

In July I made my annual trip to East Timor to continue to work on our school project in the village of Lisadila. I'm pleased to report that over 70 students are now in attendance. In January an additional grade level will be added, and we will have over 100 students!

Over the past year much progress has been made. A dormitory is under construction and soon we will be able to admit students who live too far to walk. A well has also been dug with the help of the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. It is over 200 ft. deep and will soon supply water not just to the school, but to the entire village of Lisadila. Villagers will no longer have to walk long distances to get their water. The news gets even better.

During the visit, I met with the school's governing body. Also attending the meeting was a representative from East Timor's Ministry of Education. He is in charge of rural education in the country—a big job given that 80% of the population lives in rural areas.

While the school has always been a big deal to the children who attend, to their parents, to the Timorese church and to those of us in the Northern Plains Conference, I did not realize how important it is to the entire country. The government official told us that that we were very brave in establishing a school in such a remote area. Indeed, Lisadila becomes ever more remote as the road system deteriorates. Sadly, there are many remote villages in East Timor.

The official told us that ours is the first school of its kind to be established in an isolated area in the entire country. The government is watching our progress very closely as they hope to use it as a model for developing education in remote locations throughout the nation. In a country where over 60% of the adult population is illiterate and where many rural children have no access to schools, this is a tremendously hopeful.

We still have a long way to go in our school project. I visited with the students and they expressed hope that we can start a high school in the village in 2011 so they can continue with their educations. Whether we can move that far that fast remains to be seen. What we know at this point is that we have come a long ways, and there is a chance that our work will be replicated throughout the country for the benefit of many thousands of children. For this we can be very thankful.

If you would like more information on the school, please call me at the Bismarck UCC (223-9582), or email me at jmoos@midconetwork.com.

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