



Supporter briefing: Notes from Jesuits on the frontiers

Fr Joaquim Sarmento has been acting as an agent of God's mercy since 1999. He is one of 20 Jesuits working to transform lives in Timor-Leste. Here he describes his life and work.

"I still remember the words of Jesus that inspired me to become a Jesuit. Christ said, 'I have come so that they may have life, and have it in abundance', and these words continue to lead me almost two decades after my ordination.

Our Jesuit life is always 'on the move', as we aim to enact our Lord's love in this needy world. Timor-Leste has a long history of conflict and poverty, and with the help of our friends and supporters from overseas we have been able to accompany the people of Timor-Leste, and support them as they work to overcome these obstacles.

Jesuits in Timor-Leste work to support the development work of the Church and the Government, mainly in the areas of education and social services. Both rely on our collaboration, and we in turn rely on financial help from overseas.

In the field, the support we gather from our friends and benefactors from abroad is always so encouraging and inspiring for us. We are thankful for all the gifts of prayers, donations to our work, and the solidarity of generous people.

We are motivated to serve God and his people, and the financial support we receive from our friends abroad has given us a big push forward the past several years. But still, a lot needs to be done. The country is in a condition that needs continuous support."

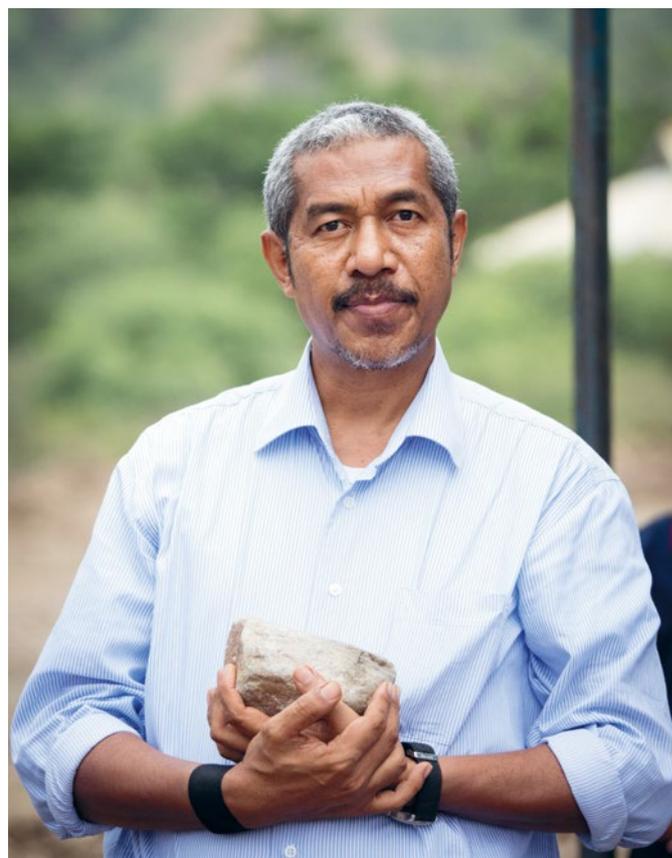


Image above: Fr Joaquim Sarmento SJ, the Jesuits' Regional Superior in Timor-Leste, holds the foundation stone for a new Teacher Training Institute founded by Jesuit missionaries with support from our Australian Jesuit community.



Background briefing: Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste is one of Southeast Asia's poorest countries, and a priority country for Jesuit Mission.

The beautiful, resource-rich nation of Timor-Leste, Asia's youngest country, has a history of colonisation, violence and hardship. After centuries of oppressive Portuguese rule, the Timorese people endured 24 years of Indonesian occupation. In that period (1975-1999), at least 183,000 people died from fighting, disease and starvation.

Indonesian troops departed in 1999, but Timor-Leste's road to independence was violent and marked by destruction. Thousands of people were displaced and hundreds killed in accompanying violence, and many homes and buildings, including over 80% of schools, were severely damaged or destroyed. The nation lost 20% of its primary school teachers and 80% of its secondary teachers.

The men, women and children of Timor-Leste are still suffering from the impact of the country's violent history, but they are resilient people. Together, we can help them overcome the ongoing challenges caused by poverty.



