



## Estrela+ Newsletter

Estrela+' vision is to see a community that understands HIV so that there will be no more discrimination or stigmatization against PLHIV and a future where there will be no more people dying of AIDS or dropping out from ARV treatment.

Estrela+ aims to achieve this through providing HIV/AIDS community education and advocating for the rights of PLHIV in Timor-Leste.

### Points of interest:

- The prevalence of HIV in Timor-Leste is less than 1% of the total population
- Statistics from the Ministry of Health from June 2013 MDH indicated that there were 355 people living with HIV in Timor-Leste.
- The total number of persons on ARV treatment was 129 as of December 2013
- As of December 2013, 39 people have passed away from AIDS to date in Timor-Leste

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## Estrela+ holds Special General Meeting - 4 December 2013

### Special General Meeting to approve Estrela+' Constitution

**Dili:** Estrela+ has undergone significant organizational development in 2013, culminating in the recent Special General Meeting of Estrela+ members held on 4 December 2013.

Earlier in May 2013, Estrela+ held its first AGM where members of the PLHIV community signed up to become members of Estrela+. These members give Estrela+ its mandate to advocate on behalf of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) in Timor-Leste.



*Estrela+ Board Members participate in training*

Estrela+ is now in the process of finalizing its registration with the Ministry of Justice, the final step in a long process of Estrela+ becoming an independent

NGO. On 4 December 2013, Estrela+ members attended a Special General Meeting where they voted to adopt Estrela+ constitution and elected Board Members.

Estrela+ also used the opportunity of the SGM to share information with members about the link between HIV and nutrition.

### Estrela+ exchange visit to Kupang, Indonesia

**Kupang- Indonesia:** In June 2013, Estrela+ and its partner organization Esperanca participated in an exchange visit to Kupang, Indonesia. During the visit staff visited Kupang's HIV network (DS Flobamora Support), the National AIDS Commission (Komisi Penanggulangan AIDS) and the Kupang Hospital and the Bayangkara Police Hospital. The objective of the visit was to see how services provided by KDS Flobamora to PLHIV in Kupang, particularly in relation to treatment, care and support and also to observe advocacy activities and to discuss coordination efforts between Timor-Leste and Indonesia's PLHIV networks.



*Exchange visit participants in Kupang.*

**“A lack of understanding about HIV/AIDS contributes to people living with HIV/AIDS experiencing isolation and stigma and discrimination”**  
 Franki D. Baba.  
 Communications and Training Officer, Estrela+

## Executive Director of Estrela+ undertakes Australian Leadership Award Fellowship in Sydney, Australia

**Sydney-Australia:** From August to October 2013, the Executive Director of Estrela+, Ines Lopes undertook an Australian Leadership Awards Fellowship at the University of Sydney where she focused on Nutrition and HIV.

Ines was one of fourteen health leaders including doctors and others involved in the health sector from Timor-Leste who undertook the three-month Australian Leadership Awards Fellowship in Sydney.

The skills and experience gained by Ines during her fellowship will assist her to build the capacity of the community of people living with HIV and AIDS in Timor-Leste and ensure that Estrela+ is an effective advocate for their rights.



*Australian Leadership Award Fellows in Sydney*



*Estrela+ Executive Director, Ines Lopes delivers a presentation during her fellowship in Sydney*

## Estrela+ district visit to Covalima

**Covalima:** In February 2013, Estrela+ staff and staff from partner organizations CRS and Caritas Dili travelled to Maucatar Sub-District in Covalima District to share basic information about HIV/AIDS as there had been reports of stigma and discrimination occurring against PLHIV living there.

By providing accurate information about the HIV virus and how it can be



*Estrela+ staff and partners during district visit*

prevented, as well as information about the rights of those living with HIV, Estrela+ works to ensure that the rights of PLHIV throughout Timor-Leste are promoted and protected.

