



Where is your home?

A creative peace building project about resettlement in East Timor

2011 Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asialink Fellowship
Report

Zena Kells

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Introduction

With the support of the Dunlop Asialink Fellowship, I returned to East Timor in 2011 to develop and tour a verbatim theatre show based on interviews conducted with former East Timorese citizens living in West Timor.

The implementation of the project also aimed at building the creative and administrative capacity of Timorese students and artists of the local organisation, Knua Buka Hatene, through a broad training program which resulted in a short documentary about the issue.

Background

Situation of former East Timorese citizens living in West Timor

“A quarter of a million people fled the province of East Timor after the 1999 referendum, many forcibly displaced by Indonesian security forces and militia. Some of the thousands remaining in West Timor are there for economic reasons; many others because of pressure from family members and community leaders. This latter group are still poorly integrated into their host communities, refuse to leave old refugee camps, and are frustrated by the end of official assistance. Political stability in Timor-Leste and the promise of access to land are making the prospect of return more attractive. But misinformation, an unclear legal basis for leaving Indonesia, and fear that their access to property and basic political rights will not be upheld are holding them back.” (Nolan, 2011)

Interview conducted during the fellowship with former East Timorese citizen, Francisco, in West Timor:

Almerio: Talking about the future, are you thinking uncle to go back to Timor-Leste or staying in Atambua?

Francisco: Go back. Go back to my birth place, our birth place. They say that as long as blood has been spilt in Timor, we must go back. To our land, we cannot say we shall not return. If we say we shall not return we die, everything dies, I tell you. Our blood has been spilt in Timor, we must return. The elders return, and bring the bones to bundle in Timor.



*Images:
Left: Almerio filming
Top right: Living conditions
former camp in Kupang
Bottom right: Preparing for an
interview in Atambua*

What is Knua Buka Hatene?

Knua Buka Hatene (KBH) which translates to 'The centre of knowledge' is an East Timorese organisation specialising in independent vocational education and training. With the support of Union Aid Abroad- APHEDA and OXFAM Hong Kong, KBH was established in 2003 and has since grown to include three main project areas:



CLC group building a well in Aileu

1. Community Learning Centres

"Grassroots" groups based in rural areas of East Timor to build the surrounding communities' livelihood through training in income generation and sustainable development/agriculture.



Free sewing class for women in Liquica

2. Training

Affordable, open access, vocational education and skills training to improve the employment capacity of the society. Current courses include computer basics, sewing and language classes.



Leonia a youth theatre member painted as a tiger

3. Expressional Arts Project

Theatre, radio and art programs to develop the skills of young people and to deliver community educational strategies that tackle issues affecting the people of East Timor.

My beginnings with Knua Buka Hatene

My history with KBH began in 2009 through the Australian Youth Ambassador for Development (AYAD) program. As a youth ambassador, I spent twelve months working as a Community Theatre Advisor to KBH's Expressional Arts Project. During this time we developed a free creative arts training program for Dili's unemployed youth, toured theatre shows to rural and remote areas in East Timor, produced radio dramas, and ran numerous creative and organisational capacity training programs.

Like anyone who has ever worked or even just visited East Timor, you soon realize that the time you spend there is never long enough. East Timorese people are magnetic, open and eager to learn. There's a wealth of stories hidden behind casual smiles which is enough to make any theatre maker want to return. So it was with eagerness and gratefulness for the opportunity from Asialink's Dunlop Fellowship that I returned to work again with KBH in 2011.

Why theatre?

I have always been drawn towards theatre over other mediums because of my belief in the transformative and influential role it can play in community development. Theatre creates dialogue, gives life to stories from voiceless communities and allows the audience to envisage a world different from the one they are living in. Theatre in East Timor is no different, except you never have to struggle to get an audience like you might in Australia. Once the lights are on and music is cranked to full, audience members in the hundreds, surround the tarpaulin-stage awaiting entertainment.

But theatre is far from just being entertaining: it also plays an important role in East Timor's donor-driven landscape, as many organisations are looking for innovative ways to get their important social and educational messages out of their reports and to the people. High illiteracy rates in East Timor also allow theatre to speak to people in ways that traditional mediums, like books and newspapers, literally can't.

