

Ministry of Health-led Wolbachia mosquitoes released in Timor-Leste to target infectious diseases

8 August 2025

A new program to address the public health concern of dengue in Timor-Leste has seen the release of *Wolbachia* mosquitoes in the country's capital, Dili.

This program is a collaboration between the Ministry of Health (MoH), Menzies Timor-Leste, Action on Poverty (AOP), and the World Mosquito Program (WMP), supported by the Australian Government through the Partnerships for a Healthy Region initiative, the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), and the Macquarie Group Foundation.

WMP's *Wolbachia* method consists of introducing a bacterium – called *Wolbachia* – into mosquito populations that stops them from transmitting dengue, chikungunya, Zika and yellow fever viruses.

Pioneered by scientists at Monash University, the *Wolbachia* technology is a safe, natural and effective method for preventing some mosquito borne diseases, and has now been rolled out in 14 countries by WMP.

Quotes attributable to Mateus Pinto, Director of Dili Municipal Health Service:

"Each year, we use vector control like fogging, education promotion to the communities, but dengue cases are still registered every year. I encourage all health professionals, local authorities and communities to collaborate and support the *Wolbachia* team in releasing the *Wolbachia* mosquito in Dili Municipality for five months.

"This new innovative method has received a strong community acceptance. The *Wolbachia* mosquito releases will start in August 2025, covering 20km² of the urban population of the capital, Dili, protecting more than 240,000 people."

Quotes attributable to Meghal Shah, CEO of Action on Poverty:

"WMP's *Wolbachia* project is more than disease prevention, it's about strengthening local healthcare systems, engaging communities, and making sure no one is left behind. Preventing diseases like dengue fever is essential to breaking the cycle of poverty, because without health, communities can't thrive. WMP's *Wolbachia* method offers Timor-Leste a safe and sustainable solution that protects everyone, especially those most affected by poverty."

Quotes attributable to José dos Reis Magno, Vice Minister for Institutional Health Strengthening:

"The Ministry of Health is fully committed to reducing mosquito-borne diseases, especially dengue, through this innovative method. We have seen the success of the *Wolbachia* Method in other countries, particularly in our neighbouring country, Indonesia (Yogyakarta).

"As Vice Minister, I personally follow this method closely and have visited the *Wolbachia* laboratory in Australia, and I guarantee and am confident that it will help reduce dengue cases in Timor-Leste."

Quotes attributable to Professor Nelson Martins, Senior Technical Advisor – Menzies Timor-Leste:

"Menzies Timor-Leste is committed to working alongside the Ministry of Health to strengthen capacity in clinical, laboratory, and surveillance settings in responding to infectious diseases. We are privileged to be working with the Ministry of Health, to support implementation of the WMP's *Wolbachia* method – a biological control method for dengue prevention.

"As a senior researcher of Menzies Timor-Leste, I have seen that the *Wolbachia* method is an evidence-based method that is effective in reducing dengue. As a former Minister of Health, I encourage all parties to come together to fight dengue through biological control of *Wolbachia*."

Quotes attributable to Nelson Grisales, WMP's Executive Director of Delivery:

"WMP is pleased to be introducing its *Wolbachia* method to Timor-Leste, targeting dengue hotspots in Dili.

"Evidence from other parts of Asia and the world shows that *Wolbachia* can be a safe, effective and long-term solution to dengue. We're excited to see progress in Timor Leste.

"Dengue is an increasing public health concern in the country, with several major epidemics in the last 10 years. In 2022, Timor-Leste saw a huge surge in dengue cases with more than 5,600 cases reported and 58 dengue-related deaths. In 2025 (Jan – July), there were registered 909 cases and 7 dengue-related deaths (July 2025) nationwide."

Quotes attributable to Deidre Ballinger, First Secretary - Health, Australian Embassy in Timor-Leste:

"As a long-term partner with the Ministry of Health, Australia is pleased to be able to support this innovative and sustainable public health solution to significantly reduce mosquito borne disease, and deaths in Timor-Leste. Self-sustaining public health solutions like this are unique. It will help save thousands of lives – many of whom are typically children."

For more information about *Wolbachia* visit:

<https://www.worldmosquitoprogram.org/global-progress/timor-leste>

ENDS

About Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies):

Menzies is at the forefront of health and medical research dedicated to improving the lives of peoples across the Northern Territory, Asia Pacific and beyond. By joining scientific knowledge with community wisdom, Menzies strives to Close the Gap, and shape a healthier, more equitable future where communities can thrive.

About World Mosquito Program (WMP):

The World Mosquito Program (WMP) is a not-for-profit group of companies owned by Monash University that works to protect the global community from mosquito-borne diseases. WMP uses naturally occurring bacteria called *Wolbachia* to reduce the ability of mosquitoes to transmit viruses to humans. Through a collaborative and innovative

approach, WMP are helping to protect local communities from these diseases in Asia, Oceania and the Americas. Following decades of research and successful deployments, the World Mosquito Program is now operating in 15 countries around the world.

About Action on Poverty (AOP):

Action on Poverty (AOP) is an independent, secular nonprofit with over 50 years of international development expertise. They identify breakthrough, high-impact solutions to global poverty and connect them with the investors required to scale these innovations. AOP mobilises and collaborates with community leaders, social entrepreneurs, researchers, and philanthropists the world over to develop evidence-based models that tackle poverty at its roots. AOP's mission goes beyond creating measurable change – we want to solve global poverty for good.