District visits are an important opportunity for Estrela+ to engage with the families and communities of PLHIV who live outside of Dili.

## Estrela+ and the PLHIV community celebrate World AIDS Day

**Dili:** To celebrate World AIDS Day which falls on 1 December every year, Estrela+ organized an event for members of the PLHIV community and Estrela+' partner organizations. The event was held at the SPSS Becora Rest Home and included the symbolic lighting of candles arranged in the shape of the distinctive AIDS ribbon. The UNAIDS goal of “Zero new cases, zero stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and zero deaths from AIDS” was highlighted. Senyor Anaclitu, speaking on behalf of the Ministry of Health, urged everyone to continue to work together to reduce stigma and discrimination to combat HIV in Timor-Leste.

World AIDS Day is an important day for everyone in the community to reflect upon the achievements that have been made to date in Timor-Leste' HIV response but also to recognize the challenges that remain and remember those that have died of AIDS.



*Estrela+ partners celebrate World AIDS day in Dili*

## PLHIV share their stories of living with HIV in Timor-Leste

### One person's experience of stigma and discrimination from their family

"My name is "B". I discovered in 2010 that I was HIV positive. It was very difficult for me to understand how had this happened to me? I was angry and very scared because I thought that I would die. I also didn't believe that I would be able to work.

I was scared to meet other people and interact with my family because I felt self-discrimination and I had incorrect information about HIV. I also felt that I did not have dignity and I felt depressed.

It was very extremely difficult for me

to tell the story of what happened to me to my doctor, my family and other people living with HIV.

The stigma and discrimination that affects people living with HIV and AIDS became a reality for me and this had a negative impact on my life.

I realized that the stigma and discrimination I experienced from my friends and family was because they did not understand about HIV and AIDS.



I realized that I could tell my story together with other people living with HIV and this could make other people including my family and health care workers understand about my health .

HIV is not my enemy. Indifference, stigma, discrimination and fear are my real enemies."

"HIV is not my enemy. Indifference, stigma, discrimination and fear are my real enemies"

Person living with HIV, Timor-Leste

### An individual PLHIV overcomes stigma and discrimination from family

**Dili** : This story is about an individual, "C" who experienced a situation where a member of their family who worked at the local clinic where they underwent HIV testing disclosed their status to others and the person living with HIV experienced stigma and discrimination as a result.

"I felt sad, scared and extremely embarrassed although at the time that I found out my status, there were no

counselors available to talk to or provide information for me or my husband. I didn't know what to do to make my feelings of frustration, sadness and powerlessness go away.

Stigma and discrimination also happened to me. After my family were told about my status by another family member who worked at the clinic, they refused to visit my house or eat with me.

This was very upsetting for me.

In 2006, I joined a support group for people living with HIV and when I did this, I felt that my life improved even though I had HIV. After receiving basic information about HIV from my support group, my family were more understanding about my status and stopped treating me in a discriminatory way".

### Addressing HIV in Loegore Sub-district, Covalima

**Suai, Covalima:** On 28 November 2013, Estrela+ and partner organisation Esperança (PLHIV organisation with responsibility for providing care and support to PLHIV community) conducted a training in Loegore Sub-District to share basic information about HIV and AIDS.

The district of Covalima borders Indonesia and as such there is much movement of people between Covalima and Indonesia. Statistics from the

Ministry of Health data suggest that that highest prevalence of HIV in Covalima District is among MSM and Transgender people. The IBBS data from 2011 for all of Timor-Leste shows an overall prevalence of 2.6% among female sex workers and 3.6% HIV prevalence among MSM.

Dissemination of accurate information about HIV and AIDS is key to reducing stigma and discrimination against

PLHIV as well as reducing transmission of HIV through sexual relations.

The training session delivered by Estrela+ and its partners targeted young people, who are a group considered to be at high risk of sexually transmitted infections. People who attended the training received information about how to avoid infection with HIV as well as information about stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV.

