



East Timor Newsletter November 2016



“The jewel in the crown of Sustainable Villages.”

These words were used by a team of visiting Rotarians to describe the village of Bocosse. The exciting news about Bocosse is now that electricity has been made available (one of the few good things that has come from ZEESM – the Oecusse Administration 20 year Plan), GREEN TL has provided pumps and piping for irrigating vegetable gardens. Very soon the



Community vegetable gardens, rehabilitated wells and bio sand filtration units in Bocosse.

entire village will have a permanent supply of fresh vegetables. Along with clean water from their bio-sand filtration units this has resulted in a marked increase in health indicators in the community! Over the five years we have worked with Bocosse GREEN TL has provided 35 bio-sand filtration units, rehabilitated six wells, with two more in the process, and is now providing irrigation for two vegetable



gardens with another on the way. We have also provided hundreds of tree seedlings, such as banana, coconut,



mahogany and trambesi, the majority of which are thriving.– indeed the “jewel in the crown!”

The villagers of Bocosse are very happy with the work GREEN TL has done with them.

Several of our other villages are also thriving but, for various reasons, have not been quite as successful as Bocosse. We do not have enough time to revisit all the villages as often as we would like.

Sustainable Villages project.

Four years ago I was fortunate enough to have the Oecusse, Sustainable Villages Project, recognised by RAWCS (Rotary Australia World Community Service), the international arm of Rotary. This means that it is now eligible for tax deductibility through Rotary so quite a few Clubs are supporting the project which has made life easier as far as funding is concerned.

Why did we decide to call the project Sustainable Villages Oecusse?

Sustainable development is defined as

“development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission of Environment and Development)

Another definition I have read recently – Sustainability *“the outcome of reconciling economic development goals, social needs and the use of ecological resources at the local and global scales.”*

Rotarians visit Oecusse.

In July a team of visitors from Epping, Brookvale and Balgowlah Rotary Clubs and Manly Friends of Oecusse came here to learn what they could first-hand about the Sustainable Villages project and to look at other projects in the enclave which may need funding.

Luis Armando, Director of GREEN TL and myself prepared a busy agenda, organised transport and generally did out best to ensure that the visit was a success.

The team had a very full four days - visited Bocosse, and Pune, watched a soccer match, part of the GREEN Games, visited Oecusse General Hospital, spoke to Arsenio Bano, Secretary of Youth, Sport and Education, re the possibility of an English teaching program, visited the local Technical School, went to Kutete and Topu Honis which are the safe houses for over 120 young people run by the revered Father Richard, visited PRADET a local NGO which assists victims of domestic violence and even had time for a bit of sight-seeing and a stop at the Dominican Café for a coffee! Yes there is now a very nice coffee shop in Oecusse!

As you can see by the following comments the visitors were impressed and went home enthused to do more to help.

“An absolutely amazing and humbling time.”

“One of the best days of my life.”

“The difference Judy and Luis are making to the lives of these people is outstanding.”

“I could not do what you are doing Judy, dedicating your life to the people of Oecusse and living in such difficult circumstances – you are a saint.”

“Luis shows amazing organisational skills – from the big picture to the smallest detail and everything runs like clockwork.”



I must admit I have to disagree with some of the comments – me a saint?? I think not even though it is nice that someone thinks so. “Everything runs like clockwork???” Due to Luis’ organisational skills a lot runs like clockwork but due to Timor Leste, circumstances beyond our control; government red tape, sickness, the heat, humidity and very elastic “Timor Time” not all runs like clockwork!

Youth in Action GREEN Games

As I mentioned in the last newsletter there were several changes to the games agenda this year. I have distributed a full Games Report which I hope you have read and enjoyed. The games were a great success, possibly even better than usual as this year we held them in a very isolated and deserving village, included younger teams and had an entire district participating in one way or another!

The community of Pune is already asking about the 2017 games! Rotary is currently organising a pallet load of goods which is expected to arrive in Dili this month, it will then have to be transported to Oecusse where the goods can be distributed. The pallet includes soccer boots and socks so maybe next year the players may not have to wear thongs or bare feet for the games!

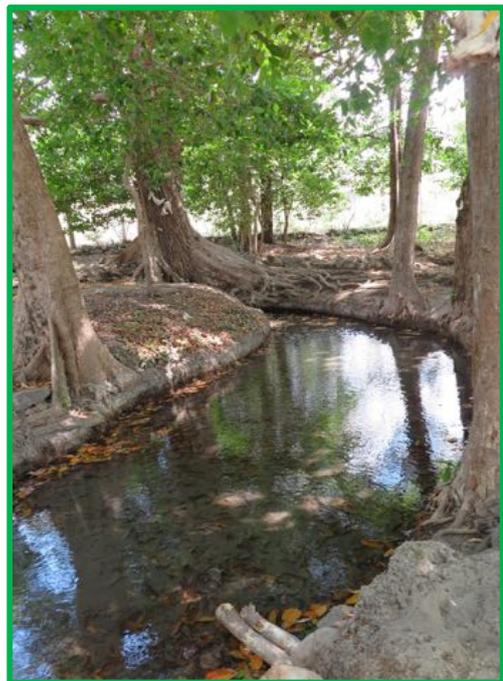
Work in the Village of Pune.



