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## Newsletter – June 2015

Don't forget **Timor Time** on September 27<sup>th</sup>. A great opportunity to meet together, and support a great cause, plus enjoy a fine meal. [Read more or book a ticket...](#)

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### Give someone a fish...

Most people are aware that despite improvement in the last few years, nearly half of the Timorese population lives below the poverty line, in poor housing and without access to clean water and sanitation.

A recent programme designed to address many of these problems in Timor-Leste was undertaken. New prefabricated houses were built and delivered to hundreds of villages, as a way of attending to the needs of the elderly and disabled, female-headed households and veterans of the resistance to Indonesian occupation. This plan was part of massive attempts to rebuild the Timorese infrastructure after the devastation of 1999.



Unfortunately, the programme suffered from some basic problems. Imported rather than local materials were used, the communities were not engaged sufficiently in the decisions, and local workers and businesses needed to be involved to a greater extent. Despite facilities for solar energy, water and sanitation, most do not have access to a water source, so taps and toilets are unusable.

The house in the photograph, whilst made of tin and extremely basic, is not one of the houses described. This one was built by a young man for his family. It is lived in, and is a source of pride. Without a job, this man could not have built his house. He didn't want a handout; he wanted a job. He, his family and his house have the chance to move on to better things.

The advice in the old saying is valuable for all of us: "If you give people fish, they can eat for a day; teach them to fish and you feed them for a lifetime."

ATLAS is concerned to keep programs close to the people and to depend on their maximum participation and advice, for example, the water project at ICR in Lahane, Dili. Your support and interest will help us.

Link to <http://devpolicy.org/the-difficulties-of-development-in-timor-leste-20131127/>

[Read as an online post...](#)

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## Sewing for their lives



For some years a group of women have gathered together in Dili as “St Joseph’s Sewing Group”. Their aim is to develop their sewing and management skills to make their group self-supporting. As a small and independent enterprise, the group has the potential to generate finance to support their families. Some years ago the women received training from Australian volunteers and despite having never used sewing machines, quickly settled in to making articles for sale.

They began by making place mats, bags and serviettes and progressed to a range of garments. They work with the traditional cloth known as *tais*, but also produce items for daily use, mainly using cotton cloth. They have made hairbands, bandanas, shorts for boys, purses, table cloths, chair coverings, pillowcases and aprons, and they also do alterations. As their skills develop there are plans for them to make school uniforms.

The small and enthusiastic “St Joseph’s Sewing Group” is independent of ATLAS, but support for this venture is well within ATLAS’s aims: “to provide work skills and other assistance to enable recipients to set up a small self-sustaining business of their own.”

With your support, we can continue to assist these women to “make a go of it”.

[Read as an online post...](#)

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## Children needing care

Children who do not have their biological parents to care for them can find themselves in situations of serious threat, particularly in the developing world. These children are the most likely to be neglected, discriminated against, exploited and suffering from malnutrition. These orphans are also likely not to be enrolled in school. They are among the world's poorest, lacking that basic human right – the presence of parents.



Timor-Leste has changed dramatically.

Since Timor-Leste's independence a decade and a half ago, the situation of Timorese children has gradually improved. However, there are challenges still affecting children in Timor-Leste which would be unheard of in a country like Australia.

Children whose parents are dead or who cannot look after their children is an issue of concern. Almost a quarter of households had a situation where a child needed support for a variety of parental problems. Extended families have traditionally taken such children in, but abuse and exploitation can take place. Placing children in institutions is the exception rather than the rule in Timor-Leste, although there are scores of orphanages which provide care, indicating the size of the problem.

The Timorese Government is keen to strengthen policies and procedures which will assist children. It is legislating to put children at the core of policy development so that the children have all the opportunities they need for development. However, in a nation which has suffered so much devastation in recent decades there is a long way to go.

Your support of St Therese's Orphanage at Maubara gives some children a chance. Thank you.

[Read as an online post...](#)

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