



FORUM TAU MATAN

Sekretariadu: Rua. Presidente Nicolau Lobato,

Colmera, Dili, Timor-Leste.

Kontaktu: 724 2099/ E-mail: ftm121203@yahoo.com

4 July 2007

Mr. Nigel Roberts
World Bank Country Director
Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and Pacific Islands

Dear Mr. Roberts

I regret to inform you that FORUM TAU MATAN has decided not to continue the project under Trust Fund Grant (Building Leadership and Communications) Enhance Youth Leadership and Creativity in Timor-Leste.

Our Board of Directors made and carried out the decision to cancel the project because AusAID is involved in the funding for this project. AusAID funding is an issue for us. Therefore, FTM is withdrawing itself from this project to avoid conflicts of interest.

As you might be aware, FTM is among 13 NGOs which were “blacklisted” by AusAID in Canberra in 2005 due to our involvement in the movement for democracy and peace in Timor-Leste, specifically signing a statement which asked Australia to respect our sovereignty and negotiate fairly regarding the Maritime Boundary in the Timor Sea.

At that time, we had a signed contract with AusAID for a A\$65,830 grant for a prison monitoring and human rights project. However, AusAID revoked the contract six months later in an attempt to pressure FTM and other Timorese NGOs not to speak out in defense of Timor-Leste’s territorial rights. On 8 June 2005, we wrote the Australian Ambassador in Timor-Leste and AusAID asking for an explanation and to meet with the relevant persons in Canberra. Two years later, we have yet to receive a response.

Forum Tau Matan continues to work for democracy and human rights in Timor-Leste, and we are happy to collaborate with the World Bank and other

institutions which share our goals. However, experience has taught us that AusAID has different objectives, and we prefer not to receive funding from them.

You may know that AusAID retaliated against Peter Ellis their 2005 director in Timor-Leste who told us the truth about why Canberra revoked our contract. He is currently seeking compensation under Australian whistleblower protection laws.

FTM is aware that the Building Leadership and Communications project is very important for Timor-Leste youths leadership development, but we intend to conduct it in a manner consistent with our freedom, self-respect and dignity.

We apologize for any problems our withdrawal causes you, but we were not informed of AusAID's involvement until after we had signed the contract.

Sincerely,

Joao PEQUINHO
Coordinator