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# Guide Post



**Magazine**

March 2026 Edition 232

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Celebrations at the recent "Open Doors for Lunar New Year 2026" event hosted by the Chinese Embassy in Dili, Timor-Leste



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




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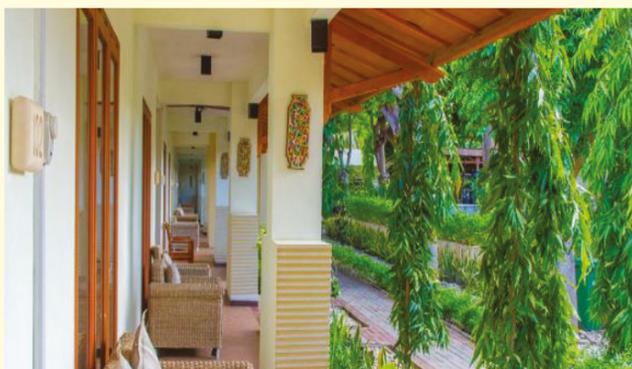


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# Chinese Community in Dili Welcomes the Year of the Horse

The Chinese community in Dili welcomed in the Year of the Horse with traditional ceremonies, cultural performances and a New Year reception hosted by the Chinese Embassy in Timor-Leste.

Participants first gathered at a Chinese temple in the capital, where they performed traditional rites reflecting their cultural identity. After prayers, performers staged a lion dance, symbolising protection, good fortune and prosperity.

The celebration was organised by the *Associação Comercial da Comunidade Chinesa Timor Oan (ACCCTO)* and marked the beginning of the Year of the Fire Horse.

Later, community members visited the Chinese Embassy on Praia dos Coqueiros in Dili, where the Embassy hosted a reception titled “Celebrating the Spring Festival Together”. Ambassador Wang, together with Embassy staff, welcomed representatives from Chinese business associations, enterprises, the medical team and the overseas Chinese community in Timor-Leste.

Deputy Prime Minister Francisco Kalbuadi Lay attended the celebration and extended festive greetings to the Ambassador and the Chinese community. He said the event reflected religious tolerance, cultural diversity and the strong friendship between the peoples of Timor-Leste and China. Quoting Pope Francis on human fraternity, he noted that such occasions showed how communities could celebrate together as one family.

The reception featured drum performances and a lion dance. Guests exchanged New Year greetings and expressed hopes for prosperity, well-being and continued friendship between China and Timor-Leste.

Ambassador Wang conveyed wishes of prosperity to Chinese residents in Timor-Leste and encouraged them to preserve their culture and identity while promoting peace and stability in the country.

The Chinese community in Timor-Leste is estimated to number around 20,000 people.



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## A Green Saturday in Hera: 2,200 Mangrove Seedlings for a Brighter Future

Source: Rotary Club of Dili

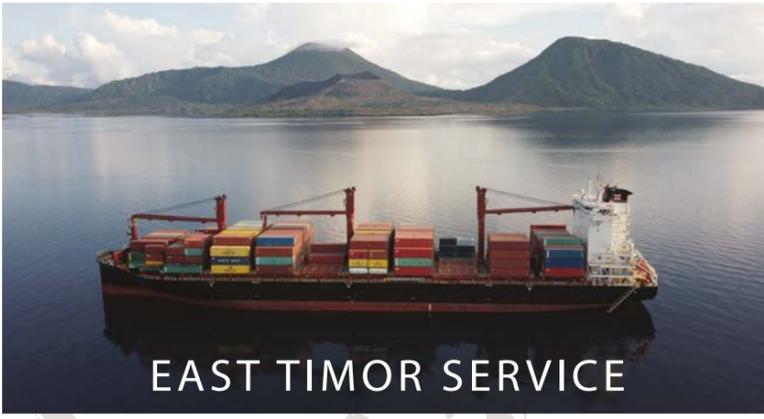
On 14 February 2026, the Rotary Club of Dili, Rotary Club Timor Lorosa'e, and the ANL CMA CGM Group led by Ms. Ekaterina Khramova (ANL General Manager to Timor-Leste) and Ms. Pearl Leonardo (Admin/Finance & ANL CSR Ambassador for Timor-Leste), marked a significant milestone towards the Mangrove Reforestation Program as they joined hands to plant 2,200 mangrove seedlings in Hera, next to the ETO Fuel Supply and KFF Mangrove Study Center.

The initiative drew strong national support with the presence of the Secretary of State of Forestry Sr. Fernandino Vieira da Costa, along with teams from the Forestry and Environmental offices. Members of the Rotary Club of Dili, CEVA Logistics, and community volunteers added to the day's spirit of cooperation.

More than 1,000 students and teachers from five local schools: EBF Hera, EBC Hera, Eskola Dominikana Hera, Ensino Básico ALPHA Hera, and ES St. Tomas Aquino Hera actively participated, turning the event into a powerful lesson in environmental stewardship.

This collaborative effort not only strengthened coastal conservation but also inspired the next generation to protect Timor-Leste's natural heritage.





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## Dili Hash House Harriers 15th Annual Red Dress Run in support of CVTL



Dili Hash House Harriers (DH3) recently held their 15th Annual Red Dress Run in Dili in support of Cruz Vermelha de Timor-Leste (CVTL) / Timor-Leste Red Cross.

Held each February, the much-anticipated event brings together participants of all ages for a colourful run and walk through the capital, all in the name of fundraising and raising awareness for CVTL's humanitarian work.

But this is no ordinary charity run. Men and women alike are encouraged not only to wear red, but to don the finest, or most outrageous, red dress they can find, often sourced from local markets, complete with creative accessories. A light-hearted "Best Dressed" award is presented, adding to the laughter and friendly competition.

As the sea of red winds its way through Dili's streets, the sight of runners and walkers in bright dresses never fails to raise smiles from onlookers. Drivers slow down, market vendors pause, and passers-by pull out their phones. The joyful spectacle brings a welcome splash of colour and humour to the day.

Funds raised through the Red Dress Run help strengthen CVTL's humanitarian programmes, including disaster response, community health initiatives, and support for vulnerable communities across Timor-Leste.

CVTL Secretary-General Mr Agapito da Silva expressed his gratitude to DH3 for their continued support, noting that the partnership plays an important role in strengthening humanitarian efforts and assisting those most in need.

Credit: Pearl Leonardo, DH3, & CVTL

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# Landmark Collaboration to Advance Hospitality and Vocational Excellence in Timor-Leste

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed at the Institute of Business (IOB) in Manleuana, Dili, launching a strategic partnership between:

- **Guangxi Economic and Trade Vocational Institute (GXETVI)**
- **Institute of Business (IOB)**
- **Dili Development Company, Lda (DDC)**

The ceremony was officiated by Mr. Alan Jape (Chairman, DDC), Mr. Lin Zhen (Senior Full Professor and Chief, International Office, GXETVI), and Ms. Isabel Moniz (Vice Rector III, IOB).

The agreement establishes the **China–Timor-Leste Institute of Modern Craftsmanship of Chinese Cuisine**, a three-year initiative dedicated to raising vocational standards and strengthening hospitality expertise in Timor-Leste.

## Building Skills with Impact

The program delivers:

- Certified training in modern Chinese cuisine
- International-standard curriculum and faculty development
- Bilingual materials and technical exchange
- Hospitality and tourism talent cultivation
- Academic and cultural exchange programs
- Structured internships within operational hospitality environments, including **Timor Plaza Hotel**.

By integrating classroom learning with real industry practice, students gain technical competence, professional discipline, and international exposure.

## A Strong Collaborative Framework

GXETVI provides vocational expertise and academic leadership.

IOB leads local governance and program implementation.

DDC ensures industry integration and hands-on training opportunities.

Together, the partners are elevating service standards, strengthening workforce readiness, and shaping the future of Timor-Leste's hospitality sector.

## Moving Forward

The partnership now enters a focused three-year implementation phase centered on measurable outcomes, sustainable skills development, and long-term sector growth.



