

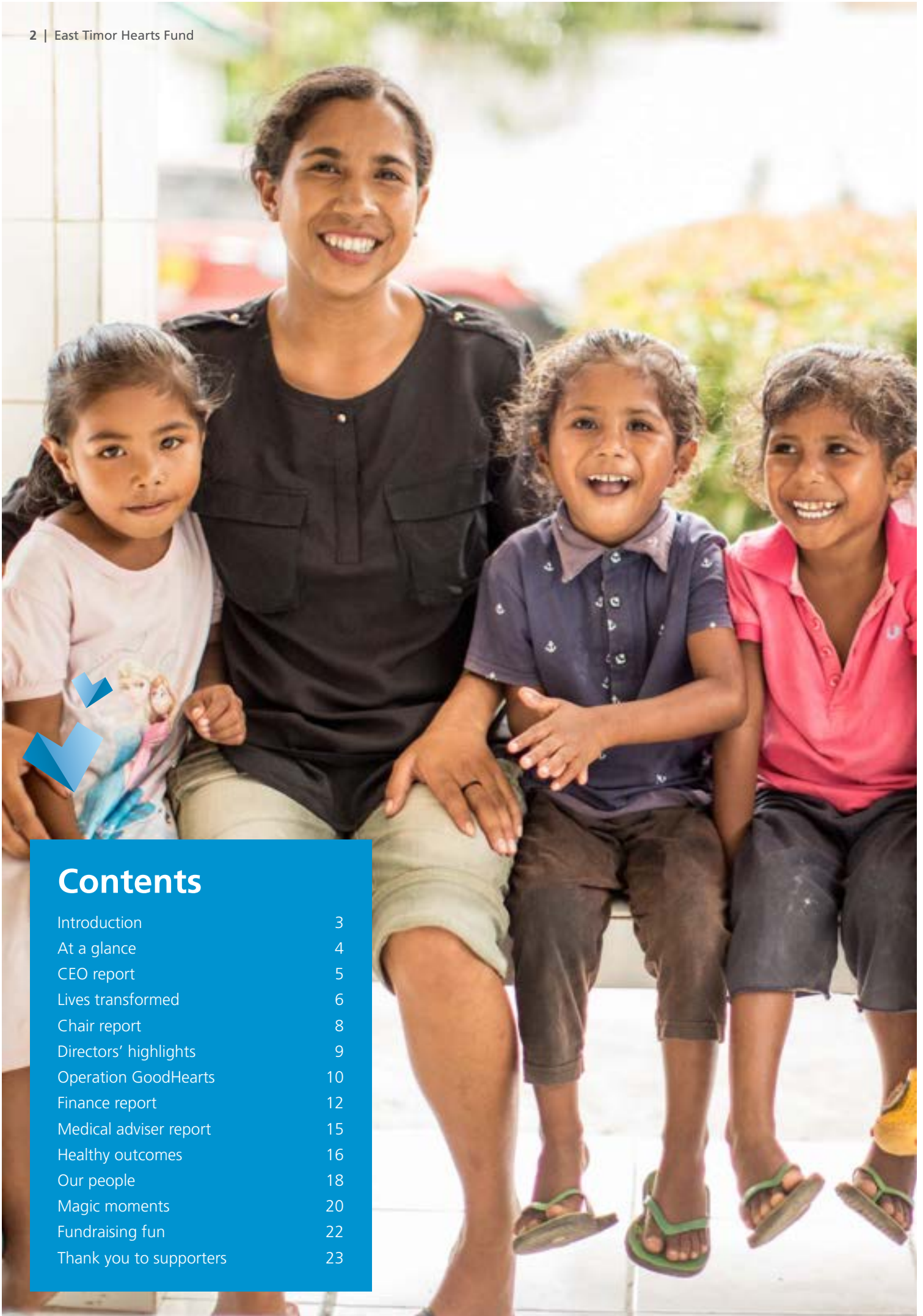
Mending Broken Hearts

2018 Annual Report

**EAST
TIMOR
HEARTS
FUND**

Australians supporting a
healthy Timor-Leste





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Record generosity, record impact

Thank you for supporting our most productive year ever

The launch of our rheumatic heart disease prevalence study in 2018 propelled the issue of poor heart health in Timor-Leste into the international spotlight, and brought home more than ever the importance of our work.

Published in The Medical Journal of Australia, the peer-reviewed research found that Timor-Leste has one of the world's highest rates of rheumatic heart disease – with 35 cases per thousand people – with girls disproportionately affected.

As the only medical organisation dedicated to heart health in Timor-Leste, we provide life-saving surgery while also working to tackle the root causes of poor heart health, through research, preventative health initiatives and education. The grim statistics uncovered in the study only bolster our commitment to this work.

Every year since we were first established in 2010, we have steadily grown and increased the number of people we screen and treat for heart disease.

We continue to be guided by:

- **Our vision** – better health and healthcare services for people from Timor-Leste with heart disease
- **Our purpose** – best practice heart care for young people from Timor-Leste
- **Our values** – respect, compassion, integrity, optimism, collaboration
- **Our strategic direction** – to provide more in-country services and improve cardiac care in Timor-Leste.

Highlights of the 2018 calendar year include:

- Delivering successful heart surgery for a record 18 patients.
- Conducting our first in-country surgical mission, Operation GoodHearts, where we treated more people in five days than we usually do in a year.

- Being appointed, alongside the World Health Organisation, to support the development of Timor-Leste's first rheumatic heart disease action plan, following publication of the landmark research that we funded and coordinated.
- Conducting heart screening on a record 662 patients, an increase of more than 200 per cent on the previous year.
- Expanding our preventative penicillin program, which delivers monthly shots that stem the development of rheumatic heart disease.

It was our most productive year ever.

Overall patient costs for the year increased by 17 per cent but, in line with our goal of maximising value for every dollar spent, the number of patients we treated more than doubled.

Our wonderful donors and supporters deserve credit for helping us achieve and exceed our goals.

This year, donations increased by an impressive 76 per cent, thanks chiefly to the generosity of major donors and increased corporate sponsorships. These included philanthropist Peter McMullin, Northern Oil & Gas Australia, the Jape family and the Harold Mitchell Foundation.

