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For immediate release

Theatre project gives life to voiceless communities

Dunlop Asialink Fellowship winner 2010

Zena Kells will receive the Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Asialink Fellowship at a ceremony in Melbourne on Tuesday, December 7, 2010.

Ms Kells won the award for her proposed project, *Where is your home?*, a 'verbatim theatre' show which aims to draw attention to the difficulties faced by East Timorese refugees still living in poverty in West Timor.

Zena is interested in the power of theatre and media to give life to the stories of voiceless communities. For many ex-refugees, though the government supports their return home, repatriation is made difficult because other people are now using their former land and homes.

These ex-refugees live in limbo, unable to assimilate and rise from poverty in their new homeland and afraid of reprisals and having nothing to come back to in East Timor.

For the past 12 months Ms Kells has been working closely with these refugees.

With the support of the Fellowship, Ms Kells will return to East Timor in 2011 to develop the verbatim theatre show based on interviews conducted in the refugee camps of West Timor. The project also aims to build the creative and administrative capacity of Timorese students and artists of the local theatre organisation, *Knua Buka Hatene*, through a comprehensive training program.

Through her past work with the theatre group, she has helped create educational theatre and radio shows as well as a free creative arts program for Dili's unemployed youth. With constant blackouts and the Timorese flexibility towards time, there were plenty of opportunities for Zena to expand her creative skills outside the workplace during her time in East Timor - making two award-winning short films, directing contestants in the 'Mr. Timor' pageant and stage managing the Dili Marathon Awards Ceremony.

About the Award:

http://www.asialink.unimelb.edu.au/our_work/corporate_and_public/dunlop_fellowships

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