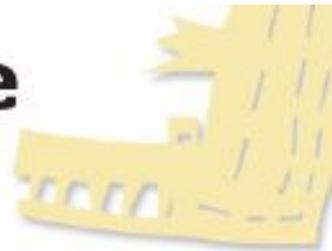




Australia Timor-Leste Advancement Society



Floods and COVID challenge Timorese society



A Dire Situation

Professor Michael Leach of Swinburne University [has written](#) about the recent floods in Timor-Leste. Deaths and displacement, alongside widespread damage to roads, bridges, and houses have caused major hardship. Australia has responded with \$7 million in aid, which will provide some assistance.

The flooding occurred around the same time as COVID outbreaks, delivering the Timorese government with major challenges in the areas of pandemic management and management of the relationships between rural and urban life. Planning for roads, drainage and telecommunications are at risk because of the severe disruptions arising from the situation. Political divisions add to the confusion and threat, and dealing with climate change is a growing concern.

Leach states: “The flooding hit at the worst possible time, with the need for people to shelter with family and friends overriding social distancing measures, and many already reliant on government support to get through the economic impact of the lockdown. An uptick in community transmissions has been evident in the wake of the floods, though many cases remain asymptomatic. With a median age of 18, Timor-Leste enjoys some communal advantages, but these demographic features do not protect the elderly and vulnerable groups.”

Floods and COVID are crises facing the Timorese people, and they also highlight political divisions, much as in Australia and elsewhere. A spirit of national unity, of people working together, is required.



Photos show scenes from Timor-Leste in the aftermath of the cyclone and floods.



Thanks to the generosity of ATLAS donors, we are supporting people in the Motael and Fatuhada areas who are receiving essential food supplies and practical assistance.

UPDATE FROM TIMOR-LESTE

by **LIBBY BLEAKLEY**

ATLAS is also pleased to be able to assist Libby Bleakley's fine initiative in Timor-Leste – the Timor Learning Centre.

Here is an update from Libby's recent report:

"There are now over 3,000 COVID cases in Timor-Leste, which is expected to rise due to the recent floods and the displacement of families. As Timor has been in lockdown since the beginning of March, the Centre's Gym and English school have been closed. Some women have been able to come to the Sewing Centre as they are seen as essential workers.

Libby's project has raised over \$10,000 for flood and COVID relief, enabling outreach to the local Don Bosco School and convent where there were over 800 displaced families. Essential articles have been provided to these people, such as food, clothes, face masks and personal hygiene items.

Many residents of flood damaged areas are having to re-build their houses and the Centre has been able to assist some. Although many people are receiving assistance there are still too many who are not. For example, university students who have come from the Districts into the capital of Dili to study mostly reside in guest houses. If they don't have part time jobs, their families in the Districts send them money to survive.

Due to the COVID lockdown they are not classed as displaced people and they are often unable to receive help. Some of these students are not able to travel home to the Districts and their families can't get to the bank to transfer money.

There are 192 students from the hardest hit areas being supported by the Centre. Each student has received a 20kg sack of rice, 2 litres of cooking oil, 200 kg of fresh greens and face masks.

Other people need assistance for food and essentials, and families require materials to fix their homes. The more money the Centre raises the more families and individuals will be assisted.

On behalf of the Timor Learning Centre staff, members and the people of Timor-Leste that need us more than ever right now – thank you – for all the donations and support.

Kind regards,

Libby Bleakley
Rotary Club of Blackheath"

Libby is pushing the sale of black barista aprons that the sewing women have made. She has 1,000 of them stored in her garage and would like to sell them off for \$10 each. Some of the money would go to the Centre and some for assisting in rebuilding and fixing the members and neighbours' homes affected by flood.

*If you are able to help sell these aprons or would like to purchase some - please contact Libby via email. **Please contact her directly – do not contact ATLAS.***

Email Libby at bleakley@live.com

FUNDRAISING

Recently, Rayella Haines had a successful fundraiser at Our Lady of the Rosary Church St Marys.

Despite the church building undergoing extensive roof repairs, and the congregation having to use other buildings, Fr Brendan Murphy once again supported Rayella's efforts.

Beautiful handmade items were snapped up and made the handsome profit of over \$1,000.00. The money will be used to support young people in Timor-Leste.

Well done again, Rayella!

**Lock in the date for our
 Timor Time 2021 luncheon!**

**COVID permitting, this is scheduled
 for Saturday, October 16,
 at Dooleys Regents Park Club.**

COVID and Floods in Timor-Leste

Up until very recently, the COVID-19 news from Timor-Leste was rather encouraging, as few cases were reported and people responded to social distancing and mask-wearing well.