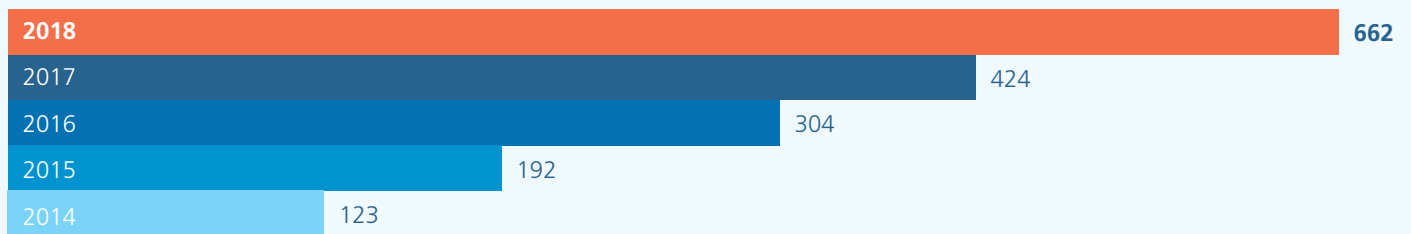
And we continue to be grateful for the partnerships we have built with Australian health organisations including Royal Melbourne Hospital, MonashHeart and Monash Health, Barwon Health, Sydney's Eastern Heart Clinic and Prince of Wales Private Hospital; and in Timor-Leste, Hospital Nacional Guido Valadares and non-government provider Maluk Timor.

We are proud to present East Timor Hearts Fund's shared achievements in our 2018 annual report.

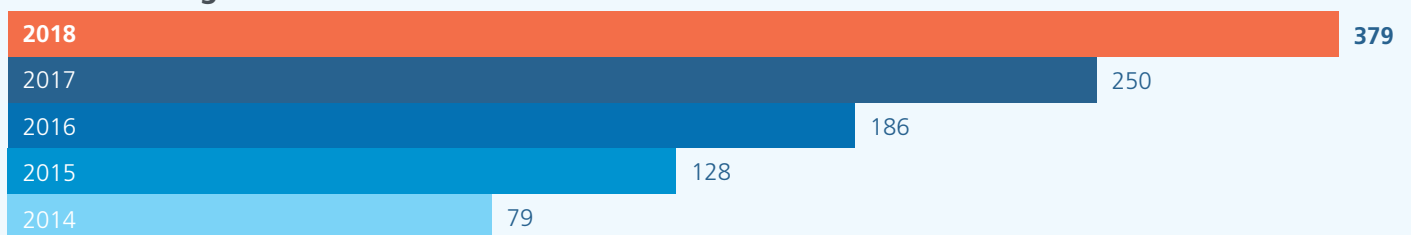
For more information about how to volunteer or donate, please visit easttimorheartsfund.org.au

At a glance

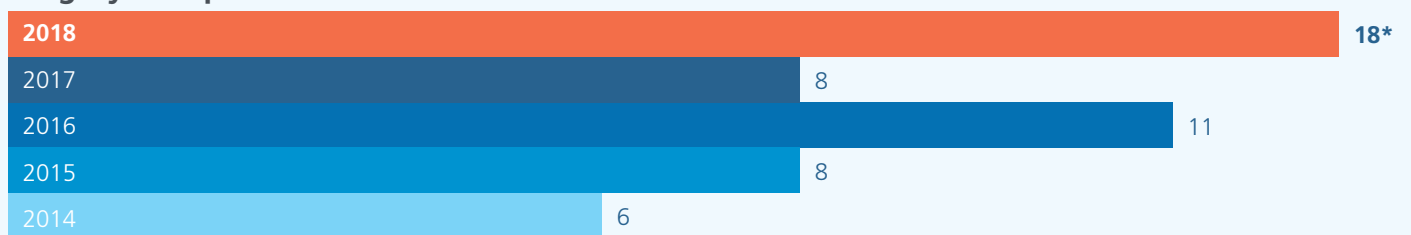
Patients screened



Women and girls screened

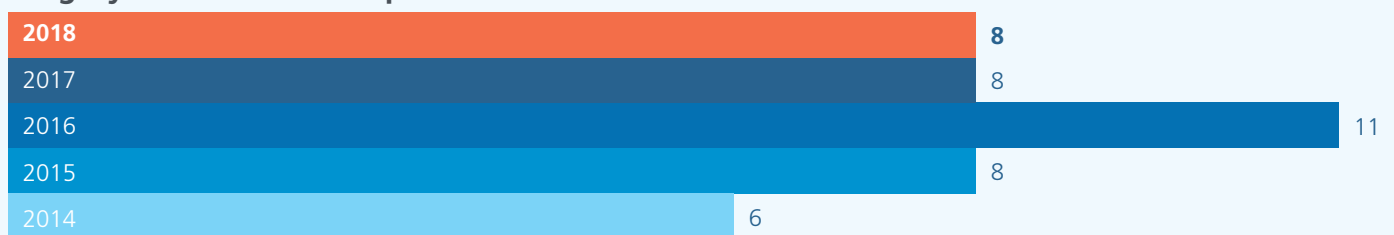


Surgery – all patients

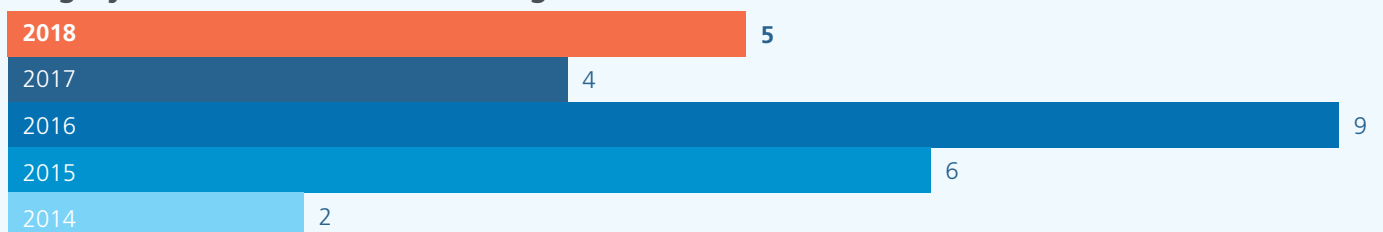


* Includes 10 in Timor-Leste

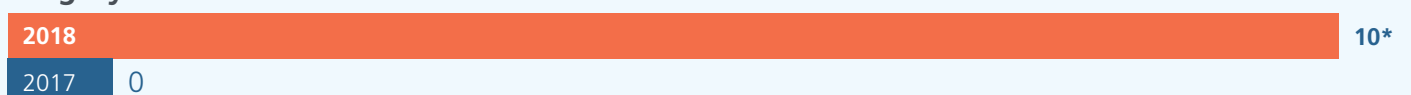
Surgery in Australia – all patients



Surgery in Australia – women and girls



Surgery in Timor-Leste



*Inaugural overseas surgical mission

CEO report

Hearts renewed, futures re-imagined

In 2018, we mended more hearts than ever before. Eighteen people underwent life-saving surgery. For the first time, more than half of these surgeries were conducted in Timor-Leste. As part of our commitment to building local capacity, we conducted our first in-country surgical trip, Operation GoodHearts, alongside our Timorese colleagues. Our volunteer surgical team operated on 10 young children in five days – as many patients as we would usually treat in a year

Operation GoodHearts was deeply satisfying but incredibly emotional. Seeing children the same age as my own undergoing surgery, I felt a greater sense of professional responsibility than ever before. I recognised the concern on the parents' faces as it was also my own, and I celebrated with them when hearts were renewed, and futures re-imagined.

