



'Matadalan Ba Malu' was established to facilitate English language scholarships for women from Timor-Leste. The program targets women working within a community context or local organisation in Timor-Leste and who would benefit from high quality English training and the experience of a cross-cultural exchange in Melbourne, Australia. The learning and experience gained through the program are also designed to benefit the participant's community in a number of ways, including the transference of new found skills and knowledge, promoting mutual understanding between East-Timorese and Australian communities, and an enhanced capacity to facilitate and negotiate local development activities and opportunities on returning home. A key objective of the program is to consider candidates who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to learn English or benefit from the experiences of living in another country for a period of time.

How does the program work?

Working with a variety of partners and stakeholders in Timor-Leste, the program identifies potential participants via an application process. Once selected, the applicant is offered a tuition-free placement in a tailored 10-week English language program provided by RMIT English Worldwide (REW) in Melbourne. As this program is designed to meet the individual needs of the applicant, there are no program prerequisites and language proficiency is tested once in Australia, with the appropriate level course being determined by REW staff.

For more information on REW visit:

<http://www.rmitenglishworldwide.com/>

In addition to the language component of the program, participants have the opportunity to explore Melbourne, participate in university life, and have contact with Australian families and communities. The small volunteer-based committee of Matadalan Ba Malu provides orientation, mentoring and other support services to the visiting East Timorese women.

Who is Matadalan Ba Malu?

The work of the Matadalan Ba Malu Committee is part of the broader Timor-Leste Research Program, which is located within the Globalism Research Centre at RMIT University. The Timor-Leste Research Program (<http://timor-research.org>) has conducted a wide range of research projects and activities in Timor-Leste for over a decade.

While the English training component has been successfully operating since 2005 (resulting in ten program alumni) a volunteer committee was established in 2012 to expand the program's opportunities and governance. The primary focus of the Committee is to enhance the sustainability of the Matadalan Ba Malu, via forging partnerships with other organisations, exploring fundraising opportunities, and providing support services to candidates. The volunteer committee now comprises a number of RMIT academics as well as current and former RMIT students, each of whom has travelled to and/or been involved in various research and development projects in Timor-Leste.

Matadalan Ba Malu committee members share a deep commitment to developing mutual learning opportunities between East Timorese and Australians.

Indeed, the phrase ‘Matadalan Ba Malu’ is Tetun meaning “to guide each other” and signifies the committee’s desire to share with East Timorese the unique opportunity for mutual learning and sharing, across both Timor-Leste and Australia. The focus in this instance is on providing educational opportunities for women, in recognition of the gender inequity experienced in both societies.

How can people get involved?

Thanks to the generous support provided by REW, Matadalan Ba Malu has been able to offer a number of tuition-free English scholarships each year to successful candidates. However, the costs and services associated with this program extend well beyond the tuition component, including airfares, passports, visas, medical insurance, and daily food, transport and accommodation expenses while the women are staying in Melbourne.

Matadalan Ba Malu is therefore seeking to develop relationships with benefactors, fundraising bodies, donors, or organisations that have an interest in supporting education opportunities and cultural exchanges for East Timorese women.

To find out more about our ongoing work, initiate a partnership, or make a donation to the program, please contact mbm@timor-research.org, or visit: <http://timor-research.org/mbm>

Matadalan Ba Malu also recognises that these partnerships offer unique possibilities for mutual learning across organisations, committees and individuals. By forging strong mutually beneficial partnerships with organisations it aims to provide a meaningful cultural and educational experience to all parties involved.

Evidence in Practice

Between 2005 and 2013, Matadalan Ba Malu has enabled 13 East Timorese women to participate in English language training in Melbourne. As a result, many of these women moved into leadership positions within their community or organisation.

The following testimonies demonstrate the positive learning and personal achievements experienced by the program’s participants, illustrating how the skills and knowledge gained through English scholarship and cultural exchange has benefitted them in their everyday lives and careers.

Testimony from past participants

I was really happy with this course because the system of teaching was excellent and very clear I also learnt much about how to communicate with respect in Australian culture, which is very important for me as I work with Australians and other foreigners in Timor-Leste. Some of the topics taught by the teachers also have a direct link to my professional life (I work as a researcher), for example how to undertake timelines and write CVs. To this day I still feel like I am benefiting from my time with REW.

Carmanesa Moniz Noronha

I am now able to produce written material of a proper standard and have developed new strategies to continue to improve my English language skill which has extended my skills in interviewing international staff, analysis and report writing, all essential skills for my current position as Acting CEO of the Fundasaun Alola. The opportunity that I got from REW – RMIT has enabled me to extend my spoken English skills and improve my written English skills. Particularly in Pre-Intermediate level, I learnt about English for academic purpose, which was focus in increasing my writing structure.

Teresa Verdial de Araujo (Alita)

In February up to the beginning March 2007, I had an opportunity studied English at RMIT University for five weeks. My understanding of this course is most valuable for the new development country. Because through this opportunity young people could increase their knowledge and good experience which they’ve got from outside country for the bright future of East Timor when they are coming back. Even though, just for short term English study I hope there is still have much opportunity to others Timorese people to take part of it.

Joana Belo da Costa