



ALOOLA
Foundation

Alola Foundation Update, August 21, 2006

Over the last month there have been a number of significant developments in Alola. The first and most exciting has been that we have gradually welcomed back our staff who relocated to Baucau during the crisis. All the breastfeeding team, our administrative and support staff, shop manager, scholarships staff and Women's Resource Centre staff are now back in Dili. The second and more distressing development has been the resurgence of violence on the streets of Dili. This includes outside our office, with large gangs of boys and young men throwing large rocks at each other, firing lethal darts and destroying property. More houses have been burned.

Initially response times for the police were long (30 to 50 minutes) but this has now improved. Many of our staff, and nearly all the returned staff, are living in refugee camps; others are living with friends or relatives where they feel safe. It is unclear how long it will take for people to feel safe enough to return to their homes. Alola programs over the last month have included:



Young people at the Canossian Balide IDP camp practicing a song for their return home

Scholarships Program

Scholarship applications for primary and high school students have continued to be processed and distributed even though schools are currently on holidays. Universities have been closed since April but there are plans to resume in September. Due to the April-May crisis, distribution to some students was delayed and some students have come to the office to receive their scholarships or enquire about their application. Increased governance and accountability procedures introduced during the year will place a high demand on program staff for travel to the districts to assess applications, deliver scholarship funds and introduce some of the extended support programs which have been developed to increase school retention rates, especially amongst girls and young women.

This extended and more comprehensive scholarships program will require investment in another safe, all weather vehicle to allow the program to continue during the wet season. The scholarships program is popular in



Scholarships Program Manager Nivio Magalhaes meeting with Melbourne University Scholarship Holders in Oecussi

Timor-Leste and we hope that the Christmas Certificate Scholarship campaign will attract further support from donors.

Humanitarian Relief

The need for humanitarian relief continues and women arrive at the Alola office each day looking for support. Food and materials have continued to be distributed in camps, much of it in collaboration with the President's office. An emerging issue in the camps is the nutrition status of pregnant women. The impact of living in the camps away from the usual household facilities such as a home garden is already creating a nutrition problem and extended residence in the camps will exacerbate the problem.

Women at the Canossian Balide IDP camp



Alola is currently exploring mechanisms to provide food supplements for pregnant and breastfeeding women. In addition, we are looking at distribution mechanisms to ensure that the women consume the food and it is not offered to other members of the family. This is likely to involve members of our Mother Support Groups being employed to facilitate the preparation and distribution in the camps.



Children helping unpack supplies delivered to the Canossian Congregation Balide IDP camp

Maternal and Child Health

World Breastfeeding Week was celebrated in early August with banners being hung across the roads in Dili and others in Baucau. A breastfeeding promotional film was shown on national television after the afternoon news throughout the week, August 2 to 7. Board Member Olandina Caeiro Alves traveled to Baucau with MCH Program Manager, Veronica Correia, to open the week and launch Baucau hospital as a Baby Friendly Hospital. The breastfeeding team also organised the Bibiluto drama group to perform in two locations in Viqueque, Beloi and Cabiraon, to promote exclusive breastfeeding. The team reported audiences of 200 and 150 at the two performances.

Handcrafts

The handcraft program is buzzing with new products, additional staff and many ideas for the marketing strategy. We are currently exploring ways to create more outlets for the tais and other products from our 22 producer groups, both through our base in Timor-Leste and through additional outlets in Australia.

Pakote Pensu

The *pakote pensu* program (washable pads) funded by USAID goes from strength to strength under the efficient and caring management of the Coordinator, Zulmira Amaral, who comes to work each day from a temporary home in the refugee camp at the Dili National Hospital. So far 8000 pakote pensu have been distributed in 19 different camps around Dili. This means our Taibesi sewers have made 32000 washable pads and packaged up 4 pads, 3 underwear, soap and a bucket for the 8000 women recipients. The *pensu* program provides employment for 20 women to sew and pack the pensu. As the demand for the pensu tapers off we are now exploring other opportunities for employing the sewers and are in discussion with UNICEF to produce 20,000 small bags for a schools program.



Pakote Pensu distribution at airport camp by Alola Chairwoman Kirsty Sword Gusmão



Friendship Schools staff Marcelina and Inacia translating student writing for schools in Australia

Friendship Schools

Alola has welcomed the new Friendship Schools Coordinator, Marcelina da Conceicao. Schools are now on annual holidays, resuming in September, so it has been a good time to brief the new member of the team. Inacia Tamele has continued her work with Child Friendly Spaces in IDP camps, conducting needs assessments and delivering materials for the use of children. Inacia is also Alola's representative on the Child Protection Working Group, a collaboration between national and international NGOs and the UN to provide children with a safe environment in the camps.

Advocacy

Our Advocacy Program Manager, Alita Verdial, has been attending the regular meetings of the **Gender Based Violence** network which has been working to identify and solve problems of gender based violence in the IDP camps. Participant are Rede Feto (network of NGOs representing women), UN Agencies and International and local NGOs which are active in responding to the current crisis. This network did some preliminary assessments to identify the causes of the current political and military crisis and is a forum for sharing ideas on longer term programs to address the underlying causes of the crisis. For example, there are many widows in the IDP camps and they have requested scholarships for their children to support their education. This recommendation was carried through to the recent report to Melbourne University in relation to the Scholarships program.



Airport IDP camp

Staff Support

We have completed our assessment of staff and their situation as a result of the April-May crisis. Alola currently employs 73 Timorese staff, some on a casual basis to implement our emergency response programs. Of these staff, 23 - nearly 20% - have had their houses burned or significantly looted. Another 20 have had less severe looting. Only 20 staff have stayed at home throughout the crisis and nearly all are supporting other family members.

Strong Women Strong Nation

Over the last month Alola's Program Managers have completed a strategic review of the Alola Timor-Leste program. One outcome of this process is *Strong Women Strong Nation* as the phrase which best captures our vision for Alola. We see Alola's program as empowering women in Timor-Leste by

- *Creating employment opportunities*
- *Promoting human rights*
- *Strengthening community participation in development*
- *Increasing the status of women*

Implementation strategies have been developed in each of our five program areas of Maternal and Child Health, Education, Economic Development, Advocacy and Management. This program focus will assist us in discussions with donors and supporters and guide future program development.

Thank you for your continued support for the Alola program.

**Anne Bunning
Chief Executive Officer
Alola Foundation**



Alola Foundation Chairwoman Kirsty Sword Gusmão with National Breastfeeding Program trainer Emalinda Monteiro, a resident at the airport IDP camp