117 DAYS IN EAST TIMOR

Experiences in the wake of the catastrophe, covering the period October 1999 to February 2000.

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Written in December 2012 from my diaries.
East Timor - the former Portuguese colony invaded by Indonesia in December 1975

Road map of Timor Leste. The main centres, outside Dili, visited during the author's emergency work in 1999 were - in chronological order - Aileu, Maubisse, Same, plus side trips to Ermera. Then Manatuto, Viqueque, Aliambata, and via Baucau, Venilale, Ossu Viqueque and Aliambata. Last main trip home was via Lilomar to Los Palos and back via Bauacu. Also unnecessary trips West to Liquica, Maubara, and Loess.
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To NT Library

Rob Wesley-Smith
Introduction

East Timor was invaded by Indonesia in 1975. At first, in an exploratory way. It led to the deaths of 5 western journalists employed by Melbourne TV companies, in Balibo, close to the border of West and East Timor.

Indonesia encountered strong resistance to their incursions. They also believed Australia would protest the murder of their citizens. This didn't happen. In effect, Australia's silence gave Suharto the green light for a full scale invasion. This happened on 7th December, 1975.

Australia and Portugal and the USA thought an Indonesian takeover, if done peacefully, would be in the best long term interest of the region.

Yes, like for West Papua I suppose, where local people are still being murdered by Indonesian armed forces.

Because Timor is just some 600 kilometres north west of Darwin, we Darwinites had taken a special interest in the developments. We welcomed some Timorese refugees in 1975 from their own brief civil war.

I had accumulated some hard experience as an anti-war (Vietnam) activist, and was shaped to some extent by working with our own indigenous people in the Northern Territory.

The title of this little memoir is of course a dig at Tim Fischer's book 'Seven Days in East Timor'. He was in East Timor for the 30th August 1999 election that gave East Timor its Independence from Indonesian military rule.

He was protected during his visit by the Australian Special Air Service Regiment (SAS), for sure.

Tim had been Australia's Deputy Prime Minister during the Howard government rule, in the 1990's.

That government actively supported the illegal Indonesian occupation of East Timor, no doubt to avoid difficulties arising in the fragile relationship between Australia from Indonesia. Never mind any human rights issues, or international legalities!
Tim had visited Indonesia in the late 1990s, and, in the presence of Suharto, famously said: 

"When I think about the man who will be remembered as the most famous statesman of the latter part of the twentieth century, I think I am in his presence now". Oh come on!! What a grovelling, subservient thought.

Don’t worry, those from the Howard era, including Gareth Evans, former Labor Attorney General and Foreign Minister, have all avoided accountability for their disastrous policies on East Timor. Gareth got a gig as head of the International Crisis Group, and is now Chancellor of Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra.

[Image: Flashback. Gareth Evans, as foreign minister of Australia, signing the doomed Timor Gap oil treaty with his Indonesian counterpart, Ali Alatas, in an aeroplane over the Timor Sea, December 11, 1989.]

Howard himself, somehow, has the Queen's approval. She appointed him one of her '24'. Yet Howard also committed us to another illegal war, in Iraq, for which he deserves to be charged as a war criminal.

Alexander Downer, who some now cynically refer to as Lord Downer of Baghdad, was Australia’s foreign minister for over a decade. He opposed East Timorese rights at every turn. With Howard, he colluded with Indonesia to rob the East Timorese people of some of their entitlements to oil & gas rights in the Timor Sea. He has been shown to be wrong on just about everything to do with East Timor over the years, yet has been appointed a professor of politics at Adelaide University! This one really irked me, because that is my home and family university. I opposed Downer at every turn on Timor and was proved right by history, but haven’t been offered even a compliment by the powers that be, let alone a professorship! Do they want to teach students the truth, or only how to succeed in politics by any means possible?
Anyway, to continue. Jose Ramos Horta, East Timor's peripatetic representative at large, after being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997, came for a few days to Darwin. I was privileged to be asked to organise his public presentation to the public in Darwin.

It was held in the auditorium of Charles Darwin University, that is, the capital of Northern Territory of Australia. On a Saturday afternoon it attracted a full house of well over 300 concerned citizens. I reflected that it was a change from an earlier time I found myself organising a speaking event for Horta. That was only in a small classroom from which we were turfed out! On another occasion in 1995, when approval was given by the University to hold on their campus an international conference on regional and East Timor interests, they withdrew their approval at the very last moment. We had to find another venue at short notice and considerable expense.

The UN took it that Indonesia was still the government and they had the right 'black list'.

So when I introduced him this time, I reflected on Tim Fischer's stupid accolade to the brutal military dictator Suharto, and said: *one thing we DO know, that when we reflect on who is the greatest diplomat in the last quarter of the 20th century, there is no doubt we are in his presence right now.* That drew a huge applause, which was almost deafening.

I mentioned that no Australian government would give him the recognition he deserved, so I pulled out a long Timor sword and, with some panic evident in Horta's eyes, I dubbed him on both shoulders and said: *arise, Sir Horta, and please address us.* To this, more deafening applause!
Do I digress? At some point I showed video clips showing him from 1975. He sat in the audience to watch, and was inspired to reflect on elements of his long career. Not a soul moved for an hour and a half, but I thought maybe we needed to end up, so gave a small cough, and Horta seamlessly moved into: *and now the topic of tonight's talk is ...*, and spoke to that for a further 3 minutes. He finished up with great applause again. Sir Ramos Horta!

Anyway, Fischer was 'team leader' of the Australian government delegation to observe the 30th August 1999 ballot for independence. One of his team was Laurie Brereton who had seemed to be well supplied with accurate information about what was going on in East Timor, and became a fervent advocate for Timor to get a fair go. He went to observe in Maliana, a very dangerous place. Fisher's government had raided several journalists, intel, and ALP persons' homes looking for the source of inside information. Yet Fischer wrote the book 'Seven Days in East Timor'. I don't want to read it, but it did get some attention.

I was working in Darwin at a frenetic pace for Timor, for over 20 hours/day, yet was not allowed to visit Timor at that time. The UN took it that Indonesia was still the government and they had me on a ‘black list’. This was made evidently clear when, having snuck into East Timor in January 1999, I was promptly deported when found.

I was also not allowed by NT police to visit East Timorese refugee in camps in Darwin in September 1999. They said they were acting on advice apparently from the President of Timorese Club!! Bloody hell!

I did get to East Timor on 9th October, 1999, after Interfet had gone in on 20th September. Interfet stands for *International Force for East Timor*. That comprised mainly Australian soldiers sent to East Timor to stop the murder and mayhem that immediately followed the release of the ballot results. The results of the successful ballot were released too early, without proper preparation, as I tried to warn the UN.

Of course I was keen to work in a liberated East Timor. Enda Byrne had interviewed me in Darwin for the job of agriculturalist. I was suggested to the Portuguese NGO Oikos as the agriculturalist by, to my surprise, the Catholic Bishop, Ted Collins.

Founded in Portugal in February 1988, *Oikos – Cooperação e Desenvolvimento* is internationally recognised as a non-profit NGO and development agency.

Enda wanted me to start next day, but I needed several days in Darwin yet. He was nervous because he knew I was a Timor solidarity activist, and had told me to do only agriculture so many times I had to demand to know if he was talking about 8-10-12-14 hours per day, or 24! Because if it was 24, he could stick his job.
East Timor was the focus of my 25 years of activism - and apart from that, I was broke. But I stipulated employment was only 4 days/week so I would have some time for my own purposes. This was reluctantly agreed, but was beside the point really, because apart from health breaks, and the concert (see later), it ended up to be employment full on 7+ days/week.

So this recollection of 117 days starts when I arrived on 9th October 1999, using my diary notes and memories at this stage. It is not claimed to be a complete history, but primarily just about my involvement.

Dear readers - if there are any - please feel free to comment and provide me with your own stories or feedback. If this is not light reading, then at least it might be some sort of historical record of the early days in the East Timor crisis.

If I cut out some of the daily detail, well, it might make it easier to read, but would it lose its historical 'veracity'?

Then again, who cares? I don't quite know what I will do with it, apart from inflicting it on a few - still so far - friends.

My friend Geoff McKee has helped by scanning and inserting my photographs, and generally taking an interest. But special thanks to all those friends who have nagged me to start documenting my Timor experiences before it is too late!
Chapter 1 - first 7 days, October 9-15, 1999.

Day 1 – Saturday. My friend Ces, short for Cesarina, was born in Dili, East Timor, but grew up in Darwin. She became an important peace activist. On Friday, late evening, she flew to Bali, and then on to peace conferences in Bangkok then Korea. I went home to pack.

After the touchdown of my flight to Dili, I was met by Timor Oikos CEO Enda Byrne and Timorese Agriculturalist Deolindo. We went to Timor Aid, the NGO started by my Darwin friends Ceu and Juan Federer. It was then well established in Dili, and very crowded.

We had to find space to sleep in a big room full of sleeping bags and poor ventilation, but plenty mosquitos, and a corner in the house as an office. Oikos was involved with medical services, food supply, and agriculture. It is a Portuguese NGO, but had an Englishman as its Timor CEO. He had worked for 30 years in Africa. I don’t know how that went, or whether he had taken an interest in Timor beforehand.

Day 2. Sunday. I struggled with their computer, and wrote a draft proposal for cooperating with FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation). Met up with Marcos who lobbied for a position with Oikos. He had graduated in Agricultural Science in Jogjakarta, and had met me there in January, and spoke reasonable English.

Enda edited my proposal, and added in stuff about Oikos. We went to the daily UN meeting, where the FAO man Dr Jose Dome, or Joe, promptly edited it back to close to what I had prepared. I dropped my colleagues to their homes. Then I came across journalist

The author struggling to lift a 50kg bag of rice, watched – not helped – by Marcos!
Tom Fawthrop and we drove around, went in close to the Indonesian military camp. I get a surprise and turn tail to get out of the area. "Didn't you see the sign?" he said. Thanks, no I didn't! I also came across eminent Aussie journalists and friends John Martinkus and Ginny Stein. So an interesting day passes.

Day 3, Monday. At a local friend's suggestion, I managed to borrow a truck and we 'liberated' 4 heavy desks from the Bank Indonesia building (which later became the World Bank building). I saw rooms full of documents. I couldn't read Bahasa Indonesia, but could see these would be important forensic records of the Indonesian occupation.

At the FAO meeting regarding seeds, I insisted we need not just corn, but in addition, beans and vegetables. This is for a balanced human diet, and improved nutrition to the soil from the legumes. This was too difficult to organise initially in these crisis times, I was told, and was asked to do a survey with their FAO form! I spent time getting the form translated into Tetun.

Day 4, Tuesday. **First Aileu trip.** Marcos and Deolindo arrive. We went to the UN to find our Doctor Ana, then drove to Aileu. That is the first town on the major road due-south from Dili. We called at priest Fr. Demetrio's house. He had refused to leave his church when the militia came to burn it down, so they left it alone. We accompanied him to a big tree for a meeting with local farmers and liurai.

![Meeting at the big tree, Aileu](image)

It was confirmed there was no corn seed in Aileu. We had resolved not to promise anything we could not deliver. These leaders had had rain, and wanted seed, but we had none. I gave their leader a hefty machete, the main or first implement used for farming.
The group was mainly from Suco Liurai. The priest guided us to a remote village where a man had been shot in his upper leg by militia 32 days beforehand. I'm not sure these people actually knew the UN had arrived. We loaded him into the back of our Nissan 4WD Ute, with lots of his grimacing, and one of his legs 2-3 times the size of the other.

Near Alieu, October 1999. Evacuation of a man shot by Indonesian-controlled militia 32 days earlier.
We also collected a man with legs so severely burned they had fused together. Later, I learned he had set fire to a house and got caught with it falling on him. On the way back we loaded on the priest's flat tyre and wheel, various items, plus two extra people. We took the injured to the Australian Interfet hospital that is today the Arte Moris art centre. We got a cool reception, until the colonel-in-charge arrived. He was a great guy - a Sydney surgeon. He organised our man with the fused leg to stay at the Catholic Dom Bosco, where he would receive daily physiotherapy and emoluments until the legs could be separated. The bullet victim was taken to the French hospital nearby where he was well cared for. We dropped others off, and then 'home', after a successful but tiring day.

Burnt-out houses throughout Dili and the countryside evidenced the terrible orchestrated revenge for voting the wrong way in the August 30, 1999 ballot. Each destroyed house represented the shattered dreams of a family group.
Day 5, Wednesday. I tried to get various young blokes at Timor Aid to help with some things, but Danny declined, saying he was “in transition”. I never did find out from what to where! I think the situation in Timor was overwhelming for many.

I do housekeeping chores, then visit UNAMET (UN Assistance Mission East Timor) that was created to administer the August 30 ballot. It became UNTAET (UN Transitional Administration in East Timor) on 25th October, 1999.

We met at 5.30 pm as usual, I report in on the Aileu situation, and beg for some seeds to go on with. This was the last day of the Bangkok peace conference for Ces.

Day 6, Thursday, October 14. **First Same trip.** Off to the UN for a meeting with CARE, a major aid organisation. They had some corn seed they were not ready to use, but they wouldn't lend any to us. I had arranged to borrow another 4WD Ute from Timor Aid, and was busy loading food bags on to both. Local Same hero Quito arrived asking why has no one come down? We were ready to leave, but this ensured delay, and several extras got on the back, sitting with legs over the tail gate.

We set off for the trip with two doctors, two agriculturalists and two journalists, to 'liberate Same'. INTERFET had not yet visited that important town, due south of Dili. Same is after Aileu, then Maubisse on the top of the ranges, then down towards the south coast.

The Ute was so back-heavy it nearly went over the side at the first big corner. There was a very agitated doctor sitting next to the passenger window. Marcos and I managed to repack the bags forward, even on the passenger floor, and the vehicle ride went better after that.

The Indonesian commander said: “don't worry, we have strong medicine for them.”

The trip was slow, we didn't arrive until 10 in the evening. Checks were made by torchlight flashing to various clandestine contacts in the mountains to agree the way was clear - I was back a bit so didn't see this, but how fantastic! What organisation! We didn't arrive until 10 in the evening. At one stage the Ute in front was going so slow that I got close, jumped out of my vehicle and ran to the driver, insisting he hand over to someone else.

At Same, Quito provides accommodation, and after a great family dinner we hit the sack with the mosquitoes. I could hear Quito playing a copy of the tape he made of Indonesian militia asking the Indonesian military about how to deal with the (Australian) observers of the ballot. The Indonesian commander said: “don't worry”, (at a certain spot) “we have strong medicine for them” - indicating murder was planned. This was an idiom known to be used by those trained at Fort Leavenworth/Benning/Bragg in the USA. The UN sent a helicopter to Same to rescue the team.
Day 7, Friday. All the people in Same – there were still only a few - were organised to come to Quito’s house for a liberation ceremony! He asked the most respectable looking fella to say a few words, but Dr John Cooper said that was not his department. I told Quito that was my area, and it was my trip, so I got the gig. With the entire population - about 50 - lined up beneath the balcony, Quito introduced me. And what could I say? I looked down and around at expectant faces, and shouted "Viva Timor Loro-Sae!", and 50 voices responded "Viva!". We all laughed and enjoyed the moment - the liberation of Same, I modestly claim.

Marcos and I went with locals to see farms, and try to work out what was needed most. Even fish farms had had their fish stolen or eaten. All needed seed, as Indonesian militia had burned or stolen rice harvests, the bastards. Then came a magic moment. Marcos found a cousin, the first family member he knew was still alive. We were led to a small house, someone climbed a coconut tree and threw down nuts. (Coconut trees provided life-giving sustenance for many for much of the bad times). A plate of meat bits was brought out, and he said to me “maybe you don’t want this one” - it was dog, for a special occasion. I joined in – it was a bit gristy but! As the driver, I had to resist more than one small glass of palm wine, though not all did that successfully - Marcos!! Anyway, the doctors had held a field clinic, but few people had returned from the mountains or from wherever they were hiding. See Sonny Inbaraj’s article Appendix 2.