Timor-Leste at a glance

- Capital: Dili
- Population: 1.2 million
- Languages: Tetum and Portuguese (official). Indonesian, English and 15 other indigenous languages are also widely spoken
- Religions: Roman Catholic 96.9%, Protestant/Evangelical 2.2%, Muslim 0.3%, other 0.6% (from 2005 – latest data available)
- Agriculture: Coffee, rice, corn, cassava, sweet potatoes, soybeans, cabbage, mangoes, bananas and vanilla
- Exports: Coffee, sandalwood, marble; potential for oil and vanilla exports
- Poverty: About 40% of the population live in poverty
- Health: more than 50% of children under the age of 5 years are underweight
- Many communities don't have access to clean drinking water and sanitation
- Education: Timor-Leste faces a major shortage of schools and qualified teachers
- Literacy: Only about two-thirds of the adult population are literate

(UNDP; World Bank)

Image above: The Jesuit-run secondary school Colégio de Santo Inácio de Loiola in Kasait, a 45 minute drive from Dili.

Image left: Year 7 students from Colégio de Santo Inácio de Loiola. The school is one of several vital community projects run by our Jesuit missionaries in Timor-Leste, and funded through the generous support of the Australian Jesuit community.



You are crucial to the work of **our missionaries**

Your generous support is the reason that our missionaries can work to eradicate poverty and improve lives in Timor-Leste. Here are three examples of the life-changing projects you make possible.

Water

With your help, Jesuit Mission provided access to safe, clean water in seven rural villages near the capital Dili, transforming the health and lives of men, women and children. But there are still communities without safe access to clean water and sanitation who need our help.

Health

The compassion of supporters like you has meant that our Jesuit partners can prioritise the health, nutrition and well-being of families in rural and poor villages in Timor-Leste. Our Jesuit partners run a small mobile health clinic and a nutrition program in mountainous villages, and Jesuit Social Service will soon open a permanent health clinic in Kasait, a 45-minute drive from Dili. We need your ongoing support to operate these clinics and provide much-needed medical care and health services to poor communities.

Education

Your generosity is helping to educate Timor-Leste's future generations. Our Jesuit Education Project has seen the opening of a secondary school that is home to 550 students across Years 7 to 11. In 2018, the school will celebrate its first graduating class of Year 12 students.

We are also finalising the construction of permanent premises for our Teacher's Training Institute in Kasait, to be co-located at the site of Colégio de Santo Inácio de Loiola (see the image at the top of the previous page). The Institute, currently in temporary premises, offers Bachelor and Diploma courses in teaching English, Portuguese, religion and mathematics.

With the help of supporters like you, we are also working to provide scholarships to help poor students with their tuition fees and education costs. The villages in the area are very poor and the needs are great, but once they are met the change will be deep-seated and long-lasting.

You can help the people of Timor-Leste overcome the obstacles created by its violent past.

Image above: Colegio Santo Inácio de Loiola student assembly, led by the Director, Fr Roberto M. Boholst SJ, at the school's new Multi-Purpose Hall. **Image below:** It costs \$15,000 to sponsor one complete water project. This will benefit 30 to 60 households, or 150 to 300 people immediately – and countless more men, women and children in the future.





You are crucial to our Jesuit missionaries' ability to go where the need is greatest.

Jesuit Mission stands in solidarity with marginalised and disadvantaged communities around the globe. We support our Jesuit missionaries and partners who work in over 10 countries, including in remote areas in Asia and Africa, where no one else is assisting.

When you donate to Jesuit Mission, you enable our partners and missionaries to be present on the frontiers, and empower communities to lead full and free lives.

Here are some examples of what your support can achieve in Timor-Leste:

\$35

can provide a meal for a whole rural community.

\$100

can help purchase pipelines to connect communities to a water tank.

\$150

can pay for a whole month's worth of vehicle repairs and maintenance for our life-saving Mobile Medical Clinic.

\$500

can pay for a week's worth of medicines for poor rural communities.

\$800

can purchase a computer for use by students at a Jesuit school.

\$1,382

can provide a one-year scholarship for one student to train at the Teacher Training Institute.

Please give generously before 30 June. **Thank you.**

Ron Dyer Centre,
Level 1, 42 Ridge Street, North Sydney NSW 2060
Tel: (02) 8918 4109
www.jesuitmission.org.au



Jesuit Mission
"in all things to love and to serve"