

# COLEGIO MARISTA

LAUTÉM, TIMOR LESTE

James D. MacConnell Award Submission



## Executive Summary

Colégio Marista Lautém represents a transformative educational vision for one of the most remote and under-resourced regions of Timor-Leste. Developed collaboratively by the architects and Marist Schools Australia, the project reimagines what education can become in a developing nation context, establishing a culturally grounded and future-focused learning community.

Located in the remote municipality of Lautém, on elevated land gifted by local elders and overlooking the Banda Sea, the project responds directly to entrenched educational inequity, limited infrastructure and restricted access to quality learning for rural communities. From its inception, the school was conceived not as an imported solution, but as a locally embedded response shaped by Timorese culture, climate, landscape and communal ways of living. The result is an environment that feels familiar, empowering and locally meaningful.

When complete, the campus will support both day students and boarders from across Timor-Leste, providing a long-term framework for educational, social and economic development. The architectural strategy prioritises openness and adaptability: open-air learning environments, shaded verandas, flexible teaching spaces, preserved vegetation and culturally responsive built forms create a strong connection to place while fostering collaboration, autonomy and wellbeing.

The spatial design directly supports the educational model, which carefully balances pedagogical innovation with local realities. In a context where many educators are early-career teachers working within a highly structured curriculum system, the learning environments are designed to support gradual and sustainable pedagogical change.

In welcoming the students,  
I invited them to make a promise:  
***Mai ita hotu promote atu servisu hamutuk  
hodihalo eskola ida-ne'e sai ksolok tebes.***  
(Let us all promise to work together to  
make this a very happy school).

— Br.Paul Kane, Principal Br Paul Kane



This includes a team-teaching model that fosters collaboration, mentoring and the sharing of practice, complemented by intentional professional development and a flexible approach. Together, these elements create a supportive and responsive environment in which skills, confidence and capacity can develop over time.

Beyond academic schooling, the project creates opportunities for enterprise education, STEM learning, community engagement and future workforce development, reinforcing the wider Marist mission of delivering quality education to young people on the margins.

Importantly, the impact of Colégio Marista Lautém extends well beyond architecture alone. The campus has become a catalyst for community pride, cultural recognition, teacher development and educational aspiration. Post-occupancy engagement demonstrates increasing teacher collaboration, strong student identity and belonging, and a deep sense of community ownership. Graduate teachers are increasingly seeking employment at the school, attracted by its educational philosophy and the quality of its learning environment.

The project reflects a deeply collaborative eight-year journey involving educators, students, local elders, community members, pedagogical researchers and designers. Colégio Marista Lautém demonstrates how architecture, pedagogy and culture can work together to create a resilient educational environment - one that responds to immediate community needs while supporting the long-term future of Timor-Leste.



# Scope of Work and Budget

Y2 Architecture collaborated with Marist Schools Australia over an eight-year period to masterplan and deliver a new 1–12 educational campus in Lautém, Timor-Leste. The project establishes a staged educational framework responding to the significant logistical, environmental and educational challenges associated with developing a school in a remote rural region.

The master plan has been designed as a long-term educational ecosystem delivered over multiple stages aligned with student growth, educational development and available funding.

The first completed stage delivers the Junior Village and foundational campus infrastructure, establishing learning environments for primary-aged learners and laying the foundation for future secondary, enterprise, boarding and community facilities.

The project required significant early-stage infrastructure planning, including access roads, boreholes, services, stormwater management and logistical coordination for remote construction conditions.

The new school has been designed to support flexibility, passive environmental performance, local labour participation and the evolving educational developments expected to occur in Timor-Leste into the future.

**Building area** | 1,750m<sup>2</sup>/18835 SF (Stage 1)

**Design capacity** | 180 students (Stage 1)/ 540 Master Plan

**Construction cost** | \$5 M AUD (Stage 1)

Stage 1:



**Project Information:**

**Project:** Colégio Marista Lautém

**Location:** Aldeia Malailada-Sika, Suku Baduro, Lautém Municipality, Timor-Leste

**Site Context:** Remote rural coastal site

**Client:** Marist Brothers Australia

### Project Scope:

**Master Plan:**

- 1–12 educational campus
- Community pavilion
- STEM & enterprise centre
- Grade 7-9 (middle years) village
- Grade 10-12 (senior years) village
- Design, arts and tech centre
- Chapel
- Boarding facilities
- Gymnasium
- Parents pavilion
- Security compound
- Waste management facilities
- Horticultural gardens

**Stage 1:**

- Grade 1-6 (junior) village
- Kitchen & student dining
- Administration
- Site infrastructure; roads, carparks, services, water, generator
- Flexible outdoor learning environments, including sports grounds & courts







