

BONDIA – GOOD MORNING FROM TIMOR!

I have been living in Timor-Leste for nearly four months now. I am loving my time here and have been made to feel very welcome by the local people. My time has been spent volunteering at Klibur Domin (KD) in Tibar, a village seventeen kilometres west of the capital, Dili. In Tetum, Klibur Domin literally means 'sharing with love', and that is certainly what happens here.

Klibur Domin's mission is to 'relieve suffering without discrimination' and they do that by providing free treatment, accommodation, good nutrition and support to patients with tuberculosis, various disabilities, mental illness and those on dialysis.

Staff from Klibur Domin also travel out into the rural towns and villages providing Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) for people with disability and actively searching for people with tuberculosis (TB). Recently, Klibur Domin opened a dental clinic, with dentists coming from Australia to work with and mentor the local dental nurses. These local nurses treat people in the dental clinic and also travel out into the community providing education and free dental treatment to all who need it, especially children in schools. Half of the money raised by St Columba's School Ballarat North earlier this year, is being used by KD to support the work of the dental clinic.



I am spending most of my time here assisting the Managing Director, Joaquim, with a number of different projects. One of our main projects at the moment is a proposal for the development of a thirty-six bed mental health facility attached to KD that will provide safe accommodation, treatment and support to the most vulnerable; particularly women and children. The number of people suffering with mental health problems in Timor-Leste is very high and there is currently only one small facility focussing on mental health for the entire population of 1.25 million.

One of the highlights of my time here has been to travel out with the TB Team to the rural district of Bobanaro, in the high mountains of western Timor-Leste looking for people with tuberculosis. We travelled for over seven hours, on roads that were sometimes not more than a 'goat track' to reach small, very remote villages. Going from door to door,



we visited each of the homes, educating people about the signs and symptoms of tuberculosis and actively searching for people with TB. If a tuberculosis suspect is identified, they are left with small cups to collect two early morning sputum samples. After collection, the samples are tested through microscopy and sent to Klibur Domin for testing using the GeneXpert Machine; a machine that detects TB rapidly and with a very high accuracy rate. Some of those found with TB can be treated within their local community, while others are transported back to Klibur Domin to undergo up to eight months of intensive treatment onsite. The good news is, that nearly all those who complete treatment are cured of TB. Considering that Timor-Leste has the second highest TB burden in the world and that three people die of TB in Timor-Leste every day, the work of the Klibur Domin TB Team is absolutely vital in the fight to eradicate tuberculosis.

Another highlight has been to accompany the CBR team to a number of local primary schools where we have talked with the students about different types of disability and how important it is to include children with disability

into their schools. Educating teachers and students is vital to break down the stigma associated with disability here in Timor. During these visits I have been able to distribute uniforms to each of the children and a few basketballs for each of the schools. They are very gratefully received.

Occasionally on the weekend, I am able to drive a number of the patients with disability and TB to the beach for a swim or paddle. For many of those who come from the high mountains, it is their first visit to the beach and there is great joy and excitement to be had.

I leave Timor-Leste in mid December, returning back to Ballarat in time for Christmas. I am really looking forward to catching up with everyone on my return to St Columba's in the new year.

Kim Butler



Ryder-Cheshire Australia supports Klibur Domin. If you are interested in making a donation to support the work of Klibur Domin, please see this link <https://ryder-cheshire.org/store/donate/>