These hearts were mended, as always, through the incredible efforts of our volunteer medical team, which conducted heart screening on a record 662 people during 2018. At the same time, across our organisation, skilled volunteers and pro-bono partners worked tirelessly to further our work, providing a multiplier effect to every dollar donated.

Although we recorded a financial loss for the year of \$61,794, our donor and philanthropic support continued to grow significantly. Last year we had one of our biggest years, raising \$384,387. Thanks are due to all individual donors, as well as our philanthropic and corporate supporters, including Northern Oil & Gas Australia, philanthropist Peter McMullin, the Jape family and the Harold Mitchell Foundation.

We continued to build partnerships to support our work in Timor-Leste, signing a three-year Memorandum of Understanding with the Timor-Leste Ministry of Health and a collaboration agreement with our partner Maluk Timor.

In April, I participated in the launch of the findings of our landmark rheumatic heart disease prevalence study, which has been published in *The Medical Journal of Australia*. The research showed that Timor-Leste has some of the

highest rates of rheumatic heart disease in the world, with girls disproportionately affected. East Timor Hearts Fund was honoured to be subsequently appointed, along with the World Health Organisation, to support the government of Timor-Leste in developing its first rheumatic heart disease action plan. In May, we were also delighted to support the Timorese government delegation to the World Health Assembly in Geneva, where the Timorese co-sponsored a global resolution on this preventable but deadly disease.

In other highlights, our co-founder Dr Noel Bayley received a well-deserved Order of Australia in the 2018 Queen's Birthday Honours for his work in Timor-Leste.

No doubt 2019 will bring its own challenges and opportunities. We look forward with optimism and enthusiasm to mending more broken hearts together.

Stuart Thomson
Chief Executive Officer (2017–2019)



18 lives transformed – meet our 2018 patients

In 2018 our patients included teachers, students, mums and children



Maria Menezes

“Thank you to all involved for giving me the second chance in life.”

A tiny surgical balloon inserted into Maria’s heart has made a huge difference to her life. Leading up to the mitral valve procedure at Royal Melbourne Hospital in March, Maria, 29, was breathless and tired. Her heart disease made it hard to look after her children and work around the house.

But her spirits and energy lifted soon after her high-tech procedure, which involves widening the damaged valve by inflating a tiny balloon. Maria returned home to her family, looking forward to having the energy to walk her children to school every day.

“Many thanks for everything that has been done to save my life, especially the donors and the doctors that made my surgery possible,” she said.

Olga Koten

“Thank you for this amazing job.”

Traditional Timorese chicken and rice was recovery food for young Olga as she recuperated from surgery at Royal Melbourne Hospital in June.

Patient support volunteers helped Olga remain relaxed and positive during her stay in Melbourne. They brought the teen familiar traditional foods and took her on trips to the zoo and to the Bellarine Peninsula.

Less than two weeks after surgery Olga returned to Timor-Leste to resume her study and work for a better future.

“I would like to express my words that come from my heart to say many thanks to the donors that have helped me to get this done, and thanks very much to the doctors for this amazing job that was done for me,” Olga said.



Domingas Lopes

“Thanks to the doctors and donors from Australia.”

Before her heart surgery in Australia, daily life was a struggle for young mum Domingas. Breathless and weak, most days all she could do was eat and sleep.

But after her mitral balloon procedure by cardiologist Dr Simon Eggleton at Eastern Heart Clinic in May, Domingas, 27, was looking forward to the simple pleasures in life, like being able to care for her kids and do household chores.

“I would like to express many thanks to the doctors and donors from Australia who have worked so hard to save my life,” Domingas said.

Jose Ribeiro

“I can achieve greater dreams.”

Jose received a surprise 18th birthday present in August when East Timor Hearts Fund ambassador, Western Bulldogs champion Lin Jong, gave him a ticket to his first AFL game.

Just days before, late in July, Jose had been on the operating table at Royal Melbourne Hospital where cardiac surgeon Mr Michael O’Keefe repaired his faulty mitral valve.

“Now that I’m healthy, I’ll continue my schooling to achieve greater future dreams,” he said.



Marcelina da Conceicao

"My family and I will never forget you."

After successful surgery to fix a congenital heart defect at Royal Melbourne Hospital in June, Marcelina was looking forward to resuming a healthy and productive life.

Poor health had forced Marcelina, an English teacher, to give up work. But with her heart condition resolved, the 29-year-old was determined to resume teaching and help support her family.

"I know that you save a lot of lives, but I want to let each and every one of you know that this life is forever grateful. My family and I will never forget you. Obrigada barak."



Natalino Maia

"From my heart, thank you."

The new year started well for Natalino, 17, when he came to Australia in January for heart surgery.

Before the operation, Natalino had been unable to play soccer

and do other activities with family and friends. But by early February, Natalino had bounced back and was recovering well from mitral valve repair surgery, performed at Royal Melbourne Hospital by surgeon Michael O'Keefe.

Following some sight-seeing around Melbourne, Natalino returned home to Timor-Leste with renewed energy to continue his study and help his family.

"The only words that I would say from my heart is thank you for the donors and doctors that have made my surgery possible"

Olandina Viegas

"Now I can take care of my children."

Constant breathlessness and fatigue caused by untreated heart disease made daily life tough for Olandina, a mother of three. She struggled to find the energy to care for baby Mimoza and to walk Octaviana and Aldo up the hill to their school.

The lives of Olandina and her family were transformed in September by a heart procedure performed by cardiologist Dr Simon Eggleton at Eastern Heart Clinic in Sydney.

