

## DAYS FOR GIRLS

Days for Girls is an international NGO founded in 2008 by Celeste Mergens after visits to Africa. She wondered why girls were missing out of school and found there were feminine hygiene issues. It was estimated that in some countries girls miss at least 6 weeks of their schooling each year while menstruating. Days for Girls' aim is to give back those days to the school girls by providing non disposable sanitary resources along with education and support.

Celeste's goal became to reverse the cycle of poverty by enabling girls to remain in school. Girls and women were told, "You can be the voice, you can make a difference!"

Days for Girls now has over 60,000 volunteers worldwide and has impacted over 300,000 girls and women. There are DFG volunteer groups in the Geelong region.

Celeste sees this success has been focused on some simple goals:

1. Seek the wisdom of those you serve and listen.
2. Be culturally, physically and environmentally relevant.
3. Look closer - help communities thrive and maintain sustainability.
4. Keep it simple - what is effective?
5. Community led development - give them the resources to build their own, so they become the leaders and we become the support.



Janet Taylor, through the **Soroptomists**, has obtained an initial grant of \$500 for a Days for Girls pilot project for school girls in Viqueque, and if successful it will be ongoing. For further information visit <https://www.daysforgirls.org/australia/>

## TRIVIA NIGHT

Christian College will hold a Trivia Night on **Friday 18 August**, their big fundraiser for the year.

6.30 for 7.00pm start. \$10 a head - book your table of 10. BYO food and drink (strictly no alcohol).

Venue: Geelong West Town Hall, 153 Pakington Street

Contact: Senior Campus on 5241 1577

Proceeds will go to upgrading the Buikarin kindergarten.

## WITH ONE SEED UPDATE by Patrice Hall

I attended a celebration night of 13 years of With One Seed in Timor-Leste in Melbourne in late May. **Mana Leo**, (Leopoldina Guterres - Co founder of With One Seed in Baguia), was present. For those who attended the GVFS dinner, she was in the film Andrew Mahar showed of the project in Baguia. Leo is the Principal of 5 Catholic schools in Baguia. Born and raised in the area, she has been witness to the extraordinary changes and challenges that her community has faced over the past 40 years, ranging from living in a Portuguese colony, to the Indonesian invasion, to independence and self-sovereignty.

Mana Leo spoke of the difference the project has made in her community, building partnerships and relationships and valuing the people on the ground, not just the educated. Originally 12 farmers and now over 1,100 farmers are connected with the program. The sub District Administrator was also present and spoke about the program's positive impact on the local community.

With One Seed has plans to extend to Viqueque in the future. For further information, visit <https://withoneseed.org.au/>

# SCHOOL GARDEN FOR UAMORI by Patrice Hall

Following my visit at Easter and discussions with Mariano and Jaime who both brought up the topic of school gardens again, I decided to privately sponsor and support a proof of concept pilot project at Uamori school in Viqueque. It has had the overwhelming support of the Principal Antonio Ferreira Gonzaga (pictured), and also the school community and a band of local volunteers admirably led by Jaime De Jesus whom I have known since 2005.



I receive regular updates including photos and videos showing the involvement and enthusiastic local support and the ongoing development and progress of the project.



Our objectives with the school garden are to promote outdoor learning focusing on permaculture principles which include garden bed design, recycling, composting, food nutrition, food security, collecting and growing seeds and tree nursery. The project is deliberately based at just one school, Uamori, which was already fenced, in order to maintain control and enable monitoring and evaluation aiming for positive outcomes. We hope the project will be able to be replicated at other schools in the future. Jaime has also been supported by Ego Lemos, founder of Permatil and Permaculture in Timor-Leste.



# KARDINIA INTERNATIONAL'S TRIP TO TIMOR-LESTE

## by Jonathan Chapman

An update from the second Kardinia group from Viqueque... the warmth of our connection to this very special community has been notably reinforced by two 2 week visits with a total of 37 students. The well tested approach of utilising the medium of teaching English as a mechanism to connect on a personal level and promote education at the same time has been highly successful.

During the course of the 2 visits we have managed to get a signed MOU describing the responsibilities to develop a science and technology centre, a laboratory technician and supply of school grade chemicals. None of this would have happened without the wonderful support of Mariano and Paulina da Silva.

We have also met with Jamie and his team and shared his vision of developing biodynamic gardens both for education and future food security at a community level. Along with Patrice's support, Jamie and his crew have set yet another tangible direction of shared development.

Our time here is almost done now and I would hope this is the start of our ongoing connection between our communities.



# LOCAL VIQUEQUE PROFILE

**Samuel A.E da Costa DOB 1984**

**Hobbies:** singing, music

**Family:** 6 children ranging from 13 years to 17 months

Samuel was also one of the original band of volunteers who helped a Christian College work party renew the school library roof at SMR in 2004. He was a volunteer at Uma Alin from 2005 and co-ordinator from 2016 to present. Samuel visited Geelong in 2016 for 3 months teaching local students about the culture, geography and politics of his country. He has also visited Australia as a seasonal worker for two periods.



## **How the Geelong connection changed his life**

Samuel sees that the Geelong connection has helped the local community with education, health, sponsorships, scholarships and training. He believes it is an honour to have the people of Geelong support the future development of the district and hopes for the continued support.

Personally Samuel says the Geelong connection gave him opportunities he would never have had, including achieving a degree in Education and English. He has learned a lot and gained new skills and experiences.

Connecting with Geelong has helped him to see the future, to have a dream and achieve it with encouragement, despite failures and disappointments. He is optimistic about the future both personally and for his community, and appreciated the opportunity to share his story with us.

## **THE AUSTRALIAN SEASONAL WORKER PROGRAM - update by Chris Hansen**

**Australian Seasonal Worker Program  
Douglas Daly NT**

**Sunday 23rd July 2023**



In the last edition of *Manten Kontaktu* you were introduced to Octaviano, a young man from Viqueque, who is currently working in the Northern Territory as part of the Australian Seasonal Worker program. He arrived in Australia on the 1st May. There are currently 5,000 East Timorese working in Australia “remitting 37.5 million dollars each year to their families in Timor-Leste” (Senator the Hon Penny Wong July 2023). Octaviano is a qualified Civil engineer but working in Australia as an unskilled labourer.

Octaviano is immensely grateful for the opportunity to work in Australia but it has been tough going. He is working on a watermelon farm in Douglas Daly, Northern Territory, about two and half hours by road from Darwin. Accommodation is a converted, air conditioned shipping container. Octaviano’s rent and medical insurance levy are deducted from his weekly pay. He pays for his own food and transport costs to Darwin (about every two weeks) to purchase food supplies. The cost of his airfare to Darwin and work visa have also been deducted from his wages (unskilled labourer). Daily shifts are 12 hours, mostly outdoors.

In June, the entire camp (about 60 workers) came down with ‘a virus’. All work ceased for 10 days. There have also been extended periods of no work based on whether the fruit is ripe for picking. Unfortunately, the workers still have to pay rent and get to Darwin to buy food through these times. Octaviano says the biggest challenges are the isolation, boredom and homesickness. There have been problems amongst some of the workers due to the problems associated with their living conditions, including one or two seasonal workers absconding. He loves Australia and enjoys his work, but the 12 hour shifts are physically exhausting. Octaviano is employed until the week before Christmas 2023.