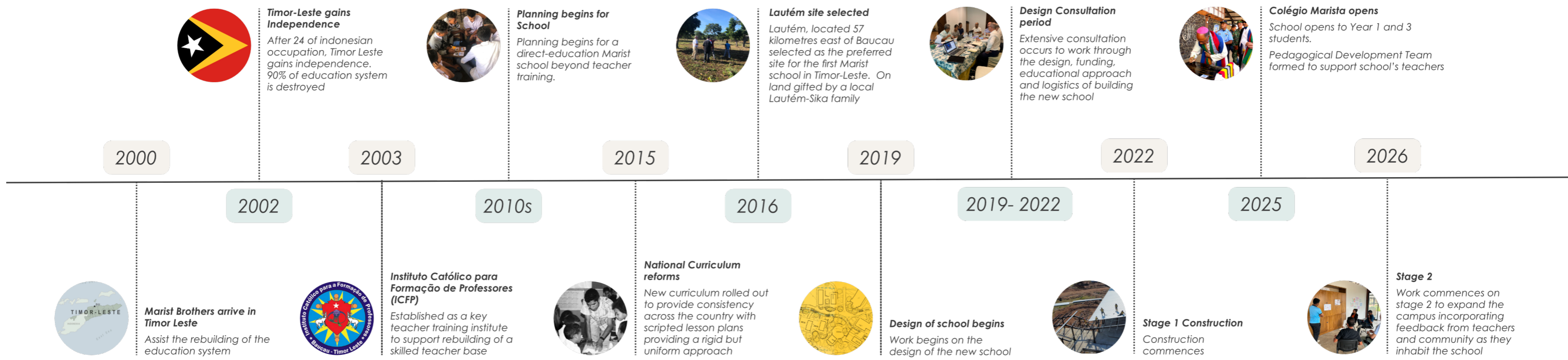
Masterplan:

# Core Principles / Vision

“The Lautém sub-district lacked Catholic schools, and the local representative of the Ministry of Education identified secondary and early childhood education as the most pressing unmet needs in the district.”

## Timeline:

	<b>REACH</b>	Supporting some of the most disadvantaged students in Timor-Leste to build capacity, raise expectations, and create opportunities for success.
	<b>BELONGING</b>	Creating a welcoming, safe, and child-centred environment where every student feels valued. Local culture, language, and community traditions are respected and celebrated, fostering pride, belonging, and identity.
	<b>GROWTH</b>	Support continuous growth, innovation, and improvement in teaching and learning. Meeting the community where it is at today while enabling gradual improvements over time.
	<b>IMPACT</b>	Providing high-quality, relevant education that develops future leaders and skilled individuals. Strengthening not only individual potential, but also families, communities, and the wider society of Lautém.





**School & community  
research and engagement**

## Everyone deserves access to quality education, no matter where they live

In Lautém, the architects have spent years working alongside Marist Schools Australia to turn that belief into a built reality. What began as a conversation has evolved into a transformative, design-led partnership — establishing a school that meets urgent needs today and sets foundations for generational change.

This is not architecture imposed from afar. It is architecture shaped through listening. Through in-country workshops, student place-card exercises and ongoing consultation with educators, leaders and local contractors, the brief was forged from lived experience. In a context defined by limited resources, challenging logistics, language barriers and environmental risk, decisions demanded rigour, adaptability and respect.

### Context:

#### Community Context:

Lautém is one of the most remote municipalities in Timor-Leste.

Historically, access to quality educational infrastructure has been concentrated in Dili and major urban centres, leaving rural communities with limited opportunities, under-resourced schools, and constrained pathways into higher education or employment.

The local community faces numerous social and economic challenges, including limited infrastructure, restricted employment opportunities and a shortage of highly trained educators.

At the same time, Lautém possesses a rich cultural identity grounded in communal living, strong family networks, local traditions, and deep connections to landscape and spirituality.

The project responds directly to this context by positioning education as a catalyst for long-term community empowerment, resilience and opportunity.

#### Stakeholders

The project involved extensive collaboration between:

- Marist Brothers (Star of the Sea Province)
- Marist Schools Australia
- Local elders and community leaders of Lautém and Lospalos
- Students and families and Lautém and greater Timor-Leste
- Local teachers
- Visiting international teachers and students
- Teachers abroad
- Pedagogical Development Team (PDT)
- Instituto Católico para Formação de Professores (ICFP) Baucau (Catholic Teachers' College)
- Local contractors and consultants
- Timorese community groups

The land for the school was gifted by local elders, reinforcing the school's role as a community-centred institution embedded within local culture and collective identity.



### Challenges and findings:

The consultation process faced a number of key challenges that influenced both the approach and outcomes of the project and broadly fell into three main areas.

#### EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

- Limited teacher training capacity and limited opportunity for professional development
- Scripted, highly structured curriculum and lesson plans developed through a centralised system
- Teacher-centred pedagogy largely based on rote learning, repetition and direct instruction
- Under-resourced schools that lack adequate materials, infrastructure and flexible spaces
- Traditional box-like classrooms arranged for front-facing instruction, reinforcing fixed, teacher-led modes of learning

#### PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

- Remote location
- Limited infrastructure and services at the site and unreliable power across Timor-Leste
- Poor road access and unmade roads
- Long material lead times due to most materials imported from Indonesia and materials needing to be produced on site, i.e. concrete
- Limited local construction skills
- Cyclone and seismic risks
- Quality of materials
- Access to construction equipment, i.e. cranes, cement mixers, etc

#### COMMUNICATION AND CULTURAL CHALLENGES

- Language barriers - Australian Architect, Indonesian Builder, local language Tetum with local dialects spoken by community and stakeholders
- Translation between English, Portuguese, and Tetum with terminology relating to education, building, contractual requirements, construction documentation, specifications and regulations, often resulting in loss of meaning and intent.
- Remote communication during construction (Whatsapp generally used)
- Local community has very low expectations shaped by current conditions, limiting ability to imagine/ dream beyond the essential requirements.

### Drawing on available assets:

Alongside these challenges, the consultation process actively drew on existing strengths and resources to help address constraints and inform project responses. Key assets included:

- **Local construction workforce, community knowledge, and labour**, bringing understanding of local building methods, material use and culturally grounded, resource-efficient approaches to construction and long-term maintenance.
- **Existing school network**, providing access for research, engagement and understanding of local educational contexts and needs.
- **Abundant local materials**, including stone, bamboo, timber and vegetation, which are cost-effective, readily available and reduce reliance on imported products.
- **Established vernacular building knowledge**, including climate-responsive strategies such as verandahs, natural ventilation and breathable structures suited to Timor-Leste's environment.
- **Local fabrication and informal construction practices**, enabling adaptable use of materials such as concrete for benches and seating.