We were keen to get back, but there was a village well on the way to Betano, and Quito wanted to use the vehicle to supply some food. At the village there was a family sitting nearby, tired and resting. They said they had been held by militia in Betano, on the coast. (This was where Australian commandos had been landed and taken off in 1942). In 1999
the militia captors were expecting an Indonesian ship to pick them up. Of course we took the family back to Same. On return to Dili, I went to the UN meeting place, at about 9pm, and saw someone I recognised as senior. I told him I wanted to pass on this information. He was a bit tired and said "well go to Intel". "But where is it?" He said "follow me". It was just to the next street.

He got out of his Range Rover to take me in, paused, and said: "what did you say your name was? I need to know so I can introduce you." I too was getting a little tired, so I stood with hands on hips and said "I didn't say my name, you didn't ask!" He said, nicely: "OK mate, what is your name?" I said Rob Wesley-Smith, and he put his hands to his face and said: "for 30 years you were right and we were wrong." Amazing! I haven't made this public before now, 13 years later. He took me in and said to these Intel dudes gathered in front of Intel tables and wall maps: "listen up, folks, this here is Rob Wesley-Smith!" I tried to shrink, but various talked, and I told my tale of the captured but escaped family. A big Marine fellow spoke to me. I spotted several spellings of Falintil, so I had to explain that that was a proud acronym, so please use it correctly. It is Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste. In English this translates as The Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor.

I have become very good friends with Brigadier Ernie Chamberlain, once the military attaché in Jakarta. Now (1999) he's working with the UN as Humanitarian Field Operations Assistant Director. Later (2012) a proven meticulous historian. Later I asked the military liaison officer for the day at one of the daily UN meetings how their visit to Betano went. He loudly said that this was classified information. He was not moved by me responding "hang on, it was me who provided the initial information!"

One of the journalists who came with us, Sonny Inbaraj, reported that, the next day, Interfet sent down 2 Blackhawk helicopters and collected 2 loads of militia. Refer his appended article.

Friday was a long and exciting day. That was the end of my first "7 days in East Timor"
Chapter 2 – second 7 days, October 16-22.

Saturday, Day 8. October 16th is the anniversary of the execution of five western journalists at Balibo. We try to set up office at Timor Aid, next to their accommodation. The house was on the corner, now the US ambassador's house I believe. Enda wanted a meeting with Timorese staff, but he cannot be available until 2 in the afternoon. Victor, mechanic at Timor Aid, fixes the right-front wheel of the Nissan, and bleeds the brakes. I install the 'liberated' desk, and shelves. There was a party at Timor Aid that evening, but I collected my gear and had my first night at the new Oikos house in Bairo Pite.

Day 9, Sunday. I visited Motael church for a look, and estimated 500 took communion and 1,000 present overall. Walk/talk, chores at house then a meeting pre lunch. Met Jesuits, go to markets, lunch, have another meeting. Then to beach for swim, dinner of green beans. That's it.

Day 10, Monday. Up about 5 am – quite ill. Too many beans or bad water? Maybe I should learn to drink beer! Typed report of Same trip; attended a planning meeting at Oikos office; met Basilio Barreto who is to work with us. Not at all well, so go home to sleep. Very ill in fact. Robyn attends me somewhat. She is our liaison in Darwin, an ex-nurse and good friend. Her husband, Ted Giblin, is my doctor and also the Oikos doctor.

Day 11, Tuesday. I was too ill to go anywhere, but scrub the bath and toilet tank and refill with water. Try to type but Enda wants to talk. He's a bit too much - but he asks me to stay on with the program. Dr Dan Murphy and Sister Lurdes (Mana Lu) come over. Dan says: “congratulations, that is one of about a dozen viruses which you probably won't get again!” How comforting!

Day 12, Wednesday. Our Timorese agriculturalists go to Ermera. Once there they can't restart the car, so it is towed home. Basilio Barreto, new volunteer logistician Peter 'NoShoes' Vanderfield, and I, go to ICRC (International Committee for Red Cross) for a meeting - recorded as very good. That probably means they offered us some corn seed once they got theirs in. Took Enda to airport.

Met Vaughan and Ilana (long time Darwin activists) on the street. Vaughan has this great idea to do a free liberation concert in Dili, if I organise it, well at least the Dili end! Later he makes a small good-looking poster, which I distribute to people who are very impressed. The irony is, I think, no artists initially listed actually made it, but ‘no worries’.

I went with Basilio to 5.30 pm daily OCHA (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) meeting. Meet the Marine again: he's really from CMOC (Civil-Military Operations Centre), and he tells me he has been reading up, and that once I was one of the
10 most hated men by the Australian government, but now I'm on the correct side! Geez, what have I done wrong? I thought to myself. We had a good chat. I don't know if he knew that during a protest on 6th September 1999 we had pulled the UN flag, flying in Darwin, down to half-mast. At that date the UN had not yet committed to bringing out those Timorese and families who had helped in the ballot, and/or were sheltering from militia in the UN compound. UN personnel came out to explain what they thought, it became quite an event. In fact Ces interrupted and yelled that the guff the UN were saying was just that, they didn't ask for permission to go into Kosovo, and the UN has never officially accepted Indonesian control over East Timor, so why accept their strictures now. TV of that action was flashed around the world, including to Kosovo we heard a report.

At the meeting the topic of the evening was how to find the water supply at Suai, in the SE corner of East Timor. Oxfam engineers have been to look but didn't find any. I leant back and ask Basilio (who I pressured to come to the meeting) if he knew where it was - he grew up there, he said "of course" (it wasn't in Suai central). So being in good humour, I said to the meeting: I notice there is only one Timorese here, I brought him, and he knows exactly where the water supply is! The Oxfam engineer leaned over and said: may we talk to him? I said: don't ask me, ask him, and why not take him with you on the next trip down? He said that there will be no room, but Basilio told him how to find the supply anyway.

Decide to go back to Darwin, as not well, had left with tasks not done, and no seed was available yet, etc - one had learned that 'waiting' was an occupation in Timor.

Day 13, Thursday. Up early, pack, go to Portuguese compound to see our medico Dr Ana, see various, then to ICRC, and house. Victor from Timor Aid starts the reluctant Nissan, which takes me to airport. - Once in Darwin visit Oikos Darwin, meet various including Enda again! Then to Post Office, home to Howard Springs, ring various including 2 hours with Ces still overseas, downloaded 600 emails.

Day 14, Friday. Enda headed overseas. I'm still not well. Did 2 loads of washing, clean up, visitors arrived. I visit various, do some money matters, meet activists in Raintree Park, call at Ines and George's, see Xanana's return speech on TV. At Tony and Veronica's, chat to Fr Francisco Barreto (uncle of Basilio and key resistance priest) and others, Manuel Tilman, Antonio Conceicao (with Timor Aid), home, very tired.

So second 7 days ends, has not been so exciting, but still busy
Chapter 3 – third 7 days, October 23-29

Day 15, Saturday. More chores in Howard Springs, and meeting people, still not well. Get photos done, catch up with Ces. She is back from Korea peace conference, where she gave a great speech which inspired a letter from Korean President to Xanana. She also is not so well, but has the letter. Take Richard Luxton, ex head of building course at Northern Territory University for many years, to meet Padre Barreto. Together they plan and draw a useful replacement house design based on light steel frames, and considered suitable and efficient. Meet many in town, do shopping, go home, still unwell. Phone calls.

Aside: In Dili the UN had several committees to head policy making, one was on housing, headed by an Irish engineer who I'm sure had never been to Timor before. They decided not to introduce any new technologies, not quite sure the rationale. Bolts were a new technology according to him, so this light steel frame design would not be accepted. Anyway, when I met him I was too late, they had decided, and was I an engineer? My unarguable shot was: - did the education committee agree with not educating people in any contemporary techniques and products? And did it matter that to fly some light steel prefabricated frames was lighter and easier than loads of timber? And the steel would survive termites; and the locals could fill in walls as they wanted - Nup! And my grandparents on one side were Irish, but no matter! He held the levers, I was too busy to argue further. But I still believe, as usual, I was right and he/they were wrong!

Day 16, Sunday. Mow, to town, drop Ces at parents' where she had a big sleep, visit various, see Padre Barreto again at shop, see Neil O'Sullivan ex CAA in town, and then home. Conspire with Ces on points for possible reply by Xanana to Korea. Pack again. Still tired, frankly.

Day 17, Monday. Up early, drop Ces off, I go to airport thence to Dili. FAO meeting with agriculturalists. It was accepted that we do need Corn, Beans and Vegetables. Care, World Vision, et al, have their own agronomist now. Someone brings a box of tools offered free from China, and wants my opinion as to their quality - I'm not best judge, suggest other opinions, get abused for not saying they obviously were cheap rubbish. Oikos meeting. Peter does OCHA meeting, I go to house.

Day 18, Tuesday. Airport to meet our 2nd doctor, Dr Miko Conceicao Pereira, also expecting extra boxes, find later at WFP (UN World Food Program) and UNTAET (UN Transitional Administration for ET). Meet Paul Toohey journio friend from Darwin, and give lift. Find 2 male nurses who have ridden their Timor ponies down from the mountains to ask: when is someone coming to their town Lequidoes? Because they urgently need supplies. I take them to Timor Aid, which has more capacity to resolve. Oikos is trying to have meeting, as usual. Colleagues are planning a Same trip, but I need to fly back to Darwin on Wednesday, as I am too tired, too much to do back there, and anyway Enda has
also gone.

Day 19, Wednesday. 9.30 depart Dili for Darwin on UN charter of Air North. Jorge meets, lunch, then lends me his Ute. Domestic chores, go to public planning meeting, meet key activists. Meet friends who alert me to a World Bank/UN meeting which I attend, good fun, find other missing friends there, including Ces! Dinner at her parent's house.

Day 20, Thursday. Chores and talks. Go to Planning meeting. [In Timor, Nissan did a trip to Same and returned that evening.] I go to Capri restaurant for dinner with Neil O'Sullivan, ex-Community Aid Abroad, and friend since 1976; and meet Fretilin cohort that walks in.

Day 21, Friday. Work on block, and meet and chat various, home computer problem, talk NT Horticultural Association re their seeds offer. Pay my property rates, do media interview. Town, as a Twin Cab had been bought by the efficient Robyn, also a double axle but light trailer. So I took the chance to buy and fill 6 jerry cans with petrol, and placed in the Ute, also bought 2 hefty tow ropes and others, and loaded onto Ute already at Perkins shipping. A lot of other shopping. Called into 7th floor of a city building where CNRT had established an office. But they already are being conned, imho (in my humble opinion), as affet (Australians for a Free East Timor) was the Darwin centre of pro East Timor activities for all the 90's. - It would have been nice to have some official ET contact in Darwin. Shop for electronic gear and camera, meet Ces, home, very tired still.

(OK, OK, I know 3rd 7 days is not much in Timor, but lots of Timor stuff.)
Chapter 4 – fourth 7 days, October 30-November 5th

Day 22, Saturday 30th. Block chores, resolve home computer problem, long meeting with Robyn - Oikos Darwin rep. Collect Ces, and after dinner at her parents’ house, go home.

Day 23, Sunday 31st. More block chores, tidy and plantings, mow. Read her 2 university study essays, email, pack, bed 1am.

Day 24, Monday 1st November, 1999. Up 4.30, clean up and pack for trip back to Dili. Aircraft delayed, so squeeze in visit to Toyota to check options, also post office and Caritas. Plane heads back to Dili 2.15. Sit next to Richard who is to run the UN helicopter program - a very useful contact. Peter and Basilio meet me, go to office, then to house. OCHA 5.30 meeting, meet Rousso ex-Renetil senior who I met in January in Jogjakarta, home (Bairo Pite home!)

Day 25, Tuesday. Chase up a helicopter trip to Atauro Island. Take Dr Ana and Dr Fernando to boat/ocean going canoe for Atauro Island. Try to get Twin Cab from wharf, get the trailer, chat various including Laurence at World Vision, and Peter at ICRC (Red Cross). OCHA meeting 5.30, chat Ernie re roads and helicopters, dinner at ‘OCHA restaurant’ with various contacts and VIPs.
Day 26, Wednesday. **Atauro Island day!** Check for Twin Cab much of day, and do office, house, sort Vegetable seeds etc. WFP says helicopter to Atauro going at 11.30, no; now 1.30, go to airport in truck. Dr Fernando and I go in WFP helicopter to Atauro with rice, plus Richard and Timorese adviser/interpreter Atoki Madeira.

It lands at Vila on the beach front, I run to quickly see Vasco, brother of Ceu from Darwin and Timor Aid. We had discussed and I thought agreed the load of 2-3 tonne of rice would go to the high village Macadade, but it was all unloaded at the coast. The local chefe had said, unload it here, we will carry it up the mountain. I was annoyed, as that was an unlikely scenario. So having the experienced Fernando with us, the UN agreed to check a possible landing zone at Macadade. The helicopter just rose direct up the cliff face, just metres from my nose it seemed, full power no doubt, quite exciting; shown a good spot to land, but almost no people seen.

Back to Dili and the UN helicopter was due somewhere. As I'm heading off, Richard pokes his head out of his office and says: “do you have a truck loaded at the airport?” Yes. “Then load us up and let’s go, as the other option is too far for the remaining daylight”. Yippee! No time to alert military guarding airport, drive on, and load 2-3 tonnes. The helicopter goes flat out from Dili to Atauro Island, through the gap in the south facing mountains direct to Macadade. Again no people seen, we land at sport field. I look at unusual rocks and don’t see 2 warriors, with spears at the ready, creeping down towards us. Unseen watchers could see this, and the bags being unloaded, and the village comes running screaming with excitement, and gather around. All feel the joy, and are moved. We reckon this is the first friendly helicopter party they have ever seen. Probably only one bad case of malnutrition seen. Return to Dili. I check boat landings and the office, have dinner with Dr Dan and Dr Ana.

Day 27, Thursday 4th. Several checks for Toyota TwinCab at wharf, get hold of it after lunch, it’s nice. Go to UN to pass on draft letter for Xanana to sign, can see Xanana but go into an office for the legal adviser, he says: “what took you so long?” (He initially mistook me for my Professor of Constitutional Law brother Peter). I hand over the letter and the suggested reply. Soon Xanana signed it, and we sent it, which led to close relationships of Timor and Korea. I asked ‘lawyer and the UN PR guy re our concert proposal. Try to see Bishop Belo; talk to Gilman (X’s cousin). I have more to ask to approve an open air concert given it is only about 6 weeks from Interfet clearing out the Indonesian military and militia.

Lunch at house, then drive to Aileu with Marcos and Deo. Meet Falintil leaders, and Oz medico Matthew Wright. Doc Ana test drives the TwinCab, now won’t give it back until tomorrow in Dili. On the way home the rain was a deluge, water flowing muddy, so I bore friends by talking erosion and need for ground cover and trees – a long term theme. Peter had driven his own car up and back and was in strife, with windscreen wiper not working, all trying hard to see though the heavy rain. Deo hops into Nissan, we ford the flooded drain/river, dropped off Marcos, and Deo, and somehow got home, as did Peter (don’t know how)!
Day 28, Friday. Enda is back in Dili with Oikos board senior Jeremias, (so that's where he went)! Take to house. I talk to various incl Alex Gusmao, our Dili concert local man, and Bishop Belo, to get his OK for the concert (I help move a generator for him – that should get some kudos). Problems with Ute front wheels, (it was bought 2nd hand in Darwin and not serviced), Victor works on it. I meet new permaculture teacher Steve Cran, and get fellas to take him to Dom Bosco for a chat to Padre Rolando. We try to get rice for a clinic from UN bod, no joy. 5.30 OCHA meeting, mention Dr Ana is on board with us, meet various as usual, including Jeanny Grant UN media. House - letters to Darwin and family at Kangaroo Valley, dinner with new Oikos arrival, with wine!! Aha, bring on the fatted calf!!
Chapter 5 – fifth 7 days, November 6-12

(so, 28 days gone so far)

Day 29, Saturday. Drive around to UN and Portuguese mission, getting frustrated. For example, Dr Ana demands all speak Portuguese, when very few do or want to - especially me! Oikos house for meeting 9.30 - 2pm, medical issues then agriculture, and re Marcos' salary which is minimal. Ana goes to Aileu with TwinCab and some rice, I pray, sortof, for a safe return (of TwinCab). I stay and do a bit of gardening at house. Hand out sweet potato cuttings to various. Letters. Nice dinner again. Gee!

