

Stewardship of Jesuit Mission projects in Timor-Leste

by Helen Forde, CEO, Jesuit Mission

Timor-Leste is a very young country, having only been internationally recognised as an independent nation in May 2002. It has a high unemployment rate, and approximately half of the population is illiterate.

Pilgrims 100 is supporting three Jesuit Mission projects in Railaco, Timor-Leste:

1. The Mobile Medical Clinic with Fr Bong and his team visiting eleven villages twice a month and caring for over 7,000 patients each year.
2. The Nutrition Program which visits three villages and provides a nutritious meal to 215 children each week.
3. The secondary school, NOSSEF, which has a student population of 380 (220 females, 160 males) and 18 staff.

The budget for these projects in Railaco is just over A\$90,000 annually. The Pilgrims 100 financial contribution will make a tangible difference in providing medical care, improving health and nutrition outcomes of young children and delivering quality education to senior students in rural Timor-Leste.

How is the annual budget allocated? More than 30% covers the costs of critical medicines that are distributed at the mobile clinics; 23% pays the salaries of the nutrition program staff and covers the vehicle fuel; 17% goes towards purchasing the food for the nutrition program and the remainder covers the salaries of the 18 teachers at NOSSEF.

How do we ensure the projects are being implemented effectively? We have two International Program specialists on staff whose primary role is to accompany our Jesuit partners overseas. Before agreeing to fund a project, we review the proposal including the budget and where necessary provide suggestions on the design and implementation. Our partners provide us with mid and end-of-year project reports summarising the outcomes, impact, challenges and learnings of their activities, as well as a financial acquittal of their expenses.

Many of the local Timorese Jesuits are young and still in formation but they are very determined to assume responsibility for the ongoing implementation and oversight of their community development and education projects. International missionaries from Australia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Japan, as well as other countries, have been missioned to Timor-Leste over the years to lead and oversee projects and now the Timorese Jesuits are gradually assuming responsibility.

At Jesuit Mission, we are committed to accompanying and building the capacity of the young nation and its people, including our Jesuit partners on the ground there. Helping our Jesuit partners to enhance their skills and expertise in program and financial management is key to the sustainability and growth of their mission.