PRESS RELEASE

Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor – PRADET Staff Receive 5 Days of Training about Mental Health and Psychological counselling for People with Mental Illness.

This training was held from Monday 23/10/17 until Friday 27/10/17, in PRADET’s main office, located in the grounds of the Dili National Hospital (HNGV).

Funded by DFAT as part of the Partnership for Human Development program, (PHD) with PRADET, the objective was to enhance the capacity and knowledge of PRADET staff in all programs to provide psychosocial services to those clients who are experiencing trauma and mental illness, domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and abandonment, imprisonment and human trafficking. The training is particularly useful for staff working in the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Center that aims to reintegrate people with mental illness back into their communities and the Dalan Ninin program that aims to support people who are living on the streets. Both these services are supported by the PHD program.

The first 2 days of training were facilitated by psychologist, Sra. Idalina Borges. Sra Idalina works in the Department of Psychiatry in HNGV and also teaches in the Timor Leste University, (UNTL).

The last 3 days were facilitated by Dr. Gaspar Quintão. Dr Gaspar is the only Timorese psychiatrist working in Timor Leste after he trained in PNG and Australia.

Topics for the first 2 days with Sra. Idalina included an introduction to Psychology, understanding how a knowledge of psychology can be used to assist people experiencing trauma, anxiety, depression and mental illness plus an introduction to Psychotherapy and how it can be used to assist people experiencing trauma and anxiety. Strategies for assisting with relaxation, especially when clients are having trouble sleeping, were demonstrated. This was followed by a demonstration of a session of psychotherapy with a client.

Topics for the last 3 days included Dr Gaspar performing a psychiatric assessment interview to diagnose a person with an acute psychosis. Other topics discussed were understanding the nature and impact of anxiety, depression, mania and schizophrenia. The use of role plays and plenty of discussion helped participants to better understand these complex conditions.

The number of Participants varied each day, partly because it is difficult for all PRADET staff to be available for a whole week when many clients are in the Municipalities and cases in crisis, attending court and staff studying are activities that cannot be changed. However there was an average of 17 participants per day, including one representative from each of the 4 Municipal Fatin Hakmatek and much enthusiasm from those who did attend.

PRADET is very grateful to DFAT and the PHD program for supporting this innovative and very important training. Providing treatment and support to people with mental illness continues to be a significant challenge in Timor Leste, both in resources and family and community education. Improving the capacity and knowledge of existing services is a good start.

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