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Magazine

February 2026 Edition 231

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Photo: Vise PM no Ministru Koordinator Ekonomia no Ministru Turizmu no Ambiente



President of the Republic, J. Ramos-Horta, alongside Vice-Prime Minister Francisco Kalbuadi Lay and members of the diplomatic corps, cut the banner to mark the official opening of the Doulos Hope ship, also known as "The Floating Book Fair", during its recent visit to Dili. (See inside for more details.)

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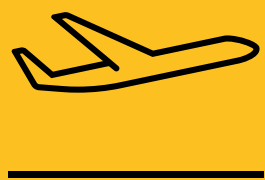
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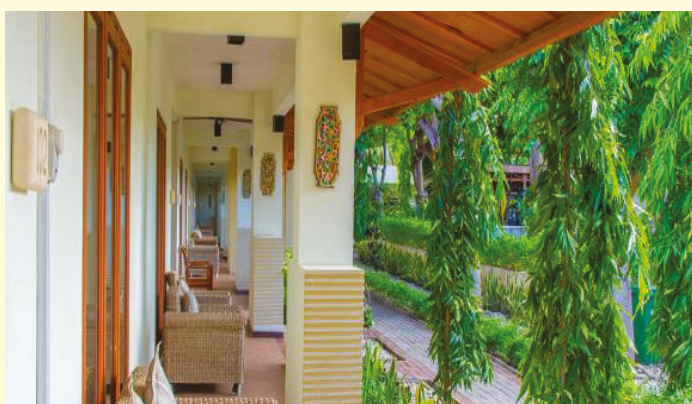
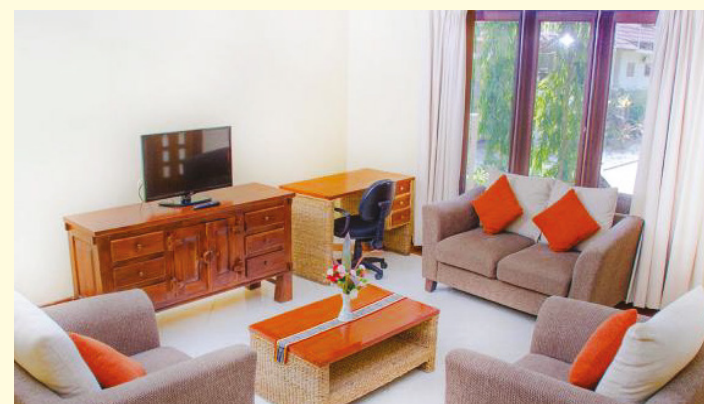
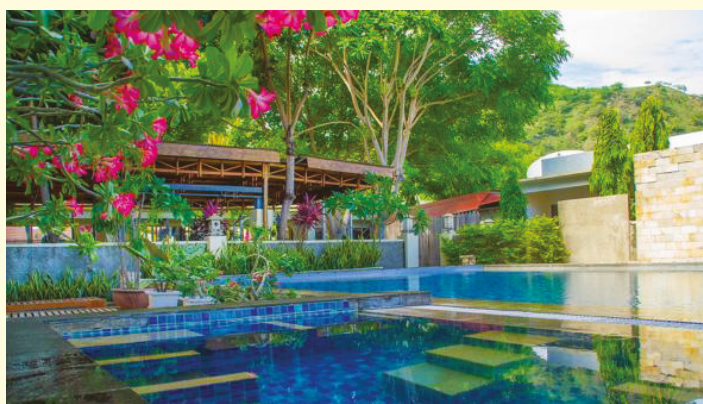


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Doulos Hope 'Floating Book Fair' Arrives in Dili

In January 2026, Dili welcomed a very special visitor with the arrival of the ship *Doulos Hope*.

Sailing in from Port Klang, Malaysia, the ship spent almost two weeks alongside at Dili Port, turning the harbour into a hub of books, colour, and international visitors. The official opening was marked by a ceremony attended by the President of the Republic, J. Ramos-Horta, Vice-Prime Minister Francisco Kalbuadi Lay, and members of the diplomatic corps.

During its stay, *Doulos Hope* opened its gangways to the public, inviting visitors on board for an international floating book fair. After departing Dili, the ship continued its journey to its next official port of call, Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea, arriving on 5 February.

This was not the first time a floating book fair has visited Timor-Leste. The now-retired *MV Doulos* made a memorable visit to Dili back in 2008, and many readers still remember it fondly.

About Doulos Hope and the Mission Behind the Ship

Doulos Hope is part floating library, part bookstore, and part cultural exchange. The ship offers more than 5,000 book titles, ranging from children's books and educational materials to general interest and Christian-inspired works, with a strong focus on encouraging reading among young people.

Originally built in Germany in 1991, the vessel has had several lives at sea. It was formally handed over to GBA Ships in 2022, underwent a major refurbishment, and entered service as *Doulos Hope* in May 2023.

Along with her sister ship, *Logos Hope*, *Doulos Hope* is known as one of the world's largest floating book fairs. Each ship typically stays in port for around two weeks and welcomes thousands of visitors every day. On average, more than one million people visit one of the ships each year.

On board, visitors are greeted by around 100 international volunteers from more than 35 countries. Beyond books, the project promotes cultural exchange, friendship, and connection between the crew and local communities wherever the ship docks.



Credits: Presidência da República Democrática de Timor-Leste, Vice PM no Ministru Koordinator Ekonomia no Ministru Turizmu no Ambiente, Administração dos Portos de Timor-Leste - Aportil, I.P., & Doulos Hope (Dili)



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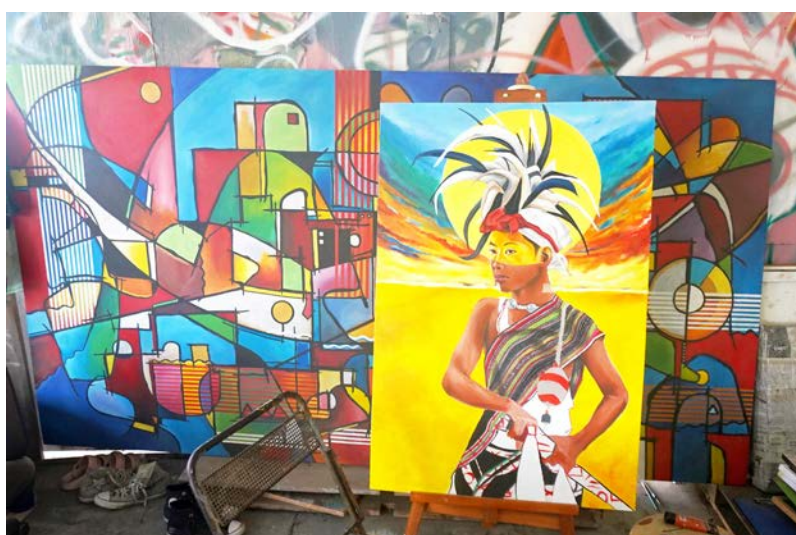
Dili Sights of Interest by Jonty Crane

As you go about your daily routine in Dili, it's easy to overlook some of the city's most intriguing spots. Here's another hidden gem worth a closer look.

