

A large photograph of a lush green cornfield in the foreground, with a dense line of palm trees in the background under a cloudy sky.

September 2008 Newsletter

Greetings again from the Bridge of Hope Sydney support team. Thanks again to all of you who've supported Bridge of Hope in many ways over the last 5 or 6 years.

As you probably know, Bridge of Hope is much more than just a micro-loan organisation - we want to engage in holistic community transformation. In this newsletter, we highlight some of BoH's broader community by featuring our work with the families who live on the Manado garbage dump as well as giving you an update on the group of refugees whose belongings and dwellings were destroyed by fire.

But firstly, we're happy to announce:

5000 clients and growing!

Yes recently we broke the 5000 mark and we ourselves are amazed at how many people have now received loans through Bridge of Hope! We now have 3 branches with a fourth to open before the end of the year. However we realise this is no numbers game, these are real people who have been given an opportunity in life - people who could have been you or I had we been born in different circumstances. We just thank God for the provision of a 'hand up' for these people.

Latest on the Manado rubbish dump

- Bridge of Hope has completed the building of a library near the dump at Samompo. It's open 6 days per week between 1.00 and 5.00 p.m. Over 140 books are available to be read by adults and children and, as the library is situated next to the School, it is a great facility for assisting the education of the children....
- BoH has been successful in integrating several children into the public schooling system. Two of such children are Leah and Diana. Diana is either 10 or 12 years old (depending on whether you ask her or her Aunt! – She was abandoned by her parents at birth) and, up until recently, has never been to School. Leah has not been to School for over 2 years. Each day these students are accompanied to School by a BoH staff member named Meldy, who sits through the classes with the children to help them become accustomed to the surroundings, which are very different to those of being a scavenger on the rubbish dump.



Diana (centre) & Leah (right) helped by Meldy



Meldy spends 6 days a week between 9.00 a.m. and 1.00 p.m. building relationships with different people who live and work on the dump. Between this role and her job of running the Library, she is having a marked impact on the life of those who live on the dump. (Incidentally, she does not see it as a job, she simply loves the people!)

- BoH now has 2 Loan Groups operating on the dump and plans are in place to run training courses in parenting and health issues.

Annual Board Retreat for BoH

At the beginning of August, the Indonesian Board of directors met together for a weekend to examine their role in the light of the current and future expansion plans of BoH. The Board were challenged to consider their personal commitment in light of the significant growth of clients within BoH and the new Branch soon to be opened. It was encouraging to see a renewed commitment made by each Board member, not only to BoH but also to supporting each other in the very significant role that they play with BoH. The Board also examined the staffing structure of BoH to ensure that it is prepared for the ongoing growth in staff numbers within the foundation. There are now in excess of 50 staff across 3 branches!

It should be noted that being a Board member is an unpaid position. We really appreciate the long term commitment that these 6 wonderful people have made.

Homes for the Stadium People

Bridge of Hope continues to aid the victims of the Stadium Refugee Camp fire last September. Whilst nobody was injured, 100 families were displaced with nothing more than the clothes in which they fled. This group was dispersed to several other, already overcrowded, locations where living conditions are extremely poor. We are currently providing medical assistance, sending two doctors to these camps to assess their health issues. Many have severe respiratory problems. We will also supply the necessary medicines to overcome this epidemic.

Our major incentive however is to help the 61 families who have taken the initiative to purchase a plot of land in Bitung with the long term aim of building 61 homes and a church on this property. To date they have managed to keep up the repayments for the land, which should be finalised this November, and commenced the building of six homes and a church. Some communities are holding fund-raising activities, AusAid have been approached and Habitat for Humanity are gearing up to help when enough finance is available to really move forward. Around \$100,000 is required so please add this cause to your prayer list. Our proposal is that these people, over time, pay back a reasonable percentage of this package so that in turn others may be assisted into permanent housing.

As BoH continues to grow, we are conscious not only of the wonderful support of so many different people, but also of the need to pray for different aspects of the work. As such, would you please join with us in praying for the items mentioned in this newsletter as well as the opening of the new branch in Kawangkoan (in the hills behind Manado).

**With love from the Bridge of Hope Sydney support team:
Howard, Geoff, David, Chris, Sandy, & Cameron.**

www.bridgeofhope.org.au