



## Timor-Leste Newsletter January 2018



**Hau hein ita iha Haksolok Tinan Foun!  
I wish you all a Happy New year!**

This newsletter rounds off 2017 and sends a big thank you to all those who have continued to help me over obstacles, through the miasma of doubt and given me the strength to keep going. I enjoy my time in Oecusse but am finding it tougher as the years go by! I refuse to admit that I am getting older so it must be the politics, the changing face of Timor Leste or something else??

### **2017 in summary.**

Even with the year interrupted by heavy rain and then the government elections taking up the first 5 months of the year 2017 was another busy and successful year for GREENTL in Oecusse.

### **Youth-in Action GREEN Games.**

The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual *Youth-in-Action* GREEN Games were held during May – June in Passabe which is in the sub-district of Oesilo at the end of the worst road in Timor-Leste! Along with the usual soccer and volleyball we added tug-of-war to the agenda and each aldeia entered a men's and women's team! The men took the competition very seriously, the women certainly strained their muscles but to them it was more for fun and laughter!

*"Halima dada tali diak liu tuur iha uma atu tien hamos."* I was told "Playing tug of war is better than sitting at home cooking and cleaning."  
No surprise there!

Each year the *Youth-in-Action* GREEN Games throws an unexpected highlight in. This year it



was the excitement, fun and laughter of the tug-of-war and the joyful singing and dancing after the closing ceremony. A cavalcade of players and their supporters carried the trophies proudly around the town, we could follow their progress by the sound of their voices echoing across the valley!

A fantastic spinoff from the 2017 games was that a Youth Group, who have been on the GREEN Games Committee for a few years, organised their own soccer

competition for 9 – 15 year olds. GREENTL provided some funds and a little organisational advice. A great initiative on the part of the Youth Committee!

## Sustainable Villages.

GREENTL continues work in Bocosse, this year we rehabilitated 3 more wells, (now eight in total), provided three more bio-sand filtration units (38 now in the village – one in each household), replaced several of the taps on older units with a much sturdier set-up and provided the pump, pipes and seeds for another vegetable garden.

We also began work in Passabe with two pumps, one well, and twenty community gardens.



Now that there are so many vegetable gardens in Passabe there is talk of ZEESM, (District Administration), helping to truck fresh vegetables from Oecusse to Dili, a good outcome if it happens.

We did not put together as many bio-sand filtration units in 2017 as we normally do as the blue barrels are becoming very difficult to find – our usual supply from across the border in Keffer seems to have dried up!

**Building a water supply system** - an exciting project which will begin in Pune in 2018. GREENTL has a very strong relationship with the village of Pune as we held the Games there in 2016.

In 2017 we facilitated a very successful community meeting between the villagers and visiting Rotarians who then plotted out and measured the potential track for the water pipeline. The plan is slightly more complicated than first thought but it is achievable with labour from the community and funds from Rotary. The first step is to fence the water source, and build wells so that the current water soak can be diverted into a holding tank. The water can then be piped downhill to the school and onto three smaller communities. Gravity feed all the way. I have not as yet tested the water for faecal coliforms but by the looks of it the count will be very, very high! Once the water supply reaches the school, (over 600 pupils) a large scale bio-sand filtration unit may be needed!

## Graduations! Very exciting news!

Over the years various Rotary Clubs, (Salamander Bay, Nelsons Bay and Dili Club) along with individual donors have been sponsoring several students through school and university.

**Fatima Sufa Nono**, has finally graduated from Crystal University, Dili with a Nursing Degree. I say finally because Fatima had to put up with changes to the program, the University's loss of accreditation, addition of extra practical hours and field work by the Education Ministry and major changes to the university itself. With much perseverance, Fatima made it to the end, taking five years instead of three, through no fault of her own! She is now very eager to get back to Oecusse and begin work either in the hospital or in a clinic. Thank you to Dili Rotary Club for seeing Fatima through the difficult times!



**Fernando Nono**, one of the young boys I met when I first arrived in Oecusse in 2001. He was then 13, and intrigued by the “strange” white woman who moved in next door. He and his friends spent a lot of time in those first few years sitting on my doorstep, learning English, helping me in the garden happily accepting any handouts – times were very tough in those early days. (Times are still tough but there have been some definite improvements). Fernando is now a Fireman, having worked his way through Fire School Training and has recently graduated with a Masters Degree in Computer Science from the local Dili Institute of Technology.