Day 30, Sunday. House duties, more gardening, set up Oikos’ new portable stove. Meet World Visionfellas, one good. Dinner party with next door’s for Dr Ana. Next door’s have provided excellent meals for us all, especially considering the parlous situation in Timor, and so I get to be friends. Dr Miko, Enda and I go to World Vision 8.30pm to sort out some items, including area jurisdiction. Seems weird writing this now, but that was the sort of thing we had to do, even on a Sunday evening!

Day 31, Monday. -2nd Aileu trip, meeting with Edu. I fit trailer onto hitch, but going up the rise over the canal on the way to hospital and ICRC the whole lot disconnects, but no damage - lucky, and embarrassing. Refit hitch - this time with pin in its proper place. Load from ICRC 30 bags onto trailer, and 20 into Ute. FAO meeting for 2 hours with Marcos and Deo. To house, need shackle, get from Bombeiros, and try to deal with house problem with well and toilet.

Head to Aileu, with Dr Miko, Marcos and Deolindo, see the Priest and leave most supplies there. Take some to Suco Liurai, and 2 boxes across the road to Timor resistance army Falintil’s temporary HQ. The guard won’t let me put down the 40 kg load, but summons someone from across the road. He comes running, and says please sir, put it down here (for which I’m grateful!). He says: what’s your name? Wesley. Not Rob Wesley-Smith? One and the same! So big hug. I say what’s your name? Edu. Not Eduardo Belo Soares? (Don’t know how I recalled that!) One and the same! Another big hug. He said: you sent me $200 in 1993!

Edu was the key to transferring supplies organised by Ceu to Kupang, where they were minded by Victoria. Then Edu somehow managed to collect and take back across the border, a real scarlet pimpernel. He somehow had to fund his trips, but not with Falintil money, even though the supplies were for them. Of course we are now great friends, and he is a successful business man. I also met Darwin friend Peter Cook volunteering with Dave Bond and John Bartlett in Aileu. Home OK in the dark.
Day 32, Tuesday.  New doctor Paul Murphy from Canada has arrived, he had worked with traditional owners of Canada.  Marcos' aunt has died, he needs to go to Viqueque urgently, and is not happy with measly money earned.  After some hassles I get 1 tonne of corn from ICRC and pop up to Ermera, where colleagues had promised corn on the previous visit when it appeared Oikos would have that responsibility.  Enda was not happy, but also I secretly wanted to see the fabled Ermera, the coffee capital up the mountains after heading west out of Dili!  Share corn between CNRT office and the Priest.  I suggest Deo drives back to get experience with trailer attached, I regretted that as he would not slow to a reasonable speed.  Glad to get back.  Our logistician vents his spleen at me, I couldn't understand.  Take Ute and trailer to Timor Aid, and to Red+.

Day 33, Wednesday.  Our new Toyota 3 tonne truck is at the port, so sweat starts waiting for it to be released!  Meanwhile Enda takes me for a walk and craps on about building networks or something unfathomable - I assumed it was to do with the row previous day - did he give this pep talk also to Peter and Jeremias?  Maybe Jeremias was upset I didn't speak Portuguese.  Want to do report, but too busy.  Septic maintenance truck arrives, and big pumping effort starts until a blockage suddenly lets go, crap everywhere.  Then our small septic is pumped out - great news!
Go to Caritas, UN and see Andrew Laddley again, he had our letter signed by Xanana. See CivPol, CMOC etc - one has to learn acronyms quickly in this game, but I think you can guess CivPol! Get truck off wharf, some household gear, and 2x200cc Yamaha Ag Bikes - bliss! These are big by Timor standards, but in my relative youth I rode similar to 3 NT Motocross championship victories. The petrol on the Utes was designed for these. But truck is ordinary 2WD, not 4WD as I specified - not happy! But probably I didn't need to have worried, and nice truck anyway. Clean up, go to OCHA meeting, dinner, ride bike to more meetings - some said I rode too much as in Motocross!

I'll be back with vehicle more suitable to deliver to villages.

Day 34, Thursday. Not much on, so put together shelves for my room, watched by Jeremias. He then says he has never seen a worse design, how do you put books into the top space, - nice friendly comment! I say it's for files laid flat, in absence of anything else provided. So much for me trying to be nice, and asking him advice! He's getting crabby because he was brought out at ridiculous expense allegedly to train Timor Aid staff in time management, but they couldn't manage their time well enough to provide the time for that! Not sure where the idea originated, someone who wanted to impose something I suppose.

Calculate seed needs initially at 2.5 kg each. Prepare truck and ropes etc, go to WFP and get 3 tonnes loaded. Find Quito from Same who wants some, generously give 0.7 tonne; take 2.3 tonne to Aileu, leave it at CNRT - Domingos Meta vice secretary Region 3, and say I'll be back with vehicle more suitable to deliver to villages. See Dr Miko, now based in Aileu. Bring extra passengers back to Dili. Drive Basilio home, meet Jude who has parcel for me, nice! Power off - what's new?

Day 35, Friday 12th Nov, Dili Massacre anniversary. People gather at Motael Church, I see lots of friends, we all walk to Santa Cruz cemetery. Walk back via UN, discuss helicopter to Same, find car, go to Red+, arrange for more seed to Aileu, go to office - tired legs. Do OCHA meeting, lend CD to UN radio media man Rick, it is Darwin La Faek group including me singing East Timor songs. La Faek = Crocodile. Take Dr Miko to Mario's, (Ces' uncle, and profoundly deaf), good, chat and dinner. Bed earlyish.
Chapter 6 – sixth 7 days, November 6-12

Day 36. Saturday 13th – Lequidoe day. (Ces goes Nimbin for Permaculture course, is handy later). Enda doesn’t want to talk. Load twin cab and trailer, head to Aileu, tyre going flat in trailer so spread load better, go to CNRT to explain I want to take seed to villages this time, but angry row: just put it in our shed” - NO, farmers need it now - “farmers need to prepare for Xanana’s visit here in 2-3 days time!” My colleague fades away, but the situation is saved by NZ UN soldier Captain Steve Michie. He quietly suggests I unload say the Ute and then take off to WV warehouse and reload, and follow him up to Lequidoe. (He had taken back seats out of his Range Rover in order to fit in more bags) This was done in a memorable afternoon.

We crossed the river, and left the trailer at a needy village. Amazing roads up the ridges and mountains, basically manually built under Indonesian duress, but stable, due to oversized ‘gravel’ - 50mm-ish rocks - hand placed and covered with bitumen. Got to Lequidoe, and a Red+ helicopter is ferrying in bags of food!! I help carry some, when a friendly voice says: “hello Wes”. I nearly freaked out, but it was the nurse I had helped - see day 18. Great Timorese memory for friends and family. We have to race back to Aileu as it was getting dark. When we made it the fellas in Range Rover said: we didn’t think you could keep up! Try me! Dinner with Dr Miko et al in Aileu, home in the dark. A memorable day.
Day 37. Discussion re how to support our Docs in Same. Basilio is drafted in to interpret, and heads down. After 6 years studying to be a priest, he had a quick course about female human anatomy as he helped 2 lines of clients wanting to see a friendly and real doc for maybe the first time. I go UN, WFP, Red +, take Dr Miko to family then Portuguese compound. Lunch. To UN twice, and Timor Aid, help colleagues on computer (blind leading the blind) and I type report. Talk to UN man from Same. Enda drives to Manatuto for NGO meeting with Xanana, he likes such opportunities.

Day 38. Monday 15th November. Typing seeds report. Take truck to Red + and load 1.4 tonnes, with Peter and driver Lourenco, but can't find Deo. Take to helicopter at airport as agreed, guard tries to block access. Sorted and unload. Then to FAO seeds meeting. We ask Care and Caritas each for 10 tonne Corn. I'm hot and stressed, have a Bex and a lie down. 3pm Truck to Care warehouse, get loaded, then airport to load helicopter for first flight in morning to Same. Not all happy. Go Timor Aid and meet lots, miss OCHA meeting.

Interviewed re Same trip with journalist Sonny Inbaraj. See his article Appendix 2.

Day 39. Tuesday 16th. To Care Warehouse and load 70 bags, take to airport, unload onto pallets. Peter helps with loads. Back for 2nd load, 63 bags, warehouse manager getting very stressed (not from me I hasten to add - well I don't think so). But I seize the chance to ask workers if anyone knows if we can get to Turiscai. Probably! Richard says no helicopter until Friday. Go Turiscai - decision made!! Race home for lunch, I drive to turnoff just Dili side of Maubisse, near the top of the ranges, with Deo, and driver Lourenco, who takes over for hair-raising (mine) trip down steep narrow road to Turiscai. But Lourenco is having fun, having been a driver with coffee trucks in the past, and not concerned our wheels were hanging off the edge at times. Off load 2.5 tonnes on Priest's lawn as can't find anyone, but have to keep going, and worried about slippery spots on way back. We leave 0.5 tonnes right at the back of the tray for extra grip, and get through the worst areas which had been improved by villagers meantime. Having got through we were on the upper section of the road, so I suggested we hand out the bags if we saw needy farmers. I was told this section was part of Ainaro district, not ours, but said: do you care? No one wanted to not help.

So we saw farmers, and Deo was sitting next to the door, but having worked in the agriculture department under the Indonesians and learned some bad habits, he preferred to sit and shout. Now he had to walk over and ask if they had had any corn seed, and how many families there were. He would come back and say they got nothing, and there are 10 families, or 5 or whatever. So we would calculate, 10 x 5kg each family is 50 kg. He would then have to carry the bag off the back of the truck and take to the farmer. This was unaccustomed labor for a senior fella, and I stayed inside the truck. After a while he began to appreciate the hands-on real work, really helping people, and I saw a change in expression. I hoped this would stay with him for ever, but not sure. Got back OK, go to Oikos (Miko's) house in Aileu, and had dinner. Home by 10.30, very tired, but feeling
good.

Day 40. Bit of a meeting, Enda had signed leases for 2 different houses. He was not happy about our trip, or for not knowing about it - but where was he? I wonder who complained or why?? The area was part of our responsibility, and so far most activity was up to me, though I had no formal responsibility, as Enda kept telling me. And I understood the urgent need for seed supplies to all parts of the country, given the TNI/Militia had destroyed so much. And we had a truck loaded. For me it was a great success, and then to be complained to and about by the boss was annoying and debilitating. And this from a man younger than me who never lifted one bag while we were there!

At some stage I told Enda about plans for a concert, and he OKs some time and use of truck for that - to my surprise. Onya Enda, good man Enda! I promised to give Oikos a plug. He gets OIKOS tee-shirts printed, they become well known. Have to get authorisation from Caritas warehouse for more bags, get 55 bags (nearly 3 tonne) at 1.00pm and Lourenco and I unload at airport onto pallets. Back for more, this time 65 bags, so truck was a bit overloaded. We had 5 extras to help unload, no time for a third trip. Drop people home. I find Alex Gusmao and Fordem (music bods) who will be our Dili committee to help organise concert, and have chat. They want it on 7th Dec, anniversary of the invasion; we will be in Dili at their house for a few days, I need to bring a rice cooker! Home, finish seeds report, do concert and workshop proposal, make copies, bed midnight.

Day 41. Thursday 18th. The warehouse manager retrieved 3 t corn from airport, silly dilly, he wants more signatures on seed taken. Lourenco takes truck and a 'note' and gets it back. I bike to Interfet, Civpol, UN, UN/PR, with concert proposal details, also Alex at Timor Aid. Take Enda and Deo to Aileu, must have been in truck, with 3 t Corn. Dr Miko is painting her/Oikos' house. Maybe this was the day Enda wanted to meet TMR, (Taur Matan Ruak, practical head of Falintil while Xanana was in gaol, and now 2012 Presidente of Timor Leste), and I was asked to speak. I just sought his OK for concert, TMR said it was not his issue. But it not only was a courtesy, if Falintil disagreed they might cause problems. Enda thought I had wasted a chance to tell him all about Oikos' great programs! Left them there, me onto Same, by 4ish. See Dr Ana and Basilio, then check with Quito, so back up the road to Holorua that evening - unload 1 tonne, and further up mountain to upper Holorua - unload 1 tonne.

Day 42. 6am Timor Aid office, take big bags of coffee up the hill. Take TwinCab to Betano, look at tractors with community leaders, look at old clinic and warehouse, back to Same. Drive on to Aileu in truck, I enjoy giving lifts to many, some with bags of rice from World Vision warehouse, but it is hard work to carry up the mountains. My legs got tired from all the gear changing to cope with steep bits and non-existent bits, without jettisoning the passenger load! Took lots of photos, but sssh, no film in camera! I can't believe this. Enthusiastic lunch at Aileu house from Falintil, return to Dili by 3.30. I visit airport, WFP, Timor Aid, Pedro's Matebian Restaurant for dinner and chat. Enda says helicopter will be taking corn to Same on Saturday, and Dr Paul should go with it.
Chapter 7 – seventh 7 days, October 20 – 27

Day 43. Sat 20th. Enda says we will be moving house, oh, very convenient in this busy time! I take truck to Care warehouse, and get 3 tonne corn. (At warehouse workers load; at helicopter or unloading usually by me and colleagues). Helicopter is loaded about 10.30, plus boxes of medical stuff, and Dr Paul, who pleaded to bring back some patients, but was not allowed. Paul and crew unload, then back in Helicopter. Me in Dili, very hot and tired, nap over lunch, back to warehouse and load 1t each Corn, Green beans, and Red Beans. Give warehouse staff water to drink, at least they are happy! Visit Care, Interfet. Richard says the helicopter program for Same ends Monday. Me very very tired, others too.

Day 44. Sunday. Use computer. Then acrimonious planning discussion with Enda, incl Dr Paul, and Miko. I drive Miko to Aileu. Back to Dili, Dr Paul determined to relax, wants to go on next morning. Do more computer reports. Bike to Timor Aid, WFP, and dinner at Pedro’s restaurant with many many activist friends.

Day 45. Monday 22nd November. Dr Paul departs 4.45 am for Same in TwinCab. Type request to Care for Vegetable seeds. Peter takes, but the right person is not there. We drive truck to airport, helicopter has done one trip early, now needs crew change. Load our corn and beans, and Deo, but storms force return to Dili. Meanwhile we load truck again with 3t Corn. This time I supply lime cordial to Care workers - an upgrade! Want another load, but Red + agree to load us up at 7am. At Timor Aid we hear of night time violent abuse of happy Timorese men, educated fellas and friends, who didn't take kindly to being treated like crap, kicked and abused, and threatened with gun at head, by young Australian loutish soldiers. No media done I think.

Day 46. Peter and Deo go with helicopter to Same? then Betano? I go to airport early 5.45am, for 2nd load, but schedule is changed to Maliana, so supplies were offloaded onto pallets. I go to Red+ warehouse and load 160 boxes = 3.2t. Diary says then loaded 50 big bags of Corn - not sure what happened to them, but for helicopter to work efficiently, they need supplies by truck. To Care, Rob Williams gives authorisation. Go to Care warehouse and load red and navy beans.

Load helicopter, and I climb aboard for trip to Same. Great trip, goes down valleys and one can look up and see villages above. No lunch, second trip, and I meet up with Quito again! Meanwhile Peter and Lourenco can’t get more seed. Anyway, a big day for me. Home, cleanup, go to Timor Aid, meet Pires x 4, dinner and bed early. I note Peter has been very helpful (I didn't realise he was employed as the 'logistician' - he did get stuff off the wharf but!)
Day 47. Wednesday. Jan Bartlett from Radio 3CR in Melbourne rings and transfers $1500 to help with concert equipment hire. Makes things possible, I am very grateful. Type 'Seeds taken from Warehouse' report, hard work, about 4.30 take copy to Dr Bill Ruscoe at Care, brief chat, then to Timor Aid, then to OCHA meeting. David Harland, UN, explains role and policies of new government of East Timor ie UNTAET, for next 36 months!!! I suggest to him he use more caution and sensitivity. Then go to WFP.

