

ONF

Ono Niha Foundation

Newsletter – September 2018



I spent two weeks in Nias in early August with my sister Tania. Her daughter Judy and son-in-law Chris, and their three children came for five days. Tania was eager to do more Days for Girls sessions, Judy is an experienced midwife and wanted to help midwives and pregnant ladies, and Chris is a successful businessman eager to see the ONF programs and the Ono Niha Oil coconut factory. And their children – they gave youth and vitality to our older bones, and they learnt a bit about village life and challenges, and about coconuts!

And me – well, I tried to help Matt and Icum make a difference for the local community.

Local employment

As mentioned in the last newsletter, Matt owns Ono Niha Oil which employs up to 20 people and produces virgin coconut oil. Ono Niha Oil supports ONF, so an efficient oil factory will help ONF become self sufficient.

Demand for Ono Niha oil continues to increase. Matt estimates the factory throughput needs to increase from about 4,000 to 10,000 nuts per day to meet peak demand. The existing factory is not very efficient and further expansion will crowd out ONF activities on the site. Matt has already acquired some nearby land for a purpose-built factory.

Chris, Matt and I talked about what the future of Ono Niha Oil and ONF might look like in one, two or five years, and how we might get there. Chris is excited about the partnership between Ono Niha Oil and ONF and what this can achieve for the health and well-being of the local communities. He challenged us to think realistic but also “big”, and suggested several options to improve the formal linkages between ONF and Ono Niha Oil. Thank you Chris for your enthusiasm and input.



Chris and family, with Matt and Icum



Learning about the Ono Niha Oil production process



Matt and I talked about the initial plans that Michael from KW Automation drafted. We discussed in detail how best to balance the desire to employ as many locals as possible, with the appropriate degree of mechanisation, capacity to operate and maintain the equipment, and factory efficiency. The main improvements will be in movement of the nuts and the waste products, which is currently all done manually. We will continue to develop the factory plans with help from Steve, Michael and Chris. There is still lots of planning required to finalise the best balance between the dream, the design and the cost.

Coconut water: Icum is building her Nata de Coco project using the coconut water from the factory. She has made several versions with varying sweetness to suit the Indonesian and tourist tastes, and is providing samples to the boarding houses in Sorake Beach and the international surfers. She, will also explore the market in Medan.

Coconut yoghurt would be a great hit with the surfers, and a good income for ONF. I make dairy milk yoghurt when in Nias using dried culture from Australia, so I thought that making yoghurt using coconut milk from the factory would not be that difficult. Well, my first two attempts were “flops” – the coconut milk straight from the nut is not the same as the canned milk we get in Australia! Good old trial and error - we have a few more ideas to test.

Education

We now have another five supported students thanks to kind sponsors. Most of these new students have lost either mum or dad, and we are so grateful that we can help them. We now have about 20 students in the program.

Tania, Icum and I visited the local senior high school to see several of the sponsored students. We appreciated hearing from the teachers about students’ progress. We are still struggling to find a suitable English teacher for additional classes for the sponsored students. We were pleased to hear that the English teacher is hoping to offer additional classes at the high school after school. The Principal is eager for English speaking teachers to help. Volunteers, how about it!

Our computer classes continue to go well. We have seven computers, with two students per computer and two classes per week. We are trying to get more computers, so please tell me if you know where we can get good, surplus computers.



The new UV water steriliser donated by Steve Brassington



My attempt at coconut yoghurt – not giving up just yet!



Jett (right) is sponsoring Ilham. Ilham’s dad died about five years ago.



Trimoni (front) at senior high school



Computer classes in the ONF centre

Disabilities

The aqua therapy program includes four sessions per week. The pools are not always available so therapy sometimes occurs in one of the lagoons near Teluk Dalam.

