



Is Timor-Leste the new NIDA?

If you want to be an actor don't move to LA, come to Timor-Leste!

There's a thriving theatre scene here as NGOs look at innovative ways to get their message out to the people.

For a nation lumped with rising unemployment, poverty and potentially Australia's refugee problem, making the choice to be an actor is a smart and viable option. But without a NIDA or even a high school drama curriculum, many youth never get the opportunity to express themselves in creative ways.

With the support of Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA, local NGO Knuu Buka Hatene (KBH) is running a twelve month creative arts training program for young,

unemployed people living in Dili. Called the Expressional Arts Project, it begins with a six month introduction to theatre.

The facilitator of the project, Lena, is very excited about the program and being able to share her skills with her students.

Like many Timorese, Lena has an innate capacity for telling stories and a natural acting ability. She began acting in 2005 and some of her credits include a role in the film *Balibo*, being the face of a national family planning campaign, and touring countless performances about domestic violence, malaria, peace building, nutrition and human trafficking to remote areas of Timor-Leste.

For Lena, another career path is unimaginable, "I would never want



Lena demonstrates a vocal exercise

to work in an office because as an actor, I can be free".

Only weeks into the program, the KBH training centre is already abuzz as new, nervous faces wait on the outdoor benches, ready for classes to start. "When we start the warm-up games," Lena says, "they are very happy. They say to me that they find the activities difficult but they like doing them because it gives them lots of energy compared to when they are just sitting around, being lazy in their homes".

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's website (2009), the unemployment rate in Dili is estimated at 40% among those aged 15 to 29.

As a result, youth everywhere are signing up to lots of different extracurricular courses, anything that will give them an edge for the few jobs on offer.

But it's not just potential employment that brings students to KBH, many students are drawn to theatre because they like funny slap-stick style performances. One



A large audience gathers to watch a performance

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improvisation that had all the participants laughing was about a deaf person trying to explain his deafness to a doctor.

It's basic humour but it works, Lena explains "It's important to start performances with something funny because then the audience will come". Once they have the audience's attention, the actors are then able to get to the tougher topics.

So why do Timorese like comedy so much? Well, that's also a pretty simple answer, "Because lots of people like laughing!" Lena says.



Warm up activity for the group

In Timor-Leste where access to entertainment or communication mediums such as TV or radio is limited - theatre can be an effective in educating people in ways that is both interesting and informative. Theatre is also an interactive and creative form of communication which helps when trying to get convey issues of importance.

► ABOUT KBH

Knua Buka Hatene is an Independent Vocational Training and Support Centre. It was formally established on 24 October 2001 by three local NGOs, Grupo Feto Foin Sae Timor Lorosa'e (GFFTL), Labour Advocacy Institute of East Timor (LAIFET), and Sa'he Institute for Liberation (SIL), with support from APHEDA and OXFAM Hong Kong. The Expressional Arts Project has been and important part of Knua Buka Hatene's commitment to developing participatory popular education and community culture in Timor-Leste.

Educating Workers

An estimated 8 million Filipinos, about 10% of the population, work abroad as temporary contract laborers throughout the Middle East, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and some even work on 457 visas in Australia.

Although the spread of HIV has been slow in the Philippines compared to many other countries in South East Asia, these overseas workers have long been considered the most vulnerable group through which the HIV virus could be spread.

Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA, with generous support from a private foundation, the Pasasalamat Fund, has been assisting the Positive Action Foundation of the Philippines Incorporated (PAFPI) for 10 years. PAFPI deliver one-hour sessions on HIV and STI education for approximately 20,000 of these overseas workers each year before they depart for their work abroad.

PAFPI also assist people living with HIV with a drop-in centre in Manila, where counseling and support is provided. They also teach the families of HIV positive people how to care for them should they fall ill, as there is little scope in the Philippine hospital system to care for HIV positive people.

Over the past decade, over 200,000 workers have been educated about HIV and what steps people must take to avoid the virus, and hundreds of people living with HIV have received support, assistance and counseling to help them cope with their illness. Thanks to an extremely dedicated and committed staff of mainly volunteers, PAFPI continues to deliver information to those who need it and hope to those who had lost it.



PAFPI staff doing an information session on HIV/AIDS

Millennium Development Goals Part III – Universal Primary Education

At the turn of 2000, world leaders met at the United Nations and agreed that all nations would work together to halve global poverty in the next 15 years. The UN set eight goals (the Millennium Development Goals - MDGs) with 20 targets to be achieved by 2015.

As of now, we have only 5 years left to reach the 2015 targets, so it is an appropriate time to take stock of progress. While not all the MDGs will be met by all countries, and some countries will fail miserably, there have been some significant and worthwhile advances.

This article will look at the second MDG - the promise to achieve universal primary education for all.

ACHIEVEMENTS

In 1990, there were 120 million children around the world not attending primary school. By the year 2000, it had dropped to 96 million and today, that number has dropped further to 74 million - 34 million boys and 41 million girls. This is a vast improvement, but still far too many.

