

TIMOR LESTE REGION

Official Languages: **Portuguese and Tetum**

Vision Statement

We, called by the Holy Triune God from various nations and cultures, live together in intercultural fraternity as witnesses proclaiming the Reign of God to all people and creatures.

Mission Statement

In obedient response to the signs of the times, we make a preferential missionary commitment to:

- *The East Timorese people that they may further grow in the ecclesial practice of their personal faith in Jesus Christ.*
- *The East Timorese families that they may gain stable and sustaining ties within Christian homes of their own.*
- *The East Timorese youth that they may attain decent education to mature in helpful knowledge, moral wisdom, and personal faith.*
- *The growing number of foreign migrants that they may find welcome in local communities of faith, and defense for their human rights.*

1. Societal Setting

Timor Leste has a total population of 1.1 million. In terms of politics, the recent national election, which was held in May 2017 for Pre-



sident and in August 2017 for the parliament, shows that Timor Leste is now on the verge of enjoying political stability as noticed by the international observers during the election. The outflow of Timorese Overseas Workers to other nations such as England, Ireland, and Korea is also notable. Albeit, there is still much work to be done when it comes to the educational system of Timor Leste; generally the literacy rate is getting better. Economically, it is a very poor country and a lot of work needs to be done to improve the economic situation of the people.

2. Ecclesial Setting

Catholics make up 98% of the population in the country. The rest belong to Protestant groups and Islam. There is an increasing number of Protestants in this country now. The Timorese people are deeply attached to their old traditions, especially their devotion to the dead. They have this special kind of ritual called “adat” where the whole family clan gathers together to ask for a special intention from the dead and to pray for them. It is part of the daily life activities of the people of Timor Leste. The challenge is that some people leave the Catholic faith because of economic reasons. Some, because it is too costly to keep the tradition, resort to other religions, especially Protestantism, because of their different belief about the dead.

The people in general are very religious but some are still clinging to animism. The government has funded the building of several churches in Timor Leste and also allocated a budget as aid to the local church every year. Vocations are also increasing, especially in the religious orders. There is a growing awareness of the people of Timor Leste as they are becoming more open to work with other religions. Unlike before, the Timorese people are very accommodating towards other faiths. As the years go by, they begin to understand the value of living together as brothers and sisters regardless of religion.

3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Parish	13	29.5	41.3	29.7
Education	11	25.0	34.4	21.2
Schools	7			
Universities	4			
Formation/ SVD Vocation	2	4.5	0	8.5
Administration/ Support	5	11.5	10.3	5.7
Other Apostolates	6	13.5	10.6	9.0
JPIC	1			
Bible	1			
Communication	1			
Mission Animation	1			
Others	2			

Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	2	4.5	0	13.7
Retired/Sick	0	0	3.4	6.6
Others	5	11.5	0	5.7

Parishes: We administer 8 parishes: 2 parishes in the Diocese of Baucau, 3 parishes in the Diocese of Dili, and 3 parishes in the Diocese of Maliana. This reflects the pastoral commitment of SVD confreres to help the local Church. The people also greatly appreciate the mission of SVD in those parishes. Many people have a good understanding of the Christian teachings, but they may not be so good at applying these teachings in the practice of a Christian life, especially for those who live in remote areas. Indeed, the parishes which are taken care of by the SVD are located in remote areas, and therefore we need to do a lot of work for the primary and the new evangelization.

Other Apostolates: One confrere is working closely with the Youth for Christ and Couples for Christ as spiritual mentor. Another confrere is working with ecumenism. There is also an orphanage which is located in one of the mountainous areas of the district of Oecusse and is managed by our confrere.

Characteristics Dimensions

Bible: The following activities were organized in recent times: Bible Quiz Competition among students and youth from our parishes and schools during Mission Sunday; writing a Sunday reflection for television and the newspaper regularly; Bible Study in some streets of Dili (Street Bible Study); and Bible Workshop for Schools and Christian Basic groups.

Mission Animation: This was carried out in the following ways: mission orientation for Indo-

Leste region's newly-ordained missionaries from Indonesia was held in November 2016; fund raising for mission activities such as mission box, brochures, Mission Sunday, Soverdi group Mass intention and contributions from our confreres; Characteristic Dimensions work evaluation is integrated in our regional monthly meeting; information sharing through our region's newsletter about our missions; annual retreat on an intercultural topic for SVD members; and a workshop with "Jovem Verbita" (SVD youth) during 40 years celebration of SVD presence in Timor Leste.

Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation: We conducted a seminar on Human Trafficking which was held in June 2016 at the SVD community in Dili. The conference was attended by representatives from all religious congregations in Timor Leste.

Communication: We have two newsletters: a) The Berita Newsletter – selected confreres are asked to contribute some reflections for this biannual newsletter based on their life experiences in their respective apostolates and work; b) The SVD TLS region webpage – is one way of promulgating not only vocations to religious life but also a way of sharing with the world our SVD missions in this region.

Priorities among Congregational Directions

The region has chosen four Congregational Directions for its *ad extra* mission. We have tried our best to make them the center of our missionary activities.

Primary and New Evangelization: Some parishes have exercised the SVD's Characteristic Dimensions, for example, *Lectio Divina* and formation for the youth. Some parishes have difficulty to implement it because the full program given by the diocese takes over our priorities. Sometimes it is difficult to gather young people who dropped out from schools. Some families do not give importance to the life of the Church. The approach to new evangelization seems to be difficult. Young people are more interested in socializing. People's traditional mentality in faith is still very strong.

