

Canossa Youth Training Center: A Triumph of Hope in Atauro, Timor-Leste

The Canossa Youth Training Center (CYTC) in Atauro, Timor-Leste, stands as a testament to unwavering hope and community collaboration. Inspired by the phrase "Spes Non Confundit" (Hope does not disappoint), the Canossian Sisters envisioned a center to empower local youth through vocational training.



This dream, conceived in 2018, persevered through the COVID-19 pandemic, culminating in the completion of the Youth Training Center in 2024. The first cohort of 42 students commenced their Eco-tourism, Hospitality, and Business Administration program in February 2024, successfully completing it by December of the same year.

The CYTC was officially inaugurated on **February 8, 2025**, on the Feast of St. Josephine Bakhita. Despite challenging weather, notable guests including Don Virgilio Cardinal do Carmo da Silva, Monsignor Sprizzi, the Philippine Ambassador to Timor-Leste Miss Mary Ann, and Engr. Joaquin Freitas, coordinator of the XI Constitutional Government, traveled to Atauro to witness the celebration, receiving a warm welcome from the community.





The realization of this vision was made possible by the generous support of organizations including Conferenza Episcopale Italia, the Canossian Sisters General Curia, the Papal Foundation USA, the Constitutional Government of Timor-Leste, the Archdiocese of Dili, a generous group from Singapore, Dreams Asia, and the local community.

The Canossa Youth Training Center - First Graduates (2024)

The initial program in Hotel and Restaurant Service (HRS) and Business Administration (BA) yielded excellent results. Of the 32 graduates from the February 2024 cohort:

- **Hotel and Restaurant Service:** Nine graduates were recommended for employment at the Jesuit House of Hospitality in Hera, where they are undergoing further Level 3 training. Others found employment at guesthouses and restaurants in Atauro or became self-employed, utilizing their culinary skills. Five graduates are employed at Timor Plaza in Dili.



- **Business Administration:** Twelve graduates are employed at the municipal and parish offices in Atauro. The Assistant Coordinators for HRS and BA at CYTC are also top graduates from this first cohort, showcasing the program's effectiveness.



The New Scholastic Year 2025: Expanding Horizons at Canossa Youth Training Center

The Canossa Youth Training Center (CYTC) entered its second scholastic year in **January 2025** with renewed vigor and an expanded vision for empowering the youth of Atauro. Building on the success of its inaugural year, CYTC is now offering a comprehensive one-year program across three crucial vocational areas: Eco-tourism, Hotel & Restaurant Service, and Business Administration. This expansion directly addresses the identified needs of the local economy and aims to equip young Timorese with the skills and competencies vital for securing meaningful employment and contributing to the nation's development.

This continued commitment to the youth is made possible through the steadfast and benevolent support of key partners:

- **Archdiocese of Dili:** Providing crucial administrative support, the Archdiocese of Dili plays an instrumental role in ensuring the smooth operation and continued growth of CYTC. Their backing underpins the logistical and organizational framework necessary for the center's effective functioning.
- **Canossian Foundation VOICA, Rome:** The generous financial support from the Canossian Foundation VOICA in Rome specifically covers staff costs for 2025-2026. This vital funding ensures that CYTC can retain and recruit dedicated and qualified instructors, a cornerstone of delivering high-quality vocational training. This unwavering support is a clear demonstration of "God's loving Providence" towards CYTC, for which the Sisters and staff are profoundly grateful.

Project of Empowerment: Nurturing Potential

The overarching goal of the "Project of Empowerment of Youth through Professional Formation and Education on Skills and Competence" is to harness

Timor-Leste's greatest asset – its vibrant, energetic, and ambitious young population. Recognizing the critical need for job placement and sustainable livelihoods, CYTC is dedicated to providing:

- **Professional Formation:** Imparting not just technical skills but also the professional ethics, discipline, and soft skills essential for workplace success.
- **Essential Skills Cultivation:** Focusing on practical, hands-on training that directly aligns with industry demands.
- **Competency Development:** Fostering a holistic set of abilities that extend beyond the classroom, enabling graduates to adapt, innovate, and thrive in dynamic work environments.

The ultimate aim remains clear: to empower these young individuals to forge brighter futures for themselves, their families, and for the beloved nation of Timor-Leste.

Specialized Course Offerings for 2025:

The three distinct courses offered in 2025 are meticulously designed to meet the demands of emerging industries and the specific needs of the Timorese economy. These curricula follow the standards designed by **INDMO (National Institute for Labor Force Development)** for Level 1 and 2 qualifications, ensuring national recognition and industry relevance.

- **Eco-Tourism (11 students):** Coordinated by Sr. Fernanda Sarmiento, FdCC, with Assistant Texeira D.S. Soares. This course capitalizes on Atauro's natural beauty and growing tourism potential, preparing students for roles in sustainable tourism, guiding, and environmental conservation.





- Hotel and Restaurant Service (15 students):** Coordinated by Laura F. Pereira, with Assistant Maria Fernandes. Building on the success of the previous year's Hotel and Restaurant Service program, this course further refines skills in accommodation, food and beverage service, customer relations, and overall hospitality management.



- **Business Administration (20 students):** Coordinated by Cesar Pele, with Assistant Aristides J.S. Pereira. This program provides foundational knowledge in office administration, basic accounting, entrepreneurship, and digital literacy, preparing students for various administrative and business support roles.



Ensuring Quality and Practical Application: The Role of the Directress

Under the vigilant leadership of **Sr. Candida de Castro Pereira**, the Directress, CYTC maintains a high standard of education and ensures the practical applicability of its programs. Her responsibilities include:

- **Establishing and Equipping Training Facilities:** Providing modern, relevant learning environments that simulate real-world workplaces, giving students hands-on experience with industry-standard tools and equipment.
- **Developing Comprehensive Curricula:** Continuously reviewing and updating the curriculum to meet evolving industry demands and national qualification frameworks, specifically adhering to INDMO-designed standards for Level 1 and 2.
- **Engaging Experienced Trainers and Mentors:** Recruiting and supporting qualified instructors who not only possess technical expertise but also serve as inspiring mentors. A crucial component of this is guiding students during their "**On the Job Training**" (OJT). This structured OJT program, lasting two weeks for Level 1 and two months for Level 2, is a vital bridge between theoretical training and actual employment, providing invaluable practical experience and industry exposure.



As of May 2025, just five months into the new training year, the Canossian Sisters and staff are already witnessing the blossoming potential of Atauro's youth. The dedication, enthusiasm, and growth observed in this second batch of students reinforce the profound impact of CYTC and the transformative power of education rooted in hope.

Thank you!

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