

Building links with Ainaro

by Tom Foley

When East Timor was still under Indonesian military occupation, I had the opportunity and privilege to travel with two exiled East Timorese resistance activists. For three weeks Savio, Zequito and I traveled by plane, train and automobile up and down the eastern part of the U.S. from Massachusetts to Miami. They were on a speaking tour to highlight the fast-escalating climate of terror in their homeland in the spring of 1999. I drove and introduced their talks with some information on U.S. sponsorship and training of the Indonesian military.

During our travels we saw many types of housing, from high rises in Harlem to yacht-encrusted homes in Coral Gables. It was while driving in rural New England when the subject of housing conditions in East Timor came up. I learned that only a few beautiful traditional houses remained, as many were destroyed early in the occupation. Most of the houses built under Indonesian rule were like: “what do you call that building where animals are kept?” Savio asked, pointing out the window at a small concrete block farm building.

So even before the Indonesian military’s scorched earth policy following 1999’s referendum on independence, basic housing in East Timor was in sad shape. When the occupying forces moved out, they put into operation a sinister plan of violence, mass deportation and destruction. Over 70 percent of all buildings in the country were destroyed. Schools, hospitals and places of worship were burned and looted. The phone, electricity and water systems were completely destroyed.

Farmers lost their livestock, village wells were poisoned, and “they even ring-barked the trees”, as an Australian observer commented. A joint East Timorese- U.S. assessment mission in early 2000 found the destruction in Ainaro was even more complete; over 95 percent of the buildings there were destroyed. The delegation also brought back news of interest in a sister-city relationship in Ainaro and need of help with long-term physical -- and social -- rebuilding efforts.

In response, Madisonians formed the Madison-Ainaro Sister-City Alliance. Ainaro is now an official sister city of Madison’s – the first official East Timorese sister city in the U.S.! We are currently planning our first formal delegation to Ainaro in Spring 2002, to strengthen ties between our two communities and to assist with Ainaro’s rebuilding efforts. We intend to bring at least three complete sets of carpentry tools. We would also like to assist with the establishment of a community workshop that could also serve as a classroom and tool library. We would gladly accept donations of tools, talent and money from those interested in helping building links with the people of Ainaro.

After a decade of activism on behalf of East Timorese human rights, I feel that, as a professional woodworker, I finally can do something that I’m qualified for!

CITY SUPPORT FOR MADISON SISTER CITIES IN PERIL JUST AS GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING NEEDED MOST

SISTER CITY ORGANIZATIONS URGE COUNCIL, MAYOR TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING MADISON'S INTERNATIONAL GRASSROOTS PARTNERSHIPS

The city of Madison is distinguished among comparably sized cities by the number and diversity of its sister city relationships. Madison's high level of international activity and understanding derives in part from these global partnerships. There are currently nine official Madison sister cities: Ainaro, East Timor; Arcatao, El Salvador; Bac Giang, Vietnam; Camaguey, Cuba; Freiburg, Germany; Managua, Nicaragua; Mantova, Italy; Oslo, Norway; and Vilnius, Lithuania. For more than a decade, the city of Madison has supported the work of its sister city organizations with small, yearly grants. However, this year the city reduced the size of these grants by more than 20 percent without prior warning. Mayor Bauman has also said the city cannot guarantee its sister city organizations any funding in future years.

"At this time in our nation's history, following the heinous September 11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. and with war looming on the horizon, we believe it is especially important to support the global understanding provided by sister city grassroots partnerships," said Nijole Etwiler, of the Madison-Vilnius Sister City organization. "Furthermore, the modest \$1000 grant previously given by the city – which was never increased to account for inflation – represents a miniscule portion of the city budget. However, the grant makes a significant contribution to the work of the small, almost all-volunteer sister city organizations. The sister city organizations are also very active, and each of them does their own fundraising to support their projects. Because the organizations are run by committed volunteers, there is very little overhead and each dollar is put to good use."