Source: Dili Development Company



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*In Timor-Leste, things are rarely broken. They are simply not working properly yet. This is an important distinction, because it means a solution is always possible — just not necessarily permanent.*

*A fan that only works on one speed is not faulty. It has chosen that speed. A door that doesn't close unless lifted slightly and pushed with confidence is not damaged. It has a technique. Everyone knows it. Newcomers will learn.*

*Repairs here aim for function, not perfection. If something works again — even partly — the job is done. Tape is applied with purpose. Wire is bent into service. A plastic bottle may become a crucial component. The result may not be elegant, but it will survive rain, heat, and daily use with impressive resilience.*

*Electricity outages produce immediate innovation. Extension leads appear from nowhere. Someone knows which switch to tap. Someone else knows a guy. Within minutes, power is restored — not officially, perhaps — but enough to charge phones and keep life moving.*

*Vehicles are treated with the same philosophy. A car that starts after encouragement is a good car. A motorbike with a missing mirror still knows where it's going. If it moves, stops, and honks, it is road-ready.*

*What's remarkable is the confidence. No manual. No overthinking. Just a calm assessment, a few tools, and the assumption that this will be fine. And usually, it is.*

*Eventually, everything gets fixed properly — when parts arrive, time allows, or someone feels like it. Until then, “just enough” is enough.*

*Because in Timor-Leste, fixing things isn't about restoring them to new. It's about keeping life going — one clever solution at a time.*

Try it for yourself at <https://chat.openai.com/chat>

## Fun Holidays in March

- *10th March – Mario Day* – Because “Mar10” looks like Mario. Celebrated worldwide by plumbers & mushrooms.
- *14th March – Potato Chip Day* – Thin, crunchy, and impossible to stop at one.
- *20th March – World Frog Day* – Celebrating frogs and pretending not to be startled by them.

## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the March 2026 edition of Guide Post

This month's edition brings together a range of stories that look beyond the headlines and into the people and organisations behind the programmes shaping Timor-Leste.

We begin with local Chinese New Year celebrations, capturing moments from this year's festivities and the strong community spirit on display.

We also highlight local organisations and companies making a practical difference. From ANL's partnership with Rotary on a mangrove seedling planting initiative, to the Dili Development Corporation's support in establishing the China-Timor-Leste Institute of Modern Craftsmanship of Chinese Cuisine, these collaborations show how business and community efforts continue to contribute to long-term development.

A special focus in this issue is hearing directly from those on the ground. We share perspectives from volunteers working in Timor-Leste, as well as from individuals who have benefited from local programmes. Their stories offer a more personal look at the work taking place, and the impact being made in communities across the country.

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 (General Manager @ Guide Post)*

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HARDENBERG

“Sorry, we do not fact-check monsters under the bed anymore, but if you want you can leave a community note.”

# I left my job to volunteer overseas. It wasn't a holiday

By Jonty Crane



Jonty Crane volunteering in Timor-Leste. Photo: Supplied.

**Jonty Crane has volunteered in Timor-Leste, helping to promote one of the least-visited countries in the world. Now volunteering in Fiji, he reflects on the volunteering experience and why Kiwis should consider it in 2026.**

At different points in life, many of us start to ask what really matters, and how we want to make the best use of our time.

2026 has been designated by the United Nations as International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development, a timely moment to reflect on how we can engage with the world and put our skills and expertise to use.

Done well, volunteering can make a real difference to communities, while also being an unforgettable experience.

In 2024, after 20 years of professional working life, I challenged myself to live outside of my comfort zone for a year, volunteering in Timor-Leste. I would have been hard-pressed to locate it on a map (it's next to Indonesia, an hour's flight north of Darwin), let alone know what to expect in Southeast Asia's poorest country.



Jonty Crane in Timor-Leste.

Turns out that Timor-Leste is home to world-class snorkelling, diving and hiking, and has a fascinating culture and history. I worked with the Ministry of Tourism and local companies to help promote Timor-Leste as a travel destination. I wrote the first guidebook to the country in 15 years, trained local staff, developed new hiking routes, and even became an unexpected hit on TikTok. I also worked with a local NGO focused on community engagement, refreshing their strategic plan, and training staff.

My time in Timor-Leste was a life-changing experience. There were challenges, including tropical diseases, power cuts, the heat and humidity, and incredibly slow internet. These were offset by discovering or learning something new every day, and by developing wonderful friendships with locals.

The experience reinforced for me the value of experiences over owning things, and the challenges strengthened my relationship with my wife, who also volunteered alongside me.

Our volunteering was made possible by Volunteer Services Abroad (VSA), New Zealand's largest international development volunteer organisation, which is primarily funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. They provide accommodation, living allowances and ongoing support for volunteers. Importantly, they have deep relationships with local partner organisations, developing assignments based on partner priorities so volunteers' expertise is genuinely useful.

I'm writing this from Suva, Fiji's capital, where we're undertaking our second assignments with VSA.

Returning to volunteering has made me reflect on the past couple of years, and on what it really involves, beyond the romantic ideas we sometimes attach to it.

## Does volunteering overseas really make a difference?

When people ask about volunteering, the question of impact always comes up – and rightly so. There's a lot of discussion about "voluntourism" or the idea of people flying in to help without understanding the context. The last thing you want is to feel like you did more harm than good. So, what does meaningful, respectful volunteering look like?

It is important to understand your role: You are not there to "fix" anything. You're not there to save anyone. You're there to support, listen, and share skills – ideally in a way that continues after you leave.

Impact often comes through small, cumulative contributions: mentoring a colleague, improving a process, or helping an organisation become more confident and capable.

And it will often have just as much impact on you, shaping how you see the world, how you relate to others, and how you define what matters.

## What to think about before volunteering overseas

International volunteering isn't for everyone, and it's worth careful thought before doing it. Based on my experience, here are a few practical considerations:

1. Be clear about your motivation. Volunteering isn't a holiday. It can be emotionally demanding and often frustrating. If your main goal is adventure or travel, there may be better options.
2. Understand the time commitment. It generally takes at least six months to build trust and be effective, and many roles last a year or more. Many people volunteer after they retire, particularly if they retire early, but it can also be a great career break.
3. Be ready to adapt. No amount of reading or training fully prepares you for living and working in very different cultures and environments. Flexibility is essential.
4. Think about the people you leave behind. Being away for an extended period affects partners, families and friends. If your partner joins you, which can be an option for longer assignments, then consider how they will spend their time.
5. Accept that progress takes time. Life will be harder in many ways, and things move more slowly than you're used to, and that's normal.

Volunteering overseas changed my life in ways I couldn't have predicted. 2026 may be the perfect moment to pause, reflect, and consider whether you might want to contribute beyond our borders.

*This story was originally published on [Stuff.co.nz](https://www.stuff.co.nz)*

Source: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/travel/360916702/i-left-my-job-volunteer-overseas-it-wasnt-holiday>

# EMPLOYMENT MATTERS!

## Edition #65 - Social Security - Death Benefits

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

Following our previous editions introducing Timor-Leste's Social Security system and explaining how to claim parental benefits, let us now turn to the process of claiming the Death Benefit.



When a registered contributor passes away, the impact on their family is both emotional and financial. Timor-Leste's contributory Social Security regime, administered by the Instituto Nacional de Seguranga Social, provides structured protection to help families manage both immediate expenses and the long-term loss of income. Through Death Benefits, namely the Death Grant (which may cover funeral expenses or provide a fixed lump sum) and the Survivor Pension, eligible dependents who meet the access requirements can receive financial support.

While each benefit serves a distinct purpose, whether addressing urgent funeral costs or providing ongoing income replacement, the claim process follows a consistent pathway: the claimant prepares the necessary documentation, the employer provides supporting information where applicable, the claim is submitted, and Seguranga Social verifies eligibility before processing payment.

### Death Grant and Funeral Expense Reimbursement

Under the contributory regime, when a contributor dies, financial support may be provided in one of two forms:

- Death Grant (Subsídio por Morte) – a one-time lump sum payment
- Funeral Expense Reimbursement – reimbursement of documented funeral costs

Important Note: These two benefits cannot be accumulated. The claimant must choose one.

#### a. Death Grant

The Death Grant provides immediate financial assistance to eligible family members following the death of a contributor.

Who can claim?

- Surviving spouse (not legally separated)
- Person living in a de facto union with the deceased for more than two years
- Descendants (biological or adopted children, including unborn children)
- Legal representatives of minor or incapacitated beneficiaries

Required Documents:

- Completed death benefit application form
- Death certificate of the contributor
- Valid identification of the claimant
- Proof of family relationship (marriage, birth, or adoption certificate)

Deadline: Claims must be submitted within 3 months, counting from the month after the death becomes known.

#### b. Funeral Expense Reimbursement

This benefit is paid to the person who actually covered the funeral costs, regardless of dependency status.

Who can claim?

- Any individual who paid for the funeral and can provide proof of payment

Required Documents:

- Completed application form
- Death certificate
- Valid identification
- Official receipts or proof of funeral payment

Payment Schedule (for both benefits):

- Submitted by 5th → Paid on 10th
- Submitted 6th – 20th → Paid on 25th
- Submitted after 20th → Paid on 10th of the following month

### Survivor Pension

While the Death Grant addresses immediate expenses, the Survivor Pension provides long-term income replacement for dependents.

