



FUNDASAUN ALOLA 2008

ANNUAL REPORT MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH PROGRAM

GRUPO SUPPORTA INAN – MOTHER SUPPORT GROUP ACTIVITIES
2008

TIMOR-LESTE – DILI AND NINE DISTRICTS

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PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Mother Support Group program recruits and trains local women to become volunteer infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counselors in their local communities. The MSG members provide breastfeeding support and infant and young child feeding education by visiting door to door in their local areas and through biweekly visits to local health clinics and through supporting the Ministry of Health (MoH) monthly health promotion activities (known as SISCa)¹. The MSG members are now trained in complementary feeding and health and hygiene and in 2008 they received training in family planning and reproductive health. The aim is to function alongside the MoH model SISCA and Promotor Saude Familia (PSF).

The Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Department of Fundasaun Alola started in 2003. Originally tasked with promoting exclusive breastfeeding and good breastfeeding practice under the directive of the National Breastfeeding Association and The Ministry of Health, the MCH department's activities have expanded immensely since then. The uniqueness and its strength, lies in the fact that the team is comprised of mostly national staff with one international adviser. This enables the national staff to identify and implement MCH programs in culturally appropriate ways for Timor-Leste.

Currently, the MCH department has Mother Support Group workers in nine districts. There are now 32 groups in nine of 13 districts. (18 in 2007)

As well as the MSG groups, in 2007/2008, the MCH piloted a community based safe motherhood initiative called Suku Hadomi Inan ho Oan (SHIO) literally 'the village loves its mothers and children' which encourages the community leaders to take responsibility for registering pregnant women, developing safe delivery plans and to address access issues for antenatal, delivery and post natal care. Alola's maternity packs distribution program encourages women to give birth in hospitals. Alola has also partnered with a number of Australian universities to carry out research projects in health seeking behaviour, reproductive health, family planning and safe motherhood.

In 2008, the Mother Support Group (MSG) program was evaluated through a University of New South Wales (UNSW) research project. The recommendations of this evaluation informed activities throughout 2008. As a result, the MCH team increased the level of ongoing support and training provided to Mother Support Groups. MSG members are now working very actively in their communities and increasing their impact on rates of immediate breastfeeding to ensure colostrums intake and to counter many traditional practices that undermine infant and young child health. (see attached report.)

Throughout 2007/2008 the Gulbenkian Health Promotion Small Grants program administered by the Advocacy department of Alola, contributed significantly to an increase in health promotion activities and events in the districts, particularly in remote areas during 2008.

¹ SISCa is a Ministry of Health initiative linking local health promotion volunteers known as Promotor Saude Familia (PSF Family health Promoter.) with MOH mobil clinic activities.



HOW PROJECT MEETS DEVELOPMENT NEEDS/ISSUES

Child Nutrition

- Through the organization and facilitation of Infant and Young Child Feeding Training to all MSG members, Fundasaun Alola's staff and other stakeholders in Timor-Leste, the program will promote optimal infant and young child feeding across the country.

Safe motherhood

- By encouraging women to give birth with skilled birth attendants and empowering communities to be prepared for the dangers associated with pregnancy and childbirth through the SHIO initiative.
- Family planning education and birth spacing education.

PROJECT DESIGN

MAJOR DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this MSG project are: -

GOAL: HEALTHY WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN TIMOR-LESTE

Purpose: To contribute to the reduction of maternal and child mortality by promoting good health for women and children in a community setting, working in collaboration with partner organisations, UN agencies and The Ministry of Health.

Objectives: To promote early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding to six months and timely complementary feeding practice to two years.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THIS PROJECT

A BREASTFEEDING PROMOTION & PRACTICES

- Increased understanding of current breast feeding practices.
- Increased awareness of cultural and traditional feeding practices.
- Increased awareness in community of good breastfeeding practices, including giving colostrum.
- Increased numbers of mothers breastfeeding exclusively for six months as a result of increased knowledge.