After a brief stay in Sydney, Olandina was excited to return home with renewed energy. *"Now I can continue my work as a mother at home and take care of my children and my husband,"* she said.



Roberto Cofitalan

"There aren't enough words to say 'obrigadu'."

Roberto, 29, became a schoolteacher at the orphanage where he was raised, to help repay the kindness of the nuns who cared for him and his siblings.

In November surgeons at Barwon Health's University Hospital in Geelong performed a complex double heart valve replacement after East Timor Hearts Fund's volunteer medical team diagnosed Roberto's condition.

Roberto is now back in the classroom and enjoying caring for his younger brothers and sisters.

"There aren't enough words to say 'obrigadu'. May God bless each and every one of you," Roberto said.



And also...

In addition to these eight patients who received surgery in Australia, the following patients received life-saving heart procedures in Timor-Leste, as part of the Operation GoodHearts paediatric surgical mission:

Ivo, 3	Nelcia, 3
Nelsia, 4	Varela, 4
Jenova, 3	Fidelia, 13
Livina, 6	Juvencia, 3
Antonito, 5	Herlia, 9 months

Board Chair report

Dreaming large, achieving goals

In 2018 the board of East Timor Hearts Fund had the incredible pleasure of seeing words on a page come to life. It was enormously satisfying to see key planks of our strategic plan delivered, bringing benefits to patients, families, practitioners and the people and health system of Timor-Leste.

A strong strategic vision has always been a cornerstone of our growing organisation. Just over a year after becoming an incorporated company in 2012, we began work on our first strategic plan. After delivering virtually all its objectives ahead of time, we went on to develop our current, 2017-20 plan, with ambitious goals to support more surgery in Timor-Leste and continue the expansion of our services into preventative health and health promotion.

As a result, dozens of young people in remote areas in Timor-Leste are now receiving preventative penicillin treatment that may ward off the onset of serious rheumatic heart disease. Families and communities are being educated by our rheumatic heart disease staff about minimising their risks. And we have completed our first in-country surgical mission, in collaboration with Hospital Nacional Guido Valadares, which saw 10 children receive life-saving surgery in five days.

For our hard-working volunteer board, these achievements brought real delight and pride. They showed that we can bring tangible benefits to the people of Timor-Leste when we dream large and mobilise support to deliver our goals.

On another note, this year I represented the organisation again on the second annual Trans-Timor Trek, a gruelling 135-kilometre, coast-to-coast hike across the mountainous island. I'm reliably informed that I am now the world-record holder for Trans-Timor trekking, which I am very chuffed about.

In other highlights, I would like to congratulate my fellow East Timor Hearts Fund co-founder Dr Noel Bayley, who was successfully nominated for an Order of Australia award in 2018 by the board of East Timor Hearts Fund, in recognition of his outstanding work over 20 years in Timor-Leste.



I sincerely thank all of our volunteers. This includes our 2018 board, an incredibly dedicated, skilled and hard-working group that I am proud and honoured to lead. The board's work is often unseen but nonetheless critical to the organisation's success.

Thanks are also due to our CEO Stuart Thomson, for his tenacious work coordinating the delivery of our strategic plan in sometimes challenging circumstances.

Above all, thanks, as always, must go to our big-hearted supporters, whose generosity allows us to continue to transform lives in Timor-Leste.

Ingrid Svendsen
2018 Board Chair

Our board

It's been a massive year for East Timor Hearts Fund and our hard-working volunteer board directors. Here some of our 2018 directors reflect on their personal highlights.



Bill Appleby

Every year this amazing organisation grows in stature and capacity with 2018 being no exception. The highlight for me was that we delivered our first ever in-country surgical mission

– Operation GoodHearts, which contributed significantly to the overall record of 18 lives saved in a single year through life-saving heart surgery.



Brett Sutton

My highlight was seeing East Timor Hearts Fund support the government of Timor-Leste in committing to developing a national rheumatic heart disease action-plan. This is

critical because it helps to address the fundamental causes and drivers of the disease. It's something that the Ministry of Health will own and provide stewardship on. East Timor Hearts Fund should be rightly proud to have been nominated to support that process; it's a great sign of our trust and rapport with the people and government of Timor-Leste.



Ingrid Svendsen

Despite the pain, completing the inaugural Trans-Timor Trek was a definite highlight. For the board and organisation, it was great to recruit some excellent new directors,

completing our transition to a skills-based board. It was also an honour this year to meet with our patron HE Xanana Gusmao during his quick visit to Melbourne.

Nick Oats



Seeing Timor-Leste's Health Ministry address the World Health Assembly, supporting a resolution to end rheumatic heart disease worldwide and announcing its partnership with East Timor Hearts Fund to combat the disease in Timor-Leste. Not only the

culmination of our landmark study, but a recognition of our broader efforts in preventative health, education and surgery.



Nicki Patten

My highlight was meeting three-year-old Nelsia and her father Nelson at Run Melbourne. To see such a young life completely transformed by her surgery earlier in the year was

truly inspiring. For me, Nelsia came to symbolise all the other children with similar conditions that are so easily treatable through our efforts.



Sophie Clarkson

It's hard to name a single highlight because in 2018 East Timor Hearts Fund kicked goals left, right and centre, flanked by our Ambassador Lin Jong. Seeing the strategic plan

come to life with a successful in-country surgical mission and the expansion of our penicillin program, all while treating a record number of patients, was just magic.



Vijaya Joshi

My highlight was the publication of our collaborative research and the posing of the question 'In Timor-Leste, why do girls suffer from rheumatic heart disease at a greater rate than boys?'. I am looking forward to our

work helping to find an answer to that question in the coming years!

2018 board attendance

Directors	Eligible to attend	Attended
Ingrid Svendsen	6	6
Brett Sutton	6	3
Bill Appleby	6	6
Julianne Scenna	3	1
Paul Smith	5	4
Sarah Danne	4	1
Nicki Patten	6	6
Sophie Clarkson	5	5
Prof. Andrew Cochrane	6	5
Vijaya Joshi	6	6
Nick Oats	6	4
Katrina Thurston	0	0

5 days, 2 nations, 10 hearts

Operation GoodHearts – collaborating to build skills and mend hearts

East Timor Hearts Fund's first ever in-country surgical mission, Operation GoodHearts, saw a team of dedicated volunteer surgeons, cardiologists, sonographers, anaesthetists, and specialist nurses descend on Dili to work alongside local health and medical professionals, for five intense days in February 2018. Within those five days, 10 young patients received life-saving heart procedures – more than East Timor Hearts Fund usually undertakes in a year.

