



FOCUS ON MERCY

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By David Skeat

GIVING BIRTH IS OFTEN A RISKY BUSINESS



Kirsty Sword Gusmao

I recently heard the First Lady of East Timor give a public address in Adelaide. Kirsty Sword Gusmao is the Australian born wife of President Xanana Gusmao and is passionate about raising the quality of life for families in East Timor.

In her address Kirsty made two points that concerned me greatly. The first was that East Timor is one of the most fertile nations in the world with higher

conception rates than most other countries. The second point was this; that many new mothers often leave the hospital too soon, many of them still bleeding from their recent delivery. They go home with out soap, sanitary pads, or other basic supplies. Many mother's who deliver at home also find themselves in a similar situation.

In her speech Kirsty said: "... only 10% of pregnant women give birth in health facilities in Timor-Leste. The costs incurred in travelling to and spending time in hospital are one factor determining many women's choice to give birth at home. Another is the shame associated with their inability to provide their newborn babies with appropriate clothing, wraps etc. It is a priority of the Timor-Leste Ministry of Health to encourage women to give birth with the assistance of skilled birth

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Reverse The Curse's Dried Fruit Factory Opens in Phnom Penh



On December 3rd 2004, the first *Fruit Candy* products went on sale at the celebrations conducted at Hun Sen Park, for the International Day of Disabled Persons. At our display tent, along with many other organizations showing their work with the disabled, we launched our new product range. About 2000 people visited the park and took information about our products. Selling was brisk and people were very impressed with the quality and flavour of our dried fruit.

The vision that we had five years ago, to establish a dried fruit factory and train people with disability from land mine accidents how to produce dried fruit, has become a reality. All those who have partnered with us to bring us to this point are sharing in the fruit of our labour among these precious people. Without your support and commitment none of this could have happened. We are very thankful for your financial help and, with your continued assistance, we look forward to seeing this ministry expand to benefit many more people and families whose lives have been shattered by land mine accidents.

Behind the success of that day lay three months of intense activity and very hard work. In September our machinery arrived from Australia. Eion May, from

ARMS Melbourne, helped to set up our new premises and Hugh and Thomas Magarey from Adelaide, helped us install the electric boiler and the steam-driven kettle for cooking the fruit. A drying tunnel was designed by Hugh and manufactured locally, using the heat from the air-conditioning unit in the office. This is working very successfully.

In September we employed six landmine-accident survivors as trainee factory workers. Since then, another two landmine-accident disabled people have joined our staff. Seven of these people have lost legs, while Bunthoeun, our Trainee Factory Manager, has severe shrapnel wounds to his upper body and he has reduced strength and mobility in his arm and shoulder. These eight people are so excited to be employed and they are so enthusiastic about contributing to the success of RTC Cambodia. They are very pleased to have a "future and a hope" when once there was only despair. Their dignity and self-worth has been restored and those who are married and have children, are able to support their families. This is all because of the generosity of our supporters. We also have four staff who are not disabled. They are our administrator, Sokhem, marketing manager Sok, driver Heng and housekeeper Rom.

It took us two months to establish a range of products from the tropical fruit available here. We have called our product range *Fruit Candy* and it includes three varieties of fruit straps, made from Pawpaw and Pineapple, Pineapple and Guava and also Mango. After this fruit is dried, we make Pawpaw Fruit Balls, Pineapple Fruit Balls and Mango Fruit Balls. In addition, we produce Glace Pawpaw, Pineapple, Mango and Ginger, and delicious Ginger syrup which we call Ginger Honey.

Our factory staff is being trained in manufacturing confectionery and also in the correct methods to produce high quality products to Australian hygiene standards. In addition, three of them are being trained in marketing by Lani, who is a volunteer marketing expert from the Philippines. Our administrator, Sokhem and our marketing manager both speak English and the rest of the staff are studying English with an Australian, Roz Gill, from Melbourne.