B Impacts on mortality and morbidity

- Reduced Child Morbidity Rates
- Reduced under five admission for diarrhoea
- Reduced child infant mortality rate
- Increased use of ante-natal and post natal services.
- Increased immunization.

C Impacts on community planning & development

- Increased awareness of family planning and appropriate contraceptive for birth spacing.
- Increased involvement of community leaders in developing safe delivery plans for pregnant women in the community.

OUTPUTS

OUTPUT 1 Mother Support Groups trained in infant & young child feeding able to effectively counsel mothers on infant and young child feeding and hygiene and sanitation through trainings provided by MCH department of Fundasaun Alola.

OUTPUT 2 Measurable recordings of women's [and community] awareness about breastfeeding practice and exclusive breastfeeding rates in communities.

OUTPUT 3 Measurable recordings of women's [and community] awareness of practice of timely and nutritious complementary feeding. [Growth monitoring]

OUTPUT 4 Measurable recordings of community awareness of good health practice, including preparation and storage of food, hand washing and treatment of diarrhoea.

OUTPUT 5 Measurable increased awareness of family planning, birth spacing and reproductive health.

OUTPUT 6 Measurable MSG attendance and service at SISCA.

OUTPUT 7 Monthly or bi-monthly activity, training and support provided by Fundasaun Alola MCH department to all MSGs.



PROJECT OUTPUTS PROGRESS

Output	Significant Output	Target	Activity Progress
Output 1	MSG trained in infant and young child feeding.	100 recipients	<p>On 19-21 August 2008 the team conducted IYCF training for MSG members in Baucau District with the total of 15 people.</p> <p>In November 2008 Alola MCH team conducted IYCF training for 10 MSG members and 9 households include lactating mothers and pregnant women in Liquica district.</p> <p>In December 2008 on 12th Alola MCH team conducted 1 day refresher training on IYCF for MSG in Sakato and their households. On 13th the same training was provided for Bausio MSG and their households. Because it was a planting time of year, many people were busy in the field, planting rice and only a few could come to the training. Mothers and their members learned about how to feed the good local complementary feeding foods and exclusive breastfeeding.</p> <p>20 members of MSG and 16 people of households were attended the training.</p> <p>IYCF training for 27 community volunteers in Oecusse district in May 2008. These volunteers came from range of organizations that work with Caritas in Oecusse.</p> <p>60 men and women (volunteer health workers) in Oecusse and 22 health workers and MSGs in Ainaro.</p> <p>24 health workers trained in Lautem.</p> <p>In April 2008 Baucau MSG conducted three days training on IYCF for their community members. Total 50 community members attended the training for pregnant and lactating mothers referred from MSG areas in Baucau City.</p>
Output 2	Communities better educated and informed about breastfeeding.	<p>Implemented through all MSGs</p> <p>(measured through counseling record books.)</p>	<p>MSG members in Baucau, Manatuto, Viqueque, Dili, Ermera, Liquica, Aileu, Ainaro provide counseling at nearby health facilities twice a week from October to December 2008.</p> <p>This is equivalent 16 MSG members attending two sessions per week and providing group counseling to approximately between 16-20 mothers per session as they wait for antenatal appointments and vaccinations. (approx 430 recipients)</p> <p>A further 72 community members in three sukus in Liquica received training in exclusive breastfeeding as first stage of IYCF training in the area.</p>
Output 3	Communities better educated and informed about timely complementary and nutritious feeding.	Implemented through all MSGs	<p>On April 29th Alola invited by vice minister for health to discuss MSG involvement in SISCa post. From May our MSG members attended SISCa programs in their areas. Members help the SISCa by weighing babies, registering patients and giving general counseling for the mothers and their families attending SISCa. Members rostered two people each month to attend SISCa to work as PSF and provide counseling on breastfeeding and complementary food. Up to 20 people receive group information on IYCF each month in each District. 20 members of</p>