Preparations for the complex mission, led by volunteer surgeon Professor Andrew Cochrane, took months. Complicated logistics were planned and young patients from around Timor-Leste assessed by the volunteer medical team, which included local doctors and nurses.

Dr Ines Teodora, a Timorese paediatrics doctor, worked with East Timor Hearts Fund during the 2016 rheumatic heart disease prevalence study, and played a key role in Operation GoodHearts.

Using her medical and language skills, Dr Teodora helped organise patients before their surgery, conducting health checks and making sure families understood the procedure.

During recovery, Dr Teodora took part in ward visits and organised post-operative chest X-rays and follow-up appointments.

The presence of local specialists such as Dr Teodora, who could also communicate in local languages, Tetum and Bahasa, was invaluable when helping to reassure families about the benefits of the unfamiliar surgical process.

It was challenging to gain the families' trust, enabling them to feel comfortable in giving permission to proceed with surgery, but Dr Teodora said she had been excited to see all 10 children successfully treated.

"And their families were so happy because they were going home with their healthy child," Dr Teodora said.

Beyond the obvious health improvement Operation GoodHearts brought to children, it also created benefits for the broader community, as knowledge and medical techniques were shared and advanced between the Timorese and Australian practitioners.

Dr Teodora said working alongside the team from Australia had been a great experience for all involved.

"It's very helpful and beneficial for the local doctors who learn from the volunteers and observe how they do examinations and for them to see how we run the clinic," she said.

Deakin University medical students, Tara Grayson and Sarah Garry, joined the surgical team as observers and also found the experience invaluable.

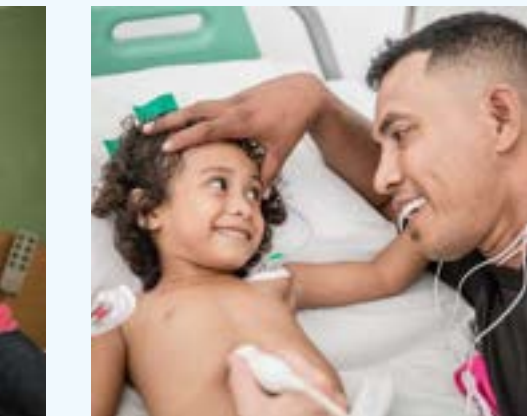


Photography: Mathew Lynn

"To see something that's so fixable and such an achievable surgery, for this to happen here to change these children's lives...they'd never live a full life otherwise and now they can," Ms Garry said.

"Every single person who's come on this trip is passionate about universal access to healthcare and the fact that they come here and do what they do because they genuinely care about people who are less fortunate than us in Australia...it's amazing to see," she said.

The aim of each surgery is to close the ductus arteriosus, a foetal blood vessel. Normally this closes shortly after birth, however in patients with



a condition known as patent ductus arteriosus (PDA), the blood vessel remains open. This results in ongoing transmission of blood between the aorta and the pulmonary artery, which can cause debilitating symptoms.

The surgeries performed on the Operation GoodHearts patients involved making a small cut on the left side of the chest to find and close the extra tube.

Surgical mission leader Professor Cochrane said the children had severe symptoms, including breathlessness and poor growth. But he said the young patients generally recovered quickly from the surgery and felt better almost straight away.

“They will have the chance to go on to live normal, healthy lives,” Professor Cochrane said.

Paediatric cardiologist Dr Ari Horton said Operation GoodHearts was the beginning of a process to prove that collaborative surgical missions were possible in Timor-Leste, and to strengthen Timor-Leste’s ability to provide diagnostic care for children.

“One day regular missions, with a focus on sustainability and capacity building for local services, will ensure that Timorese kids have access to the same care that children in Australia receive every day,” Dr Horton said.

Ultimately, the aim is to support the health system of Timor-Leste so that

patients with these complex heart procedures can receive treatment by local surgeons, in local hospitals.

It’s a vision that inspired many donors, including major sponsor Northern Oil & Gas Australia.

Northern Oil & Gas Australia Managing Director Angus Karoll said his company was delighted to support the surgical mission.

“Our aim is to make a positive social contribution to the Timorese community, and being involved in a project like Operation GoodHearts is a great way to do this,” Mr Karoll said.

Financial overview

Finance report

I am pleased to present to you this summary of our financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2018. Independent auditor Ernst & Young (EY) has audited the financial statements, which we have prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards.

The overall deficit for the period was \$61,749, resulting in net assets of \$941,028 at the end of the financial (calendar) year. Although we recorded a deficit in 2018, we have concrete plans to continue to increase our fundraising results in the new year. Additionally, some significant bequests will be realised in 2019, which we expect to bring our financial results into significant surplus.

We saw a significant improvement in fundraising revenue in 2018, with a 76 per cent increase in donations from 2017 to 2018. This was largely due to an increase in major donor support and corporate sponsorships.

We are planning for continued positive and improved returns in the future from our major donor and bequest programs. The planned recruitment of a part-time fundraising manager in the second half of 2019 will support this.

Investments managed through JB Were were starting to yield benefit during an up and down year for the markets. The aim is to grow the investment portfolio to safeguard the sustainability of the organisation while striving towards its continued success. Balancing our investments with readily available cash reserves is constantly managed to ensure critical funds are available for life saving-surgery and other organisational costs. We are continually working with JB

Were to ensure all investments are ethical, low risk and in accordance with our Investment Management Strategy.

Patient costs increased by 17.8 per cent, as we performed 10 paediatric heart surgeries on the ground in Timor-Leste for the first time, in addition to our Australian-based surgeries.

The organisation continues to be largely supported and run through the work of our volunteers, from our board to our medical team. We continued to receive office space and administrative support from our pro-bono partner Russell Kennedy lawyers. The support of professional volunteers and pro-bono partners ensures that every dollar we raise goes a very long way for individual patients, and for the future of the fledgling nation of Timor-Leste.

I would like to personally thank outgoing Finance and Audit Committee Chair Paul Smith and volunteer Finance Manager Anbu Mohan for the work they did during their time with East Timor Hearts Fund, as well as the ongoing committed members of the Finance and Audit Committee and our finance volunteers for their wise counsel.

