

EXPEDITION AGAPE

A journey empowering and transforming lives

UPDATES

Timor Leste

12th to 24th December 2013



The mentoring journey for the Expedition Agape team commenced in Sept 2013 with a series of intense and rigorous team-building and leadership development camps and activities. After 3 months of preparation, the team of 14, comprising **8 volunteers** and **6 teenagers** were ready to throw in their all to serve, grow and learn through the magical and memorable 13 days in Timor Leste.

"The only way that we can live, is if we grow. The only way that we can grow is if we change. The only way that we can change is if we learn. The only way we can learn is if we are exposed. And the only way that we can become exposed is if we throw ourselves out into the open."

– C.JovBell

Serving the Community

Over the 13 days, Expedition Agape partnered with **Transformation Alliance**, founded by an alliance of Singaporean churches, and played a small part in their extensive community development work in Timor Leste.

Nazarene Youth Centre

A Christian centre situated at Dili, the capital of Timor Leste, which provides many of the youths access to education and continued support through their studies as they come from faraway rural villages and districts to study in the Universities in Dili. The Youth Centre also reaches out to the villagers in the vicinity and inculcates a **love for learning** in the children in the community with many children's programmes. The Youth Centre was only completed in July 2013, after spending 10 years fundraising for the building project and another year building it. Facilities are still sparse and we worked with the Timorese youths at the centre to turn the gravelly and uneven plot of land into a multi-purpose court that can be

used for many outdoor sports and educational activities/ programmes.



The original plot of land

Work in progress for the multi-purpose court

We conducted many meaningful workshops and activities for the children at the Youth Centre too, and brought joy, smiles and enriched learning and cultural exchange to the community, through arts and crafts, song and dance, as well as games and fun. We also organised a **Singapore Day**, carnival-style, to share about our local traditional games, food, costumes and culture and a closing **Christmas Party** which was a time of laughter and celebration and marked an important gathering and festival for the Timorese.



Education, learning and exchange

Atabae & Luro

We braved rocky roads and ventured to the rural districts in Atabae (2 hrs away) and Luro (6 hrs away). Atabae was a day trip and we helped to refurbish a pre-school serving 100 children in the village, as well as conducted a day of fun enrichment. In Luro, we stayed for 4D3N with Pastor Sam, and together, trekked across hills to visit the surrounding villages to spread Christmas joy and bring gifts for the children so they will be blessed this festive season.



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Leaders in Action

Leaving behind all that we are familiar with to serve in a foreign land brings us through the crucible of fire. There were challenges and difficulties we had to overcome, stretching ourselves beyond our comfort zone to give and sacrifice. Through it all, Expedition Agape saw the best in ourselves emerge, uniting as a team, and being mentored and empowered to be “Leaders in Action”, demonstrating AGAPE - love unconditional and living our AGAPE values to the fullest.

Acceptance

The friends we made in Timor Leste taught us that there is strength and beauty in diversity. The nation’s road to independence left a legacy of bloodshed, violence and conflict. But instead of mistrust, we experienced warm welcome, and a deep love for peace in the people we met. A friend shared that his parents were killed by Indonesians, but he has chosen to let go of that hatred and move past his hurts. Another had his nephew senselessly murdered just last year, but he chooses to forgive. Pastor Sam in Luro taught us too that relationships are the bedrock of life, and division is our biggest adversary. Sacrificing to seek unity helps us find wholeness and healing. We were touched by the stories, and within the team, committed to be a family to one another and shared deeply about our life journeys and our lives.



Growth

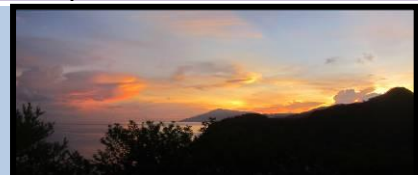
There were many “firsts” that we courageously faced and found ourselves learning and growing as we stepped up. For some, it was our first flight experience. For others, it was our first time facilitating and leading group activities. Our first time volunteering, our first time cooking for 100 people in the community, our first time adapting to difficult living conditions, our first time stretching ourselves to our physical limits in the trek in Luro, etc. The list is endless. We learnt and we grew. Most of all, we learnt from one another, taking turns to lead in our daily facilitations, our team members’ ages ranging from 14 to 62 years old. It was a beautiful amalgamation of life experiences.