In the year I spent working with KBH we developed theatre and radio shows about breast feeding, malaria and domestic violence and all of these were performed in a formulaic and realistic way. Three of the most exciting things about undertaking the Asialink's Dunlop Fellowship and continuing my work with KBH were the:

1. Opportunity to challenge the staff, actors and audiences' ideas about what theatre "is", that is, theatre can happen anywhere at any time: you don't need a stage and lights to put on a theatre show
2. Chance for KBH to make their first theatre show which would be inspired by stories and not the key messages of a donor
3. Opportunity to use theatre as a means of real dialogue between former East Timorese citizens living in West Timor and those that remain in East Timor

Dunlop Asialink Project- 'Where is your home?'

Dunlop Fellowship

"The Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asialink Fellowships provide opportunities for young Australians who are committed to making a lasting contribution to Australia-Asia relations.

The Fellowships operate as one component of the Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asia Awards program established to:

- Promote Sir Edward's vision for peace and prosperity in the region through people-to-people exchange and interaction*
- Recognise and reward excellence and the potential for excellence in individuals committed to tangibly enhancing Australia-Asia relations*
- Establish and expand networks between a growing number of young Asia-skilled Australians in Australia and the region" (Asialink, 2010)*

Main project aims of 'Where is your home?' project

- To promote peace and initiate dialogue about the situation of former Timorese citizens living in West Timor.
- To build the creative and administrative capacity of the local organisation Knua Buka Hatene and other East Timorese artists and young people

Overview of the project

The project can be broken down into three stages:

1. Create a verbatim theatre show

Interview former East Timorese citizens living in West Timor and use their stories to create a theatre show.

2. Perform the show

Tour the theatre show to communities living in rural areas of East Timor.

3. Produce a documentary about the issue/process

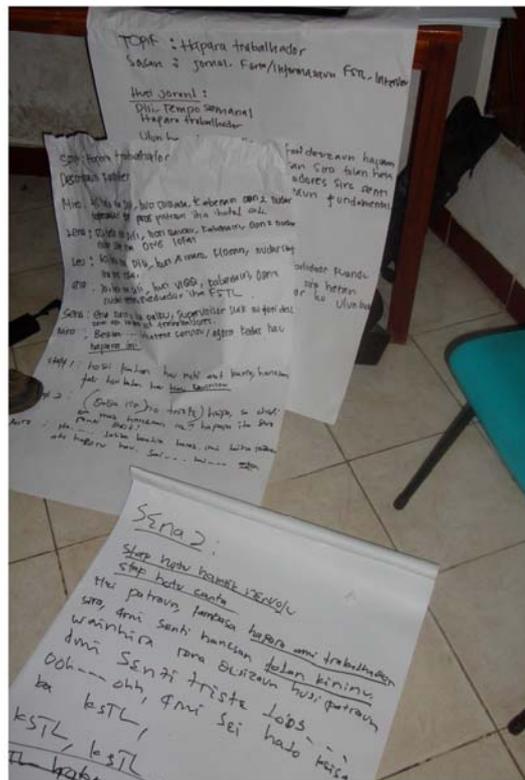
Film the first two stages of this project, then through training exercises in video production, edit a short documentary together with KBH staff.



Fellowship

Training

The project commenced with training for KBH's Expressional Arts Project four staff members in verbatim theatre (two males, two females). Verbatim theatre is a style of theatre that relies on the actual words of interviewees, quotes and situations from non-fiction material, to construct the story and or dialogue.



Images:
Top: Singing together
Bottom left: Staff writing their script
Bottom right: Finished script

Objectives of the verbatim theatre training were to:

- Equip the Expressional Arts Project (EAP) staff with the skills they would need to ask the right questions in West Timor and then later, be able to use these interviews to construct a theatre performance
- Transfer my knowledge and skills in verbatim theatre to staff so that they would then be able to train KBH's youth theatre group and deliver a verbatim theatre workshop for young people
- Demonstrate to staff the creative freedom that you can apply to storytelling in theatre, that is, dialogue doesn't have to be realistically delivered it can be sung or interpreted through movement or dance and still have the same message

Outcomes

- Expressional Arts Project staff members successfully delivered a two day workshop for twenty of KBH's youth theatre group (ten males, ten females). With their new skills, staff and students wrote three verbatim theatre shows about violence against women and children based on interviews they conducted with domestic violence victims and support organisations for the Australian Government funded Justice Facility. These shows toured to four districts in East Timor and over one thousand people saw their shows.