Arte Moris

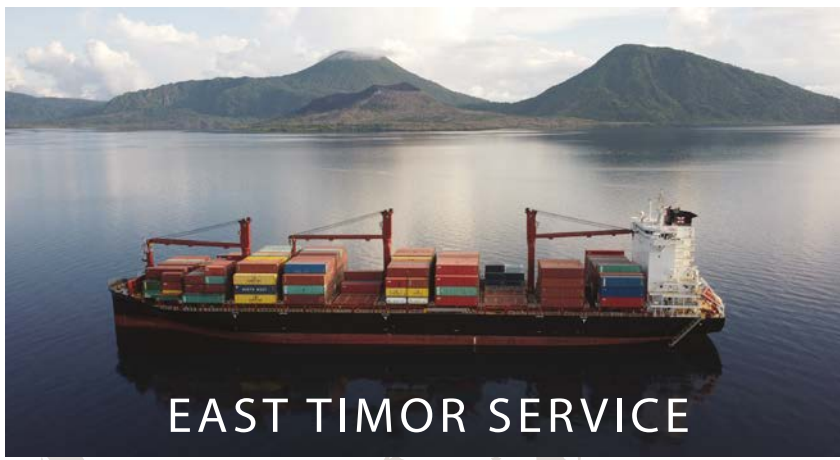
The first Fine Arts school, cultural centre and artists' association in Timor-Leste, established in 2003. It gained an international reputation for its varied, and often surreal, art incorporating Timorese culture and motifs. In December 2021, it was controversially evicted from its home in the former National Museum in Comoro, which had been promised by the then

government to the veterans. Thankfully, it found a new home in the former air traffic control tower of the original Dili airport, located to the south of Nicolau Lobato Presidential Palace. It isn't easy to find, but the Google Maps location is correct, enter through the gates by the stormwater channel and turn right. *Public Transport: Microlet #3 or #10 and a short walk.*



About the author:

Jonty has published a number of books on Timor-Leste, which can be bought in Dili or online from Amazon, has recorded an **Exploring Timor-Leste** podcast series, developed the website www.exploringtimor.com, and has many videos promoting Timor-Leste on YouTube (@ExploringTimorLeste) and TikTok (@exploringtimor).



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Australia's TOMAK Timor-Leste program is partnering with supermarkets to encourage shoppers to buy local produce through the **#HadomiLokalTimorLeste** campaign.

When you choose local, you are choosing more than great taste and freshness – you are supporting Timorese farmers, families, and livelihoods, and helping build a stronger local economy.

You can easily spot fresh local produce at participating supermarkets such as Leader Hypermarket, Lita, Mei Mart Timor Plaza, Centro Supermercado, Centro Fresco Mart & Qulina Supermarket.

Next time you visit the supermarket, keep an eye out for our **#HadomiLokalTimorLeste** signs, stickers and displays, and fill your basket with fresh, healthy produce grown right here in Timor-Leste.

Credit: Australian Embassy, Timor-Leste



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YEAR OF THE FIRE HORSE

Beyond the Bintang: Why Timor-Leste Feels Like the Perfect Escape from Over-Tourism

By Maun Jeremiah

Every December the big travel magazines and sites roll out their “Hot Lists” and “Best Of” roundups. For years many have hinted that Timor-Leste might be the next big thing. Well, 2026 is the year it actually happened—CNN named us one of the world’s best destinations to visit, spotlighting that rare mix of raw adventure and slowly emerging polish we’ve got going on.

For those of us who actually live and breathe Dili every day, it feels like a well-earned pat on the back. Travelers these days are just... tired. Tired of “destination fatigue,” tired of places that feel like they’ve been Disney-fied—where “authentic” cultural dances happen on a strict timetable between the lunch buffet and the souvenir shop. What people really crave now is something closer to the Bali of the 1980s: a spot where culture is still being lived, not performed for tourists.



The Luxury of Being Genuinely Different

That’s exactly what Timor-Leste offers right now—a kind of time machine you can actually visit. While so many places have swapped their soul for the same global chain stores and cookie-cutter vibes, Dili has stayed refreshingly itself. We might be one of the last capitals in the region where you can stroll the waterfront without spotting a single Starbucks or McDonald’s.

Forget your generic over-roasted latte from Starbucks. Here you get the deep, earthy kick of real organic Timorese mountain coffee. And instead of another imported lager that tastes the same everywhere, there’s Bintang brewed right here in Timor-Leste—crisp, cold, and full of local pride. There’s something special about cracking one open as the sun dips behind Atauro Island, knowing this exact sunset-and-beer combo can’t be copied in a Bangkok mall or Singapore rooftop bar.

Construction Chaos, But the Good Kind

Let’s be honest: Dili still looks like a city very much under construction—and in the most hopeful way. Interesting street markets and new street food shops pop up every evening along the main roads. Unique new restaurants and cafés seem to appear every month. At the same time the government’s ripping things up to widen streets and sort out drainage. It’s messy, dusty, loud... yeah, chaotic.

But change is happening fast. The “accommodation desert” we used to joke about? It’s over. Places like the Palm Springs Hotel and JL World have opened recently, bringing proper higher-end options that can stand up to what you’d find in neighboring countries. Throw in Starlink and the rollout of 5G, and suddenly the digital gap is closing quicker than anyone expected. You can legitimately run a global hedge fund (or just doomscroll Facebook) from a plastic chair on the beach while the smell of fresh ikan bakar—grilled fish—drifts over from a street stall nearby.

Charm That Actually Sticks

Even with the hotel and tech upgrades, the tourism experience still has to improvise to “make things work”. Take the road out to the Marobo hot springs—legendarily rough. Our local drivers treat vertical landslides like they’re just Sunday drives. By the time you finally sink into those warm, sulfuric waters, it feels like you’ve earned every second of it. Would it be nice if the road was perfectly paved? Sure. But would the soak feel half as rewarding? Probably not—and you’d have way fewer epic stories to tell at the next dinner party.

Then there’s the classic Mikrolet ride. If you’ve never squeezed into one of those vans with fifteen or twenty other people (in a vehicle built for eight), blasting 120-decibel pop music while mixtures of smells swirl around you... well, consider it a rite of passage. Twenty-five cents for the most unforgettable public transport experience of your life.



How We Protect What Makes Us Special

Now that the world’s starting to notice us, we can’t just keep doing “accidental tourism.” We need to get strategic about hospitality while keeping the things that make Timor-Leste feel un-franchised and real:

- 1. Protect the street-food magic** — As the city keeps “unbuilding” and rebuilding, urban planning should embrace the pop-up vendors instead of pushing them away. Let’s create proper “Market-Gastro-Zones” with good waste management so the chaos stays charming, not messy.
- 2. Fix the last-mile transport** — We’ve got great hotels and fast internet now, but getting around still feels disjointed. A local super-app that combines taxi hailing with real-time Mikrolet info would be a game-changer for visitors.
- 3. Build bridges between luxury and local** — High-end spots like JL World and Palm Springs can serve as perfect hubs, linking fancy stays with vetted, adventurous trips into the rural interior so the “CNN bump” actually spreads benefits across the whole country.

Timor-Leste isn’t a shiny, fully-polished resort destination yet—and honestly, that’s precisely why people are excited about it. The world is looking for real adventure again, and we’ve got it in spades. Let’s make sure when they arrive, we deliver the raw, unforgettable experience they’re chasing... backed by just enough professionalism so they feel taken care of.

Here’s to 2026 being the year Timor-Leste shows the world what authentic really means.

About the Author:

Maun Jeremiah is the Chairman of HOTL Association and CEO of Island Explorer Holidays.

Fun with ChatGPT

Me:

Write a short, amusing article about life in Timor-Leste.

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“The Mystery of the Permanently Open Shop”

There is a small kiosk on every street in Timor-Leste that appears to be open at all times. Not just during business hours — but always. Early morning. Late night. Lunchtime. Rain. Power cut. National holiday. Somehow, it is open.

Except when it isn't.

This is the mystery of the permanently open shop. You can walk past it ten times a day and it looks closed. The shutters are down. No lights are on. No sign of life. But the moment you pause — the very second you hesitate — the owner appears. From nowhere. Like they were waiting behind the wall just for you.

Sometimes the shop is technically closed, but available. The door might be half shut. The counter empty. Yet if you ask quietly, “Ibu, buka?” the answer is almost always yes. The transaction happens through a small gap. No rush. No inconvenience. You have not disturbed anything important. This was always part of the plan.

Opening hours are flexible, but knowledge is not. Shop owners know exactly where everything is, even in total darkness. They can locate one specific brand of cigarettes, one sachet of coffee, and the last cold bottle of water without hesitation. They also remember who owes what — down to the cent — sometimes from months ago.

These shops are more than shops. They are information centres. Community noticeboards. Safe places for children with small coins and big decisions. They sell essentials, gossip, advice, and sometimes credit — quietly, without paperwork.

And when the shop is truly closed? You know. The silence is different. No hesitation will summon anyone. No knocking will help. This closure is absolute and must be respected.