Day 48. Timor Aid, CMOC, UN, Care Warehouse, big struggle to get seed for Atauro. Finally load 400kg Red Beans (keep 200kg), 400 kg Soy (keep 2 bags), Peter gets 500 kg corn from Red+ warehouse. 5pm Load much into small boat for Atauro - a bit ridiculous! Chat Maj Mark Mackay re concert - music and facilities. Finalise reports, print 5x. Go to Concern, lunch, try to chat to Xanana's not very communicative man Brian re agriculture. Chat NTU people, Geoff, Antero etc. Dr Paul and Dr Miko return, plus Deo and Joanne, all happy with their week.

49. Friday 26th Nov. Bit of gardening at Oikos, plant out PawPaw seedlings. Timor Aid early. Alex Gusmao re concert, I stress we need some action from Dili group. Find Marcos - first time seen for 2 weeks, he has done his family duties. He was trying to hitch a ride back to Dili from almost non-existent traffic, when FAO Dr Joe and Care man Dr Bill, see and recognise him, stop/chat. Then used him as a guide and interpreter in the Viqueque and Uatolari districts which are only ones with seed rice available in the whole of East Timor. They camped in old warehouse on the coast at Beacu. Then delivered Marcos back to Dili - a good bargain all round. Speak Maj Mark again, good fella, CMOC re travel, Fr Chico Barreto for chat, given letter for matriach Veronica in Darwin.

Care: Dr Bill (good fella) hops on back of my trail bike and we go to Warehouse and get seed authorisations. (The Care warehouse serviced many, and Enda/Oikos' plan was to make me plead for gifts of seed and food from bigger organisations - humiliating, yet needs were great).

Our boss Enda back probably from Darwin, and wants a meeting before lunch, while we are flat out. Peter gets upset, he had container to get off wharf, needs truck, I plan to load seeds at 2pm, is Nissan fixed? Don’t know. (Well, Enda bought it off the street in Darwin, and it was not serviced, then we have to drive it in remote places in Timor with no backup).

Marcos arrives by motorbike, lunch, Enda formally talks to Marcos and he rejoins our team (luckily), but he prefers to get a living wage. I go Timor Aid, goverment palace, UN meeting, Rumiana says David H says 'just do it' (I presume this was the OK for our Darwin musos to come over for 7th December concert.) Maj Mark says OK for 25 people via the 'Jervis Bay' large catamaran, plus one truck to carry gear. This quota was gradually increased to nearer 40 musos and supporters, plus several vehicles.

Oikos meeting, very unpleasant, Peter gets out of order, sounds off against me and 'my
management of various'. I try in vain to say I have NO management authorities, though if I didn't take some initiatives not much might be done. I tell him he is getting stressed, and certainly to back off me. Not the only case of stress - which needs to be managed - perhaps that was what Enda was doing in disappearing to various places. But he Enda comes back and gets stressed and stresses us trying to reassert his management role when he doesn't know or ask properly what has been going on. He certainly does not give me any credit for mainly quietly managing agriculture and food help. I think he needs to do a white-mans management course!! After, I type Agriculture plan for next week.

So despite hassles, a lot was accomplished, especially re concert. Time for me to go again.

**Acronyms and abbreviations**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Interfet</td>
<td>International Force for East Timor</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>(UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, UN)</td>
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<tr>
<td>affet</td>
<td>Australians for a Free East Timor (ngo based in Darwin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OIKOS</td>
<td>Portuguese ngo I worked for in Timor for 4 months only!</td>
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<tr>
<td>ngo</td>
<td>non-government organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAA</td>
<td>Community Aid Abroad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timor Aid</td>
<td>big local ngo started in Darwin in 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICRC</td>
<td>International Red Cross (Red+), Oxfam, Care, Concern, Caritas. World Vision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>All big International aid and caring ngos.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>(UN World Food Program)</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNAMET</td>
<td>(UN Assistance Mission ET) became: UNTAET</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>(UN Transitional Administration for ET) on 25 October 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>OCHA</td>
<td>(UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMOC</td>
<td>(Civil -Military Operations Centre)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Falintil</td>
<td>Forces Armed Liberation Timor Leste - local resistance armed forces since 1975</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNRT</td>
<td>Council National Resistance Timor, successor to CNRM</td>
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<tr>
<td>CivPol</td>
<td>Civilian UN Police</td>
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Chapter 8 - eighth 7 days, November 27 - December 3

Day 50. Saturday. Back to Darwin. Do diary, pack, go Timor Aid, then UN looking for Alex Gusmao, find Xanana Gusmao instead. Dr Paul takes me to airport, Enda follows, we disagree re repair of Nissan. I fly in Hercules, sit with Lise (UN), Ernie, and Manuel Tilman, who gave me a copy of the first 'law' the elite ET group had passed. I showed it to Lise as a bit of one-up-person-ship, she hadn't seen it and was desperate to, so I graciously gave it.

Jordan. This reminds me, though its not in diary, that there had been discussion at a UN meeting about using troops from Jordan in Oecusse, despite many from Oecusse making it clear they didn't find them acceptable. Lise was chairing, and summed up saying: Jordan is a member of UN, and there is no reason not to send their troops. I thought I had better stay cool and quiet, but after approached the military attache to the UN meeting, a Brigadier from BanglaDesh, and asked him if he knew reasons - No - Well I know 5, and summarised them. He asked me to write to him with this info, I said no but I'll annotate or list the reasons on the spot. So I think it was next day as we walked in to the next UN meeting, chaired by Lise, she said: “don't think we didn't know those reasons“. I replied saying fairly forcefully: well you didn't know yesterday!!

Just out of interest, reasons included that they were Muslims, (as were most Indonesian troops); they had given sanctuary to Prabowo, Suharto's son in law, who claimed credit for the capture and killing of first prime minister hero Nicolau Lobato; they had a poor attitude to women, (one even molested a woman at Darwin airport); and had unsavoury sexual practices. They were duly located in Oecusse, but it was hushed that they interfered with boys, and one got stuck up a goat, and had to be brought to hospital to be removed!! It makes you wonder what the rules and protocols of the UN are.

I had another row with UN bods re whether peacekeepers, even from high incidence AIDS countries, had to have a check for AIDS, but was told NO, that would be an infringement of their human rights. What about the HRs of the Timorese I asked?? What crap - I wonder if the rules have been changed? (ET now has a cohort of Aids carriers). Just because a country is a member of UN, should not mean it can escape scrutiny. And why should UN staff be 'protected'?
Settle back home in Howard Springs. Party that evening, but I wasn't up to it.

Day 51. Sunday. Home all day, mow, service mower, emails and letters, ring Macca on abc's Australia All Over re situation in ET, having heard a great song played re Xanana. I was sent 2 copies, gave one to UN Radio, and one was for Xanana but I never met him with CD in hand, or could prompt an invite. Bed early, very tired.
Day 52. Monday 29th November. Catch up with local friends and activists. Visit Timor Aid/Oikos office, meet Richard Luxton who is due to go over on Wednesday, get Pics, Post Office. Meet with musician leaders re planned trip to Dili for Concert - they take some convincing it CAN, nay WILL, happen. They have ordered PA audio gear that will do a crowd of 2,000, and think that is pretty good. I demand it be increased to 5,000 capacity, at least. This is considered unbelievable, but 'Sounds Systems' adds in more gear if I stake my life and cash on it. (Worked pretty well for a crowd of 17,000 - type Dili Concert into YouTube to see in 10 segments - but I digress).

Talk media re concert. Home, spray, am not well - was it change of diet, or old milk? Try to ring Alex Gusmao re concert organisation, but no, feel frustrated. In Timor Marcos, Deo, and Carlito take Vegetable seeds to Aileu, but were intercepted by CNRT, and had to put into their shed.

Day 53. Mow, phones, NT News, give $200 towards gear hire, Alex Gusmao rings to confirm go ahead Dili end, so at lunch meeting with Musos I had something definite to say. Talk re truck prices for Timor Aid, visit Oikos' small Darwin office. Tired, so was late going to a Timor activist’s house to meet Falintil Cdr Falur, visiting for health reasons, who generously wanted to thank us activists for our support - nice fella. Shopping, give letter to Veronica.

Day 54. Interview by Country Hour (abc Darwin), mow, lunch, Muso meeting as usual, meet Ces at Bus Station - back from PermaCulture course, go to family home for great feed, as always, then home.

Day 55. Thursday. Sleep in, washes, lots of phone calls, including long chat with George Aditjondro, explore block. Police ring saying I had been summonsed, re crap event on footpath outside Indonesian consulate. Police eventually said no charges to be laid, but the Government solicitor general intervened, the prick, so more calls to dispute situation. Collected some donated music instruments we wanted to take to Timor. I had tried to book on UN plane back, but for 2 days it was full up. Booked for 'Jervis Bay' big Navy Catamaran, but this also delayed a couple of days, due to bringing refugees from Kupang.

Day 56. Media interview. Pack for return to Timor. Plenty busy - its a bit of a blur. In Timor Marcos and driver Lourenco go to Care Warehouse, and eventually get hold of a half tonne each of Red Beans, Mung Beans, and Corn, take to Lequidoe that afternoon, but they need more.

Given Yellow Van from Lino Lopes, which we can take over packed with gear, then leave there. Load it (when we get it going), including from Top End Sounds, in late afternoon. Other Muso's big Van loaded Sat morning. Need PA gear, lots of instruments, personal gear and supplies.
Chapter 9 - ninth 7 days, December 4- 10.
A biggie, including Concert

Day 57. Saturday. Cleanup of block, and trip to dump. Get email of a possible concert song from my brothers on our theme 'Loron Folin To'o Ona - New Day Here!
To wharf at 4.30ish pm. Ces forgot her passport, I hate to think how fast she drove back to get it. Navy loader has some sympathy, as the rule was we could only take on what we could carry. I was overloaded, then tried to carry her gear as well. She made it back just in time. Her Dad rescued our car, while we waited on board. Set off near sunset, just see Darwin disappearing, reassured Alex by mobile phone we were on our way, and to meet us in the morning.

Day 58. Up early dawn to see the grey hills of Timor sliding past. Veronica sheds a tear, and a bloke standing beside me sheds more - it is Jose Texeira on his first sight of his homeland in decades. At Dili harbour our Papuan rep blows the welcoming horn as the boat slides into place. Met on wharf by Maj Graham Finney with trucks, and Alex Gusmao and the Fordem crowd. Veronica dropped a flower into harbour - see all this on YouTube - Dili Concert or did I mention that? We go to Fordem house, unload and lunch, some explore and film, while others make concert posters for display, and put them up. Ces and I go back to Oikos house.

Day 59. Monday 6th December. Two days to get organised, build stage, and so on. Somewhat rainy day. I drive Dr Miko to Aileu with supplies. Buy bananas and pineapples. Interfet and the musicians are putting up tents and covers. Others engage with locals at Fordem house including finding locals to perform, or agreeing to lend their instruments, as so many in Dili had been burned. That is all left to Vaughan and the 'musos' to sort out. Interfet had installed a power pole with heaps of power. This evening Xanana was talking at the Stadium. There was some suggestion I should be there. It was an overly long talk as usual. I leave a message to be read re the concert. Meet Horta and Falur.

Cut bamboo poles at night time, after getting an OK from owner for a consideration. Took people back to Lehane. Hand over $50 to help with food, did so daily (plus rice cooker, and some other supplies).

Day 60. Tuesday 7th December. Big Gig day - and anniversary of invasion in 1975. Also turns out the new UN administrator Sergio de Mello sets up a free-grog reception, so media and UN heavies go there - thanks, people! But also sincere thanks to so many who helped, especially Interfet in various ways.

Up, prepare, media interview. Enda confirms truck use is OK for concert. At Fordem house meeting, I try to sound positive. There are lots of uses for the truck, including finding and bringing pallets on which to stack speakers, taking drummers around the streets to
publicise concert (or was that yesterday)? Scotty, camera-man and energetic helper, manages building the stage shelters and other things, with Interfet, using the bamboo poles. A large Oikos tarpaulin was spread and supported, thanks again Oikos. It’s a pity it later got stolen by someone(s) who must have needed it more I suppose. Kids helping with sand bags, people gathering on the sports field. Bit of rain. I go home for shower and change. We drive to gig at around 5pm, wondering why the streets are so crowded, until it dawns: they are all coming to our gig!!

Not raining, gig starts about 5.30. Timor dancers and musos from Lehane, fantastic, Anito Matos has been found to MC, a brilliant choice, he is so funny, and he sings. Horta seems to be the only senior leader in the crowd, so we get him up to speak. He has only been back a few days so most present see him for first time: voice emotional. I speak, as briefly as possible of course, with interpreter doing a great job. I thank various, especially Interfet and Maj Finney, mention Oikos and affet. When I said we came not for money but to help celebrate a New Day Here! (our theme - Loron Folin To'o Ona), there was such a buzz I shouted Viva Timor Lorosae, and 15,000 voices responded happily with VIVA! I estimated the crowd at 15,000. Interfet said 17,000, so I accept their figure!

Then it pours with rain, first big rain for season. I’m sure it was sent to muck us up. Actually was quite hazardous, as some cables came to be lying through pools of water. Also young people tried to crowd stage, to the point I ask Interfet fella with gun to help clear them. I had to take the young singers and dancers home to Lehane, standing on the truck tray. That was quite a worry. While I was away, Interfet Bob was popular, especially when he sang in Tetun. I uploaded a video of the concert to YouTube, see http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9ts_xlo2A4

Groups do singing and playing, nearly half the crowd had gone home when rain stopped.
Anyway that already was quite late for Timorese. Concert goes until approximately 11 pm. One of last singers - and very popular - was our interpreter Nina Rangel, who had said she could sing something. I thought Vaughan checked her but he told me later he didn't.

Interpet Bob performs at the Dili concert, becoming a huge hit with the cheering crowd.

With only 2000 or so left, and at a late 11pm, some still won't agree to shut down, until Interpet says: if you don't you can clean up all by yourselves! Pack until 1.30 am, we get to bed around 2. All this filmed by our two cameramen and later edited into film by myself: did I mention you can see it? Type Dili Concert into YouTube to see concert in 10 parts.

Musicians from Darwin at concert, performing with local artists
Day 61. Wed 8th December. Dr Miko needs a lift down from Aileu. It is agreed I can get her with the truck and take whoever for a ride in the mountains. Meanwhile ten want to get home to Darwin on a Hercules. Interfet agrees. At about 10.30 am up to Aileu – fantastic – misty. At the markets we buy red bananas - the best! Return with Dr Miko, rain heavy, so a tarpaulin is erected. I drive fairly fast thinking it will clear the rain off people, but under the tarp several get sick with all the corners, and we have to stop a few times. Miko takes the worst into the cabin with us. A good trip, but I regret we used the tarp. Tea at Fordem with musos.

Day 62. Take chairs back to Timor Aid school, no one else was going to help (in fact Timor Aid people were notable by not helping with this event, despite our friendships). I have to do list of those on next Jervis Bay trip to Darwin. Some go to airport, some on yacht trip. Ring Lino Lopes and give van back! Get more water from Interfet. Guys clean their van in detail, and pack with PA gear. Lunch at Fordem, home for shower, exhausted. Go to Oikos office, then to meeting with Horta at OCHA. Take people around (that may refer to CDU and Darwin hospital staff, not sure.)

Return to OCHA for 5.30 usual meeting. Such meetings tended to whip through topics unless UN bods wanted to explain more. They tried to whip through on roads, and I said: hang on, we need to discuss and do something. One old fella said: "it is no matter, because we have ze helicopters!! I said you silly old man: where does that leave us and the entire population - and unsaid - which we are here to help. When some still needed convincing, I said it is clear that within a week you won't be able to access Aileu, where Falintil was in cantonment. Now they see we have a real problem!! The chair, Bob Churcher, a good fella from UK/DIFD, quietly asked me to convene a meeting on roads, he wanted a roads engineer (up to me to find), plus Military, UN and others. It is set for noon Friday - tomorrow!! I go to Fordem, then UN to see Major Faroom re meeting, then to Timor Aid to ask Richard Luxton to attend. Finally, home. (The Musos to go home next morning on the Jervis Bay).