Performance about domestic violence

- EAP staff members successfully delivered a half day workshop for youth in verbatim theatre at St Paul's College in Dili. One hundred young people (seventy female, thirty male) attended the workshop and the training concluded with the students creating short verbatim theatre performances for their peers.



Verbatim theatre training for youth with Lena

**TEATRO VERBATIM
WORKSHOP**

**Sabdu 11
Juni 2011**

**Workshop no
apresentasaun
iha ne'e**

**4:00 -
5:00**

Teatro uza lifaun husi komunnidade

AsiaLink
Leaders in Australia-Asia Engagement

**The Sir Edward Weary
DUNLOP ASIA AWARDS**

Poster for the training- theatre using the words of the people



Zena explaining a verbatim theatre workshop activity to a group



Final verbatim theatre performance in front of peers

West Timor, Indonesia

It was with trepidation that I approached the next part of our project: the trip to West Timor. This trip had the most potential, out of all our activities, for something to go wrong! But, everything got off to an unflawed start. We were lucky to receive training from an experienced journalist who had travelled to West Timor to interview the former East Timorese citizens; we found a driver who had driven Al Jazeera journalists to the old refugee camps in West Timor; and our visas weren't delayed.



Almerio after an interview in Atambua

The objectives of the trip were to:

- Interview former East Timorese citizens now living in West Timor to gain material to develop into a theatre show
- Film the interviews and record material to use in short documentary about the project

It wasn't until we were in West Timor that we faced a few difficulties. The hardest to deal with was the hostility displayed by some of the people who didn't want to be interviewed. They explained that they'd been interviewed by many foreign journalists in the past to no result: they were still living in West Timor in exactly the same conditions as before. We understood their point of view but it made it difficult to explain the importance of the work that we and others were doing to raise awareness about their situation when they couldn't see the immediate results. To overcome this and to draw less attention to ourselves, I didn't go with the staff to the camps on the outskirts of Kupang. Because of this, staff experienced less hostility and were able to conduct two interviews which was a good learning experience for them.



Pre-interview consultation in Kupang

We also found it hard to avoid the lengthy community consultations required before we could conduct interviews with people. This usually wouldn't be a problem, but because we had such limited time in West Timor, we had to devise a creative 'drive-by' solution to solve the problem. This consisted of us driving and stopping if we saw anyone that looked East Timorese and asking them a few questions. Not only were people more than happy to talk to us, the interviews were over in five minutes and not the three hours that we'd become accustomed to. We even interviewed two older men in the car as they hitched a lift with us to church! This interview turned out to be the best interview of the trip and the one we used in the documentary.



Car interview with Francisco

But, despite these minor problems, we were able to achieve good outcomes and we certainly learned far more than I expected from the experience.



Almerio & Albere playing with the camera

Outcomes:

- Visited two camp areas in Atambua and Kupang and interviewed 5 people who were born in East Timor but left after the 1999 referendum.
- Recorded two of the interviews and filmed other footage to use in the documentary.



An interview in progress in Atambua

Theatre

The objective of the theatre show was to:

- Create a theatre show based on the stories of those living in West Timor
- Raise awareness of the plight of former East Timorese refugees in West Timor
- Reduce chance of retribution by initiating community dialogue in East Timor about the issue which will make it easier for the former East Timorese to return and prosper in East Timor
- Provide the community with accessible information about the situation of ex-Timorese refugees living in West Timor
- Use theatre in new and innovative ways

The overall consensus from our interviews in West Timor was that these people wanted to return to East Timor. For the theatre show we decided that for greater audience impact, we needed to go beyond the material in the interviews and thus, beyond the guidelines of verbatim theatre. We needed to imagine what would happen if two of the people we interviewed returned to East Timor, to show the audience how these people would feel and what they would experience. And although we didn't use the interviews as we had initially intended, as dialogue, the trip to West Timor was vital in increasing our understanding of the situation of these people and being able to make a theatre show about them. The interviews were also helpful for the actors, who didn't go on the trip to West Timor, to know the background of the characters they were playing and to have a better understanding of the conditions these people live in. Amazingly, sitting down to watch the interviews on the first day of rehearsals, Ely, one of the actors, was shocked to see that we had interviewed his grandfather! This certainly created an extra dimension to the whole performance.