But most of the time, the shop is open. Watching. Ready. Patient. Waiting for you to need exactly one thing.

You didn't plan to stop — but somehow, it knew you were coming.

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Funny Holidays in February

- **1st February – Change Your Password Day** – The annual tradition of adding an exclamation mark and hoping for the best.
- **3rd February – Carrot Cake Day** – Proof that vegetables can still count as dessert.
- **28th February – Tooth Fairy Day** – Celebrating the strange tradition of swapping teeth for money.

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the February 2026 edition of Guide Post

This month's edition brings together a thoughtful mix of stories that reflect both local activity and international connection.

We begin with a report on the recent visit of the *Doulos Hope* ship, also known as the Floating Book Fair, which drew crowds to Dili Port with its onboard library and international crew.

Next, we share an insightful article by Maun Jeremiah, offering a forward-thinking perspective on tourism development in Timor-Leste — a must-read for those interested in the country's future as a travel destination.

Just after we went to press last month, we received the sad news of the passing of Pat Walsh, a long-time friend of Timor-Leste and a tireless advocate for justice and human rights. We are honoured to include a touching obituary written by the Diplomacy Training Program, reflecting on his remarkable contributions.

You'll also find a collection of stories from people who have come to Timor-Leste to volunteer, each offering a personal look at why they came and what they've learned.

Finally, for those planning ahead, we have included the official 2026 public holiday list issued by the government. Feel free to cut it out and stick it on your wall.

As always, this issue includes engaging features, practical advice, and puzzles to keep you thinking. Whether you are a long-time resident or new to Timor-Leste, we hope you will find something here to inform, inspire, or simply enjoy.

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Until next month.

Cheers!

Dan Conroy

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Clocks; parts and fittings for watches; wristwatches; electronic clocks and watches; bracelets (jewelry); watchbands; control clocks [master clocks].

Providing technology information in the field of Internet of Things (IoT) and application programming interface (API) software and software as a service (SaaS) services, and platform as a service (PaaS) services; software as a service (SAAS) services; computer software development; computer software design; updating of computer software; computer software research; maintenance of computer software; computer system design; computer system analysis; computer programming; development of computer programs; development of data processing programs; providing information in the fields of software design and development and installation and maintenance of software; computer hardware development; computer hardware design; computer security services, namely, enforcing, restricting and controlling access privileges of users of computing resources for cloud, mobile or network resources based on assigned credentials; providing on-line non-downloadable software for viewing, recording, storing, sharing and analyzing audio or video, transmitting images and videos to remote locations; electronic monitoring of a location, home or office using computers and sensors; monitoring security system to ensure proper functioning; platform as a service (PAAS) featuring computer software platforms for home or environment monitoring and remote control or access of HVAC systems, energy management systems, burglar, trouble, security and/or fire alarms, lighting systems, door locking systems, video cameras; design and development of home automation systems and home security systems; design and development of software for integration of home automation and home security products and systems; installation, maintenance and repair of home automation and home security products in the nature of home automation and home security software; design and development of automated home controller systems, namely, temperature, humidity, and electrical controllers; monitoring of computer systems by remote access to ensure proper functioning; computer services, namely, acting as an application service provider in the field of knowledge management to host computer application software for the purpose of monitoring security and home automation systems, and for use in remote video access of security systems; computer services, namely, cloud hosting provider services; computer services, namely, integration of computer software into multiple systems and networks; computer services, namely, providing cloud management servers to others; computer programming services for location monitoring, wireless communication, and remote interaction with devices or appliances.

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EMPLOYMENT MATTERS!

Edition #64 - Social Security - Part 2

These are **Employment Matters**, which matter to all of us!

As we deepen our understanding of Timor-Leste's Social Security system, it is equally important to explore how workers can access the benefits they are entitled to.

Social Security rights only become meaningful when workers can successfully claim them, particularly during life events that interrupt income, such as childbirth, adoption, pregnancy complications, or clinical risks. Knowing how to navigate the claims process strengthens workers' protection, supports employer compliance, and ensures families receive essential assistance when they need it most



Timor-Leste's Social Security regime provides a comprehensive set of parental benefits designed to replace income when workers temporarily leave employment due to parenting-related reasons. These benefits, such as Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Clinical Risk During Pregnancy, and Pregnancy Interruption, are available exclusively to contributors of the general contributory regime who meet the access conditions. Although each benefit has its own purpose, the overall claim process follows a consistent pathway: the worker prepares the required documents, the employer provides supporting information, the employee submits the claim, and Seguranga Social verifies eligibility before processing payments.

Maternity, Paternity, and Adoption Benefit

How to claim? - Applicant must:

- Complete and submit the relevant Subsidy Application Form (Maternity, Paternity, or Adoption).
- Attach the child's Birth Certificate issued by the civil registry.
- Provide an Adoption Certificate (for adoption claims only).
- If the Birth Certificate is unavailable, submit the child's health book (LISIO) showing the birth date and parents' names (maternity and paternity claims only).
- Include an employer statement specifying the first day of leave, the total number of leave days, and any days paid during this period.
- Attach proof of contributions abroad if applicable.
- Submit the claim within 6 months from the start of the leave period.

Who can claim?

- The beneficiary/holder.
- The beneficiary's legal representative.
- For maternity: the spouse may claim if the mother dies within two weeks of childbirth, provided the death certificate is included.

How and where to claim?

- In person at Social Security Centres in Dili, municipalities, or RAEOA.
- At Timor-Leste's Embassies or Consulates abroad.
- By email to seguranca.socialtl@gmail.com with signed forms and scanned attachments.

Leave period:

For workers covered by the Labour Law

- Maternity & Adoption: Minimum 12 weeks (84 calendar days), with at least 10 days after birth; Social Security pays up to 90 days.
- Paternity: 5 working days following childbirth.

For workers covered by the Civil Service Statute

- Maternity: 65 working days (including 40 after birth).
- Adoption: 65 working days.
- Paternity: 3 working days.

Pregnancy Interruption Benefit and Clinical Risk Benefit During Pregnancy

How to claim? - Applicants must:

- Complete the relevant application form (pregnancy interruption or clinical risk).
- Provide medical certification confirming the clinical condition and the period of work incapacity.
- Include an employer statement detailing the leave start date, number of days, and payment status.
- Attach proof of foreign contributions if relevant.

Who can claim?

- The beneficiary/holder.
- The legal representative of the beneficiary.

How and where to claim?

- The same submission channels apply as for other parental benefits: Social Security Centres, Embassies/Consulates, or email.

Leave period:

- Clinical Risk Benefit: Granted for the medically required duration to prevent risk to the pregnant worker.
- Pregnancy Interruption Benefit: Paid for 4 weeks (28 days) and must be submitted with the appropriate leave form.

Understanding how parental benefit claims work ensures that workers in Timor-Leste can effectively access the financial protection they are entitled to, reinforcing both social welfare and economic security during critical moments of family life.

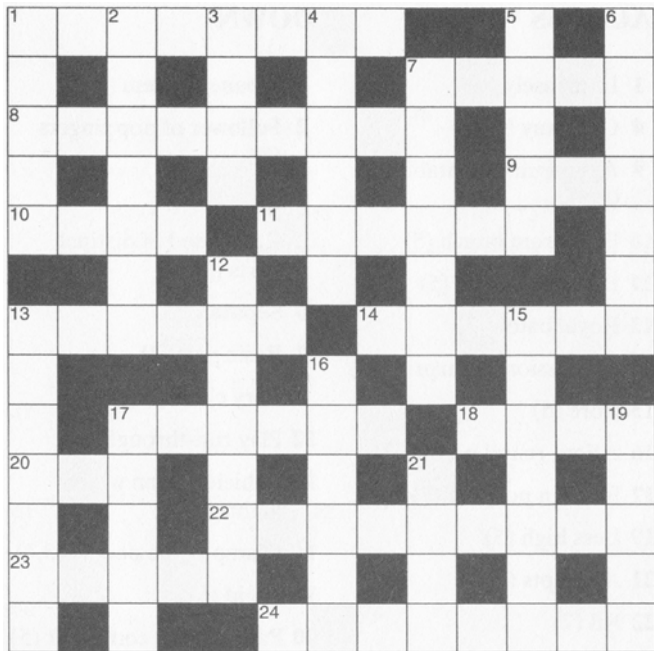
Note: This structure aligns with the official outline of parental benefit categories and claiming mechanisms published by Instituto Nacional de Seguranga Social.