			MSG provided counseling at every nearby SISCa post.
Output 4	Communities better educated and informed about preparation of food, food storage, hand washing and treatment of diarrhoea.	Implemented through all MSGs	MSG provide small training to their households on complementary feeding, diarrhea & cooking demonstrations in Baucau, Manatuto, Viqueque, Ermera, Dili and Liquica in rural areas. (Approx. 1030 households receive monthly visits.)
Output 5	Communities better educated and informed about family planning and birth spacing.	Implemented through all MSGs	Baucau and Aileu MSG members received Family Planning training. (40 members)
Output 6	MSGs members in attendance at SISCa ² and strong links with DHS and health posts.	Implemented through all MSGs	MSG members attend SISCa once a month at SISCa post hold in their areas to help the health workers from CHC and HP in weighing babies, registering patients and provide information on good feeding practice.
Output 7	Monthly or bi-monthly MSG activity, training and support by MCH department	Implemented by MCH department	Alola MCH team provide information on diarrhea, malaria, nutrition, safe motherhood and other health related topics through monthly meetings to each MSG group in their area.



² Servisu Integradu Saude Comunitaria. The Ministry of Health initiative for health service delivery in the sub-villages

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

SISCA APPROACH UTILIZED IN TRAININGS.

MSG members started working with each Health post and CHC to support SISCa programs held in their areas. Some MSG members are involved in working as PSF (volunteer health workers) by weighing babies, registering patients and providing IYCF counseling to the community who attend the SISCa for treatment, Vaccination and ANC.

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION TOOLS.

As a result of the evaluation of MSG role within the community in early 2008, from June 2008 the team has created community mobilization tools, which includes new training manuals that we use to educate the community more creatively and effectively; counseling books that records the number of counseling sessions provided by MSG members, type of support and referral offered.

FAMILY PLANNING TRAINING, PROMOTION AND ACTIVITIES

MSG members requested training in Family Planning in 2007. The team provided Family Planning training and basic safe motherhood to the mother support groups in Aileu and Baucau district in response to this request.

Aileu Mother Support Group members attended two days training on basic safe motherhood and family Planning in Suco Bandudato. In order to deliver the training for the members, Alola MCH team invited the trainer from the District Health Service in Aileu and they facilitated training from 4th – 5th of December. From 21 members active in the group, 10 members participated in this training. Six MSG members were invited to participate in 5 days training to become Family Health promoters (PSF/Health Promotion Volunteer for SISCa program) and some of the members could not attend the training due to commitments to other activities such as teaching at school, attending English courses.

The Safe Motherhood training covered Antenatal care and post partum care. In the afternoon session, participants were required to work in pairs and practice counseling on antenatal care and post partum care for mothers. The counseling included nutrition for pregnant women, the importance of antenatal care visits and using Information, education and communication materials such as brochures, flipcharts and posters given by the trainers / midwives. Members also learnt about dangerous signs during pregnancy and delivery.

In the second day members learnt about sexual reproductive health and family planning methods. The Midwives trained the members in contraceptive methods and counseling skills to enable MSG members to counsel women to choose the best methods for themselves. At the end of the training members were provided with Information, education and communication materials. (IEC)

During the training, based on our observations, participants were very interested and enthusiastic about participating in this training and they said they learnt new important information regarding safe motherhood and family planning and we expect this training will help them to contribute to their community's health issues.

REVIEWING BREASTFEEDING AND COMPLEMENTARY FEEDING TOPICS LEARNED IN TRAINING

MASTITIS AND ITS TREATMENT, SWOLLEN BREASTS ETC.

On first week of July 2008, Alola MCH team went to meet the group to train them on how to use Breastfeeding Flipchart to counsel mothers. Each of the members received a

Flipchart entitled “ Bui Kolo Fo Susubeen Inan” and practiced how to use it. Members were also provided with Counseling books and every month they filled it in whenever they counseled mothers. The counseling books show us how many mothers have received counseling in each district.

