

**GENERATION MUAYTHAI:  
PROJECT TIMOR LESTE 2015**

## **Community Profile:**

In May 2002, Timor-Leste (formerly known as East Timor) gained independence. Violence had left the country and its families torn apart, with nearly 70% of all buildings, homes and schools destroyed, and an estimated 75% of the population displaced (World Bank, 2015). The population of Timor-Leste is slightly over 1 million, with its major capital city being Dili, Timor-Leste use the USD currency and the official languages are Portuguese and Tetum (World Bank, 2015).

Over the past decade, Timor-Leste has created the preconditions for successful development. It has credibly emerged from a crisis of internal violence and political instability in 2006-2007, built a coalition, and increased tangible services for the population, with the absence of conflict and a new confidence in the state. Largely peaceful democratic elections for President in March and May of 2012 reflect these achievements (World Bank, 2015). Education, keeping healthy, and productively employing its young population are the biggest development challenges facing Timor-Leste in the next decade. With 60% of the population under 25 years of age (World Bank, 2015), Timor-Leste is one of the youngest countries in the world. Benefitting from high global oil prices, Timor-Leste achieved lower middle-income status in 2011, but poverty remains persistently high, particularly in rural areas, where the majority of the population lives. (World Bank, 2015)

## **About the programme:**

It is delivered through in-kind support such as coaching, venues and equipment donations from international organisations. It is conducted in collaboration with local organisations and sporting clubs. With the aim to enrich the lives of Timorese Youth through participation in Muay Thai and promoting Albert as a positive role model to the community.

**Starting time frame:** April 2015

**Ages:** 9-25

**Number of participants:** 500

**Sponsor/Partner:** Talho Morris, Dili E Benfica, Timor Plaza, Dili International School, Timorese Assassins Muay Thai Academy,

## **Project outcomes:**

- The profile as an athlete and Muay Thai Boxer Albert created in Timor to be the face of the sport.
- Support from the Secretary of State Youth and Arts Leovigildo Hornay.
- Support from Sport Dili e Benfica.
- Support from Boxing Clubs wanting to work in partnership.
- Support from key sponsors wanting to work in partnership.
- A genuine interest in the sport of Muay Thai, coaching over 500 participants over the program.
- Organised an exhibition Thai Boxing display with appearances from the Ex-Prime Minister and Nobel Peace Prize Winner Jose Ramos Horta.
- Using Combat Sports to promote health and a way to engage Timorese youth.
- Promoting Muaythai at Timor Plaza and other commercial events.

## Strengths

**The profile as an athlete and Muay Thai Boxer Albert created in Timor to be the face and of the sport:** The sport of Muaythai was non-existent and the image of the sport was brutal upon reaching out to communities. Having dialogue about the positives of training and the spirit of Muaythai created an image that Timorese Muaythai athletes should be one that is highly regarded.

**Support from the Secretary of State Youth and Arts Leovigildo Hornay:** An official letter of recommendation and Government support to help foster and develop the sport of Muaythai in Timor-Leste.

**Support from Sport Dili e Benfica:** Developing relationships with sporting clubs to allow the use of venues and facilities to implement our program.

**Support from Boxing Clubs wanting to work in partnership:** Boxing trainer keen to understand the knowledge and skills of muaythai to work in relationship with cross training fitness components to help foster health and lifestyle changes.

**Support from key sponsors wanting to work in partnership:** Sponsors such as Talho Morris providing financial and logistical support to administer logistical goals of our program.

**A genuine interest in the sport of Muay Thai, coaching over 500 participants over the program:** The sport of Muaythai was highly regarded as one that is fun, great for health and overall wellbeing. With many participants wanting to join clubs to continue their training after our introduction.

**Organised an exhibition Thai Boxing display with appearances from the Ex-Prime Minister and Nobel Peace Prize Winner Jose Ramos Horta:** Muaythai and martial arts was banned due to the civil unrest the fighting it caused between groups. Hosting an organised display of Muaythai to promote its true spirit and teachings provided the Timorese people with the correct image of the true aspect of Martial Art spirit, showing a positive way of how muaythai can change lives.

**Using Combat Sports to promote health and a way to engage Timorese youth:** Unlike other sports like football or basketball, muaythai and martial arts allowed for disengaged youth to participate in a sport they could relate to and channel negative energy into positive outcomes.

**Promoting Muaythai at Timor Plaza and other commercial events:** Utilising public spaces and venues allowed us to engage with people who have not been exposed to the true nature of Muaythai.

## **Weaknesses**

- Lack of KNOWLEGABLE trainers and SKILLED participants
- Limited opportunities to fight and compete
- Limited knowledge of rules and techniques
- Lack of fitness professionals
- Lack of role models to follow
- Lack of national boxing/ training camps for elite athletes
- No pathway for elite athletes

## **Recommendations**

In conclusion it is apparent how powerful sport can be used as a tool to create positive changes to the Timorese community, it has suffered long enough, and it is writing a new chapter in its history. Working on the weaknesses listed above are the key findings throughout the project implemented. Timor is one of the youngest democracies in the world and is looking for ways to improve the environment for its people. There are still formalities to be organized such as electing executive board members and creating a logo for the Timorese Thai Boxing federation. But everything has been set in motion for a federation to help foster and develop Thai boxing in Timor-Leste. Sport is a vehicle to instil change, promote health, and fitness. If the opportunities are provided to the community stronger individuals will be produced for a better Timor-Leste.