For any questions, please email us at info@konnekto.com with any questions. Your inquiries inspire us to create fresh and informative content!



QUICK CROSSWORD

Solution on page 20



Across:

1. American game (8)
7. Semiconductor device (5)
8. Mountainside fall (9)
9. High mountain (3)
10. Caress with the lips (4)
11. Signal receiver (6)
13. Make a journey (6)
14. New recruits (6)
17. Protein in milk (6)
18. Act as informer (4)
20. Anger (3)
22. Painting of flowers, etc (5,4)
23. Praise highly (5)
24. Distress (someone) (8)

Down:

1. Vacant space (5)
2. Welsh city (7)
3. Reveal secrets (4)
4. Simple plant (6)
5. Pinkish-red colour (5)
6. Feel contempt for (7)
7. Openly resistant (7)
12. Obstinate continue (7)
13. One being taught a job (7)
15. Oily liquid used in the manufacture of dyes/drugs (7)
16. In poor health (6)
17. Tall conifer (5)
19. Diving bird (5)
21. Relating to wings (4)

QUICK CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

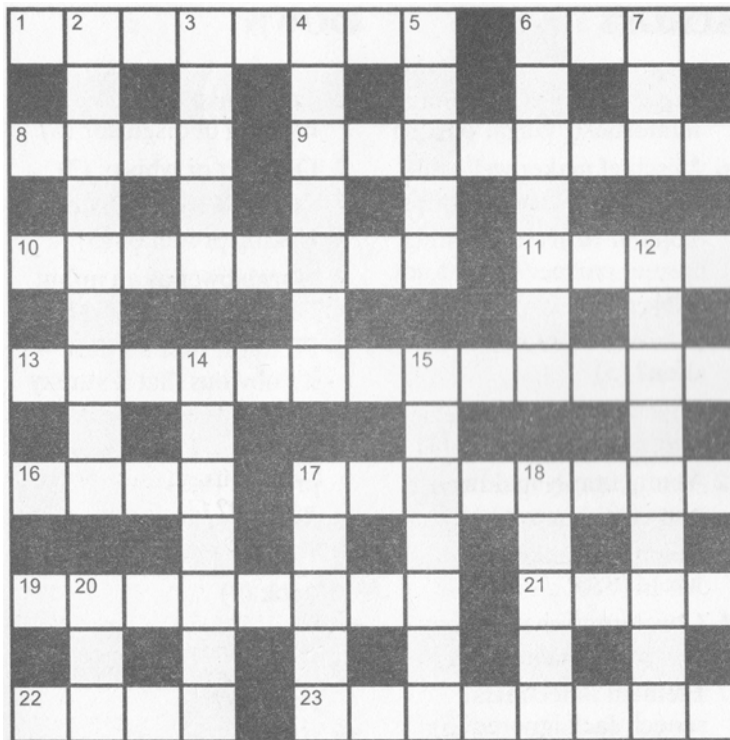
Solution on page 20

Across:

1. Expression of masculinity — dreadful scam, IMHO (8)
6. UK seaway with one-third reduction in fish (4)
8. Observe maximum returns (4)
9. Escaping no *Hamlet* broadcast (2,3,3)
10. Small-town resident gets endless dreadful beer (8)
11. Point, indicating second stop on pub crawl? (4)
13. Ace menu option, designed for a fairy tale start? (4,4,1,4)
16. Tax: it's not involved in light-heartedness (4)
17. Dangerous blaze: vehicle with lease taken round front of farm (8)
19. Confrontation of French by groom-to-be (8)
21. Artist abandoning chasm to depict plant (4)
22. Congregation's response put right without end (4)
23. Channel's latest repeat exhibiting culture? (8)

Down:

2. Device in Palace redesigned to restrict parking (9)
3. Holiday location turning up in epistle to home (5)
4. Energy required to hold high note, just for a while (4-3)
5. River creature's more than enough on English river (5)
6. Drink's fixed, incorporating mint? (7)
7. Meadow mostly unproductive (3)
12. Artist using eye movement to mark conclusion of portrait (9)
14. Easily moved by name of delightful spot (7)
15. Developing article that's picked up trail (7)
17. Prohibit a line in stock (5)
18. Illness Father catches the day before (5)
20. Spy, upset, dumping nothing in tree (3)



Crossword Notes:

'THE TIMES' QUIZ

Solution on page 20

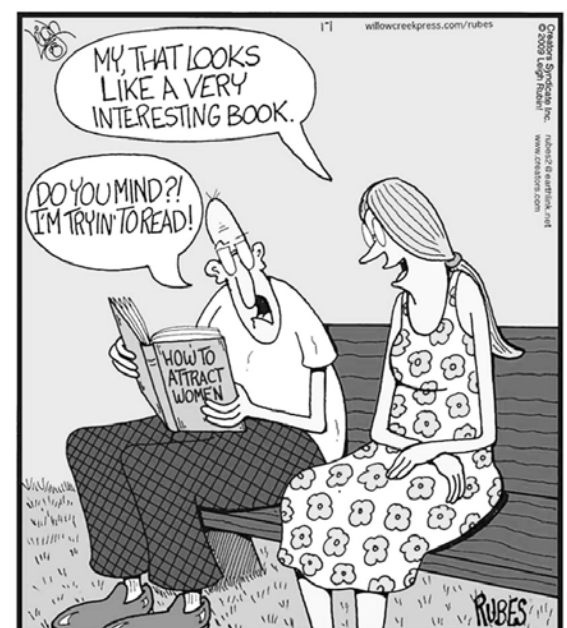
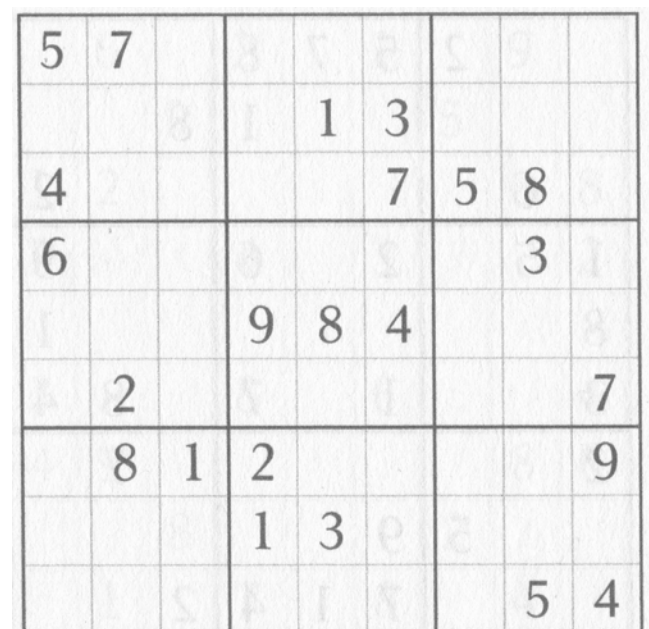
General Knowledge

1. Which US filmmaker directed the TV pilot episodes of *Boardwalk Empire* and *Vinyl*?
2. What type of elite service is Gray & Farrar?
3. In France, the term 'un nègre' is used to describe which literary role?
4. Which disaster site's clean-up operation involved around 830,000 "liquidators"?
5. Dibatag, gerenuk, chinkara, puku and lechwe are species of what?
6. What is the most abundant mineral in Earth's continental crust?
7. In 1826, which elite infantry corps was forcibly disbanded by Sultan Mahmud II in the Auspicious Incident?
8. Jim Backus voiced which nearsighted cartoon character with the first name Quincy?
9. Gifts made of what material are given on a 15th wedding anniversary?
10. Which author took off in a P38 plane from Corsica on July 31, 1944, and vanished?
11. Which British heavy metal band released the 1980 single *Breaking the Law*?
12. In 1994, Tom Ford became creative director of which Italian fashion group?
13. Which element, the final member of the actinide series, is named after the inventor of the cyclotron?
14. Who painted *The Shrimp Girl* (c.1740-45) and *David Garrick as Richard III* (1745)?
15. In 1916, Berlin, Ontario was renamed after which British Army officer?
16. In which US state is the historic site Cahokia Mounds?
17. Which Uddingston, Lanarkshire-based biscuit maker is famed for its Teacakes and Caramel Wafer?
18. In which type of fencing is the entire body a valid target?
19. Which Great Britain competitor won 2014 Winter Olympic gold in the women's skeleton bob?
20. Name the pictured NASA rover —



THE TIMES SUDOKU

Solution on page 20



Victor is not what you would call a quick study.

