

## **A Passage of Hope for Young Girls in Timor-Leste**

The St Mary Mazzarello Vocational School of Venilale in Timor-Leste, is a great example of the resilience that everyday lay and religious missionaries demonstrate in their life-giving work and the burning passion for God and people that inspires their hearts.

Amidst the challenges of unemployment and a lack of qualified employees in rural areas like Venilale, the school offers hope to the younger generation, particularly for younger girls.

Established in 1994 by the Salesian Sisters, the school provides a safe learning environment and imparts vital employable skills to its students. The curriculum focuses on hospitality, teaching students how to cook and manage tasks in kitchens and restaurants. Since its creation, the school has faced challenges, including being reduced to ashes in 2001 due to violent conflict.

Through a remarkable journey of resilience and rebuilding, the school is now fully operational and supports 214 students, and provides a passage of hope for young girls like 16-year-old Madalena\*, currently in her second year, who was fortunate enough to have an opportunity to study at the school.

"We want to educate and train youth with good values, to promote their capacity and professional autonomy, therefore they are able to contribute," says Sr Carolina, a Salesian Sister in Venilale.

The school not only equips students with the necessary tools to support themselves but also empowers them to create a better future for their local community.

"If you have skills, if you can work, you don't need to depend on other people. We try to increase their skills as some of them have good capacity. A good way for them to make a way for their own future," says Sr Alma, the Provincial of the Salesian Sisters in Timor-Leste and Indonesia.

Keeping the St Maria Mazzarello School running to a higher standard means the Salesian Sisters can continue reaching out to young girls like Madalena\*, providing them with local opportunities to secure a future and gain financial independence.

Catholic Mission invites everyone to make a difference.

Visit [catholicmission.org.au/passageofhope](https://catholicmission.org.au/passageofhope), and donate now to support the Salesian Sisters in creating a passage of hope for young girls.

\*Names changed to protect identity.

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### **About Catholic Mission**

Catholic Mission is the Australian agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies – the Catholic Church’s global organisation dedicated to continuing Jesus Christ’s mission in the world: that all may have life to the full. Catholic Mission contributes funding and project support to critical church-run initiatives in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America. These include spiritual formation, pastoral care, education, health, sanitation, and agricultural programs. Here in Australia, we form people to go out and be missionary in their professional and personal lives; to pray, advocate and act for those on the margins. Catholic Mission has offices in 27 Australian dioceses.