Although there is widespread support for the work of Madison's sister city organizations in the community, the city claims it was forced to reduce this year's grant level to \$777, and may need to further reduce or even eliminate the funding in future years. "We realize that Madison is facing a tight budget this year," said Diane Farsetta of the Madison-Ainaro Sister City Alliance. "However, we believe that the drastic cut in funding for the sister cities was a political decision which ignores the high value the Madison community places on our work. We also question the city's commitment to maintaining vibrant, active sister city organizations, especially if the funding is reduced again or completely cut. How would the city claim to support these important international partnerships if all city funding for them were ended?"

As the City Council and the Mayor prepare to finalize next year's budget, the sister city organizations urged them to insure a \$1000 grant for each official sister city contingent upon receipt of a yearly activity report and budget, as was done in previous years. The organizations also urged the Council and Mayor Bauman to budget an additional amount over and above the \$1000 per group amount, in order to account for the likely addition of new sister cities. Funding left over after each sister city received \$1000 could then be awarded to sister city organizations based on the project work planned for that year.

Alder Jean MacCubbin, in consultation with the sister city organizations and the Mayor's office, introduced a Council resolution stating the city's intention to establish a more formal structure to award city monies to the sister cities. The Council adopted the resolution in early September. While the sister city organizations support the resolution and appreciate the efforts of the Mayor's office, Alder MacCubbin, Alder Judy Olson, and former Alder Barbara Vedder in drafting the plan, they remain deeply concerned that the reduced level of funding available in future years will negatively impact their work.

Following is a list of the recent activities of some of Madison's sister city organizations:

- **AINARO, EAST TIMOR** – Madison's newest sister city held a "Tour de Timor" bike ride fundraiser in early September to support community-identified reconstruction projects in Ainaro. Over 95 percent of

all buildings in Ainaro, including the only hospital and all the schools, were destroyed in 1999 by the Indonesian military and their militias. The group is currently planning its first delegation, to focus on reconstruction and women's issues, scheduled for spring 2002.

- **ARCATAO, EL SALVADOR** – In June, a delegation of six young Madisonians traveled to Arcatao to share community organizing experiences with their Salvadoran counterparts. Five of the six are UW students active with anti-sweatshop organizing. The youth exchange has generated much excitement in both communities as a way to develop new approaches to cross-border organizing. In October, Madison participants with recent delegations to Arcatao will give a multimedia presentation titled “El Salvador: Organizing Hope.”
- **FREIBURG, GERMANY** – Two delegations, one in each direction, were organized this summer. The Freiburg delegation to Madison focused on cultural experiences and on strengthening university and business partnerships.
- **MANAGUA, NICARAGUA** – Madisonian and experienced Latin American human rights activist Kris Hoffschmidt worked with the Nicaraguan Network of Women Against Violence to document their trauma counseling work this summer. She was also able to bear witness to and report on increasing right-wing attacks on women's organizations in the country. In October, the organization will host the Madison visit of health care promoter and human rights activist Dorothy Granada.
- **VILNIUS, LITHUANIA** – A Madison delegation traveled to Vilnius in September to officially represent Madison in a large festival called “Capital Days,” where they were the only Wisconsin presence among 15 of Vilnius's Sister Cities. While there, the Madison delegation planned to visit the two orphans that the organization sponsors through the Sunlight Orphans Fund.
- **JOINT ACTIVITIES** – In October, the Ainaro, Arcatao and Managua sister city organizations will present a panel discussion titled “Community-Based Peacekeeping: Building Grassroots International Partnerships through Sistering” at the Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies' 17th annual conference. The presentation will focus on the power of sistering as a grassroots, community-based approach to addressing women's issues, youth organizing, and economic and social justice issues, and to draw parallels between international solidarity work with different countries.

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ACTION ALERT:

Contact Mayor Bauman and your Alder TODAY and tell her/him:

- Madison's sister city organizations do important work that the city needs to value and support;
- The city must continue to support its sister cities through yearly grants;
- The grants to the sister city organizations represent a very small item in the city budget, but they are significant to the sister city organizations;
- Funding decisions are political - this is NOT a choice between funding needed social services and sister cities. Many questionable city expenditures (including public subsidies for large developers) do NOT have the community support that sister cities do;
- The city must guarantee a constant minimum amount of support for the sister city organizations, preferably at the \$1000 level. This must not change if more official sister cities are formed.