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Oceanview Beach Hotel	7723 6041
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Lucky Cake House	332 2536

Lucky Cake House
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Guide Post Magazine

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27R



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Press Release

National holidays in 2026

The public holidays with a fixed date and variable date for 2026, determined by the Law n.10/2005 of 10th of August, are:

- a) 1st of January – New Year's Day (fixed date public holiday)
- b) 3rd of March – Veterans Day (fixed date public holiday)
- c) 20th of March – Idul Fitri (variable date public holiday)
- d) 3rd of April – Holy Friday (variable date public holiday)
- e) 1st of May – World Labour Day (fixed date public holiday)
- f) 20th of May – Restoration of Independence Day (fixed date public holiday)
- g) 27th of May – Idul Adha (variable date public holiday)
- h) 4th of June – Corpus Christi (variable date public holiday)
- j) 30th of August – Popular Consultation Day (fixed date public holiday)
- j) 1st of November – All Saints Day (fixed date public holiday)
- k) 2nd of November – All Souls Day (fixed date public holiday)
- l) 3rd of November – National Women's Day (fixed date public holiday)
- m) 12th of November – National Youth Day (fixed date public holiday)
- n) 28th of November – Proclamation of Independence Day (fixed date public holiday)
- o) 7th of December – Memorial Day (fixed date public holiday)
- p) 8th of December – Day of Our Lady of Immaculate Conception and Timor-Leste Patroness (fixed date public holiday)
- q) 25th of December – Christmas Day (fixed date public holiday)
- r) 31st of December – National Heroes Day (fixed date public holiday)

The Law n. 10/2005, of 10th of August, determines national public holidays, official commemorative dates and the granting of days-off, and has been amended by Law n. 3/2016, of 25th of May and by Law n.º 10/2023, of 5th of April, to recognise key historical dates of the Timorese Struggle for National Liberation and for the recognition of the role of women in Timorese society. **ENDS**



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Inclusion is Not Optional: Lessons from People with Disabilities in Timor-Leste

Author: Lucas Obe

Editor: Aderito do Rosario da Cunha Mambares

Timor-Leste has taken important steps to advance the rights of people with disabilities. By ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2022 and adopting the National Disability Action Plan (DNAP) 2021–2030, the government signalled a clear shift away from welfare-based approaches towards rights, dignity, and equality.

These commitments matter. Yet for many people with disabilities, everyday life continues to be shaped by barriers—limited access to public services, inaccessible infrastructure, and exclusion from decisions that affect their lives. While inclusion is present in policy frameworks, it is not yet consistently felt in practice.

Drawing on Oxfam’s work with organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and evidence from the Open the Books initiative, this essay highlights a critical lesson for Timor-Leste and the wider Asia-Pacific region: disability inclusion only becomes real when power is shared, and governance systems are held accountable.

On paper, Timor-Leste’s disability rights framework is strong. In reality, progress remains uneven. Many public buildings do not meet accessibility standards. Disability-disaggregated data is limited, making it difficult to design inclusive policies or measure impact. Monitoring of government commitments varies across institutions, weakening accountability. Despite national development narratives that promise to “leave no one behind,” many people with disabilities remain excluded from meaningful participation in public life.

This gap is not simply the result of weak political will. It reflects how disability inclusion is often treated as an additional or sector-specific concern, rather than embedded within the core systems of governance, such as planning, budgeting, coordination, and oversight. When inclusion is not built into these systems, it becomes fragmented, inconsistent, and vulnerable to changing priorities.

Structural barriers continue to slow the implementation of DNAP. Responsibilities for disability inclusion are spread across multiple ministries, yet coordination remains weak and enforcement mechanisms limited. Dedicated and traceable budgets for disability inclusion are rare, leaving commitments under-resourced and difficult to sustain. Inaccessible infrastructure and limited data further undermine evidence-based planning, while inconsistent reporting and follow-up reduce transparency and public trust.

These challenges are not unique to Timor-Leste. Across the Asia-Pacific region, many countries have adopted progressive disability rights frameworks yet struggle to translate them into meaningful change. The lesson is clear: policy commitments alone are not enough.

Despite these constraints, organisations of persons with disabilities in Timor-Leste—such as ADTL, RHTO, and KDTL—are increasingly shaping national policy dialogue, monitoring government commitments, and contributing to UNCRPD shadow reporting. Their growing visibility reflects the principle of “Nothing About Us Without Us” moving from rhetoric towards practice.

Initiatives such as the Disability Ambassador Program, which places persons with disabilities within government institutions, demonstrate how participation can move beyond consultation towards influence. However, participation is only meaningful when OPDs are supported with adequate resources, technical capacity, and formal recognition as equal partners. Without these conditions, engagement risks remain symbolic rather than transformative.

Oxfam’s experience shows that disability inclusion becomes tangible when it is embedded in public budgeting and accountability processes. Through the Open the Books initiative, Oxfam works with OPDs, civil society, and government institutions to strengthen transparency, participation, and oversight in how public resources are allocated and monitored. Budget analysis, parliamentary submissions, public dialogue, and capacity strengthening on disability-inclusive budgeting all contribute to making governance more responsive to lived realities.

Evidence from this work shows that when people with disabilities engage meaningfully in budgeting and oversight, policies become more relevant, services improve, and institutions are more accountable. Inclusive budgeting is not only possible, but it also strengthens governance outcomes.

Achieving disability-inclusive governance requires collective responsibility. Governments must allocate adequate resources, enforce accessibility standards, and strengthen accountability mechanisms. Organisations of people with disabilities must be recognised and supported as equal partners in planning, budgeting, implementation, and evaluation. Donors and development partners need to prioritise long-term system change and local leadership over short-term, project-based interventions. Civil society and citizens also play a vital role in amplifying disability rights and holding power to account.

Timor-Leste has laid an important foundation for disability rights. The challenge now is to turn commitments into everyday practice. Evidence from Oxfam’s work shows that when people with disabilities are meaningfully engaged in governance, inclusion becomes measurable, achievable, and impactful.

Disability inclusion is not a favour and not an optional extra. It is a right—and a measure of just and inclusive governance. In Timor-Leste, and across the Asia-Pacific region, inclusion is not optional. It is a legal obligation and a democratic imperative.

Source: <https://en.tatoli.tl/2026/01/12/inclusion-is-not-optional-lessons-from-people-with-disabilities-in-timor-leste/16/>

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Ken's Two Centavos

Ken calls himself a citizen of the world, and with good reason. Now in his seventies, he's lived a life that has carried him from Denmark to Europe, the United States and Thailand, before choosing Atauro Island as the perfect place to retire.

Each month, he shares his thoughts on everyday life — the insights, quirks and small moments that show Timor-Leste to be both familiar and unexpected. These are Ken's Two Centavos...

There's an odd dynamic which happens at Dili's Ferry dock, five days per week. I refer to the challenge of buying passenger tickets for the 2.5-hour trip to Atauro Island. There are two large ferry boats, and they divvy up traveling days among Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. That part is fine. It's the scrum for tickets, which is not so fine. The word 'scrum' is used by English speakers (other than Americans) to describe a group of people, usually as it relates to rugby - where a motley group scrunches together to achieve a goal.

That describes what happens during endeavors to secure a ticket for a ferry. I don't think tickets can be bought in advance (correct me, if I'm wrong), so travelers get to the small ticket office an hour or so prior to the ferry embarking. I just now noticed, for the first time, the verb 'embark' may have come from the word 'bark' which is an old-fashioned word for a floating vessel with three or more masts.

