwan

Iwan had been running the dental hygiene and disabilities programs until his serious motorbike accident in March this year. He had 7 broken bones and has had 3 operations. Matt has been looking after him in Medan and we visited Iwan on our way through Medan to Nias. Some of the bone breaks are mending. He had good movement in his arms and left leg, but his right hip was not good. The Foundation is paying for physio visits at home 3 days per week, and within 4 weeks his hip movement had improved a lot. We bought crutches and the physio is helping him walk. Iwan has another appointment with his surgeon in late September, and he will then decide if the hip will recover or needs full replacement.

### Local employment

The coconut oil factory run by Matt (the Foundation chairman) is a key employer in the local area. It is also essential to the Foundation because a profitable factory allows Matt to run the Foundation on a largely voluntary



Sandra and Eunice helping Iwan to walk with his new crutches



Grinding the coconut flesh – and plugging the ears!

basis. The factory is located between the Community Centre and the bungalows.

The factory was very busy fulfilling an oil order for Lush. At the moment the factory uses petrol motors to drive the machines grinding the coconut flesh, so it was often noisy in the centre. We are planning for the Foundation to buy the existing factory within the next 3 years (this was the long-term plan anyway) so that a purpose-designed one could be built close-by. In the meantime we are hoping to replace the petrol motors with much quieter electric ones. The challenge is the regular failure of mains power, so we will also need to upgrade the existing generator to a more reliable and efficient diesel one.

The concrete block-making machine purchased in February is now operational. I spent some time understanding how it works and making small modifications. We did several trial runs making blocks and pavers, and several of Matt's workers were trained on the machine. Matt will set up a micro-business which will probably involve a local man running a business and paying a fee per block to the Foundation for the use of the machine. This will provide income for the community development programs. It will also be used to make the concrete blocks for the aqua therapy pool we plan to build on site.

We had ongoing discussions about additional community employment options. We had several phone calls with our Lush contact in the UK about supplying essential oils. One of these is Patchouli, which is related to the spearmint and peppermint family and is commonly grown in Sumatra and Nias for the oil. However, yields are very low because of poor production practices. We are discussing with Lush the possibility of the Foundation conducting several demonstration trials with local growers to improve yields, and establishing a steam distillation operation to produce the oil. This will increase local employment and provide income for the community development programs of the Foundation. We will continue to discuss this with Lush over the coming months.

## Education

**Education scholarships:** This program is going well, with about 20 students supported by sponsors in Australia. The finances are in good shape and the procedures are working well. We met most of the students informally, and Matt and I discussed student and family progress. One of the children has been removed from the program because of little interest in education, while the father of another student now has a job and no longer requires support. Matt is considering employing another local person part-time to improve communication and oversight of the program.



Matt making a concrete block with the new block machine



Some eager helpers cleaning up the concrete block moulds



A small plantation of patchouli grown with very little input.



Matt talking with a scholarship student, and the family of another student

**English and computer skills:** We were really pleased and grateful to see the centre being used for English and computer classes. Part of the education scholarship pays 2 local English teachers to run 2 after school classes per week for elementary (primary), and 2 classes for senior students. The classes are primarily for the scholarship children but are also available to others up to a maximum of 30 children per class. Computer classes for senior students are also held 1-2 times per week with the computers provided last year by the Australian Embassy in Jakarta.

The English classes are having a big impact on the children. We noticed they were much more confident/friendly/ bubbly than in previous years. This was fantastic to observe and we felt humbled to a part of this.

## Children with Disabilities

The disabilities program was suspended in early March because of Iwan's accident. However, it kicked off again with a bang in the last week of our stay when Amy arrived. We are so wrapped that she came – her skills in diagnosing and recommending therapy strategies for each child was impressive, and she was so passionate. Thank you Amy.

The 6 children and their parents came most of the 5 days Amy was with us. We were really happy to see the parents interacting and sharing their experiences. Also, the patients waiting for Jill's dental services (see below) observed what was going on, and I think this gave them a greater appreciation and understanding of these children and their families.

Amy spent time with each of the children and their parents to understand their condition, then instructed the parents how to help their children with exercises etc, and to manage daily activities such as feeding. Here are the brief stories of 3 of the children:

**Kristin** is about 14 years old with severe cerebral palsy. She is from a very poor family but her parents are so committed to her. Her parents struggle to get her to the centre because her poor muscle control makes it too dangerous to take her by motorbike. Amy helped Kristin to feed herself for the 1<sup>st</sup> time. We gave her a small wheelchair, and also another chair because they have no chair in their little shack.