Who may be entitled?

- Surviving spouse or de facto partner
- Dependent children
- Dependent parents in certain cases

Required Documents:

- Completed Survivor Pension application form
- Death certificate
- Identification documents
- Proof of family relationship
- Additional documents regarding contribution history, if requested

Purpose: The Survivor Pension ensures that families do not fall into poverty due to the sudden loss of a breadwinner, reinforcing the constitutional right to social security protection.

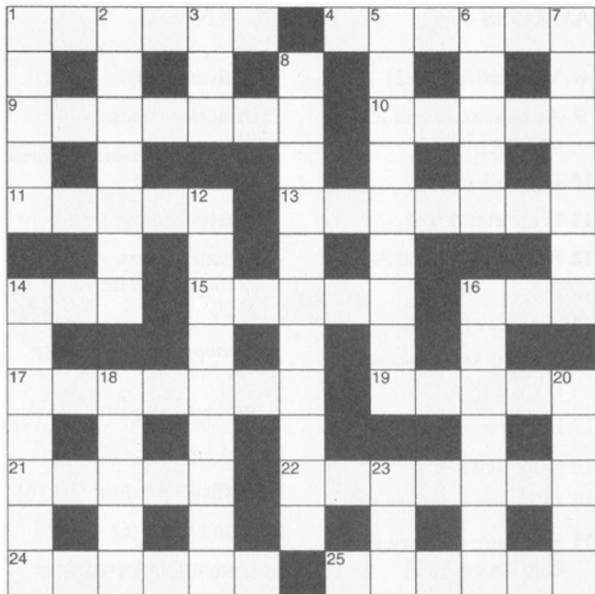
Social security is not merely a payroll deduction; it is protection during life's most vulnerable moments. By providing immediate relief and sustained financial support, these mechanisms ensure that families remain protected even after loss.

**For any questions, please email us at [info@konnekto.com](mailto:info@konnekto.com) with any questions. Your inquiries inspire us to create fresh and informative content!**



## QUICK CROSSWORD

Solution on page 20



### Across:

1. Immensely (6)
4. Get away (6)
9. Appropriate, suitable (2,5)
10. Fruit from bunch (5)
11. Highest in rank (5)
13. Royal baton (7)
14. Expression of surprise (3)
15. Core (5)
16. Allow, rental period (3)
17. Place in position (7)
19. Less high (5)
21. Attempts (5)
22. Nil (7)
24. Lottery to win goods (6)
25. Come into sight (6)

### Down:

1. Japanese poem (5)
2. Follower of pop singers (7)
3. Pie crust (3)
5. Composed of distinct parts (9)
6. Separate (5)
7. Basic part (7)
8. Very clear (11)
12. Play run-through (9)
14. Vehicle out on winter nights (7)
16. Disreputable people (3,4)
18. Rigid (5)
20. Palindromic composer (5)
23. Highest point (3)

## QUICK CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

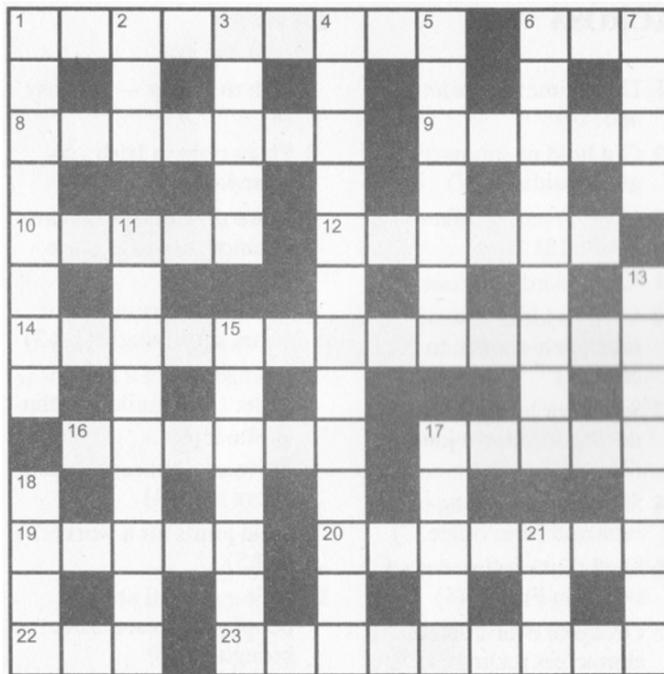
Solution on page 20

### Across:

1. Biscuit that's grand — a humorously vulgar one (9)
6. Mischief maker well-off but oddly lacking (3)
8. Popular turn entertaining former partner? That's not quite right (7)
9. A bone to pick with children? (5)
10. Pole playing a part in television or theatre (5)
12. Young family making a mess (6)
14. Celeb must take novel he wrote (6,7)
16. Consternation when boy returns with girl (6)
17. Element in technical speech Jack ignored (5)
19. Heartless dame resides in Greek island and works as a programmer (5)
20. Line taken by part of Europe or part of Africa (7)
22. Spoil a short month (3)
23. Damned business bigwig, highly regarded (9)

### Down:

1. Freedom of speech — blessing in disguise? (8)
2. Old port or whisky (3)
3. Self-assertive bachelor lacking prudence (5)
4. Hornblower as an infant down in the dumps (6,3,4)
5. From the first it's daft — it's obvious that it's crazy (7)
6. Segregate nutty chocolate product (6,3)
7. Release without charge (4)
11. Jogger carrying a cut-price book (9)
13. Normal colours (8)
15. In a group coming from France (2,5)
17. Warning when first couple have left room (5)
18. Despicable people in dirty film? (4)
21. Rocky outcrop stuck up? Nonsense! (3)



### Crossword Notes:

## 'THE TIMES' QUIZ

Solution on page 20

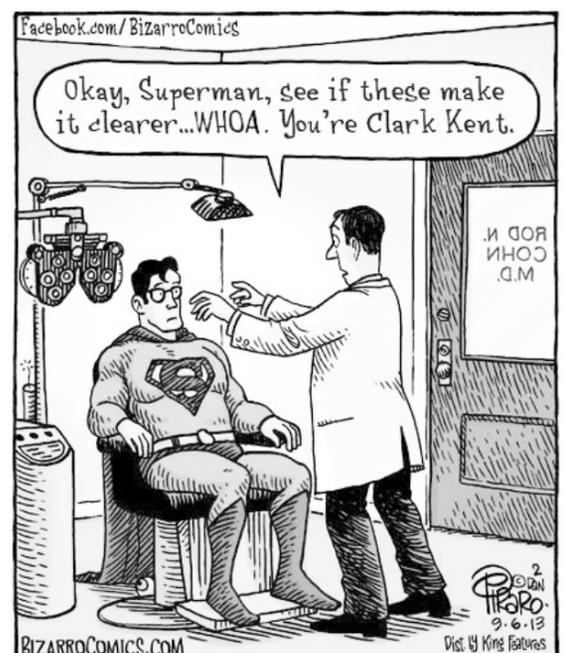
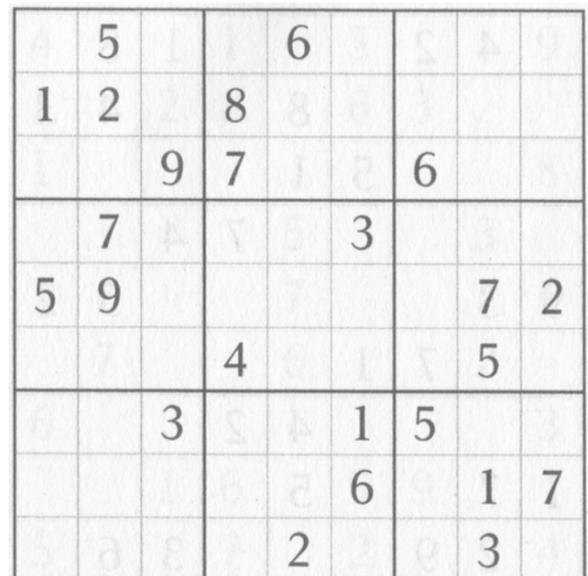
### History