**Process**

**Visioning + Engagement**

Over several years, extensive research and engagement were undertaken to develop a deeper understanding of the cultural, educational and social context of Timor-Leste. This included visits to local kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and vocational facilities to conduct workshops and engage in conversations with Timorese students, educators and community members. These experiences informed an understanding of the local educational landscape and provided valuable insight into the aspirations students and teachers hold for their education and future opportunities.

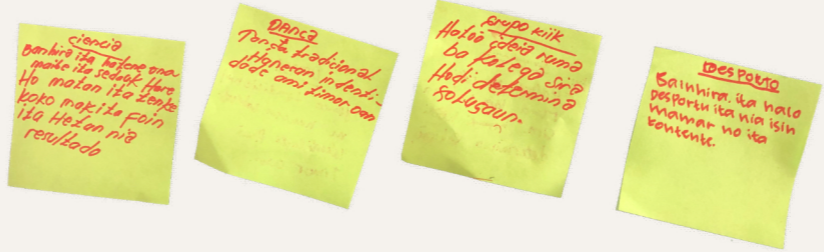
Site visits and observation of the built environment also contributed to an understanding of the region's architectural vernacular. Research into Timor-Leste's colonial history, occupation and path to independence provided important context for understanding how these histories have shaped the country's built environment and educational system.

The project was also shaped by a broader understanding of Marist identity, developed through previous work with Marist schools in Australia and a 2014 research visit to Saint-Chamond, where the origins, values and ethos of the Marist tradition were explored. Central to the Marist mission is a commitment to providing education in remote and underserved communities, creating places of opportunity, dignity and belonging for young people who may otherwise have limited access to quality education. In this context, the school is envisioned not only as a place of learning, but as a beacon for the region - a visible investment in the future of Lautém and a catalyst for long-term educational and community development.

**Student workshops:**

Student workshops were conducted using place cards with imagery and English and Tetum translations, and facilitated discussions revealed aspirations for better learning environments. The public school operates out of a single shed-like room, which is severely limited and under-resourced. Despite this, students provided valuable insights about the spaces they would like to inhabit and aspirations for their community.

To improve regional outcomes, we are fundraising with Marist Solidarity and Australian partners for a new public school classroom, giving all local students greater learning opportunities.



- Science**  
Even if we think we know something, we should still observe and test it carefully to find the real result.
- Dance**  
Traditional dance is part of our identity as Timorese people.
- Small groups**  
Share ideas with classmates in order to make a decision together.
- Sport**  
When we play sports, our body becomes healthy and we feel happy.



Student workshops

### Post Occupancy + Pedagogical Development team:

A key part of this project is recognising the journey of local educators as they settle into the new school. Professional development sessions offer time for reflection and improvements in both teaching and future planning.

We established a Pedagogical Development Team (PDT) of educators and designers volunteering to collaboratively develop a support framework for staff at Colegio Marista Lautem, focused on innovative learning environments, alongside the co-design of a STEM program for Grade 6 students, commencing in 2028.

The existing Timor-Leste curriculum has been translated into English to enable development of a culturally grounded and contextually relevant STEM program, which will then be translated into Tetum for delivery. Requested by local teachers, this process is strengthening educator agency and supporting more innovative, culturally responsive teaching practices.

Drawing on pre-colonial approaches to education - hands-on, collective, and deeply connected to land, culture, and community - the program reimagines learning as an extension of identity and place. Together, the STEM program and new learning environments aim to foster ownership, hope, and future agency, empowering students to become active agents of change within their community.

The goal is to help local educators confidently explore new learning environments, without imposing external models or straying far from familiar practices. Educators are receptive, but ongoing guidance will be needed.

In August, teachers visited Australian schools to learn about innovative environments and consider how these ideas could be adapted locally.

This process is also shaping Stage 2. The teachers' insights are informing design decisions for classrooms, furniture, and spatial flexibility.

#### POE Activities included:

- Pre-visit work to set 'good school design' exercise with translation into Tetum
- Day in the life workshop, testing the Timorese curriculum and LP's Lesson Plans against spaces and time
- Site walk and furniture discussion. Influencing Stage 2 planning and design.

This integrated process is also sparking discussion about how architectural and educational collaboration can enhance pre-service teacher education in Timor-Leste and beyond.

#### Lesson 1

- GR 3 - Literasia
- GR 3 - Mathematic



#### Lesson 2

- GR 3 - R.E.
- GR 3 - Literasia



#### Lesson 3

- GR 3 - Siensia Social
- GR 4 - Natural Science



#### Lesson 6

- GR 3 - Art and Culture (painting)
- GR 4 - Natural Science



Day in the life workshop with teaching staff

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Work has been undertaken to translate the existing Timor-Leste curriculum into English, enabling the development of a STEM program that sits meaningfully within the educators' zone of proximal teaching development, while remaining culturally grounded and contextually relevant to the local community. Once developed, the program will then be translated into Tetum to support its delivery within the school. Developed at the request of local teachers, the process is not only shaping curriculum outcomes, but also creating opportunities for educators to take greater agency over their learning environments — empowering staff to adapt and lead these spaces in ways that are both innovative and culturally responsive.