I think it was at this meeting, or maybe later, probably emboldened by winning the point re roads, I politely but cynically said: by the way, good to see so many of you at our concert! A UN lady said, tartly, it didn't happen! Oh, you are telling me, the organiser, it didn't happen? Yes, because it rained! (Oh dear, how perceptive.) I managed to splutter: yes, and 17,000 sat through it. It was, and still is, fascinating to me how such people - in fact most UN and media - could ignore the first big free social event, the concert, with 17,000 attending. Surely that is part of rehabilitating a society after 24 years of military occupation, and only 3 months after such savage reprisals for voting 'the wrong way'!
can't remember anyone saying: “well done, son”

At this, or another meeting, they were talking about the New Year’s event. I mentioned they could use our MC - who was brilliant - and a lady, or that lady, said: “I heard he was drunk!” I don’t know what she was talking about, but that was not our concert!! Just shows some of these ‘up-themselves pricks that go from disaster to disaster’ are not oriented to take local advice - what a travesty! And so that’s how the New Year’s party turned out to be, when it should have been special for this newly liberated country. I know activist people came over from Darwin for it, expecting to be part of huge celebrations, but no, it was not to be. The UN did not consult with the locals.

Day 63. Friday 10th. 6am at Fordem. Take musos to wharf, as Jervis Bay is set to depart at 7am - but they wait for a few hours. Noon Roads meeting. Richard Luxton, a builder who has built plenty of roads in the Northern Territory, delivers a précis of how the Portuguese used to build on mountain sides: just cutting into the side, but leaving the main slope unchanged. Thus it was stable – narrow, but stable, with of course a good drain on the high side (which must be maintained, and engineered to drain under the road and down the slope). The Indonesians, however, piled spoil from the cut onto the side of the mountain, which made the road wider but therefore inherently unstable. Heavy Interfet army vehicles were exacerbating the damage. He recommended maximum road loads being 3 tonne in the mountains. This was important information, but hardly likely to be accepted by people with big trucks - including the Australian Army, whose Mack trucks had a front wheel loading over regulations anyway!!

The UN’s Bob suggested he chair future meetings, with which I’m in total agreement, as Enda had told me it was none of my business! (Oh yeah, how did he think we could get our supplies around, by helicopter, or blowin' in the wind? Actually it was kudos for Oikos, if only he could see it that way.) I have a nap at Oikos. Did a report, it still reads well!

So ends the ninth lot of 7 days. An epic, for me anyway.
Chapter 10 - tenth 7 days December 11-17, including the great Aileu Corn rebellion

Day 64. Saturday 11th Dec. Attended Oikos house meeting for most of the day. Probably that's when Enda told us he was going back home to UK for Xmas, and the appointment of Rui to do personnel/logistics work - and, by the way, he would be acting head while Enda was away. Also he was 'letting go' Nina, our Timorese Doc-in-training, working as an efficient interpreter at Same. No one would say why, but I assume it was not pucker to some for a single lady to assist a single male doc in a remote area! I took up the issue, that it was not fair to lose her modest job for no fault of her own. The main point of the meeting was it was agreed that finding a way to complete our rice paddy acquisitions program obligations should be first priority, with all hands to help.

Day 65. Visit Deo and Nina about the Same situation: she is niece of Dr Lobo, who now, in 2012, is Minister for Health. Nina is upset, but agrees to return to work if Oikos/Enda allows. The house meeting continues, 9-12. I visit Deo, Richard, and also Timor Aid Shelter mob. Then dinner with Richard, while Dr Paul with Miko, AND Nina, go to Same. I want to mention somewhere that Enda never 'welcomed' or tried to involve Ces, my friend, born in East Timor, with a degree in SE Asian Studies, taking up no extra living space, available to help, ah well! That's how it goes...

Day 66. Monday 13th December. Great Aileu Corn revolution day. I go to Care and get note to give more seed. The tractor for Mana Lu has arrived. I had specified the features wanted, but this one was available in Darwin, and it was good but a little big. Ces and I go to Rooney's shipping and get it. I want her to drive it to Dr Dan's, so we do a few laps around the car park to practice the finer points of driving and staying alive. She follows me, and when we go past the Cathedral, there are mobs of young Timorese waiting for an interview, who give a collective woohoo as the tractor is driven past by a cute lady. I'm pleased. It gets to Dr Dan's car shed OK, but Dan is not pleased to use up this space, even though it was for Mana Lu, in whose house he lived!

Anyway, we and Marcos go to the UN where Ernie waits to take us for a 'Meeting with Falintil in Aileu' about the quality of the corn seed supplied. The fact is, the allegedly 'Permaculture Paul' Boucher person has caused angst. He has a history of going to disasters and preaching against the food/seed supplied. He claims, as in this case, that the corn is a Hybrid bred to have killer genes so its seed will not grow - a total furphy of course. In fact 2 things: I had met him in Darwin, and given him a list of corn varieties used in East Timor, which Deo - who was the seed expert from Indonesian times - had told me were the varieties used. P/Paul said they were all hybrids with killer genes. I told him that proved he was a total fraud - yet here he was, having inveigled himself into Falintil in Aileu. Secondly, Oikos, via myself, had supplied this seed to Aileu. There was no way any seed was as Permaculture Paul had described. It was either found in Timor, or mainly had been bought from Surabaya, Java. The situation had got so bad Permaculture Paul had persuaded some to pull out really well growing plants. I hadn't realised quite how serious this situation was until recently, as Falintil apparently had threatened to march to Dili, and
take armed action to seize all seed stocks. Ernie was setting out to counter this idea: he also included senior resistance man Joao Boavida, a friend of mine too. We rehearsed on the drive up, but I insisted I take any question on hybrids, as Marcos wasn't confident on that topic.

At the meeting with at least 15 Falintil, including the famous Sabika (the last Fretilin commander at Balibo, and who had been a great friend of Marcos' Dad - killed by TNI). Also present were Commanders Mau Kalo and Jose Saka, as well as UN Civ Pol, and our Dr Miko, based in Aileu. Permaculture Paul starts off, but Ernie cuts him short, saying it is our meeting, and organises first speakers to start with some truth. I had to explain the anti-ant treatment in some corn bags, designated by pink colour and blatant signs. I suppose Permaculture Paul had no chance! Marcos spoke well and powerfully, and Ces also spoke saying she had done the same permaculture course as PP, and ....!! It was great (for me) to see a Timorese girl telling Falintil what's happening! We return to OCHA with Ernie, and must have fitted Dr Miko in too, probably wanted to restock her kitchen supplies! We chat, feel pleased with ourselves. Tea at Oikos. Enda asks me to change 3,000 Rupiahs into smaller sizes! (Did he think I was being paid??)

Day 67. Take Dr Miko back to Aileu early. New doctor, 2 Darwin students, and new driver. We fuel up and head to Same in twin cab. I used truck with Marcos to go to Care. Talk to Dr Bill and others, then to World Vision to ask about Rice paddy seed program - having to hide that Enda had insisted we had to stay only in our districts.

Back to Oikos for lunch. Find distinguished Timorese fella sitting on the veranda. He wants to talk to me. Enda says we are having lunch - bush him - but I go out and talk. He is I understand Padre Antonio. I might have got the Padre bit wrong, anyway he is head of the 'Commission for the Future'. In fact I invite him in for lunch scraps, but he heads off. I re-join the table, and say he was a Padre. Enda rushes out to invite him in, but he has gone! Such is life. I shower and sleep, then go to OCHA meeting.

Day 68. Wednesday 15th. Visit World Vision again regarding paddy rice. (It's all a bit humiliating, this begging business, and trying to be loyal to Oikos policy!) Dr Bill talks hard, saying to do the rounds and suchlike (or get our own!!). I go CMOC, and UN. Go WFP. WV logistician says I'm 'bitching'. I disagree. There was a bit of a blue, then all agree there is a problem to solve. (Turns out Marcos had written to Enda emphasizing we had to collect our own. My report saying the same thing came a few days later).

At OCHA meeting, I report on our (Oikos) access to paddy rice problem. Lise of the UN says thanks and asks me to brief her after. She says she will head the next FAO seeds meeting - held Tuesday 21st. I pop into Oikos, then go Hotel Dili to meet Trish Caswell and
Dr Donald from Plan International. Michael G turns up, has a lot to say. He has been working to exhaustion, trying, among other things, to save Timor activists targeted by militia. (I had previously sent him all my savings including overdraft).

Day 69. Take Michael G to UNDP. No plane available. He briefs Lise about the West Timor situation, but this is not really the UN mandate!! We go with Baslio to the Catholic Radio station above Bairo Pite, where I am embarrassed by Michael telling everyone how my contributions had saved so many lives. Trish and Dr Donald want more chat. I drop Michael at Timor Aid, go to Hotel Dili. We all go to Oikos for lunch. Then we go in Oikos' little car to Aileu (Enda must have gone on his break for this to be available). We meet various friends there - Peter Cook, Dave Bond, Dave Bartlett - trying to help, especially in the restoration of clean water supplies. I see their setup, then see CivPol Aileu. Bring Dr Miko back by 6.30. Met too many to list, phew.

Day 70. Try to get reports typed, but not much luck. Marcos does extra treated-seeds warning in 3 languages, and we edit. Take copies to UNP (ex-OCHA). Various want to talk technical stuff - maybe some recognition of my prior tropical agriculture experience?? Back to Oikos. Rui takes us to look at new housing situation, but we are not impressed, and decide to stay put. New place will use one house as office, one for accommodation. It's a bit isolated. Rui says he might add a toilet - now that would be handy!! Rui and Miko do move to one house - where she was later seriously assaulted. I take Tapol's Liem Soi Leong to Yayasan Hak HR rights organisation. OCHA meeting. Talk with Dr Dan, Max White and Sister Lurdes about child kits. We discuss the overdone penchant for donors to give Teddy Bears and suchlike when people are ill or starving.
Chapter 11 - eleventh 7 days, December 18-24

Day 71. Go to Media training seminar, opening by Horta. Back to Oikos, where our truck battery has been stolen, from the cradle under tray. Not sure how we replaced it. Probably by Lino Lopes. We tried to make more secure. Go with Max White (from Dr Dan’s clinic) to UNICEF to get 2 x 500 hygiene kits for babies. Lunch. Rui sends Marcos to new house, asks him to write his own duty statement. I copy Aileu documents, and take one to Care (chat with Dr Bill and others) then send one to to Agio Pereira. Meet Horta on road. Home for tea.

Day 72. Sister Lurdes pops in, and I take her to Motael. Chat with Liem. Rui has taken to himself the tractor keys. But under pressure (mine) eventually hands them over, and just in time. At noon, a journalist’s training conference. At about 2 pm an NGO meeting with Horta and Agio. Meet Carmel Baranowska, and later see her seminal film. Talk Richard at Tim or Aid, dinner and bed!

Day 73. Wait for Miko regarding a trip to Aileu. She is busy so no, we go, speak Edu at TMR’s house, and talk to a UN guy. Marcos talks to Domingos Mota – CNRT. I see Peter and Dave at their workshop again, bring Ilana, Sam and 4 locals back to Dili. Doc and boys return from Same. Rui comes to house and complains they didn’t come back exactly as predicted days ago. It is so ridiculous, I tell him to mind his bloody language.

Day 74. Tues 21 Dec. I type up notes from Permaculture Paul’s whiteboard. Attend Lise’ Oikos rice seed special meeting. It is made clear that we have an obligation to collect our own from Viqueque, or really, Uatolari, further east. Lucky for us, that is where Marcos comes from. Now to work out how, and check on any vehicles we can hire/borrow/steal.

Meanwhile, more importantly, there is the John Farnham (and other performers) concert for Interfet personnel, and they also kindly allow others in at the stadium. I take Ces and Marcos there, take Liem to UN HRs meeting, then to Talitakum media, then take myself back to Oikos.

Rui is there, I talk to him about our obligations regarding the collection of rice, but it is like talking to a brick wall. I remind him that the last Oikos meeting with Enda agreed this would have to have priority, but Rui says, “I am in charge now!” Fair dinkum! I take Basilio and Lourenco home, they both complain about Rui.

Day 75. Wednesday 22nd December. Journalists’ Training Seminar at Hotel Turismo. I gave my talk about Radio and Radio Maubere 1976-1978, which they found interesting, as it was prior to their own experience. I noted there was no obligation to attend the sessions, and no testing involved. I reckon this is typical of training in Timor.

Go to Red+ to talk about Bags and trucks? OK for bags, so I go to ICRC warehouse to get them. Oikos for lunch, friends Graeme and Paul L are there. I make a comment about logistic problems of collecting rice (I wasn’t meant to be the logistician anyway!). Peter
reacts, but I remind Rui it's an Oikos problem. I ask if we have money to buy rice, and by the way, why is office now kept locked? Paul L says there's no money, as Oikos has just forked out for the tractor. I go to UN all afternoon, meeting with Lise/NGOs/Timorese, and Peter ICRC. UN Emmanuel offers UN helicopter before New Year, but no, we have to go there first.

Earlier, it was announced that the bridge into Viqueque had fallen down, but was being rebuilt by Thai support. A Care man said: why not go via Manatuto? That is half way to Baucau, along the north coast road, then south to that coast and across the plain and rivers to Viqueque? I said it is all very well for you, with 3 big 6WD trucks that can be linked together. I just have one old 2nd hand 4WD ute! But in fact we took this option. At dinner, Paul and Graeme want to chat, but I prepare for big trip. Bed 10.30.

Day 76. Thursday, December 23. First Aliambata trip. Up 4.30am, pack and load up. We go to Marcos' house, then head to Manatuto for breakfast, and meet several friends in their vehicle. As we drive down via Cribas, up and over mountain range and down to the coast road, we wonder where Natarbora is. Can't see, but no time to explore. So we head east. A little bus Bemo follows us to a big river. I'm just thinking, this is a good sign, when it turns around and disappears - not such a good sign! At least he might have watched us get across or drown. I ask Marcos if there are crocs here, and he is appalled, says if you don't talk about them or think about them, there won't be any, but... Anyway, no sign of track across. Can't walk in because of crocs, maybe, so we plunge Ute in, in low range, keep going, on and on. The old Nissan turbo diesel climbs out over the bank on the other side. Hooray!

On to Viqueque, we try to talk to UN, Priest and CNRT. UN not interested, Priest asleep, and CNRT sit having coffee across the street. Marcos says: don't go into their office and sit
down, don't! We sent a messenger across, but NUP, just wait I suppose. We have a long way still to go, so on we go (some repercussions later!). We see Beacu and warehouse where Marcos and FAO had slept, then to new Uatolari the Indonesians had set up. Fella wants exorbitant cash price for some paddy rice, so we head off, he swears at us, Marcos chuckles and says to me: he doesn't know who I am, I have a grandmother who speaks one local language, Makassae, and the other the other, Naueti. So Marcos gives him an earful back in his language as we head off.

At the next big river some men are in the water, apparently moving rocks to provide irrigation flow. One Marcos calls his brother, and he guides us in the right directions, a bit of a bent elbow shape.

Old Uatolari is up the hill to Left, but we head Right along the coast to Marcos' village Aliambata. Meet his family, then tour, see many village heads, people prefer cash, but will trade paddy rice ready for planting, for milled rice ready to eat. We can promise 50kg bags milled, their's will be more like 40 kg if in their own home made bags. I wish to set up tent to sleep, but the family has prepared a room for us, unfortunately I didn't bring enough sprays to slaughter quite all the mosquitos and other bugs. Ces goes to bed, I sit up talking until late, old fella talks about Commandos setting out in 1942 from near here to near Betano to be evacuated. Bed is nice, but bugs not good! (Xanana's father died today, mourning at his house in Dili.)

Day 77. Friday, December 24. Visit 5 villages at Marcos' direction. Leave empty sacks, other items, and agree to supply milled rice in return. Babula is way up a steep hill. Today Marcos sees one of his old grandmothers - I take photo.
A hectic morning. At about 2 pm we head back, taking an uncle to Viqueque, where we have an early dinner. I reckon we were the first car to cross the teak bridge north of the town built by Thai engineers, good fun. We got to Ossu on dark, and saw stunning waterfall plunges down just off and across road.