**Berkat** is about 8 years old, and with severe bone deformities. We now believe that he has rickets. He is also physically very small, possibly from malnutrition because his family is very poor. He is a bright boy with lots of potential but can not go to school. We gave vitamin D/calcium supplements, and will fly him and his mum to Medan for specialist attention. They will stay in Matt's house and Matt will take them to the specialists etc. We also gave him a chair and a small wheelchair.



English class in the Community Ccentre



Kristin learning to feed herself with Amy's help and Mimi (left) and Kristin's mum (right) learning



Kristin in her new wheelchair with (L to R) her papa, brother, Matt, her muma and Amy



Berkat's mum feeding him as Amy observes

**Prita** is about 4 years old. She has very poor muscle control and lays down most of the time. Amy noticed she has pneumonia because she is often fed lying down and food gets lodged in her lungs. Amy showed her mum how to feed Prita in the sitting position and also gave her exercises to improve her muscle tone.

Amy selected a number of therapy aids for the children, including walkers, parallel bars for exercise, tables, and seats that secure the child so they can sit up by themselves. We contracted a local carpenter to build 14 items, which he has now completed. If suitable, more will be built so they can be placed in each child's home, and a number of each kept at the centre.

Amy also trained Mimi, Iwan's wife, so she can continue the therapy program after we left. The Foundation will pay Mimi to run therapy sessions at the centre 2-3 times per week, and will also pay the parents transport costs and lost income while at the centre.

Amy is eager to come again next year, and we may also have several trainee occupational therapists for the Catholic University coming early next year. We are excited that this program is really taking off.

**Aqua therapy pool:** We are still planning to build a pool next to the centre, but Amy is considering whether we can have a bigger, quicker impact by first providing more of the therapy and mobility aids that local tradesmen can build. We have raised about \$7,000 for the pool so far. Thank you to Patricia and the crew in Batemans Bay/Moiruya NSW, including The Olive Tree Cafe, Ernie & Carmel Fruit Markets, Nerida Bourke, Batemans Bay Highschool and Steve and Dior Mahnken.

## Community health

**Dental:** Jill bought about 500 toothbrushes, and Dr Henry Sinclair (our major dental Australian supporter) provided about \$1000 of dental supplies. Jill took a few days to get over her nerves and doubts (Can I still do this?) but from then on she powered. Clinics were held 3 days per week between 8.30 am - 2 pm. Pinta (a local studying dental nursing in Medan) helped her again this year, as well as Tuti. They were such a pleasure to work with and Jill felt very fortunate that they helped. We lost count how many patients Jill treated, but we guessed about 200.

Iwan was doing dental hygiene clinics (scale and cleans etc.) 2-3 mornings a week until his accident in March. These will recommence when he has recovered.

**First aid:** Sandra again managed the transition from the Tasmania winter to the equator very well. She raised about \$450 to purchase medicines, and provided first aid for the locals as needed. Mimi received more training with Sandra. Last year Sandra ran several clinics in other villages, but this



Amy showing Mimi how to help Prita sit



Amy showing Kristin's dad and Mimi how to strap her foot so she can stand without pain



Jill helping a deaf and mute girl, with her mum watching. Amy taught the girl how to say "I love you" to her mum!



Sandra giving first aid to one of the students

was more difficult this time because of Iwan and Matt's absence during Sandra's stay. Thank you Sandra.

**On-going:** Iwan will recommence the dental hygiene clinics when he has recovered. He will also build up the disabilities program in the centre and maybe re-start the aqua therapy program in the rented pool, if it is still use-able. Iwan will have to start slowly as he continues to recover, but we believe he will once again help the children, and he will be even more effective because of what he has learnt during his own recovery. He is a man with passion and compassion, and he will serve again!

Pinta has returned to Medan to continue her university training as a dental nurse. We will try to employ her again next year and hopefully instil a passion to take over the dental program in the future.



Jill with Iwan. He will make a difference again!

## Holidays with Purpose

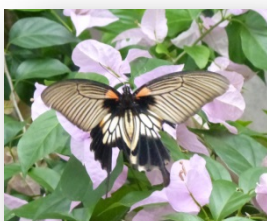
The bungalows are going well. We often sit on our veranda and enjoy the local kids playing volleyball and games on the beach Matt has built. The bungalows are available for rent by volunteers, but also for those who just want to have a break from the rat race. The rent supports the Foundation's programs so please consider – you will enjoy your stay and make a difference at the same time.



The beach and one of the HwP bungalows



The kids having stacks of fun on the beach



Oh the beauty!