CHILD RIGHT CONVENTION (CRC) TRAINING

Starting on 19th February, representatives from MSGs from eight districts attended Child Right Training Convention by Haburas Labarik in collaboration with Care International. 32 members attended the training in Alola training room. The training was divided to 2 phase which first phase attended by 8 members of MSG and second phase was attended by 24 members of MSG. It has five days training for each phase.

TRAINING ON GRANT MANAGEMENT FOR CHILD RIGHT

Following to the CRC training, Starting from 19th February – 14 March, 31 MSG members attended this training at Alola Foundation training room. Alola's MSG members had an opportunity to apply for small grants from care in April 2008 in order to do some activity for Children within their community.

MSG COUNSELING BOOK TRAINING.

MSG were trained on how to fill the book from 6th of March 2008. The first training was held for Aileu MSG member then continued to other groups in other districts. The team taught MSG members about how to fill the books and to use the books on reporting counseling activities with the community.

MSG SMALL GRANT – FOR CHILD RIGHTS

Most of the MSG received small grants from Care International on the project of Haburas Labarik. Members applied to for grants and ten groups of MSGs received \$350.USD to be spent on their chosen activities. The type activities that members chose includes: competition on Designer and mini workshops on child rights for their community members in their areas.

IYCF REVIEW DAY MEETING

Alola MCH successfully conducted IYCF review day for counselors who attended the 3 in 1 IYCF training last year. On May 8th, 2008 those who have received IYCF training from Alola met at the TAIS meeting room. The objectives of the day were to review the commitments made by those who received IYCF training, discuss the challenges that trainers faced in providing training and counseling and to develop a support mechanism and work plan for the way forward. During the meeting all the participants re-confirmed their commitment to counsel mothers in infant and young child feeding. The participants said they were keen to begin integrating breastfeeding information into SISCa and needed support to do so. During the meeting, the head of Integrated Management of Child hood Illness (IMCI) from MoH presented the MoH's IMCI strategy. Participants had the opportunity to give their input into some of the IMCI materials and their comments were used to revise some of the materials. At the end of the meeting participants worked in groups according to their workplace. They were asked to present their action plan for IYCF for the next 6 months.

MSG EXPANSION TO AINARO DISTRICT

From June 2008, the team into Ainaro District – Southern Central Timor. The team commenced socialization and data collection in June to assess current infant feeding practice in the Suco Soro as a pilot suco for program implementation in this district. Following this the IYCF training was held for thirteen health workers from Health posts, Community Health Centres, private clinics and the Maubesse Referral Hospital during seven days. Six health workers received training for ToT during six days. The ToT the

trainers then led three days IYCF training for nine new MSG members selected from Suco Soro. The training was conducted in September 2008 in Ainaro District with the support of Alola's MCH team and DHS staff.

MSG EVALUATION

Starting by third of January 2008 the NBFA Coordinator, together with a student from UNSW Australia, finalized the MSG evaluation in Baucau, Manatuto, Dili and Ermera. During MSG evaluation we interviewed mothers who had received counseling interventions and mothers who had non intervention from MSG members. We also held Focus Group Discussions with fathers in Baucau and Manatuto.

BFF SHOW

Breastfeeding film shown in Aileu and Manatuto Districts in January and February 2008.

MSG MONTHLY MEETINGS

Every month the Alola MCH team visits the groups to provide support to the members and follow up MSG activities. Members provide information about ongoing counseling for their households and referrals made to health facilities. The results of MSG counseling records show us that where, in the past, no mothers practiced exclusive breastfeeding, a number of counseled mothers are now practicing exclusive breastfeeding for their babies. In this meeting, members also report that in some rural areas the local leaders visited the MSG coordinator and requested training on breastfeeding for their communities.

