

ONF

Ono Niha Foundation

Newsletter – December 2017



My sister Tania and I visited the Ono Niha Foundation in late September 2017 for about two weeks. The key aims were to review progress with the programs, and to start a Days for Girls program (more on that later).

Local employment

The coconut oil factory was in full operation during our visit. We continue to investigate better uses for the by-products.

Shell: Lush are eager for Matt to supply cleaned coconut shell halves. One of the challenges is to cut the shell neatly in half – it is very dense and hard to sand smooth so it needs to be cut straight to start with.

Matt was wisely reluctant to purchase a large machine until firm orders were confirmed. So he bought a drop saw that will be handy around the factory anyway, and we adapted the vice on the saw to hold the shell securely while being cut. We are now waiting on feedback from Lush.

Husk: Processing 2-3000 coconut shells per day quickly produces a big pile of husk. The easiest way to dispose of this – burn it. We are looking at alternative uses to reduce pollution and increase employment. Test samples of doormats and plant holders were made with the husk fibre. Separating the fibre is a difficult and dusty job. The mats and holders were made from partially cleaned fibre, so they had a “rustic” look. We discussed purchasing a small machine to separate and clean the fibre so we can produce more refined samples, but it is a bit of “chicken and egg”; do we invest in some equipment so we can produce better quality sample products when we are not yet sure if there is a market for these products? Watch this space!

Burning the husk
– we are working
on how we can
better use the
fibre



Iwan and Mimi holding
a door mat and pot
holder made from
coconut husk fibre



Olly (far right) and Matt (2nd from left)
discussing how we can make better use of
the husk fibre

Olly and her team will also look at making biochar from the husk. Olly plans to demonstrate the benefits of biochar to other farmers on her vegetable garden.

Coconut water: This is currently thrown away. Matt's team will test the market for nata de coco, a jelly-like dessert made by fermenting the coconut water, and popular in Indonesia.

Education

The computer classes were halted for a time because the computers needed repair. These are now repaired and the classes have re-commenced.

Disabilities

We visited several of the children and teenagers in their homes. It was really good to see the provided furniture and wheelchairs being used. Some have outgrown the tables or chairs so we provided bigger ones. In other instances the mobility aids were not strong enough so they will be re-designed. Markus loved his wheelchair so much that he would often get excited and eventually broke the fitted table.

Iwan "found" Lius in a neighbouring village. He was born with incomplete arms and legs and was looked after by his grandmother. He spent most of its time locked in the small house while his grandmother was working. He was very alert and enthusiastic. We gave him a wheelchair and he promptly climbed on by himself and started to wheel around the room. We also provided a table and chair, and discussed whether we could provide prosthetics - no progress on that front yet.

Aqua-therapy still continues about two times per month at a pool in the local town about 30 km away. Transport distance is an issue for some of the parents because it is becoming more difficult to take their teenager on the back of their motorbike. This re-ignited the discussion about building and aqua-therapy pool on the Foundation site.

Given the growing transport difficulties, Iwan and Mimi will visit one of the families in their home once per week, to see how they are managing and determine if they need additional mobility aids or furniture. That means each of the eight families will be visited once every two months.

I bought to Nias about a dozen leg and foot braces donated by Laura Drysdale from Tasmania. These would really help some of the children but we need a specialist to fit them.



Markus with his new table – a bit taller than his first one because he had grown



Lius with his new wheelchair



Tania and Mimi explaining the Days for Girls kits to about 30 young ladies.

Community health

Teenage girls who cannot afford to buy sanitary pads either use unhygienic alternatives or miss school every month. Days for Girls is an international program making reusable sanitary pads for young women. Tania worked with a chapter of Days for Girls in Geelong to make 60 sanitary packs. Tania and Mimi gave these out to girls and ladies in several villages, and provided training in their use. They were very well received. Tania will investigate if the less complicated parts of the kit can be manufactured in Nias. However, it is likely that the required flannelette material will need to be sent from Australia.

You may remember papa Marlina; injured about 10 years ago and now immobile on a wooden "bed" in his little room with no windows and infrequent access to outside. Last year we built a concrete ramp so the family could wheel him out into the village street. This year we visited papa Marlina and realised this was still too difficult for the family. We paid for a local carpenter to make a doorway directly from his room into the small path that leads to the village street, which also gives him much-needed fresh air and sunlight. We gave him one of the disabilities wheelchairs, which was a bit too small but a lot easier for his wife to wheel around outside. We also provided a mattress and some medicines for bedsores.

The dental hygiene clinics are continuing but at a slower pace. Pinta, the local young lady who has helped Iwan in the past, has now finished her dental degree. Iwan and Pinta will publicise the clinics more broadly, and also run clinics in villages where the residents struggle to get to the centre for treatment. We will consider expanding the dental clinics if needed, including further university training for Pinta so she can undertake extractions and fillings etc.

Iwan is now walking without crutches but still needs help walking up and down stairs. Following Xrays in Medan, his specialist said that his arms are full mended and the plates can be removed. The left femur is mending but still not sufficiently strong to allow the hip replacement operation required to allow him to walk normally.

HWP

There have been no volunteer visits recently, however.....

"Meet" Dr Raf from Sydney. He is a regular surfer at Sorake Beach, and is eager to give something back to the community in return for the good times he has had. He and his team ran a medical clinic in the centre in October, and is hoping to gain enough support from



Papa Marlina, on one of his rare "stolls" outside. The new doorway and better wheelchair should make it easier for him to get out and about.



Pinta doing scale and cleans in 2016. Hopefully she will have the skills and confidence to do full dental clinics.



Matt, Pinta and Iwan (from left to right) after discussing the plans for the new dental program.

other specialists to run clinics every month. These will likely be held at Sorake Beach and Dr Raf is eager for us to refer patients to his clinics. We are hoping this will also provide the required expertise for the disabilities children.

Have a look at <http://www.swellnet.com/news/swellnet-dispatch/2017/11/08/late-season-run-gallery>. Raf is pictured in the 2nd of the 3 photos showing the clinic in action. One of Dr Raf's colleagues is also providing advice on Iwan's condition. Iwan is in good hands.

Other

We are exploring options to improve coordination and reporting for the Foundation. Matt is in Nias about 6 months of the year, usually when the factory is running. He spends the rest of his time in Medan with his family, where he manages and builds the coconut oil marketing program. Matt has realised for a while that we need another person to drive the programs and the reporting, but he has struggled to find someone he can trust. In October we interviewed a lady whom Matt knows well and we are hoping she will start in early January. I plan to visit again in March/April to see how she is going.

Thank you for your support for 2017. We hope you have a really rewarding and refreshing Christmas, and a memorable 20128.

Peter Hofman

Project manager



And we had some fun! Tania doing a selfie with the kids, and Matt and his family gave me a lovely birthday dinner for mynd birthday.