1. Jack Cade led a 1450 uprising against which king's government?
2. Which King of Italy was assassinated by the anarchist Gaetano Bresci in 1900?
3. Pope Alexander II gave his blessing to which man's invasion of England?
4. Simon Vouet was court painter to which French king?
5. The Marconi scandal rocked the government of which Liberal Prime Minister?
6. The Battle of Chamdo took place during which 1950 invasion?
7. Built in 1382 by Emir Djaharks el-Khalili, what is the Khan el-Khalili?
8. A stateless Albert Einstein became a citizen of which country in 1901?
9. Who led the Welsh rebels to victory at the 1402 Battle of Bryn Glas?
10. Which English king died of 'camp fever' at the Château de Vincennes in 1422?
11. Which Chinese imperial dynasty succeeded the Qin Dynasty in 206 BC?
12. Which Gallic leader defeated Caesar at the Battle of Gergovia (52 BC)?
13. The Battle of Sheriffmuir was the key clash of which rebellion?
14. The ancient city of Apollonia in Illyria is in which modern-day country?
15. Anna Anderson (1896-1984) claimed to be which Romanov dynasty princess?
16. Herod the Great was the Roman-appointed king of which province?
17. Which Vietnamese leader was born Nguyen Sinh Cung in 1890?
18. The Babington Plot led to the execution of which queen?
19. In 1782, King Rama I established the Chakri dynasty in which country?
20. Name the British Conservative Prime Minister (*pictured right*) —



## THE TIMES SUDOKU

Solution on page 20



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# Free Business & Trade Register

Dili's biggest goods and services register go online to [www.easttimor-timorleste.com](http://www.easttimor-timorleste.com)

## Airlines (Areas-Aviaun)

|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Aero Dili         | 7888 8444 |
| GSA Timor Airways | 7724 1156 |

## Accommodation

|                          |           |     |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Arbiru Beach Resort      | 7751 3024 | 29W |
| Atauro Dive Resort       | 7738 6166 |     |
| Balibo Fort Hotel        | 7777 4845 |     |
| Bay View Hills Residence | 7728 6630 |     |
| Beachside Hotel          | 7750 2184 | 56Y |
| City 8                   | 7391 8899 | 29O |
| Hotel Timor              | 332 4502  | 7H  |
| JL World Hotel           | 7378 7195 |     |
| Lauhata Beach Escape     | 7740 1111 |     |
| Oceanview Beach Hotel    | 7723 6041 | 29W |
| Plaza Hotel              | 7723 2438 | 17J |
| Pousada Casa Do Sandalo  | 7857 2595 | 18I |
| Terra Santa Residence    | 7320 2020 | 24S |
| Timor Homes              | 7311 7202 |     |
| Timor Lodge              | 332 4227  | 26S |

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web: [www.timorlodgehotel.com](http://www.timorlodgehotel.com)

|                            |           |     |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Timor Plaza Hotel & Apart. | 331 3288  | 30S |
| Venture Hotel              | 7338 2476 | 20L |

## Accountants & Audit Services

|                         |           |     |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----|
| AH Public Accountants   | 7592 0999 | 34T |
| CC Business Solutions   | 331 0963  | 30S |
| Haksolok Consult        | 7732 8580 |     |
| JJJ Associates          | 7372 9717 |     |
| LEAO Accountant Service | 7731 8658 | 2K  |
| Primos Bo'ot            | 7831 8131 | 39S |

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ACCOUNTING & AUDIT

|                         |           |  |
|-------------------------|-----------|--|
| Vicenteamaro Consulting | 7701 5921 |  |
|-------------------------|-----------|--|

## Auto Services Products

|                         |           |     |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Bridgestone             | 7706 8725 | 21G |
| City Auto Lda           | 7571 1111 | 35S |
| VSL Oilchem (Timor) Lda | 331 2345  |     |

## Bakery Shop (Paderia)

|                  |           |     |
|------------------|-----------|-----|
| Delicious Bakery | 7723 3415 | 30S |
| Lucky Cake House | 332 2536  | 12E |

**Lucky Cake House**  
see feature advert on Guide Post Magazine

## Bar-Cafe-Restaurant

|                          |           |     |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Beachside                | 7750 2184 | 56Y |
| Castaway Bar             | 7733 9000 | 35T |
| Caz Bar                  | 7723 3961 | 56Y |
| Dili Club                | 7723 3149 |     |
| Early Sun Cafe           | 7732 4514 | 47T |
| EL Legendario            | 331 0005  | 43T |
| Golden Star Restaurant   | 7723 3838 | 19F |
| Hotel Timor              | 332 4502  | 7H  |
| La-Ciu-Bar Lounge & Cafe | 7806 1999 |     |
| Lauhata Beach Escape     | 7740 1111 |     |
| Naris Restaurant         | 7847 6019 | 34T |
| Spooners                 | 7732 4752 | 31V |
| Timor Thai Restaurant    | 7733 2399 |     |
| Venture Restaurant       | 7338 2476 | 20L |
| Wabisabi                 | 7362 7788 | 30S |

## Banks - Finance Money Transfer

|                       |           |     |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----|
| ANZ Bank              | 330 6157  | 30S |
| BNCTL                 | 213 0015  |     |
| BNU Bank              | 330 0000  | 10H |
| BRI Bank              | 331 1372  | 8H  |
| MoneyGram             | 7761 1000 | 3E  |
| Mandiri Bank          | 331 7777  | 10H |
| Western Union Dili    | 332 1586  | 6G  |
| Western Union Baucau  | 7724 0897 |     |
| Western Union Maliana | 7726 1378 |     |

## Boutique / Fashion

|                        |           |  |
|------------------------|-----------|--|
| Abeeha-Aziz Fashion    | 7592 0999 |  |
| HauTimor Fashion Brand | 7888 8777 |  |
| Mag&Co Fashion         | 7828 2828 |  |

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## Clinics - Pharmacy

|                              |           |     |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----|
| 333 Clinica                  | 7733 3804 | 35T |
| Flodova Clinic 1             | 7737 3727 |     |
| Flodova Clinic 2 Timor Plaza | 7777 2778 |     |

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## Clinics - Pharmacy

|                        |           |    |
|------------------------|-----------|----|
| FMCC 24 Hours Pharmacy | 7585 7585 |    |
| Kura Hao               | 331 0801  | 1H |
| National Eye Centre    | 331 0415  |    |

## Computers & Electronics

|                    |           |     |
|--------------------|-----------|-----|
| NTECH              | 331 1127  | 40O |
| Quantech           | 331 1280  | 33Q |
| Zeon International | 7729 7888 |     |

## Education (Edukasaun)

|                           |           |     |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Ba Futuru Pre School      | 7724 6022 | 25S |
| Dili International School | 7733 9090 | 30T |
| ISAT Training             | 7343 0000 |     |
| JSU                       | 7830 2225 |     |
| Pelican Grammar School    | 7564 1138 |     |
| QSI International School  | 332 2389  | 35S |
| SIS Dili                  | 7681 6812 |     |

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## Electrical & A/C

|             |           |  |
|-------------|-----------|--|
| ClimaSimões | 7824 0690 |  |
|-------------|-----------|--|

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|----------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Holiqu Unip. LDA (GREE AC) | 7713 9266 | 30S |
| ESSET                      | 331 7019  | 27R |
| JB Electrical              | 7726 4000 |     |

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## Employment Agency

|          |           |     |
|----------|-----------|-----|
| Konnekto | 7727 3462 | 32S |
|----------|-----------|-----|

## Engineering Construction

|                      |           |     |
|----------------------|-----------|-----|
| Concept Construction | 7830 3961 | 29Q |
| East Timor Roofing   | 7761 2005 | 26P |
| EDS                  | 7723 0880 |     |

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|--------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Esset                    | 7732 8814 | 27S |
| H2O Pump & Power         | 7726 4616 | 26N |
| Performance Construction | 7725 2525 | 30S |
| RMS                      | 7723 0540 | 27N |

## Florists & Flower Shop

|                 |           |     |
|-----------------|-----------|-----|
| Ce'Mill Flores  | 7389 3811 | 31U |
| Hermosa Flowers | 7311 2700 |     |

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|         |           |  |
|---------|-----------|--|
| VIP Gas | 7315 0000 |  |
|---------|-----------|--|

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|               |           |     |
|---------------|-----------|-----|
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| City Auto Lda | 7470 0000 | 35S |

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## Insurance (Seguru)

|                         |          |     |
|-------------------------|----------|-----|
| Federal Insurance Timor | 331 0098 | 9G  |
| Sinar Mas               | 331 0899 | 17J |

## Instruments & Music

|                |           |  |
|----------------|-----------|--|
| Tarkastamo LdM | 7349 3655 |  |
|----------------|-----------|--|

