



**St CANICE'S**  
RAILACO

# Project Update

January – June 2023

## Railaco Projects Timor Leste



*Children in Railaco enjoy protein-rich meals thanks to the Feeding Program supported by St Canice's Parish*

## Overview

For 20 years, St Canice's Parish has been working with Railaco Jesuit Mission to improve the health, nutrition, and access to education of the community with a focus on the most disadvantaged families, children, and youth.

The population of Railaco and communities nearby experience extreme disadvantage and the area has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the country. Many families cannot afford to provide nutritious meals and the children suffer from malnutrition, weak immunity and poor health.

Young people from marginalised households and remote communities find it hard to access schooling, particularly higher-level education, that is essential to lifting them from poverty and opening future opportunities.

St Canice's Parish is helping to address these key issues affecting the community's wellbeing and future.

This update provides information on the activities and targets achieved during the period January to June 2023 that have been implemented with your generous support:

- A Feeding Program for vulnerable children in the remote villages of Railaco.
- Quality education at the *Escola Secundária Nossa Senhora de Fátima* (NOSSEF) secondary school for rural students who otherwise may not achieve a high school education.

## Project Highlights and Impacts

Thanks to the support of St Canice's Parish:

- **704 people have directly benefited** from the feeding program and NOSSEF school support during the first six months of 2023.
- **350 children received nutritious meals** three times weekly through the feeding program.
- **Children served by the feeding program have gained weight** towards reaching a healthy weight for age and therefore are at a decreased risk of malnutrition.
- **338 Students at NOSSEF gained a quality education** in a range of subjects due to the employment of qualified teachers.
- **All NOSSEF students passed their end of semester exams.**
- **16 qualified teachers** employed part time at NOSSEF, to improve class coverage and positively impact student's academic achievement.

## Who are we reaching?

The project has successfully reached families, children, and youth in Railaco and addressed key areas of education and nutrition helping families and the younger generation to work towards breaking the cycle of poverty.

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>TARGET PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>Jan-June 2023 ACTUALS</b>
<b>Feeding Program</b>	350 children	350 children
<b>NOSSEF School Students</b>	380 children	338 children
<b>NOSSEF Teachers Salary support</b>	15 part-time teachers	16 part-time teachers
<b>TOTAL PEOPLE SERVED</b>	745	<b>704 participants</b>

## What has the project achieved?

### Feeding Program:

With the financial support of St Canice's parishioners, 350 children (145 girls) in three different locations of Lebdodon, Caitarehei, and Cocoa were provided food freshly prepared by feeding program team on the morning of the lunch-time meal distribution. Each portion/meal contained rice, beans or vegetables, and with protein (chicken/egg/tofu/tempeh).

These protein-rich foods are difficult for parents to afford or to source – with the usual household meals consisting of cassava, sweet potatoes, cassava leaves, and sweet potato buds and corn. As a regular diet, these foods are low in nutrition value.

The team travels to the communities where the meals are provided to the children. The children attend with their parents or with their siblings. Each child receives the same portion.

Children also receive guidance on good hygiene and handwashing as well as avoiding food wastage – as only the amount of food required for distribution to children that day is prepared by the Feeding Program team. Children also bring their own reusable plates and utensils.

This program ensures that children from vulnerable households receive nutritious and protein-rich foods that aid in their growth and development.

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Impacts</b>
Essential nutrients are provided to children who would not otherwise have access to sufficient nutrients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The feeding program has made it easier for children from disadvantaged households to consume protein-based food that is very important for them like eggs, chickens, tofu and tempeh.</li> <li>Eating protein rich food like tempeh, tofu, chicken, eggs, and fish is a luxury for the households of the children. At home</li> </ul>

	they consume cassava leaves, sweet potato buds, and bok choy that lack the protein they need.
Stunting prevented in children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is visible impact on the growth in weight and height of the children that can be attributed at least in part to the feeding program.</li> </ul>
Children are healthier and better prepared to participate in school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The children that participate in the feeding program are mostly preschoolers and primary school students. The nutrition provided to them is aimed at helping them grow physically and to assist with focus at school.</li> <li>• Parents reported that their children did not experience any grave illnesses other than occasional coughs and runny noses as expected of children in that age group. The improved wellbeing may be partly attributed to the feeding program and nutrition.</li> </ul>



*Fresh meals containing egg, tempeh, tofu and chicken are prepared on the morning of the same day it is distributed as lunch to children through the Feeding program.*

**NOSSEF School Support:**

NOSSEF plays a vital role in educating the rural youth of Railaco. Educating the young minds of the marginalized communities in Railaco is key to promoting peace and prosperity in the area and the country as a whole. Young people are the actors of peace and future leaders.

NOSSEF Secondary School offers classes for students in years 10-12. In 2023, 338 students are enrolled with 70% of students from Railaco and remote villages in the area. Other students come from other municipalities and are generally from disadvantaged, rural families.

NOSSEF celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year in 2022. Many graduates from NOSSEF are continuing their tertiary education in universities and institutes, while others have found employment. NOSSEF graduates are highly sought for employment.

Funding support for NOSSEF from St Canice’s in 2023 has been used to support operating costs including the salaries for 16 part time teachers (5 women), in addition to the Jesuit teachers, in order to provide adequate coverage of classes and strengthen academic performance of the students. All 27 NOSSEF teachers are qualified.

Additionally, five student teachers from the Jesuit-run teacher training college Instituto de São João de Brito (ISJB) have undertaken practical experience over two months which also benefits the students at NOSSEF with the extra teaching assistance.