Family and Youth: The family center has been well attended by couples who are preparing themselves for marriage. We have been regularly visiting the families as well. Our challenge is how to involve the youth more actively in the parish life.

Pastoral Apostolate for Migrants: Timor Leste as a new nation has become a home to many foreigners who come to help in developing the country. As a response to this reality, Timor Leste has continued to serve two particular migrant communities, Filipinos and Indonesians. We would like to reach out to the migrants of Timor Leste who are working and/or studying in South Korea and in England, in partnership with SVD confreres in those respective countries, but we could not realize this because of lack of personnel. We have strengthened our interfaith dialogue, especially in ecumenical services.

Education

Ensino Básico Macadique (Secondary School), Uatolari: The ownership of the secondary school Ensino BasicoMacadique in Uatolari, Diocese of Baucau is still undecided. For the time being, we are still in consultation with the Bishop of Baucau. We will hand over the school to the diocese at any time they are ready. Despite the issue of ownership, we have committed ourselves to work at this school together with the lay people. The challenge is to make our full presence effective in the school.

Colégio do Verbo Divino, Palaca: We are grateful for the status of the colégio which was granted by our generalate. The colégio is now in its third year of operation. At present we have 300 students and 22 teachers. We have committed ourselves to the development of the colégio both academically and in terms of the infrastructure. The correspondence with the generalate regarding the construction of the colégio is in progress. We have also requested the financial support from the TLS government and other donors.

Instituto de Ciências Religiosas (ICR) in Lahane, Dili: This is owned by the diocese of Dili. We have been administering ICR since 1986. This institute is a formation center for lay people to become catechists, religious education teachers in secondary schools, and also to become social development agents. Recently, the regional superior and his council met the bishop and discussed the process of turning over the management of

the institute to the diocese. In that meeting, it was decided that a committee has to be formed. With some of the diocesan priests, three of our confreres are appointed by the regional Superior to be part of that team. The first meeting of the transition team will be held in October 2017.

Collaboration with SSpS and others

A monthly recollection is held for the SVDs and for the three sister congregations namely: SSpS, PRR sisters and CIJ sisters. Every month we have different topics and speakers with an intention to promote a better collaboration among these congregations.

SVD Lay Partners

There is a small group near the SVD Community in Dili whose members devote their time in weekly adoration, prepare the daily Masses and assist SVD activities such as anniversary celebrations, conferences, etc. This group, although is not yet officially organized by the SVDs, acts as our lay partners in prayer and in our work.

4. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Intra*

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012
Clerics	35	32
Brothers (final vows)	6	2
Brothers (temporal vows)	0	2
Scholastics	3	0
Total	44	36

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012
Average age	44.4	44.8
Nationalities	8	5

Spirituality: We recognize the significance of spirituality as the root of our religious life and mission. We continue to rekindle our spiritual life personally and in community. We have acknowledged the difficulty of praying together in our communities/parishes, because we do not have a prayer book in the Tetum language. In order to resolve this issue, we have agreed to use the English breviary as our common prayer book. Despite these challenges, we remind ourselves continuously to renew our commitment in our spiritual life by praying and sustaining our communities and parishes with Bible sharing.

Community: The cultural differences among the confreres do not block our good relationships. These differences have become our richness. Each confrere makes an effort to place himself in front of other confreres with respect for each other, dialogue and good communication. The reality of having different backgrounds has helped us to deepen our understanding and knowledge about others and their cultures. A sound understanding of the local language (Tetum) has also become a key for our success in the mission field.

The tensions that previously occurred due to ethnic issues have slowly reduced. We are reminded to be forgiving towards our confreres

who may have hurt us not only in words, but also in deeds. Finding a competent and qualified mediator would be a good way to resolve

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the problems among our confreres. Furthermore, in order to prevent old problems from repeating, we are reminded not to retell any problem which happened in the past to newer members. We also remind ourselves not to talk about any confrere when he is not present. All confreres are invited to understand that the official language of the society is either English or Spanish.

Leadership: We have shown good leadership skills, always consulting and supporting each other in our region. Our leadership team has practiced dialogue with one another in the community as well as at the workplace. The leadership team has always made consultations before making decisions. It always works together with SVD members in the parishes and communities. We are aware that we need to practice continuously a participative leadership model at the parish level. The unity of the regional council is an absolute necessity for the unity of the region. Workshops for new leaders and district superiors are needed before they exercise their assignments.

Finance: Every confrere contributes to self-reliance of the region. As per the norms of the Society, the salaries/donations are to be given to the

region; we have agreed that they are to be given directly to the treasurer of the region/communities. To support transparency, we have decided on two administrative models/systems, namely: the SVD administration book for stipends, salaries, and donations and the parish administration book for collections and certificates. A report will be submitted once every three months to the region and diocese. All parishes/communities must have a yearly financial plan. According to the decision made at the meeting of the Indo-Leste provincials/regional and visitators in Ledalero-Indonesia, any confrere who has a debt must take full responsibility for it.

Formation: For the time being, the formation house for postulants has been moved to Batu-gade. To build a new formation house, land has been bought in Hera. Our future plan is that within five years our postulants will no longer be sent to Nenuk, IDT-Indonesia. After the postulancy, postulants will study philosophy at the Salesian's Philosophical School in Dili. The novitiate program will begin after their philosophy course, either in the Philippines or Timor Leste. To support this, a few confreres will be trained to be formators.

Before receiving a new assignment, we recommend that the young confreres visit some of the SVD's mission sites in Timor Leste. It is highly recommended to conduct an ongoing formation opportunity each year for younger as well as for elderly confreres.