



## Carmelite Friars of Australia and Timor-Leste

### MISSION COORDINATOR UPDATE 19.12.08

*As each of us patiently wait in this season of Advent to celebrate the birth of Jesus may we be gifted with a renewed sense of wonder. This is what I experienced on my last visit to Timor-Leste as I saw many positive things happening in Zumalai sub-district.*

I returned from Timor-Leste three weeks ago feeling very excited about the fact that the Timorese people are now much more confident in being able to make responsible decisions. I travelled with Fr Denis Andrew, Sr Margaret Harrison and Greg Reid from Wentworthville parish in Sydney and Brian Moffett from Coorparoo Parish in Brisbane.

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**Solar Panels at the Zumalai Compound**

Another great sign of progress happening was that three of the teachers who were being supported by the Carmelites have received government contracts from the beginning of next year. The teaching experience and in-service training that these three teachers have received has given them the confidence to sit the exam for the government contracts. One of the girls who was part of the sewing project in Zumalai has also now obtained employment in Dili.

The kitchen in Zumalai which had a mud floor and was always judged by westerners as a health hazard has now been completely demolished and replaced with a new building that has a strong foundation and cement floor. A proposal has been received for a rice storage room in one of the villages and also one to set up the youth centre for computer and other training courses for post school youth in the future. A further sign of progress is that land has been purchased to grow rice in one of the fertile rice growing areas of the Zumalai sub-district.

Another achievement is that there are now four students at Baucau Teachers College, two girls and two boys. In this 2008/2009 Timor-Leste academic year there are therefore two students doing first year studies and two students doing second year studies. Great opportunities for educational progress are now beginning to take place for the people of the Zumalai sub-district.



**My travelling Group at Raifila Village**

We arrived at the Zumalai Compound late in the evening, it was therefore a wonderful experience to have light from a renewable energy system that had been installed in October. Two solar systems were set up on the Zumalai compound by the Alternative Technology Association. The Zumalai compound has also been rewired in order to handle the new solar systems. Each system consists of four batteries and ten panels. During the evening meal we no longer had to raise our voices and compete with a noisy generator. There was even a choice of staying up later at night as there was no longer a generator to be turned off at ten o'clock. As a result of having solar electricity new proposals were still being looked at after midnight on some evenings.

I was taken by surprise at the way that the Teachers College has advanced. A good library has been set up with a study area for the students. There is an information technology room with about fifty computers. The IT room is able to operate very well because of a satellite dish which provides internet connection. Both of these rooms were filled with students during my visit because the students had assignments that were due.

All the staff at the College are Timorese and all doing professional development to update their qualifications. In October of this year the first Timorese Masters student graduated from the College. We hope and pray that there will be many more in the future.



**Bernardino, Monica, Rosito, Ana Cai - the four students at Baucau Teacher's College**

### **Mobile Medical Clinic**

Before Christmas in Zumalai another mobile medical clinic will be held in the outlying villages. Last year this happened late because of heavy rains. This year the wet season has started in the Zumalai sub-district but the rains haven't been as heavy.

During our November visit the all government health clinics in Timor-Leste were campaigning and providing information that advertised a tetanus immunization program for women from 12—45 years of age. There are three phases in the program that the women must attend. The third and final stage is in June 2009. The mobile medical clinic is helping to support this program by giving vaccinations in the remote villages wherever it can.



**Zumalai Christmas crib erected with creativity and care.**

The photo above is of the Christmas crib on the Zumalai Compound. It is set up in a very prominent place on the Church veranda. Nearly all the families in Timor-leste build a crib for Christmas. They assemble them outside their homes so that everyone who passes by can see them.

May all of us in developed countries also gather under the star of Bethlehem this Christmas where all are welcome.

**Very special thanks to all the supporters of the Carmelite Timor-Leste Mission. May all your hearts be filled with a peace and love that will lead us into the future with hope.**

*Rosemary Patterson*

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