Nomi, Ely & Suzi watching the interviews in rehearsals

Instead of making just one performance we decided to do two shows with different storylines. Our first show was a site specific performance inside a small public bus, a microlet, the cheapest and main form of transportation in East Timor.



Hired bus with logos

We planted three actors (two males, one female) inside the bus, two of whom were newly refugees returning to Dili for the first time. The third actor performed the role of their tour guide and narrator for the audience.



Audience watching the performance

I think one of the main outcomes of this performance was that it allowed the fifty people who caught the bus with the actors to see East Timor freshly, through the eyes of a refugee returning.



Back row seats in the microlet



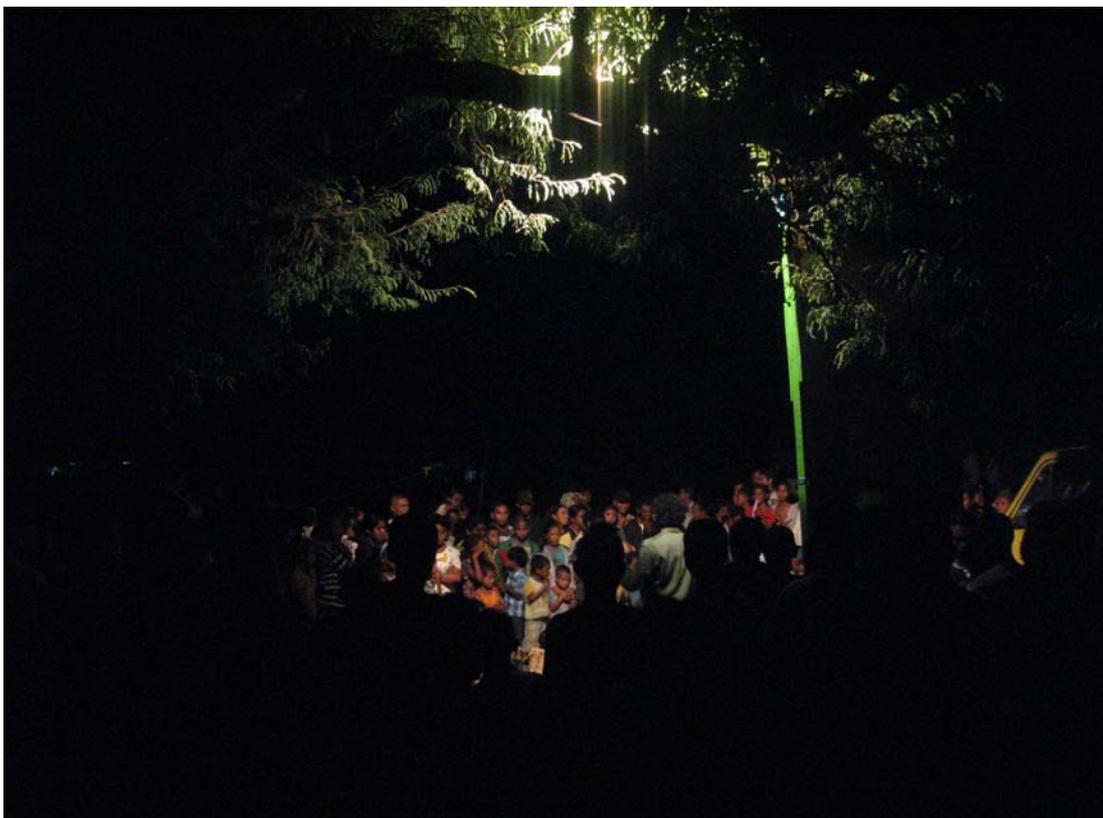
Ely, Suzi & Zena after the performance

Our second show was a hand puppet performance. This show was set in a village and it followed the story of a recently returned refugee who is being physically threatened by another community person.



Flash, Lena, Suzi & hand puppets

This show demonstrated through example, how to deal with conflict at a community level. This show was performed in three locations (two rural areas) to an audience of over seven hundred people.