E-mail Mayor Bauman at sbauman@ci.madison.wi.us or call 608-266-4611

E-mail your alder in district "N" at

districtN@council.ci.madison.wi.us

Council phone numbers and addresses at www.ci.madison.wi.us/council/alders.html

Act TODAY – the City Council will finalize the city budget on Tuesday, November 13!

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HOW CAN YOU HELP WITH AINARO'S RECONSTRUCTION?

- Join us in planning our spring 2002 delegation to Ainaro! We meet Thursday evenings at 7:30 pm in the Memorial Union on the UW campus (on Langdon Street). Or contact us: Madison@etan.org, phone 608-663-5431, 1202 Williamson Street, Madison, WI 53703. You can also learn more about our sister city and other Madison-East Timor solidarity work on our website at <http://www.aideasttimor.org> or at the website of the East Timor *Action* Network/U.S., <http://www.etan.org>
- Make a contribution! Checks can be made to "ETAN-Madison" (please write "Ainaro" in the memo line). Tax-deductible contributions over \$50 can be made to the "Foundation for International Scientific Cooperation" (please write "East Timor" in the memo line). What can your contribution do for the reconstruction of Madison's East Timor sister city?
 - \$15 can buy a tape measure
 - \$25 can buy a package of school supplies (pencils, notebooks)
 - \$40 can buy a toolbag to hold a set of woodworking tools
 - \$70 can buy a set of planes for woodworking
 - \$80 can buy a set of chisels
 - \$150 can buy a basic tool set (hammer, screwdriver, clamps, files, saw)
 - \$460 can buy an entire woodworking tool set

Please send donations to the East Timor *Action* Network, Social Justice Center, 1202 Williamson Street, Madison, WI 53703

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UPCOMING EVENTS!

Fri, Oct 26- joint panel with Madison's Nicaraguan and Salvadoran sister city organizations on "Community-Based Peacekeeping" at the Wisconsin Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies' 17th annual conference, 10:30 am to noon, MATC-Truax campus

Mon, Nov 12- candlelight vigil to mark the tenth anniversary of the Dili massacre, 7 pm, Library Mall

Thurs, Dec 6- "East Timor's reconstruction: the people's struggle continues" multi-media presentation by Yohan of Bibi Bulak nongovernmental organization in Dili, 7 pm, Pres House

Sun, Dec 9- dinner discussion with Yohan of Bibi Bulak

Check our website <http://www.aideasttimor.org> or contact us at Madison@etan.org or 663-5431 for more information on these events!

Madison the first U.S. sister city of an East Timorese community
by Diane Farsetta

WHEREAS, Madison has a long history of engagement with the people of East Timor...

On Tuesday, February 20th, the Madison City Council voted unanimously in favor of an official sister relationship with Ainaro, East Timor. In doing so, Madison became the first U.S. sister city of an East Timorese community. Those speaking in favor of the resolution included East Timorese native Natércia Godhino-Adams and lead co-sponsor Alderwoman Barbara Vedder (now retired from the Council).

WHEREAS, the people of East Timor suffered greatly under a twenty-four year long occupation by the Indonesian military...

Why would Madisonians – or any U.S. citizens – be motivated to work in solidarity with the East Timorese? When the half-island country in southeast Asia was brutally invaded by the Indonesian military in 1975, U.S. Defense Department figures show that over 90 percent of the weapons used came from the U.S.A. In the first four years of the invasion, one-third of the population was killed by summary execution, torture, and forced starvation. By the time the Indonesian occupation ended in 1999, the U.S. had sold Indonesia over \$1.2 billion in military equipment. Add to this the political cover the U.S. continues to provide for the repressive tactics of the Indonesian military, motivated by U.S. business interests and realpolitik.

WHEREAS, following the 1999 vote for independence, the departing Indonesian military engaged in a scorched-earth campaign...