During the meeting the members discuss Exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, Malaria, Dengue Fever, Pneumonia, Diarrhea and other health related topics as requested by the members. Members are provided with snacks, transport to organize the meeting and phone cards to contact the team or make referrals.

Please also refer to the attached Mother Support Group Evaluation Report for more information about the progress.

JOINT MEETINGS WITH DHS HEALTH STAFF

MSG members are often invited by DHS and other NGO to present their work within the community. Members are also often invited by DHS to attend meetings on Family planning, HIV/AIDS, Nutrition, Mental Health and Malaria disease. MSG members were invited by the local government, to participate in a meeting about Domestic violence and gender awareness.

CASE STUDIES – GETTING MSG WORKERS TO PRESENT THEIR WORK AND PROBLEMS OR GOOD STORIES.

FATHER LEARNS ABOUT IYCF

There was a father who learnt from the training of IYCF given by ALOLA MCH team in 2007. He has five Children but three of them were not exclusively breastfed. When he had the fourth baby he taught his wife to breastfeed exclusively for the first 6 months and he said that the baby was healthier than the other three. He kept supporting his wife to give good complementary feeding when the baby was six months old so he found it very helpful and the child did not get sick compared with the other three children who had been sick often most of their life. Currently the fourth baby is three years old. His wife currently has their fifth baby, the little girl is now four months old and for this lesson learned, they decided for exclusive breastfeeding for the baby as it is the best and healthy was to save money and life.

This story reinforces the need for men to participate in the training so they can support their wives.

SITTING ON THE FIRE

In December a woman attended the IYCF training with a one month old baby. The woman was practicing the tradition of staying in the fire house for three months after birth. Mother and child stay in a traditional low hut with no windows, sleeping very near the fire. The baby was one month old, but low weight and with blisters all over its body and with a bad cough and running nose. The mother had heard about the importance of colostrums from the MSG members so had provided that but both mother and child looked very unwell. A member of the team asked the woman how she felt her baby was. After confiding that the child was unwell, the team member explained the importance of fresh air, and the need to remove the child from the fire. So the woman stopped the practice and began exclusively breastfeeding the baby. One month later, the team visited her again and she and the baby had recovered and the baby is doing very well, having gained a great deal of weight. She now wants to become a Mother Support Group member.

VISIT TO AILEU COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE (CHC)

MSG ACTIVITIES IN AILEU – AS REPORTED BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE CHC

The Director spoke very highly of the MSG members. He described how, even in January, when the MSGs were meant to be on holidays, members came to the CHC to counsel new mothers. He said the Midwives contact the MSGs to provide support to mothers who need it and the MSGs are also notified of children who are malnourished so they can go door to door and provide support and monitoring for the supplementary feeding program.

The CHC also had great respect for the MSGs involvement in SISCa, noting that all members of the MSG attended the SISCa activities, registering visitors, distributing vitamin A and worm tablets, weighing children and assisting pregnant and lactating women. He said SISCa equipment was always left with the MSGs as they trust them to store and use the equipment carefully.

He also said there was great collaboration between the CHC, Plan International and the MSGs. He described how the MSGs are assisting Plan to monitor the use of their water and sanitation equipment.

It is a great example of the CHC and MSG members working closely together for mutual support. There is an exchange of referral and information in both directions, from MSGs to CHC and CHC to MSGs. It would be very easy to establish a Community Support Team in Aileu to coordinate and support this process further.



WORLD BREAST FEEDING WEEK

Mother support group members were very enthusiastic in organizing their activities to celebrate the 2008 World Breastfeeding Week. World breastfeeding week was celebrated over 13 districts in Timor-Leste. From August 1st – 07th 2008, the National Breastfeeding Association, in collaboration with Ministry of Health and other NGO's such as Care International, Oxfam Australia, World Vision, Share, Hiam Health, TAIS, Concern, CVTL, all members of the National Nutrition Working Group, conducted activities to celebrate World Breastfeeding Week in each district. The target groups were community members, specially mothers with their families. This activity was lead by the National Breastfeeding Association at Fundasaun Alola. There were several activities conducted to celebrate world breastfeeding week in Timor Leste, includes:

1. Media Campaign

The National Breastfeeding Association contacted Radio Timor-Leste, Radio Lorico Lian and some of the District Community radio stations to broadcast breastfeeding messages across the country about the benefits of colostrum for the mother and baby's health. Newspaper articles were placed in the major daily newspapers highlighting the benefits of the first milk and good breastfeeding practice during the week.