The crowd encircling a performance

Both of these theatre shows raised awareness about the plight of the refugees living in West Timor at a grassroots level by giving the audience an opportunity to put themselves in the shoes of a person returning. The performances were also engaging and provided the audience with practical steps to deal with conflict in their community, one of the fears of people who would like to return. The making of two theatre shows demonstrated to the staff the adaptability and the different ways you can use theatre to share similar messages.



An awaiting audience



Hand puppet performance in Hera

Documentary

The first two stages of the project were filmed. As a practical application of the training in video production I led with KBH staff members, we made a short documentary about the project/issue to share with audiences in East and West Timor, Australia and online.



Zena & Almerio editing

Outcomes:

- Facilitated advanced video production training with two EAP staff members (one male, one female) including further training in Adobe Premier
- Planned, shot and interviewed the documentary together
- Developed a manual for KBH to use to run a video production course for their students. Time constraints and other organisational issues didn't allow for the actual running of the course.
- A Tetun (language of East Timor) version of documentary to be screened in East Timor later in the year and copies have been given to staff members to give to the people we interviewed in West Timor. Screening in Australia possibly later this year. You can view it online here: <http://whereisyourhome.weebly.com/doco.html>

It was a difficult balancing act to try and do the project and at the same time, get footage for the documentary. This became clear in West Timor because we didn't have the time to do both things. We were asking for too much and it wasn't until we decided that our priority was the project that the documentary material (interviews and footage collection) improved!



Flash filming a workshop



Zena, Lena and Flash preparing materials



Almerio & Albere working out the camera

KBH staff really enjoyed the video training exercises. They interviewed each other on camera and created a karaoke music video clip of a very popular song in East Timor, Bob Marley's 'Don't Worry' (both can be viewed online at <http://whereisyourhome.weebly.com>)



Lena enjoying transcribing an interview

Other organisational training

I also had the opportunity to run other training workshops at KBH including:

Fundraising Training

KBH relies heavily on donor funded activity, without it, KBH would cease to exist. In early February, I led a fundraising workshop for nine staff members (five male, four females) and concentrated on how KBH can diversify their cash flow. Through the workshop we decided on three activities for KBH to independently implement, to raise extra money for the organisation.



Images:

Top: Lena and Almerio coming up with ideas

Bottom: Zena with Meno, Lena and Benny after the training

Website Training

KBH staff couldn't update their website so I led training in how to build their own website from scratch: the training was with two staff members (both males). As a result of the training, we built two new websites: a new website for KBH that they can update without any help, and a wedding video promotion page (a part time hobby of one of the trainees). Both of participants intend to teach other people how to make their own websites.

Poster Design Workshop

At the end of KBH's theatre performances, they hand out educational posters to reiterate the important messages of the performances. I ran a workshop on poster design for EAP staff members (two females, two males) and we designed three posters for their performance about violence against women and children. Five male and five female actors from KBH's youth theatre group were also involved in creating the images.



Poster- stop violence for the next generation

One-on-one mentoring with the KBH Coordinator

During my fellowship, I met with the KBH Coordinator weekly to develop strategies to improve his confidence, communication skills and relationship with staff members and stakeholders. In my time, the Coordinators confidence did improve and he did implement some important new policies and behaviours that enhanced his communication and relationships with others.

It would have been impossible for me to do this fellowship without my previous experience living in East Timor and also my strong relationship with KBH. Although returning and working again with KBH was nearly always positively influenced by our past relationship, it sometimes made it difficult for the staff members and I to differentiate between what was my project and the work of the organisation.