### **Thank you Donors.**

#### **We could not have done it without you!**

Thank you to all the wonderful people who have helped with the Oecusse, Sustainable Villages Project over the last 17 years. Your funds have saved lives, provided a future for many, provided education, encouraged leadership and built sustainability into communities. Everything you have done has been a great help to the people of Oecusse.

### **A personal story of life in Oecusse.**

#### **Dinner Party – Oecusse style.**

It is difficult to describe some of my experiences in Oecusse as they are quite different to anything you might run into in Sydney. I will try and describe a night I recently enjoyed with my neighbours – I had been invited to dinner to help celebrate Nando’s graduation from university.

Nando’s family consists of mother, father, Nando, his wife and young son, two teenage nieces, a sister, brother-in-law and their two young children. Add me to this and we have 12 people, several small tables, 9 chairs, two benches, a motorbike, a tricycle and a fridge in a space approximately 3 metres by 4 metres. This space is a small room added to the back of their house, dirt floor, bare cement block walls, one still showing marks of black ash due to the house being burnt during the Indonesian occupation, tin roof and rotting timber door. I am trying not to be too harsh with my description as it is as good as many other houses in Oecusse and apart from the dirt floor quite similar to mine!

Apart from the humans and hundreds of mosquitoes, there are 4 puppies, two adult dogs, a cat and a kitten to add to the crowd. With all the people and other animals under this tin roof it is like being in a very noisy sauna!

The door is closed supposedly to keep out the dogs but they constantly manage to squeeze under it as there is a hole, which I am sure they have dug, in the dirt floor. Each time a dog tries to get in it gets hit with a long stick by whomever is the closest at the time, the dog squeals and squeezes back outside to simply try again a few minutes later. The young son is a very bright little boy but I am sure he is on the hyperactive spectrum! So the noise; dogs yelping, cats mewing, the young boy screaming and throwing a tantrum, the women talking loudly in Bahasa and laughing as they have had a beer each which has gone straight to their heads! Heavy rain banging on the tin roof, dogs and cats fighting over food scraps, Jessie, the cat, climbing up my leg to get at my food, then getting hit by afore-mentioned large stick. To add to the excitement a large crab – yes a crab, with very large nippers digs its way out of a hole in the floor and begins to crawl across the room causing the cats to jump with fright, the dogs to run away barking and one of the nieces to chase the crab outside with the large stick, obviously a very useful weapon!

The food; lots of rice, green spinach-like vegetable and chicken and beef. The piece of beef I got was actually liver which is one of my greatest culinary dislikes but in the semi darkness it is hard to see what you are choosing. The chicken is quite tasty but has been chopped into pieces with a very sharp knife such that there are shards of sharp bone left in it so it has to be eaten carefully to say the least. The cat must have got a piece of bone stuck in its neck as at one stage it coughed and retched while someone took to it with the stick treatment! The cat retreated for a while but soon came back for more!



I am presented with a ladies tais, a thank you gift for helping Nando through University and as his mother has dressed me in it I am obliged to wear it – like being wrapped in a woollen blanket – no wonder I was getting light headed on only one beer!

And I am sitting here thinking that I could be in my comfortable townhouse in Warriewood – peace and quiet, eating a lovely fresh salad, drinking a cold

Tullamore Dew over ice, watching some second-rate television show ..... no dogs, cats, crabs, screaming children to disturb my peace!

Where would I rather be????? Good question - probably right here where I am!

**Christmas Donations**

Due to the kindness of those who gave donations last year many students can now continue with their schooling, they have been helped with books, pens, uniforms and school fees, several families are now proud owners of a pig or two, sporting competitions are becoming more frequent and of course the need for clean water and home grown, nutritious food is being tackled.



**There is always more to be done. Planning for 2018 is well underway, pending politics and the likelihood of new government elections.**

Donations over \$2 to the Sustainable Villages project are tax deductible: Donate online by going to the Rotary Australia World Community Service, (RAWCS) website. Click the donate button and search for project 50/ years 11-12. (Sustainable Villages Oecusse) Or via OzGREEN: [https://ozgreen.nationbuilder.com/east\\_timor\\_donation](https://ozgreen.nationbuilder.com/east_timor_donation)