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Impacts</b>
All NOSSEF students received lessons based on the curriculum and there is improvement in student performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 338 students received lessons from 27 teachers (including 16 part-time) across science, math, arts, literature from Monday to Friday.</li> <li>• 100% of students passed the examinations.</li> </ul>
A quality Jesuit education has been provided to young men and women in Railaco.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extracurricular activities including sports, music, and arts were offered to students during the school days.</li> <li>• 16 part-time teachers have been very motivated and involved in extracurricular activities even though it is sometimes outside their usual work hours.</li> <li>• Other activities such as mass and formation were also part of the school activities conducted.</li> <li>• The school fulfilled its obligation. All the part time teachers were paid accordingly and were able to continue teaching based on their schedule.</li> </ul>
Qualified local teachers employed at NOSSEF across all subjects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the 16 part-time teachers are local residents. All are qualified teachers and benefit from employment in their local community, while also ensuring adequate class and subject coverage for the benefit of students.</li> </ul>

## Financial update

St Canice’s funding ensured that the activities outlined in this report could be implemented for the reporting period January-June 2023 for the benefit of children and youth in Railaco and nearby communities.

Between January – June 2023, the expenditure of St Canice’s funding (in AUD) has been as follows:

Feeding	NOSSEF costs	TOTAL
A\$17,942	A\$21,700	A\$39,642

Conv from US\$ @0.685

Expenditure is on target with 47% of NOSSEF budget and 50% of Feeding program budget expended in six months.

## Challenges

- Attendance of children at the feeding program is impacted by the rainy season and difficult travel conditions and at time of harvesting coffee when the parents and children are otherwise engaged. At other times, the average attendance is over 80% of expected numbers of children for whom meals are prepared.
- Increasing costs of food items and fuel for the transport of meals impacts on the program – also on teachers’ salaries as there may be requests for a higher rate and reduced staff retention. NOSSEF has recently revised the teachers' salary system to better retain teachers. This has been managed by good budget monitoring and planning.
- At times, reaching remote communities for the feeding program has been hampered by damaged and flooded roads. The team makes every effort to reach these communities as often as they safely can. Efforts are also being made to improve food security knowledge in communities so they can also produce their own nutritious food locally.

## Conclusion

During the period from January to June 2023, the support from St Canice’s fundraising has been able to provide improved nutrition to children in and near to Railaco through the feeding program serving 350 young children faced with malnutrition and a lack of protein-rich food. Additionally, support to the NOSSEF school including for 16 part time teachers has ensured that 338 students are accessing quality education and sufficient teacher coverage of their classes across all subjects.

Thank you for your kind generosity for some of the most disadvantaged community members, offering them a stronger education, improved health and wellbeing, and a brighter future.

## Hear their stories

### Fernanda

For many parents in Ermera feeding their children with nutritious food every day is still a big challenge for them especially those in the remote areas of Ermera. Given their living conditions and poor livelihoods, they can only give their children whatever they have just to survive.

Fernanda, from Tabulasi has four children and she brings her children to the feeding area in Caitarehei because she believes that her children need good food so that they can grow well.

***"Three days a week I bring my children here to Lebdodon because it is worth it. They can eat lunch given by Cristina and her team. They give very good food and my children really like it especially the chicken and eggs,"*** said Fernanda.



This program is a key measure to prevent stunting and boost the growth and physical development of the children in these remote areas. Jesuit Mission Australia is also establishing a food security program in the same area to help families to learn about growing their own food.

Seeing the benefits of the Feeding program, President of Timor Leste, Dr. Jose Ramos Horta, has also launched a feeding program in Matata modelled on the one run by the Jesuits to provide nutritious food to 285 children identified as undernourished. The program in Matata is run by a team that prepare the same portion of food containing protein-based food and vegetables for the children to consume.

## **Daniel**

Daniel, born and raised in Railaco, is a NOSSEF alumnus and is now employed as a part-time Civic Education teacher at NOSSEF. He was a scholarship recipient while studying at NOSSEF. After graduating from NOSSEF, Daniel was sponsored to pursue his Bachelor's degree in Civics and graduated in 2015. He was involved in the student council at NOSSEF from 2010 to 2011.

After completing his bachelor's degree, Daniel was recruited by the Director of NOSSEF in 2017 to teach Civics Education. Daniel is passionate about his work at NOSSEF and he sees it as an immense opportunity to share his experience and knowledge.



***"Since 2017, I've been working as a Civics teacher at NOSSEF, and sharing what I learned at my university with my students. This is my dream and desire; to be a good teacher and as a professional transmitter of knowledge. I'd like to share with my students the knowledge I've acquired so that they may better serve the church and the nation."***



*Daniel teaching a class at NOSSEF*

Because of his passion, dedication, and achievement, Daniel was appointed by the Director in 2022 as the as the Scholarship Student Council advisor. He hopes to help the scholarship students in their academic learning and in their activities so that they can be successful in the future.

Daniel's success is a testimony to the motivation and aspirations of many of the students at NOSSEF. Despite being born to a family of farmers his persistence to graduate and gain secure employment has been strong. Because of his passion, he is now working and can help his widowed mother and sibling in Railaco.

***"In my family I have my mother, 4 sisters and 2 brothers. My father was a farmer. He passed away. We're living happily together in Railaco."***

The continued support from St Canice's Parish and Jesuit Mission to the part-time teachers at NOSSEF has enabled Daniel and his colleagues to share the knowledge that they have learned to the younger generations at NOSSEF.