



GREEN TL *Youth-in-Action* GREEN Games



Final Report 2022

Project Title:	<i>Youth-in-Action</i> GREEN Games	
Name of Implementing Organisation:	GREEN Timor leste (TL)	
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Date of GREEN Games:	September – November 2022	
Cost of GREEN Games	\$US29,383	\$Aus43,210

“It was the worst of times, it was the best of times.”

That just about sums up the 2022 *Youth-in-Action* GREEN Games, our 14th. Will there be a 15th – at this stage the answer to that is way out there as I have to get over this one first! I am basically only an involved spectator at the Games and I find it exhausting, so how Luis and the GREENTL Games committee cope I don't know; organising, planning, ensuring things run smoothly every day, liaising with referees and players, cleaning up after each game and solving all sorts of problems which crop up. No detail is left unattended, nothing is left to chance, even though “chance” seems to play a large part in everything up here.

The Games began on the 21st of September and ran until the 25th November, 7 days a week for 9 weeks!

A First for Women's Soccer

Definitely a highlight of this year's games was the inclusion, for the first time ever in competition in Timor leste, of Women's soccer. Nine teams participated and it was fantastic to see the response of the spectators, the pride in the teams and their coaches and the improvement and growth in the confidence of the players as the games continued. There was a lot of laughter from the sidelines as the players fell over, missed kicks and so on but also a lot of respect that women could play so well, so hard and so fast!



“This is a real moment for women’s sport in Oecusse.” Comment by a member of Oecusse government.



“We will now include girls’ soccer in our annual inter-school sporting competition.” Representative of Oecusse Education Ministry.

As it turned out the Games became the best soccer competition ever held in Oecusse but for various reasons, mentioned elsewhere, the other sports had to be cancelled. Not so much this year as the *Youth-in-Action GREEN Games* but the *Youth-in-Action Soccer* competition.

Problems we had a few.

1. Before the Games even began, we hit a wall. I arrived in Oecusse in June planning on commencing the Games soon after but talk of the GREEN Games spurred the Oecusse Regional Government, (RAEOA) into thinking about a soccer competition so they decided to begin a competition on the same date as ours, no previous planning or discussion just a sudden realisation that a soccer competition would be a good idea! We had to postpone our Games as we could not compete with Government and having two competitions simultaneously would be ridiculous.

2. Would you believe it they then did the same again in October – once GREENTL had registered the volleyball teams, held the technical meeting and completed the draw RAEOA decided on having a volleyball competition at the same time. Once might have been coincidental but twice just arrogance! Then when RAEOA conceded defeat and withdrew their games, the Volleyball Association, on behalf of RAEOA, decided to send all the referees to Dili for a training camp so the volleyball had to be cancelled as we ran out of time.



3. Forty men’s soccer and nine women’s teams registered – not really a problem but more teams than ever before so the soccer competition went on for longer than originally planned.

4. This year we were confined to the town limits! Soccer was played at Lifau on the outskirts of Oecusse town, within the boundary of the new dual, tarmacked highway to nowhere! GREENTL members told me that the roads out of town are impassable due to last year’s floods and the tornado. 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 team??? There is only one decent soccer field in the whole of Oecusse and that is in the middle of town, tightly run by the Soccer Federation. I like to spread the games around the districts to involve as many community teams as possible. At least this field in Lifau was mainly flat, with the remains of an old pebble road across the middle and a few potholes but the community assured me they could fix it and they did!

6. The weather gave us everything - we played in dust, dirt, mud, rain, wind and thunderstorms!! But always hot and steamy. Not quite sure which was preferable – the dust or the mud?



The goalie bites the dust.

7. One day we arrived at the soccer field to see a large bulldozer in use around the perimeter, it was clearing everything in its path – an abandoned brick building, trees, a well, two old goal posts on the sidelines and even children if they could not get out of the way fast enough! This apparently was to smooth the way for a horse race, all I could see it do was destroy a lot of beautiful old trees.



8. A few times things got a bit rowdy when spectators or players did not like decisions made by referees. These were generally sorted out with intervention from Luis and Lopo, the Games organisers, a few threats of dismissal and red and yellow cards.



9. One nasty incident occurred when Lafaek, the Defence Force Team didn't like getting beaten so took it out on an opposing team player who ended up in hospital for the night. Luckily he was OK but this on-field skirmish involved armed police, the ambulance and of course Luis and Lopo. It is easy to see how riots suddenly occur in situations like this – adrenalin, excitement, a disgruntled population, noisy barracking from the sidelines and suddenly a crowd surge is underway! Not quite sure that

armed police are the way to go in a soccer match but they were there so got involved.

10. Spiralling out of control costs. Inflation is a problem in Timor leste as it is elsewhere – the cost of everything – fuel, water, food, equipment, wages and so on has gone up and the value of the Australian dollar against the US dollar has gone down – all leading to an increase in costs for the Games.