As mentioned in the July newsletter we have begun working in the village of Pune. The major problem is the lack of water. We have discussed the water issue with the village leaders and have a tentative plan to help repair the system.

However! One of the characteristics I love about the Oecusse people, even though it can be frustrating at times, is

that they tell you part of a story, the easy part, the part they think you might like to hear, and then slowly let you in on the extended picture. This is what is happening with the water problem. We were originally led to believe that the water system could be relatively easily fixed – repairs to 2km of piping and then water would flow to the village again. This is the easy version! The real version, as we have discovered after several treks into the hinterland behind Pune - visiting various sites, over a very, rough goat track following pipes into the hills; is that a very large, multi-tank, piped system was built some years ago by someone, maybe the government,



The road we followed to find the water system, the spring behind Pune and market day Pune.



maybe an NGO, and it has now fallen into disrepair – tanks are leaking, pipes are broken, taps are missing and the springs have run dry!!! Seems there are four springs in the hills behind Pune, one is dry, two currently have minimum water due to the lack of rain and the one plentiful spring is not connected into the system!

One of the springs is on the other side of a deep valley so there is not enough water pressure to push the water from one side of the valley to the other – the water stops at the first village in the system. Not quite

sure where to next, a far more comprehensive study is required with flow rates, heights, distances, pressures etc etc. Anyone with the skills and the time is welcome to come and have a look! There are a few people in Oecusse with the expertise but not the equipment needed, also lack of detailed topographic maps is a concern. So onwards and upwards as they say!

Water to my house in Palaban?

This is still a problem as the water pipes throughout Oecusse town have not yet been fixed. Watching progress of all the infrastructure in Oecusse it seems that the roads, gutters and pavements have to be done first so they can then be dug up to lay the water pipes! The government has put a tap stand in the field across the road from my home so the locals can obtain water three afternoons a week. On these days everyone is very busy filling their bottles and buckets and carrying them home. I bought a long hose to attach to the tap stand so water does not have to be carried quite so far. Eddy my hard working neighbour who looks after my garden, cleans my house and acts as general handyman, then carries water into the house and fills my mandie, (concrete wash tub in the wash house).

As they say in Darwin this is the mad season as it is like living in a sauna at the moment - very



hot, very humid and the least bit of activity brings out a sweat. The rain has not really started – a few showers to steam things up a bit is all. At least I have a fan to blow the hot air around and I sleep with a wet towel on me to try to cool things down! The neighbours sleep outside but I am a bit wary of mosquitoes, marauding dogs and the large geckoes which I am sure would latch onto anything which wiggled in the night – like toes!

These are the native geckoes – about 30 cms long, very beautiful and very noisy! I currently have two living in the house with me. That is OK by me as long as they keep out of my mosquito net.

Politics again!

Politics is in full swing at the moment. Last week the elections for Succo Chiefs were held, (similar to our council elections) but very few nominees received the majority they needed to win therefore there is now a second round of voting this weekend. Luis of course is heavily involved in the campaigning as he is a nominated representative for Fretilin in Oecusse. This means I have been keeping out of the way, reading lots of books, writing lots of stories and planning my trip home. It is very interesting watching the way politics evolves up here, the problems with the voting when a lot of people, through no fault of their own, are illiterate so put their crosses in the wrong place on the rather complicated form, the corruption as some parties pay for votes, the lies, the exaggerations – just like any democratic voting procedure I guess! Or I am getting cynical as I get older??

I have just spent a few days in Dili – I had to get away from the politics and also check on the pallet which is to arrive sometime last month, this month, maybe December! Apparently the ship did arrive last week but due to congestion on the wharf could not unload so returned to Singapore. Ahhh Timor leste!

Christmas

Need I remind you that Christmas is almost upon us – where has the year gone? Maybe you would like to think about giving a gift to someone in Oecusse - someone you do not know, you will probably never meet but who will be forever grateful that you thought of them. Clean water, chance of an education, leadership training, sport activities, tree seedlings, irrigation for vegetable gardens and the list goes on!

If interested please donate as per below.

Donations over \$2 to the Sustainable Villages project are tax deductible and can be done as per below:
*Donate online by going to <http://www.ozgreen.org.au/donate.php> and selecting East Timor from the drop down menu
*Direct debit BSB 032 293: Acc No 113 864.
* via the Rotary Australia World Community Service, (RAWCS) website. Click the donate button and search for project number 50 years 11-12.