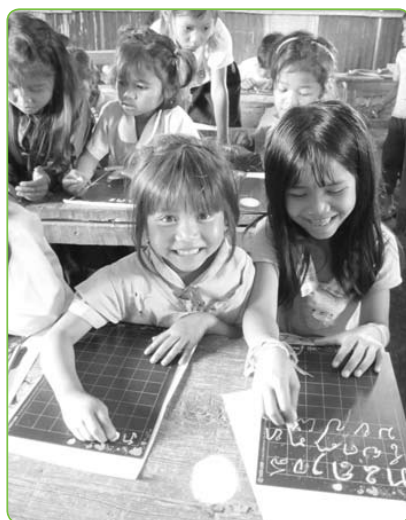
However, there is both a gender and class dimension to those not receiving primary education. For example, for the richest 10% of the population in India the gap between boys and girls in access to education is just 2%. For the poorest, the gap is 24%.

Generally the ones who miss out on education are those children in remote rural areas, indigenous, ethnic and linguistic minorities, children with disabilities, and those affected by armed conflict.

Moreover, the numbers of children to be educated is changing over the years. In East Asia, the number of primary school aged children will drop from 117 million in 2000 to 88 million in 2015, while in sub-Saharan Africa, the numbers will rise from 111 million in 2000 to 152 million in 2015. Primary education for all is achievable, but at current rates, will not

be realised until 2020 or 2025.

We also need to consider the importance of secondary and vocational schooling, especially for girls. The education of girls and women is absolutely essential for a nation's development as it has significant influence on other development indicators such as population growth rates, infant mortality rates and maternal mortality ratios.



Students in Laos

LOOKING FORWARD

As well as focusing on the 8 MDGs, we should focus on the underlying conditions that would realise these goals. We know, for example, that gender equity, eliminating corruption, war and civil conflict (which brings in issues of the arms trading and trafficking), strengthening the International Court of Justice and fair trade all play significant roles in overcoming global poverty. Another important factor, and one which relates to equal access to education, is the introduction of a progressive and enforceable taxation system in each country, where the richest pay more tax.

Such a progressive taxation system would give governments the resources to build schools that are sufficient in number and accessible, to properly train the teachers, to pay the teachers a sufficient wage that they remain in school teaching and not look for alternative income sources, and to resource the schools with textbooks,

etc, so that the children have a better chance of learning.

To fully achieve the MDG of universal primary education, we do not need to wait for some great technological breakthrough, all we need is political leaders who value education, and the important role it plays in overcoming poverty and inequality, and who are prepared to make it a spending priority of their governments.

One of a number of projects where Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA directly contributes to meeting this MDG is our Teacher2Teacher project in remote, rural southern Laos. New teachers graduating from the Pakse Teachers College each receive a teaching kit, and are also assisted with inservice training. We have already received a lot of interest and support for this project but need much more help from you all so that we can continue to assist the teachers in Laos.

Visit www.apheda.org.au for information on our Teacher2Teacher campaign.

The Millennium Development Goals are:-

-  1 Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty
-  2 Achieve universal primary education
-  3 Promote gender equality and empower women
-  4 Reduce child mortality
-  5 Improve maternal health
-  6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
-  7 Ensure environmental sustainability
-  8 Develop a global partnership for development

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PAKISTAN FLOODS APPEAL - URGENT

The recent floods in Pakistan have created unprecedented devastation with more than 1600 dead. 14 million have lost their homes and a further 6 million have lost crops, livestock or possessions. We have been running an appeal to assist our partner in Pakistan, the Labor Education Foundation (LEF - www.lef.org.pk), who are working with the Pakistan National Trade Union Federation, the Labour Party of Pakistan, the Women Workers Help Line and the Pakistan Progressive Youth Front to provide essential water, clothing and medicines for a refugee camp established in Lahore.

Updates of LEF's work will be posted on www.apheda.org.au.

If you would like to donate please call the APHEDA office on 1800 888 674.

ENSURING QUALITY IN OUR HIV PROGRAMS

In late August, our staff and partners from eight countries gathered to evaluate the last 18 years of APHEDA's work in HIV prevention and care.

The three day workshop was held in Lao PDR and was funded by the AusAID ANCP program. Bringing together 10 partner organisations to review all programs was something that APHEDA has been working towards for the past year. It was especially timely because several countries are about to launch a wider range of HIV programs.

APHEDA Timor-Leste and Solomon Islands are keen to emulate APHEDA Cambodia's program which has led the way in integrating HIV prevention into vocational training programs.

By having these evaluations, we can ensure we are at the cutting edge of HIV prevention and care and that our programs have maximum impact.

SYDNEY AND CANBERRA ANNUAL DINNERS

Plans are well underway for the Canberra and Sydney Annual Fund-raising Dinners.

Canberra's dinner, being hosted by a dedicated team of volunteers will be held on the 22nd of September at the Canberra Institute of Technology.

Sydney's dinner will be on the 29th of September at the Petersham RSL Club. You can purchase tickets by contacting us on 1800 888 674.

A big thank you to our dinner sponsors **AustralianSuper** and **Members Equity Bank**.

Details of the Melbourne annual event will be sent to members shortly.

Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA is the overseas humanitarian aid arm of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.

We assist projects in South East Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East and southern Africa, working through partners to deliver training in vocational skills, health and workers' rights.

If you'd like to get active for workers' rights in developing countries, contact us on 1800 888 674 or office@apheda.org.au and find out about activist networks in your state.

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