

# Kose Nehan

## Improving the oral health of the children of Timor-Leste



north richmond  
community health  
Wulempuri - Kertheba

*Friends of* **Aileu**  
A partnership established in 2000

  
**FRIENDS of  
Baucau**

## Kose Nehan: Improving the oral health of the children of Timor-Leste

Since 2009, North Richmond Community Health and Friends of Aileu have been working with the Aileu District Health Service to improve the oral health of school children in the district.

The Oral Health team, led by Dr Martin Hall, General Manager Clinical Services, North Richmond Community Health, has been working with the local dental staff to support a tooth brushing program in local primary schools.

Thanks to a grant from the UK's Borrow Foundation, 2016 saw the program expand to another six schools, including collection of baseline data for a 12 month systematic evaluation of the program implementation and outcomes.

The initial program started with two schools and according Sra Rofina, Principal of one of the schools, it has contributed to reduced absenteeism and improved school performance.

The engagement of locally trained dental nurse Ms Ana Tilman has been a fantastic development. As the program officer, her duties include continuing the school visits and monitoring and supporting the teachers in school tooth brushing. There are plans to bring Ana to Melbourne for professional development this year.

Before the Kose Nehan initiative, none of these schools had an oral health program. This program now has the potential to influence the behaviour and oral health of up to 1,600 children.



*Ms Ana Tilman instructing children at Acu Mau primary school, Remexio subdistrict, Aileu.*

From February 2017 we will extend work to at least five more schools in Baucau District in the Eastern part of the country

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Portable, folding dental chairs have been also been manufactured in a spin-off of the program. The chairs are now being used in the Sub-district Health Centres.

The dental chairs are manufactured at the Aileu Parish Clinic's St Francis Assisi Disability Workshop, which is run by people with a range of physical disabilities. The program aims to have a portable chair in each participating school.

A Tetum-language oral health and tooth brushing manual has been developed to guide the teachers. An illustrated Tetum-language school reader with the title "*Kose Nehan*" or "*Brushing Teeth*" has also been distributed in local schools as an educational and health promotion aid. This reader has now been adopted by the Ministry of Education who are in the process of providing copies to all schools in Timor-Leste.



The aims of Kose Nehan are to:

- identify facilitators and barriers to program implementation
- provide evidence that a behavior change has occurred in participating children
- expand the program to other districts
- develop the capacity of the local program officer
- facilitate sustainability.

For further information, or if you wish to make a donation to support Kose Nehan, please contact:

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