The good news, regarding tickets for Atauro, is: everyone who wants one, gets one. No one is turned away. Sometimes, particularly on Saturdays, the ticketing process is so time-consuming, that the ferry's departure is delayed by up to 35 minutes.

There are two ticketing windows at the one-room kiosk. Each window is 'manned' by a woman who is doing her best to provide tickets. It's not the workers who are less-than-sterling,it's the protocol. Each ticket-buyer is required to pass his/her TL ID card through the small window. A foreigner can pass anything with his/her name. Some people just jot their name on a little scrap of paper. The rule requiring names of passengers is silly. No ticket-taker ever looks at or follows-up on names written on tickets. The result: an unnecessary bureaucratic slow-down.

When one looks into the ticketing kiosk, one sees the two to four workers inside doing things which could have been done prior, like numbering tickets by hand, and other notations.

One wonders whether the Ferry company bosses have thought about streamlining the ticketing process. For example, when folks enter TL at an international border, they queue up, and then get processed in a civil manner. The ferry situation, in contrast, is a scrum - where two globs of people press their bodies together - toward the two small windows. Naturally, the more aggressive folks wheedle their bodies (with outstretched arms, all trying to force their ID cards or scraps of paper into the little windows). Those who don't physically force their way forward, are among the last to get tickets, even if they arrived early to the kiosk.

It doesn't need to be that haphazard. It would be easy to arrange the venue - to be a smoother operation, with queuing or, as Americans would say, 'getting in line.'

Here's a different scenario: Years ago, I was in Paris queuing to get a bus ticket. There were about a dozen folks there. Along comes a tall group of five guys from Africa (a visiting basketball team?). They just pranced in and went straight to the ticketing window, paying no mind to everyone else who were patiently in line.

I got out of the queue and gently confronted the guys, telling them to get to the back of the line. They did. When I got back in the queue, a Frenchman whispered to me, in all seriousness: "Vous et fou" ('you are crazy').

Ken Albertsen
kenalberts214@gmail.com

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLE ON PAGE 12

QUICK CROSSWORD

B	A	S	E	B	A	L	L	C	D
L	W	L	I	D	I	O	D	E	
A	V	A	L	A	N	C	H	E	R
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QUICK CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

M	A	C	H	I	S	M	O		S	O	L	E
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L	A								A	N	E	D
A	M	E	N		L	I	T	E	R	A	T	E

'THE TIMES' QUIZ

Answers:

1. Martin Scorsese
2. Matchmaking service
3. Ghost-writer
4. Chernobyl
5. Antelope
6. Feldspar
7. Janissaries or Janissary corps
8. Mr. Magoo
9. Crystal
10. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
11. Judas Priest
12. Gucci
13. Lawrencium (atomic no. 103, it is named after Ernest Lawrence)
14. William Hogarth
15. Herbert Kitchener, 1st Earl Kitchener or Lord Kitchener of Khartoum — the city is now called Khartoum
16. Illinois
17. Tunnock's
18. Épée fencing
19. Lizzy Yarnold
20. Mars rover Curiosity

THE TIMES SUDOKU

5	7	6	4	2	8	9	1	3
2	9	8	5	1	3	7	4	6
4	1	3	6	9	7	5	8	2
6	4	9	7	5	2	8	3	1
1	3	7	9	8	4	6	2	5
8	2	5	3	6	1	4	9	7
7	8	1	2	4	5	3	6	9
9	5	4	1	3	6	2	7	8
3	6	2	8	7	9	1	5	4

"It's a Fact"

There are two main shapes of popcorn:

butterfly and mushroom

Mushroom is when the kernel pops in a more uniform way, while butterfly is more explosive.

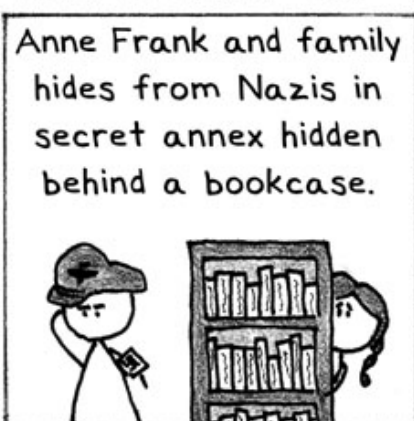
"Dad Joke"

My sister bet me \$15 that I couldn't build a car out of spaghetti.

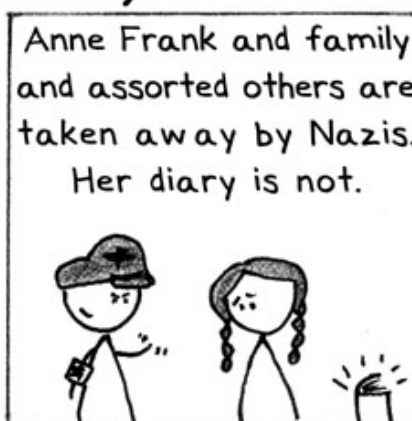
You should have seen the look on her face as I drove pasta.

"3 Panels Plays"

THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK (in 3 Panels)



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Featured Volunteer Profile: Max C.



Peace Corps Volunteer Leader MARCH 2023 - JUNE 2026 (extended)

1. What got you interested in the Peace Corps?

I've always been passionate about volunteering and making a positive impact in the lives of others. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I dedicated much of my time to volunteer work, which deepened my commitment to service and community engagement. When I learned about the Peace Corps, I saw it as a unique opportunity to take that commitment to the next level, not only by continuing to serve others, but by doing so while fully immersing myself in a new culture and environment. The chance to live and work in a country I had never heard of, on the other side of the world, was both exciting and humbling. Peace Corps service offered the perfect intersection of two of my greatest passions: helping people and learning about diverse cultures.

2. What projects are you working on?

Currently, I serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer Leader based in Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste. My role is split between supporting Peace Corps operations and collaborating with a local training center. Within the Peace Corps, I'm actively involved in the project redesign team, where we're conducting a comprehensive review of our Community Economic Development program. Our goal is to refine the program's objectives and develop a strategic plan to enhance its effectiveness and sustainability over the next five years.

At the local training center, I'm leading the implementation of a personal money management course aimed at equipping community members with essential financial literacy skills. Additionally, I'm working to strengthen the center's English curriculum by introducing new materials and teaching strategies to better support learners' language development. These projects allow me to contribute both to organizational development and direct community impact, aligning closely with my passion for service and capacity building.

3. What strategies have you used to integrate into your community?

My primary strategy for integrating into the community has been to remain open, approachable, and genuinely engaged. I've made it a priority to build relationships by spending time with my host family, collaborating closely with my co-workers, and participating in everyday community life. I've learned that integration is less about grand gestures or major projects and is more about showing up consistently, listening, and sharing experiences. Whether it's joining in local events, helping with daily tasks, or simply sitting and chatting with neighbors, these small moments have helped build trust and mutual respect. Flexibility and presence have been key to forming meaningful connections and becoming part of the community.

4. What is a highlight of your time in service so far?

Two moments stand out as highlights of my Peace Corps service. The first was successfully designing and facilitating a personal money management training course entirely in Tetum, the local language. It was a milestone that marked not only my growing language proficiency but also my ability to contribute meaningfully to my community's development. Seeing participants engage with the material and apply it to their daily lives was incredibly rewarding. It was the first time I truly felt the impact of my work.

The second highlight of my service was joining my host mother and her church group on a whirlwind 48-hour pilgrimage from Maliana to Mount Ramelau, the highest peak in Timor-Leste. The journey involved traveling with over 100 people, sleeping for just a few hours, and culminating in a breathtaking hour-long mass at the summit. That trip remains one of the most memorable and meaningful experiences of my three years of service in Timor.

5. What have you enjoyed most about the community where you are serving?

What I've enjoyed most about my community is the incredible sense of openness and connection among its members. There's a strong feeling of togetherness here. Everyone truly looks out for one another. In my neighborhood, many of the families are related, which creates a close-knit environment where people share not just space, but lives. From day one, I was welcomed with genuine warmth and treated like part of the family. Whether it's sharing meals, participating in local events, or simply chatting on the front porch, there's a deep sense of belonging that makes every day meaningful.