I want to share with you the stories of some of our staff, so you will fully appreciate what a job means to these dear people. They have suffered so much because they live in a war-torn country, still struggling to recover from the devastation cause by the Khmer Rouge.

BUNTHOEUNTHONG

Bunthouen Thong is 25 years old and recalls only too well what happened on the day a landmine exploded under the cart he was driving.

My name is Bunthouen Thong and I am 25 year old. I was born in Kompong Thom Province and there are 10 people in my family, of which I am the eldest son.

This is my impression of what happened to make me a landmine accident survivor. My family members are farmers, and we earn our living from growing rice and vegetables. One day, my parents and I we went out to the fields and a horrible thing happened. I was driving the ox cart and my parents were travelling with me. Suddenly, a mine exploded under the cart. Immediately I called out to my parents. I was in terrible pain and fainted. Someone took us to hospital where they told me that we were all injured in the mine explosion. When I became conscious, I found myself in hospital and my parents were there also. I asked myself and my relatives, "Am I dreaming or did this really happen?" Then I knew that this terrible accident was not a dream but a reality. I was sorry for myself and felt very hopeless about my life, especially when the doctor said my father's leg was too badly injured and he would be permanently disabled. My mother and I were both injured, with shrapnel damage to our bodies. My back, ribs and especially my left shoulder were so badly damaged that I cannot do hard work any more. This was really bad news for farmers like us. Previously, when I had free time from my study, I had always done a lot of work for my family on the farm. Now I could no longer help them as I had in the past. Then I knew that what had happened could never be changed.

My family also suffered scorn from some of the people in our village and they had no sympathy for us. I also believed that each human being has the freedom to find a job and a right to live. That is why study became the most important thing for me, so that by getting a good education, I could help myself and my family in the future.

After high school graduation, I took the entrance exam to major in agriculture at the National School of Agriculture at Prek Liep. When I passed the exam, I

was really excited, because I had achieved success after all my effort. On the other hand, my family had no money to pay for university fees. It was very difficult, because my family was very poor and had almost no money to support my studies. I faced many difficulties during my university study and I also felt sorry for my parents and family, who had to work very hard to make enough money so that I could study. Therefore, I had to be successful in my study and I hoped that one day, I would be able to teach my family and other farmers my knowledge of agriculture. I also hoped I could find a good job after my graduation.

My hopes began to come true. The school sent me to visit ZOA Organization, at Banteay Meanchey Province and the



The reverse Thr Curse staff working together to manufacturing the fruit flats.

ADRA and CWS Organizations, which are also at Kampong Thom Province. After that, ASPECA Organization sent me to teach agricultural techniques to students and farmers in rural areas. At that time I was just working as a volunteer with no salary.

Then I heard that RTC Cambodia wanted staff who had survived landmine accidents, to work in their confectionery factory. I thought this was a good opportunity for me to apply for a job. At that time, I had an interview with Mrs.

Marion Fromm, the director of RTC Cambodia. After the interview, she decided to give me a job at RTC Cambodia, as a trainee factory manager. She is a good woman, who has given a great opportunity to me and other disabled people to have employment. I think that it is really good to create this organization especially to give opportunities to disabled people in Cambodia so that they can have jobs. Now I'm really happy working with her, and will try my best to help her to succeed. In the future, I hope that RTC Cambodia will expand and have a well known reputation for helping the disabled.

SAVY VORN

Savy Vorn is another person whose life was savaged by the effects of landmines.

My name is Savy and I was born in Phnom Penh in Cambodia and I'm 35 years old. I came from a Moslem family. I am married and I have four children, two girls and twin boys.

When I was 18, I was living in Koskong Province. My husband was in the military and I went to Poipet, near the border of Thailand, to look for my husband. I didn't find my husband, because unfortunately I stepped on a landmine and lost my right leg. When I learnt that I had lost my leg I was very disappointed and very upset. My husband totally rejected me and left me. I was very shy and afraid of what people would say. I stayed at home and, later on, worked as a servant for another family.

