



Timor Leste Newsletter September 2022



I began this newsletter, in August, on a very positive note - I have booked my return trip to Timor Leste, flying through to Dili on 29th August, – assuming things will go much better this time around! So far so good as I managed to use some frequent flyer points for the trip up so only cost \$135 including carbon offset! My bag is basically packed as I did not unpack much of it when I arrived home after the aborted last trip so ready to go!

GREENTL has so much planned that we will certainly be hitting the ground running – building the housing for the composting toilet, two fish farms and of course the *Youth-in-Action* GREEN Games. Looks as though we will have over 25 soccer teams so add volleyball, basketball and a marathon to that and the Games will be BIG! This of course is a problem – a good one but still a problem. The more teams we accept the more the games cost due to the extra time involved – extra games for the referees, more fuel costs, (fuel is \$US1.87, \$Aus2.85, a litre in Timor Leste now), hundreds more water bottles and so on.

Problems I had a few!

29th August arrived at the airport at 5.15am in plenty of time, so I thought, for an 8.15 take off! Getting through check-in in Sydney was a nightmare due to one very cranky customer, (not me!) who refused to move because she was not happy with the service. We all had to wait whilst security and airport management was called to sort the problem. Whilst this was going on the Domestic/International check-in counter closed even though there were still quite a few of us waiting so we had to toddle off to the other end of the concourse for the domestic check-in counter where there was a queue of hundreds. Then passing through Security I had to go through the full body scan several times until I was handed over for a pat down. Nothing to do with my knees but the scan seemed to show that my entire left side torso and left arm was metallic?? Interesting! Ended up running as best I could to get on the plane as final boarding was being called! The flight was then held up as connecting passengers from Melbourne had not arrived. Won't go into the details of passing through Darwin then arriving in Dili, just to say that travel is not getting any easier! Two hours to get through Health and Customs clearance in Dili due to extra layers of red tape. People behind me in the queue were still coming out an hour later whilst I waited for Luis to arrive from Oecusse! Mrs Judy's G&T at the Timor Lodge was very welcome!!



Forgot to read the small print re Timor Leste – enter at your own risk!

Working here at the moment is like trying to walk backwards through quicksand whilst wearing concrete shoes – the more I struggle the deeper into the quagmire I get. Is it just me or have things actually gotten worse over the last few years? The weather is almost unbearable – temperature does not get under 33°C at any time night or day – usually hovering around 38, the humidity is such that just sitting here typing and the sweat is pouring down my forehead even though I have a wet

tea towel wrapped around my head. Yes I should be used to the weather as this time of the year, the onset of the Wet, is always like this, but it seems to be getting worse.



The first morning back here, boiling water for my tea and the power points blew – crackled and shot sparks – very impressive! The electrician has come twice to fix this problem, not very successfully, my fan blows the power point switch every time I turn it on so I cannot use it, I guess it only moves the hot air around anyway! The electrician had to make a hole in the ceiling to get into the roof space so now there is easy access to whatever wants to get in – rats, snakes, spiders and whatever else races around the roof space every night! I have wedged the door shut on that particular room so at least if anything falls through the hole in the ceiling it will be confined to one room! The car has been causing problems yet again – would not start unless pushed so Luis either had a constant supply of willing helpers to do just that or the car was simply kept running all day. Needed a new starter motor which, after much searching, we got from across the border in Indonesia - \$530US rather than the \$790US quoted from Dili. With the

addition of fuel and oil filters plus two days in the workshop and now it is going OK. I dread to think of the cost as I have not been given the invoice as yet but it will be in the vicinity of \$1500US. Condition of the roads, constant dirt and dust, low maintenance levels and the quality of the fuel are not conducive to longevity in vehicles up here! This one, like me, is getting close to its use by date!

Are we working?

Luis has organised teams of workers to take charge of the games, the fish ponds and the composting toilet but whether it is the heat, the humidity or something else things are very slow. We spend



most of the time sitting doing nothing more strenuous than drinking coffee and thinking about what to do sometime later in the day! I must admit I am concerned as to why anyone would contemplate playing soccer,

Look at me pretending I know what I am doing



basketball, volleyball let alone run a part marathon in this heat – beats me but they are rolling in to register their teams.

One thing I have noticed over the years working here is that everything and everyone seems to go at snail's pace and then all of a sudden things kick

off! Over the last few days the kick off has begun and we are now well and truly running!

HELP - 40 men's teams have registered for the soccer – far more than we expected!