## Law Firms (Firma Lei)

|                           |           |  |
|---------------------------|-----------|--|
| ABREU e CC Advog.         | 7844 2999 |  |
| Correia Barradas Advog.   | 7781 7535 |  |
| CRA Timor                 | 7818 8627 |  |
| Wong Alliance             | 7724 8006 |  |
| JLA, Advog. e Consultores | 7772 0101 |  |

## Marine Services

|                             |           |     |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Compass Marine & Mechanical | 7723 0967 | 26N |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----|

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## Motor Mechanics

|                             |           |     |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----|
| A1 Services                 | 7723 0607 | 42O |
| Auto Vision                 | 7725 0018 | 32R |
| City Auto Lda               | 7570 0000 | 35S |
| Compass Marine & Mechanical | 7723 0967 | 26N |
| Rentlo Service Centre       | 7742 7729 | 26S |

## Nursing (Enfermagem)

|                               |           |  |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--|
| Timor Private Nursing Service | 7854 3129 |  |
|-------------------------------|-----------|--|

## Optic

|                     |           |  |
|---------------------|-----------|--|
| Flodova Farma Optic | 7737 3727 |  |
|---------------------|-----------|--|

## Pest Control (Kontrola Peste)

|                           |          |     |
|---------------------------|----------|-----|
| Professional Pest Control | 331 3003 | 35S |
| San Car Pest Control      | 331 0606 | 25Q |

## Printing-Publication (Impressaun Publikasaun)

|                     |           |  |
|---------------------|-----------|--|
| Ce'Mill Printing    | 7865 6589 |  |
| Guide Post Magazine | 7726 7160 |  |
| Instant Shop        | 7729 2200 |  |
| Silk Printing       | 7725 0080 |  |

## Removals (Muda Sasan)

|            |           |     |
|------------|-----------|-----|
| JVK        | 7723 5784 | 29R |
| D&N Movers | 7747 0203 | 28T |

## Rental (Car, 4x4, Boat)

|                      |           |     |
|----------------------|-----------|-----|
| Compass Boat Charter | 7723 0964 | 26P |
| EDS Car Rentals      | 7723 0880 | 29S |
| E-Silva Car Rentals  | 332 5055  |     |

## Salon / Hair

|                     |           |     |
|---------------------|-----------|-----|
| Harmony Spa & Salon | 7737 2868 | 17J |
| Hair Spa            | 7730 5045 |     |

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|               |           |  |
|---------------|-----------|--|
| Mag&Co Beauty | 7828 2828 |  |
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## Security (Seguransa)

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|-------------------|-----------|-----|
| GARDAMOR Security | 7725 0880 | 33S |
| Maubere Security  | 7723 2908 | 30S |
| Sentinel Group    | 7856 2836 | 33Q |

## Shipping Import Export

|                    |           |     |
|--------------------|-----------|-----|
| ANL Timor          | 331 0162  | 27Q |
| ASL Logistik       | 7476 1919 |     |
| Crossland Shipping | 331 0261  |     |

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|--------------------------|-----------|-----|
| DHL Express              | 7377 7333 | 28T |
| D&N Movers               | 7747 0203 | 29Q |
| JVK International Movers | 7723 5784 |     |
| Mariana Express Lines    | 331 0241  |     |
| Meratus Line             | 7733 8547 |     |

## Tour & Travel

|                          |           |  |
|--------------------------|-----------|--|
| Island Explorer Holidays | 7707 3199 |  |
|--------------------------|-----------|--|

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|                         |           |     |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Bridgestone             | 7706 8725 |     |
| City Auto Lda (Hankook) | 7571 1111 | 35S |

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|--------|-----------|--|
| MAXXIS | 7724 6804 |  |
|--------|-----------|--|

## Translation - Tutoring

|                          |           |     |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Oasis Translations       | 7853 8353 | 35T |
| SDC Translation          | 7736 9693 |     |
| SIMTRAS Translation Unit | 7833 8882 |     |
| Tetun-English-Tetun      | 7729 7567 |     |

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|                         |           |     |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----|
| Azad Autos              | 7592 0999 | 33S |
| Autozone Unipessoal Lda | 7588 8999 | 31U |
| Best Company Lda        | 331 3338  | 35S |
| City Auto Lda           | 7670 0000 | 26P |
| EDS                     | 7723 0880 | 33R |
| Tokyo Vehicle Lda.      | 7751 3555 |     |
| United Auto Lda         | 7726 7551 |     |

## Vet Clinics (Klinika Animal)

|                 |           |  |
|-----------------|-----------|--|
| Dili Vet Clinic | 7723 3792 |  |
|-----------------|-----------|--|

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# Thinking Ahead Without Rushing: Timor-Leste and the Long Road to ASEAN Chairmanship 2029

By Khoo Ying Hooi

The establishment of a National Council for the Organisation of Timor-Leste's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2029, approved by the Council of Ministers in February 2026, marks an early and deliberate move by the Timorese government to prepare for a role that lies several years ahead. The Council, tasked with strategic coordination, supervision, and inter-ministerial planning, signals that the government understands ASEAN Chairmanship not as a ceremonial obligation, but as a complex governance exercise that demands long-term institutional readiness.

Yet, precisely because 2029 remains some years ahead, the significance of this initiative should be read less as a countdown to leadership and more as a reflection of how Timor-Leste is thinking about itself as a state, its development trajectory, and its place in Southeast Asia.

Chairmanship is not only about regional diplomacy. It is also about domestic capacity, political stability, bureaucratic coherence, and the ability to sustain policy direction across electoral cycles. For Timor-Leste, these domestic variables will matter just as much as ASEAN procedures in shaping whether the 2029 Chairmanship becomes a moment of confidence, or constraint.

## ASEAN as a Long-Term State Project

Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN in October 2025 ended a fourteen-year process that tested the country's diplomatic persistence and institutional adaptability. Membership brought symbolic recognition of Timor-Leste's regional belonging, but it also introduced new obligations, such as regular participation in ASEAN's dense meeting architecture, alignment with economic and regulatory frameworks, and sustained engagement across political-security, economic, and socio-cultural pillars.

Chairmanship represents the next stage in this trajectory; not as a reward for accession, but as a stress test of state capacity.

In ASEAN practice, the Chair must convene and manage hundreds of meetings, navigate consensus among ten diverse member states, respond to crises, and represent the organisation externally. Even well-resourced states find this demanding. For Timor-Leste, the challenge will not simply be logistical, but structural, as in whether its political institutions, civil service, and development priorities can absorb ASEAN responsibilities without undermining domestic governance.

The early creation of the National Council suggests awareness of this challenge. But institutional architecture alone does not guarantee effectiveness. The deeper question is whether political continuity, administrative depth, and policy coherence can be sustained over time.

## Domestic Politics: Elections, Elites, and Policy Continuity

Between now and 2029, Timor-Leste will undergo presidential and parliamentary elections, each carrying implications for governance priorities and elite configurations. While Timor-Leste has established a reputation for relatively peaceful democratic transitions, its political landscape remains shaped by coalition bargaining, party realignments, and personality-driven leadership.

ASEAN engagement that is often technocratic, slow-moving, and externally focused does not always sit comfortably within electoral politics, where immediate socio-economic issues dominate public discourse. Infrastructure gaps, youth unemployment, rural development, health services, and the future of petroleum revenues remain pressing concerns for voters.

In this context, ASEAN Chairmanship preparation risks being perceived as elite-driven and distant from everyday concerns, unless it is clearly framed as serving national development objectives.

This is where the domestic framing of ASEAN matters. If ASEAN is treated as a foreign policy project detached from social and economic realities, political support may fluctuate with changes in government. If, however, ASEAN is embedded into narratives of economic diversification, education, labour mobility, and regional opportunity, it can become part of a broader state-building story.

The National Council's effectiveness will therefore depend not only on bureaucratic coordination, but on political ownership across party lines; a difficult but necessary condition for long-term policy continuity.

## Development Constraints and Institutional Capacity

Timor-Leste's developmental context adds another layer of complexity. Despite notable progress since independence, the country continues to face structural economic vulnerabilities such as dependence on finite petroleum revenues, limited industrial base, and capacity gaps within the public sector.

ASEAN integration offers potential benefits including access to markets, investment, and regional cooperation; but it also exposes these vulnerabilities. Chairmanship, in particular, requires sustained financial commitments including hosting summits, providing security, deploying trained diplomats, and managing communications at regional and global levels.

