

Dear Timor-Leste



Poems of Hope
Cameron Semmens



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*Dedicated to World Vision Timor-Leste's friends,
donors and supporters for their ongoing generosity
and encouragement of our work.*

Some Words from Samaresh

I am not a poet nor a writer but I enjoy poetry very much. The words of a poem can both touch and change our hearts.

I am so glad to know that this small collection of **Cameron's poems is in your hands. I'm sure you will** love it. Every word will surely touch your heart. Our vision is for every child to enjoy life in its fullness and our prayer for every heart is the will to make it so.

The idea for this book came from an inspirational **Cameron Semmens book of poems on World Vision's** work internationally. This book is our prayer and takes the form of letters from Timor-Leste.

We have many statistics and measurements of our **projects, but Cameron's poems and the superb** photographs help capture some of the spirit of hope and faith in the future that we come across in our work. All the photos were taken in the calendar year 2013.

The opening poem, 'Dear Friends of Timor-Leste' on page 9, thanks all our donors and supporters. Our heartfelt gratitude goes to everyone who supports our work here. I hope and trust you find inspiration in the wisdom and warmth contained in these pages.

Samaresh Nayak
Country Director, World Vision Timor-Leste

A Short Note from the Poet

Like many Australians, I have watched Timor-Leste's painful birth from a safe distance - saddened by the struggle of its journey in nationhood, and yet deeply optimistic about its future. Given the chance, I know its people will rise to the challenge.

It is therefore a real honour to be able to use my skills as a poet and performer to support the work of World Vision Timor-Leste. I have been moved and encouraged by their effective and truly life-changing programs. I can only hope that the poems in this book will speak into this great work, and contribute in some small way.

As an artist, it's my job to grapple with what it means to be human - and with issues like poverty, equality and the environment. In 2009, I came into partnership with World Vision Australia, a relationship that has deepened my understanding of the true challenges of changing the world. It's been transformative. And, more than ever, I feel called to turn my art form towards these issues as a hope-seeking artist.

I may be an outsider - an Aussie author from the suburbs - **but I hope my outsider's perspective will** shed new light, and reveal new hope.

Yours poetically,

Cameron Semmens
Poet. Performer.

Contents

<i>Dear Friends of Timor-Leste</i>	9
<i>Have You Smelt a Timor-Leste Classroom?</i>	11
<i>Dear Amaa and Apaa</i>	12
<i>Dear Hands</i>	14
<i>Dear Chalk</i>	17
<i>Dear Politician</i>	21
<i>Dear Water</i>	23
<i>Dear Future</i>	26
<i>Dear Mr Sit-Still-And-Be-Quiet</i>	29
<i>Teacher</i>	33
<i>Dear letter F</i>	34
<i>Mother!</i>	36
<i>Fire</i>	39
<i>Hold Me Close</i>	41



Dear Friends of Timor-Leste,

With your help...

Spreadsheets

*have been laid out across the land
from the hills of Baucau to the valleys of
Bobonaro.*

Databases

*have turned into relationships -
clients, consumers and customers
have become Lorensas, Juandros and
Gilbertas.*

Budgets

*are bearing beautiful fruit -
papayas bless the little ones
like golden tears of joy.*

Obrigadu!

With your support...

Water management

*has turned wells into wellness;
bores into blossoms.*

Health strategies

*have turned pregnant women
into healthy mothers with healthy babies.*

Training

*has turned blackboards into
bright futures.*

Obrigadu! ▷

With your gifts...

Meetings

*have been transformed into meeting places
and smiling faces*

Policy

*has planted the dry earth
with new seed.*

There is food now

where there was hunger.

There is water now

where there was dryness.

There is health now

where there was sickness.

Obrigadu barak!