Final budget

Expenditure			Income	
Category	Expense details	Amount	Income details	Amount
<i>Travel & living expenses</i>	Return Flights (Sydney- Dili and excess luggage)	\$977.00	Dunlop Asialink Fellowship	\$11,900.00
	Accommodation (\$550/month, 5 months)	\$2,750.00	Other Income (personal contribution)	\$ 3,100.00
	Living Allowance (\$800/month, 5 months)	\$4,000.00		
	Travel Insurance (21/1/2011 to 30/06/2011)	\$440.00		
	Visas (East Timor entry and exit, 5 months)	\$255.00		
<i>West Timor</i>	Visas for West Timor (3 people & authorisation for car)	\$170.00		
	Hire car for travel to Indonesia (5 days) and petrol	\$1,020.00		
	Materials, per diem and accommodation for travel to West Timor (3 people, 5 days)	\$550.00		
<i>Theatre tour</i>	Props, set and costume for performances	\$200.00		
	Rehearsals fees (2 shows)	\$300.00		
	Accommodation & actors fees for the theatre tour	\$400.00		
	Hire small bus, boat tickets, transport contribution	\$500.00		
<i>Documentary</i>	Materials for making the documentary (batteries, DVD's)	\$50.00		
	Post Production Documentary (translation & materials)	\$1,150.00		
<i>Administration & workshops</i>	Internet (100 hours)	\$100.00		
	Preparation of training Materials	\$500.00		
	Workshop materials and workshops	\$650.00		
	Administration (accounting, acquittal and office costs)	\$500.00		
	Incidentals	\$488.00		
	Total Expenditure	<u>\$15,000.00</u>	Total Income	<u>\$15,000.00</u>

Conclusion

At the ANZAC day dawn service held at the Australian and New Zealand barracks in East Timor, I got to talk with a young Australian doctor who had recently arrived for service. When I explained to him about my project and that I was funded by the Dunlop Fellowship, his eyes brightened! Weary Dunlop, he explained, was his hero! He recalled how a biography about Dunlop inspired his decision to become a doctor. So there we were, both in East Timor, doing completely different things but motivated by the same reason, Sir Edward Weary Dunlop. For me, the Asialink Dunlop Fellowship was an unparalleled opportunity to develop a project to promote peace and give a voice to a voiceless community. Through the mediums of theatre and documentary, we encouraged dialogue at a community level about the situation of former East Timorese citizens living in West Timor. Starting and continuing this conversation is vital in not only building peace so that those who want to return to their homeland are free to do so without fear of retaliation, but also, maintaining peace in this new, fragile country.

The success of a community development project can be measured by its longevity: what's left or continues after you leave. I think the Asialink Dunlop Fellowship is successful in having a long term, lasting impact because of its focus on skill exchange and capacity building. I can say that through the workshops and training I led during my fellowship, I was able to transfer creative and technical skills to my counterparts in East Timor which they will continue to use and build upon in the years to come. For me personally, everything that I've learned from this experience and the networks that I've been exposed to will certainly influence the work that I will do in the future. And undoubtedly, the relationships that I was able to form with people will be lifelong friendships. In East Timorese culture, you give anyone that is leaving a gift so that they do not forget you. The gifts that East Timor gave me personally and professionally are immeasurable, thanks to the Dunlop Fellowship, a truly unforgettable experience.

Reference List

Nolan, C. (2011). *Timor-Leste: Reconciliation and Return from Indonesia*. Retrieved July 19, 2011, from <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-east-asia/timor-leste/B122-timor-leste-reconciliation-and-return-from-indonesia.aspx>

Asialink. (2010). *Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asialink Fellowship*. Retrieved July 19, 2011 from http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/our_work/corporate_and_public/dunlop_fellowships#overview

Appendix 1. Publicity

Fellowship funds show

THEATRE-MAKER Zena Kells has spent the past 12 months working with poverty-stricken East Timor refugees stranded in Indonesian West Timor. Her work and plans to dramatise their plight have won her Asialink's Weary Dunlop Fellowship, worth \$11,900. She will use the money to return to Timor next year to develop a "verbatim" theatre show about the refugees' plight. Though the Dili government supports their repatriation, the move is difficult because others now occupy their homes and land. Kells has made two award-winning short films in East Timor. She has also helped create educational theatre and radio shows, as well as a creative arts program for Dili's unemployed youth.

AWD | Zeno Kells
Country | East Timor
Assignment | Community Theatre Assistant
Host Organisation | Krusa Buka Hatene | <http://enpartproject.wordpress.com>
Australia Partner Organisation | Union Aid Abroad, APHEDA | www.apheda.org.au

14

Lights out, Action!