I was so depressed that I tried to kill myself by jumping off a bridge into the river. Someone rescued me and told me I was very bad to do that, so I said I wouldn't try to do it again. I searched for vegetables to sell at the market, but I couldn't make enough money to survive, so I went to live at the pagoda and became a nun. At the pagoda I met a monk and we fell in love. When the head of the pagoda found out about our love, he dismissed us both from the pagoda. Then we had nowhere to go and we had to sleep in the streets and under the trees.

Someone came along the road and shared with us about Jesus and we became Christians. We were baptized 3 years ago. When I shared with my mother and father that I was a Christian,

they completely rejected me because they were Muslims and they wouldn't even give me any food. This made my heart very sad.

When I became pregnant, we wanted to be married in the Church, but the Pastor wouldn't marry us because we were living together, so we just signed the official government marriage papers.

All our friends can see that Jesus Christ has blessed us. Now I'm getting better and I'm very happy. I have a job with RTC Cambodia, and they are very kind and generous to me and encourage me all the time. Finally I want to thank the staff of RTC Cambodia and everyone for helping me and giving me a good job.

SOTHEA KEN

Sothea Ken is a woman who had her leg blown off twenty-six years ago, and has struggled on a daily basis just to look after herself.

My name is Sothea and I was born in the Kampong Speu Province. I'm 45 years old. All my immediate family was killed by the Khmer Rouge in the war, but I do have six other relatives.

In 1979, when I was 19, I went to the border of Cambodia to cut down trees in the forest near the border with Thailand. The Cambodian Government sent me from Phnom Penh to do this work to remove the hiding places of the Khmer

Rouge and so protect Cambodia. I didn't have a choice. I just had to go where I was sent. Unfortunately I had an accident with a landmine and lost my right leg.

After that I was very upset and there was no hope in my life. I had no parents or brothers and sisters to look after me and I didn't want to do anything. I was very shy with people when I had to go out. I always cried a lot of tears.



Training staff at Reverse The Curse factory in Phnom Penh

I went back to Kompong Speu and tried to make enough money to live, by buying some fruit and making some cakes to sell to the passengers on the train when it stopped at the station once each day. This did not make enough money for me to live properly and I was very thin, miserable and depressed. Life was extremely hard for me.

But right now I'm so happy that someone in Australia is helping me to have a job

with R T C Cambodia. Marion Fromm is my boss and she is very good to me and she encourages me all the time. I am having lessons in marketing and I enjoy selling our products. Finally I want to

thank everyone for helping me and also the staff of RTC Cambodia.

At RTC we are committed to caring for the people who are looking to us for help and encouragement; but life in a third-world country is never easy. Even though the factory is starting off well, we are experiencing severe power cuts because there is not enough electricity being generated to meet the needs of this rapidly expanding city. We are in urgent need of a generator, so that we can continue our production and not have large quantities of fruit go mouldy because we cannot get it dried in time. A suitable generator costs about \$AUD5,300. Please pray about this urgent need.

As you read these testimonies, your heart will be touched by the extent of their pain, the horror of their recent history, the way they have suffered - and yet their incredible dignity and spirit in rising from the pain of their past. Praise God with us that He always has a plan to bring healing and wholeness to broken lives. May God bless you wonderfully as you pray, support and are instrumental in blessing these people with employment and faith in the One who alone can give them peace.

Ongoing work in Aceh Nias



By Dr. Virginia Keng

Since the arrival home of the second Aceh medical team a third team has been organised and is already in place.

Melbourne GP Dr George Somers who travelled with the second team to Aceh was approached by the Indonesian health authorities with a proposal the he return to Aceh as soon as possible with a third team and address Primary Health Care

issues in the camps around the Banda Aceh region. He has also been asked to recruit doctors who can provide support for the medical work being carried out in some of the local hospitals. George accepted this invitation and has asked ARMS to cover the project; which we are only too pleased to do.

Steady streams of medical personnel from all around Australia are signing up to join the team. Over the next few months small groups of doctors and nurses will travel to Banda Aceh in a relay

teams, to take turns in the provision of these services. This project is expected to last another 6 months and will see the provision of medical services for thousands of families who were affected by the tsunami.

