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Media Release:

Clean water project transforms daily life for 1,800 people in rural Timor-Leste

Families in rural Timor-Leste who once spent hours each day collecting unsafe water now have clean, reliable water close to home, thanks to the generosity of compassionate supporters of Jesuit Mission Australia.

Delivered with local partner Jesuit Social Service (JSS) Timor-Leste, the Clean Water Project pumps water from a spring or underground source to a main village tank, with taps installed so residents can collect water safely and easily.

In Busadau, a tiny sub-village in rural Timor-Leste, families now have clean running water near their homes for the first time.

Before the project, children were often responsible for collecting water while adults worked during daylight hours, taking time away from school, rest and play.

“The spring is far below where we live,” recalls Luciano, a Busadau resident. “Fetching drinking water meant ten or more trips a day with five-litre containers. These had to be carried by hand because there was no road access to the spring. Each trip took almost an hour.”

Many children spent more time fetching water than learning or playing with friends. In a country where more than 40% of the population lives in poverty, missed school days can make it even harder for children to complete their education and break the cycle of poverty.

Without a reliable source of water, the community struggled to grow crops to feed their children. In the dry season, water sources could vanish overnight. In the rainy season, flooding could contaminate the water and make it unsafe to drink.

The community's unreliable water supply affected health, education and food security, making daily life especially difficult for children and families.

Unsafe water also increased the risk of waterborne illness and disease, placing children and families at greater risk.

Busadau resident Meliana says: "I am very happy because water is now so close to home. In the past, the spring where we got our water was very far away, and sometimes it would get dirty so we would have to wait hours for it to become clean again. Now, even during the rainy season, we have clean water!"

Community ownership is central to the Clean Water Project, which has improved health, sanitation, livelihoods and future prospects for almost 1,800 people. By involving local residents from the outset and supporting them to practise safe hygiene, maintain their water systems and protect their water sources, the project is designed to create lasting change.

Clare Dunstan, Jesuit Mission Australia's Relationship Manager, said the Clean Water Project shows what is possible when local leadership and donor generosity work together. "For families in Busadau, reliable water nearby means children have more time for school, parents have more security, and the whole community has a stronger foundation for health and opportunity," she said. "With continued support, Jesuit Mission can help more communities in Timor-Leste build lasting access to safe water."

To support the project, visit jesuitmission.org.au/busadau.



Image caption: Children and families in Timor-Leste now have access to clean water, through Jesuit Mission's Clean Water Project. The project is helping to improve health, hygiene and daily life for rural communities.

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About Jesuit Mission Australia

Jesuit Mission Australia works in over 10 countries across Asia to uphold the innate dignity of people living with the effects of poverty, especially the most marginalised and vulnerable. Funds from our supporters:

- Break cycles of poverty through teaching and education
- Protect the health of communities by providing medical care and programs that improve access to clean water and toilets
- Develop independent, sustainable communities through livelihood training and income-generating projects
- Provide vulnerable individuals with pastoral care, social inclusion and advocacy
- Support refugees in crisis
- Enable effective disaster response and relief.