My AYAD placement couldn't have ended more perfectly: my presentation ceremony was running five hours behind schedule, it was pouring down rain and the power had just gone out. As people scrambled to someone's house to grab a generator, I was swept off stage and taken to a back room to be dressed in traditional East Timorese costume. As my female workmates used the light from their mobile phones to apply my lipstick, I was reminded how, funny enough, electricity (or lack thereof), running late and rain have been important players in my time in East Timor.

At 4 o'clock every day, the power went out at Krusa Buka Hatene- the place of learning, a small East Timorese NGO where I have spent the last 12 months working as a Community Theatre Advisor. With the support of my Australian Partner Organisation, Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA, my task was to set up a free creative arts training program for East Timor's unemployed youth, train staff in different theatre styles and improve the organisations' professional capacity.

I've always believed in the transformative and influential role theatre can play in community development. In East Timor, high illiteracy rates allow theatre to speak to people in ways that traditional mediums, like books and newspapers, literally

can't. Theatre is storytelling and there is an abundance of people in East Timor with the most incredible life stories you will ever hear. Theatre entertains, and this aligns with Timorese peoples' love of spectacle and anything of a comic nature. I'll never forget Alerrino, my counterpart, explaining the importance of laughter to me one afternoon:

"Mana, you have to laugh three to four times a day to stop your hair turning grey and you dying!"

Comedy combined with storytelling captures the audience's attention. Crowds in their hundreds gather to enjoy shows that also convey powerful social messages. For these reasons, there is a strong demand for theatre in East Timor because hundreds of organisations are looking at innovative ways to share their research and messages with the people.

The first performance

Four hours after our designated departure time (you quickly learn time has little authority here) we were off, en route to our first performance in a small sub-district called Aileu. I was awarded the front seat in the little truck next to the driver and the 12 actors from the youth theatre troupe piled into the tray out back. As we slowly coiled our way up the foothills that

line Dili, the foliage increased and the temperatures began to drop, a welcome reprieve from the ever present sun in the capital. That's until... it started to rain. The tarp erected over the kids did little to ward off the downpour and so we arrived wet, late and with a generator (our electricity) which we soon discovered wasn't working. We were greeted by some kids and the local police officer. The rest of the town stood by watching and keeping a safe distance as the police officer helped us get the generator working. When the stage was set on the balcony of the primary school, Costa (my workmate) started up the microphone. Costa acted for a long time as my interpreter but he had always spoken so quietly that I had more trouble understanding his English than what everyone else was saying in Tetun. Today, he was a different person: loud and animated. He called for the people to come and watch the show.... but no one moved! He offered a free poster and one woman came over. He then offered me up for a dance but still (I don't know why) no one came over! We were running out of time! They put the music on and the children finally came over followed by the adults. It was time to begin.

The first performance was for the women. It was designed to demonstrate how they could make their local produce

Zena at her farewell in East Timor



compete with that of the larger commercial businesses. It was hilarious and a real hit. One boy acted as an old man selling oranges. He stumbled his way through the audience trying to

coax someone, anyone, into buying some of his fruit. The performance on stage had to stop until he finished his unusually long entrance because people were laughing so much! The next performance was about domestic violence, the premise being, a lot of women who have jobs get beaten by their husbands who don't work. It was silent and short. It was good but it missed the 'why men should stop hitting their wives' element. At the end we distributed posters and talked to the people which hopefully made the issues clearer.

On the way home I rode in the back with the others who were eating sweet bread with slabs of margarine, dancing and serenading each other and all the village people we passed on the side of the road. It was my 'aha' moment, this is what I came here for and this is exactly what I want to be doing.

Zena's farewell with staff members



The final curtain call

Twelve months later, at my farewell, we were still waiting for the audience to arrive and I was still feeling exactly the same way: exhausted but contented. Being an AYAD and working with a local NGO in East Timor was such an incredible opportunity and one experience I will never forget.

Encore

Zena has just been awarded the Sir Edward Weary Dunlop Fellowship and has returned to East Timor to develop a performance and documentary with the same NGO (KBF). The subject matter of this work will be the former Timorese citizens that now live in refugee camps in West Timor. She

Top: Final first, KBF Theatre troupe warming up Bottom: Warm up activity: the actors programme



is looking forward to working with the staff to develop material that will evolve out of the creative process and generate new income sources for a solely donor driven organisation.