*Khoo Ying Hooi, PhD, is an Associate Professor at Universiti Malaya, Malaysia. She also serves on the International Advisory Council of the Centro Nacional Chega! (CNC).*



Khoo Ying Hooi

Comparative experience within ASEAN shows that smaller and less diversified economies face real constraints when chairing the organisation. Laos' recent chairmanship, for example, demonstrated how limited bureaucratic depth can strain national administrations, even when political will is strong. Cambodia's earlier chairmanships similarly revealed the importance of prioritisation and coalition-building to compensate for capacity gaps.

For Timor-Leste, the risk is not failure, but overextension, when trying to do too much too quickly, or adopting overly ambitious agendas that exceed institutional readiness.

This is why the timing matters. With three years still ahead before 2029 preparations intensify, Timor-Leste has a window to focus less on external messaging and more on internal strengthening such as training ASEAN-specialised civil servants, enhancing policy coordination mechanisms, and investing in diplomatic continuity.

## ASEAN Chairmanship as a Developmental Tool, Not a Showcase

A recurring mistake among newer ASEAN member states has been to treat Chairmanship as a moment of visibility rather than a governance instrument. Yet ASEAN Chairmanship can and should be leveraged to reinforce domestic reform rather than distract from it.

For Timor-Leste, this means resisting the temptation to frame 2029 as a moment to "prove readiness" to the region. Instead, Chairmanship should be framed as part of a longer process of institutional learning, where ASEAN obligations help discipline domestic governance standards.

This approach aligns with how more experienced ASEAN member states have gradually used Chairmanship to strengthen internal coordination, refine policy messaging, and consolidate bureaucratic expertise. It also reduces political pressure, allowing Timor-Leste to lead in ways consistent with its actual capacities.

In this sense, the National Council's value lies not in accelerating preparations, but in sequencing them wisely.

## Why Thinking Early Matters, but Rushing Does Not

The establishment of the National Council in 2026 is therefore best understood as institutional foresight rather than premature ambition. It reflects recognition that Chairmanship preparation is cumulative, shaped by years of administrative learning, political alignment, and development choices.

At the same time, the distance to 2029 should be preserved as a strategic advantage. Timor-Leste does not need to rush into thematic branding, ambitious declarations, or symbolic initiatives. What it needs now is patience through building capacity quietly, embedding ASEAN into domestic planning, and ensuring that elections do not derail long-term commitments.

If managed carefully, the path to 2029 can strengthen Timor-Leste regardless of the Chairmanship's eventual outcomes. If mismanaged, it risks becoming another elite-level project disconnected from public life.

Ultimately, Timor-Leste's ASEAN Chairmanship will reflect the kind of state Timor-Leste becomes by 2029, not simply how well it follows ASEAN procedures.

The real work lies not in preparing conferences, but in nurturing institutions capable of sustained regional engagement. It lies in aligning foreign policy ambition with domestic development realities, and in ensuring that ASEAN integration supports, rather than distracts from the social contract between state and citizens.

Seen this way, the National Council is not the beginning of Chairmanship preparations. It is a mirror revealing how seriously Timor-Leste is thinking about governance, continuity, and its future as a regional actor.

And with time still on its side, Timor-Leste has the rare opportunity to prepare deliberately, modestly, and intelligently; and those are the qualities that ASEAN, perhaps more than spectacle, ultimately values.

# 'MAF does more than bring people to hospital'

Story by Matt Painter

We talked to a hospital chaplain to find out how MAF supports patients and their families – beyond the flights that almost daily connect Timorese people with urgent treatment.



Ingrid Pinto I, MAF hospital chaplain. Photo: Matt Painter

"I think what we do as a team is really helpful for the Timorese people," said Ingrid Pinto I, MAF's hospital chaplain in Dili. "Because MAF does not just help to bring them here to the hospital, but we also give them care and support.

"Sometimes we might think it's not a big deal, but we can see that, for the patient, especially in their difficult situation, what we do is so meaningful to them. MAF do more than bring people to the hospital."



Ingrid gathers food and practical supplies to give to patients on the weekly hospital visit. Photo: Matt Painter

Since the early days of the flight operation which began in 2007, members of the MAF team have often visited hospital patients who have been flown in on medevacs from isolated communities. However, in 2023, MAF increased their holistic impact by adding a hospital chaplain to the team.

Ingrid took on the chaplaincy role in 2024 after studying public health in Indonesia. The 28-year-old from Viqueque is excited about MAF's impact on patients and their families.

**"We provide them with emotional support and our presence makes them feel less alone."**

— Ingrid Pinto I, MAF hospital chaplain



Ingrid visits a young man in hospital with serious leg injuries from a motorcycle accident, who was flown to Dili on a MAF medevac. Photo: Matt Painter

"We provide them with emotional support and our presence makes them feel less alone," she said.

"We don't just bring them here and then just let them go. We are with them in their difficult situation to provide what they need."

After providing an initial 'care pack' of essentials on arrival, Ingrid and other MAF staff make weekly visits to patients and their families who have been flown to the national capital. These chaplaincy visits include further practical gifts and an opportunity to chat and pray with patients together with their families.

Though the task is often physically and emotionally draining, Ingrid finds joy and encouragement in her role.



Ingrid visits the family of Marcelino Antones and Amonia De Lima, whose premature baby rests in a Dili hospital paediatric unit incubator. This family received two MAF medevacs - first for their baby and soon after for mother Amonia. Photo: Matt Painter

"The thing that I enjoy most is building a good relationship with the patient and the family. We really feel happy if they want to open up with us because we really want to help them, to listen to them," she said.

“We know that God can perform miracles. But I know that miracles don’t happen to everyone. But what I really admire is how even in difficult situations, the families still believe with their faith in God. I really see that faith becomes their hope. And I see how God also blesses them with a brave heart, even in the worst situations.”



Mother Natalia Gomes, baby Marcelina Lilia Gomes, with Ingrid, after their MAF medevac.  
Photo: Matt Painter

**“I can say it was a miracle”**

— Ingrid

Not long ago, Ingrid visited baby Marcelina and her family. After a medevac from Maliana, Marcelina was unconscious, severely ill with meningitis. The possibility of recovery was so low that the doctor told the family that the only option was to pray for their baby.

“We see a lot of patients with meningitis, and there's no hope,” Ingrid said. “And with this one, we thought it would be the same. She was unconscious during our first visit.

“But the next visit, she was already conscious and just doing fine. They even discharged her and she returned to Maliana with our flight. And that's how we see God really work, because even the doctor that treated the baby also said that it's a miracle that the baby can regain her consciousness. I can say it was a miracle.”



Ingrid Pinto I stands in front of one of MAF Timor-Leste's GA8 Airvan aircraft, which are kept at readiness for medevacs seven days a week.  
Photo: Mary Domtta

Ingrid is also pleased to develop new skills while working with MAF. She also serves in administration and finance; and will soon join the safety team.

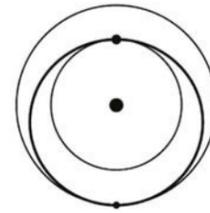
“When I started, I couldn’t drive,” she added. “I never imagined that I would drive someday!

“I can say it's been a great big opportunity for me to learn. I grow through MAF. They offer me the opportunity to learn, and learning how to drive is one example of that.”

Source: <https://mafint.org/news/2026-maf-does-more-bring-people-hospital>

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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...

Since the US dollar is Timor-Leste's currency, does fluctuation in the dollar's value affect Timorese folks' 'bang for the buck'? I'm not an economist, but nevertheless have opinions which, with 25 centavos, may buy a can of your favorite carbonated drink in an aluminum can. The short answer to the question above is 'no.' Fluctuations in the US dollar's worth, compared with other currencies, won't matter much. A key factor for Timorese is to 'buy locally,' when feasible. For example, when you buy vegetables or fruit, buy items which are produced by Timorese farmers - as opposed to the same items which are imported. There is a row of well-stocked fresh fruit outlets at the east end of Dili, alongside the main road which parallels the beach.

The US dollar's value will be challenged in 2026. Several factors show their fuzzy faces; President Trump's mishandling of the US economy is the most dire red flag. Even after a year into his second term, he still doesn't understand that tariffs are paid by the importing country's people, not by the exporter.

Whole sectors of the US economy are facing dire scenarios, not least; farming and manufacturing, but also tourist numbers coming to the USA. Many foreigners, particularly Canadians, are not making their ordinary annual vacationing plans. Las Vegas' and Florida tourist numbers are in the basement. The second most dire 'Sword of Democles' hanging over the US economy is; The Artificial Intelligence bubble. AI is in its infancy, but already accounts for about a third of the money coursing through the roulette wheel known as Wall Street. It's akin to the Titanic, moments after being gouged beneath the waves by the iceberg; Some people on board sense it could be dire, but are still sipping champagne on the decks. The third major factor is cryptocurrency, which, to me, is a giant digital Ponzi scheme. Like all money-speculation lures, it will take a vertical plunge where the 2% at the top of the pyramid (who cashed out quickly) will be grinning with bulging wallets, while 98% of investors will rue the day they got sucked into spending real money to buy ether. Not coincidentally, President Trump is intrinsically entwined with all three of the issues mentioned above. He has squashed any government oversight over crypto and AI, because he and his family are making billions of \$\$'s from those ruses.

