

ONF

Ono Niha Foundation

Newsletter – October 2016



Jill and I (Peter) visited the Ono Niha Foundation (ONF) base in Nias (off the northern coast of Sumatra) from 26th July -15th September. The aims of our trip were to support the ONF team with the local employment, education, supporting disabled children and community health programs. The Nias team includes Matt (our “boss”) and his wife Reni, Marcelina (education), and Iwan and Mimi (community health and disabled children). Matt’s family (his brother Kadar, and Matt’s parents) also help where they can.

We were blessed to have three visitors: my brother Adrian (a builder) from Tasmania, my sister Tania (a teacher) from Geelong, and Phil Bailey (a horticulturist) from Cooloom. We really enjoyed and appreciated their company, skills and enthusiasm.

Local employment

The coconut oil factory was in full swing during our visit. Matt continues to improve operations and systems. He received good orders from Lush but the very wet weather slowed coconut harvests which made it difficult to fill the orders on time. The factory operates for about six months per year depending on orders, and Matt is to building his Indonesian market so the factory can provide more local employment.

Phil’s dream is to improve sustainable food production through composting and mulching, and at the same time provide value for waste products such as coconut husk fibre and pig manure. Currently the pig manure is washed out of the pig stalls, and often contaminates the groundwater, creeks and the reef. Phil worked closely with several locals to demonstrate how to make compost. This compost is “maturing” and they will demonstrate its benefits with chilli and corn crops.



Pig pens with the manure waste in the foreground



Phil talked to Iwan about composting, with the new compost heap in the background



Phil turning the compost as the sun sets – what dedication!

Adrian managed the transition from cold Tasmania to the equator very well. Together we trained Desi, a local handyman/tradesman, to use the concrete block machine donated last year. Desi experimented with different mixes for making concrete pavers and large concrete blocks. Matt and Desi hope to develop a business model that will provide appropriate income for him, and for ONF. The first step may be that ONF “purchases” his concrete pavers to improve the area around the Foundation’s community centre, which at the same time will be an “advertisement” for the block business. The long-term plan is to use the machine to build an aqua-therapy pool for the disabilities program.



Adrian providing advice, and Desi (in the background) making pavers

Education and scholarships

About 20 students from poor families are supported by sponsors in Australia. Marcelina is the local field worker who distributes the support every month and keeps in touch with the students. Jill visited each family during her visit in March this year. We visited several students again but did not have time to visit them all.



The growing supply of pavers and blocks

Iwan and Mimi have identified another eight students/families who desperately need support. This was easy because there are lots of families in crisis. Here is one story.



Papa Marlina with the new “handles”, and the renovations that will allow his to go outside

Marlina is one of the new scholarships students. Her papa is a builder but fell about 10 years ago and is now paraplegic. He is too heavy for his wife and daughters to move him so he is in “nappies” and has not been outside for 10 years! Tania is now sponsoring Marlina and was so impacted by her papa’s situation that she had to try to do something to help. Tania’s family donated \$250. Following discussion with Tania and Marlina’s papa and family, Iwan organised a carpenter to install “handles” from the ceiling so papa could swing himself from his platform (“bed”) onto a wheelchair so he can go to the toilet by himself, and also to modify underneath the house so there is wheelchair access to the outside world. He made his first visit outside about two weeks ago. The photo speaks volumes for his joy at seeing the sunshine again, and having some freedom!

We have another seven families that require sponsorship. It costs \$30 per month and is tax-deductible. It does not take much to make a big difference.



Sunshine at last – after 10 years. His neighbours are rejoicing with him

Extra education classes for the sponsored students are continuing, with a focus on English and computer skills. Iwan is helping students in his village three times per week by holding classes where he asks them questions from their course textbooks. Iwan is doing this on a voluntary basis – thank you Iwan for your desire to help where you can.



