



Leprosy Workshop Sorong

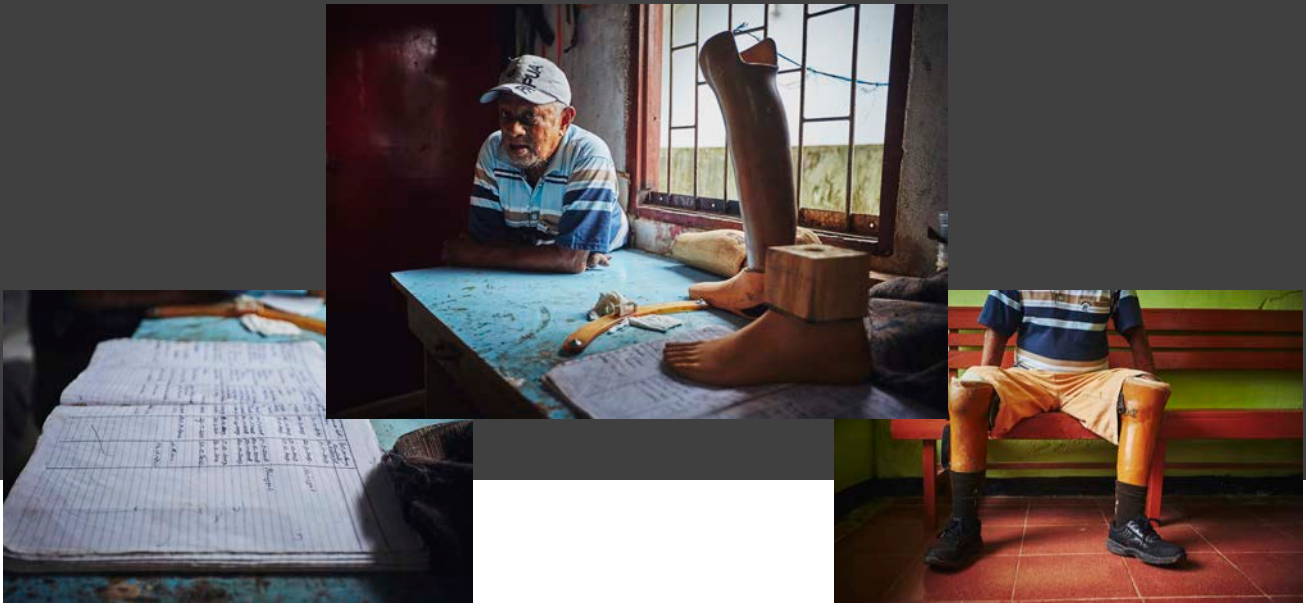
FEBRUARY 2015
SORONG - WEST PAPUA

- SDSP -

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LAURENCE CROSSMAN-EMMS

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PURPOSE: To investigate current leprosy health care provision.

On the 02/02/2015 we met Ruth Watofa; an 88year old Dutch lady that has dedicated over 30years to providing and supporting Leprosy care in West Papua. Following our discussions on current Leprosy care, we were made aware of a service that initially provided prosthetic limbs for those that had contracted this particular disease but since has expanded to accommodate anyone in need of such service. A 74year old man named Mr Martin Latuheru in the city of Sorong runs this service. Apparently his service is known to most hospitals in West Papua so people a referred from far and wide for his care. He reports to be unaware of any other similar service in West Papua.

In the early 1970's Martin Latuheru himself was affected by Leprosy, of which resulted in bilateral below knee limb loss and loss or limited function of his distal and intermediate phalanges (Fingers). He did not let his physical limitations stop him leading a normal life as made himself prosthetic legs. Following the success of this, he has since made prosthetic legs for those in need.

Martin initially worked in his own workshop but due to such high demand moved to the Leprosy specialist Unit at Sele be Solu Hospital. As a result of a cure for Leprosy becoming more accessible, the prevalence of those being seriously affected by the condition lessened. Therefore demand for Prosthesis for those affected by Leprosy reduced. Martin's service at the hospital closed. His drive to continue this care resulted in him moving his service back to his own workshop where it still stands today.