Churches had been closed, but parishes were ensuring that people had enough food. The parish of Motael is assisting 500 families.

Then the situation deteriorated as a number of people entered Timor from Indonesia. The border between west and east Timor is porous, with few checkpoints. Cases of COVID infections in Timor-Leste has grown to hundreds. Indonesia proper has recorded over a million cases and tens of thousands of deaths. There is concern that the movement of people may cause the virus to spread, thus threatening the Timorese people and their poorly equipped healthcare system.

The Commonwealth government has included Timor-Leste in its plan to assist Pacific nations through the crisis and has sent humanitarian supplies.

The Council of Ministers has approved a national vaccination plan, and doses of vaccines are entering the country but it is not clear whether adequate coverage of the population of 1.2 million people will be achieved.

Dear Valued Supporter,

You would have seen the devastation wreaked by the recent flooding in Timor-Leste. **Lives have been lost and there has been a large amount of property damage.** The impact has been exacerbated by a lengthy COVID-19 lockdown in the country. In addition, the Timor-Leste's government response to these crises has been somewhat hampered by current political instability.

ATLAS has received several requests for help to assist our delivery partners in Timor-Leste to help clean up the damage, rebuild and replace damaged buildings, furniture and equipment.

To do this, **we need your help.** Financial support means that schools will be able to reopen, businesses can start to function again, and men, women and children will be able to regain their self-sufficiency faster. Australia owes a large debt for the support the people of Timor-Leste provided to Australia in World War II.

Can you help repay that debt? If you can, please contribute at:
<https://www.atlaseasttimor.com.au/2021-floods-can-you-help-timor-leste/>

Thank you for your generous support.

Gerald Kenneally
 Chairman: ATLAS

Devastation and re-building



Signs of growth and re-building



A Word from Timor-Leste

Sister Clare of the Sisters of Paul de Chartres at Kuluhun in Dili, writes that people are suffering, especially the poor who are depending on selling vegetables and fruit.

Workers are being laid off, and restaurants are closed. Many people do not have jobs now. In the jails, the prisoners were tested and many were found to be positive, and so too were the guards.

The flooding destroyed so much. People are slowly going back to their places but still many are living in make-shift shelters.

The government is concentrating on vaccinating everyone. The Sinovac from China has arrived and the percentage of vaccinated persons has not yet reached the 60% or 70% required to make the country safe from the pandemic. The Sisters are continuously giving food out to members of staff badly affected by the situation. They cannot travel freely to the districts, such as to Turiscai to help Sisters and people they know there.

The Sisters ask God's blessing on all ATLAS donors, grateful for the generous assistance of Australian friends.

The Slow Climb to Education

When the Timorese people voted overwhelmingly for independence from Indonesia the United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor (UNTAET) administered the territory for three years until May 2002. Its task was immense: to work with the people to pave the way for a new government, and its systems and structures, to begin the development of social services, and to continue humanitarian assistance the huge scale necessary.

The new nation of Timor-Leste faced singular challenges, including a population traumatised by recent wholesale violence, the presence of people returning from forced displacement, and the repair of much of the public infrastructure.

In particular, the education system was in tatters. Whilst there were enough East Timorese primary teachers to staff schools at that time, most of the Indonesian secondary teachers had returned to Indonesia, the education buildings having been destroyed. There was dire need for teachers, textbooks, classrooms and furniture. There were no forms. Can you imagine an education department without any forms? Even worse there were no records. All had been destroyed.

Timorese relationships with Portugal, Indonesia and English-speaking countries formed challenges to language learning that affected decision-making, and was the cause of the expenditure of much valuable time, effort and finance.



REBUILDING THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN EAST TIMOR DURING UNTAET INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION AND TIMORESE AGENCY

Trina Supit



Dr Trina Supit has written a comprehensive history of the Timorese education system during the UNTAET years, entitled *Rebuilding the Education Sector in East Timor during UNTAET: International Collaboration and Timorese Agency*. It describes the Timorese context which evolved from its Portuguese colonisation and then traces the educational policies arising from both Portuguese and international influences. The importance of teachers in the fledgling nation is made clear, as are the difficulties faced by all regarding language politics.

This is a masterful work. It is a rich resource for anyone interested in the challenges faced by the Timorese people as they rose from the ashes to become the first new nation of the

21st century. Congratulations to Trina Supit for providing this excellent book. It is available from [Routledge](http://Routledge.com).

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