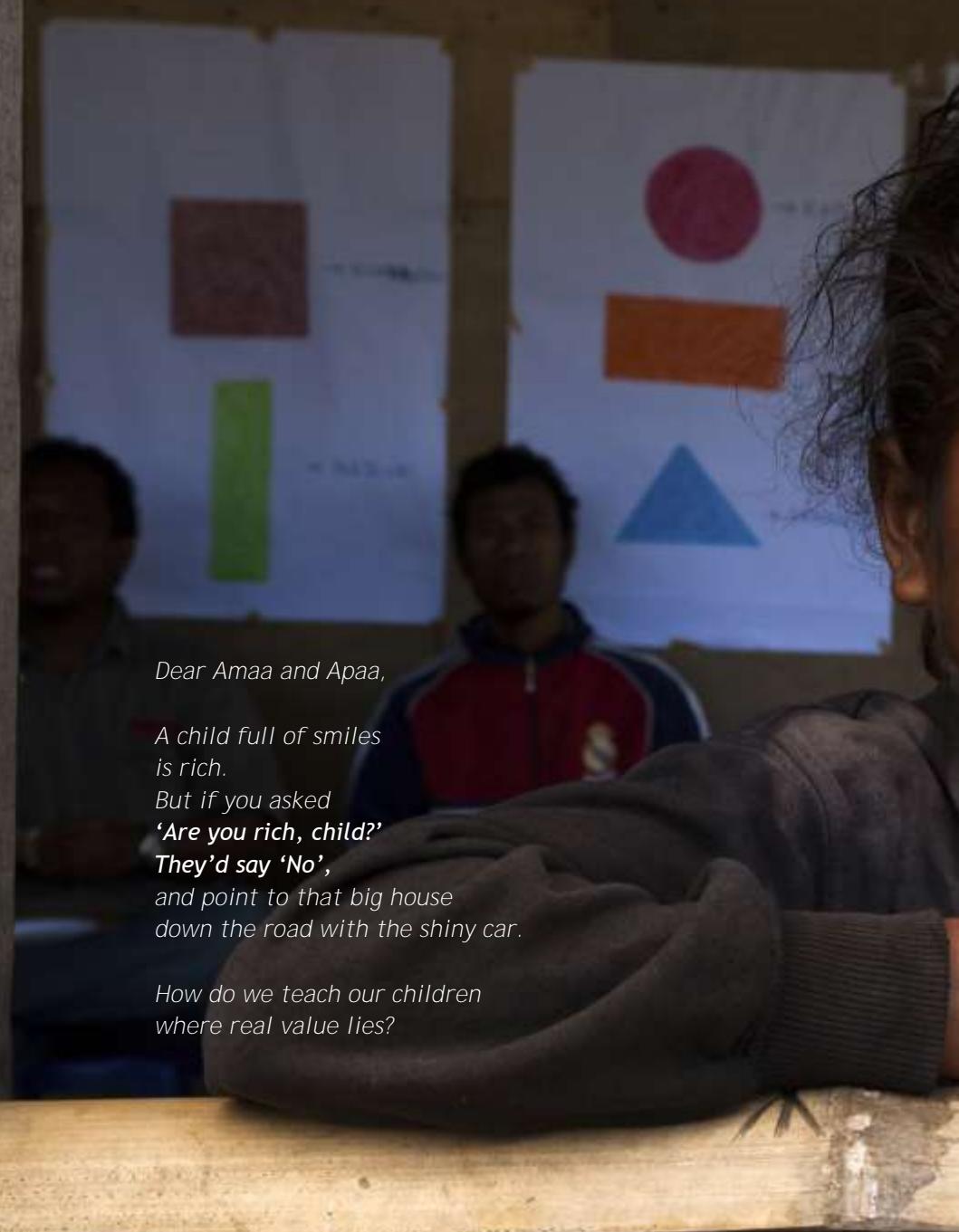




Have you ever smelt a Timor-Leste classroom?
It's more than earth and wood.

It's perfumed with potential,
the fragrance of popcorn questions,
the aroma of loving guidance,

and the sweet scent
of hope.



Dear Amaa and Apaa,

*A child full of smiles
is rich.*

*But if you asked
'Are you rich, child?'
They'd say 'No',
and point to that big house
down the road with the shiny car.*

*How do we teach our children
where real value lies?*





Dear Hands,

Get Washed!

Get Clean!