2. Produce IEC materials

To celebrate the week, The National Breastfeeding Association produced T-shirt, Copying breastfeeding Film, printing Brochure, Posters and banners to promote breastfeeding messages. These IEC materials were distributed to the Districts through the mother support groups and the NGO's to educated community members.

3. Breastfeeding Counseling

Dili Mother Support Group from: Osindo, Aituri – Laran I and II and Comoro Mother Support Groups provided individual counseling at community health centre around Dili district.

4. Mini Workshop on the importance of Colostrum

District Mother Support Groups from: Aileu, Oecusse, Liquica, Manatuto, Baucau, Viqueque and Ermera decided to conduct mini workshops in one area chosen by them. Apart from the district MSG, a mother support group from Beto – Dili group and the members of community friendly Villages in Liquica (Tibar, Guico and Mota – Ulun) also decided to conduct mini workshops for their community in their area.

5. Parade on the importance of the Colostrum

Baucau I and II mother support groups as well as Viqueque MSG decided to do a parade along the city about the importance of the colostrum. They invited the local leaders and together with the District Health Service, conducted a parade around the city ending with the mini workshop in the chosen area. To celebrate the Week, The national breastfeeding association was responsible by conducting some activities in eight districts where Mother Suport Groups had established. This includes Baucau, Viqueque, Liquica, Ermera, Dili, Manatuto, Oecusse and Aileu. Members of the National Breastfeeding Association were responsible to assist the mother support Group to conduct their activity. Each of the mother support group chose their own activity for their district and each group has received UNICEF small grants to conduct activities. The type of activity chosen by the mother support groups were: Mini workshops with their community members, Parades along the city to promote colostrum and provide individual counseling at the Community Health Centre.

From the activity above, the Dili Mother Support Group decided to do individual counseling at the Community Health Centre in Dili while the District Mother Support Groups decided to do Mini workshops and parades on giving Colostrum. During the activity of Individual counseling at CHC in Dili, Mother Support Groups counseled mothers and pregnant women on the benefits of colostrum and exclusive breastfeeding at Becora, CHC Centro, CHC Comoro and the Bairopite Clinic. Mothers and women who received counseling as they attended the CHC for ANC and Imunization. MSG members were provided with transport, Snack, T-shirt and Brochure to support them conducting counseling at the CHC.

Mother Support Groups from other District decided to run Mini workshops and Parades. For the Activity of mini workshop, MSG members decided an area to conduct it and invited all community members including local leaders and Health workers to participate. For the mini workshop there were speeches about the importance of the colostrum for mother and baby and also about the risk of the prelacteal feeding. Guests included local leaders and representatives of community health Centres. From our observation mostly participants were mothers with their family and pregnant women. During the mini workshop, there were also discussion with the participants, Quiz and Film showing. Quiz members were provided with a gift for those who gave the correct answer to the quiz.

Total participants attending mini workshops in the districts was: 787 people and Total people receiving individual counseling at Community Health Centre is: 146 people.

Create MSG newsletter and support network.

Since October 2008, ALOLA MCH team created a MSG newsletter which covers the information on MSG activities in each of their areas. The newsletter will be producing every three months to report and promote the work of the members. After reading the first newsletter, MSG members were very exciting to see their work promoted to others.

Introduction or recipe book and cooking demonstrations

Recipe books were distributed to MSG members and some of them started using the books to provide small training to their communities. Baucau Mother Support Groups used the recipe book to train their community on how to cook and prepare the good foods for their family especially for their children.