In close collaboration with the school community, the STEM program is also drawing from pre-colonial approaches to education - forms of learning that were inherently hands-on, collective, and deeply connected to land, nature, movement, song, storytelling, and shared community responsibility. Rather than viewing education solely as something delivered within a classroom, the project seeks to position learning as an extension of culture, identity, and community life. Through this lens, the STEM program and new learning environments aspire to foster a deeper sense of ownership, participation, and hope for the future, equipping students to become active agents of change within their own community while honouring and reimagining traditional knowledge systems in a contemporary educational setting.

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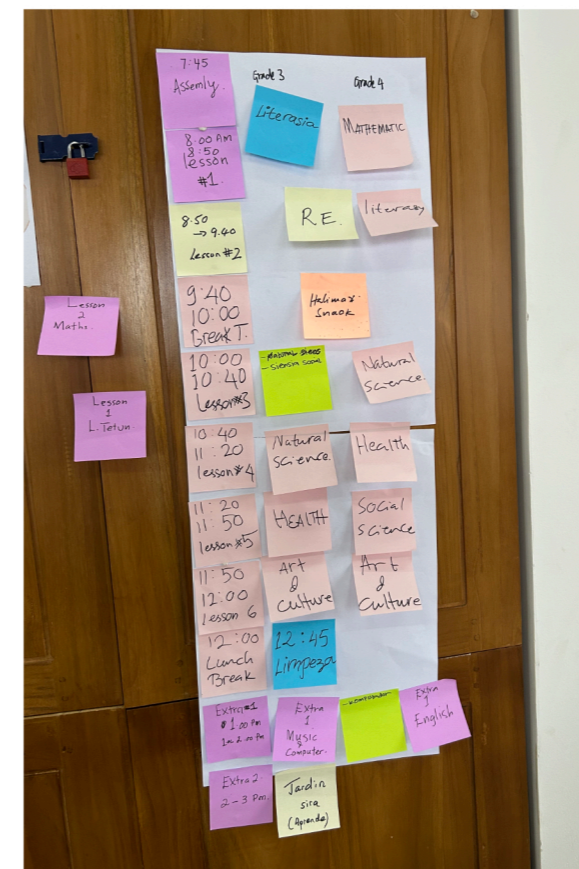
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Day in the life workshop with teaching staff



# Physical Environment

The physical environment at Colégio Marista Lautém is shaped by climate, culture, community, and pedagogy.

The architecture responds to Timor-Leste's tropical conditions and communal ways of living while providing flexible learning spaces that can adapt to future educational needs.

The result is a campus that is contemporary in its approach yet strongly grounded in place.



Site location

### Context:

#### Site + Landscape:

The campus occupies elevated land overlooking the Banda Sea in Lautém Municipality.

The remote coastal site presented significant infrastructural and environmental challenges, including access, services, stormwater management, climatic exposure, and logistical coordination.

Rather than dominate the landscape, the masterplan works with the site's natural topography, vegetation, and environmental conditions.

Buildings are arranged to maximise natural ventilation, shaded circulation, visual connection to landscape, and opportunities for outdoor learning.

The scale of the facilities has been designed to reflect the proportions and character of village life, creating a sense of familiarity and belonging for users. It was important that students and the wider community could see themselves reflected in the spaces.

#### Cultural Context

The architecture is informed by Timorese cultural identity and traditional spatial forms.

Design research drew on:

- Traditional architecture
- Traditional gathering spaces
- Bamboo construction and screening

These references influence roof forms, façades, screening, spatial hierarchy, gathering spaces, material choices, and indoor-outdoor relationships.

The design avoids imported colonial school models, instead creating a learning environment grounded in local culture.



Response:

Inspiring + motivating Environments

Developing a school in a remote context requires adaptability, patience, and strong collaboration with the community. Success depends on meeting local needs, supporting growth, and aligning with shared priorities.

Respect for local culture is critical. Since colonisation, Western building typologies—such as blockwork construction and enclosed classrooms—have become common. These often result in static, teacher-centred spaces disconnected from the environment.

This project responds by adopting a more locally appropriate approach, drawing inspiration from traditional architecture to create familiar and climate-responsive environments. Key strategies include:

- **De-institutionalised planning:** pavilion clusters forming smaller “village” communities
- **Connection to landscape:** large verandas and bamboo screening providing shelter within nature
- **Natural ventilation:** prioritising passive cooling over air conditioning
- **Community ‘street’:** linking pavilions with outdoor learning and gathering spaces
- **Culturally embedded design language**
- **Integration of technology within open, flexible environments**

The school aims to support more contemporary learning approaches while recognising that educational change is gradual. Ongoing support for educators, openness to feedback, and encouragement of experimentation are essential. The initial buildings establish a foundation for continued development.

From the outset, the project has engaged with questions around the purpose of education in Timor-Leste—supporting relevant pathways for students and preparing future community leaders and skilled professionals. These discussions continue to shape the design of specialist

spaces within the developing secondary school.