English classes in the centre

The unusually wet and stormy weather during our stay made it very difficult for families who cannot afford to repair their leaky thatch roofs. Donations from Australia allowed for roof repairs to five homes at about \$50 per home. Thank you to those who provided the funds!

Disabilities program

Fourteen specialised wheelchairs have been donated and delivered mostly free of charge by WheelchairsforKids in Perth - a great ministry! Adrian and Phil helped to assemble and fit the chairs. Six of “our” disabled children now have these special wheelchairs, and we will be visiting more villages in the future to identify other children who need these chairs.



One of the homes with repaired thatch roof

One of these children will be Wendi. He lives in Iwan and Mimi’s village. They have walked past his house many times but no one told them about Wendi. Wendi is about 12 years old. Two year ago he fell while helping his papa harvest taro and has not been able to walk since. About six months ago he fell again while his papa was carrying him and has not been able to eat well because of stomach pain and daily headaches. He is now “skin and bone” and very weak, but is still alert and can move his legs.



Wendi receiving intravenous drip and high energy food supplements, and Jill and Iwan encouraging him

It is hard to understand why his parents did not seek treatment for Wendi. Maybe they could not afford to or it was too much for them emotionally, but we had to do something to help. Iwan organised an ambulance so we could get him to the local hospital for x-rays. There is no specialists in Nias so Matt will consult several specialists in Medan (Sumatra) for advice. In the meantime we are providing food he can eat (eggs, high protein supplements etc.) so he will be strong enough to travel to Medan for treatment. An American couple visiting Nias gave about six weeks supply of food supplements but much more is needed. We don’t know what the treatment and costs will be but we cannot sit back and do nothing. We would appreciate your prayers and support for Wendi.



The other disabled children and doing so much better. I had not seen them for 10 months and it was obvious that the support and advice from Amy and Sally last year and in March is making a big difference. Amy also provided a computer tablet for one of the teenage children who is so bright but is “bound” by her physical challenges. At

Tania showing Cristin and her dad how to use the tablet; or is she showing Tania!



least she can now exercise her brain! Thank you so much Sally and Amy for your support for these special children and their families.

Iwan and Mimi take the children and parents to a local pool every month for aqua-therapy and some fun. We really enjoyed seeing the parents playing around and laughing – so important in a society where there is no other support for them. Aqua-therapy sessions will be held every two weeks from now on.



Aqua-therapy and fun in the pool

Community health

Iwan has been doing 2-3 dental hygiene clinics per week since March and had a full appointment book for Jill when we arrived. Coolum Beach Dental and Henry Schein Halas donated dental supplies and Jill bought more supplies in Medan. Tuti and Mimi helped Jill again this year, Jill also trained Lenti, who desperately needed money for her last semester at “University” in Teluk Dalam. She was such a blessing to Jill.

Pinta has completed two years of her dental nursing degree in Medan and now had the training to help Iwan with the hygiene clinics and scale and cleans. We were so happy to see Pinta helping Iwan and to see her practicing. Good on you Pinta!

Jill and Iwan held clinics three days per week, and Iwan and Pinta worked the alternate days. There was no shortage of patients and Iwan and the team did a great job managing the appointments and the patients. Tania also helped by played with the kids as they waited in the clinic.



Pinta practicing her new skills

Iwan and Matt

You may recall that Iwan had a serious bike accident last year resulting in seven broken bones, five plates inserted, about five weeks in hospital and many months of recovery. His bones are on the mend but his hip is not working so he has restricted mobility and uses crutches to get around. While his injuries slow him down physically, he can now empathise with those in similar situations and is so eager to help where he can. We were so grateful to see that, what could have destroyed him has made him far stronger. Thank you Matt and Reni for your compassion in looking after Iwan for nine months in Medan while he recovered and for your ongoing support for the poor in your community. Thank you all - you are an inspiration to us.



Jill and her dental team



Iwan giving therapy while Jill cheers on

Peter Hofman

Project manager