



Message from the Chair

PDG Una Hobday OAM, Chair Food Plant Solutions

Happy Rotary New Year to you all.

This is the year when we continue to “be the inspiration” as we “Connect the World”, as World President Mark Maloney suggests. What does it mean to you? How are you going to connect to the World?

I have spent the last month in France and each night I sat down and watch the news, both from France and the UK. I see the major issue of malnutrition in the African countries and see advertisements for “\$3.00 a month, which would feed a child for a day.”

We, at Food Plant Solutions, have a proven solution to malnutrition and food security, if only we could encourage the wonderful groups who work in those areas of greatest need, to see that, as well as the short term fix, there is a long term, sustainable opportunity to make a difference in the lives of all those communities by working together. I dream of being an entrepreneur with wealth to be able to start the ideas being brought to fruition! If only, I say to myself!

But we can continue to do what we do and all of you can use your connections to slowly bring about the change we want to see. A world where children and families do not starve, where their food is always secure, and peace reigns.

I make a commitment that I will work hard to share what Food Plant Solutions has to offer with my connections. If we all do that, we will make a difference.

Editor's Note: *FPS Chair, PDG – Una Hobday was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia - (OAM), in the Queen's birthday honours. Una's award was for service to the community through a range of organisations. Congratulations Una, so very well deserved.*



FPS and ChildFund in Timor-Leste

Rita Mu – ChildFund Australia

Food Plant Solutions has partnered with ChildFund Timor-Leste to help prevent child malnutrition and strengthen food security in vulnerable communities in Timor-Leste.

Four handbooks, created by Food Plant Solutions, featuring photos and information on a range of local, high-nutrient foods will be used to help families identify healthy eating options for their children and establish kitchen gardens in homes and schools.

Foods featured in the handbooks include leafy greens and vegetables such as slippery cabbage, amaranth and cassava leaves, as well as fruits, nuts, and root crops such as sweet potato and taro.

The handbooks will be used in ChildFund Timor-Leste's Integrated Nutrition and Integrated Early Childhood Development projects, which are helping to tackle the poor nutrition levels of children across Timor-Leste.



A Community Health Volunteer conducting a growth monitoring session.



A family who has benefited from learning how to prepare nutritious meals for their children, outside a kitchen garden in their community.

According to the most recent Demographic Health Survey, published in 2016, while stunting in children under the age of five in Timor-Leste has decreased from 58% in 2009 to 46%, wasting rates have increased from 19% to 24%. The effects of malnutrition, particularly during the first two years of life, can result in long-lasting impacts on cognitive and physical development.

In addition to helping communities establish kitchen gardens, ChildFund Timor-Leste is also educating families on healthy hygiene practices, and how to prepare nutritious meals for their children. Community Health Volunteers are also being trained to carry out regular growth monitoring sessions for children to



A mother's support group, run by ChildFund Timor-Leste, as part of the Integrated Nutrition Project, teaches mothers about nutrition and healthy hygiene practices.

prevent, identify and help treat cases of malnutrition.

As 70% of Timor Leste's citizens are rain fed subsistence farmers, the project is also addressing the role of climate change as an indirect cause of malnutrition and poor dietary diversity. The Australian Humanitarian Partnership Disaster Ready Project is being implemented by ChildFund Timor-Leste in consortium with Plan International, to teach families about climate smart farming techniques and adaptive nutritional practices.

Better Dissemination of Sound Nutritional Information Needed

Bruce French AO

In an age when scientific study and fields of specialisation are becoming so narrow and self-contained we may need to look more broadly.

The millions of fish that died in the Murray Darling river system due to excess nitrogen and phosphorus or, the thousand people killed in floods in Mozambique or, the hundreds killed in floods in Indonesia may reflect our agriculture systems out of control. Agriculture, after all, is the main contributor to global warming and climate change. Many of the top international reviews are saying we need to re-think our whole approach to agriculture. The global trend is now back to biodiversity, local well adapted food plants and agro-ecology. It is not simply in my spare time that I have spent my life collating information on edible plants of the world. Once you have seen badly malnourished children, it is heart breaking. Some reductionist solutions cause me concern. I have previously mentioned how limited the idea of spending millions of dollars breeding one banana cultivar for Uganda that is rich in Vitamin A, when they already have a lovely diversity of 238 banana varieties and lots of leafy greens already rich in Vitamin A. Recently there has been mention of a large World Bank loan to address stunting in Benin. My immediate response is to open my database and select the top 100 plants of Benin richest in Zinc as that is the main cause of stunting. Zinc is needed by over 100 enzymes in our bodies to keep them working well.

It remains my view that we don't need major scientific breakthroughs but better dissemination of already known sound ecological and nutritional information about edible plants.



FPS and AOG World Relief Vietnam – Reducing Malnutrition Together

Rebekah Windsor – Project Manager AOG

AOG World Relief Vietnam was founded in 1996, located in Central Vietnam. Our objective is to connect and partner with whole communities, to see them empowered to independently determine and achieve their development goals, ultimately leading to community transformation.

We do this in many different ways through various programs and training opportunities. Included in this is Food Plant Solutions publications with our Rural Development initiatives. These help address the needs many communities raise, particularly the need for year-round access to nutritious clean foods for their children, and available at an affordable price. FPS is a useful program because it is purposed to empower children to harness local



food plant resources, to feed themselves and their families in response to the emergency facing the developing world in terms of the rise of malnutrition amongst the human population, particularly children.

Since we first began to partner with Food Plant Solutions, we have helped establish 14 gardens in Kindergartens across many different communes. We have found schools to have the greatest connection point in a community with a highly visible and measurable impact. They are more sustainable as they have a kitchen, with school lunches prepared daily from the produce grown in the gardens tended by the children. In this way, many children benefit from the one garden, as do the staff and the parents/families. The latest results for a 12 month period, across 8 schools, shows malnutrition having reduced by between 40%-100%.



Alleviation of Malnutrition in PNG - Global Grant Update

This is a long-term project involving social change - changing the diet of mothers, babies and small children. Villagers must be convinced, through education, that their efforts will be worth the outcome of having strong, healthy children who will lead their community to a better life in the future. The following reviews the first nine months of the project;

1. The project aims to raise awareness of the importance of good nutrition. The first step was to run a two week Train-the-Trainer workshop to train local volunteers. Expectations were exceeded when 55 people undertook this training, not the 35 expected. Most of the volunteers ended up being enthusiastic young men, not women.
2. 15 teams of 1 to 4 instructors were formed to teach project lessons in villages across the Strickland Bosavi region. To date, 41 village workshops have been held and more are planned. Most of the teams delivered on their promise to run village workshops.
3. Village workshops were attended by 8,369 participants representing 2,030 families.
4. Dr Stephenson has visited over eight villages, for up to a week each, and run revision workshops and distributed seed to participants, as well as inspecting village home gardens, and providing advice on how to improve the gardens.
5. Supplementary seed of nutritious corn, beans, peanut and coconut were given to workshop participants to increase production of nutritious food. The most consistent and needed advice was 'plant only one seed per planting hole'.
6. Reference booklets "Nutritious food for stronger child growth in Papua New Guinea" and "Notes on growing more nutritious food in your garden" have been printed and are in the process of being distributed.
7. Nineteen programs of project lessons have been broadcast on Radio Biemi, in both English and the Bedamuni language. A major part of the project now involves encouraging villagers to adopt a better diet and reinforcing the awareness that, for children to grow strong and healthy, their bodies need essential nutrients.