Max and his host family in Timor-Leste.

6. What are some of the most important things you've learned from your community?

One of the most important things I've learned from my community is the power of collective support and shared purpose. From the start, I've been struck by how genuinely invested people are in helping me succeed as a member of their community. Whenever I've shared a goal or project idea, I've been met with enthusiasm and a willingness to collaborate. Their support goes beyond encouragement; they actively offer their time, resources, and insights to help bring those ideas to life. It's a level of generosity and solidarity that has deeply impacted me and reshaped how I think about community engagement. I've learned that meaningful development is truly a shared journey, and that trust and mutual respect are the foundation of lasting change.

7. How do you spend time when you are not working on a project?

I first lived in a city about an hour and a half drive south from the capital. I spent much of my free time on the veranda, simply enjoying the rhythm of daily life. Whether it was morning, afternoon, or evening, I would "tuur halimar"—sit outside relaxing, taking in the scenery, chatting with neighbors and family members, and greeting passersby. Those moments of quiet connection helped me build strong relationships in the community.

Now that I'm based in Dili, I've found a new way to explore and unwind: cycling. The city's bike-friendly roads have made it easy to discover different neighborhoods, meet new people, and experience the vibrant energy of the capital. Riding through Dili has become one of my favorite ways to interact with this new city I call home.

8. What are you looking forward to in your remaining time as a Volunteer?

In my final year as a Peace Corps Volunteer, I'm looking forward to witnessing the growth and accomplishments of my fellow Volunteers across Timor-Leste. As a Peace Corps Volunteer leader, one of my key responsibilities is to support other Volunteers, and it's incredibly rewarding to see their projects take shape and make a real impact in their communities. I'm excited to continue celebrating their successes.

9. Once you finish your service, what will you do differently when you return to the U.S.?

Living and working in my community here has taught me the value of patience, gratitude, and finding joy in simplicity. When I return to the U.S., I'll carry with me a more compassionate and mindful approach to everyday life. I've learned to slow down, appreciate small moments, and prioritize relationships over routines. These lessons have become part of who I am, and I'm committed to living with greater empathy and intentionality moving forward.

Source: <https://www.peacecorps.gov/what-we-do/life-in-the-peace-corps/volunteer-profiles/max-c/>

Vale Pat Walsh, Order of Timor-Leste, AM.

By The Diplomacy Training Program

The great and wonderful Pat Walsh, passed away on December 29th, 2025.

Pat was one of Australia's great human rights defenders and promoters. His many contributions to the Diplomacy Training Program as former DTP Board Member, DTP Advisory Council, and DTP Trainer were but a small part of his larger life's contributions to human rights in our world.

Humble, tireless and indefatigable, a gifted writer and thoughtful chronicler of history, lives and stories, Pat was a true internationalist. The principal focus of his human rights' advocacy from 1975 was the peoples of Indonesia and Timor-Leste – and their aspirations for human rights and democracy.

His work in support of the Timorese right to self-determination led him to become an exemplar of "peoples' diplomacy" – engaging everyone who could do something for the Timorese – from Foreign Ministers to Indonesian generals to Timorese refugees, Australian aid organisations, trade unionists and politicians – across the spectrum and world. In the 1970s he co-founded the magazine *Inside Indonesia* that continues to build knowledge and understanding of Indonesia's rich history, peoples and politics.

President Suharto banned Pat Walsh from entering Indonesia, but when the democracy movement ended his rule, President Habibie personally welcomed Pat into the Presidential Palace in Jakarta. It was a lesson in history, that unlike principles, dictators don't last for ever. Pat probably had more friends in Indonesia's new democracy, including future President Gus Dur, than did an Australian government so closely tied with its former dictator.

Pat quietly built solidarity and rich friendships stretching the world and generations. His great friendship with Timor's President José Ramos-Horta spanned decades.

As the first Director of the Human Rights Office of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid, he mobilised with others in the Asia-Pacific to ensure governments upheld the universality and indivisibility of all human rights at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. He then helped establish the first Asia-Pacific network on human rights.

For decades he worked against all odds for Timor-Leste's freedom, to ensure that, in the words of Irish poet Seamus Heaney, "*hope and history rhymed*" for the Timorese. When it did, in the 1999 vote for independence, Pat was there to help the Timorese build their new democracy on a foundation of respect for human rights. Working from a cell in a former prison in Dili, he helped build the *Chega!* institution (*Centro Nacional Chega!*) – the Centre for truth, reception and reconciliation, that tells the extraordinary story of the Timorese and the victory of right over might through the voices of the victims and survivors.

The Centro Nacional Chega! is a lovingly curated history honouring the truth of the words of Czech writer Milan Kundera "*The struggle of man (sic) against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting*". Pat saw the work of *Chega!* as a critical part of human rights education – how can we make the future different to the past, how can peace be built after conflict? He spent a year living in Jakarta helping to oversee the translation of the *Chega!* report into Bahasa. The story is told in one of his lovely books "*Stormy With a Chance of Fried Rice*".

Pat received honours from both the Timorese and Australian governments for his extraordinary contributions to human rights, peace and reconciliation. The focus of Pat's work in recent decades was on ensuring that Timor, Indonesia – and Australia all know their shared history. He maintained a hope that the lessons from this history could be applied to the West Papuan aspirations for self-determination and to Australia's reckoning with its past.



Pat also documented his own family's history – from Ireland to his own start in life on a dairy farm in Western Victoria. His books were tributes to the joys and humour to be found in the lives of ordinary people, both in Dili and Jakarta as well as his own suburb of Northcote during COVID. The pages of his books are full of his empathy, humour, wisdom and delight in the everyday. He has motivated many to take up the cause for human rights. He leaves an inspiring legacy and will be long missed and well-remembered. DTP extends its sympathies and condolences to Annie, his daughters Mayra, Suzannah and Patricia and his wider family.

Source: <https://dtp.org.au/general-news/vale-pat-walsh-order-of-timor-leste-am/>

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Fishing rods bring happiness



Adam, Tyson, Minto and Gil collect donated fishing rods, sharing their passion and helping seasonal workers bring food and skills home to their families overseas. (PS)

A simple love of fishing is helping bring people together and provide lasting benefits for seasonal workers in East Gippsland, Victoria, Australia and their families overseas.

Minto, a seasonal worker from the small village of Sui-Loro in Timor-Leste, grew up fishing and says it has always been an important part of his life. When he first came to Australia in 2015 to work under the PALM scheme, buying a fishing rod was one of the first things he did.

Now living and working in East Gippsland, Minto has been sharing his passion with fellow seasonal workers, including team leader Adam, who comes from Humboe Emera, a village far from the sea. Adam is eager to learn to fish in the region's lakes and rivers, taking advantage of the opportunities Gippsland offers.

The group was recently pictured collecting donated fishing rods, joined by friends Gil and Tyson, as part of a growing effort to equip seasonal workers with gear they can use both locally and back home.

Organisers say more fishing rods are urgently needed, with some donations destined to return with workers to Timor-Leste, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

The rods will help families catch food, reduce living costs and, in some cases, provide an income through small-scale fishing.

Supporters say the initiative reflects the old saying: "Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day; teach a person to fish and you feed them for a lifetime."

Community members who have unused fishing rods are encouraged to consider donating them. Donations can help bring joy to workers, strengthen cultural connections, and put food on tables both in Gippsland and overseas.

For more information or to donate fishing rods, contact Peter (details available at the Bairnsdale Advertiser office. See website below for info.)

Source: <https://bairnsdaleadvertiser.com.au/16926/fishing-rods-bring-happiness/>

From Dream To New Home: How a Community Savings Scheme Built a New Life In Atauro



The completed two-story house built by Herminia, financed through a combination of ROMANSA program loans and her personal savings. Photo courtesy of KSI.

