



## **VLGA TIMOR-LESTE ADVISORY GROUP UPDATE**

### **March 2011**

**Greetings to all VLGA Friends and Members and Supporters of Friendship Groups. This is our first news update for 2011.**

### **VLGA submission to Aid Effectiveness review**

The VLGA has made a submission to the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness. The review is due to report to the Federal Government in April. The Terms of Reference can be viewed at

<http://www.aidreview.gov.au/index.html>

The VLGA submission focuses on the role of Australian local government friendship relationships with Timor-Leste and argues that the Australian Government should give them appropriate recognition through making funds available for approved activities via AusAID, consulting with local governments about the development of the aid program to Timor-Leste, liaising with local partners in Timor-Leste via the Dili embassy and amending the criteria for tax-deductible eligibility for donations made to support scholarship programs in Timor-Leste.

The VLGA's submission is among those from 288 organisations which have been published on the website – see link above.

### **Video of talk on skills development in Timor-Leste**

A video of the talk given by Annie Keogh last November at the Hume Global Learning Centre on skills development in Timor-Leste can be accessed at

<http://vimeo.com/19785904>

### **Forum on micro-finance in Timor-Leste**

The VLGA Timor-Leste Advisory Group will be hosting a Forum on micro-finance in Timor-Leste, to be held at 6pm on Wednesday 13 April in Meeting Room E at Brunswick Town Hall, 233 Sydney Road, Brunswick. The keynote speaker will be Guy Winship, CEO of Good Return, an innovative social enterprise established by World Education Australia to address poverty issues in the Asia Pacific region. Guy has international experience in the field of micro-finance. For more information about Guy Winship and Good Return go to

<http://www.goodreturn.org/site/home/Home.aspx>.

If you wish to attend the Forum, please RSVP to Gary Jungwirth by Friday 8 April to [gary@vlga.org.au](mailto:gary@vlga.org.au).

In addition, Geoff Donnelly, who is the Good Return Ambassador, is available to meet with friendship groups to discuss the good return project and micro-finance opportunities in East Timor. Geoff can be contacted at [geoff@goodreturn.org](mailto:geoff@goodreturn.org) or by mobile 0412 991 734.

### **Tetum and Portuguese classes to begin**

Tetum and Portuguese language classes, organised by Timorlink, will start again in the week beginning 28 March. For details and enrolment, contact Katrina Langford on 0404 275 960 or go to

[www.timorlink.org](http://www.timorlink.org).

## Jill Jolliffe to give talk on Timor-Leste

Australian journalist and author, Jill Jolliffe, will give a talk entitled *East Timor: emerging from the post-conflict society*, at a fundraising dinner for the Friends of Aileu on Friday 6 May. Jill is the author of *Balibo* and *Finding Santana* and is the Director of the *Living Memory Project*. For further information and bookings, contact Richard Brown on 0407 091 004 or at [rbrown@moreland.vic.gov.au](mailto:rbrown@moreland.vic.gov.au).

## AusAID support for friendship relationships

The Australian Government has indicated its support for local government friendship relationships with Timor-Leste. In a letter to Moreland City Council dated 9 February 2011, the Assistant Director General of the Indonesia and East Timor Branch of AusAID stated: *'The Australian Government is very supportive of the friendship relationships which Australian Local Governments maintain with various communities in East Timor... and we recognise the positive contribution of friendship groups to East Timor's development.'*

The statement was in response to a letter from Moreland Council to the Australian Foreign Minister asking the Australian Government to give appropriate recognition to the Friendship relationships and, in particular, to make funds available through AusAID to support the friendship groups.

In its reply AusAID referred to two sources of funding which could be accessed by Friendship groups: the Public Sector Linkages Program (PSLP) and the East Timor Community Assistance Scheme (ETCAS). Local governments are able to partner with state governments to apply for funds under the PSLP to undertake projects designed to 'improve public sector capacity'. This could be relevant to activities relating to the transition to elected municipal government in Timor-Leste, for example. (See item about the

VLGA's partnership with the Victorian Government below).

ETCAS is a source of small grants for East Timorese NGOs, which could partner with Australian friendship groups on projects that aim to improve local conditions. It is administered through the Australian Embassy in Dili (contact [Pedro.Aquino@ausaid.vic.gov.au](mailto:Pedro.Aquino@ausaid.vic.gov.au)). Details of both schemes are on the AusAID website at [www.aisaid.gov.au](http://www.aisaid.gov.au).

## Training for officials from the Districts

The VLGA is working in partnership with the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development on a training program for local officials from eight Timor-Leste Districts: Aileu, Ainaro, Dili, Ermera, Lautem, Liquica, Manatuto and Oecusse.

They have made a submission to AusAID under the Public Sector Linkages Program for funding to bring the trainees to Victoria for intensive training in aspects of the operation of local government, in preparation for the transition to elected municipal government in Timor-Leste, expected to take place in 2013-14.

The trainees will be placed at a number of rural councils, where local conditions are more like those in the Districts. They will be accommodated in home-stays with the local community and provided with social support while they are here by the Friendship groups linked to the District. The result of the submission will be known by May, with the training expected to take place in October-November 2011.

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