Yet, for Timorese folks, half a world away, those types of financial earthquakes in NYC and Washington DC are not going to have much effect on day-to-day spending in Dili and the surrounding areas. We can sit by the beach, sipping pineapple juice, and watch the smoke rise from the other side of the planet.

Ken Albertsen  
Atauro Island  
kenalberts214@gmail.com

Note: The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Guide Post Magazine, its editors, advertisers or other contributors.

## SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLE ON PAGE 12

### QUICK CROSSWORD

HUGELY ESCAPE  
ARIC EPL  
INORDER GRAPE  
KUYMRM  
UPPER SCEPTRE  
IETNN  
GEE HEART LET  
RELAO  
INSTALL LOWER  
TTRIILE  
TRIES NOTHING  
EFAE OFE  
RAFFLE APPEAR

### QUICK CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

GARIBALDI ELF  
LYRIDAR  
INEXACT ISSUE  
BSTOTE  
NORTH LITTER  
EEEIRS  
SAMUELBECKETT  
SANOGA  
DISMAY ARGON  
SNABMAD  
CODES LIBERIA  
UESUEOR  
MAR EXECRATED

### 'THE TIMES' QUIZ

#### Answers:

- Henry VI
- Umberto I
- William the Conqueror
- Louis XIII
- H.H. Asquith
- China's invasion of Tibet
- A giant souk or market in Cairo
- Switzerland
- Owain Glyn Dwr or Owen Glendower
- Henry V
- Han Dynasty
- Vercingetorix
- The Jacobite Rising of 1715
- Albania
- Grand Duchess Anastasia of Russia
- Judaea (37 - 4 BC)
- Ho Chi Minh (meaning 'he who enlightens')
- Mary, Queen of Scots
- Thailand
- Stanley Baldwin

### THE TIMES SUDOKU

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

### "It's a Fact"

*Sharks existed before trees.*

*Sharks: ~400 million years old.*

*Trees: ~350 million years old.*

*Let that sink in.*

### "Dad Joke"

*I told my wife she was drawing her eyebrows too high.*

*She looked surprised.*

## "3 Panels Plays"

### THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE (in 3 Panels)



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## Domingas' Journey: Supporting Her Family and Starting a Construction Company After Joining the PALM Programme Led by SEFOPE-DNEE

Domingas, from Aileu municipality, set a clear vision when she first joined the Seasonal Worker Program — now known as the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme — in 2018. Over the years, she has travelled to Australia nine times, gaining valuable experience in horticulture while also supporting her family's future.

While Domingas worked in Australia, her husband remained in Aileu, caring for their three children and managing the construction business they established together. In both business and family life, their partnership has been built on trust and shared responsibility.

*"While I was away, my husband stayed with our children. He managed construction projects, and I provided the capital, investing in our business. We support each other for our family,"* said Mana Domingas.

Together, they have achieved remarkable milestones: building a three-storey house, purchasing a construction truck, and registering their construction company to actively participate in local development projects in Aileu municipality.

Domingas' journey has not been without challenges. After her initial deployment, she returned home briefly before heading back to Australia in 2019 — just before the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

*"I returned home in 2019, but after four months, I went back to Australia again — just before COVID-19 hit. We ended up staying for two years and six months,"* she recalled.

During this time, she picked oranges in Adelaide, worked on a strawberry farm in Queensland, and endured the emotional toll of separation from her family. Yet through it all, one thing remained constant: her faith in her family and their shared vision for a better future.

Mana Domingas' journey shows how the PALM scheme is more than just work abroad — it is a pathway for Timorese families to build businesses, strengthen communities, and turn resilience into lasting development at home.



Source: SEFOPE - Secretariat of State for Vocational Training and Employment

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## Featured Volunteer Profile: Kelly I.

*"Everything is based on the importance of relationships here, from time to work to cultural activities, and I think that is a beautiful thing!"*



**Community Economic Development Volunteer  
DECEMBER 2024 - DECEMBER 2026**

### 1. What got you interested in the Peace Corps?

I was interested in joining the Peace Corps for years, but it took me a little bit more time to build up the courage to apply. I loved the idea of getting out into the world, living and working with a culture completely different from my own, and hopefully making a difference by putting a bit of good into the world.

### 2. What projects are you working on?

Right now, I have a few projects that I have been working on. My local women's group is getting a shipment of tea out to Japan. And we are in the process of trying to build a local coffee shop for the community, which would be a place where even more products would be sold and would help tap into the local coffee tourism.

On the side, I have a weekly English club, where I spend time with the kids of my community teaching English, and on the other days I teach art and coloring.

I also have been slowly implementing a mural painting project that has started at home, but I hope to bring it into the community.

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

I have used several strategies to integrate into my community:

- Going into the kitchen and asking if I can help, whenever I can. If they don't want help I at least sit and talk with everyone.
- *Tuur Halimar* (sitting and talking)
- Going to church. Church is a huge part of my community, and it's important to my family so I make it a point to go.
- Trying to learn the local language, even just a little bit, even just making it known that I am attempting to learn.
- And finally going to as many of the local cultural events that I can, interacting with as many people as I can.

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

This is hard to answer because there have been so many highlights! I love my family and my community and having the opportunity to interact with everyone every day and learning just how connected everyone is has been so much fun. It's also taught me just how much I love kids, and the true importance of community.

It has also been amazing getting the chance to explore this beautiful country, when I can, and to see just how vast a small country can be, from climbing Mount Ramelau to visiting Atauro Island. I will forever hold these small adventures deep in my heart.

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

The kids. I love coming home every day to the chorus of "*Biin Kelly fila mai!!!*" and then they all run up and give me a hug. It makes me feel loved. I love taking the opportunity to color, play, and teach them new things.

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

I've always known and believed in the importance of family, friends, and the community, but somehow living in Timor-Leste has taken that belief to the next level. Everything is based on the importance of relationships here, from time to work to cultural activities, and I think that is a beautiful thing!



*Kelly loves coming home every day to a chorus of greetings from the children in her Timorese host family.*

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

I spend time reading, drawing/painting, journaling, and talking to my family.

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

Finishing up my projects, traveling and seeing more of Timor-Leste, learning more about the culture, and seeing different cultural events.

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

Prioritize family, friends, and relationships more. I will make it a priority to budget more wisely, and I will also probably still say "*Bondia!*" to everyone I meet.



*Kelly enjoys exploring Timor-Leste in her free time.*

### Guide Post Delivery Locations

Every month Guide Post Magazine is delivered to over 140 locations across Dili, including:

- Ala-ala Café
- Aloia Foundation
- ANZ Bank
- Arbiru Beach Resort
- Asia Development Bank
- Asia Foundation
- Australian Defense (DCP)
- Australian Embassy
- Australian Volunteers
- Bay View Hills
- Beachside Hotel
- BNU
- Burger King Colmera
- Cafe Letefoho
- California Cafe
- Castaway Bar
- Caz Bar
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- City 8
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- CRA Timor
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Source: <https://www.peacecorps.gov/what-we-do/life-in-the-peace-corps/volunteer-profiles/kelly-i/>

# Why, How, and What: The Story of the HOTL Association

By Marlo (General Manager for HOTL Association)



*Imagine standing on the peak of Mount Ramelau just as the sun spills gold across the clouds below you. Imagine diving into the crystal waters of Atauro Island or shore diving and snorkelling in Jaco Island, where the fish—or even the dugongs—practically greet you. Or imagine sitting in the cool highlands of Maubisse, cup of local coffee in hand, while an elder tells you a story that has been passed down for generations. This is Timor-Leste. And for too long, it has been the best-kept secret in Southeast Asia. But a group of local hotel owners got tired of keeping the secret. They got tired of watching travellers fly over us on their way to Bali or Lombok. They knew that the potential was here—hiding in plain sight. They just needed to unlock it together.*

## Why HOTL Association?

Back in 2019, a group of ten hotel owners in Dili sat down together. We weren't just there to complain about business. We were there because we all shared the same curiosity: *Who is coming to Timor-Leste, and what are they really looking for?*

We realised that we were all trying to figure this out alone. And that didn't make sense. So, we formed a nonprofit—the *Associação Hotel Owners of Timor Lorosa'e (AHOTL)*—because we believed that together, we could do more than just run hotels. We could build an industry.

