



Timor-Leste Newsletter November 2018



Writing my article for the OzGREEN Annual report set me thinking about the past, present and future of GREEN TL.

OzGREEN began working in Oecusse, Timor leste, in 2001 when Sue Lennox and the then Board Chair Dr Peter MacDonald, undertook a scoping visit. During this visit they asked 2 key questions:

What is the area of greatest need?

Which areas are getting the least attention from the international aid community?

The answers were consistently the same – Oecusse.

As a result, in January 2001 myself and Colin Lennox conducted the first Village Environmental Action Program training in Oecusse. We worked in conjunction with a local organisation, FFSO, the first NGO to be set up in Timor leste after the referendum for independence in 1999.

I still vividly remember the day in the OzGREEN office in Dee Why when Sue and Col asked if anyone wanted to go to East Timor for 5 months as a volunteer and my hand, seemingly of its own free will, shot up in the air! I immediately began to wonder what I had said yes to but once the decision was made, that was it and the rest as they say is history.

In the words of OzGREEN co-founder and Director, Sue Lennox, *“Judy has gone on to dedicate her life to Oecusse for the past 18 years, making an outstanding impact through huge personal commitment. In 2018 GREEN Timor leste has largely achieved independence from OzGREEN, an outcome we have been working towards since 2007. The Board of OzGREEN extend heartfelt congratulations to Judy, Luis and GREEN Timor leste for this achievement.”*



Have I
hassled
Luis so
much that
he has lost
all his
hair??

Has he
hassled me
so much
that I have
put on
weight??



FFSO, our original partner, was involved mainly with Human Rights and Justice, so in 2007 Luis Armando and myself decided to create a separate NGO to concentrate on the environmental and youth orientated program initiated by OzGREEN, hence the birth of GREEN TL.

During its establishment GREEN TL worked closely with OzGREEN but is now an independent organisation. Luis Armando, who has worked with us since 2001, is the Director of GREEN TL and I continue my volunteering role as mentor, trainer, funds manager and general stirrer. GREEN TL has grown to become the leading

environmental and youth orientated NGO in Oecusse and has built a very sound reputation with communities and District Administration. Luis and his staff provide the expertise, skills and leadership necessary to ensure that people work together in building resilience and sustainability into their communities be they schools, villages or business.

GREEN TL now receives funding from multiple sources, Aid programs, Rotary Clubs and Rotary International, the Penn Foundation, Sydney Schools and several wonderful private donors so is becoming self-reliant and should be able to continue well into the future.

Here is my diary entry for the end of that first trip: June 2001

“The Oz GREEN program in Oecusse is proceeding at a great pace despite the various problems encountered along the way. With only 2 weeks to go before I return to Sydney I am beginning to feel quite sad about leaving behind the many wonderful people with whom I have lived and worked for the last 5 months. Oecusse is an unusual place to say the least and I have developed a definite love/hate relationship with it!

The people of East Timor have so little of material wealth, having lost everything during the militia rampage, but they are so rich in the simple pleasures of life which we westerners seem to have lost along the road to “civilisation”. The people are friendly, warm and sharing and family ties are very strong, there is a deep compassion in the souls of these people.”

Little did I think whilst writing that entry that I would still be here - developing that “love/hate” relationship 18 years later and still keeping a daily diary?

So to continue:

2018 has been another very busy year for GREEN TL, although once again interrupted by government elections, uncertainty of results, general malaise due to the slow pace of change and some dubious government decisions which have upset the general population. There have recently been peaceful, anti-

government demonstrations in Dili which have led to some heavy handedness on the part of the police so let’s hope the government listens to the people and things can settle down quickly. Timor leste still has a way to go before it becomes a true democracy. I keep saying that I will not discuss Timorese politics as that in Australia also leaves a lot to be desired so who am I to complain about what happens up here???

Youth-in-Action GREEN Games.