What led us to introduce the *Youth-in-Action* GREEN Games in 2007?

The idea for the games came up in 2006 when Luis Armando, Director of GREENTL and myself were having a general conversation re young people in Oecusse having too much spare time on their hands and not seeing a bright future for themselves, many finished school, could not afford to go onto further education and had little opportunity of employment, leading to disenfranchised and easily angered young people, so he suggested we organise a sporting competition to give them something to do. The inaugural GREEN Games were held in 2007 and the event has been a great success ever since. Sadly, this societal situation has not changed a lot over the last 13 years and, in actual fact, is getting worse due to the disconnect between government, and the general population, particularly young people who are angered by the lack of progress. Some of this frustration was evident in the Games this year.



Another good catch by a goalkeeper

Since 2007 the *Youth in Action* GREEN Games has evolved, changed, grown and become the single, biggest, most important, annual sporting competition in the enclave. Over the last 14 years the majority of the population of Oecusse has been

involved in one way or another, some of the players watched from the sidelines when they were too little to play and are now taking their turn! We have held the games in several sub-districts with the intention of giving as many people as possible the opportunity to participate – Obeau, Padeia, Pune, Passabe, Boaknana and now Lifau.

The importance of sport, especially in a developing country such as Timor leste with a very large, disenfranchised youth population, cannot be over emphasised. Sport is very popular in Timor leste and young people have natural, well developed fine motor skills. I am always amazed at the expertise shown in the games even though there is very little training received in these outer, isolated districts, simply enthusiastic locals who do their best.

Many of my Australian visitors have commented on the natural skills and ability shown by the players.



His turn will come in 12 years or

Direct Beneficiaries

Games	Members	Total
Soccer Men 40 teams	18	720
Soccer Women 9 teams	18	162
Team officials		98
Referees & linesmen		10
Organising Committee		20
Lifau Youth Group		14
Police		8
Red Cross volunteers		6
Cooks		12
Total		1050

It is not only the players and their club officials who benefit from the games –

- ◆ members of the local community who arrive each day to set up their stalls and sell local goods, betel nut, vegetables, sweets, biscuits and so on. I am sure the local community makes more money during this event than at any other time of the year!

- ◆ community spirit is enhanced as supporters cheer on their teams, wave flags, wear team colours and yell their support. The cheering gets very rowdy at times, especially amongst the women who can be extremely loud.
- ◆ District Sports Administrators, Youth Groups, Police and sporting clubs gain invaluable experience in seeing how well a large event such as this can be run.
- ◆ literally thousands of people are entertained, seven days a week for three months as they come to watch the games and support their teams. The players become role models for the youngsters.

Add all these people together and the numbers involved overall would be closer to 10,000.

Winners

I'm sure in some way everyone was a winner – they enjoyed the games, learnt new skills, helped their community and generally ensured all had a great time.



Soccer	Men
First Place	FC Sao Rocky Banoco
Second Place	FC St John Batista Sikluli
Third Place	FC Vilanos
Fourth Place	FC Activista

Soccer	Women
First Place	FC Estrela Noelica
Second Place	FC Amor Oebau
Third Place	FC Inur Sacato



- Number of people directly involved. 1050
- Number of soccer games played 116
- How many spectators daily? thousands
- Weeks spent by GREENTL on the games 3 months
- Duration of the games competition. Nine weeks
- How many cups of water did we distribute? 9,552
- How many bottles of water did we distribute? 1,320
- How many soccer balls destroyed? 10
- How many "serious disagreements"? three
- Unusual incidences? Bulldozer clearing the sidelines during play, several fires, armed police settling an on-field dispute.
- How many locals earned extra income from the games? hundreds
- What animals invaded the field during play? Several dogs, a few pigs and a cow.
- Most unusual food prepared for us. Goat intestines boiled in blood.
- Did I sample the above? No

Thanks to all the sponsors of the Youth-in-Action GREEN Games

The Penn Foundation, Rotary Clubs (Epping, and the E-club of Greater Sydney), Ridley Bell from Mountain Blue Farms, Peter Fitzsimons from the Sydney Morning Herald, Phil from Rentlo Timor Leste and many friends who continually give me strength and support. None of this could happen without you!

Comments from participants:

"This is really well organised and truly a community event – everyone is getting involved in one way or another." Representative from Oecusse Administration

"The natural skills shown by the players is something else again. They are much more skilled at playing the ball in the air than we are in Australia." Australian visitors.

"We are so grateful that you chose to have the Games here – it is certainly giving our community something to do and participate in. Obrigada, please come again!" Village Elder.

"Next year we will build a volleyball court as well so we can have all the games here." Lifau Village Leader



Congratulations to Luis Armando, to Games Organisers Lopo, Nando, Campar, Anton, Agida, Sabina and Mary, to the Lifau Youth Group and GREENTL members who worked diligently each and every day, and the Lifau community who provided food, cleaned up after each game and they all can't wait for this to happen again!!