Katrina Thurston
Chair, Finance and Audit Committee

Income summary 2014–2018

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
General giving	\$224,855	\$194,482	\$1,139,015	\$64,583	\$118,382
Trust and foundations	\$29,000	\$23,593	\$38,576	\$30,730	\$142,000
Corporate sponsorships	\$130,532	–	\$7,273	\$83,700	\$20,000
Total	\$384,387	\$224,015	\$1,184,864	\$179,013	\$280,382

Key expenditure items

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Patient costs	\$215,332	\$182,723	\$224,235	\$197,886	\$44,150
Salaries and wages	\$176,425	\$127,118	\$99,153	\$38,646	nil
Total	\$391,757	\$309,841	\$323,388	\$236,532	\$44,150

Summarised statement of profit and loss

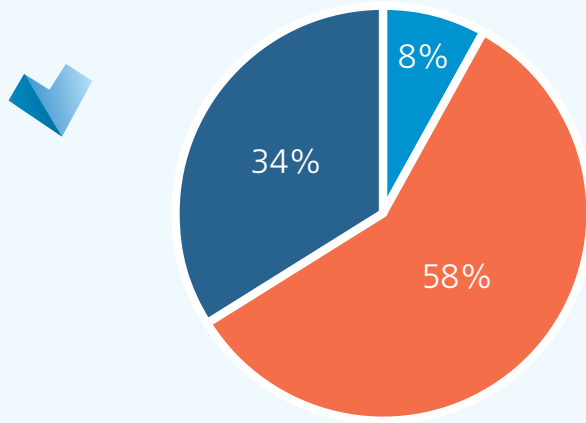
	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Income					
Donations	\$384,387	\$218,075	\$1,184,765	\$179,013	\$280,382
Interest Income	\$31,381	\$10,131	\$24,495	\$7,578	\$3,437
Total revenue	\$415,768	\$228,206	\$1,209,260	\$186,591	\$283,819
Expenditure					
Subscriptions	\$2,264	\$5,126	\$2,014	\$1,029	\$500
Patient support services	\$215,332	\$182,723	\$224,235	\$197,886	\$44,150
Insurance	\$5,479	\$1,815	\$4,436	\$2,306	\$171
Bank charges	\$1,003	\$827	\$262	\$35	\$72
Promotional expenses	\$37,615	\$17,779	\$16,379	\$9,008	\$11,562
Other expenses	\$39,399	\$56,021	\$13,668	\$681	\$252
Employee expenses	\$176,425	\$127,118	\$99,153	\$38,646	–
Total expenditure	\$477,517	\$391,409	\$360,147	\$249,591	\$56,707
(Deficit)/surplus for the year	(\$61,749)	(\$163,203)	\$849,113	(\$63,000)	\$227,112

Summarised statement of financial position

	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Current assets					
Cash and cash equivalents	\$540,369	\$1,069,194	\$1,185,938	\$338,487	\$386,162
Investments	\$426,047	–	–	–	–
Receivables	\$8,233	\$7,676	\$9,460	–	–
Prepayments	\$6,012	\$4,184	\$17,152	\$57,100	\$1,886
Total current assets	\$980,661	\$1,081,054	\$1,212,550	\$395,587	\$388,048
Total assets	\$980,661	\$1,081,054	\$1,212,550	\$395,587	\$388,048
Current liabilities					
Trade payables	–	–	–	\$78,721	\$8,181
Accrued expenses	\$39,633	\$72,339	\$46,502	–	–
Total current liabilities	\$39,633	\$72,339	\$46,502	\$78,721	\$8,181
Total liabilities	\$39,633	\$72,339	\$46,502	\$78,721	\$8,181
Net assets	\$941,028	\$1,002,777	\$1,163,250	\$316,866	\$379,867
Equity					
Retained earnings	\$941,028	\$1,002,777	\$1,165,980	\$316,866	\$379,867
Total equity	\$941,028	\$1,002,777	\$1,165,980	\$316,866	\$379,867

The summarised financial statements have been derived from the audited financial statements of East Timor Hearts Fund for the year ended 31 December 2018.

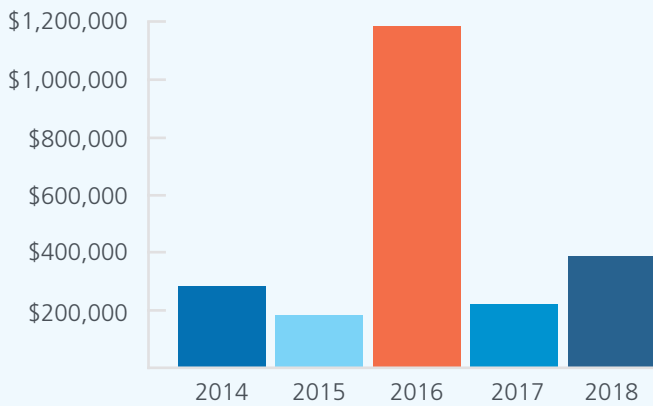
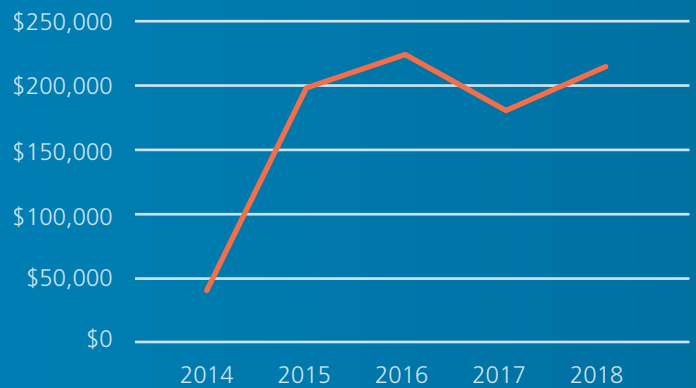




Our main sources of financial support

- General giving
- Corporate sponsorships
- Trusts and foundations

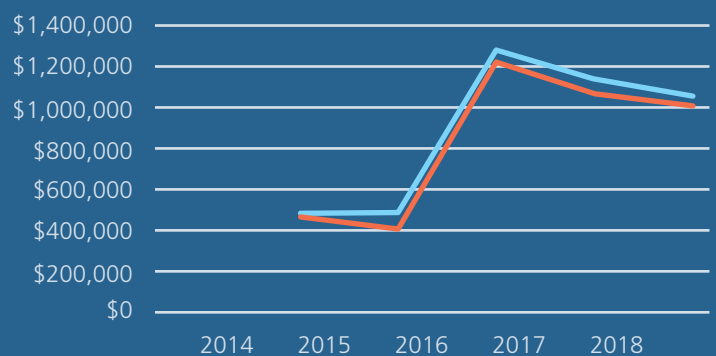
We are increasing our patient support services



Our growing financial support saves more young lives

Our asset base remains strong

- Total assets
- Net assets





Medical adviser report

Smiles make it all worthwhile

The 2018 calendar year was busy, enormously satisfying and worthwhile, albeit occasionally difficult and frustrating.