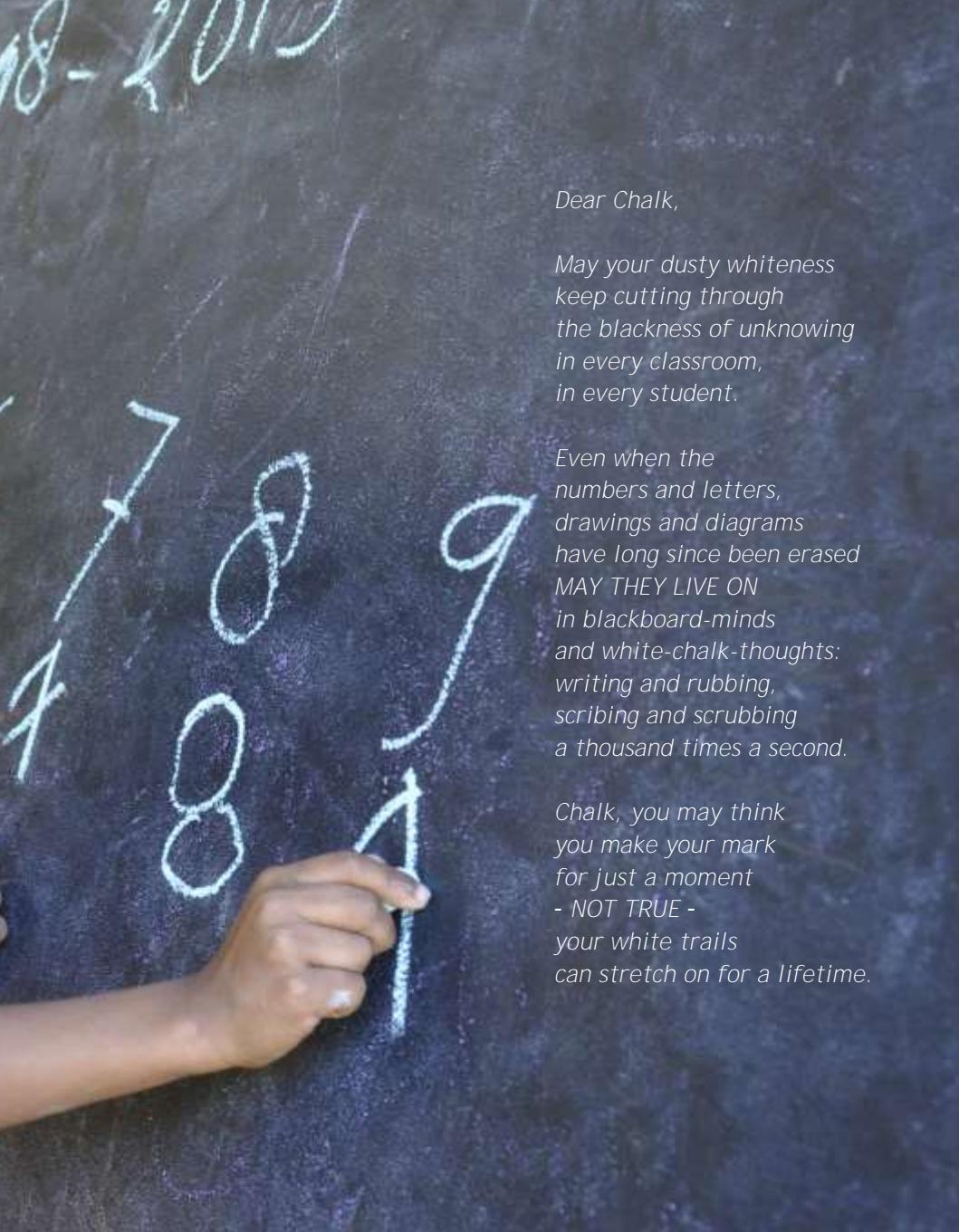
or Get Away from my batar da'an!

With love,

Your Tummy







Dear Chalk,

*May your dusty whiteness
keep cutting through
the blackness of unknowing
in every classroom,
in every student.*

*Even when the
numbers and letters,
drawings and diagrams
have long since been erased
MAY THEY LIVE ON
in blackboard-minds
and white-chalk-thoughts:
writing and rubbing,
scribing and scrubbing
a thousand times a second.*

*Chalk, you may think
you make your mark
for just a moment
- NOT TRUE -
your white trails
can stretch on for a lifetime.*







Dear Water,

Don't be unreasonable.

