

ONF

Ono Niha Foundation

Newsletter – December 2020



An “interesting” 2020 indeed!

Nias was not immune to Covid-19. Schools were closed, non-essential gatherings prohibited, and air travel to Nias stopped. On top of this, swine flu swept through the island, killing about half the pigs which provide major income for lots of families. Thankfully Covid-19 was not detected in Nias until about September, and workplaces could stay open.

Covid-19 prevented Matt and Icum from travelling to Nias since March; they finally managed to return to Nias on 21st October. Steve Brassington and I planned to visit in May but this was reluctantly cancelled.

However, the team has not been idle by any means, despite my silence since the last newsletter in April.

Foundation self sustainability

Matt’s coconut oil business (Ono Niha Oil) already provides about 20% of the Foundation’s operating costs through in-kind support. We are working toward financial self-sufficiency for the Foundation by the end of 2021 by:

- Designing and building a more efficient oil factory to improve factory profitability.
- The Foundation funding some of the construction costs of the factory through donations.
- Signing a formal contract between ONO and the Foundation that will provide income to the Foundation through a proportional share of the profits based on the its donations to the new factory.

So far:

- The Foundation was re-registered with a new name (Ono Niha Pelita Kasih) and committee



Icum at a trade show in Medan



Icum showcasing Ono Niha oil at the Nias Surf event. A surfer from Brasil was eager to import the oil.

structure, with Icum as the Chair and Matt as patron and advisor.

- The contract between the Foundation and ONO was finally signed in November when Matt and Icum were both in Nias.
- The factory plans are being improved to reduce construction costs and increase efficiency.
- The factory land has been cleared and building materials will be purchased in January to start construction.
- \$20,000 has so far been donated toward the new factory, with a further \$50,000 required.



The new range of improved coconut oil - Sococo Oil

Local employment – the oil factory

Covid-19 impacts reduced oil orders from Lush this year, which is ONO's main customer. However, Matt and Icum have been working hard to increase sales within Indonesia. Initiatives included:

- Training in marketing.
- Holding stalls at trade shows and local events in Medan and Nias to increase sales and better understand what the Indonesian consumer wants.
- Purchasing more factory equipment to produce and even better-quality oil.
- Launching this improved oil under the name of Sococo Oil, rather than the existing name of Ono Niha Oil, since Indonesians generally consider products from Nias (Ono Niha) to be lower quality.
- Using by-products to generate more income, for example Nata de Coco from the coconut water, and soaps and shampoos from the 2nd grade oil.



Nata de Coco, made the coconut water that was previously thrown away

Education

It has been tougher for Nias students this year. The Indonesian government closed schools because of Covid-19 and asked students to use remote learning and video calls with their teacher. This was challenging for those without computers and internet. However, the ongoing commitment from sponsors helped the supported students to manage better, with many saying they were grateful for this financial support which helped them buy data packages for internet access.

During 2020 two students could no longer be supported because the financial position of the donor changed. One student was removed from the program because he stopped going to school. The remaining 16 students are doing well.

After-school English and computer classes continued during most of 2020, but with Covid-19 control strategies



Computer (above) and English classes held in the Foundation's Community centre



including washing of hands, wearing of masks and social distancing. although at a reduced level because of Covid-19. Fourteen computer studies students graduated in June, and another course with 22 students started in August. No graduation ceremony was held in June, but a small combined one for some of the June and November graduates was held in December.

A replacement English teacher was appointed early in 2020, and a new English course started in August. However, the teacher is not available in 2021. Finding good English teachers continues to be challenging.

Icum works closely with other local efforts to improve education. For example, Ian and Jacqueline from Distant Seas Ministries run English classes on their base in nearby Sorake Beach. Icum helps them, and Ian and Jacqueline provide an English (Aussie!) input into our English classes when they can.

Disabilities

This program is helping about 26 children. Seventeen children regularly attend the program. Carers of the other children find it difficult to attend sessions because of transport difficulties or the need to work. The team tries to provide therapy for these children in their homes.

The program was suspended for a while because of Covid-19, but is now continuing. Therapy sessions are held at the Foundation centre every week, aqua therapy started again at a public pool in Teluk Dalam (about 30 km away), and home visits continue.

Five new children joined the program this year. Several had little strength and movement in their legs and neck. Regular therapy and exercise have increased strength and movement so that several of these children can now either stand or walk.

Iwan led the Disabilities program for about 5 years. He made a big difference to many of the members, despite his own health challenges following a serious motorbike accident. We were sad to learn that Iwan decided to leave the Foundation in March, but he trained two new team members before leaving. Thank you Iwan for your dedication, and welcome to Mama Entri and Mama Fildra who now run the Disabilities program.

We are continually saddened to hear stories of poverty and the impacts this has on health and life. For example, during this year Icum met children with leprosy, hydrocephalus and cataracts, diseases that are so easy to control with the correct attention but is often out of reach to the poor.



Washing hands before English class



Aqua therapy continues at the public pool



Home therapy for Prita to improve leg movement and strength



Therapy sessions at the Centre

Holidays with Purpose

Covid-19 prevented any travel this year. Hopefully we and other volunteers can travel in 2021.

How you can help

Donations can be made at

<https://www.wra.org.au/1901wholisticdevelopment>.

Follow us on Facebook. Search for LSM Ono Niha Foundation. Also check out our website; <http://ononihalsmfoundation.squarespace.com/> and Facebook page, which I freely admit I don't update enough.

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Javin, one of the new members. His grandma always takes him to therapy. His legs are getting stronger and he can now stand.



A big thank you from Kadar (Foundation secretary), Papa Jordan (Disabilities program driver), Matt (patron and advisor), Reni (treasurer), Icum (Foundation chair and coordinator), and Mama Entri and Mama Fildra (Disabilities program leaders)

PS: Our condolences to Matt and his family on the death of his father just before Christmas