Waterfall at edge of road at Ossu.

Then we provide 2 motor bikes without lights the use of our headlights, until they turned safely right to Baucau, and we turned left to Dili. During a stop to fix our lights, Kieran Dwyer, an old activist friend and Tetun speaker, who has been made administrator of Baucau, stops to check and have brief chat. We pause at a relation’s house in Manatuto and get a cuppa, then on to Dili. A very long day and Xmas day next! Home about 11 pm.
Left: Marcos 1999 with the first crossing of the new teak bridge.

Right: Marcos 12 years later, now a Minister, reading Geoff McKee's presentation on oil and gas options.

That ends a very hectic 11th seven days!
Chapter 12 – twelfth 7 days, December 25-31

Christmas day, day off!  Saturday, day 78.  Wash, breakfast, chat.  Liem and Gil come for insulin from Dr Miko.  Lunch, chores/diary, visit Talitakum journalist’s house, then beach, visit Ces’ relations, and so spend time there and enjoy lots of chocolate. Bed, 10pm.

Day 79.  Sunday, December 26.  Drive around a bit with Liem, his friend is making a film, go Hera port and check out ice factory.  Don’t find permaculture mob, some finding their 'silver prevention' doesn't work too well for local malaria mosquitos.  Check out drink at Hotel Dili, meet Jose A Belo, home, shower, nap, visit Uncle Joao’s.

Day 80.  Monday Dec 27th.  It was meant to be holiday day.  Had a swim, first since Enda left.  Go to Olandina’s restaurant for coffee and cake.  Give Basilio his first ever driving lesson.  Make a truck booking for service on Wednesday, and Nissan for Friday.  Go to Oikos office, type report on Viqueque/Uatolari visit.  Rui needles me for taking Basilio away for 20 minutes - faark, it is Boxing Day after all.  I raise again, for the second time, his attitude, rules and crap, and lack of help.  I restate I require Basilio and most staff for the following week in Uatolari, big row, no concessions.  So I tell him I will take what I need, and what the Enda meeting agreed to.

He says then: I’ll pack and go.  Then I made my biggest mistake, I said, ‘hang on, I’ll help you pack’.  So he changed his mind.  But I believe he went to Darwin while we did the first big Aliambata trip (2nd trip).  I finish the report and go home.  I pop into UN at 5 pm, find 5.30 pm OCHA meeting still to happen, so attend.  Ask various questions regarding trucks.  Dinner at Uncle Joao’s.

Day 81.  Diary, planning talk with Marcos.  Go to UN and Care for Vege seeds, can't get any!  Ces and I both getting sick.

Day 82.  Wednesday.  Truck serviced at Toyota service center.  Take Ces to Red+ for Malaria test. It is positive. She takes Phasigyn (Tinidazole) antibiotic.

Day 83.  I go to Red+ for malaria test, it’s negative. But back by 11 am, feeling so crook they take blood sample. Lunch, then see visitors Liem and Saskia.  We go to hospital to get Mefloquine for me, taken at 2pm, 10.30pm, and dawn.  Probably worked for whatever, but I get sun-sensitive.  That’s a drag, since right arm will be exposed to sun on next trip (so have to drive with hand clenching inside long sleeve).  Paul Boulter is still around spreading his brand of lies - how destructive!  Perhaps I should have more thoroughly dealt with him, but now too sick!

Day 84.  Friday 31st December, 1999.  Nissan serviced at Toyota place, oil, filter, greased, and headlights.  Dr Paul takes me to Red+ to show rash, take blood test, and they want faecal test.  Asked if rash is like mossies biting?  YES.  But I’m a bit better pm, and Graeme helps by collecting Nissan.  I drive Ces to UN, CMOC - to get her on Hercules, to
Lino Lopes garage, and back, tired. Sleep. Up at about 9.30pm, we drag ourselves to UN organised party in front of Government Palace, just as it is being closed down, because our UN friends didn't ask any locals. They brought in a garish and very loud doof music band, which so upset solemn celebrations at Motael, a priest came over and required the noise to stop. Ces and I supported each other until midnight.

Then someone I knew from the Viegas family got on the microphone, wanting to count in the New Year/New Millennium, in Tetun. Spotting me he asked if I knew someone who could count backwards in Tetun, so I volunteered our interpreter, Nina, but didn't realise she had already over-celebrated. She climbed onto the stage, and failed to count, until the compere did and got under 10 when she joined in. Xanana and most senior Timorese were at another spot, the enclosed stadium, and didn't appear. Military seniors including Australian General Peter Cosgrove came and spoke. I complained to an organiser we don't want this event to be military - the military have enabled us to celebrate in freedom, but this is for the future!! None of us were asked to speak! We struggled home.

End of 12th 7 days; and end of Millennium.

On the stage in front of the government palace, counting in the New Year, backwards in Tetun, 1999.
An historic moment: the first New Year’s celebration for the new nation.
Chapter 13 – thirteenth 7 days, January 1 – 7, 2000

Day 85. Saturday 1st January 2,000, start of new Millenium!. Second trip to Aliambata. A sick start, let alone the evening before. Ces is so bad we go to Red+ again. Dr Miko gets a needle from Portuguese, and fugs her in the bum - it hurts, but helps. She is able to eat a bit, and drink, and take Panadol, then she sleeps, while I deal with my headache. I get fugged a day or two later, it allows one to hold down food, which is handy.

Day 86. Sunday. Peter gets Ces booked in on a Hercules. We visit her family members, then pack. At airport, I lecture her to act a bit chipper or she won't be allowed on the plane. She has to see Army doctor, but charmed him enough, they depart about 4 pm. I find a WV friend almost comatose with malaria I suppose, and identify him to the Doctor. He just couldn't fly that day. Back at home, I had a bad night.

Day 87. Monday 3rd. Big headache until about 11am. Have drink and aspirin, then only a small headache! Things looking up. Dr Sergio says the rash is an allergy, or I'm allergic or something. Take insulin back to Liem. Take Saskia (one of Dili Massacre heroes), and Sam to Timor Aid then Red+ to treat Sam's foot. Meet guys who want to talk about militia, then go to CMOC. Drop Marcos home, take Saskia and Jude to CNRT, wait then go, call at Yayasan Hak, and chat with Rousso, then home. Lunch with new but elderly Doctor Albert Forman from Darwin, who is going to help Dr Dan for a bit, allow him some time. He's actually an ENT and Eye doctor. That comes in handy later. But what a job, to replace Dr Dan even for a day or so!! Impossible!

I ’crash’! Later, make Tamarind brew, then ring Ces back in Darwin. She became a star at the hospital, having 2 sets of symptoms at once, especially the rash from Dengue, which was photographed daily - pity I haven't seen the rash or pics.

Day 88. Tuesday. Feel a bit better, plant out Paw Paw seedlings at house. Still looking for 3 tonne 4WD truck to swap with ours for a week. I was worried about a big ditch across the road, also general primitive roads. I shouldn't have worried, because when we got one later that day, and went to collect it Wednesday morning, they insisted we take their driver as well, which was problematic, and in retrospect our truck could have done the job!

Meet Emmanuel at CMOC. Panic! He intends to send huge 23 tonne load helicopter and load of milled rice to Viqueque, on Wednesday. We know a previous use of this helicopter had blown some huts apart, so we all agree to use an abandoned solid TNI base just north of Viqueque. We should have gone to the sports field at Aliambata, adjacent to sea. That would have saved a big lot. At this time, I can't imagine why we didn't think of that.

So Marcos and driver Herculano set off in Nissan for Viqueque. Marcos needs to organise lots of labourers to unload 20 tonnes, then 3 to guard the stash. I go to UN, OCHA,. They want me to find 20 labourers to load the giant helicopter. Fat chance. I'll be heading to
Viqueque. IOM helps instead, thanks fellas.

Also they will send big 3.5 tonne helicopter down on Thursday to begin taking our rice back to the agreed spot, Betano, and keep bringing more milled rice on each trip from Dili. I talk to helicopter liason fella at UN, and say we will be at Aliambata in Uatolari district, and take his finger and place it on Aliambata on the big wall map. But it seems I shouldn't even have mentioned Uatolari - the Uatolari district was still being confused with the Uatolari centre of admin, as I said established by TNI, see later. I get home after 8 pm.

Day 89. Wednesday, January 5. We exchange trucks at CRS. Their driver sets off with Basilio, with the idea to meet up in Venilale. I take TwinCab with Peter, call at Timor Aid and change 50,000 Rupees into smaller denominations. I do find the truck at Venilale, travel to TNI old airbase, and find our loaders and 20 t rice, and load truck and TwinCab with Rice. All going well! Truck heads to Aliambata, we follow. But I know Marcos' uncle's house, and as we go past I spot our Nissan there. The left hand side front brake was leaking fluid at a great rate. Marcos was trusting me to spot him. He finds a mechanic, who inserts a flat head small nail in the line to stem the flow. We refill, and get some spare brake fluid. And set off, this time I drive the Nissan, 3WB, that is, 3 wheel brake version, giving up the comfort of the new Toyota TwinCab. We get to Aliambata after dark, and after chats and dinner, to bed at 10.30pm, very tired. The 'boys' sleep in vehicles, Peter and me have a room each, I can't argue with that, and sleep well.

Crossing the river to Aliambata. Note the irrigation diversion rock bank.
Day 90. Thursday, January 6. Up 4.45 am to get an early start. We need to offload at Aliambata's sport field next to the sea, and collect the promised bags, also to employ locals as loaders. Marcos and I do this together of course. We are at the landing field next to the sea, and see the helicopter in the distance, despite waving like madmen which we probably were by then, it circles around, and goes to new Uatolari town! Bags of milled rice are unloaded there, don't know by who, in front of priest' house, a gift from the heavens! Incomprehensible! I told them ALIAMBATA!

Basilio is our money man, and kept busy. We collect rice locally with truck, with Julio and I in Nissan. Then truck to Viqueque for 60 bags. I go to Uatolari town to get more brake fluid, and get Twin Cab tyre fixed. I'm falling asleep, someone gives me coffee, it gets me back to Aliambata!

Day 91. Visit Vessoru – the next village to the east. Chefe is Marcos' aunt - for discussions. Some angry growers want money and there is no resolution. Then truck and Nissan off to Viqueque for more rice. Try to use police satellite phone, but can't get through. Load and return. Lunch about 3pm.

I want Jose to do another trip, but he bales up. I say then I will drive truck, he rejects this. I try to explain we need 2 trips/day to manage the situation, offer him overtime, he says no, but suggests he would like the 2 broken sacks of rice to help feed his family. I quickly agree, and off we go. Bit of rain. Have to pay loaders. One fit strong young fella, insisted on loading 2x50 kg bags on his shoulders, then insisted on another, then dumped them on the truck - I reckon he could have been trained to Olympic standard in due course! I call at CivPol Viqueque and ask for a visit next day Sat am. Back 10.30 to Aliambata, leave bags at different places, lowest bags in Nissan are damp. End of 13th 7 days, hectic and frustrating.
Chapter 14 - fourteenth 7 days, January 8-14

Day 92. Saturday 8th January. To Vessoru for extra negotiations, offer 'bribe' of 5 extra bags of rice, not accepted. Jose takes truck back to Dili, Peter, Basilio and Herculanem go in twin cab. Marcos and I still meeting. A CNRT fella or fellas arrive, and say it's all my fault for not notifying them (the ones drinking coffee and not being available to be notified! Anyway, why should we?). CivPol Bill Hadden and Capt Lim also arrive, I feel it is helpful to have their support seen. Marcos and I drive to Babulo up the hill, and other village - old Uatolari. I asked for some road repairs before next helicopter visit, (had to agree on some payments), as we had to transport much rice to and fro. Also Marcos and fellas build a cover of palm leaves over the stack of rice, and arrange 2 or 3 x 24 hour guards until we return. I also give Marcos his first driving lessons, to the amusement of locals.

Getting worn out, with headache and loose guts, horror drive back to Dili, close after Baucau and heading down the slope with 3 brakes, suddenly around a steep corner an Interfet truck straddled the road, and stopped, the driver in shock at us bearing down. I didn't know what the drop off was to the left, so aimed for his back wheel and jammed the brakes hard. Car pulled up in a straight line on the three brakes. Good old Nissan! I was amazed, and looking up, so were the faces of soldiers in the truck. Still a long drive back, home by 9pm.

Day 93. Me very unwell, unblock toilet, boil water, etc. Dr Paul departs noon for Same. I ring brothers in Kangaroo Valley, media in Darwin, Ces in Darwin 2x, etc, bed early.

Day 94. Monday 10th January. Tentatively feeling better, take Panadol, and spring
vegetable soup. Fella wants job with Oikos, but I really am too busy, and his English is not up to standard, better than my Tetun though. He's angry. I go with Peter with Nissan to Toyota centre, it needs new brake cylinder etc.

Peter, Lourenco and I go to CRS warehouse, wait, then walk to CRS to talk to people about trip. I'm accused of overworking their driver Jose and not paying O/T. I ask if he told you he opted for 2 broken bags of rice instead - NO - oh well, that's different. We agree we can collect some gardening/household items for our next trip.

Take someone to airport, talk to Fr Jose from Fuiloro agric college near Los Palos, about SSB radios. After lunch at Oikos, I go to OCHA/WFP to try to talk about helicopter disaster, I'm told they wasted a trip, I say you caused me to waste 3 days with all our staff! (Not quite wasted, but). But not quite the time to lock in next helicopter trip!
I take Marcos home, go to house, then OCHA 5.30 meeting, not feeling very chipper, as though people looking at me think it was all my fault! Home, chat to our Dr Albert, take Peter to Dom Bosco.

Day 95. Ego Lemos comes to house with Graeme, talk, Peter takes him to Timor Aid, then takes Graeme to airport and meets Enda and new Dr Ilona. I think about Ego/Atauro, I mean Enda has told me I should employ more helpers/reps. So I offer Ego - who has done an Agriculture degree - 2 days/fortnight or 2 days/3 weeks with Oikos to monitor Atauro. He is interested in learning more about or promulgating Permaculture, but this will provide the cash to live by. He's happy.

House, then with Marcos to Agriculture meeting, for hour and half. Lunch. Apply to CMOC for helicopter to Aliambata, the form goes to OCHA, get later, CMOC, CivPol re communications, meet various including admin guy from Ermera. Tea with Drs Albert and Ilona, Rui, Ego, Peter and moi. Chat. Bro Dan Courtney and Peter Jacobson call in, to talk about northern Aileu villages.

Day 96. Wed 12th January. Ring Rocha's, find Jervis Bay docked, meet Ines coming off, and take to her brother's house, took pics of him with new tools brought over, brekker at Oikos. Paul Toohey 'The Australian' journalist visits Oikos, then we go Olandina's for lunch. I go to CivPol re message to Aliambata, CMOC, UN PR, Red+. Peter and Marcos go to Ermera (not sure why). 5.30 OCHA meeting, goes to after 7. Dr Fernando and Ego find fishing boat/canoe to go to Atauro, load 9 bundles of mossie nets, I give Ego R50.000.
Day 97.  Ring from Graeme, asks me to ring Jim Godlove, Phillips Petroleum Darwin (now ConocoPhillips), over hand-tractors. Enda arrives back from his Xmas holiday, has arranged for an old friend of his to go to Mana Lu's training centre and tell her how to be more efficient!!  But they arrived back with Tomasia after a couple of days - I would say not happy campers. I think Sr Lurdes didn't appreciate being told how to run her show, I could have told them that and saved the money. They parted early. I wondered how much money was wasted.

Go Care for seeds order, then to office to type report, lunch with Enda plus. Sr Lurdes (Mana Lu) arrives with sweet little girl who loves singing, which she does to us for ages, Peter rings Enda to come back over, Lurdes wants tractor at Laleia?? on weekend.