Don't hold yourself back,

keep falling

into our laps, our cups, our gaping mouths,

flow down the hills,

follow the gutters please.

Don't be so haphazard!

Arriving all at once in a manic state

then disappearing for ages -

spread yourself out a bit.

We need you.

But we need you clean.

Keep coming,

and we'll find better ways

to respect you, collect you.

Keep falling

on our skin, our streams, our crops.

We'll never stop

being thirsty

for you.

Be responsible,

and we'll try to be responsible too.



Dear Politician,

*This boy
is so much more
than a mouth to feed,
a mind to teach,
a body to clothe.*

*This boy
is son and brother,
creator and hoper,
sunrise and August rain.*

*This boy
will grow
into so much more.*

Look deeper...

*In this boy
is a man,
and in that man
is the future
of this land.*





Dear Future

When are you going to get here?

I've been waiting for ages,

looking for you

down long dirt tracks,

through rough cut huts.

Sometimes I catch a glimpse

of black roads and shiny stoves,

but it's always from a distance.

They said, once you get here

everything will be better,

there'll be freedom and food and jobs.

They said, that you are mine to share

with all the other kids,

that our elders will be living in the past

by the time you arrive.

Can I do anything to help you get here sooner?

More learning?

I'm going to school, I'm washing my hands,

I'm drinking good water.

If you're close, let me know.

I'll meet you half way.

Cos I can run! I'm a runner. I'm fast.

They said, you might be slow in coming,

and I know you'll get here eventually...

but please, don't take too long.







Dear Mr Sit-Still-And-Be-Quiet,

*When you see kids playing
don't pass them by.*

Stop.

*Watch them sprint
and squeal
and work together
for fun.*

*And if your joy ever fails,
return to them.*

*They will always have enough
to share with you.*

P.S.

Don't postpone the joy.



ORARIO

TERCIA
ORARIO: 09:00 - 11:00

Sexta
ORARIO: 09:00-11:00

Sexta
ORARIO: 09:00-11:00





Teacher

*Laugh me into learning,
play me into wisdom,
race me into knowing.*

*I've seen seeds sprout from nothing.
I've seen brown fields flare to life
when loved by rain.*

*We are rich soil.
We are bursting with potential.
Fertilise our minds.
Quench our thirst for knowledge.*

*And we will do more
than grow,
we will bloom!*

Dear letter F,

I see you've taken a fall.

Don't worry,

M and N will support you as long as needed.

E and G won't forget you.

We couldn't do without you...

_reedom

_uture

_un

_aih

We need you for them all!

So hang in there.

Yours faithfully,

A Friend





A close-up photograph of a young child with dark hair, wearing a pink t-shirt with a palm tree graphic. The child is laughing heartily, with their mouth wide open. A hand with a gold ring is visible, holding the child's arm. The background is a weathered wooden fence.

Mother!

*Pregnant clouds;
thunderbolt labour -
a child
is the storm.*

*Raging,
tear-away,
squalling,
myriad tears,
cracking laugh.*

I love storms!





Fire,

*Your red tongues
have spoken to us
for millennia,*

*whispered with hot breath
of warmth and home.*

*But now we say
‘Keep your distance
from our newborns.’*

*Now we know
your smoke
is a cruel father.*

Don’t be angry,
*your rage is all-consuming.
Please understand,
we need your searing tongues
as much as ever -
boiling, baking, roasting, toasting.*

*But our babies
- NO -
our babies need space
from your bad breath.*





*Hold me to you,
womb-close.*

*Press me against
your chest,
skin on skin.*

*I need to feel the heat form
on the borders of our beings -
it's the only true comfort I have.*

*It teaches me I am dear,
I am precious, I am yours.*

*Keep me close to the warm
white waterfall of your laughter.
I need it.*

*With your body
I am loved
into living.*







Front cover. Haburas Aileu Project (HAP),
Aileu 2013.
Bridie Walsh/WV Australia.



Inside front cover. Aileu landscape 2013.
Bridie Walsh/WV Australia.