Coffee Shops In The Camps

Another thing ARMS is doing in Banda Aceh is that it is funding a pilot program that will establish little coffee shops in refugee camps. Thousands of tsunami victims still need to process their grief. It would take many months and hundreds of counsellors to provide the professional services that are needed there.

The coffee shop idea provides a means through which people can talk to each other in a natural non threatening setting about how they are coping with the after-



Repairing the damage - Caring for those affected by the Tsunami

By Dr. Melissa Monkivitch

I was part of a medical team co-ordinated by ARMS that visited Aceh in mid February this year. Our team consisted of two medical doctors, one nurse / counsellor, two primary health care workers and an interpreter. Our purpose was to assist with the on-going general medical needs of the refugees who had lost homes and families in the Boxing Day Tsunami.

Once we arrived in Banda Aceh we were very fortunate to have our physical needs of food, lodging and transport provided by an associated NGO called Partners.

Banda Aceh is a small rural city that originally had a population of approximately 300,000 people. However, after the tsunami half of its population was lost. Not only that, but the tsunami also did incredible damage to houses, buildings and infrastructure throughout the region.

Around Banda Aceh many refugee camps have been set up in response to the disaster. Within these camps

thousands of displaced families reside in difficult conditions. Each camp relies on the United Nations and Indonesian government to provide their daily food and bottled water, but their medical needs are generally supplied by such organisations as ARMS and Partners.

Our team worked in some of these camps and also in some reclaimed schools in the area. Our clinics were held in tents, under tarpaulins and in various surviving school buildings. It was in these often rudimentary conditions that we saw more than a thousand patients over a two and a half week period. In our clinics we were ably assisted by local University students who acted as interpreters for us. Most of these students had lost family members in the tsunami.

It soon became evident to us that one condition that was widespread was that nearly every patient we treated suffered stress and grief. The sheer terror of surviving such a catastrophic event as the tsunami, followed by the confrontation of the total loss of home, job, family and friends had taken a very big toll on the physical and mental wellbeing of the people.

There were few systems in place to provide support and counselling to these people. Many of our conversations

attempted to do so. We were very fortunate to have a trained counsellor as part of the team, and she spent invaluable time providing one-on-one and group counseling, as well as therapy sessions with school students. She was also involved in a training program of local people to carry on this work.

It will take many months, if not years, for these people to reclaim some sense of normality in their lives. We were very privileged to have the opportunity to contribute this small effort to their recovery. We were also very blessed to have a trouble free experience (despite the warnings issued by the Federal Government in Australia advising people to leave Banda Aceh for security reasons), and we found the local people to be warm, friendly and very happy for us to be there.

We were very thankful for the prayer support we had from our friends and family at home. The whole team felt that those who were praying played a significant part in this outreach as we did.

I want to encourage people to continue to pray for the people of Aceh and for the team that continues to work there under very difficult circumstances.

math of the tsunami. It may not be the deep counselling that some of the people need but it is something that could help people to cope better with the cataclysmic disaster that has befallen them. Each coffee shop is expected to cost about \$250.

Nias

The disaster in Nias is very much on the minds of many. ARMS has not been idle in responding to this disaster. In the past weeks we have funded the sending of specialist nurse to the Island of Nias that was devastated by earthquakes in recent weeks.

Nathan Willis who was a member of the original Aceh team in January has returned to Indonesia to once again give

assistance to the thousands of families who were affected by the earthquakes there just a few weeks ago.

The reports we are receiving from Indonesia tell us that damage there is far worse than that which has been reported by the news media. Thousands are homeless and without water, food and basic health care. Nathan's arrival in Nias has further strengthened the work being done by the Partners team that are on the ground in Nias. ARMS has already supplied funds for emergency care of the refugees and is about to send further funds that will help local businesses to re-establish themselves in a post disaster environment. Details of these disbursements are available from the tsunami page on the ARMS website; www.arms.org.au.