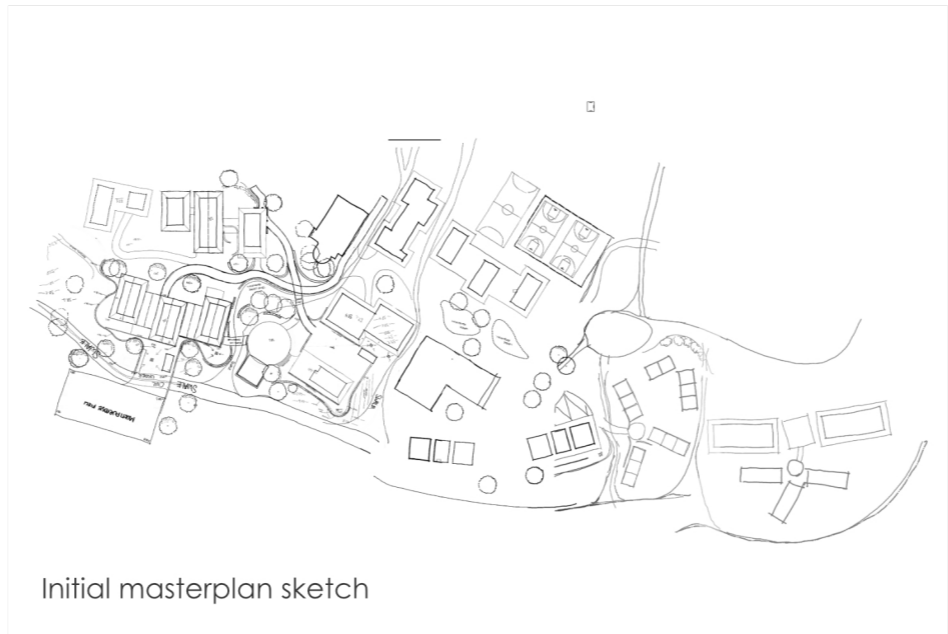
Colégio Marista Lautém is designed to express dignity, possibility, and aspiration, creating a welcoming and inspiring environment for learning.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Through Space

The physical environment supports equity and inclusion through:

- Visibility and supervision
- Collaborative learning environments
- Shared communal spaces
- Culturally familiar forms
- Adaptable learning settings
- Safe and welcoming environments
- Reduced hierarchy between teachers and learners

The learning environments also support collaboration and mentoring among teachers, particularly benefiting early-career educators.



### Sustainability + Wellness

The project integrates biophilic design principles through a contextual, low-resource approach to sustainability. Practically, this reduces ongoing operational costs, works effectively with an unreliable grid and improves resilience to climate risks. More importantly, it creates learning environments that are deeply connected to the local landscape and culture, supporting the well-being of students, teachers, and the wider community.



#### Connection to Nature

- Linking indoor and outdoor spaces through deep verandas that provide shade and framed views to the landscape
- Careful placement of existing vegetation and new plantings
- Cross-ventilation that allows students to feel breezes and hear natural sounds
- Use of natural textures and materials
- Allowing rain sounds on metal roofs to remain audible



#### Refuge and Protection

- Sheltered outdoor spaces with views across the landscape
- Covered outdoor learning spaces
- Areas that feel enclosed without being isolating



#### Presence of Water

- Visible stormwater channels that allow occupants to observe water flow during rainfall events



#### Thermal and Airflow Variability

- Open and semi-open classrooms
- High ceilings and operable louvres
- Deep verandas and integrated courtyards between pavilions
- A non-air-conditioned design approach



#### Place-Based Cultural Connection

- Incorporation of local Tetum cultural references through materials, patterns, and spatial layouts
- Dedicated spaces for gathering and community use



#### Material Connection with Nature

- Locally sourced materials such as timber, bamboo, and stone
- Exposed natural textures rather than applied finishes
- Materials selected for durability and graceful ageing



#### Dynamic and Diffuse Light

- Bamboo screening walls that filter daylight
- Good building orientation combined with deep eaves
- Extensive protected glazing

“Observing the growth of the students, both academically and personally, has been a source of delight for staff and families. The students have a pride in their school.”

Br.Paul Kane, Principal

**Educational Environment**



*The educational environment at Colégio Marista Lautém supports a gradual, context-responsive evolution of teaching and learning in Timor-Leste. It balances innovation with local curriculum, teacher capacity, and community expectations, creating flexible, future-focused spaces that encourage collaboration, autonomy, and exploration.*

**Context:**

**Educational Objectives and Brief Development**

The educational brief responds to Timor-Leste's realities, including:

