



Timor Leste embraces RYLA alumni

Last month we discussed the importance of staying connected with Rotary alumni. Personally experiencing the benefits of our programs themselves, these are people who need not be convinced of Rotary's value. As such, they are likely willing supporters of future projects and programs – if you keep in touch and ask! They may even accept membership, if not to your club then perhaps a Rotaract or Next-Gen club in your area.

In Timor Leste, the RYLA team has made a strong effort to cultivate participants long past their initial program's span through continued education and scholarship offerings, as well as providing opportunities to give back through community service. Many have been transformed into Rotaractors and Rotarians and have begun to run youth programs themselves, continuing the cycle and expanding Rotary's reach. It's a clear demonstration of the value of maintaining alumni connections, for our organisation and our communities.



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Rotary Youth Leadership Award (RYLA) is enormously popular in Timor Leste, with the eight programs conducted by the Rotary Education Training team attracting over 1100 applicants each year for the 85 positions available. The program has been completely rewritten and adapted to suit Timorese culture and lifestyle, with local leaders acting as presenters.

There are now almost 680 RYLA alumni who have gone on to achieve great results with their willingness to give back to the community. Many have gained scholarships in overseas universities. All cite the RYLA program as integral to giving them the motivation to apply themselves, as well as an edge over their peers. Four RYLarians ran for parliament in the 2017 elections.

The RYLA team takes steps to keep in touch and integrate these alumni with Rotaract or Rotary. Following RYLA, last year the Australian team members organised a Rotary Education Training program, with topics relevant to the RYLA alumni. These included money management, entrepreneurship, agricultural initiatives, project identification and evaluation, Days for Girls, women's health and English teacher training. Attendance exceeded expectations, with over 500 young Timorese participating over five days.

A traineeship program has started funding 21 young Timorese to work for a three-month period with three Timor Leste partners of the JVP Sunrise

Consortium (Woodside, Conoco Phillips, Shell and Osaka Gas), who are the primary sponsor of the RYLA program. Even though the traineeships were open to all young Timorese, the 21 selected were all RYLA alumni, with the selectors commenting they were all far better prepared in their presentations. Of the 21, 18 were offered permanent positions and the other three have received overseas study scholarships. This program will continue next year.

To date, RYLarians have formed three Rotaract clubs. With the help of District 9550, the first Indigenous Rotary Club in Dili was chartered, made up of predominantly RYLA alumni. They have been involved in teaching English and Portuguese after school to primary students, clean up days, tree planting, RYPEN, support staff for the Tour de Dili cycle race, youth concerts, leadership training, drama classes and recycling projects in the Dili area.

There are now active committees in Aileu, Ermera, Bobonaro Liquisa, Los Palos, Viqueque and Manatutu Municipalities rolling out similar programs. Plans are underway to run RYPEN camps in Manatutu, Viqueque, Manufai, Ainaro, Baucau and Suai. These will all be coordinated and managed by RYLA alumni at no cost to the RYLA program.

“As we gain more critical mass, we will be able to provide more services and programs at a reduced cost to all,” RYLA Timor Leste mentor Angelo Raveane, of the Rotary Club of Crows Nest, NSW, said. “The connections, network and systems we have in place augur well for a bright future and expansion of the program. The key is that we all continue to work together for a sustainable future goal.”

“Over 1500 young Timorese have now participated in either RYLA or RYPEN since 2009,” Theo Glockemann OAM, of the Rotary Club of Pennant Hills, NSW, said.

“It has been personally very rewarding and motivating to see the success of our programs, and the extent that our alumni have contributed to,

and continue to contribute to, Timor Leste's development. When committed Rotarians and motivated youth combine, anything is possible! We confidently expect that Timor Leste will have RYLarians at the helm in the not too distant future!”

If any Rotary club would like further information regarding RYLA or RYPEN in Timor Leste, PNG or the South West Pacific, contact Angelo Raveane, Rotary Club of Crows Nest, NSW, on 02 9982 5259 or email angelo.raveane@gmail.com or Theo Glockemann OAM, Rotary Club of Pennant Hills on 02 9980 6842 or theogeo@bigpond.net.au.

