

## Mauchiga

Mauchiga is one of the 3 sucos (local areas like wards) in the Hatobuilico Sub-District. This very isolated area sits high on the flank of Mt Kablaki, Timor's 3<sup>rd</sup> highest mountain and its most inhospitable and rugged peak.

Despite the difficulty of the terrain of Mt Kablaki, or maybe because of it, this was the site of resistance during the Indonesian occupation. Falantil guerrilla fighters were able to hide out in the heavily forested, steep and hazardous mountain side, escaping detection by Indoensian forces.

Indonesia occupied Timor by force in 1975. Their occupation of the small country was often brutal and it is estimated that 250,000 people lost their lives during the 25 years of resistance. In 1999, the Timorese voted for independence in a UN supported referendum.

Mauchiga bears a particularly poignant scar from this period. Using systematic rape as a method of control and to draw men from their hideouts in the surrounding mountain, many women victims were hugely impacted, many having babies, and facing discrimination from their own communities in the years that followed.

Because of political allegiances and the steepness of terrain, Mauchiga still has no electricity and access to water is limited for many. Few schools are well equipped and road access is either not for the faint hearted or hazardous for the driver ill equipped to manage mud.



*Figure 1 Mauchiga Women's Centre*

The scenery is sublime!



*Figure 2 Women attending the opening of the Centre*

The Blue Mountains, working with a Dili based NGO called ACbit, has resourced the women victims of sexual assault by funding the building of a small women's centre. The small building includes a meeting room, a space for visitors to sleep, an eating space, veranda with the world's best outlook and a good kitchen by Timorese standards (cooking on a fire on the floor).

The community centre has provided the opportunity for the women's group to have a place to meet, a venue for training and trauma healing, a place to cook (food like cakes that they can then sell in the local market), make products like baskets that the women sell and rent space for visiting dignitaries.

BMETS member, Lesley Sammon said, "The centre has given the women the chance to work together, support each other and then get on with developing their lives. We are proud to have made this difference for this community".



*Figure 3 Proud participants of the women's centre*



*Figure 4 Learning English, Caterina speaks to a meeting with BM reps*

The Blue Mountains supports Mauchiga in other small ways as well. The Blue Mountains Hatobuilico Scholarship Program provides scholarships for 6 young people to attend university: 2 from each of the sucos –Mauchiga, Nunomogue and Mulo. This year we are supporting Florindo de Araujo and Jacinta Rodriguez to study teaching, much needed contributions to Timor today.



*Figure 5 Mary Waterford with scholarship student, Florindo de Araujo*

We also have funded English and IT classes for young people. One of the participants is now a successful BMETS scholarship recipient. We plan to extend this contribution in the future to build the capacity of young people.