Affirmation

Words of love are words of life. For some who had before only experienced hatred and conflict in their families, affirmation is a tall order. But we saw lives blossom through encouragement and positive reinforcement. And beyond the strengths in ourselves, we celebrated the strengths in our Timorese friends that we aim to learn and bring back to Singapore - their resilience, their warmth, their joy, their deep anchors in family and love. Affirmation helps us to soar on eagles’ wings to achieve the dreams we once thought impossible

Perseverance

When adversity presents itself, as it certainly will, we learn to embrace it as a learning opportunity and not to give up. As we climbed the long stairs to Cristo-Rei to see the sunrise at 4am, it was poignant for us, and we remember that in every brokenness, we can find new dawns and new hope as long as we persevere.



Empower

What is our legacy? Are we taking ownership of our lives, the choices we are making to soar to our fullest potential and live our best lives? We dreamed dreams in Expedition Agape, and declared goals and action steps we will take over the next 3 months and beyond. It is not just the overseas trip that matters... it is how we are living our lives when we return to Singapore. It is just the beginning of an incredible journey, and **we are ready.**

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Our affirmation envelopes

The Heart of



...is to build mentoring relationships that last a lifetime within the Expedition Agape team; to create a community that unites together as a **FAMILY** to support one another through the adventures of life that are ahead. Expedition Agape is a family where everyone enables and believes in one another's dreams, hopes and potential, and where we are the catalysts of possibilities for one another.

Friendships were fostered too with our Timorese friends, with Transformation Alliance, with Pastor Acy in Nazarene Youth Centre, with Pastor Merlando in Atabae and Pastor Sam in Luro. Lasting friendships, lasting memories, that we will not forget.



With the children & teachers in Atabae



With Pastor Sam in Luro



The multi-purpose court, near completion @ Nazarene Youth Centre

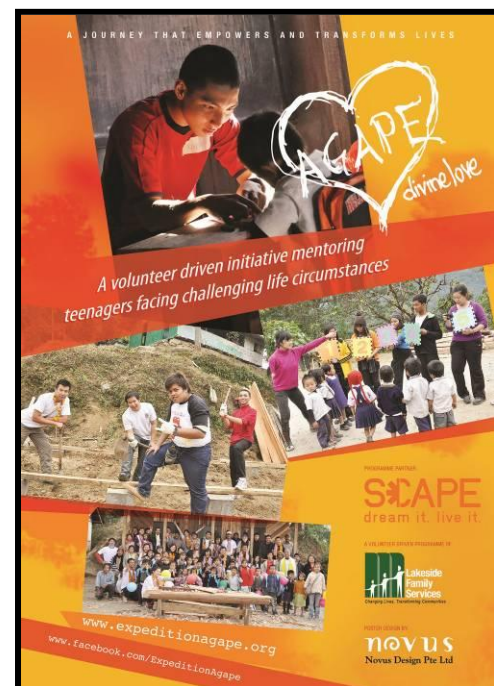
Be a part of the Expedition Agape Family!

Expedition Agape has big dreams ahead, with new local programmes and initiatives in 2014 that focus on creating greater impact and support for youths facing difficult challenges in their lives.

Volunteers' Info-Session

We are recruiting and seeking passionate volunteers committed to make a difference! Join us and be a mentor and/or take up organisational/planning roles... all of us have different talents and gifts and can contribute immensely to see lives transformed and empowered. If you are keen to find out more, join us over tea and cakes for conversation and sharing on **19th January 2014, Sunday, 2pm to 3pm** at *SCAPE HubQuarters (Level 4), 2 Orchard Link, Singapore 237978.

RSVP to contact@expeditionagape.org with your name and contact number. See you there!



Thank you for your belief & support to make Expedition Agape possible

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