



FOCUS ON MERCY

July - September 2006

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THE EAST TIMOR CRISIS

The Long Way Back

By David Skeat

The recent civil unrest in East Timor has done a lot of damage to the country's economy and also to investor and donor confidence.

In late April the country seemed to break apart in a demonstration of violence that was unprecedented. Houses were burned people shot in the street and it seemed for a while that the world's youngest nation was about to tear itself apart.



Burnt house in Dili

There are still a lot of questions that need to be answered about who exactly was responsible for the violence. Both sides seemed to blame each other and the Australian media vigorously reported the news of the events happening on the streets of Dili. There was almost no reporting on the background of just who was responsible. Our TV screens showed us graphic pictures of houses in Dili burning but who exactly lit the match?

Whilst I was in Hera recently I saw 100 trucks of Fretelin protesters coming along the road heading for Dili. Truck after truck passed us on the road; they had come from the other end of the country we were told; but who paid for their petrol, and where did supposedly small poor communities find 100 trucks? It wasn't the people from Dili who burned Dili, many of Dili's residents were in hiding. The culprits were the imported thugs who came in the trucks but where exactly did they come from ... and how many of the gangs that were causing problems inside Dili were actually residents of Dili?



Protesters heading to Dili

There is more to this than meets the eye and we can only hope that some clearer



Girl in remote refugee camp

understanding of the events of the past two months will eventuate in due course.

The real victims of this crisis were the East Timorese. In a country of 800,000 people close to 140,000 (32%) were hiding in fear from the groups of protesters who were descending upon Dili. That is a lot of people, and whilst the media emphasized the street protests and gang violence, little emphasis was given to the plight of those who were so terrified that they literally headed for the hills.

There were 32 refugee camps in Dili alone. At one stage the main hospital in Dili could not function properly as the nurses and hospital support staffs had run for their lives and were hiding in the hills. Extended blackouts were experienced in various places because the technicians who could repair the problem were also in hiding. Local infrastructure had fallen apart. Whilst



Child in refugee camp

Dili to major centres such as Bacau smaller villages such as Hera watched as the trucks went past but received no help. There was no rice for people to buy and as many could not work there was no money with which to buy food. What the world saw unfold in East Timor was a very serious situation and as the country goes into recovery mode it still remains critical.

Some commentators have said that what we were seeing in East Timor was democracy in action in, and that may be so. Freedom of speech is an essential part of our political process; but sometimes freedom of speech has an ugly side, and so it was with the imported thugs who came to Dili and the reports that circulated that the then Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri had tried to arrange death squads to deal with his political enemies. It is these reports and the images of people looting shops and houses that seem to stick in our minds and not the images of the people who were and still are living in the hills suffering from serious health problems, and with out enough nutritious food to eat and little clean water.

140,000 people were hiding in fear

Whilst the crisis was in full swing I heard many comments from people about how they had ceased to be sympathetic for East Timor and how they thought that it was a waste of time helping people there as *they obviously did not deserve it*. Such comments show ignorance and a lack of understanding about the real issues that are facing East Timor at this time. Yet they will form a significant world view that will stop people from giving to projects based in East Timor. The events of the past two months will take a huge toll on public confidence and generosity towards the people of East Timor. It could be a long road back.

Whilst I was there in Hera a few weeks ago I witnessed the fear and the disappointment in the eyes of those who were the victims of the crisis. Try telling them that they don't deserve the help and good will of nations like Australia. Our assistance and good will should not be



Refugees in the hills.

conditional on the misbehavior of a very small group of people.

Aid and development organizations like ARMS need to effectively re-engage the people of East Timor after the crisis. In order to do this we need the help, support and prayers of people who can see the bigger picture and not be put off by the adverse media coverage.

Now is the time for us to rise up and further engage the poor in East Timor not walk off in disgust. One could liken such a situation to a doctor who refuses to treat a patient because they look sick! Yes the situation in East Timor looked bad, but the people there still desperately need our help.