Health education Team.

ARMS has also funded a health education team to travel to Aceh to help people in the camps avoid the spread of diseases through wide spread health education.

This team is travelling to Banda Aceh from South Africa and is headed by our dear friend Dr. Virginia Keng who has a lot of experience in health education and the establishing of community health clinics in the developing world.

ARMS continues to fundraise for its tsunami projects; your prayers and donations are really helping to touch the lives of thousands of families who have been caught up in the most deadly tsunami ever recorded.



New Preschool Training Center For East Timor

By David Skeat

Since her re-location to Hera, East Timor Soraya Nepomuceno has seen some amazing doors open for her.

She has established a preschool in Hera that has a community clinic attached to it. About 50 children are receiving a high quality preschool program in Portuguese and families are being better served in health care and health education through the work of the community clinic.

Together with this Soraya has also established an extension program in Sidara, a small village about 15 minutes out of Hera. Over recent months the East Timorese Education Department has taken a keen interest in her work and are encouraging her to start East Timor's first Preschool Teacher's Training Centre in Hera.

Land has been donated for this purpose and a design for the centre has been done in the Hekan format, a team is ready to go to East Timor to do the construction work and funds are being raised in order to complete the first phase of the project.

When you think about it this is an amazing result – considering that Soraya only moved back to East Timor in July 2003, to start the ministry of Kid's Ark. Then again, the importance of preschool is fairly universally recognised by many people including governments and local village councils.

I find it very interesting that through ARMS I seem to be involved in establishing and supporting the work of

preschools amongst poor communities in the developing world. I was in fact one the first men in South Australia to train and qualify as a Preschool Teacher, attending a Kindergarten Teachers College in North Adelaide from 1977 -79 and graduating with a Diploma of Teaching in Early Childhood. (I am sure that my lecturers would be very pleased to know what I am doing today!)

Preschool is not just child minding: it is the very basis of education, the place where some of the building blocks of a child's learning are put in place. It is the place where the foundations of a child's educational career are laid; and without those foundations children are seriously disadvantaged. A recent article in a US newspaper picked up this point when the writer stated, "*Educators say children who do not attend preschool are often behind when they start kindergarten, which can contribute to academic and disciplinary problems.*"

These statements are confirmed by many research studies that have come up with finding such these; *preschool education produces higher achievement test scores, along with fewer occurrences of grade retention or placement in special education programmes. Students who attend preschool have higher graduation rates and decreased crime and delinquency rates.*

But we already know all this and our culture readily agrees with the weight of evidence that confirms that preschool is essential for our children's educational well being.



Statistics available on the internet show that in the past financial year both State and Federal governments spent approximately \$2.4 billion on children's services that included preschool funding and that in the same year over 722,000 children attended government funded preschools. If these figures show anything it is that as a community we believe in preschool.

In East Timor the government there has many problems that it is trying to address, one of the most complex of which is education.

Prior to independence, the education system in East Timor was Indonesian-based. It taught Indonesian history, language and customs and was designed to draw this group of people into the wider federation that is Indonesia today. I think it would be fair to say that the government of the time in Jakarta saw the East Timorese as being *cultural misfits*. Their natural language was Tetum, or Portuguese, their natural religion was Catholic, and they were strongly independent and did not want to be ruled by Jakarta. The Indonesian education system however, was taught

New
Preschool
Training
Center
For East Timor

I believe that one of the best things we can do for a country like East Timor is to establish in it a high quality preschool system

in Bahasa Indonesia, (the Indonesian national language), had a strong Muslim influence and was geared towards integration. The Indonesian education system was in place in East Timor for 25 years.

Consequently when East Timor became independent one of the first decisions they made was to adopt Portuguese as the national language and to also teach Tetum. All remnants of Indonesian rule were to be forgotten and a new education system was to be established. That in itself has been a mammoth task because at independence few of the population spoke Portuguese. History books would have to be rewritten, the whole education system would have to be redeveloped and there is only so much aid money coming in with which to do these things. In this unfortunate set of circumstances the area of education that was forgotten was preschool. Therefore when the Education Department came to Soraya to ask her to set up a preschool training center it was a very significant thing.

