



Timor-Leste Newsletter August 2018



This is a bit of a rambling newsletter but you must remember I am in Oecusse, it is very hot and I am very tired and my brain is fried, so have done my best. Hope you enjoy the read.

A few stories to make you smile.

Games and Graves

The GREEN Games are now well underway in Boaknana and we thought Pune was tough! The soccer field in Boaknana is something else again. The ground is literally scorched earth, dirt and rocks, the best bit being the two graves on the centre line just inside the sideline! I was assured that the graves were very old, maybe 100 years or more, so nothing was left in them and we are not likely to disturb any one's rest! It did take a sacrificial chicken to insure this though.

Most of the rocks have been removed from the graves but those that are left present a serious hazard to the balls and the players! it is interesting to watch the players' sudden change of direction when the ball rebounds off the rocks and heads in a different direction to that expected. The players seem to take this in their stride.

Note the gravestones in the field, the white line being the centre line.



Young terriers play soccer

One of the soccer teams competing in the Games consists of young boys from the primary school in Citrana. These boys are playing against the older, much more experienced teams



but this does not seem to hassle them. Their coach has inspired his team to just get on with it and not be demoralised by the larger players. To start with the older boys took it as a joke, nicely, that they were playing such small kids but soon realised that this team was serious! They are like little terriers, (or toy poodles), and take on anything in their path with great energy and gusto! They are not afraid to tackle the bigger boys and often beat them with determination and persistence. This of course brings loud cheers from the sidelines! They have not won a game but they certainly have not been put to shame, in fact have developed a great following of very loud supporters!

English lessons

A group of young girls has befriended me in Boaknana and await my arrival each day. They are in Junior Secondary school so like to practice their English with me – The conversation so far has been “How are you?” “I am fine.” “What is your name and where do you come from?” I introduce a new question each day so we are now up to “How old are you.” “Do you have any brothers or sisters?” “What are their names?”

One of the girls has obviously not seen a white skinned person before so keeps rubbing my leg assuming that the white will rub off to reveal the darker skin underneath. The only other foreigner in the district is the local Padre, a young man from India, so he is blessed with dark skin.



Lots of the young people want to learn English from the funny white foreigner!

Water, water everywhere – not likely.

The on-going saga with roads and politics seems to be setting the scene for everything up here. I am told that those who supervise infrastructure projects like to see them fail as they then get more money to do the repairs!

When I first came here in 2001 we all had running water from taps both inside and outside



Can you see Mercy – behind the fallen tree and below ground? She is not hiding, just collecting water.

our houses. Since then the water system has broken and been repaired at least a dozen times. During the many periods of no water I have had to collect it in barrels from Luis’ place as he is closer to the centre of town and also relies on a well and pump which he has in his garden, another GREEN TL project. Water from the well in my garden is too salty to drink. The latest water supply repair was last year. At great expense the entire system throughout town was replaced or repaired and water meters put in every garden in the

expectation that we would start paying for water use. Life was good for a few months –

running water from a tap and a simple process of using a hose to fill the tub in my wash house



(I refuse to call it a bathroom, just as I often think that I should call my house a shelter rather than a house!) Since then my tap has been broken and replaced twice and now the water pressure in the neighbourhood has dropped to such an extent that water no longer gets pushed up to the tap. The ever-ingenuous neighbours have dug a hole down to the water main, basically the theory being, "If the mountain will not come to Mohammad then Mohammad will come to the mountain!" We now collect water from the broken pipe a meter below ground!

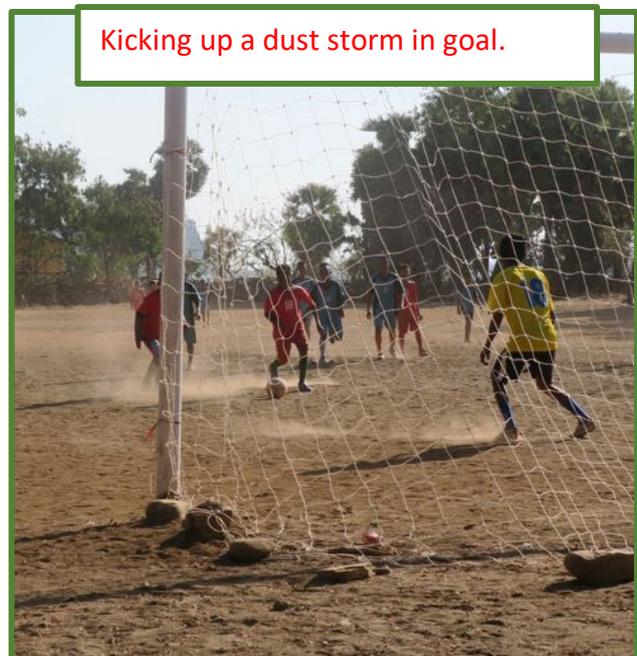
Here she is filling bottles from the broken pipe. The broken pipe is in my garden so all the neighbours come in for their water supply.