I collect Nissan from Toyota, all brakes done, to office and type Aliambata report, send Lourenco and Marcos to Care. Take Ines for a drive, see Victoria - activist, visit white sands beach, then CNRT where Ines' husband had assisted. Take roads/labour project note to OCHA - maybe this was Timor Aid/Richard re employing gangs of workers with hand tools, serviced by vehicles, to do road repairs etc, rather than using big machinery. Not feeling well, take a Panadol and have a good lie down.

Day 98. Friday 14th January. Dr Albert agrees to see Lita, Ines' brother, later today. Marcos comes with me to Timar Aid, CNRT, then I type more Aliambata report, Marcos and Lourenco get Vegetable and Bean seed from Care. I try to brief Enda a bit on seed and the Rui saga, Peter also, but not successful as Enda claims to be tired. He doesn't talk with me until the last minute next weekend when I'm trying to head back to Aliambata! Some skulduggery is being hatched!!

I go to see Lita, go to Dr Dan's. but Dr Albert has gone home. At 3pm he sees Lita, and diagnoses Cataracts, and provides letter to Dr Mu in Darwin. Lita is profoundly deaf, yet is a respected refrigeration mechanic etc, so to lose sight would be even more problematical. His sister Ines, a former nurse, and family, are determined to help.

We unload truck of the seed, and I go to Dr Dan's to look at his flooding issue. OCHA meeting and WFP, talk Shiga and Emmanuel, they agree to reschedule Aliambata helicopter flights. They want us to put one of our staff on the first trip, and I should take a Satellite Phone. But as we don't have one, (whaat?), they will lend, but if I don't make contact on arrival they won't come!! Fair enough if all goes well. I take Ines and Lita to tea at Pedro's on the sea side, meet Michael, Gus Withnall who wants to help, and others.
Day 99. Saturday
Office most of day doing report - jeez, I didn't remember doing so much reporting, I bet Oikos files are well stocked, and Enda shouldn't complain - but he will! Fellas get some seed from WFP for Dili distribution. I am driving Nissan past Lino's garage whereupon the newly allegedly repaired front brake falls off. I leave it with Lino, taxi home. Ring Ces at home in Darwin.

Day 100. re Nissan, need to find right bolt. Office 2x, Timor Aid, meet many, WFP re Helicopter request for some priority, see family mob, etc. Dr Paul and Peter go to Same. Its the first day I start to feel well, or weller! - that's a help. Peter Vanderfield, a volunteer - but is getting more essential.

Day 101. Monday 17th January. Office before 7, type report on Oikos Agriculture progress so far, 1.5 pp, give to Enda for Portugal HQ! Visit WFP several times, catch Emmanuel eventually and we agree on a helicopter program for Thursday/Friday. At office, without consultation, Enda has rung Dr Paul requiring Lourenco to bring TwinCab back, (Enda asserting his authority now he's back and unaware of all that's happened meantime!) Its not vital, and Dr Paul could do with some transport mean time. Anyway, its agreed I ring Dr Paul and cancel. Go to Timor Aid for advice, see various.

Day 102. To office. Discuss arrangements for helicopter support with Enda and Rui. I go to OCHA/WFP. Agriculture meeting at 11, not many attend, I sort-of chair. Meet Plan people, lunch Oikos. Raining most of day. Timorese seniors help me locate Jim Godlove, Phillips, and guy from Joint Authority Timor Gap. WFP again, Emmanuel happy to handle Dili end of big helicopter gig. For the radio: I will be 'November Kilo 1', Emmanuel is 'Whisky Lima 11' - oh, this is so exciting, if people are at the other end when required!! (Get Satellite phone Saturday). Good on the UN!!

Eric Hotung, benefactor, invites me to reception, attend in truck, take Jude, put 'For Sale' note in NGO boxes at OCHA, as per Enda demand. I thought it was someone else' job, but really, after the next Aliambata trip we can do with one ton vehicles for passengers and stuff - we can still have the trailer, and not the truck.

Day 103. Pack, Rui says to take Nissan to Toyota for another check, so I do, obediently, but all OK (Rui doesn't know Lino Lopes!). CRS re contract, can't sign as printed, go Warehouse with trailer and collect load of tarps, hoes, rakes, forks, jerry cans and blankets. Go to house, and re jig load with Marcos,(working like a slave but getting strong, same for me, actually comes in handy later), tie tarpaulins over load. After lunch go to WFP again, Emmanuel has to delay helicopter until Monday/Tuesday, OK by me. Visit both houses, some unrest in Bairo Pite and road near Dr Dan's blocked, take Dr Albert to dinner.
Day 104 Thursday 20th. Enda trying to reassert his authority, no matter if it is inappropriate and illogical and tires more his hard working staff!! I mean, I have worked almost independently for 100 days, often when Enda is not around, and unofficially 'manage' our Timorese staff. I dig drain at Dr Dan's 6-7.30, as he is being flooded still by burst pipe. Enda can't mind me doing that, surely - but he does! Wait for Marcos, Sr Lurdes girls come re tractor, Max at Dr Dan's rings re drainage again, I visit again, this time find the broken pipe, and get water fellas to come and seal it, good idea!, then get tractor going.

Enda must have fallen out with Dr Dan, he's cranky, wants Nissan to go to Aileu, don't know why. He insists on me taking truck loaded with implements to Mana Lu's at Loess, its a long way, I don't even know where her place is, Enda has never been along that road, it should be a full day trip, but he insists. I ask why, he lies and his face shows it, and says the truck is programmed elsewhere Friday. I realise I'm on the way out!! Find people, Mana Lu's girls and Mike Hartnell, Marcos, lunch and go west to near Loess River, 80 km in Timor. Mike wants to see the school where he helped in the August 30th ballot in Liquica, it then got destroyed by TNI militia. We see Fr Rafael. So at Loess we pull the implements, not even connected together, off the truck on land of the CNRT leader. Come back again through Maubara, see graves by the sea; Liquica, home, dinner. Job not half done. Nice one Enda!
Mike G asks me to meet a delegation from Uatolari that evening, trying to resolve a long running issue between 2 language groups, I try to act presidential, that's hard! I say I can't comment on your exact situation, its up to you to sort out I think, but where I come from, the traditional land owners often talk about what was their fathers, grandfathers and their grandfathers before, and this still applies! So I don't know if that is a useful reflection. I still don't know, but we parted friends.

Day 105. Take truck to office, Nissan has flat tyre, go Untaet, home, Dr Dan's, Marcos comes over and we talk through the issues and plans again. Lunch, go to CRS and get many extra hoes, its all heavy, home, check tyres. With Marcos repack car and trailer again with the load, have to leave out blankets. OCH 5.30 meeting, brief Bangladesh Military attache possibly Brigadier Haider re Jordan troops. Enda wants Saturday meeting, after I get Satellite ph from UN. I mean it is Saturday, we get sent on a wild goose chase Thursday, and do heavy lifting Friday, and have to drive to Uatolari Sunday - fair crack of the whip!
Chapter 16 - sixteenth 7 days – January 22-29.
3rd Aliambata trip.

Day 106 Saturday 22nd January. Get Satellite phone, have to sign for it, told if no contact no helicopter - oh, lovely! Whisky Lima 11 for Emmanuel, WL 13 for offside, I only get November Kilo 1!! Reminds me of Radio Maubere days. Ring Enda at 11.45 when finished at UN, he criticise me again, anything!, I'm annoyed and tired, or tired and annoyed. Anyhows, after lunch we get into a long meeting, he says my work effort is fantastic, he never knew anyone worked as hard (I concur), but my personal relations are 'shocking'! Well, maybe with dickheads, I expect he is reflecting on the rows with Rui when he hasn't even talked to me about these, after all I was upholding Enda's last meeting instructions. And my relations with Timorese, and activists, and most, are fantastic.

He says a new agriculturalist is coming while I'm in Uatolari, he has skills in agriculture, whereas mine are clearly with logistics. So I go into 'Yes Minister' mode, and say: I know you are going to sack me! He denies this, and praises with faint praise, so I say: now I'm sure you intend to sack me. I say I have had to do your job really, organising - he denies all, even though it is true, this makes me feel better. Meeting goes long time - bastard!

I mean, I was recommended by Bishop Ted for my agricultural expertise, but mainly had to be flat out on logistics, never had any authority position, just operated by good relations, yet he says my relationships are 'shocking'! Then he employs a logistics fella Rui who countermands his own instructions, and I get blamed! Now he brings in new guy to do what I loved to do. Jeez! I knew something was happening, as he refused to talk to me. What sort of management is this?

I fuel up, need to get bag from UN, meet up with Lise again, dinner with Lito and Ines, try out Satellite phone, etc.

Day 107. Sunday - Departure day for Aliambata. Towing heavily loaded trailer with no spare, and starting tired! Up 4.45, chores, drive to Marcos' house, about to leave, people waving, when Ces, suffering Dengue after-effects, rings and wants to engage on when I'm coming home and/or where she might be. I say I'm just off, now not the time for long chat, and will contact you when I get back. I think Marcos wondered why I just took off - I admit I was upset. Have to drive extra carefully, especially on bumps, cos of trailer and its load. Come across a cluster of various friends near Baucau, nice, brief chat.
Meanwhile in Dili Enda insists on a hard meeting with Dr Paul, when he was due to drive to Same - a many hours trip under these conditions. His car is hit by an Australian Army truck that day, they don't accept responsibility for accidents, I feel Paul's meeting with Enda was not coincidental.

Meanwhile we get to Viqueque, via Baucau, call in to brief CivPol, see various uncles and a priest, on and on to cross the big river at dusk, Aliambata about 7. Use Satellite phone to ring WFP, no one knows who what why I am calling, but maybe the message got passed on, as the helicopter did arrive next day. I also ring our Peter V, to confirm he must be on the first helicopter, and my upset buddy was very useful after all!!
Day 108. Monday 24th January. Helicopter arrives OK bringing 50 bags, our team swings into action and reloads with our paddy rice. Peter tells me it was still going to new Uatolari, he said to pilot: er, I don't think that is right, so they looked around further. Helicopter does 2 visits, then back to Dili for refuelling. Enda gets himself and JoAnne (with UN in Same) onto flight deck, and turns up. He sees our team swing into action, says to me: this is fantastic, why don't you have media here to cover it? So I remind him he was insistent that I leave all media to him, despite me saying we were adept at using media well, and this was a key to our activist success. I ask Marcos to take him to the village and meet the leaders (and get him out of our way!). By the time he wanders back we have the helicopter reloaded and waiting. Heli pics by Peter vd Field.

Sometimes the helicopter used a sling under it, which we could unload and load on the ground, took about 70 bags. Sometimes the load was inside. There were 2 loads, to Betano, rice growing area, on coast from Same - then a break as it returned to Dili for fuel, and milled rice; then another 2 loads, then lunch, then again. (At the finish there was one load sent to Ainaro - unloaded at Priests house - they also probably wonder where it came from and why!) There was rice grown all over Timor on the flats, but also some on hillsides. Of course before all the seed rice - paddy - was destroyed by militia, there would have been local varieties, matching the soil conditions and elevation etc. What we sent from Uatolari would not have matched all local requirements, but I hope some was better than none. Due to my unfortunate Oikos redundancy I was unable to monitor this aspect. And I had functioned as a rice agronomist for several years in the nearby tropics!

The team tended to get stuffed towards the 3 tonne load mark, often after unloading 3 t of 50 kg bags - this by fellas who just came out of military occupation and half starved for 24 years. I used to help at the finish, especially to push bags further forward into the helicopter, to help balance it. If possible I liked to be there, anyway. But we had a huge job to do between trips, 50 kg bags of milled rice to take to villages, as agreed, and maybe
some more paddy to bring in. Most paddy had been stored under a temporary shelter beside the landing field, to be loaded on these 2 days.

A fella known to be a thug walks to Aliambata to try to force me to take his 2 bags, after not being interested before. He sharpens his machete on a rock as a stand off continues. I repeat I have nothing left, and no money. He climbs into my Nissan, but I had taken the keys, he looks around and under dash, I signal him to get out, but he doesn't. I gesture to some men, they come over and persuade him to leave - still a worry though. Marcos said to me that people are not sure about you, they think maybe you can fight!! I tried to keep up that image, and was getting strong with all the lifting, came gratis for Oikos! (Didn't ever see Enda help!!)

Handling UN rice Aliambata

We have to attend some sort of party with senior people up the hill at Afaloica village that evening, after taking 5 loads of milled rice there. I'm uncomfortable, frankly, but we survive.

Day 109. early brekker, I ring Peter to ask helicopter to go to Vessoru landing field. It does, and he gets off and stays. It stops as I arrive with return load, + 16 bags in Nissan. Load milled rice to Vessoru, still hard negotiations, leave, load sling, take more to upper villages. In fact I drove for 2 days in low range 4WD, 9x up the steep mountain hill loaded up, and when I tried high range on heading home, I had to drop it back in after one km.

Marcos wants us to visit Babulo again to avoid future trouble for his village. Peter had said never again due to threatening attitudes, but bravely comes for last meeting. Marcos' brothers line the Nissan sideboards, some get brushed by overhanging vegetation as we go, especially in the bits Marcos drove, but are undeterred! I noticed
they had short machetes stuck into the back of their pants - a precaution! We sit in room, crowd crowds in, I get my back to wall, holding my heavy mobile phone, Peter is exposed, but doesn't flinch. I say I will not discuss while that fella (a different one) is wandering around waving his machete, the young Chefe is in a difficult position, but gets the machete released. Basically people want more, despite all the gardening tools, soap etc brought in as extras. One of Marcos' brothers spots a man going to our car, intent on cutting the brake line he thought, would have had us dead for sure, as road was so steep, but he clears him away. As it gets dark I say to the Chefe, this is not fair and proper you holding us here until after dark. He denies this, but time is running out. I write a promisory note to return with more supplies, with 'if possible' at the end. I sign, and they let us go.

Day 110. Wednesday, epic trip home, via Los Palos. Discussions with family, Marcos says the angry guy at Vessoru will accept 2 more bags, the other machete man has said he will catch us going out. We need to visit Vessoru anyway, and it would be nice to ask about rice at Uatocarabau, further on, though someone said the road is out to Illiomar close to Los Palos. I find the back of the Nissan full of Marcos' family, I say why don't or didn't you go with truck direct, they say: 'Timorese Driver!' Oh! Road to or past Vessoru does a tight loop thru the scrub, and with the trailer on the back it is awkward. I slide car around. After Uatocarabau there is this huge river, we creep down the bank, cross a small stream, down a sandy bit, across more shallow water, up past the incomplete bridge, then across more bits, I reckon 9 sections - anyway, we get to where the water is about 30m wide and flowing fast and level at maybe 40-50 cm deep.

Pause for breath, I ask people to stay put, for ballast, not much choice really, as it would have been dangerous to try to ford on foot, we get across OK, I think the trailer floated a bit, scrambled up the far side, and thought, hooray, we have made it! But then there was an anabranch, shallow water but muddy horror stretch. We crawl through this, wondering if we would make it, Peter wanted to get out to push, but no way, deep mud! When we did emerge, I could see the trailer axles had been under the mud, so we were bulldozing as we went. Great jubilation! But more to come. A tree across the road, we pulled it off, I nearly pulled it into car, silly boy!
Another tree block, this time we divert off road and around.

Another big river, but this time a big bridge looked OK, as we approach the far end, I realise much of the bank leading up has fallen away. After close inspection, and unloading passengers, Marcos guides me to scrape car along the bridge edge, then with maybe 6" left of dirt on RH side, we scramble down. Relief! We would definitely have been the last across. Family re-convenes in the back, and we keep going. Getting towards lliomar we stop by some rainforest, first I had seen, and have a bite to eat. On to lliomar, and hand out some last remaining packs of bean seeds to people we see.
From Iliomar to Los Palos up on the plateau we come across cleared ground, with coarse grass regrowth. I can recognise this as early times after clearing, and I'm sure it was when TNI had used bulldozers and probably flown heavy duty weedicides over, as they did before in Timor, to remove cover from resistance forces. I had read they had done this here. Horses etc were now grazing, and I could see that restoring the forest would probably not happen.
Arrive at Los Palos, I talked with UN fella who seemed to be glad of a chat, also Care. We have to go, get to Baucau just after dark, then to Dili 10pm - I noted 'great trip'. (Peter's diary note said it was a 'great achievement').