Although the Indonesian military was forced to withdraw from East Timor following a United Nations-administered vote for independence, it did not leave peacefully. During her stay in Madison, Natércia Godhino-Adams related, “over 70 percent of homes, shops, and public buildings – the basic infrastructure of East Timor – was destroyed in 1999.” The United Nations estimates that over one thousand and perhaps two thousand people were killed in a three-week period in September 1999, a time the East Timorese refer to as “black September”. Three-quarters of the population were forced from their homes by the Indonesian military and the militias they created, trained, and armed. In addition, the East Timorese women’s organization FOKUPERS has documented hundreds of rapes which were part of the military’s intimidation of the population during this time.

WHEREAS, the community of Ainaro, East Timor was especially hard hit by 1999’s violence...

In Ainaro, a town in the mountainous southwest of the country, the militia were numerous and ruthless. Ninety-five percent of all buildings, including the only hospital and all the town’s schools, were destroyed during black September. Godhino-Adams said that during a July 2000 visit to Ainaro, “I saw almost no buildings with roofs.” Although the extent of the destruction was one of the reasons Madisonians are interested in sistering with Ainaro, it’s not the only reason. During a joint East Timorese-international countrywide assessment mission in early 2000, those interviewed in Ainaro invited international friends to join them in a sistering relationship. They shared with mission members their strong, inspiring vision for Ainaro’s future, including agricultural cooperatives, women’s organizations, and revitalized health care and educational systems. Madison’s first envoy to Ainaro, Jen Laakso, spent several weeks there in the summer of 2000. Following her visit, Jen wrote, “I explained the project to the CNRT [the group which led the resistance to the Indonesian occupation] leader in Ainaro, the leader of youth groups, women’s groups, the subdistrict [regional] head, the sisters and priests at the Catholic church...pretty much everyone... and they are really excited about the sister city!”

WHEREAS, international solidarity with East Timor is especially important now as the East Timorese face the difficult tasks of reconstruction and establishing an independent nation...

East Timor is currently under United Nations administration, and will only become fully independent after a constitution is drafted and adopted, currently scheduled for early 2002. Many East Timorese call the United Nations administration “the third colonization” (after that of Portugal and the Indonesian occupation). East Timorese feel marginalized in their own country and have called for a greater role in decision-making. The presence of well-paid international staff also distorts the economy and causes resentment among the East Timorese, who face an 80 percent unemployment rate. “The average income of an East Timorese family is three dollars a day,” said Godhino-Adams, “while the average income for international staff is \$8000 a month. The cost of basic commodities in East Timor has increased four-fold since 1999.” The World Bank already has a strong presence in East Timor, and Jen Laakso found that its programs were not adequately explained to the Ainaro community.

WHEREAS, the people of Madison have a long and impressive history of furthering peace, understanding, cooperation and democracy through sister-city relationships...

The importance of sistering is that it is an empowering and beneficial relationship for both communities. Inherently undemocratic structures like the World Bank and the United Nations will not act in the interests of the majority of the world’s population without cross-border organizing. The East Timorese say “a luta continua” – the struggle continues!

Working with our sisters in East Timor

by Jen Laakso

"Now we have nothing. Before we had a television, stereo, telephone, bicycles, and furniture, but now we're starting from zero." Amid the rubble of deserted homes and schools, friends in Ainaro, East Timor told me account after account of militia atrocities which are simply beyond my imagination.

Ainaro is approximately 110 miles southwest of Dili, the capital of East Timor, in the mountainous interior of the southeast Asian island. In Ainaro, charred buildings and flattened homes testify to the scorched-earth campaign waged in 1999 by the militias under the direction of the Indonesian military. The violence followed the historic United Nations referendum in which the East Timorese voted overwhelmingly for independence. Over 95 percent of buildings in Ainaro were destroyed, and today many remain so.