Although the education department could offer support, it could not offer financial assistance with the project – hence Soraya has asked ARMS if it can raise the money needed in order to complete the project. The full project is expected to cost about \$225,000. Stage one of building the first class-room building and ablution block will cost approximately \$140,000.

East Timor needs to have its educational foundations laid properly and a high quality Early Childhood training facility should be part of that foundation. To date ARMS has received gifts and pledges of approximately \$40,000 we still need to raise a further \$185,000, and then we need to furnish and equip the center.

If Australia can afford to spend \$2.4 billion on early childhood services, then we can afford to spend \$225,000 on establishing Early Childhood services in East Timor! The East Timor cost represents one ten-thousandth of what we spend in Australia.

ARMS needs your prayers and support on this project. By June 2005 we need to have raised another \$100,000. Donations to this fund are tax deductible and we are seeking help from our donors, churches, the corporate sector, anyone who can see the value of what we are trying to achieve for the people of East Timor. Please pray. Is there someone in your network of family and friends that you can ask to help, is there a fund raising event that you can run in your home?

I believe that one of the best things we can do for a country like East Timor is to establish in it a high quality preschool system that will guarantee that children coming up through the new education system have the kind of foundation they need in order to succeed.



(continue from page 1)
attendants as a means of bringing about a reduction in the alarmingly high rates of maternal and infant mortality in our country."

When Kirsty made these remarks I was struck by the implications of what may happen with post natal infections, or the possibility of their children dying from preventable diseases. One of our own staff Marion Wilbraham reported seeing a woman die in a Dili clinic from post natal infections that were attributable to these very circumstances.

When I contacted Kirsty about this issue and she said that one of her personal goals is to raise money for 6,000 *Smart Mum's Packs* that would be given to mothers leaving the hospitals or who have given birth at home with the aid of a birth attendant. Each pack would cost approximately \$20 and would contain;

- 2 cotton sarongs
- 6 pairs underpants
- 4 packs sanitary napkins
- 1 towel
- 6 cotton nappies
- 2 cakes soap
- 1 mosquito net

I have travelled to East Timor many times and have been aware of some of their health needs but hearing from the President's wife the specific needs of mothers has renewed in me a determination to do more to help the people of East Timor.

I would like to launch an appeal to raise the funds needed to help 500 new mothers in East Timor. If we can raise \$10,000, then we can make sure that for at least 1000 East Timorese families the risk of post natal infection is significantly reduced. Donations towards this appeal can be made through our web site www.arms.org.au or by sending your cheque made out to ARMS to our National Office at 1 Kent Rd Surrey Hills Vic 3127.

Save a life..

By Child Sponsorship Program



Boonyarit Sae Lee

Greeting from Thailand. My name is Boonyarit Sae Lee and I am in Grade 12. I love to learn but my father's wage is not sufficient for me to go further in my studies. I live with my uncle now who is helping care for me. I am very keen to do further study. Thank you for helping support my education.

...Sponsor a child

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We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.

Sir Winston Churchill

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2. Hekan Housing Project
3. Home Of The Open Heart
4. Karen Preschool Project
5. Weberek Water Project
6. Reverse The Curse Of Landmine Project
7. Tsunami Appeal

Response Form



I would like to become a supporter of ARMS and will regularly pray for its ministry and /or give a monthly gift of \$ per month. I enclose a gift of \$ towards:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> National Office Support | <input type="checkbox"/> E.T. Maternity Packs | <input type="checkbox"/> Australian Mercy Fund |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reverse The Curse | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Sponsorship | <input type="checkbox"/> Kid's Ark Pre-school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tsunami Appeal | <input type="checkbox"/> Other..... | |

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Please debit my credit card (circle one) Visa Mastercard Bankcard

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