

Thursday 13 August 2009

BALIBO FIVE BROTHER PAUL STEWART LAUNCHES NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO HELP DISABLED EAST TIMORESE KIDS

With the national release of the award winning film 'Balibo' (the story of five Australian journalists murdered in East Timor in 1975) Paul Stewart, brother of Balibo Five journalist Tony Stewart, launches a national appeal to help raise money for children with disabilities living in East Timor.

Paul Stewart who has been an active supporter of Timor-Leste for 25 years has turned his support toward helping hundreds of children with disabilities by raising vital funds to purchase essential equipment for a small group of Timorese Nuns working in the region.

"Raising a disabled child is tough enough in Australia, but in one of the world's newest and poorest nations, it's just a nightmare," said Paul Stewart.

Four Nuns of the ALMA Order ('Asossiasi Lembaga Misionaris Awam' meaning Association of Lay Missionaries for the poor and the disabled) are inspired by the work of Mother Teresa.

"In their inspiring work looking after disabled children of the former Portuguese colony, these four amazing women are fighting a constant battle against the odds to treat the number of disabled Timorese children who, in their society are described as 'the lowest of the low'," Stewart said.

"Until recently, physiotherapy was not available to these kids and so the Nuns have a good deal of work cut out for them," he said.

All fully qualified physiotherapists, in addition to providing free therapy the ALMA Nuns are also teaching parents basic physio techniques to enable them to continue to help their own children to improve movement and flexibility.

The ALMA Order Nuns travel around Dili on a single motor scooter, struggling to provide hundreds of children with disabilities with free, essential physiotherapy in the hope that they can improve mobility and the quality of life for these children and their parents.

However, because of their limited means of transport, the care the ALMA Nuns are able to offer and the number of children they can help, is limited. They desperately need a car to transport the children to and from their clinic; treat more children from a wider geographical area and offer more comprehensive care to help improve mobility for these children.

"What we have now is hundreds of disabled children, four nuns and one tiny motor scooter," said Paul Stewart.

"But with the help of the Australian people I know we can raise the money needed to purchase a suitable vehicle as well as essential physiotherapy equipment to help the Nuns in their vital work in Dili, East Timor," Stewart said.

Unfortunately, the Sisters say they cannot keep up with the huge demand for their services. East Timorese ALMA Nun Sister Justine said the order had only the use of one tiny motor scooter.

"If we had a four wheel car with a tray we could do a lot more work," said Sister Justine. "We could even get out into the countryside to visit the really disadvantaged disabled children. It would be a miracle if Australians could help us get a vehicle. Not brand new just one to help us with our work."

Stewart urges all Australian's to help these kids by making a donation, today. Please send your donation to: ALMA Nuns East Timor C/O The Jesuit Mission, P.O. Box 193 (31 West Street) North Sydney NSW 2059 AUSTRALIA.

To arrange an interview with Paul Stewart or a photo, please contact:



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PAUL STEWART & TIMOR LESTE

For musician and journalist Paul Stewart, whose brother Tony was one of five journalists murdered in Balibo during the Indonesian invasion of 1975, his first visit to East Timor had an impact which still resonates.

Growing up, Paul channelled his adolescent rage into punk, and by the 1980s was front man for Painters and Dockers, performing songs like Die Yuppie Die and Nude School.

In 1996 Paul formed The Dili Allstars a 7-piece funk, ska, rock band with Gil Santos, whose father was killed in the same conflict. Stewart and Santos recruited East Timorese and Australian musicians, and their first project was a version of the old Rose Tattoo song 'We Can't Be Beaten'. It was recorded, in the East Timorese language Tutum, the day Xanana Gusmao was captured by Indonesian forces.



In 2006 Paul lay dying of liver failure in a hospital bed, his lifestyle of hard drinking and drugs finally catching up with him. Paul's miracle came in the shape of Sister Helena, a nun from East Timor, who promised Paul her sisters would pray for him. Within days he received a new liver.

His story was the subject of the documentary *My Brother, Balibo and Me*, which screened on ABC1's *Compass* on Sunday 9 August.

For the film **BALIBO**, Paul Stewart worked with Timorese performer and cast member Osme Gonsalves, on an English/Tetum language interpretation of Graham Parker's 1970s hit, HEY LORD DON'T ASK ME QUESTIONS, to be included on the soundtrack album of **BALIBO** together with the Dili All Stars political anthem LIBERDADE.

ROBERT CONNOLLY'S FILM BALIBO

**EAST TIMOR, 1975: FIVE JOURNALISTS ARE MISSING.
ONE MAN SEARCHES FOR THE TRUTH AND FIGHTS FOR JUSTICE.**

As Indonesia prepares to invade the tiny nation of East Timor, five Australian based journalists go missing.

Four weeks later, veteran foreign correspondent Roger East is lured to East Timor by the young and charismatic José Ramos-Horta to tell the story of his country and investigate the fate of the missing men. As East's determination to uncover the truth grows, the threat of invasion intensifies and an unlikely friendship develops between the last foreign correspondent in East Timor and the man who will become President.

BALIBO is a political thriller that tells the true story of crimes that have been covered up for over thirty years. Balibo opens nationally this weekend. It stars Anthony Lapaglia and Oscar Isaac. For reviews see info at: <http://www.balibo.com.au/press/news.html>

THE ALMA NUNS – BY PAUL STEWART

The Nuns, who consecrate themselves completely to Christ and the Kingdom of God, serve only the most disadvantaged children (the poor, the abandoned, and the disabled) and live amongst them in togetherness in the community. The Sisters' task is to help and to empower the abandoned, poor and disabled helping along the way to change the mentality of the community towards them.

They are under the jurisdiction of Bishop Dili and their mission has been in operation for three years. At the homes they visit the Sisters treat the disabled children with physiotherapy and teach parents basic physiotherapy techniques to improve mobility.



Their work is showing great results. On a recent visit around the back blocks of Dili with the Sisters I met a young chap called Lorenzo who could now sit in a chair and perform tasks his twisted, disabled body would not let him perform before he started therapy with the Nuns.