Nearly everyone in Ainaro was forced from their homes following the referendum. Many fled to the mountains while others were coerced into refugee camps in Indonesian West Timor. Those that fled took no more than the clothes on their backs, blankets, tarps, and cooking pots. In Ainaro, militia members looted and burned, leaving nothing behind. Women were specifically targeted in many ways - they were separated from husbands and sons, harassed, and often raped. In the refugee camps - which are mostly populated by women and children - living conditions are terrible, with food shortages, poor sanitation, and rampant disease.

Today, the people of Ainaro are working hard to rebuild, though they have few resources. Village women work all day long, caring for children, cooking, cleaning, washing, farming, and carrying water. Rice and leaves are a daily staple, and what I ate every day. My Timorese mother often went to the market in hope of finding meat, but she was usually disappointed. There is very little food in Ainaro, in stark contrast to Dili, East Timor's capital city.

Yet, despite these hardships, the people of Ainaro have great hope. Women are organizing against domestic violence and working to support their families with traditional weavings, or "tais". I visited Ainaro to help establish a sister relationship between Ainaro and Madison, and a fair trade exchange of tais is one project Ainaro women are excited about. In their quest for economic empowerment, East Timorese women are fighting more than their country's current poverty - under customary law, women cannot inherit or own property. Women are, in fact, often legally treated as property, with the custom of bride-buying or "berlake". Domestic abuse is widespread and generally accepted as "normal". These are just a few examples of gender discrimination that a Madison-Ainaro sister relationship will help our East Timorese sisters fight.

Jen Laakso is a member of the East Timor *Action* Network. She lived in East Timor from August to December 2000, working with women's and community groups in Ainaro and Dili. Jen brought to Ainaro school supplies purchased with funds raised in Madison (see picture).

“Tour de Timor” bike ride fundraiser a total success!

by Mike Iltis

On the beautiful sunny afternoon of September 16, forty-three Madison-area supporters of East Timor participated in the second annual Tour de Timor bicycle ride around Lake Monona. The event was a fundraiser for community-identified reconstruction projects in Madison's sister city of Ainaro.

The unforeseen, horrific events that rocked and overshadowed the U.S. and the world the previous week were a reminder that we must stand against violence and terror and lend a healing hand whenever possible. We were especially touched by the strong support shown for the Tour de Timor in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Many participants said such a positive community event and opportunity to reach out to others across the world was especially timely. We hope the Tour de Timor was a step in sowing peace on earth and the seeds of hope, by planting seeds of reconstruction in Ainaro, an area still reeling from 1999's near-total devastation by the Indonesian military.

The Tour de Timor not only succeeded in building community and awareness, but also in raising much-needed funds for our sister community. Many participants went above and beyond the call of duty in collecting pledges, and more than \$2500 was raised over event costs! Our top pledge-raisers, Pam and Greg Bell of Madison, raised nearly \$600 for Ainaro. The Bells are cousins of Dr. Dan Murphy, who has volunteered at the Bairro Pite medical clinic in Dili, East Timor since 1998. When they heard about the Tour de Timor, the Bells immediately sent out pledge challenges to friends and family members.

We would like to thank all Tour de Timor participants and those who pledged, as well as the area businesses who sponsored the event: Williamson Bicycle Works, Yellow Jersey, Budget Bicycle, Lands' End, Charter Communications and St. Mary's Hospital. We would also like to recognize our top pledge-raisers: Pam and Greg Bell, Brian Wehrle, Frank Iltis, Karen Muench, and Kit Foley and Scott McMahan.

If you would like to be involved in planning our spring 2002 delegation to Ainaro, which will deliver reconstruction aid purchased with these funds, please contact us! Beautiful green and white Tour de Timor T-shirts are also still available for \$7 each at our office in the lower level of the Social Justice Center, 1202 Williamson Street, and other progressive businesses around town. And mark your calendars – we're planning to hold next year's Tour de Timor on September 22!