LESSONS LEARNED

In 2008 we realized that a number of MSGs were spread over large areas and were required to walk long distance to assist mothers in their areas and meet together each month. In areas such as Aileu and Oecusse we are gradually splitting some groups into two or more to reduce the burden and increase the coverage of MSG members. In addition it was noted that MSGs are most effective when based near a CHC or health post so that members can provide twice weekly counseling within easy travel distance. Alola will commit to establishing a number of new groups in 2009, but each will be linked to a CHC and supported by a Community Support Team (similar to the SHIO model) to recruit increased community support and leadership so that communities take responsibility for their communities.

Alola is continuously improving its training manuals and introducing more creative training methods to include far more discussions, role plays, games and quizzes. Through working with Oxfam Australia, the team was exposed to new training techniques and had opportunity to practice these methods which stressed the importance of asking questions and constantly drawing out the experience and knowledge base of the participants. Before, during and after the presentation of new health information, participants were quizzed in positive and fun ways to guarantee that they understood and could retain new information.

These training sessions and discussion forums also exposed many cultural taboos about diet and nutrition for pregnant and lactating women and young children. Too often, women are restricted from eating essential sources of nutrition like limiting bananas, corn, papaya etc. Some women virtually only eat rice during pregnancy and after child birth. Some are required to only eat white food for the confinement period after birth. In addition many children only receive rice porridge for the first 12-18 months of their lives.

It has been noted recently, that women are sometimes averse to taking iron folate and eating well during late pregnancy as they believe that their baby may be too big to deliver. This is an important issue to consider in future training as messages that promote strong, big healthy babies may be counter-productive. Women need information about safe motherhood that highlights the need for the mother and child to both be strong and ready for delivery.

Fortunately, we generally find that once exposed to new information and experience of healthy exclusively breastfed babies, behavior change is evident.

DIRECT & INDIRECT BENEFICIARIES

DIRECT BENEFICIARIES:

This project is directed towards women and children in Dili and Districts where Mother Support Groups have been established, but the impact of the project benefits the whole family and community. This project provides support to health workers and PSF and SISCA members increasing their knowledge of breastfeeding and Infant and Young Child Feeding practices, family planning and reproductive health.

INDIRECT BENEFICIARIES:

DHS and MoH will benefit from the support to their programs, and increased availability of health information, and from the impact of Alola project activities on health outcomes in the target group.

GENDER ANALYSIS

The Alola Foundation is committed to gender equity and all activities will include male and female participants. While the promotion of breastfeeding and counselling is largely an activity undertaken by women, Alola is committed to training male participants. The project is designed to ensure that the benefits of gender mainstreaming are achieved.

Alola mostly employs women and all key management positions are filled by women, in an effort to best meet the needs of women and children in the community and to provide development opportunities to increase women's leadership and management skills into the future. Men are welcome to attend training and to participate in counseling to engage their support.

Alola's District Support Workers³ also provides training in gender awareness, gender based violence, information about the judicial system in Timor-Leste and provides ongoing support and referral to women in the community. Her increased involvement in this project in 2009 will see gender issues front and centre in all our activities.

SUSTAINABILITY

While a significant level of support is required to establish and maintain community groups in the first few years, the aim of this program is to establish sustainable community structures which are self-supporting and groups who are able to initiate health promotion activities within their communities.

In addition, with the Ministry of Health's SISCa volunteer model in the process of implementation the Minister welcomes activities that support this structure. In the second

³ District Support Workers are local women employed in each district to facilitate and support women's groups, promoting leadership, community change and mobilisation. Activities include health promotion and awareness raising in gender issues such as Maternal and Child Health, gender based violence, the judicial system and life skills training.

half of 2008, MSG members began actively supporting monthly SISCa health promotion activities such as vaccination days and health supplements distribution. At these events, MSG members single out pregnant and lactating women and offer counselling and support.

