



Klibur ba serbisu hamutuk

Our association is gradually taking shape with the East Timor subdistrict Remexio. We are building mutual understanding, respect and trust. If we are seen as just another mob giving hand-outs, we will have fallen short of the partnership ideal that we set out to achieve back in September '99.

Four groups from the valley have now visited the people of Remexio. In May, Libby Turnock and Maureen Magee spent two weeks in East Timor – you may have read Maureen's report in the June Voice. As well as helping with quite a few projects in various parts of East Timor, Libby and Maureen made the initial contact with Remexio, and its principal village of Asu Mau, opening the way for those of us who follow.

Asu Mau lies in a small valley 900 metres above sea level, well away from the tropical heat of Dili, although only 25 km distant. It is a village of 850 people and around 250 houses. Like Kangaroo Valley, about half the houses are spread along the one kilometre or so of their 'main street'. Before they were destroyed, most were built of concrete blocks with an iron roof. Outside the main part of the village, the roofs tend to be the traditional and very attractive thatch. Some have split bamboo walls, either woven or joined together like vertical ship-lap boards.

In June, I spent a week and a half in East Timor with my daughter Bella, trying to find the best way we can help. One of my aims was to see if Asu Mau had a suitable site for a micro-hydro generator to supply power for the village. While they do have several streams with a suitable fall, the

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seasonal nature of their flow makes it hard to rely on hydro power through the dry season. This makes the project more difficult than I had hoped, but I am still working on a solution. More next month. We travelled to Ailieu to meet the head man of Remexio, Sr Joaquim Carvalho de Araujo. After finding an interpreter, Sr Joaquim took us to Asu Mau and introduced us to their head man, Sr Pedro Mendonça and his family. Bella fell in love with the children, who were delighted to have visitors and very keen to communicate. After a formal discussion of the village's immediate needs, why we were there and what we were able to offer, Sr Pedro took us around the village to show us some of the problems. We saw the burnt out school house and scores of homes still needing their roofs replaced. We saw the vandalised water supply and power plant. Most of the damage caused by the militia was within the main part of the village.

On our second visit, we were invited to join Sr Pedro for lunch of rice, green vegetables and a bit of chicken. After lunch we got down to a serious talk to decide a list of priorities. We explained that although we could see Asu Mau needed almost anything we could think of, our resources were limited, and we needed specifics so we could come back and put a case on their behalf. The school had no furniture, but did they want us to send desks or would it be better to send timber so they could make the desks, and if so, what kind of timber? At this, Sr Pedro went and got pen and paper and elaborately wrote a list headed **Necessities**. What he gave us was a list containing only a single item – a chainsaw. With a chainsaw they could use the fallen logs in their forest to make timber for roofing and various sorts of furniture including desks. Although I was glad to see the desire for self-sufficiency, I was wondering whether a chainsaw was the right tool for what they wanted to do.

What they really need is a mobile mill like the Lucas mill you may have seen demonstrated at KV showground. But, on our way back to Dili that evening, we saw a man in another village using a chainsaw to do just what Sr Pedro had described. He was using a Stihl 090 to rip a log free-hand into 75mm by 50mm rafters. He was a highly skilled operator, but it was a very risky operation, as the photo shows.



East Timorese saw mill in action

When I returned to KV, I spoke to as many people as possible about chainsaws. I was reluctant to send a machine that could cause serious injury where the level of skill with such tools may be low.

I chose a Stihl 088, the same size as the 090 but with anti-vibration and kick-back protection and a chain brake. We added a slabbing attachment, which makes the milling operation much safer, and some ear muffs and face shield. I really appreciated the expert help from Gary White at Bowral Mower Service, who also provided all the equipment at cost.

We've received generous contributions toward the cost from Moss Vale Rotary, Berry Community Activity Centre and Kangaroo Valley Woodcrafts. Any further contributions would be gratefully received.

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The church in Asu Mau was spared when the priest stood in front and confronted the militia.



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The chainsaw went with our shipment of goods on the *Jervis Bay*, leaving Sydney on 5th July. The major contribution was a Land Cruiser from Nigel Lewis with a heavy duty trailer from Michael Moore. These were christened *Nigel* and *Mike*, adorned with our logo (expertly designed by Ruth Guthrie at B&K Camera House), and loaded to the roof with donated goodies from far and wide. There were tools for woodworking and gardening for Asu Mau, computers and filing cabinets for training in Dili, books, writing paper, a toilet pan and even the odd kitchen sink. This all arrived

in Dili on Friday 14th July, and has since been distributed by Rob Wesley-Smith, who has gone to East Timor specially to do it. *Wes*, as he is known to his friends, and his East Timorese partner Cesarina, gave us great help while on holiday from their home in Darwin, and visiting Wes's brothers Martin and Peter in KV. He also roped in a friend of his to visit Asu Mau to do some chainsaw training, and we've had reports of successful milling of a log and great delight in Asu Mau with the results. Of this there should also be more reports next month.

At the time of writing this, our fourth contingent are in Asu Mau. Libby and Paul Turnock and Chris Nobel left on 15th August for two weeks in East Timor, to further cement our relationship. One of the group's aims is to smooth a path between our two villages to make visits easier from



Respected senior citizen of Remexio



'Nigel' being loaded by Mike, Nigel, Michael, John & Paul

both sides.

One idea floated on earlier trips was to set up a cottage in Asu Mau for paying guests to provide some cash flow for the village. This is obviously difficult while the villagers are struggling to meet their own needs, but if we can help them with the project, it could be of great benefit to the community. The cooler temperatures and spectacular scenery of the mountains would be a great attraction for people stuck in the heat of Dili. Whether this is a traditional thatched building or something a but more mozzie-proof for we Aussies has yet to be decided. Either way, we could possibly organise a working bee to add such comforts as a bathroom – I'm sure we could round up a few volunteers from KV.

Peter Stanton