Day 111. Thursday 27th January. Phone Ces 3 times, trying to get thru. Unpack, see Ines (her Mum), get fuel 130 l, 640 km, visit Timor Aid, UN/WFP, return Satellite phone and radio, all very happy this time, told how much I'd achieved. Lunch, meet Carlos the new allegedly gun agronomist from Angola. He had nothing much to say. Oikos meeting 2-5pm. Enda has choice of me doing wanted report, or going to Same to distribute seed - he opts for me doing report(s). Go to UN to arrange travel, take Neil O'Sullivan to World Bank, Ines again, drinks on accommodation ship, see toilet sewage drifting out untreated in a long line - people catch fish and swim here! Dinner at house.

Day 112. While I type report, Lourenco, Marcos and Carlos drive to Same to stay, then take rice bags from Betano to villages. Carlos orders Marcos out of the house. Marcos says no, this is the Oikos house where I stay. Not with me, says black Angolan x Portuguese man brought in to upgrade agriculture services, and presumably to have improved personnel relations compared to me? Racist prick! Great choice, Enda! (He is given 3 months to do a report on the way forward, while I am given 4 months of hard slog, then offloaded. Faark you, Oikos).

Put form in to return to Darwin Monday. 5.30 pm go to OCHA - last meeting for me. Look for my CDs. Dr Albert signs off on Lito's X-Ray. Drinks with Richard and others.

End of 16th 7 days, and what a big one!
Chapter 17 - seventeenth 7 days, to make 117!

Day 113. Saturday 29th Feb. See Ines, get CDs, office and do typing corrections, go UNPOL, CRS, etc, CMOC, Army for de-briefing about Uatolari etc  Dinner with all. Enda insists I finish Loess chores re cultivators!!

Day 114. Go to Loess with Richard (who advised on buying them) and Zinda ...no bolts to fix gear, can't recall anything else, can't read my last cramped diary notes, (prob traumatised?!), return, pub, truck to office, house, pack. Wasted arvo, as I knew would be. Thanks again Enda.

Day 115. Monday 31st January is spent getting ready to fly, and flying out late, get to Darwin after dark. But in that morning, Marcos comes to chew the fat, and report in on Same visit. Family next door has efficiently provided us with meals since we got the house in Bairo Pite, I have got to know them quite well, now Enda expects the lady, Rosalina, to walk to new house carrying fod and gear, she is angry, so there is talk. I am embarrassed from a distance. Rui grabs the kitchen gear from our house - he doesn't know who it belongs to, and takes to new house. Maybe I asked him about it, he infers I knocked off plumbing tools - the prick - lucky for him it was just inferring, and I was on my way. I mean, fair dinkum!

Fabio and Mandy - great Sydney filmmakers and friends - drop by for a chat, and to ask when they could go on the helicopter. Despite Enda's exhortations about media, I had told them about our Aliambata work, and insisted they had only those 2 days to get on the helicopter and film our hard work, and Aliambata, but they didn't take me seriously enough apparently. Last clean of room, left some clotlies and files etc. (When I got the flick, this was packed and maybe sent to Darwin.)

Fly to Darwin, arrive after dark, met by Ces, and we go to real home.

That's it really.

Spend days catching up with Darwin chores, on 117th day I get paid!

Tuesday 1st Feb. Block chores, shop, do film interview with Bruce Honeywill re history of main events in Timor over last 24 years. Becomes part of his film: The Road to Freedom goes thru Hell.

Wednesday. Get some salary paid, meet activist friends.

Thursday. Dentist for big filling as a result of Timor time! More in following days. Media interview.
Friday. Oikos Darwin - give Robbie keys (did I have some in pocket by mistake??). Pay phone account (did I get it paid, or have to pay, not sure).

Saturday, February 5. **Enda rang to inform me they had a better person to go on with.** HA! I, expecting this, insist on a month’s pay in lieu. He says we’ll see about that. I say yes we will, I will be persistent on this. Our finance man Paul finds I am owed living allowance and salary, total quite a bit, though 1/3rd what Enda gets. I did get my month in lieu!!

Sunday, February 6. **I get the sacking letter on day 121,** and extra monies owing on day 122, so that’s it, I’m happy to just claim 117 days.

I’ll just say that sometime later (a year or two) I called in to the Oikos office in Dili, was enthusiastically greeted by various Timorese I had known, and met Enda’s replacement, Anna. She was enthusiastic, saying she feels she knows me, has read all my reports, they made her feel she was there. I told her that’s how I tried to write them. I asked re the Angolan Carlos' report, she said yes, do you know how much it was worth? She held her finger and thumb apart and closed them tight. I wanted a copy. She said she would send, but I haven’t seen it.

Day 121. Robbie gives me Enda’s “sacking letter”. Here it is. See what you think:

OIKOS (Letterhead - cooperacao e desenvolvimento)  
www.oikos.pt  
oikos.sec@oikos.pt  
5th Feb 2000

Dear Rob,

Following our telephone conversation of this morning, I am writing to confirm the decision to end your period of work with OIKOS here in East Timor.

I would like to thank you most sincerely for your excellent efforts and hard work during the emergency phase when you made such a significant contribution to OIKOS’ work by way of maize/corn, bean, vegetable and rice seed procurement and distribution, as well as a small number of hand tools. There is no doubt that thousands of East Timorese will be harvesting their own food in the coming months due to your efforts.

OIKOS now plans to move to a more community-based rural development approach where different skills and experience are needed.

<the next 4 paragraphs related to my final payments. All OK, I never ever checked by doing calculations, but it did include my month in lieu.>

Regarding your personal effects which remain in the Bairo Pite house, you should confirm to
us here if you wish these to be packed and returned to you in Darwin.

Finally, let me express once again OIKOS' appreciation for all the good work you did in very difficult circumstances here in Timor over the past months.

Every good wish,
Yours sincerely
Enda Byrne

East Timor Programme Coordinator
cc OIKOS Lisbon, OIKOS Darwin Office

THE END, for now!

The author on a visit to Timor Leste in 2012, with Presidente elect Taur Matan Ruak
Appendix 1

IPS: East Timor Aid Workers Warn of Food Politics

by Sonny Inbaraj

DILI, Nov 23 (IPS) All's not well in the urgent distribution of food and seeds in East Timor, before the heavy monsoon rains expected this week makes planting impossible and roads impassable.

While East Timor's leaders have accused the United Nations of marginalising them, aid workers, however, claimed the territory's leading political group was interfering in their work in villages.

Rob Wesley-Smith, a team leader and agricultural consultant with the Irish aid group Oikos, said his agency worked alongside the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) to help mobilise farmers so that his aid workers and volunteers could work together with them.

But lately, he has encountered problems.

"We're racing against time and depend heavily on local CNRT people to help us in the logistics of distributing the seed to villagers. But now we come across cases where the local CNRT head virtually insisted on all the seed going into his store-room where he could distribute it in his own time, which is very slow," said Wesley-Smith.

Wesley-Smith said if the tail-end of the planting season is missed, hunger would be widespread and may well leave the East Timorese without food for the next six months.

"I didn't come here to distribute seed to a warehouse. I've come to distribute seed to the people quickly," said the angry agricultural consultant. "Lots of farmers have not been able to plant their fields as they wish. In some cases they might not be able to plant before the wet season."

Added Wesley-Smith: "The NGOs are struggling to get seed out to the districts and sub-districts and if there is any organisation there that doesn't jump in and help immediately, then it's a great shame. We'll then have several disasters on our hands."

Last week, there were signs that the relationship between CNRT and the UN was becoming strained.

CNRT last month appointed a six-member commission to advise the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) that is expected to rule the devastated territory for the next two or three years.
UNTAET will formally take over the stewardship of East Timor and be responsible for everything from visas to currency and the enormous task of reconstruction after pro-Indonesia militias went on an orgy of killing and destruction in the wake of the Aug 30 ballot that led to a vote of independence.

But a senior CNRT member said UNTAET was trying to sideline CNRT.

"The UN is a new colonial power and they're trying to marginalise us," said Mario Carrascalao, the leader of a CNRT contingent that accompanied a World Bank mission to East Timor recently.

Wesley-Smith agreed there was miscommunication between the UN, humanitarian agencies and CNRT.

"It's a two-way street," he said. "CNRT should make its structures visible. They should attend NGO planning meetings, and in turn NGOs should invite CNRT."

Added Wesley-Smith: "Many Timorese have complained that the English spoken at the meetings has been too quick for them to comprehend -- so the NGO people themselves have to be sensitive to take into account these people and not make them feel marginalised."

On Nov 19, CNRT head Xanana Gusmao met UNTAET head Sergio Vieira de Mello for a whole day.

"We needed to clear the air. There was a feeling on the part of CNRT that we were not including them, that we were not listening," Vieira de Mello told reporters here.

Xanana called the discussion with Vieira de Mello the beginning of a process to which he pledged his full commitment.

"We have been political activists for a long period. Now we have to get the practical skills to manage our country," said Xanana.

But Indonesian sociologist Dr George Aditjondro said that there was now pressure on CNRT to act as a government, even if was not yet ready for such a role.

"It's just like prematurely ripening a mango using carbide gas instead of allowing it to ripen naturally on the tree," said the University of Newcastle sociology lecturer, currently in East Timor researching material for his new book on the financial empire of former Indonesian president Suharto.

Added Aditjondro: "So CNRT is beginning to function as a government. They have the self-perception that they are the government and outside bodies like UNTAET try to minimise opposition by treating them (CNRT) as such. And that's where the bureaucracy has started to creep in."
"The point is how CNRT, currently led by an elite group that had been away from the country for the past 24 years, is going to develop a government based on Timorese culture at the grassroots where the local headman or 'liurais' play a big part," asked Aditjondro, whose writings on East Timor had earned him the wrath of the Suharto government.

Meantime, Aditjondro expressed alarm that food aid was being politicised.

"This is coming back to the old 'cargo cult' in many indigenous societies because if you have the cargo, you can create a dependency of the people on you -- thereby the cargo will be translated into political power," he said.

Last week Xanana embarked on a tour of East Timor, visiting its devastated villages. It was a chance for the people to see their idolised guerrilla leader in the flesh and at the same time tell him their problems. His message has been for them not to rely on international aid, but to take up the challenge of rebuilding their towns and villages themselves.

"CNRT has got a potential to be an excellent organisation but someone has to squash any notions of overbearing demagoguery. CNRT has to be like any democratic government serving the people -- if there's a problem then Xanana has to deal with it pretty quickly," said Wesley-Smith. (END/IPS/ap-dv-ip/si/js/99)
Appendix 2

IPS: East Timor 'Ghost Town' Raises Disturbing Questions

by Sonny Inbaraj

SAME, East Timor, Oct 18 (IPS) - An eerie silence engulfed this town, 110 km south of East Timor's capital Dili, as the first international aid convoy made its way here after journeying seven hours through a tortuous mountain trail.

The convoy of aid workers, bringing rice, blankets and medicine, found only a handful of people out of a population of 23,000 when it arrived here last week.

The town at the foot of Mount Kabulaki and once the seat of government of chief Dom Boaventura, who rebelled against the Portuguese in the late nineteenth century, is now almost totally destroyed by retreating militias controlled by Indonesian military.

The few remaining houses, now occupied by East Timorese refugees, are those that belonged to Indonesian transmigrants or militia members.

That's about the only human life in the town. Even the stray dogs seem to have fled.

"This seems like a ghost town," said convoy leader Rob Wesley-Smith, an agriculture consultant with the Irish aid group Oikos. "I've gone on other convoys, but this is the worst so far."

A question that rankles the mind is: Where is the rest of Same's population?

"I used to have about 800 people taking communion every Sunday," said Father Gelasio de Silva, parish priest. "Last Sunday there were only 50."

Father Gelasio, a Catholic priest who returned to his homeland after 10 years in Australia, said the bulk of the population were still hiding in the hills.

"They're just too afraid to come down. They think the militia are still around and will only feel safe if Interfet (International Force in East Timor) troops are here," he explained.

However, Interfet troops have yet to make their way to Same in East Timor's Manufahi region. Armed escort to the convoy that arrived here toward midnight Thursday -- a joint Oikos-Timor Aid operation -- was provided by resistance Falintil Region 3 fighters under Commander "Quito".

On the way here, there were fears of an ambush by the Abalai militia group believed to be still operating in small numbers around Betano port -- 50 km from the town.
In Dili on Friday, Interfet commander Major General Peter Cosgrove admitted that hundreds of pro-Indonesia armed militia remained active in East Timor.

"We actually want them to lay down their arms and if they feel they can't do that, well, don't come into East Timor," he told reporters in response to the spotting of 150 militia members in Liquica, about 60 km west of Dili.

A number of clashes have been reported between UN troops and militia, including one Saturday near Marko, some 5 km from Indonesian-controlled West Timor, that resulted in the deaths of three militiamen. That was the fourth clash in 10 days.

Interfet forces, most of them Australian, arrived in East Timor on Sept 20, but only recently moved outside the main cities of Dili and Baucau toward the western frontier.

Reinforcements from South Korea and Thailand are expected this week, to enable Australian troops to reach the southern and eastern districts of East Timor.

Aid agencies have complained the multinational forces are moving too slow through the troubled territory.

The scale of slaughter in East Timor, after the East Timorese voted for independence in the UN-supported Aug 30 referendum, is still unknown. Rights groups say the territory-wide purge was well-planned, with refugees recounting Indonesian military-backed militias working from lists as they singled out victims.

Ross Mountain, the UN humanitarian coordinator for East Timor, said as many as 300,000 refugees are still unaccounted for, in a territory with an estimated population of 850,000.

"The missing refugees are a question we are very concerned to find the answer to. There are presumably tens of thousands still in the mountains, but we are certainly not seeing the numbers add up," he added.

Father Gelasio said large numbers of the population, in Same, were also taken away to neighbouring West Timor by the militias.

"I know of many Same people who were forced at gunpoint by the militias to board trucks heading toward Atambua across the border on Sept 4," he said. "Many were also taken to Betano port and shipped to Kupang port in West Timor."

Father Gelasio said he believed many could have gone missing on their way to Kupang and feared they might be dead.

Amnesty International, in a recent report, cited an incident on Sept 11 where East Timorese were killed when being forcibly transported by ship from Dili to Kupang. The bodies, said Amnesty, were then dumped overboard.

The Catholic priest himself was threatened by five militia members. "They wanted me to
leave the church but I stayed put. Then they started to fire shots at the church building to frighten me," Father Gelasio said, pointing to the bullet-riddled walls of his church.

Guilermo Marcal, who just returned from hiding in the hills, recalled seeing 30 trucks taking away people. "The Abalai militias just turned up with these trucks and forced everyone in my village to get into them. They said we were taken to Atambua for our own safety."

Marcal and his family managed to slip away and under the cover of darkness made the steep trek up the hills. "There's no food in the hills and we were surviving on just leaves and roots. Hunger forced us to make our way down to Same town," he said.

"There're still lots and lots of frightened hungry people up there," said the old farmer, pointing to Mount Kabulaki. "Please don't let the outside world forget us."

But Mount Kabulaki, too, has an interesting tale.

Dom Boaventura, who managed to unite the island's tribes against the Portuguese in a bloody 16-year campaign, had his base in Mount Kabulaki. He was finally subdued by Mozambican troops drafted into the Portuguese army in August 1912. In the ensuing battle, thousands died and 3,000 rebel troops taken prisoner.

"The spirit of Dom Boaventura is still very much alive. He will protect our people in Kabulaki," said Lorenzo da Costa, who is in his early seventies. He had seen the Japanese land in East Timor during World War II and helped Australian troops sent to fight them.

"Interfet is like the Australian troops during the Japanese time. Please ask them to come to Same fast to save us," he added.

Father Gelasio was more down-to-earth. "As you can see, everything here is in ruins. But for 24 years we had survived a brutal occupation. The Indonesians are gone and we are happy to rebuild from zero," he said.

Added the priest: "But Interfet has to come soon to give the people, who are hiding, confidence to face the future." (END/IPS/ap-ip- hd/si/js/99)