In my life I am glad about many things. I am glad that I have a wonderful wife and family who love me, and I am glad that I can have great staff who are dedicated to the work that we are doing through ARMS. I am also glad that in those times when I find my self in great need that people don't give up on me because of the way things look.

As people committed to prayer and as donors who want to make a difference in the lives of others it is critical that determine to double our efforts to make sure that the people of East Timor live in a secure nation with adequate healthcare, education, housing, employment and like us have the opportunity to raise their family in peace.



Clinic in a river bed.

Hera Project Back On Track

After delays caused by the civil unrest in East Timor the Hera Preschool project is back on track. A builder has travelled to Hera to survey the building and has returned to Australia with estimates of what needs to be done and the costs involved.

We are hoping to have the tiling, ceiling, and bagging of the walls completed by the end of the year so that the building can commence being used in early 2007.

We are hopeful that work on the second building will commence in 2007. Meanwhile we are continuing to fund raise for the project. Tax deductible donations towards this project can be made through the ARMS National Office.



Comings and Goings @ The National Office



It is with much joy that we welcome Nik and Sarah Matthews to the ARMS National Office. Nik and Sarah hail from the UK and have 2 sons Joe and Daniel.

In 1996, my wife Sarah and I travelled to South Africa to do our DTS with Mercy Ships. We had a great time and it laid the foundation for the next ten years of missions. We met in Preston, England whilst at Business School and were married in '95. After completing our DTS we worked in Bangkok for two years in the YWAM Mercy Ministries International office, before returning to Mercy Ships where we stayed for the next six years: two with the Anastasis in Africa and four years in England with the Africa Mercy project (converting a train ferry into a hospital ship). It was during this time that Sarah gave birth to two wonderful sons – Daniel (now aged 4) and Joseph (now aged two), and I was able to continue with studies: completing a professional course with the Chartered Management Institute and commencing a Masters Degree in Business Administration. We've now been in Australia - and working with ARMS - for 4 weeks and are settling in well. My main areas of focus will be to develop funding and to assist the projects that ARMS are involved in. We're glad to be here, glad to be working with ARMS and look forward to this exciting new season in our lives!



Another new member to our team is Helen Lowe who has joined us for 3 months before she returns to the UK. Helen did her DTS here in Melbourne and has kindly come to help us with upgrading our Child sponsorship program.

Hello Everyone! My name is Helen Lowe, I'm from Yorkshire in England and I'm 23 years old. I have been in Australia since February 2006, doing a Discipleship Training School with Youth with a Mission. I had the privilege of visiting some ARMS ministries in Thailand during my course, including Home of the Open Heart and the Karen ministry in MaeSot. So when I arrived back in Australia I was glad to take the opportunity to join the ARMS team here in Melbourne for 3 months before returning to the UK. My role here is primarily management of the Child Sponsorship Program, but also I hope to take this chance to learn more about all the ministries of ARMS. This picture is of me when I was in Thailand - making friends with some of the local wildlife!



It is with much sadness that we announce that after three years in the ARMS National Office Eliza Bacon is leaving us to go on to do other things.

Eliza has been an essential part of our team and has provided us with many light hearted moments over the three years she has been with us. Eliza worked in administration, helped to staff the Mercy Ministry DTS, has travelled to East Timor, Thailand and Burma and has trained with RescueNet. She has excelled in her duties and has set a high standard for those who follow in her stead.

In the immediate future Eliza will go to Latvia where she will be involved in running a DTS, she will return to Australia mid 2007. We wish Eliza the best and hope that one day her journey will lead her back to being a part of the team here at ARMS

jess hammond
there is hope



- COMING SOON -

Jess Hammond: 'There is Hope' album and National Tour

From a drug rehabilitation centre in Siberia, to YWAM mission work in Nepal, China and Kings Cross... Jess Hammond has shared her songs - full of passion and personal testimony - as she ministers from her life's experiences and her deep love for God. Now, with her new album Jess and husband Daniel Hammond are spending three months visiting churches, Bible colleges and schools across Australia.

