

PART ONE

[PHOTO OF TWO GIRLS / KIDS READING]

GOOD MORNING.

DO YOU REMEMBER RACING BACK FROM SCHOOL TO DIVE INTO A BOOK THAT YOU NEVER WANTED TO END?

We, representing the staff and management committee of the library, as well as many of the people of Ermera, want to thank all of you in Rotary District 9680 for your support. For helping to create access to books: Windows through which the children of Ermera can dive into other worlds.

I wonder though, whether you have asked yourself, “why *are* we supporting a library in Ermera District, East Timor?”

[PHOTO OF INSIDE OF HATOLIA BRANCH]

1. Imagine an area bigger than the Blue Mountains with a population of 130,000. Imagine an area this big that doesn't have a single bookshop.
2. In January we opened our second library branch, which is in Hatolia. Although officially only open two days a week, they hosted 1000 visitors that first month (photo)
3. In the same month, the central branch of the Biblioteka Ermera in the town of Gleno hosted 8000 visitors.

[POSTER PHOTO OF GIRL FACING CAMERA IN CROWDED CLASSROOM]

4. In an area of the world where schools are woefully under-resourced (photo), people are desperately keen to access education and information
5. A few months ago I attended a ceremony in a village called Riheu, just a few kilometres from Gleno. The ceremony was to celebrate the fact that everyone in Riheu was now literate. It was pretty exciting going up there to this town where now everyone could read and write. A new audience for the books and newspapers from the library.

So you can imagine my astonishment when during the ceremony I discovered that the town being literate meant that everyone in Riheu could at least sign their name, and recognise it written down. What it didn't mean was that they could read the document above their signature..

Maria is a teacher in the town of Ermera Villa. In January she borrowed two books from the library, and failed to return them within the 1 week time limit. When we contacted her on the Friday to let her know the books were overdue, she told us that she hadn't finished with them yet, she told us that she would be finished with them by Wednesday. She would bring them back then and would happily pay the overdue fine. [Pause] They were good books.

As I mentioned before, there are about 130,000 people in Ermera. 130,000 people, but they can't all access the library's branches in Gleno and Hatolia.

For those of you who haven't traveled to Timor, the roads are a wonder. I saw a Simpsons episode once where a popcorn truck drove into a pothole, disappeared, and a moment later a whole lot of popped corn came bursting out the top of the pothole. East Timorese roads feel like this a lot of the time. It is a mere 33km from Gleno to Hatolia. But Travelling by car it takes two hours to get there, *[pause]*, on a good day. These conditions make even public transport irregular and expensive...

[PHOTO: expansion plan picture]

For this reason, Biblioteka Ermera will be opening another four branches, over the next three years. . You can see the Gleno branch and the Hatolia branch highlighted here in green, and the other four branches that we are yet to open, here in the towns of **[point]** Ermera Villa, Letefoho, Railako, and Atsabe highlighted in Red.

[PHOTO OF KIDS IN KIDS AREA]

Now, I'd like to return to my earlier question; When you were a kid, how far would you have gone to dive back into that book?

PART TWO

For those of you who heard Beth and I speak at the district assembly last year, you may remember us asking you to look at your neighbour and imagine that he or she was illiterate. An illustration to highlight the 50% literacy rate in East Timor.

I am standing up here in front of you today to talk about Going for Gold. Beth has told you why the library is important for the people of Ermera, and why it is worthwhile for Rotary to support it. But Going for Gold to me suggests the future, Going for Gold to me, suggests to me that we need to talk about partnerships.

PAUSE

For me personally, Gold would be East Timorese kids growing up with access to the same life opportunities as kids from Rotary District 9680.

The same opportunities to study,

The same opportunities to travel, as kids from District 9680

The same work opportunities, as your children.

PAUSE

That is a digression though, somewhat beyond the scope of what the Biblioteka Ermera was set up to achieve. Our goal, raising literacy levels in Ermera, is a step along this path though. And I'd like to thank all of you who have supported the library in Ermera up until now.

[PHOTO OF HATOLIA BUILDING AWAITING RENOVATION]

The local government does not have its own budget, but like you, has been very supportive of the library. When we were considering where the second branch would be, the administrator from Hatolia lobbied my boss, the Chair of the Library, quite heavily. As well as making multiple requests for the library to open its next branch in Hatolia, he demonstrated active support by organising both temporary premises and offering a building for the library to renovate as a permanent location.

Libraries here in Australia, are run and paid for by government. Shouldn't the Timorese Government be paying for the library in Ermera?

The short answer to this is yes.

And, *The library's sustainability plan, the plan to keep library services operating into the future*, is to become funded by the national government. Transition to government ownership though is a bit like Pantene. It won't happen overnight...

LONGISH PAUSE

The Ministry of Education has shown interest in this idea. So far:

[PHOTO OF GLENO BRANCH]

- ⤴ They provided a block of land in the centre of Gleno for the library to be built on.
- ⤴ Recently they organised and paid for the coordinator of the library [see photo] to attend two weeks training in Indonesia with staff from the East Timor National Library.

[PHOTO OF JRH IN LIBRARY]

- ⤴ The president of TL, Nobel Peace Prize Winner Dr Jose Ramos Horta opened the library in Gleno, and has offered us horses to get books into rural areas. I'd like you to note that we haven't seen hide nor hair of these horses.

PAUSE

How does this relate to your Rotary Club? How does Gold for us translate into your Club ***Going for Gold?***

Just raising literacy levels, and giving people access to good books is going to take years.

GOLD then is a long-term commitment. GOLD is the Biblioteka Ermera having secure funding for the next three years. GOLD is your club not just giving the library funds today, but assuring us that we will have funds the year after next, ,and the year after that.

Beth's and my goal today, the goal of the management committee of the Biblioteka Ermera, is to convince you that partnering with us over the medium term, making a commitment to supporting us, is a worthwhile endeavour.

[PHOTO OF KIDS LOOKING AT GLOBE OF THE WORLD]

Our goal is to give kids in Timor windows to other worlds. We'd like you to help us with this.

So, I want to ask that as you walk away from the conference later today, I want to ask each of you to think about that book, that book that you couldn't wait to dive back into.