8. Food Security and Economic Development project, Bobonaro 2013.
Nuno Tolentino/WV Timor-Leste.



8. Livelihood Improvement Through Farmer Enterprise (LIFE) project, Aileu 2013.
Bridie Walsh/WV Australia.



10. HAP project, Aileu 2013.
Bridie Walsh/WV Australia.



11. Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) project, Baucau 2013.
Amelia Xavier/WV Timor-Leste.



12. LIFE project, Aileu 2013.
Bridie Walsh/WV Australia.



14. Global Handwashing Day celebration,
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)
project, Baucau 2013.
Try Harysantoso/WV Timor-Leste.



16. ECCD project, Baucau 2013.
Amelia Xavier/WV Timor-Leste.



18. LIFE and ECCD projects, Aileu 2013.
Bridie Walsh/WV Australia.



20. Child Rights' Day celebration, ECCD
project, Aileu 2013.
Amelia Xavier/WV Timor-Leste.



22. LIFE project, Aileu 2013.
Bridie Walsh/WV Australia.



24. LIFE and ECCD projects, Aileu 2013.
Bridie Walsh/WV Australia.



24. WASH project, Baucau 2013.
Amelia Xavier/WV Timor-Leste.



25. LIFE and HAP projects, Aileu 2013.
Bridie Walsh/WV Australia.



25. WASH project, Aileu 2013.
Stephan Barthel/WV Timor-Leste.



26. Maternal and Child Health (MCH)
project, Bobonaro 2013.
Judit da Costa/WV Timor-Leste.



28. Child Rights' Day celebration, ECCD
project, Aileu 2013.
Amelia Xavier/WV Timor-Leste.



30. LIFE, HAP and ECCD projects, Aileu
2013. Bridie Walsh/WV Australia.



32. Child Rights' Day celebration, ECCD
project, Aileu 2013.
Amelia Xavier/WV Timor-Leste.



35. ECCD project, Baucau 2013.
Amelia Xavier/WV Timor-Leste.



36. Child Rights' Day celebration, ECCD
project, Aileu 2013.
Amelia Xavier/WV Timor-Leste.



38. Food Security and Nutrition project,
Baucau 2013.
Amelia Xavier/WV Timor-Leste.



40. LIFE project, Aileu 2013.
Bridie Walsh/WV Australia.



41. MCH project, Baucau 2013.
Amelia Xavier/WV Timor-Leste.

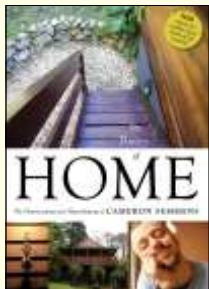


42. LIFE and HAP projects, Aileu 2013.
Bridie Walsh/WV Australia.



Inside back cover. Aileu landscape 2013.
Bridie Walsh/WV Australia.

If you've enjoyed this book, you might like some of Cameron's other books, like these two:



If you're interested in any of Cameron's publications, go to www.webcameron.com

also

If you'd like to commission work from Cameron or invite him to perform or run workshops, email him at: cam@webcameron.com

About World Vision Timor-Leste (WVTL)

WVTL is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice.

We work with vulnerable people to promote the wellbeing of children, families and communities regardless of their religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

Our strategic goals

1. Increase gender equity

Hasa'e iquidade jeneru

2. Promote child well-being

Promove labarik nia moris diak

3. Enhance community resilience and productivity

Hasa'e resilencia komunidade no produktividade

4. Become a strong voice for change

Sai lian ne'ebe forte ba mudansa

5. Enhance supporter engagement

Hasa'e engajamentu suporte sira

Our mission statement

Healthy children for strong communities

Labarik saudavel ba komunidade forte

Where we work

Our country office is in the capital Dili and we have three base offices in the districts of Aileu (central), Baucau (east) and Bobonaro (west).









About Cameron Semmens

Cameron Semmens is an award-winning poet and performer, with 13 books and four CDs of his poetry published to date. He makes his living through words: running workshops, writing books and performing live. **Cameron is a 'Vision Artist' with World Vision Australia.** He lives just outside Melbourne, Australia with his wife Sonya and two young children.