

## Timor Leste

Timor Leste is the poorest country in our region and one of the world's poorest.

Nearly 400 years of neglect and suppression during the Portuguese colonial period was followed by the brief but brutal Indonesian occupation. When the Indonesians were forced to leave, they took what they could with them and destroyed what they couldn't. The result is that most people live on less than \$1 a day and the malnutrition rate is among the highest in the world.

There has always been a food deficit towards the end of the dry season. However, the virtual failure of the 'wet' season in the last few years has compounded the people's difficult situation.

## Friends of Vemasse

We are one of almost 50 such groups linking Councils in Australia with Districts and Sub-Districts of Timor Leste (East Timor). Vemasse is a Sub-District of the District of Baucau and consists of seven villages and 24 hamlets.

The major aim is to develop a long-term relationship with people in Vemasse and to transfer resources there so that we may assist in rebuilding people's lives.

## Friendship Agreement Vemasse and Monash

**In December 2008, Monash City Council agreed to form a Friendship Agreement with the Sub-District of Vemasse.**

**This was signed in May 2009 – a most important step in the growth of the relationship.**

## What we are doing

**Thanks to Alex Gusmao, formerly a Community Development student at Victoria University and from Vemasse, there is a committee in Vemasse through which we work.**

**Alex visited the villages and got together a group, which represents Schools, Women's Groups, the Churches, Local Government and other Community Organisations, and they have drawn up and prioritised their needs.**

**The committee has done an excellent job in accounting for money sent.**

## Project Support – Schools

Despite the impact of the drought, the Vemasse committee determined its number one priority is the education of its youth. They asked us to support two schools – the Junior Secondary in Liolubo Village located in the hills and the Senior Secondary School in Vemasse.

Neither of these schools currently receives any government support, so the teachers are volunteers and there is little in the way of equipment, writing materials and text books.

We are also sending books, writing materials, school furniture and school bags for schools generally in Vemasse Sub-District. Rotary graciously ships these for us.

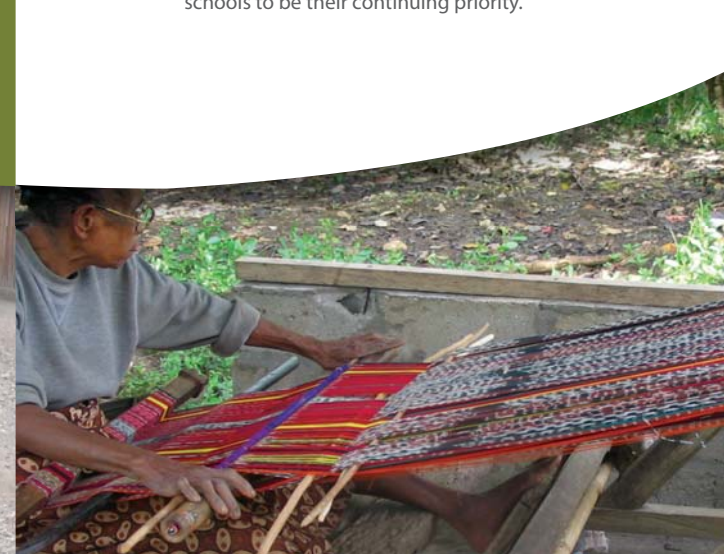
## Project Support – Weaving

Some money has been provided to enable the older women to pass on the skills to the girls for the traditional beautiful weaving for which Timor Leste is known. This is needed to help prevent these skills being lost.

## Visit to Vemasse

Four of our committee visited Vemasse in June 2008 and received a welcome worthy of royalty!

A Friendship Agreement people to people was signed. They reaffirmed the support of the two schools to be their continuing priority.



## How can you help?

- Become a Friend of Vemasse- \$10 per annum (to address below)
- Make a donation (to address below)
- Register to receive information of the group's activities
- Offer your help at future
- Fundraising events
- Volunteer your skills that may be of use here and in Vemasse.

### Phone:

Barbara: 9561 1185  
Allan: 9885 6083

### Or write to:

Mr A. Clausen,  
18 Shaw Street,  
Ashwood, 3147.

For more information visit our web site  
<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~vemasse/>

## Friends of Vemasse

Friends in fostering a sustainable East Timor



## Friends of Vemasse

A friendship relationship between the people and Sub-District of Vemasse and the people of the City of Monash

One of the network of Timor Leste – Australia  
Community-to-Community Friendship Groups