The *Youth in Action* GREEN Games 2018 was another outstanding success. I must admit I am quite proud of what GREEN TL has achieved with these games - 12 years and still going strong and the spin offs – leadership skills, community interaction, confidence building, peace enhancement, fun, friendships and many lasting memories. The enthusiasm of the organising committee inspired to do their best by Luis Armando’s leadership is wonderful to see. Now that the Boaknana community has a good volley ball court, useable soccer field and organisational ability they can



run their own events. The importance of youth activities such as sport in Oecusse can not be over emphasised. As per usual all games were played with great sportsmanship, enthusiasm and intensity. Both men and women players showed incredible skill. How the soccer players ran across the gravestones within the sidelines, without tripping over I am not sure. There were several incidences of twisted knees or ankles but after a few manipulations the players got up and ran, limping onwards!

Bring on the 2019 Youth-in-Action GREEN Games, Lucky 13!

Water Security

GREEN TL continues to install bio-sand water filtration units in households – with so many interruptions to our timetable this year we did not get as many in as usual but currently have another five made and ready to go. We have recently delivered one to Lifau and another is on the way to Boaknana. At the same time we have installed some pumps which means families now have running water and no longer have to carry buckets of



water to their gardens, a few more vegetable gardens are about to be organised!

Now that the wet season is imminent, the rain is late starting this year, GREEN TL will continue with the tree planting projects in villages – mainly Passabe, Pune and Oesilo. Also there is a very bare hillside just out of town which I have been eyeing off for years as a site for many trees, every time we have suggested this we are told that the land is earmarked for a police station, an army barracks, a seminary but so far nothing has been built on it. Maybe it is time to put some trees in!

We have recently been granted funding from Rotary International, through Epping Rotary Club for a water reticulation project in Sifin, a small community in Pune. This will provide running water to a school of 800 pupils and staff and a village community of 25 families. Luis and I are currently in negotiations with the village chief to set up the process to begin the work. Villagers will provide labour and we will provide materials. GREEN TL will supervise the process, hopefully I will not have to go to Sifin too often as the road up to the village is one of the worst I have ever encountered, the same road that took us to Pune for the games in 2016.



Talking about water - **we need RAIN!** The Wet season is late starting this year and everywhere is so dry it is painful to look at. Both temperatures and humidity are very high so being in Oecusse at the moment is like living in a sauna 24/7! Sitting here typing this newsletter you would think I had just run a marathon as the sweat is pouring off me even though I am sitting in front of the fan and have a wet towel around my neck! A friend of mine recently read a report which reckons that 20 minutes in a sauna is a very good form of exercise as it increases heart rate, opens up your pores and generally detoxes the body – stands to reason that I have just done 4 weeks of non-stop exercise, my pores are well and truly open and I am so detoxified I must be super healthy!!! Nice if it were true!

A few other exciting plans are in preparation for 2019, a SEWAID project run by Rotarian, Tony Castley, teaching women to sew and set up a small business, musical tuition

in schools teaching students to play the harmonica and several more scholarships to assist with school fees so young people can continue their education.

And so it is Christmas!

Christmas is all about thinking of others!



I wonder what these children and their families would like for Christmas?

This Christmas why not give a gift to someone you do not know, will probably never meet, but who will be forever grateful that you thought of them?

A small amount of money goes a long way in helping families and communities in Oecusse, Timor leste. Your donation could go towards:

Clean Drinking Water

Bio sand filtration unit – clean water for a family for a lifetime	\$250
Rehabilitate a village well – clean water for a community	\$350

Education

School fees for a student for one year junior school	\$150
School fees for a student for one year senior school	\$250
Uniforms and hat or school shoes and back pack	\$80
Equipment such as books, pens, pencils per student	\$60

Youth in Action GREEN Games, leadership training.

Soccer or volley ball	\$45 each
Soccer or volleyball nets	\$100
Sponsor a team to take part in the games	\$250

Village Sustainability Project

Fruit or timber tree seedlings	\$10 each
Live-stock such as pig or goat or chickens	\$10 – \$50
Irrigation for community vegetable garden	\$350
Help villagers develop and put in place an action plan to reduce impacts of environmental degradation on their village.	\$1000

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

Donate online through Rotary www.RAWCS project 50/11-12 Sustainable Villages Oecusse.

The people of Oecusse thank you for any assistance you can give in improving their lives.
(for further information please email jcharnaud@ozgreen.org.au)