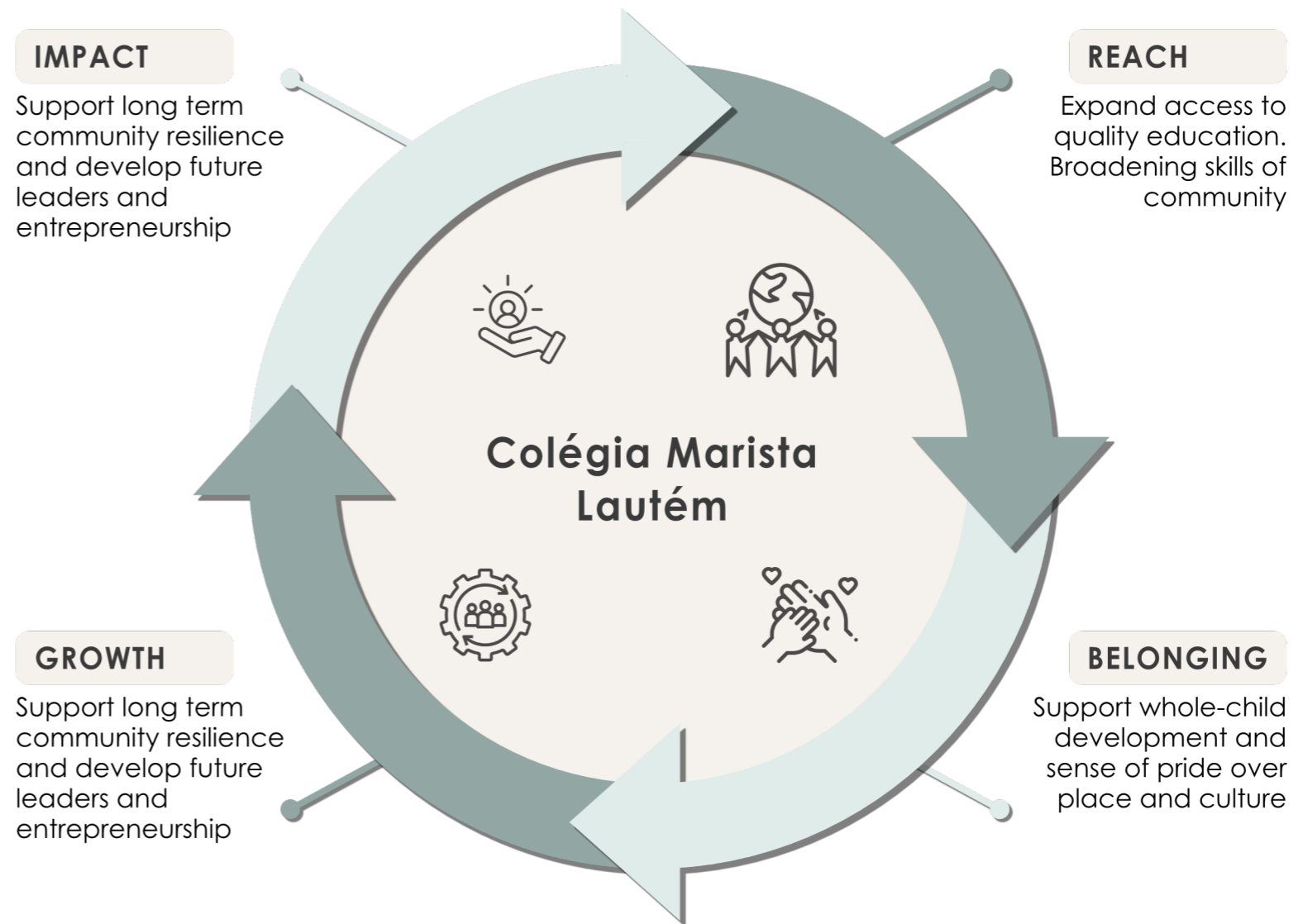
- A highly structured national curriculum using scripted lesson plans to support under-trained teachers
- Limited time for teacher planning, collaboration and professional development due to six-day school week and minimal breaks

In response, the educational specification prioritised:

- Flexible learning environments supporting team teaching and peer learning but also allow for direct instruction
- Spaces that allow teachers to work collaboratively and to their strengths
- Adaptability to support gradual pedagogical change
- Alignment with post-school pathways and local employment opportunities

**Educational Vision**

The educational vision is grounded in the Marist philosophy of quality Catholic education, with a strong focus on supporting young people in marginalised communities.