ATAURO, TIMOR-LESTE - What began as a small weekly savings deposit has culminated in a towering personal achievement for Herminia Araujo Martins. The 49-year-old treasurer of the 'E'papana' savings group has just completed construction of a two-story concrete house, realising a long-held dream through her participation in the innovative Rai Osan Ba Mudansa (ROMANSA) program.

The program, formally known as the Hakbiit Asaun Koletiva ba Igualidade no Inkluzauin iha Timor-Leste (HAKBIIT), is implemented by the Kdadalak Sulimutuk Institute (KSI) on Atauro Island. It empowers communities through collective savings and micro-loan schemes, leading to tangible economic change at the household level.

For Herminia of Biqueli village, the change is concrete and stands 7.5 by 8 meters wide. "My original dream was just to build a simple house, not a two-story one," she shared. "But I am grateful because through the ROMANSA activity, we can save and borrow money with low interest, so I was able to use a ROMANSA loan together with my private money and finally build this two-story house."

Her journey with the 'E'papana' group involved disciplined saving, setting aside between \$20 to \$50 weekly. Over one savings cycle, she accumulated \$577.30. The ROMANSA model allowed her to access four separate loans to phase the construction.

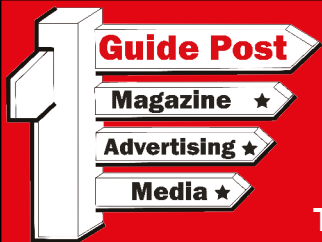
- First Loan (\$200): Combined with personal funds to purchase sand, stones, and cement for the house foundation.
- Second Loan (\$300): Used with private savings to buy steel rods and materials for the house frame.
- Third & Fourth Loans (\$400 & \$600): Secured to purchase remaining construction materials to complete the home.

When her group distributed its collective savings in December 2025, Herminia's own \$577.30 share was reinvested directly into the building project. "I feel happy because through ROMANSA, I could increase my family's income, and it helped me realise my dream of building a new house," she explained.

The success story of Herminia is a testament to the ROMANSA program's impact. She praises its clear, non-burdensome rules and the easy access to savings it provides members. Inspired by the outcome, Herminia has decided to continue saving, committing to a second cycle of the program.

The ROMANSA initiative continues to foster financial resilience and turn aspirations into reality for many families across Atauro.

Source: <https://www.kdadalak.org.tl/tl/notisia/136-from-dream-to-new-home-how-a-community-savings-scheme-built-a-new-life-in-atauro>



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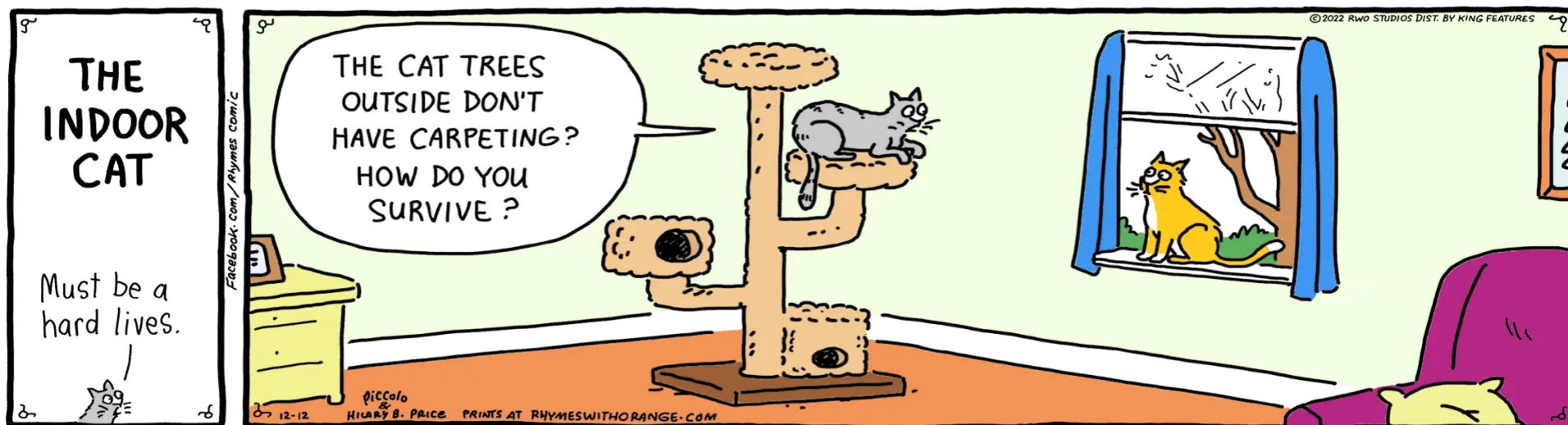


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Meet mother-daughter volunteer duo in Timor-Leste

From sunrise rooster calls to conversations on justice, Helen and Georgia prove that volunteering together is anything but ordinary.



Meet Helen and Georgia – a mother and daughter who have been volunteering together in Timor-Leste. Helen's three-month assignment as an English Language Mentor involved supporting the energetic crew at *Permaculture Timor-Leste (PERMATIL)* gear up for English convos ahead of the Permatil Global Youth Convergence.

Georgia has been in Timor-Leste a little longer (four+ years and counting!) and is supporting survivors of human rights violations at *AJAR Justice and Rights Timor-Leste* and helping strengthen the organisation behind the scenes.

We sat down with Helen and Georgia for a chat and discovered what it's like to volunteer together in Timor-Leste.

What We Have Learned

Georgia

Being a volunteer here carries a lot of historical meaning – not just practically, but symbolically. Timor-Leste has a long history of international solidarity, and working on justice and human rights here is part of a bigger, global movement. It's powerful to be a part of local organisations and continue the legacy in fighting for issues that go beyond borders.

Helen

Timorese folks are some of the busiest people I've ever met – between community events, family obligations, and working in the 'foho' (rural areas), they still show up to learn English! It's no small feat either. Teaching beginners can take 180+ hours, but every conversation is worth it.

Things We Love

Helen

The roosters waking me up at 5:30 am. Every. Morning.

Georgia

Wait 'til you get a pet goat. Then the fun really begins.

Helen

I love being surrounded by the laughter and energy of staff and students. Even the awkward bits of learning a new language have turned into joyful moments. Through our conversations, I've heard everything – from wedding plans to big cultural shifts, and the dreams [the students] have for their kids.



*Bibi - Georgia's pet goat.
Supplied: Georgia Leyendekkers.*

Georgia

One thing I adore here is how wins are shared. Got a job? Celebrate with your family and friends. Learned something new? Share it with your cousins. Made too much food? Take it to your neighbour's house. That collectivist spirit is something we don't do of as much back home – and it's widely altered how I move through the world.

Things We've Shared

Both

The best part is doing this together. Volunteering away from home can feel isolating at times – new places, tough work, cultural differences and dodgy sidewalks. But having each other here has made a huge difference.

Georgia

It's been special to have Mum here and have her experience the life I've built.

Helen

I've been so touched by how open the volunteer community is – young, old, everyone in between. There's a real sense of mutual respect, and it's been lovely seeing how inclusive and supportive the vibe is. And yes, being here with my daughter has added something really unique to the whole experience.

Georgia

Having someone close to you reflect your thoughts and reactions back at you, in a different age and stage has been grounding. It's helped me grow in patience with myself and others, and also helped me find better ways to communicate life and learnings here to people back home.

Final Thoughts

Helen

Before coming here, I didn't truly grasp the depth of Georgia's work, especially with survivors and the community at AJAR TL. Now I've seen it with my own eyes and met some of the people – the impact of the work she is involved in and the respect she's earned. It's pretty awe-inspiring.

This journey isn't just about volunteering – it's about showing up, taking a leap, and living the values we've always believed in. Doing it side-by-side is the part we'll never forget.

Georgia

Don't let the goats and roosters fool you – Timor will steal your heart.



*Australian volunteers, Helen Leyendekkers (left) and Georgia Leyendekkers (right).
Supplied: Georgia Leyendekkers.*

Source: <https://www.australianvolunteers.com/stories/mother-daughter-duo-volunteering-roosters-and-real-talk-in-timor-leste/>

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- Mapa lokalizasaun Hela fatin Aplikante nia.

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