We saw something special. We saw that tourism could be a sleeping giant for our economy. But more than that, we saw that the Timorese people already have the foundation of a world-class hospitality culture: a deep sense of community, respect, and natural politeness. Our "Why" is simple: We believe that by working together, we can build on that strength. We want to turn Timor-Leste from a hidden spot on the map into an unbeaten track that the world is excited to explore. It's about bringing Timor-Leste to the world, and bringing the world here to experience the real us.

## How HOTL Association?

We quickly learned that if we wanted to understand the market, we couldn't just wait for visitors to show up. We had to go out and connect.

That realisation shaped our "How." We knew that lifting our standards wasn't something hotels could do alone. It takes the whole tourism family—transport, food, attractions, and local guides—working together.

So, starting in 2025, we hit the ground running. We partnered with organisations like the *Market Development Facility (MDF)*, *The Asia Foundation (TAF)*, and the *Ministry of Tourism*. But most importantly, we worked hand-in-hand with our members. Together, we became the host for the industry.

*HOTL Association: Bringing Timor-Leste to the world, and bringing the world to Timor-Leste.*

We started bringing the world to Timor-Leste. We invited travel agents from Australia, Singapore, and Malaysia to experience our country firsthand. We took them trekking up Mount Ramelau, snorkelling in the marine paradise of Atauro, tasting coffee in the highlands of Maubisse, and walking through the history of Balibo. We didn't just show them sights; we set up B2B meetings so they could build real business relationships with local Timorese operators.

We've worked with media from Japan's *NHK TV* to Germany's *Tagesspiegel*, and we've gotten features in Australian outlets like *NT News* and Malaysian platforms like *The Star*. We even ran a tour guide workshop to make sure our stories are told by the people who know them best.

## What is HOTL Association?

So, what is *HOTL*? We are the leading membership organisation for Timor-Leste's hospitality and tourism sector. We are the group that designs those familiarisation tours, that connects local operators with international agents, and that tells the world why this country is worth the trip.

We are the bridge between the incredible potential of the Timorese people and the travellers who are looking for an authentic, unbeaten path. From the founding ten hotels, we've grown to over eighty members—and we're just getting started.

## We invite you to be part of this journey.

Whether you are a hotel owner, a tour guide, a coffee shop in the highlands, or just someone who believes in the future of tourism here, we want to hear from you. Let's work together to put Timor-Leste on the map.

To stay in touch or to learn how you can get involved, reach out to the author, *Marlo (General Manager for HOTL Association)*, directly. You can send an email to [marlo@hotl.tl](mailto:marlo@hotl.tl) or send a message on WhatsApp to **+670 7402 9163**.

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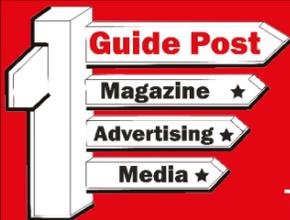
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## Dili Sights of Interest by Jonty Crane

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.

### Dili Lighthouse

Dating from 1896, the 19m high lighthouse is a landmark on the Dili waterfront. It was altered in 1932 and between 1948 and 1949, and more recently refurbished in 2003 with Japanese funding.

Public Transport: Mikrolet #9.



#### 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](http://www.exploringtimor.com), and has many videos promoting Timor-Leste on YouTube (@ExploringTimorLeste) and TikTok (@exploringtimor).



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# It felt like someone was talking to me

## How Efa found comfort and clarity through On My Mind

By Simine Alam



Efa  
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At the age of 27, Efa is juggling a lot. She is a university student in her final year, a small business owner and a young woman building an independent life in Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste. Originally from Ermera municipality, she moved to the city in search of opportunity, like many young people her age, carrying both big dreams and quiet worries with her.

*“I do everything,” she says with a laugh, “I’m studying, running a small business, and still trying to find a stable job. It’s complicated, but I try.”*

Alongside her studies, Efa runs a paper-recycling business, creating handmade wedding invitations, notebooks and souvenirs. Her days are busy, her weekends are often filled with work, coffee catchups with friends, and moments of reflection about the future. “I hope for financial stability,” she says, “And I want to learn more about Business Innovation technology and AI.”

But like many young people in Timor-Leste, Efa has also had to navigate emotional challenges, often without formal support.

### Growing up without the language for mental health

Efa’s childhood was shaped by separation and loss. Her parents divorced when she was very young. “I didn’t see my mother again until I was 11, but I know her prayers were always with me,” she says. She was raised by her grandparents and her father, who worked hard to raise his children as a single parent.

*“My grandparents were like my second mother and father,” she says, “They raised us until they passed away.” These early experiences influenced how Efa learned to cope. “I don’t take things seriously sometimes,” she admits, “I make jokes, even in serious moments. I think it’s because growing up, I didn’t always feel I was heard.”*

Mental health was not something openly discussed in her family. “For my family, we don’t really talk about mental health,” she explains, “But with my friends, we do. We always check on each other.” Efa believes this gap between generations is deeply connected to Timor-Leste’s history. “My generation is the first generation after independence,” she says, “The previous generation was focused on survival. They didn’t have the space to talk about mental health.”

### Discovering the On My Mind podcast by chance

Efa first came across the *On My Mind* podcast unexpectedly on a billboard in Dili. Curious, she scanned the QR code and started listening. “My first impression was, ‘Wow, this is something new for Timor-Leste,’” she recalls, “It felt modern. It was digital. It felt like something young people actually need.”

The eight-episode series was launched during World Mental Health Day in October 2025 and promoted through UNICEF’s social media platforms and school-based awareness sessions in four municipalities. Developed in partnership with Spotify and supported by UNICEF Headquarters’ mental health and psychosocial support team, the podcast draws on evidence-based, expert-reviewed global resources to ensure high-quality and reliable information for young listeners.

What stood out immediately was the language. For the first time, Efa was listening to mental health content in Tetum. “Before, I heard mental health podcasts only in English or Portuguese,” she says, “But hearing it in our own language felt different. I felt like someone knew me. Like someone was hearing me.”

Listening while working, the podcast became a quiet companion in her day. “It felt like I was talking with a friend,” she says, “The voices were calm. The pace was slow. It helped me breathe.”

### Learning new tools, and using them

One episode, in particular, stayed with her: the first episode of the series. “People say mental health issues are a problem, but this episode explained that they’re a normal thing,” Efa explains, “Everyone goes through them.”

She says that the tool that has been most useful to her is the 5-4-3-2-1 exercise, which has helped her to deal with anxiety. The podcast has helped her recognize her anxiety when it shows up, even if in subtle ways, and then practice the techniques to help her to work through it. “I practiced it while I was working,” she says, “I focused on what I could see, hear, smell. It gave my mind something else to hold on to, instead of the stress in my head.”

These tools have helped her in everyday situations, even in moments when she feels the urge to deflect stressful situations with humour. “Now, when I feel anxious or want to make a joke instead of being serious, I stop,” she says, “I take a breath. I focus.”

### Why it matters

For Efa, *On My Mind* fills an important gap. “In Timor-Leste, it’s hard to talk to professionals,” she explains, “It’s a small society and everyone knows everyone. People are scared of being judged.” That’s why the podcast feels safe. “You can listen privately. You don’t have to explain yourself to anyone.”

She now recommends the podcast to her friends, sister and cousins. “I don’t always know what they’re going through,” she says, “But maybe there’s something in the podcast they need to hear.”

Looking ahead, Efa hopes to see even more content supporting young people’s mental health, including episodes that talk about family problems, work stress and relationships. But above all, she hopes the conversation continues.

*“This podcast gives young people courage,” she says, “It helps them feel less alone.”*

For Efa, that feeling of being understood, in her own language has made all the difference.



Efa proudly carries the Timor-Leste flag at the ceremony in which she received her certificate for participating in an exchange programme at the University of Nevada, Reno, USA.

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My lowest point was the second time I was sexually abused. From that moment onwards, I started having suicidal thoughts and even attempted to end my life with medication. The pain of betrayal was overwhelming. I began to isolate myself, cried constantly and had nightmares about death, my own and others.

My mother eventually invited me to the Help Centre and, by following their guidance, my inner self started changing. I forgave everyone who had hurt me, started sleeping well and found a reason to live. Self-love and true happiness was born in me, allowing me to love myself and others, all because I found the Help Centre. - **Sandra**



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