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News at Klibur Domin,  
East Timor  
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The period since our last Newsletter has been extremely difficult for the staff, volunteers, patients and residents at Klibur Domin. Readers will have followed the events in East Timor since the sacking of 600 Army personnel in March and the subsequent violence, killings, rampaging and arson that have thrown this new nation into chaos not seen since September 1999. The village of Tibar, adjacent to Klibur Domin, was the site of one of the major battles between the "petitioners" or rebel soldiers and the supposedly loyal forces in late May. It is understood that 8 or 9 people were killed in Tibar during this battle.

Jane Shamrock, a volunteer at the home, describes the action in the following article. Despite being surrounded by gunfire and explosions, Klibur Domin escaped any damage to its infrastructure, vehicles and equipment. More importantly, none of the patients, residents, staff or volunteers were injured, notwithstanding that many will have been seriously traumatised and will need months to fully recover their emotional well being. The fact that Klibur Domin continued to operate throughout the troubles was a great tribute to the dedication of the staff and volunteers. Not only did they continue their care of the patients and residents, but they also provided assistance to a growing number of refugees who had fled Dili. This activity was still underway at the time of writing of this article.

On one occasion during the height of the two day battle, when I was able to make phone contact with the volunteers at Klibur Domin, I could hear the gunfire in the background. I asked what they were doing at the time and was amazed to hear that they had just finished physiotherapy and other normal duties were being performed. Shortly after the height of the crisis, two Australian volunteers were evacuated, but three others refused to leave the Home as they considered that the situation had improved and that their tasks were too important. Unquestionably this helped the Home to continue running smoothly and probably stopped any possibility of looting by local disaffected youths.

Of great concern were the death threats made to Joaquim, the Home Manager, and Alberto, the Nurse, and to a number of patients. These were no doubt as a result of the friction between those from the east and those from the west of East Timor. Joaquim, Alberto and the threatened patients all came from the east while Tibar village is 15 kilometres west of Dili. Hopefully this divide on geographical lines will settle as the political situation stabilises.

Patricia McDonell, who has spent more than 30 months at the Home and who had only returned at the end of December has made a 10 day visit to assess the situation and advise on what help is needed from the Foundations in Australia. We remain ready to provide whatever assistance is sought, within our resource limitations. Included in this will be food, clothing, household and personal items needed by those who have lost everything in the arson and vandalism.

Already, Ryder-Cheshire volunteers in Melbourne have been involved in loading containers with humanitarian aid and more is planned in the near future. I am sure that many supporters will be extremely disappointed that this crisis has occurred and most will not be able to understand how some small elements of the East Timorese society could be party to such violence. We must all remember however that the majority of East Timorese are peace loving people who were the victims of the violent few. They have suffered and need our help once again.

Shortly after the problems of September 1999, the Foundation became aware of a 13 year old girl who needed major heart surgery if she was to survive the next 12 months. Isaura Da Silva was brought to Melbourne and successfully operated on at the Monash Medical Centre. Isaura is now 19 and will be returning to Melbourne shortly for a follow up operation. Our thoughts and prayers are with her and with all who are suffering as a result of the recent violence .

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