



AAI AUSTRALIAN AID INTERNATIONAL



MEDIA RELEASE

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TOUR de TIMOR A RACE AGAINST TIME

As professional cyclists prepare for the Tour de France, a team of Australian Aid International volunteers is gearing up for an event more than 13,000 kilometres away, to help improve the health of people in Timor-Leste.

Australian Aid International (AAI) operations director Frank Tyler and public relations officer Paul Piaia, will cycle the 350 kilometre Tour de Timor this month, to raise funds and attention about the state of burgeoning nation's health.

The state of health in Timor-Leste is the poorest in South East Asia. Rates of preventable and easily treatable diseases such as malaria are the highest in the region, largely because of limited medical infrastructure and inadequate access to remote areas.

“We’re effectively racing against time to help limit disease in a poor nation where only half the population has access to drinking water. Maternal mortality and child malnutrition rates are unacceptably high,” Mr Tyler says.

Australian Aid International is a non-profit, non-government organisation. Since March 2007, its volunteers have worked across Timor-Leste, particularly in Atauro, where it has helped establish more than 150 mobile medical outreach clinics and facilitated the majority of aero-medical evacuations to Dili.

Efforts to continue the program, that has helped thousands of people through the provision of medical assistance, provided medical education for local healthcare staff and obtain funding for a remote area nurse to work on Atauro Island, have come under strain in recent months due to a shortage of funding.

The AAI team has called for financial assistance and cycling equipment to help complete the Tour de Timor and sustain its work in Timor-Leste.

“It’s important that Timor-Leste’s story is told to Australian and international audiences in order to raise critically needed funds to help communities who cannot yet help themselves,” Mr Tyler says.

For more information about the Tour de Timor (August 23 – 28) or to support AAI visit: www.aai.org.au/tourdetimor/tourdetimor.html

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