The volunteer medical team conducted three clinics, in February, June and October. We saw patients in the capital of Dili, with outreach clinics to Suai and Maliana in the south-west of Timor-Leste and Baucau in the east.

The clinical team continues to go from strength to strength. We now have seven adult cardiologists, with Dr Ari Horton providing invaluable and desperately needed input in paediatric cardiology.

The Dili clinics without exception were hectic, with the usual mix of previously operated patients (most doing very well), new referrals and patients we're monitoring, who may eventually need intervention.

In 2018 a record 18 patients received life-saving heart surgery or procedures, in Australia and in Timor-Leste, as part of our first-ever paediatric surgical mission.

We had some standout results including multiple mitral valve balloons by our Sydney and Melbourne teams for a number of young women patients. In all cases, we saw very satisfying symptom relief and dramatically improved prospects of long-term survival.

We also had some very promising results from mitral valve repairs at the expert hands of Mr Michael O'Keefe at Royal Melbourne Hospital, for patients who would have faced death from progressive heart failure without intervention.

For patients with valve damage caused by rheumatic heart disease, we know that mitral balloons do extraordinarily well, almost all without further intervention. Based on early results, we have high hopes for mitral valve repairs for this group of patients also.

Of course, when we conduct screening clinics we are always confronted with a significant number of patients for whom intervention is not possible. This is the 'difficult and frustrating' aspect of our work.

The smiles of the post-operative patients and their families go a long way to making the work so worth doing.

As we seek to continue to expand the scope of our work, the contributions of volunteers and donors that make it all possible are gratefully acknowledged.

Dr Noel Bayley AM
Honorary Medical Adviser

Look at them now

Four previous patients tell how healthy hearts have changed their lives



Teresinha da Costa

"I can do everything that I could not do well in the past. It has changed my life a lot."

Following a high-tech medical procedure to repair a congenital heart defect, paediatric nurse Teresinha da Costa is now back at work, helping other patients at Timor-Leste's main public hospital, Hospital Nacional Guido Valadares.

The young mum was struggling with debilitating symptoms from her heart condition when she was flown to Melbourne for life-changing surgery in April 2016.

Prior to the surgery Teresinha was constantly tired and suffering chest pain and other complications from her patent ductus arteriosus, commonly known as a 'hole in the heart'. In developed countries, the condition is generally fixed in infancy. But in Timor-Leste no hospital was able to perform the complex procedure required.

Teresinha is now enjoying seeing her infant son grow up and helping other patients through her nursing.

"I can do everything that I could not do well in the past. It has changed my life a lot," Teresinha said.

"East Timor Hearts Fund is such an amazing organisation. There aren't enough words to say thank you."



Esmenia da Costa

"I play soccer and do other physical exercise. I can run for about five kilometres now that I don't feel short of breath and tired anymore."

Three years after a successful heart procedure at MonashHeart cardiology service in Melbourne, university student Esmenia da Costa is still feeling relief and joy at the improved health the operation has brought.

"With this operation I felt so happy. Everything that hassled to me is gone. The operation has really changed my life a lot in many respects," Esmenia said.

In 2015, aged 32, Esmenia had suffered from heart disease for almost 10 years. She couldn't walk for more than a few metres and had to leave her university studies because she was constantly short of breath with swollen and painful legs.

Things could not be more different now. *"I play soccer and do other physical exercise. I can run for about five kilometres now that I don't feel short of breath and tired anymore."*



Eufrazia Gonzaga

“The operation that I had was very significant and totally changed my life for the better, especially my physical and mental health.”

Kindergarten teacher Eufrazia Gonzaga is back in the classroom teaching the next generation of Timorese children, following her amazing lesson in heart health in Australia.

In September 2016 Eufrazia underwent complex, double-valve repair surgery at Royal Melbourne Hospital. Within days, she was overjoyed to be breathing easily again for the first time in years – and the positive effects have kept on coming.

Two years later, Eufrazia’s life had been renewed by the surgery. *“The operation that I had was very significant and totally changed my life for the better, especially my physical and mental health,”* Eufrazia said.

“I thought I could no longer exist on this planet but now I physically feel so much better than before.”

“Thank you to all involved for helping me. I feel very happy and healthy.”



Timotio Freitas

“Now I can play soccer and run, and I can do activities at home with my family.”

From too weak to walk, to training for a fun run, student Timotio Freitas’s life has changed dramatically since his damaged heart valve was repaired in Australia in 2017.

Brimming with good health, Timotio has been able to return to his studies, and to living a fit and active life.

“I feel like a miracle has happened to me,” Timotio said.

“Now I can play soccer and run, and I can do activities at home with my family.”

Timotio plans to return to Australia in 2019 as East Timor Hearts Fund’s special guest at the Run Melbourne fun run. Timotio planned to complete the event with one of the cardiologists who performed his life-saving procedure, Dr Simon Eggleton.

“Thank you for giving me a second chance at life, and for inviting me to participate in the fun run,” Timotio said.

“I am in training to reach five kilometres, and I’m looking forward to exploring the city and seeing the people, culture and lovely places in Melbourne.”

Our people

'They just need a helping hand'

Ellen Tilbury, Sydney patient support coordinator

When weary heart patients arrive in Sydney from Timor-Leste, often after a day or two of travel, volunteer Ellen Tilbury is a friendly face to greet them at the airport.

As a patient support coordinator, Ellen offers comfort and care to her charges as they adjust to a strange, bustling city.

She drives patients and their escorts from and to the airport, settles them into accommodation and helps them with supplies, shopping trips, medical appointments and sightseeing.

"It can be quite exhausting for them by the time they arrive, and the Sydney airport is massive compared to where they have come from," Ellen says.

Negotiating large medical centres is also a foreign experience for the patients, many of whom come from remote villages.

"They don't know how their surgery is going to play out, and don't have the experience of going to a big hospital so it can be a little nerve-wracking for them."

"They just need a helping hand and to realise it's going to be alright."

Spirits lift after the operations, with the patients generally feeling immediate benefits to their health.