ARMS is excited to be an official sponsor of this tour, and with Jess and Daniel the message of ARMS is going out to thousands of people throughout the country.

We would encourage you to visit www.smallhouserrecords.com.au to listen to samples from 'There is Hope', and find out more about the Jess Hammond and the Christian independent record label that supports her

"Jess Hammond is a very gifted singer/songwriter, with the ability to weave lyric and melody together in a way that demands your attention, and leaves you wanting more. She sings with passion and integrity? and I look forward to hearing more of her in the future."

[Nathan Tasker, Singer/Songwriter,
Winner of the Pacific Song-writing
Competition 2005]

Asia's Daughters

By Diana Hallas

I have just recently returned from over a month in Asia visiting five different nations and finding it hard to step back onto the plane as each week ended. The hardships endured by many as a result of extreme poverty are heartbreaking and without help in basic areas such as clean water, health care, literacy projects and education the future for millions is grim. I was encouraged to see many wonderful Christian N.G.O's implementing projects in Cambodia, but many more are needed.

As I came away, once again I had been confronted with the enormous injustices that

women are so often faced with, not just in Asia, but to one degree or another, around the world. Our ideas have consequences and we live them out. Often we as men and women are quite unaware of belief systems that are deeply ingrained into our cultures or family systems – they are values that we accept as normal and operate our relationships out of them. I have been told there is a Buddhist saying, "She was born a woman because she committed 1,000 sins in her former life". Whilst in Cambodia I was told there is a saying, "If you throw a piece of gold into the dirt it can be cleaned again, but, if you throw a white cloth into the dirt it becomes soiled and can never be made clean again". I was told the white cloth referred to a woman and her virginity. In some nations a cow can hold more

"She was born a woman because she committed 1,000 sins in her former life".

value than a woman and in Papua New Guinea where I once lived, some women breast fed baby piglets as their value was so high.

Cambodia is one of the poorest nations on earth, the annual average income being just under U.S.\$300. Just over 30 years ago the Pol Pot regime raped the land and set up death camps where unspeakable atrocities were committed on men and women. Previous to this time it had been called 'the rice bowl of Asia'

a land filled with abundance! Today poverty is no stranger to the people of the land. Sadly too, Cambodia is known as being a sending

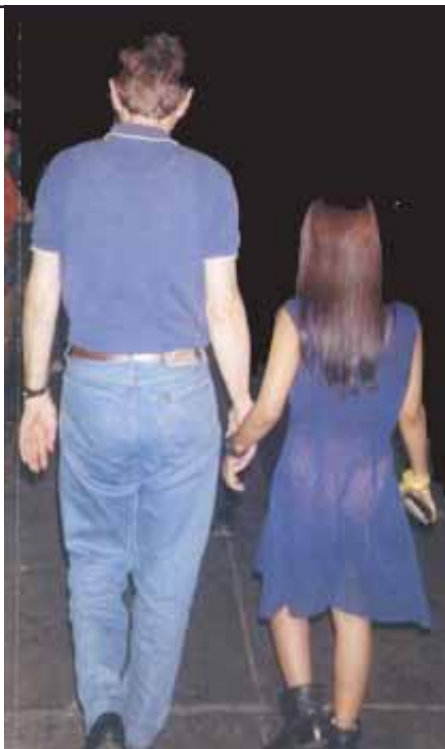
and receiving nation for the trafficking of women and girls. As I mentioned previously, when there is an underlying belief system that women are inferior to men, that they are indeed second class citizens, then they pay a heavy price as human beings. Young girls and teenagers are being sold, many times by their own families, their mothers and fathers, or perhaps if their parents have died, an uncle or aunt will sell them into prostitution. As I spoke with one of the researchers at one of the N.G.O.'s in Phnom Penh she shared that there are many Vietnamese living in Cambodia and the Vietnamese women and girls are highly sought after as their skin is fairer and they are known to be 'more adventurous'. Her research found that sometimes a girl at birth will be chosen by her family to 'be the one' who will be 'groomed' and sold as a young girl to bring money to the family – she is sometimes known as 'the honour child'.