INSIDE THE WORKSHOP AT MARTIN'S HOUSE



KIRSTY & MARTIN DISCUSS THE PROTHETICS



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The workshop is based at his home and the service is free of charge. There is a room above the workshop that provides accommodation for those being treated. Martin reported to try and provide a rehabilitative service – from teaching people to walk again, to providing emotional support, as he himself can relate well to how the patient may be feeling.

With regards to funding, a Swiss company used to send 50 million Rp each year, of which helped fund Martin's initiative. Apparently in 2013 this funding ceased, as funds were reported to be required more in Africa? Since this time Martin has been trying to use what resources he has left. This money not only supported the service but also was a very small income for Martin and his family. They now fully rely on his wife's nurse pension, of which is reportedly not enough to support his family.



A COMPLETED PROSTHETIC LEG AND A KNEE MOLD



MANUFACTURING IS ALL COMPLETED IN THE WORKSHOP

Martin saw his last patient in December 2014 and has since had to decline those that have sought out his service as stated that he no longer has enough resources and funds to continue. He reports to have a waiting list of at least 7 people that are in need of lower limb prosthesis. He highlighted that most of these people are poor, so when they stay with his family it is also a financial drain of which they cannot afford at present. Martin's family normally not only provide the accommodation but all food also, as the travel itself would have cost the affected a lot of money.

With regards to those that may need their prosthetic limb fixed, adapted or maintained Martin reported great concern, as at present he has very limited resources to attend to this. His electric and cost of maintaining the machinery is also a cost he cannot presently afford.



OVERVIEW OF THE WORKSHOP



MATERIALS USED TO PRODUCE THE PROSTHETICS

The workshop reportedly has all the required equipment to continue making prosthetic legs. Most materials for prostheses were apparently sourced from Switzerland and Germany, but Martin reports to feel he can order these himself. He estimated that each prosthetic limb costs him approximately 4 million Rp to construct. Materials he presently uses include fibreglass, wood, dense foam, plastic moulds and bandages.

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Martin only specialises in lower limb prosthetics. It was discussed whether he would consider expanding to making other prosthetics and potentially other assistive equipment. He was reluctant as stated that this would involve the need for more funding. Therefore he rightly feels focusing on getting his present service up and running effectively is necessary before considering expansion.

The Prosthetic Limbs observed during our visit were not necessarily of a 'Western Standard' and design could potentially be improved, however they do prove to be functional. Support from specialist Prosthetic Limb and Therapy services would be of great benefit.

It was acknowledged that prosthetic limbs are not always appropriate for some people and/or people may require other mobility aids, such as Walking Sticks, Zimmer Frames and Wheelchairs. From several health services we have visited it is evident that the Government does not fund rehabilitation, therefore Therapy is not available to most Papuans. From our perspective, there is scope for a therapy service to be integrated into this prosthetic limb initiative.

Martin's wife is a retired nurse who also has been physically affected by contracting Leprosy. They have 2 sons, a daughter and a grandchild, of who wish to continue helping with Martins initiative. Their two sons have been helping with the running of the workshop. If they are to find funding the plan is for the two boys to continue with Martin's work when he is unable to.



MOLDS THAT ARE KEPT INSIDE THE WORKSHOP ON THE WALLS



LEPROSY PATIENT & WORKSHOP OWNER: MARTIN LATUHERU

SHORT TERM NEED

- The greatest need is funding so Martin can start up his workshop again and treat those 7 people on his waiting list.
- If Martin struggles to source materials required, he may need assistance.

LONG TERM NEED

- Once funding is sourced there may be scope for perhaps more support and education from specialist Prosthetic Limb and Therapy services. There is an NGO named Handicap International that could visit and potentially provide such support.
http://www.handicap-international.org.uk/what_we_do/rehabilitation
General enquiries: info@hi-uk.org
- Expansion towards providing other Prosthetic limbs.
- Expansion to provide Therapy.
- Implementation of a review service.



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