

relations with australia

Australia has a long association with East Timor, which goes back prior to the military and aid assistance provided to achieve Independence in 1999. The friendship was forged in the darkest days of the Second World War, when Timorese villagers actively aided Australian soldiers. After the Australians had been evacuated and Japan assumed control of the island, 40,000 Timorese paid the price for this support with their lives.

why should we help and how?

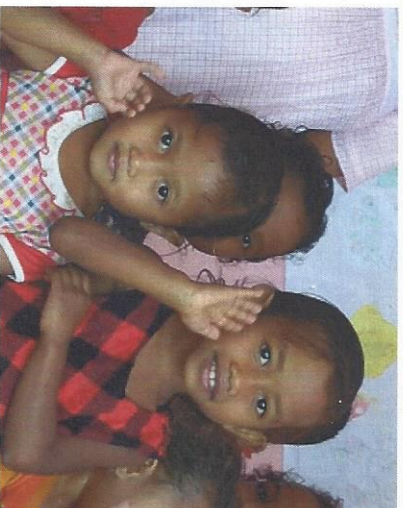
Following the evacuation of our soldiers in 1942 the Australian Government dropped thousands of pamphlets declaring 'Your friends will never forget you'. Let us keep that old promise and become involved. Show your friendship and gratitude by joining the Friends of Baguia and giving your time and/or your financial support.

You will not only assist in building a new nation, you will also receive our newsletter and have the opportunity to participate in many fun events.



facts about timor leste

- Timor Leste is our nearest neighbour and has a population of 1.1 million.
- It is the poorest country in the Asia Pacific region, with 40% of Timorese living below the poverty line.
- 90% of people rely solely on subsistence farming for survival.
- Most have limited access to clean water and health services. Many have poor sanitation.
- Transport is very limited and roads are in poor condition or non-existent.
- Only 58% of adults over 15 years are literate.
- Lack of education and jobs are two of the biggest problems facing Timor Leste.



Kindergarten



— City of —
STONNINGTON



FRIENDS OF BAGUIA
Connecting you with
the people of East Timor
Baguia

A community group

formed to foster friendship support and cross-cultural exchange at a grassroots level with the people of **Baguia**.
The Friendship

Agreement with the Sub-district of Baguia in **Timor Leste** (East Timor) was endorsed by a City of Stonnington Council resolution in September 2004.

where is baguia?

Baguia is a sub-district composed of 10 small villages in a remote mountainous area of East Timor. Situated in the Baucau district, Baguia is 70 kms from the town of Baucau, but it is still a laborious four hour journey by the daily truck due to badly broken roads.

life in baguia

The population of Baguia sub-district is 13,500 and covers an area of 207 sq kms. Surrounding Baguia town are nine main villages, but the rough dirt roads are often impassable due to heavy rain. Walking is the usual mode of transport and many of the villages higher up the mountain have no road access at all.

Baguia town and villages on the main road now have electricity, but every day there are long outages. Most of the surrounding villages do not yet have electricity.



Wakala Primary:

Bamboo school and desks, with dirt floor

a tumultuous history

The Republic of Timor Leste rose out of the ashes of a violent past after 450 years (1515–1974) of Portuguese colonisation, interspersed with Japanese occupation, and 24 years of Indonesian domination (1975–1999). The Democratic Republic of Timor Leste finally gained its independence after a violent and bloody upheaval following the referendum of 1999.

The cost was high – one third of the population perished in the years following the Indonesian invasion. 78% of the population experienced the loss of at least one relative. 90% of the infrastructure (schools, libraries and other public buildings) and nearly all public records were deliberately destroyed during the final days of the Indonesian occupation.

our projects in baguia

We support the following key projects, (and other similar projects) which were suggested by the people of Baguia. We work closely with a Timorese committee in Baguia that comprises of local government and community representatives to identify priorities. Education is our prime focus, as the Timorese consider this of vital importance to enable their children to achieve a better life, as they establish their new nation.

1. High School Scholarships. The eight schools in Baguia district have a combined total of over of 900 students. Over 100 scholarships are provided each year to cover fees, books and uniforms up to \$70 per year for each student.

2. University Scholarships are provided to students from Baguia to study in Timor Leste or Indonesia. Courses are normally 4 or 5 years and currently there are 6 scholarships of \$500 per year.

3. Desks and equipment for remote mountain Primary schools. In some mountain schoolrooms children sit on the dirt floor or on shaky bamboo poles. We support local carpenters to build desks and blackboards.

4. Tanks to mountain villages. Five tanks have been provided to primary schools in mountain villages to give children clean drinking water and allow mothers to cook the government provided rice based lunch at these schools. The cost of transport and concrete bases means that each installed tank costs over \$1,500.

5. Kindergartens. Two kindergartens have been established in Baguia district at the request of the community. This provides employment for 7 staff and kids can attend for free. In homes where parents are often illiterate, this early childhood development enables an easy transition into school.

6. Computer Training. Computer classes are extremely popular with young people despite the lack of internet facilities in Baguia. Most of our computer trainers have themselves been students of the program and as computer skills are now in high demand, some trainers have gone on to get full-time jobs. It also provides better study and possible job opportunities for young people.

7. English language classes. The official languages in Timor are Portuguese and Tetun but there is a strong demand for English, which is seen as an international language to provide future opportunities. Three local teachers are employed to run free English classes. **Cost \$120 per month.**

More information for FRIENDS of BAGUIA

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DONATIONS: make cheques payable to
City of Stonnington – Friends of Baguia.

www.baguia.org.au