[picture of bike ride]

What do the refugee crisis and militia returns mean for Ainaro?

by Eric Piotrowski

More than two years after the people of East Timor came out in a historic display of courage and determination to vote for independence, up to 100,000 men, women and children are being held against their will in wretched refugee camps in neighboring West Timor (Indonesia). In addition to post-ballot violence and destruction, the militias and their military sponsors kidnapped hundreds of thousands of East Timorese civilians and forced them across the border into West Timor. Although over half of these people have been able to return to East Timor since 1999, those still in the camps are deprived of food, clean water, and medical supplies. Relief agencies working in the camps estimate that five children die there each day, from malnutrition and disease.

Because the UN and almost all other international agencies withdrew from West Timor after militiamen killed three UN refugee workers in the camps last year, the situation in the region is very unstable and it's often difficult to get information on conditions there. However, it's quite clear from Indonesian organizations working in the region that things are bad. The refugees are controlled using what one Indonesian humanitarian worker has called "circles of intimidation". The refugee camps are surrounded by militia outposts, which are surrounded by an Indonesian military (TNI) presence. Intimidation, random acts of violence, theft, abuse, and sexual assault are daily tragedies faced by the East Timorese refugees.

But there are signs of positive change. On September 14, one of Ainaro's main militia leaders in 1999, Cancio Lopes de Carvalho, announced that he was renouncing ties with TNI and would "reveal all the Indonesian generals who gave the orders" for the post-ballot violence. The dismantling of the militia groups - - of which this announcement may be a first step -- is essential for the return of the refugees from West Timor. On the same day as Carvalho made his statement, the Associated Press reported that nearly 1,000 refugees -- including Carvalho -- returned to Ainaro and surrounding regions.

In 1999, there was a large and particularly brutal militia presence in Ainaro, including Carvalho's MAHIDI group (an acronym for "life or death for integration with Indonesia"). What will it mean for the Ainaro community if large numbers of high-ranking militia begin to return to the area? Although the UN has helped set up a few courts of law around the country, East Timor's fledgling judicial system has no presence in Ainaro and is, in general, very under-resourced.

Tragically, this likely increase in militia returnees to East Timor comes as the UN refugee agency, the UNHCR, is dramatically scaling down its presence in East Timor. This reduction is not driven by the on-the-ground reality, but by political and donor pressures. What the UNHCR withdrawal means for Ainaro -- and East Timor in general -- may likely be increased instability and risk of violence, along with a decrease in civilian refugee returns. The UNHCR has already closed two of its offices in East Timor, one of which was in Maliana, an important transit point for returning refugees close to Ainaro. The UNHCR also plans to end at-the-border screening of returning refugees for security problems. These screenings will instead be carried out in refugees' home districts, and will be instituted by UN civilian police and human rights workers, instead of UN peacekeeping force members, as was previously done.

There are other concerns besides those of security. Refugees currently returning to East Timor have been held in the camps for over two years, absent from and detached from the nation-building process that has been going on in the country. Additionally, newly repatriated refugees -- both militia and civilian -- are more likely to experience serious physical and emotional problems than earlier returnees; this will surely have an effect on their home villages. This was confirmed by a recent communication from one of our Ainaro contacts, who wrote of the refugees: "They [the UN] are finding that many of those returning are in very

poor health, with a higher than anticipated rate of tuberculosis.” Sadly, the UNHCR is also planning to end all humanitarian services for returnees by the end of the year.

East Timor’s refugee crisis is complex and frustrating, and it impacts greatly on our sister community of Ainaro. Worse, political and financial pressures appear to be blocking the ability of the agency most equipped to deal with these problems, the UNHCR, from doing its job. This is, quite simply, an issue of life and death for approximately one-tenth of East Timor’s population. If conditions don't change, more children will die, more women will be raped and more families will suffer. This humanitarian crisis must be resolved without delay – taking into account the needs of both the refugees and their home communities -- so that one of the final chapters of East Timor's arduous path toward freedom can be completed.

Weaving Peace for East Timor by Julia Weaver

Peace Weavings have been made in the Madison area for over ten years. The project began as an intentional act of support for the Iraqi people during the first U.S. bombing of their country. The project developed as a way to hold people in great distress in our hearts and prayers. Eventually, the Physicians for Social Responsibility delivered this first weaving to Iraq. Other weavings have been made for Bosnia, Haiti, Israel and Palestine, El Salvador, Burma, Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Tibet, Ireland, and Chiapas, Mexico.

