

# The Timor-Leste Australia Collaboration for HIV Testing and Counselling Project (TAC-TAC)

## WHAT ?

TAC-TAC is part of the AusAID funded Regional HIV/AIDS Capacity Building Program linking Australian organisations with counterparts in Asia-Pacific to strengthen HIV/AIDS responses.

TAC-TAC will train and mentor health workers to provide HIV Testing and Counselling (TAC) through Marie Stopes International Timor Leste sexual and reproductive health (SRH) clinic and outreach services and government health workers. Beginning with a needs assessment and stakeholder consultations, the project will end by producing a lessons learnt film or photolanguage exhibition to share results.

## WHY ?

HIV prevalence rates in Timor-Leste (TL) are 0.2%<sup>1</sup>. Although TL is a low prevalence country, it is experiencing higher rates of HIV transmission than epidemiological modelling projected in 2005<sup>2</sup>. Sexually transmissible infections (STI) prevalence rates are also increasing, and HIV sentinel surveillance has reported an HIV prevalence of 2.58% in the STI population group<sup>3</sup>. Providing HIV TAC through SRH services addresses this heightened risk group and the issue that some people may be unwilling to attend a service specifically for HIV, but may be willing to be tested in the context of STI service provision<sup>4</sup>.

## WHO ?

**The Albion Centre** (Albion) is the lead agency working in collaboration with the key partner Marie Stopes International TL. Albion is a government health service, established in 1985 and is one of the longest established services for HIV globally and a World Health Organisation (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Capacity Building and Health Care Worker Training in HIV/AIDS Care, Treatment and Support.

**Marie Stopes International Timor Leste** (MSITL) was established in 2006 and works in partnership with the Ministry of Health to provide SRH services in TL through the Dili Reproductive Health Centre (RHC) and outreach services in eight districts. MSITL is a subsidiary of MSI Australia.

**Ministry of Health** (MoH) leads the HIV response in TL and is envisaged to be a key TAC-TAC partner. TAC-TAC is in line with the National Health Strategic Plan (2011-2030) and the Timor-Leste National HIV and STI Strategy (2011-2016), specifically Section 2.3.2 strengthening provider initiated HIV counselling and testing in the context of SRH service provision. Other stakeholders include Estrela+, WHO and the National Reference Laboratory along with civil society groups and individuals.

## WHERE ?

MSITL currently works in eight districts with plans to extend services to additional districts in Timor-Leste based on health system requirements. The RHC is in Dili and outreach services are provided within Dili and Lautem, Baucau, Viqueque, Manufahi, Bobonaro, Ainaro and Ermera districts. MoH will be invited to send staff from any district to TAC training and mentoring.

## WHEN ?

TAC-TAC is from October 2012 to June 2014. Training and mentoring activities will occur through short-term in-country visits by Albion TAC Technical Advisors over the project period.



<sup>1</sup> Timor-Leste National HIV and STI Strategy 2011-2016:10, 4 and section 4.2.1 (footnote references 1,2, and 4)

<sup>3</sup> UNGASS. Global AIDS Progress Report January 2010 – December 2011