In 2009, Alola plans to integrate the strengths of the SHIO program with its Mother Support Groups and where possible, always link them to a local health posts or CHC to ensure good referral pathways, and greater level of community ownership and support for the work of the MSGs.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

THE ROLE OF FUNDASAUN ALOLA

Fundasaun Alola provides on-going technical backup and support, monitoring and evaluation to MSG members.

THE IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS AND COORDINATING ARRANGEMENTS

Ministry of Health is our primary partner, and the project is subject to a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry. The Co-ordination and implementation is in tandem with the District Health Services.

The program has grown significantly since 2004, with 18 groups in 2007, 22 in early 2008 with 32 groups by the end of 2008. In addition, as recommended by the MSG evaluation, the MCH team is providing monthly support and monitoring visits to all MSG groups. As a result the program has grown in size, cost and impact and requires multiple donors to support all program activities.

Other NGOs and donors enable the program to increase its reach. UNICEF funds have enabled more extensive IYCF training for MSGs and health workers in the second half of 2008. OXFAM supported training to their health workers and health volunteers in Oecusse, increasing the level of community support available for MSG members and breastfeeding mothers in Oecusse. Similarly, ENI and Moreland Community Health Service supported Alola to increase training opportunities in Ainaro and Aileu. Gulbenkian funds focus on monthly program support for all MSG members across all nine districts and additional support to the MCH program based in the Baucau satellite office. This program has employed two MSG members to provide counseling support to all new mothers at the Baucau hospital and to provide additional support to all MSGs in Region 1 – Baucau, Viqueque and Manatuto.

MONITORING AND REPORTING ROLE

The MCH team conducted monthly visits to the MSG's to assess their achievements, address challenges and provide support and training to the members to promote breastfeeding and good feeding practices for infants.

The evaluation will be by comparing the baseline survey with an evaluation survey after a 2 year period. There will be a monitoring each month via the monthly meetings attended by the MCH team who collate counseling data from MSG members counseling record books. The meetings are also a forum to discuss issues and share case studies each month to learn from each other and share ideas.

OTHER ALOLA INITIATIVES WHICH SUPPORT THE MSG PROGRAM

1. Suku Hadomi Inan no Oan
2. Alola District Support Worker Project, working to support women's groups

3. Alola Producer Groups, working to sustain livelihoods in traditional craft.
4. Alola Health Research initiatives.

FINANCIAL REPORTING – INCOME AND EXPENDITURE TO DATE

See attached financial report.

ACCOUNTABILITY

INVOLVING BENEFICIARIES IN PLANNING, MONITORING AND REPORTING

The Mother Support Group members are women from their own communities who work closely with new mums in their neighbourhoods. They provide ongoing support to the monitoring and reporting processes and individual stories. They also provide important referral to health services as required.

REPORTING TO BENEFICIARIES

The discussions at the monthly MSG meetings provide a forum for constant exchange information and feedback. Through this forum Alola staff provide feedback about progress and new activity opportunities in the community.

CONCLUSIONS/GENERAL COMMENTS

Throughout 2008, the program worked intensively to provide training and regular support to the MSGs across nine districts. We also hope to introduce stronger community development principles into the program approach in 2009 and will be seeking the support of the Alola's District Support Workers to work in partnership with the MSG members to promote maternal and child health and nutrition.

By supporting 32 Mother Support Groups and piloting the new Community Support Teams linked with CHCs, we will see far more extensive activities in 2009 and we will also be supporting greater levels of facility based IYCF counseling as well as neighbourhood counseling. 2009 will also see increased support for SISCa activities in the community. New, improved modules of IYCF training are also being developed with the Nutrition Working Group and other NGO partners, which we are excited about using more broadly across our programs.

As a result we believe that the Gulbenkian Alola Partnership is a very positive initiative and we look forward to working together in 2009.

