

A letter from

# the Jesuits in Timor-Leste

October 2015



## Embracing new frontiers

As Jesuits, we recognise that “... new frontiers beckon that we must be willing to embrace” (GC 35 Decree 2, no. 24). Jesuit Social Service was formed in response to this clarion call – a new social ministry in a young country.

It was clear that the needs are great but where should we direct our efforts? We conducted a scan of the economic, social and political atmosphere, and after much discussion, dialogue and discernment, drew up a five-year plan.

### Support our work

The Jesuits have embarked on several projects to help meet the many needs in Timor-Leste. The education project, comprising a secondary school and a teacher education institute, is the largest. Other Jesuit works in need of support include the secondary school in Railaco, the mobile clinic serving rural communities in the hills, Jesuit Social Service, and the audiovisual production centre that produces many public education programs. We would also welcome contributions towards the Jesuit formation fund. If you wish to know more about or support our work, please email: [etr.development@gmail.com](mailto:etr.development@gmail.com).

Dear Friends,

Bom dia.

As many of you know, Br Noel Oliver SJ has left us to join the Jesuit mission in Cambodia. We thank him for his contributions to the mission in Timor-Leste. Our loss is the Cambodia mission's gain.

We ask for your patience and understanding as we continue to provide you with updates on Jesuit activities in Timor-Leste.

This issue focuses on Jesuit Social Service, a fledgling ministry that has identified many projects with communities in and around the areas where the Jesuits are present.

We hope you enjoy the read.

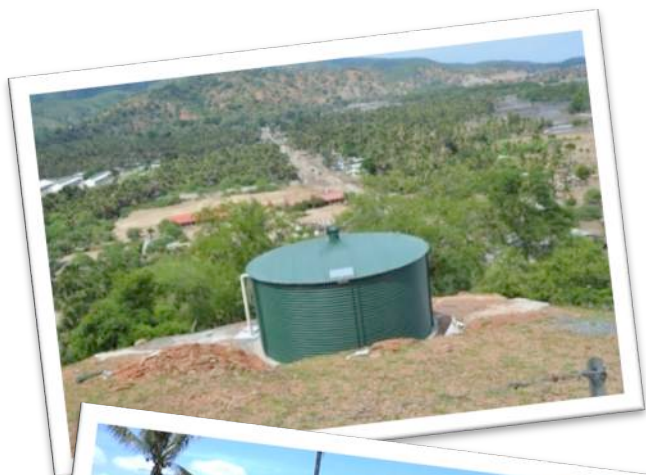
God bless,

*Fr Joaquim Sarmiento SJ*  
Delegate to the Regional Superior



# Jesuit Social Service projects

JSS is engaged in several projects in in three geographical areas where the Jesuits have a long-term presence – Dare, Hera and Kasait.



## Water infrastructure project

Communities are organized into clusters of 5 to 15 households, and a location is identified for drilling for water. The communities provide the labour and JSS provides technical input and equipment. There are 4 clusters in Hera and 5 in Kasait. Only one has been successful so far because the depth of underground water source varies from place to place. In order to protect and preserve the watershed, JSS also reinforces with the communities the need to plant trees and avoid practices detrimental to the environment.

## Community farming

Traditional agricultural practices prevail in rural areas, and education is needed on crop rotation and irrigation to help the farmers earn a better living from their land. JSS is assisting small communities and small-scale farmers in Hera, Namalai and Dare with this, and in pooling their harvest together and accounting for equitable distribution of the income among members. Already some successful accomplishments have been in Namalai.



## Agricultural Development

The Horta Lopes Facility in Dare is being rehabilitated with a view to using it for agricultural training. It was set up by the late Fr Tan Soe SJ and had fallen into disuse after his passing and subsequent lease to an NGO. The first house restored can provide respite for visitors and also be used as an office for JSS. The access road has to be improved and the water supply secured because the present source is about to be cut-off due to plans to create a huge fishpond up the hill.

## Reforestation

In collaboration with the national forestry department, JSS has conducted tree-planting activities in Namalai and Kasait. It plans to do more tree planting in areas where it is engaging communities on water infrastructure projects. For this kind of activity, help is being sought from the alumni of Colegio de São José, the school the Jesuits used to run for the Dili diocese, along with the local community members.





## Vision

The vision of Jesuit Social Service is the vision of the Jesuit mission for Timor-Leste, which is of a Church and nation that is grounded in the faith and justice of the Gospel.

With our unique mandate, we envision united, self-reliant, and self-sustaining communities that will build a strong Timorese nation, animated by love for the country, and empowered to form a just society and promote the common good.

## Mission

As companions, we serve the faith and promote justice for integral development of the people of Timor-Leste.



Hence, Jesuit Social Service is committed to:

1. Promoting integral community development where the cultures and identities of the people are respected and promoted, empowering the poor to become self-sustaining.
2. Fostering humanization of life where all people especially women, youth, and children are included, their basic needs are met and they are able to live their lives to the full through agricultural and livelihood projects, training and mentoring for entrepreneurial and related functional skills, and public health development.
3. Creating avenues to strengthen human resilience in communities through volunteerism, network building, and partnership with the government and the private sector - local and international.

## Goals

1. **Water and Sanitation.** Alleviate poor access to water and sanitation through community-based infrastructure projects.
2. **Agricultural Development.** Help secure an adequate food supply that is affordable for all through innovative agricultural development programs suitable to each community in the rural areas.
3. **Social Innovation.** Train and mentor youth groups and women to become social innovators. By using business solutions to social issues, we aim to empower the youth and the women to become agents of change through a variety of innovative projects that will not just improve the living condition of the communities where they belong but also to impart values formation and foster communal action.
4. **Public Health Development.** Develop public health interventions in the rural areas where there is poor access to health care.



# More Jesuit Social Service projects

## Youth program

Youth are a vulnerable group. Almost half the population is between the ages of 13 and 19, and unemployment is high. To help this vulnerable group, JSS has begun a pilot project with eight youth in Kasait to provide them with language, computer and personality development lessons, and training them to work as baristas. After this, they will be sent for vocational training. If they do well, the plan is to teach them about social enterprises. This project is still in the planning stages and will require skills and technical support in the future.



## Women empowerment

In Timor's patriarchal society, women do not have many opportunities for work and self-development. JSS began a *tais*-making venture with women in Kasait. A *tais* is a traditional, colourful fabric widely used in Timor. The women spent weeks training with a professional *tais*-maker from Dili so that they could produce *tais* good enough to sell in the market. Another group of women will be gathered soon in snacks-selling venture.

## Fishermen community development

The fishing community in Kasait is struggling. It uses traditional methods of fishing and most of their equipment is old and worn, thereby posing a danger to the fishermen. A community development project is being developed, in consultation with the local officials and the fishing community, to upgrade their equipment and also help them to earn more from their catch.



## Public health development

There are many gaps in public health services in Timor and JSS wishes to supplement government efforts through continuing professional development and community-driven health-care activities. It aims to set up a small public health clinic in Kasait, to be named Daniel Ornelas Health Center (DOHC), which will also provide training and education in basic healthcare.