"The first patient I helped out with was so young, in his late teens, and very quiet when he arrived. He was struggling to walk up to the doctor's surgery, but after the procedure he had so much new energy and he was seeing the sights and going down the beach. It was evidence of the benefits of the surgery and amazing to see."



Ellen forged a connection with the people of Timor-Leste when she volunteered in the island country as a legal adviser for an NGO for a year between 2014 and 2015.

"I was impressed by the optimism of all the people and their determination, despite the hardship and conflict they'd been through.

"I could see they'd come a long way since independence, but there was so much they didn't have access to, especially health care.

"That lack of equity was quite stark, particularly coming to their country, just an hour from Darwin."

When Ellen returned to Australia, she was on the cusp of starting her own family but wanted to maintain support for the small country and its people.

She chose to volunteer with East Timor Hearts Fund because of the organisation's focus on improving health in Timor-Leste.

"East Timor Hearts Fund does an amazing job, organising their projects, getting doctors and hospitals to donate their resources, and bringing patients out to Australia through the complicated visa system.

"They're very focused on getting outcomes for the patients and it doesn't look like there's anything wasted – it's run very well," she says.

Now a mother of two, Ellen, 37, is on family leave but intends to resume her volunteer work as soon as possible.

"I'm happy staying in touch with that part of the world, and knowing I'm helping out, even if it's just with those few people I see when they come to Sydney for their heart procedures."



Volunteering's a family affair for Annette and Alan

Alan Appelbe and Annette Steel, volunteer doctors

Husband and wife team Alan Appelbe and Annette Steel make a dynamic volunteer-duo on their regular working trips to fight heart disease in Timor-Leste.

On arrival in the capital Dili, it's straight to the hospital. From there, they travel to more remote and under-resourced areas of the small, mountainous country.

Cardiologist Alan promptly starts assessing hundreds of heart patients at a rate unheard of at his usual workplace, Barwon Health University Hospital in Geelong, in regional Victoria.

"In the Geelong cardiology clinic, you would see half a dozen patients in an afternoon whereas in Timor-Leste I would see 40 or 50 in half a day. The volume of work is way higher," says Alan.

GP Annette helps manage the fast-paced schedule of their screening visits and often treats patients for unrelated health conditions.

The couple say the work is enriching but challenging, particularly when treating young patients suffering from deteriorating heart problems that are now virtually unseen in Australia.

"We have to triage people into those who can be readily helped, people who might need ongoing follow-up or penicillin treatment, and triage some who are beyond resources available there," Alan says.

"Sometimes, sadly, we do see people with heart problems that are so severe that surgery is not possible or is too risky."



In the worst advanced cases, many patients, young or old, face almost certain death within months.

Annette says one of her most challenging times was seeing a teenage girl being told that her heart disease had become untreatable.

"She was in her early teens and old enough to know what it all meant," Annette says.

Since 2016 Alan has helped to bring nine heart patients to Barwon Health for life-changing heart procedures.

Many required a technically complex but ingeniously simple mitral balloon procedure. This involves inserting a balloon to widen their narrowed mitral valve and restore good blood flow to their heart – a procedure that can take less than two hours.

Alan says the young Timorese patients quickly recover from surgery.

"The staff at the University Hospital Geelong enjoy helping the young Timorese patients who bounce out of surgery."

For Annette, seeing the benefits to former patients and their communities is most rewarding.

"There are lots of great outcomes: people you see very short of breath, women in their early 20s, whose lungs are full of fluid because of their heart valve damage. And you go back to check their progress and hardly recognise them," she says.

"Because of their treatment they're able to return to work and have a normal family life."

The pair continue to return to Timor-Leste but look forward to a time when the island has its own, fully funded surgical unit, using locally trained surgeons.

"The country is becoming more organised and sophisticated and the local doctors' expertise is improving," Alan says.

"Part of the program is to upskill locals to take over and it's very satisfying to know there'll be people there on a permanent basis."

Magic moments

February

It was a momentous start to the year as preparations ramped up for Operation GoodHearts, our first surgical mission into Timor-Leste. The volunteer medical team began surgery on 26 February, and five days later 10 young cardiac patients were all recovering well. Over just a few days they had treated as many patients in-country as they would normally operate on for East Timor Hearts Fund in Australia in a year.

April

In April The Medical Journal of Australia published our landmark rheumatic heart disease prevalence study, which found that Timor-Leste has one of the world's highest rates of preventable, treatable rheumatic heart disease.

The study and its publication prompted a major breakthrough, with the international community acting and the government of Timor-Leste announcing work on its first rheumatic heart disease action plan, supported by the World Health Organisation and East Timor Hearts Fund.

June

What a month for accolades! Not only was our co-founder and honorary medical adviser Dr Noel Bayley awarded an Order of Australia for almost 20 years of voluntary work in Timor-Leste, but our 2016 annual report won Bronze at the prestigious Australasian Reporting Awards. It was the first time we'd entered the awards and we were especially thrilled as the report was put together using only volunteer and pro bono resources. A victory for volunteerism all round!



July

We welcomed to Australia one of our youngest and sweetest patients, three-year-old Nelsia, to join us at the Run Melbourne fun run. Little Nelsia had surgery a few months earlier, as part of the Operation GoodHearts paediatric surgical mission, but cheerfully breezed through the five-kilometre walk, inspiring our whole team.

August

Board chair and co-founder Ingrid Svendsen and four others donned hiking boots and took part in the 2018 Earth Trails Trans-Timor Trek. The hardy expeditioners trekked 135 kilometres from Dili on the north coast to Betano in the south via Timor-Leste's highest peak, the 3000-metre Mt Ramelau. The trekkers raised vital funds and awareness for our work.



October

Our ambassador, AFL Western Bulldogs champion Lin Jong, travelled to Timor-Leste for the first time to learn more about East Timor Hearts Fund's work. He met former patients and travelled to more remote parts of the country to see how our preventative penicillin program keeps young people with rheumatic heart disease healthy. He also found time to catch up with some extended family members of his own.





Fundraising fun

In 2018 we were buoyed yet again by the big-hearted individuals, companies and groups who donated time, money, services and equipment to help us do more to improve the health of the people of Timor-Leste.

Once more people climbed mountains on the Trans-Timor Trek, took to the fairways at our third Swing into Action to Mend a Broken Heart golf day and jogged and walked at Run Melbourne, all to boost our impact and allow us to mend more broken hearts.

To all those who ran, walked, played, trekked or just dug deep – thank you. We could not do what we do without you.



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