



## **Australia and USAID Announce a New Partnership to Improve Child and Maternal Health in Timor-Leste**

*Dili 12 July 2010* -- Australia announces that it will work with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission in Timor-Leste to increase its support for tackling health issues in the areas of maternal/child health, reproductive health including family planning, and safe pregnancy in Timor-Leste.

The new AusAID-USAID partnership will work to improve health care in two areas:

- increasing access to maternal and child health and family planning services
- improving the quality of those services.

AusAID's AU\$5 million (US\$4.4 million) gift to USAID will add about 30% to the current budget for USAID's Health Improvement Program (HIP), which focuses on family planning, maternal and newborn health, nutrition and child health initiatives. The added funding will bring the program to more of Timor-Leste's districts to improve the health and wellbeing of families and help children grow into healthy, productive adults.

While the recent preliminary results of Timor-Leste's 2009 Demographic and Health Survey have shown positive progress towards improving child health indicators, however, maternal and child health indicators remain low and fertility rates are still categorised as among the highest in the world. USAID's long-term health program works directly with target populations to improve these statistics.

Manager for Health at AusAID's Dili Office, Miriam Smith, said, "This is a good example of how Australia can work with other donors to achieve results. Our support for HIP represents a new health partnership with USAID. "

USAID Timor-Leste Mission Director Mark White said, "This significant gift from AusAID will increase the positive impact of our health program on the lives of thousands of people in Timor-Leste. Partnerships such as this show our commitment to accelerating the aid effectiveness principles of the Paris Declaration."

AusAID Program Officer Armandina Gusmao Amaral said that she was pleased with the funding coordination. "I believe that this funding will complement our existing support on maternal, newborn care and birth spacing and the provision of family planning counselling and services."

Australia provides an average annual aid contribution of US\$100 million to Timor-Leste, covering a range of needs including health, education, public sector development, agriculture, infrastructure and employment. In 2010-2011, AusAID will increase its direct assistance to maternal and child health initiatives from AU\$1.2 million to AU\$5.25 million.

Australia also supports the Timor-Leste Ministry of Health through the Health Sector Strategic Plan Support Project (HSSP-SP), in partnership with the World Bank. This program is worth AU\$23 million over four years. A separate program of support, ATLASS, worth AU\$8.4 million over 5 years, provides health specialist training and advice to the five referral hospitals in Timor-Leste.

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