



Luisa: Building peace in Timor-Leste

Everybody has the right to feel safe. People feel unsafe for many reasons. In Timor-Leste (East Timor) many feel frightened as a result of fighting. Others feel afraid because of family arguments and violence. Many people were also afraid during the violence of April 2006.

Luisa, a mother of five and a midwife, is from Timor-Leste. The East Timorese have struggled for freedom for many years. Finally in 1999, they were given the chance to vote to become a free country. What took place changed Luisa's life forever.

Before the vote, there was a group of people called "the militia" who threatened the people leading up to the vote. The militia bullied the people hoping that they would change their minds about voting to become a free country. Luisa's husband was killed and her home was burnt. After the vote that gave Timor-Leste its freedom, more violence took place. Luisa and her children escaped to the safety of the United Nations compound and then were flown to safety in Australia.

In Australia, Luisa was given the opportunity to learn how to become a counsellor. This means she would be able to help people who were sad or scared.

In 2000 Luisa returned home to Timor-Leste and began work as a counsellor. People were embarrassed of family violence and were nervous about getting help. Luisa gave support, information and training on how communities and individuals could help a survivor of

violence. By 2005 the program had moved towards finding ways of stopping violence and making survivors strong again.

"Independence meant we had to rebuild our own country but first we needed to rebuild our broken people," says Luisa.

In April 2005, Caritas Australia in partnership with PRADET built a safe room at Dili hospital. The safe room is a place where women can come and talk about their feelings and also get medical help in private. Luisa works there as a counsellor.

"Working with Caritas Australia's Human Rights and Justice Program has given me new opportunities to build my knowledge and help assist the survivors of violence," Luisa says.

Caritas Australia helped to develop and print information about the safe room in the local language. These have been given to organisations, police stations, health clinics and hospitals throughout Timor-Leste as a way of letting people know about the service. Caritas Australia is now providing support for a second safe room to be built in Oecussi, Timor-Leste.

Your donation to Project Compassion will allow Caritas Australia to continue to provide support for the people of Timor-Leste as they rebuild their lives.

PDHPE / RE



Conflict resolution

- What happens when you and your friends fight?
- Who gets upset?
- What do you do to make up?
- Who helps?
- What can you do if your friends are fighting?
- How can you and your friends *Play Fair Today*?
- Are there any better ways of sorting things out before you have a fight?

God of Peace, we pray for our neighbours in Timor-Leste struggling to develop a just and peaceful country. Give them the courage to continue to work for peace in their families as well as peace in their land. Amen.