About the ‘Timor-Leste Research Program’
at RMIT University

www.timor-leste.org

The Timor-Leste Research Program is based at RMIT University (Melbourne, Australia), and is primarily situated within the Globalism Research Centre and connects into the work of the Global Cities Institute. Researchers from the Globalism Research Centre have been working in Timor-Leste since 2003, and as with other sites within Australia and the Asia-Pacific, our main intellectual task has been to understand broad processes of social transformation in the world today. In terms of the Timor-Leste Research Program, the focus has very much been on the process of nation-formation. We endeavour to work across the divide between abstract theory and applied research and we seek to develop strong collaborative connections with communities, civil society and state organisations in our research areas.

**Timor-Leste Research Program Objectives**

RMIT’s Timor-Leste Research Program is committed to both intellectual and ethical objectives. At an *intellectual* level, our objectives include:

- To seek to understand processes of change in contemporary Timor-Leste, specifically the process of nation-formation;
- To develop and utilise innovative research methods suitable for the East Timorese context; and
- To ensure that our academic research findings contribute wherever possible to development policy and program design and community knowledge in Timor-Leste.

At an *ethical* level, our objectives include:

- To build innovative knowledge about East Timorese society that is applicable, socially progressive, accessible and widely distributed in both Timor-Leste and globally, including both within and beyond universities;
- To ensure that our research program is transparent and accountable in Timor-Leste, and involves locally-based partners wherever possible;
- To build the research capabilities of East Timorese communities, organisations and individuals, and emerging researchers from Australia and internationally; and
• To include a diverse range of East Timorese voices in data collection and written outcomes.

Publications

In addition to academic publications, the Timor-Leste Research Program has produced a series of public reports which have been drawn from project work with a range of community organisations and funders. Most of these reports have also been translated into Tetun and distributed across Timor-Leste as well as internationally.


• **The Impacts of Gender Programming in Timor-Leste**, Irish Aid and Trocaire, 2011. (Also in Tetun.)

• **Uptake of New Technologies in Rural Communities in Los Palos**, Concern Worldwide, 2011. (Also in Tetun.)


• **Understanding Community: Security and Sustainability in Timor-Leste**, Irish Aid, Oxfam Australia, Concern Worldwide and the Globalism Research Centre, RMIT University, 2009. (Also in Tetun.)

• **Social and Economic Development in Oecusse**, Timor-Leste, Oxfam Australia and the Globalism Research Centre, RMIT University, 2008. (Also in Indonesian.)

• **Challenges and Possibilities: International Organizations and Women in Timor-Leste**, 2nd edition, Globalism Institute, RMIT University, Melbourne, 2008. (Also available in Tetun.)

• **Mapping the Pursuit of Gender Equality: Non-Government and International Agency Activity in Timor-Leste**, Globalism Institute, RMIT University, and Irish Aid, Melbourne, 2008. (Also available in Tetun.)

Students

The Timor-Leste Research Program has facilitated the involvement of RMIT based students in a wide-range of research and event based activities. This includes undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students, as well as Honours and postgraduate research students. Through internships, employment into projects, study tours, supervision and international conferences and seminars, students have been able to gather first-hand experience, including extensive field research and project management experience. For more information please visit timor-leste.org
‘Matadalan Ba Malu’ was established to facilitate English language scholarships for women from Timor-Leste. The program targets women working within a community context or local organisation in Timor-Leste and who would benefit from high quality English training and the experience of a cross-cultural exchange in Melbourne, Australia. The learning and experience gained through the program are also designed to benefit the participant’s community in a number of ways, including the transference of new found skills and knowledge, promoting mutual understanding between East Timorese and Australian communities, and an enhanced capacity to facilitate and negotiate local development activities and opportunities on returning home. A key objective of the program is to consider candidates who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to learn English and benefit from the experiences of living in another country for a period of time.

How does the program work?

Working with a variety of partners and stakeholders based in Timor-Leste, the program identifies potential participants via an application process. Once selected, the applicant is offered a tuition-free placement within a tailored ten-week English language program conducted by RMIT English Worldwide (REW) in Melbourne, Australia. As this program is designed to meet the individual needs of the applicant there are no program prerequisites and language proficiency is tested once in Australia with the appropriate course level being determined by REW staff (course levels start from ‘Elementary’ through to ‘Advanced Plus’).

In addition to the language component of the program, participants have the opportunity to explore Melbourne, participate in university life, and to have contact with Australian families and communities. Orientation, mentoring, and other support services are also provided by Matadalan Ba Malu volunteers and RMIT staff and students.

Who is ‘Matadalan Ba Malu’?

The work of the Matadalan Ba Malu Committee is part of the broader Timor-Leste Research Program, which is located within the Globalism Research Centre at RMIT University. The Timor-Leste Research Program (timor-leste.org) has conducted a wide range of research projects and activities in Timor-Leste for over a decade. While the English training component has been successfully operating since 2005—resulting in ten program alumni—a volunteer committee was established in 2012 to expand the program’s opportunities and governance. The primary focus of the Committee is to: enhance the sustainability of the program via forging partnerships with other organisations; provide additional support services to candidates; and explore additional fundraising opportunities. The volunteer committee now comprises a number of RMIT academics as well as current and former RMIT
students, each of whom have travelled to and been involved in various research and educational projects in Timor-Leste.

Matadalan Ba Malu Committee members share a deep commitment to developing mutual learning opportunities between East Timorese and Australians. Indeed the phrase ‘Matadalan Ba Malu’ is Tetun meaning ‘to guide each other’, and signifies the Committee’s desire to share with East Timorese an opportunity for mutual learning and sharing across both Timor-Leste and Australia. The focus in this instance is on providing educational opportunities for women in recognition of the gender inequity experienced in both societies. Between the English training provided since 2005 and other activities, the Timor-Leste program has facilitated the visit of more than thirty East Timorese to Melbourne for a range of purposes. As such, there already exists considerable experience within the Committee in terms of organising visits by future candidates.

How can you get involved?

Thanks to the generous support by REW, Matadalan Ba Malu has been able to offer a limited number of tuition-free placements each year to successful candidates. However, the costs and services associated with this program extend well beyond the tuition component (including airfares, passport and visas, medical insurance, food and accommodation, et cetera). Matadalan Ba Malu is therefore seeking to develop relationships with donors, fundraising bodies, organisations that have an interest in developing language skills of East Timorese women and those who can provide additional organisational and financial assistance to successful applicants. Should you or your organisation wish to contribute to our ongoing work please contact mbm@timor-research.org or more information is available at timor-leste.org.