Icum and Iwan continue to find children who need help. Merman had a high fever about six months ago when he was six years old. After the fever he could not speak and had lost control of his legs and arms. After about four months of aqua therapy his left side has almost fully recovered. We fitted a brace (donated by Kimberley) to help stretch his calf muscles and tendons – we hope! We do what we can with our limited knowledge.

Natalius is nine years old and is itching to start school. Icum tried to convince the principal of the local primary school to accept him but he refused. Icum is now negotiating with the Education Department. In the meantime, Natalius was really excited when she bought him some books and pens, and his sister will teach him until he is admitted to school. Icum and Iwan have tested several versions of pads to protect his knees when he walks, with more development required. Wallace from Queensland 3D-printed a forearm and hand that unfortunately did not fit because Natalius's forearm is too short. Both need further development – trial and error again! Experts, any advice?

We also provide mobility aids for use in their homes. Kristin can now get herself from her bed onto a wheelchair with the timber support we provided. We will also provide a ramp so her mum can wheel Kristin to the toilet inside their home.

Community health

Icum is doing a great job developing working relations with the Puskesmas' (community health centres). Meetings with the managers of two Puskesmas' confirmed a mutual desire to work together. They offered to organise two dental hygiene clinics per month in the villages and to drive Pinta to these clinics. They also arranged for about 30 midwives and expectant mothers to come to the Puskesmas so Judy could observe the midwives working with the mums and provide advice if needed. Judy was pretty impressed with the midwives' knowledge – the challenge is to encourage the more traditional families to adopt these better birthing practices.

Tania and Icum held two Days for Girls sessions, and Tania and Mimi also gave kits to needy families near Sorake. The kits were well received. We continue to think how these kits can be made in Nias.



Aqua therapy in the lagoon – with fun!



Merman with his new foot brace, and Natalius with his brother



Kristin sitting up by herself



Birthing training with Judy and Icum (above) and Days for Girls with Tania and Icum (below)



Pinta works for one of the Puskesmas about two days per month and volunteers for the remainder of the month in the hope that she can get a full time job when their budget improves. While visiting two Puskesmas' I was surprised to find brand new dental chairs – the first I have seen in Nias! They were purchased by the government but Pinta cannot use them until a fully qualified dentist can oversee Pinta's work, and water and power is connected. So they sit idle. We encouraged her boss to find a supervising dentist; we will then loan Jill's other dental equipment to the Puskesmas for Pinta to use, and will also provide funds for consumables if the government cannot. This was an exciting development, assuming the conditions can be met. Jill's dream of "home-grown" dental services might be getting closer.

In the meantime, Icum will strengthen working relations with the Puskesmas', and Iwan and Pinta will continue with dental hygiene clinics in the ONF centre and twice per month in the villages.

Holidays with Purpose

Ian and his wife Jaqueline visited in June. Jaqueline gave several English lessons.

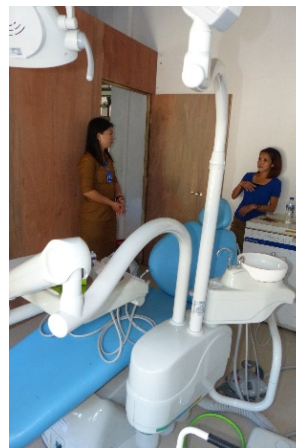
Follow us on Facebook. Search for LSM Ono Niha Foundation to see my almost daily updates of the trip. Also check out our website; <http://ononihalsmfoundation.squarespace.com/>.

Peter Hofman

Project manager

A cool story...

We were given 15 specialised wheelchairs by Wheelchairs for Kids (WfK) in Perth. Papa Michael (below left) found WfK on the internet and emailed them. They contacted Amy (she helped "our" disabled kids several years ago) and Amy contacted me. Matt and I fitted a wheelchair for Michael on my way back through Medan. A lovely "thread" that made a difference.



Icum discussing with the Head of the Puskesmas how to start dental services using the new dental chair



Pinta giving a scale and clean at Ollie's orphanage