One of the organisations in Phnom Penh specifically focuses on rescuing under aged girls who have been sold into prostitution. They bring them to one of the many shelters where they will be loved and cared for, sent to school and be given a chance of living a life with dignity. However, they said that because of this honour belief, that sometimes these girls find it hard to accept being rescued, because they will bring shame to their families, and this is almost an unbearable burden for many. Sometimes the child or



teenager will be sold because the family is poor, but other times it sadly can be the longing for more material things such as new clothes or some item. Sometimes they are sold for a number of years, only to find out when they are thinking their time is up, that mum or dad or aunty have come and taken 'another loan' and they must stay longer. Virgins are very valuable and a high price can be fetched for them. Sadly too incest is rampant and apparently a way of life for many men – how sad when you think of the story of the white cloth. What hope does a daughter have when she may not be safe in her own home. One day as I was driving I passed a very basic brothel that I had seen on a number of occasions. However, on this particular day I noticed a young girl, possibly about 8 years of age inside. She was all made up with rouge and lipstick and had very provocative clothing on her. Fortunately I was able to contact the people who could rescue her. A couple of weeks later I heard via email that the police came and physically destroyed the brothel.

When we look at nations like China and India we could ask the question: "Where have Asia's daughters gone?" Several years ago statistics showed that there was over 100 million females missing in the world's demographic count. China's 'one child policy' pressures many families to choose a baby boy over a baby girl. Boys are preferred for many reasons – worship rituals are performed by sons and grandsons. In both China and India boys are viewed as pension schemes, supporting their parents in old age. If boys are an asset, then girls are a liability. In having a son you gain wealth as his bride comes with a dowry. Having a daughter you lose wealth as she leaves your family together with the expected dowry required in marriage by the culture. In India, the birth of a girl eventually entails a dowry, an increasingly expensive proposition. Where the grandmothers of today recall going to their husbands homes with a pot or two and a few rupees, a modern dowry can cost hundreds of thousands of rupees. (Often many years of saving). Girls are viewed as both an economic drain and a hassle. The protection of their virginity – central to the family honour – creates further stress for the parents. Boy preference is so ingrained in the Indian family system that many women don't feel they have done their wifely duty until they produce a



son. There are more than 40 million females missing in India's gender count. Today as in China where a similar amount of females are missing, the ultra sound has become a dangerous machine for the unborn girl. Some statistics say that in Bombay out of every 1,000 abortions, 999 are baby girls. An Australian friend of mine who has lived in India for over 15 years shared recently that one of the male Christian workers that has worked with her organisation for many years was deeply distressed that his wife had given birth to a girl. He said, "I know this is wrong but I can't help feeling this way". Apparently when he would visit his relatives they would look sad and say, "We are so sorry for you that you did not get a boy!" These are belief systems that have been prevalent for thousands of years. They are beliefs shared by BOTH MEN AND WOMEN about each other. We have each bought into the lie that men are more and women are less and we have generation after generation perpetuated that lie - that men have the power and women are to serve them unquestionably. Another head of a Christian organisation in Phnom Penh who works with women, shared that some husbands had two or three wives but then, would also bring home prostitutes and have sex in front of them. If the wives complain they tell them they should be grateful for him being so considerate towards them by not pressuring them constantly for sex! While I was in Bangladesh recently, I noticed an article in the newspaper saying that because of the shortage

of women in India that some poorer husbands were 'renting out their wives' for a month or so to richer Indian men. China too is facing the consequences of male preference with the lack of women available for marriage partners – statistics show approximately 826,000 girls for every 100,000 boys and the trend is growing. A 2002 article in the *International Security Magazine* estimated that by 2020 there will be up to 33 million 'bare branches', as these young unmarried men are known. Some demographers have put it at 40 million. The unwanted girl has a long history in Asia - foeticide is merely the first assault on Indian women, and cannot be seen as separate from the whole life cycle of anti-girl practices: girl-child neglect, early marriage, the dowry system, domestic violence and honour killings. "Being a girl," says activist Sabu George, "is considered a congenital defect".