Madison-area residents add to the weaving of each project, as they learn about the area of the world the weaving is devoted to. The weavings are taken to gatherings of family, friends, workshops, neighborhood meetings, churches, schools... wherever they are welcome! Anyone can add to the weavings with anything they can imagine. The intention is that each weaving will eventually hang in a place of healing in the country it is woven for. Given the current world situation, I hope the Peace Weavings testify that people around the world do care, and express the wish that we move beyond race, class, gender and all other false barriers to true worldwide community.

The Peace Weaving for East Timor began in 1998, thanks to a friend who was very insistent that I pay attention to what was happening in East Timor. What brought my focus to this part of the world was the beautiful weavings that women there make; I saw photographs and was instantly connected to their work. When I did start to educate myself about East Timor, I found the situation very important but complex. As it turns out, we began weaving at a time when education on East Timor was essential. U.S. citizens needed to know how our country supported the brutal Indonesian military occupation there. A visiting East Timorese activist who had been assaulted by the Indonesian military, Bella Galhos, started the weaving. The project continued through 1999’s persecutions and pain. We wove into a new time for East Timor and were able to share what we knew with others.

Now the work of East Timor is reconstruction and healing, and it is my hope that this weaving can be a visual projection of many people’s good intentions or prayers for the country and its people. We plan to deliver the weaving to Ainaro as a part of Madison’s first delegation, to hang in a community area, to bring a message of healing, hope, and peace.

[picture of weaving]

Wisconsin – East Timor connections abound!

by Diane Farsetta

East Timor and the state of Wisconsin – it's not a geographic pairing that readily springs to mind. However, many connections do exist between these two places. Community members in Green Bay are working to establish a scholarship for an East Timorese student at St. Norbert's college, a school known for its international student program. An Appleton police officer is serving with the UN Civilian Police in Dili, East Timor; his correspondence home prompted many in the Appleton community to collect and ship tons of school supplies to East Timor. And a retired Bayfield county sheriff is stationed with the UN Civilian Police in Madison's sister city of Ainaro. This connection has led a number of Ashland-area residents to actively support our sister city project! Ashland native Mike Frederick has lived in Ainaro since November 2000. Following are excerpts from a conversation I recently had with Mike, as he spoke from the only working phone in Ainaro, at UN local headquarters.

There isn't much of Ainaro left. Over one-half of the people here don't have a decent house to live in. There's definitely still a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done. That means that whatever you can do with the sister city project will be much needed and appreciated, but it also means you have to realize that you just can't help everyone here. When I first came over here, I was terribly surprised by the conditions.

The local hospital is still demolished. That's true of most buildings here, though; the only buildings better off are those the UN has fixed up to use for themselves! There is an ongoing project, partially funded by UNICEF, to build a community/ sports center here. There used to be a community center in Ainaro, but it was burned down in 1999. Some people think it's a good project to rebuild it, but others question why it's a priority.

There is a minimal medical clinic in Ainaro, staffed by a doctor from Africa who's staying here for one year. That's a pretty good improvement over the past, when Australian doctors would come to work but only stay a few months each. As soon as they would get to know the area and the people a little, they would leave.

Most people here have their hands full trying to live from day to day. It's a challenge to even try to discuss things like women's issues. The traditional justice system reinforces these biases. If a woman is raped, it's customary for the rapist to give her parents a water buffalo, and that's the end of it. Chickens and pigs are given to compensate for domestic violence when that's considered to be a crime, which is not often. There needs to be lots of education done on women's issues here, with the community, local leaders, and even the Church.

I know a number of students here who are bright, highly motivated, can speak English and want to go to school in the U.S. They're committed to coming back to Ainaro to use these skills, too, so any scholarships you could help set up for these students would benefit the community here for a long time.

Contact us or attend one of our meetings to get involved with East Timor solidarity work – it's a Wisconsin tradition!