Response

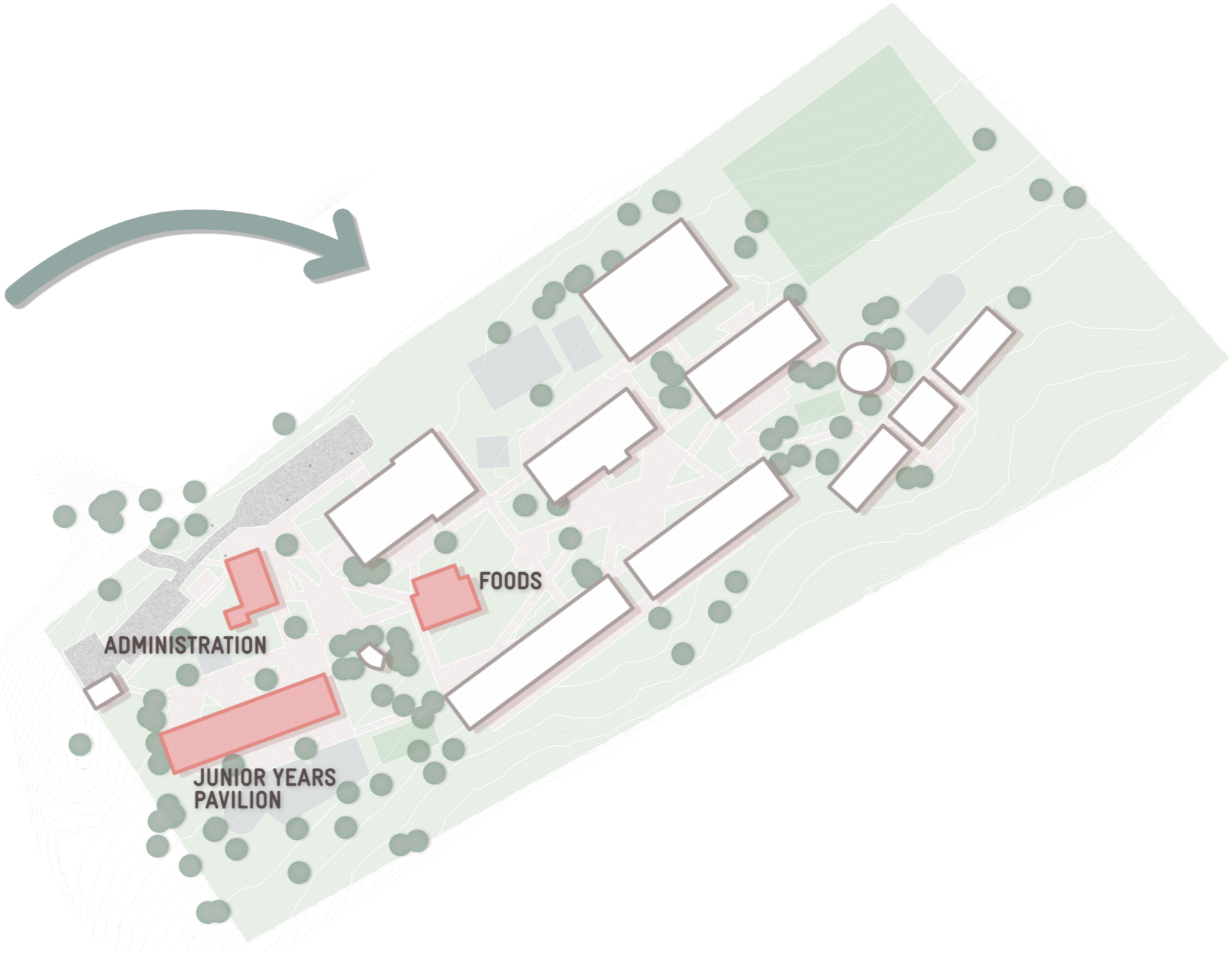
Stage 1 Junior Village

The first stage of the college focuses on creating the **Junior Village**, designed for students in Years 1–6. Students will be organised into three learning communities, each with up to 60 learners supported by a team of teachers.

The first intake includes Years 1 and 3, a strategic decision that targets children at the beginning of their formal education for the greatest long-term impact. Over time, the Junior Village will grow as more students and teachers join, building a strong and supportive learning environment.

This stage also includes a **communal dining and cooking pavilion**, which serves as a central gathering space for the school community. It ensures all students and staff receive a daily meal, while also creating employment opportunities for local community members.

An **administration** space provides dedicated areas for staff collaboration, planning, and social connection, strengthening the overall school culture.



Junior Village



Communal dining and cooking pavilion



Administration

**Contextualised Innovation**

While the design draws on innovative \ educational environments, familiar to developed nations, it is adapted to the local context, where teachers often have limited resources and are used to traditional teaching methods such as rote learning, authoritarian teaching models, strict lesson plans, and rigid discipline (including corporal punishment).

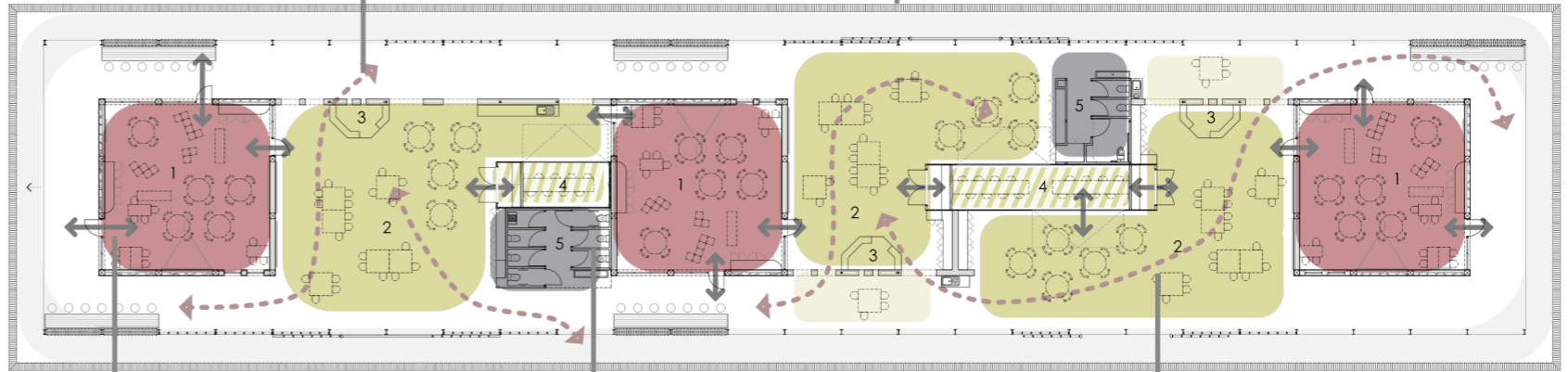
To support change, the building design and teaching approach work closely together focusing on student engagement and growth. Large shared learning spaces provide a variety of settings and opportunities, including:



- Floorplan**
- 1 Studio / classroom
  - 2 Makerspace
  - 3 Tinker wall
  - 4 ICT
  - 5 Amenities

**Verandas and outdoor areas** that extend learning into the environment

The design connects learning directly to the surrounding environment. This allows lessons to use local context and make use of natural resources as tools, making learning more meaningful and sustainable.



**Enclosed classrooms** for focused, teacher-led instruction. Secure technology hubs (in repurposed shipping containers) within learning areas providing direct access to technology within the open environment while allowing out of hours security of valuable resources.

**Integrated student amenities** Students have direct access to toilets throughout the school day, supporting dignity, independence and easy supervision

**Flexible makerspaces** for hands-on learning, exploration, and collaboration with a flexible/zoned layout, access to wet areas and resource cupboards



### Supporting Diverse Teaching + Learning Styles

Although teachers currently work within a structured curriculum, the school encourages them to experiment, take risks, and try new teaching approaches.

- The school uses a team-teaching model, allowing teachers with specialist skills (such as literacy and numeracy) to work together and share responsibility for students. This supports more collaborative and effective teaching, allows for mentorship of inexperienced teachers and encourages teachers to innovate.

Teachers are also encouraged to support each other and focus on recognising the potential in every child. Smaller student-to-teacher ratios and collaboration help teachers implement behaviour management tools in line with international expectations.