Interestingly enough, the ancient Greeks also believed that women were deformed men. Aristotle believed that normally male insemination produced another male in the image of his father. But sometimes the male form was 'subverted' by the female 'matter' and produced a defective human specimen - a female. He considered the female was inferior in every way: weaker in body, less capable of reason and morally less capable of will and self-control. So, we see that today, this belief lives on. Even our western cultures have not escaped these lies about who we are as men and women and Greek philosophy has permeated our framework of thinking.

However, in the beginning, in God's great dream for His Creation, this was not so. Male and female together, equally are the image of God as we read in Geneses. Together we were designed to rule and take dominion of this amazing earth that God has placed in our care. The Apostle Paul confirmed this when he spoke out in a time of great distinctions and declared in Galatians 3.28: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Sometimes we also in the church have allowed gender distinctions and many women have felt to be second class citizens. We must be sure that the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we preach is 'Good News' to women and that it is 'Good News' to men for together we ARE the IMAGE OF GOD.

A LETTER FROM CORINNA



Corinna at Mae-la Camp.

I would like to share with you a letter I have recently received from Corinna. Corinna is a refugee lady who runs a preschool in the Mae-la camp in Thailand. This letter is her activity report for the past 12 month period. English is not Corinna's first language but I have reproduced this letter with as few corrections as possible so the sentiment of her communication is not lost..

Although the letter is addressed to me it really is addressed to all our loyal donors and supporters who have faithfully supported the work that Pehlu and Corinna have been doing over many years.

Please read it as a letter of thanks and encouragement from Corinna to you for all your prayers and support. I have made explanatory notes throughout the letter.

Dear David,

Thank you very much for your support. The children in Mae-la camp need your help to become better educated and to have a better chance at life. You are one true friend and we shall never forget your kindness.

I would like to write to you about my performance and our school. In the 2005 – 2006 school year there were 60 children in our preschool, 25 boys and 35 girls. These children were aged from 2 – 5 years old. We had three teachers, including me. Each week some parents of the children come to help us in the preschool.

Some of the things we teach in the preschool curriculum are; fun songs, the Karen and English alphabets, parts of the body, animals, vegetables, fruits, family tree, colours, shapes, health, how to clean our parts of the body and games.

Every month we celebrate the birthdays of the children who were born in that month. On Friday's I let them watch one of the DVDs that ARMS has sent us



Refugee Children

Several years ago ARMS bought the preschool a generator, TV and DVD / video player, since that time ARMS has been supplying educational videos and DVD to the preschool and orphanage for a number of years.

Every morning we have devotions with the children. During this time we teach the children from the Bible, we sing songs and read Bible stories. After our learning time we ask them to do activities according to the lessons they have learnt.

On the 19th of September we did "clean up the world" activities. On December 20 we went to the KWO Office and participated in "Disable Day" activities. Our children performed songs and dances there. There is a competition of all the Nursery Schools in Mae-la camp. On 22nd of December 2005, we took part in that competition and won two first prizes and one third prize.



Preschool Kids

(ARMS is seeking ways of serving more preschools in Mae-la to help raise the standard of teaching in all Early Childhood settings within the camp.)

Of the 22 nursery schools in Mae-la camp our school is ranked first for many reasons. All of the teachers in our school attended AMI, TOPS and SVA seminars. Trainers were trained by TOPS in Mae-Sot. Last April. I had a chance to attend this training. On my return to the camp I was surprised to be asked to teach our nursery school's teaching methods to the other preschools. I had to train both the teachers and preschool assistants for the whole of the Mae-la camp.

(For a refugee to attend a seminar in Mae-Sot is a very special event – they have to be issued with special passes to leave the camp.)

