

# Australian Volunteers Program in Timor-Leste

In 2020-21 the Australian Volunteers Program in Timor-Leste supported 22 volunteers and 16 partner organisations, supporting partner organisations to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 and assist women, children, indigenous and gender diverse communities.

*'It was a fantastic experience I'll remember for life.'*  
– Remote volunteer

In 2020-21 in Timor-Leste, the program supported:

**16**  
partner organisations

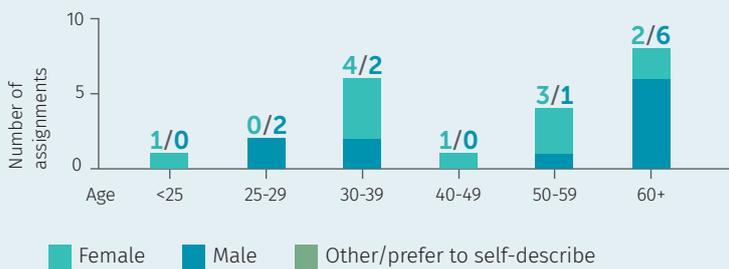
**9**  
partner organisations with Impact Grants

**22**  
volunteers

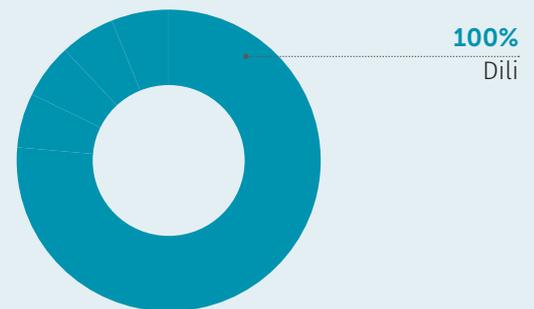
**19** remote assignments  
**6** in-country assignments

## Gender and age of volunteers

Women 50% Men 50%



## Location of assignments



## Most common types of partner organisations



## Most common professions of volunteers



80% of partner organisations were satisfied or very satisfied with the volunteer assignment



73% of volunteers were satisfied or very satisfied with the program



\* The above data is drawn from reports completed by volunteers and partner organisations. Responses were not received from all volunteers and partner organisations, and not all respondents provided a response to every question.

In 2020-21, in accordance with Australia's COVID-19 Development Response Plan, the Australian Volunteers Program supported partner organisations to implement their response and recovery efforts, aligned with Timor-Leste's local and national priorities.

COVID-19 significantly impacted the ability of partner organisations to operate and deliver services. The program tailored its support to partner organisations' changing needs and priorities, addressing the health security and economic impacts of the pandemic and mobilising in-country volunteers to assist with COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

Through remote and in-country volunteer assignments, the program supported the Timor-Leste government to enhance health care, sanitation systems, and service provision to vulnerable communities.

During 2020-21, the program in Timor-Leste supported 19 remote volunteer assignments. All assignments were with partner organisations operating in Dili, as organisations based in the city have better access to resources and infrastructure to support remote volunteering than in less urban locations.

Eleven partner organisations received support through the Australian Volunteers Program Impact Fund. These included the Alola Foundation to strengthen the inclusion of children with disability in rural education projects, Asosiasaun Halibur Defisiensi Matan Timor-Leste to establish a theatre group for blind and visually impaired people, and Blue Venture to support coastal communities to monitor their fisheries and reef habitats.

The program celebrated and promoted international volunteering throughout the year in Timor-Leste. In particular International Volunteer Day was a key event and saw former President Mr Jose Ramos Horta become a goodwill ambassador for volunteers in Timor-Leste.



*Dr. Nikee Msuo volunteers as a Clinical Management Mentor at Maluk Timor/Clinic Health Centre, Comoro, with her colleague Family Medicine Registrar Dr. Nelson V. Cardoso. Maluk Timor is an NGO that aims to improve healthcare in Timor-Leste's community health centres. Dr. Nikee Msuo advises on critical care and isolation facility infrastructure, deliver intensive emergency skills training and does bedside mentoring of Timorese doctors. She is one of a small number of Australian volunteers with critical skills who have remained in Timor-Leste to support local organisations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo: Clementino Amaral.*

## Spotlight on The Assosiasaun Halibur Deficiente Matan Timor-Leste

The Assosiasaun Halibur Deficiente Matan Timor-Leste (AHDMTL) promotes awareness to the community of people living with blindness and visual impairments. In 2020, Australian volunteer Michael White supported AHDMTL to achieve its development goals.

Michael mentored staff to improve their organisational development, advocacy, and networking skills, and helped secure support materials for people with visual impairments. He identified Timor-Leste and Australian organisations interested in collaborating with AHDMTL, and assisted with developing fundraising proposals and activities, as well as grant applications.

The Australian Volunteers Program Impact Fund provided support to establish a theatre group for visually impaired people in Timor-Leste. Currently, there is a lack of understanding in Timor-Leste regarding the multiple disadvantages faced by those with visual impairment, particularly women. The project will raise awareness of these issues through performances of traditional dance, music, and theatre.

With support from the Australian Volunteers Program, AHDMTL has improved its capacity to collaborate with organisations in the disability sector, both in Timor-Leste and Australia, and broadened staff skills to generate creative approaches to fundraising activities.

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