We have had several meetings to check team IDs and ensure all participants are from Oecusse and there are no double ups. We held the Technical Meeting yesterday. Put Luis in front of a crowd and



he is in his element – speaks well, holds the attention of the audience, diffuses any difficult situations and makes light-hearted comments at the most appropriate times! It is times like this when I remember why I still employ him!

The technical meeting was a great success – 8 pools with 5 teams in each so we will be playing soccer for 2 or more months! We did try to limit the number of teams to 30 but did

not have the heart to tell some they could not play – only those who did not get their papers in on time otherwise we would have had 54 teams!

The soccer will now start on the 21st September as it will take longer to sort out the draws and get the information around to all the clubs so they can prepare for the first round.

GREENTL gets Women's Soccer up and running in Oecusse!

For several years there has been a group of women quietly playing soccer in Oecusse. Firstly the male teams looked on this as a bit of a joke but the women have persevered and now have a small but determined presence of 6 teams. I insisted that we should invite these teams to participate in the GREEN Games so we will have a women's round along with the men's. We have always had women's volleyball and basketball so why not soccer? This means more funds are required for the extra games but getting Women's Soccer into the competition will be well worth it.

So yes here I go again asking if anyone can help out with a small (or larger) donation to add to funds allocated for the Games. I have recently been given \$500 from Rentlo, the car hire company in the Timor Lodge, knew there was a good reason for me to go to Dili that last weekend, apart from a shower with hot, clean water, and a few Mrs Judy's G&Ts!



The soccer field needs a few repairs but it is as good as many we have played on in the past.

Also a wonderful donation from a long-term supporter so I am now only \$3000 short on the necessary budget, any help you can give to ease this deficit will be greatly appreciated as I can no longer afford to do it by myself. Getting women's soccer into the competition will be a great step forward for women and the sport!

The first few rounds of the soccer will be played at Lifau and the finals at Oebau where we originally began the games back in 2007! Lifau is on the outskirts of Oecusse town, still within

the boundary of the new four lane highway to nowhere! All GREENTL members tell me that the roads out of town are basically impassable due to the floods and tornado last year. Considering some of the roads we have travelled on in the past I cannot imagine how bad they must be now to be classed as "impassable" by my entire team??? So this year we are confined to the town limits!

Fish Ponds

Luis and I recently visited Touleca – part of Lifau but across the river onto the bad road, (and yes it is bad!). One of the leading families there is very happy to put in a fish pond and are prepared to do the work involved. We have discussed the plan and they are now getting quotes for the materials, liaising with the Fisheries department and then will discuss the findings with us. I think the whole village is looking forward to adding fish to their diet in 12 months time!

If this looks like being a success, which I am sure it will be, we have the funding for a second fish pond but as yet have not confirmed the location.

Loron Hamos Mondu Tomak. World Clean up Day

Nando, one of my neighbours whom I have known since day 1 in Oecusse – he was a very young lad who appeared on my back door step way back then curious to see who or what this odd white person was, has helped me organise a group of young kids from the neighbourhood to clean up along the beach front on Saturday 17th September.



The clean up was a great success – small children began sitting in the road outside my fence at 7.30 even though they had been told the clean up would start about 10! All came armed with high spirits and a bag which in which they buy their rice. We filled 15 of these in no time. The government run dump site is a bit of a worry – it is alongside the river so I am a bit concerned that we dump the rubbish to have it washed back into the sea the next

time it rains. Nando assures me this does not happen as all the rubbish is regularly burnt! Where to start on the burning of plastic bottles? I noticed an old container from the back of a destroyed dumptruck at the site so suggested that we put the rubbish in that so at least keep it contained! Each child was rewarded with books and pens for school so all went home with big smiles on their faces.

Littering is a major issue throughout the whole of Timor Leste. Recycling of bottles and cans has started in a small way and at least one of the larger Chinese shops in town no longer supplies plastic bags – small steps in the right direction! Many years ago I set up the first rubbish dump in town but that is now under the runway of the new airport!



After 22 years I certainly have a lot of stories to tell – maybe one day I will put it all in a book!

If you would like to donate to this project Tax deductible donations can be made via the RAWCS website – donate button, search for project number 50, years 11/12. (Sustainable Villages Oecusse.) or a direct link:

<https://donations.rawcs.com.au/Default.aspx?ProjectID=592&ReturnTo=4>

If tax deductibility is not required deposits can be made into the GREEN TL account in ANZ Dee Why.
BSB 012280, Account 216246173