Our school building was in need of repair. Therefore during the summer break the teachers not only attended training seminars but also repaired the building. We were very busy. It is now the time to accept students for the 2006 – 2007 learning year and to manage the syllabus again.



Mae-la Buildings (note the leaf rooves)

(Every two years the leaves on the roof of the building need to be replaced otherwise the building is not waterproof during the wet season. Corinna's preschool building has a very large roof area that needs many thousands of leaves.)

David, I want to ask for your help in two ways. Firstly, we need graduation gowns for the students when we give them their certificates at the end of the course. We do not have gowns for our school so we have to borrow from another nursery school that is run by the Bible school. It will mean such a lot to the students and their families if we have gowns of our own. We will need 30 gowns that will cost 500 baht each (the total cost will be 15,000 Baht -about \$600)

(Preschool graduation is practiced in many cultures and is seen as a significant event as the child is now ready to go to school. In many cultures graduation ceremonies take place and village dignitaries are asked to attend.)

The second thing we need is a camera. The camera your friend bought us seven years ago has broken and we can no longer use it to take photos for our records and photos to send you. Therefore I would like to appeal to you to buy us a camera.

(We would like to buy a camera for Corinna we expect that one that will serve her best will cost about \$200.)

I am happy and well and I pray for you to be the same. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Please give my best regards to the staff of ARMS. I wish you all the best for the future and may God bless you always.

Yours Sincerley

Corinna.

Corinna is doing an excellent job running this preschool. With the limited resources that she has Corinna has established a staff training program, provides counselling for traumatised mothers and has set the bench mark for Preschools in the camp.

Despite coming out of a war zone the children in her care receive a good quality preschool program that is the envy of the camp.

We want to thank you for your prayers and support for our Mae-la projects. Please continue to pray for Corinna and her staff.



Corinna and child

ARMS ADMIN FEE **POLICY CHANGE**

For the past 8 years ARMS has not charged any admin fees. All donations received have been passed on to the project concerned and ARMS has fundraised separately in order to cover its administration costs.

However, over the past 12 months we have reached a critical point in our growth that has made it more difficult to fundraise for our operational costs, yet due to circumstances beyond our control our these costs are substantially increasing.

In response to this situation the ARMS Board has instituted a 5% basic administration fee on all donations, grants, etc fee that will come into operation from August 1, 2006. This fee will also apply to child sponsorships but will only be introduced only as each sponsorship is renewed.

ARMS regrets having to take this action but sees no other way in which it can meet its financial obligations. This 5% fee is well below the industry standard that usually falls within the range of 10%-30% of donation income.

If you have any questions about the ARMS administration fee then please contact the ARMS National Office.

Plan to make a real difference.

@ the 2007
Mercy Ministry DTS

February 4 - August 10
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more info?

www.arms.org.au

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 Then email us at sponsorships@arms.org.au
sponsor a child

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 Support the work of ARMS through the Lifepoint Project. Profits made through the sale of goods and services sold on the Lifepoint web site will directly benefit ARMS.
 Lifepoint offer a range of competitive deals on everyday products and services such as insurance, telephone and mortgage refinancing. Profits made from these products will help ARMS to serve the poor and the needy.

Focus On Mercy
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 A Ministry Of Youth With
 A Mission Australia

Quotable Quote

"It's a job that's never started that takes the longest to finish." J. R. R. Tolkien

Tax Deductible International Projects
 1. Burmese IDP Project
 2. Hekan Building Project
 3. Home Of The Open Heart
 4. Karen Preschool Project
 5. Reverse The Curse Of Landmines Project

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:

- National Office Support
- Kid's Ark Clinic
- Karen Preschools
- Hekan Houses
- Child Sponsorship
- Kid's Ark Building
- Kids Ark Clinic
- Other.....

Donations to all of ARMS Australian Projects are Tax Deductible

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

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Expiry date/..... Signature

* Credit card bank fee of 2% applies to all credit card donations.