Is a summary of Timor leste politics over the last year amusing or distressing??

In July 2017 the quinquennial, (just learned this word so had to use it!) government election was won marginally by Mari Alkitiri's Fretilin party. In January this year the minority government was dissolved by President Lu'Olo Guterres, as the opposition, a coalition of minor parties led by Xanana Gusmao, refused to pass anything including budget plans. Subsequently another election, held in May, was won by the opposition parties who banded together to form a new coalition, the AMP. Three months later the new AMP government has not yet been finalised, Matan Ruark, the leader of one of the minor parties in the AMP coalition has been appointed Prime Minister but of the 43 members put up for ministerial positions 11 are suspected of or have been charged on corruption allegations, so the President could not legally accept their nominations. To add to these difficulties the AMP coalition has internal problems as it is made up of strange bedfellows so it looks like a split is on the cards meaning, what, another fragile minority government; Fretilin being given the opportunity to take over or another election??? Xanana Gusmao has just resigned from government to concentrate on the Timor Sea petroleum negotiations! There is a lot more to this than meets the eye. I am sure more will come out soon! There in a nutshell you have all the big players in Timor leste politics. And I thought Australian politics was messy enough!

GREEN Games 2018

As mentioned earlier the games have begun in Boaknana in the sub-district of Nitibae. Luis tells me that he chose this district as they have not had games such as this before and that the road between Oecusse and Boaknana is good – his idea of a good road and mine do not coincide at all! The district



Kicking up a dust storm in goal.



is very excited about the games and we have had a great roll-up – 18 soccer teams, 18 men’s volley ball, 8 women’s volley ball and as yet we have not called for the tug-of-war teams, we keep getting asked when that will happen as teams are lining up.

Apart from the road, the graves, the state of the volley ball pitch, the dirt, dust, heat and lack of shade there are no real problems with the games! We have borrowed some of the pews from the nearby church to sit on so I either get to sit on a pew or on the rocks of the graves as I watch the games. I will

give a detailed report once the games have finished.

I must gratefully thank all those fantastic donors who chipped in to ensure the games could continue!

Obrigada barak from the people of Boaknana. Your help is gratefully appreciated.



Hot, hard work, then a well-earned rest!

Insanity streak.

One day last week I was sitting in the car getting ready to drive back to Palaban after doing some shopping. I had the keys in my right hand and my sunglasses in the left as would be expected. However, I somehow managed to poke my eye with the key and try to start the car with my sunglasses!! Is that a sign of insanity, not thinking straight or absolute exhaustion?? Having just driven back from Dili the day before, meeting, with all sorts of trouble at the borders and the road getting worse by the minute and the fact that I had to drive some of the way as Luis was not too well then getting home to the noisy neighbours who are building a washhouse right on my fence line – maybe exhaustion could be the problem!

Banning single-use plastic in Timor leste?
CCI-TL Looks for Alternatives to Reduce use of Plastic (a recent article in East Timor Asian News Network)

“The Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Timor leste said entrepreneurs have discussed amongst themselves about looking for alternatives to reduce the use of single-use plastics towards resolving the growing waste problem. She said CCI-TL is sharing information about the negative impact of plastic waste to the environment and to public health so communities become more aware and limit the use of plastic.

We are trying to look for some alternatives to plastic use ... Some countries have banned

Plastic waste is everywhere in Timor leste



communities from using plastic.... and Timor leste needs to develop a similar policy.”

These words are strongly supported by tourism organisations and some Village leaders.

Timor leste certainly has a major problem with single use plastic, it is everywhere even in the most isolated villages. Stall holders automatically put everything in plastic bags – they are quite surprised when I say “No thanks I do not use plastic!” Another mad malae they think but let’s hope this idea catches on, small beginnings are a start!

Some years ago in Dili calico bags were available, maybe they will make a comeback!

Creative use for plastic waste?

Bio sand filtration units.

We have been too busy with the games to get onto this as yet but have ordered more barrels, have the pipes taps and pebbles ready to go and are planning to put some units in Boaknana. One of the original GREEN TL workers, Lafau, now lives in Boaknana with his wife and young son and he is keen to get a bio-sand filtration unit in his house. He has been helping us with the games and it has been great to catch up with him and meet his new family. His house is on the outskirts of the village so it is an ideal spot for a coffee on the way through!

Donations over \$2 to the Sustainable Villages project are tax deductible:

Donate online by going to the Rotary Australia World Community Service, (RAWCS) website.

<https://donations.rawcs.com.au/Default.aspx?ProjectID=592&ReturnTo=4> If this connection does not work simply hit the donate now button and search for project number 50 years 11/12. (Sustainable Villages Oecusse).

Or via OzGREEN: https://ozgreen.nationbuilder.com/east_timor_donation