### Adaptability + Flexibility

The school is designed to evolve over time as teaching practices and curriculum develop. Spaces must support current structured teaching methods while enabling a gradual shift toward more contemporary approaches.

To support this:

- Learning environments allow for **team teaching and peer support**
- Each community has access to **multiple settings** for different group sizes and teaching styles
- The design encourages **use of the surrounding landscape** as an extension of the classroom
- Ongoing discussions with the **Pedagogical Development Team** support teachers in using spaces effectively


A current challenge is the lack of resources and contextually appropriate learning materials. This is being addressed through partnerships with schools in Australia to provide guidance and support.



Junior Village

**OUTCOME**

*Supporting some of the most disadvantaged students in Timor-Leste to build capacity, raise expectations, and create opportunities for success.*



**“Graduate teachers are seeking to be employed at Colégio Marista because of its philosophy of education and because of the ambience, beauty and functionality of the buildings, gardens and grounds.”**

**Results**

*Colégio Marista Lautém is already demonstrating significant educational, social, cultural, and community impact.*

*The project has established a strong sense of pride, belonging, and aspiration while creating a framework for long-term educational transformation in Timor-Leste.*



**REACH**



'In Timor-Leste, access to well-resourced, high-quality education has historically been centred in limited areas of the capital, Dili, and many rural communities have had few opportunities. Like Saint Marcellin Champagnat, who went into remote villages to teach children who had been overlooked, we are here because we believe our students deserve the same dignity, care, and opportunity as any child.'



**BELONGING**



'Walking into Colégio Marista feels different. The spaces are open, light-filled and thoughtfully designed. They communicate to our students that they are valued and show the importance we place on education in this community.'



**GROWTH**



'Rather than placing teachers in isolated classrooms, the design supports them to work side by side, learning from one another and gradually building confidence in new approaches. Change is gradual. We are not trying to copy another country's model, but to build educators' confidence and capacity within our context. '



**IMPACT**



'As teachers at Colégio Marista Lautém, we feel that we are part of something hopeful. This school stands as a sign that young people in rural Timor-Leste deserve quality, beauty and opportunity. '

### Educational Outcomes

The college is driven by a student-centred, community-focused vision transforming learning and daily life.

**Student agency and autonomy:** Breakout spaces encourage exploration, self-directed learning, and stronger connections to the environment.

**Early responsibility and ownership:** On their sixth-day, students help maintain the school, building collective ownership and a sense of accountability.

**Meeting nutritional needs:** The kitchen provides students and staff with at least one meal each day, strengthening community bonds.

**Flexible teaching:** Adaptable spaces support experimentation, team-teaching, and ongoing staff development, supporting new and creative teaching methods.

**Cultural recognition:** Architecture draws on local traditions, helping students and families feel seen and celebrated.

Students are recognised as capable/responsible learners. By integrating facilities with pedagogy, the school creates meaningful opportunities for engagement beyond formal lessons, improving educational outcomes, well-being, and social connection.

This model shows how creative spaces support learning, responsibility, and community, making the school an active place where students, teachers, and the wider community grow together.



### Community and Regional Outcomes

The school has rapidly become a source of community pride and identity. Students, staff, and families have demonstrated strong ownership of the campus and a deep appreciation for the quality and cultural sensitivity of the environment.

*'The open grounds and sporting areas are already becoming places where families gather, and where students enjoy themselves, feel inspired, and build strong friendships.'*

*One of the most important parts of the school is the kitchen. Every student receives a daily meal, which for some may be their most substantial of the day. We see the difference this makes to concentration and wellbeing. The kitchen also provides employment for local women, and the school creates jobs in many areas.*

*The impact extends beyond the classroom, offering income and upskilling for local people who previously had few employment opportunities.'*

### Organisational Goals

As the first Marist School in Timor Leste The project advances Marist educational goals through:

- Supporting marginalised communities
- Delivering high-quality educational environments
- Building strong school identity
- Fostering whole-child development
- Supporting faith-based education
- Encouraging future leadership and service

**Marist presence has become tangible and visible in the easternmost part of the country.**

### Unintended Outcomes

Several additional outcomes have emerged:

- Increased interest from graduate teachers seeking employment
- Stronger teacher collaboration than anticipated
- Significant student pride in the campus
- Community ownership of the school environment
- Increased discussion around educational reform and teacher training
- Expanded conversations around STEAM and enterprise education

The project has also become a catalyst for broader discussions regarding the future of education in Timor-Leste.



## Lasting Impact

The project demonstrates strong stewardship and value for money by delivering low-maintenance, cost-efficient environments that are flexible and future-ready. The passive design principles further reduce operating costs, maximising the school's capacity to focus funding on teaching and learning goals.

The staged delivery approach reduces upfront costs and allows the school to grow sustainably over time, adapting and innovating at each phase.

By prioritising local labour for construction and everyday operations, the project strengthens the local economy and ensures lasting community benefit.

## Sustainability + Wellness Outcomes

Sustainability is achieved through simple, climate-responsive design rather than complex technology, creating spaces that work naturally with their environment.

The campus supports wellbeing by:

- Embedding biophilic design principles throughout, strengthening connections to nature
- Promoting a culture of respect and encouragement, redefining how students are supported
- Fostering a strong, collaborative community that nurtures growth
- Celebrating local culture and traditions through building design, creating a sense of pride and identity

*"Seeing our students grow academically and personally has been a source of great joy. In addition, enrolment for 2026 is increasing significantly, from 45 students this year to approximately 110," says Brother Paul. "There is a real sense of belonging and hope here."*

— Br.Paul Kane, Principal Br Paul Kane