Menzies Media contacts:**In Timor-Leste:**

Georgina Moreira, Communications Officer

Phone: +670 7671 2066 | Email: georgina.moreira@menzies.edu.au

Fausta da Costa: Communication and Engagement Lead, Wolbachia Timor-Leste

Phone: +670 7738 1210 | Email: fausta.dacosta@menzies.edu.au

In Australia: Email: media@menzies.edu.au

--

WMP Media Contact:**Alex Jackson**

Global Media Relations and Editorial Manager

World Mosquito Program

Phone: +44 7919 204 149 | Email: alex.jackson@worldmosquito.org;

Ministériu Saúde lidera husik susuk Wolbachia iha Timor-Leste atu tarjetu ba moras Infeksiozu

8 Agostu 2025

Programa foun ne'ebe atu hatán ba preokupasaun saúde públika husi moras dengue iha Timor-Leste hahú husik ona susuk *Wolbachia* iha kapitál nasaun, Dili.

Programa ida-ne'e nu'udar kolaborasaun ida entre Ministériu Saúde, Menzies Timor-Leste, Action on Poverty (AOP) no World Mosquito Program (WMP), ne'ebe suporta husi governu Australia liu husi Parseiru ba Insiativa Rejiaun Saudavel, Programa Kooperasaun NGO Australia (ANCP) no Macquarie Group Foundation.

WMP nia métodu Wolbachia konsiste husi introdús baktéria ida – hanaran Wolbachia – ba populasaun susuk ne'ebé hapara sira atu labele transmite vírus dengue, chikungunya, Zika no yellow fever.

Dezenvolve husi sientista sira iha Universidade Monash, teknolojia Wolbachia maka métodu ida ne'ebé seguru, naturál no efetivu hodi prevene moras sira ne'ebé hada'et husi susuk no agora lansa ona iha nasaun 14 husi WMP.

Sitasaun atribui husi Mateus Pinto, Diretor Servisu Saúde Munisipal Dili:

"Tinan-tinan, ita uza kontrolu vetor hanesan *fogging*, promosaun edukasaun ba comunidade sira, maibé kazu dengue rejista nafatin kada tinan. Ha'u enkoraja profisionál saúde sira hotu, autoridade lokál no comunidade sira atu kolabora no fó apoiu ba ekipa Wolbachia hodi husik susuk Wolbachia iha Munisípiu Dili durante fulan lima nia laran.

"Métodu inovativu foun ne'e hetan aseitasaun maka'as husi comunidade. Husik susuk Wolbachia sei hahú iha fulan Agostu 2025, kobre 20km2 husi populasaun urbana kapitál, Dili, hodi proteje ema liu 240,000."

Sitasaun atribui husi Meghal Shah, CEO Action on Poverty:

"WMP nia projetu Wolbachia ne'e la'os de'it prevensaun ba moras, ida ne'e kona-ba haforsa sistema kuidaude saúde lokál, envolve comunidade sira, no asegura katak laiha ema ida mak hela iha kotuk. Prevene moras hanesan dengue ne'e esensiál atu hakotu siklu pobreza, tanba laho saúde, comunidade sira labele buras ho di'ak. WMP nia métodu Wolbachia oferece solusaun ida ne'ebé seguru no sustentável ba Timor-Leste nia ema hotu, liuliu sira ne'ebé maka afetadu liu husi pobreza."

Sitasaun atribui husi José dos Reis Magno, Vise Ministru ba Fortalesimentu Saúde Institusionál:

"Ministériu Saúde totalmente komprometidu atu hamenus moras ne'ebé hada'et husi susuk liu-liu dengue liu husi métodu inovativu ida ne'e. Ita hare'e ona susesu Métodu Wolbachia iha nasaun sira seluk, partikularmente iha ita-nia nasaun viziñu, Indonézia (Yogyakarta).

"Nu'udar Vise Ministru, ha'u rasik akompañia métodu ida ne'e ho didi'ak no vizita ona laboratóriu Wolbachia iha Austrália, no ha'u garante no fiar katak sei ajuda redus kazu dengue iha Timor-Leste."

Sitasaun atribui husi Professor Nelson Martins, Senior Technical Advisor - Menzies Timor-Leste:

"Menzies Timor-Leste komprometidu atu servisu hamutuk ho Ministériu Saúde hodi haforsa kapasidade iha área klíniku, laboratóriu, no vijilánsia hodi responde ba moras hada'et sira. Ami iha priviléjiu atu servisu hamutuk ho Ministériu Saúde, hodi apoia implementasaun WMP nia métodu Wolbachia - métodu kontrolu biolójiku ida ba prevensaun moras dengue.

"Nu'udar peskizadór seniór Menzies Timor-Leste ha'u hare'e katak métodu Wolbachia nu'udar métodu ida ne'ebé bazeia ba evidénsia efetivu hodi hamenus moras dengue, nu'udar eis Ministru Saúde ha'u enkoraja parte hotu-hotu atu hamutuk hodi kombate moras dengue liuhusi kontrolu biolójiku, Wolbachia."

Siatsaun atribui husi Nelson Grisales, WMP's Executive Director of Delivery:

"WMP sente haksolok atu introdús ninia métodu Wolbachia mai Timor-Leste, ho tarjetu alvu mak ba dengue iha Dili.

"Evidénsia husi parte sira seluk iha Ázia no mundu hatudu katak Wolbachia bele sai solusaun ida ne'ebé seguru, efetivu no ba tempu naruk ba moras dengue. Ami haksolok atu hare'e progresu iha Timor Leste."

"Dengue hanesan preokupasaun saúde pública ida ne'ebé aumenta iha rai-laran, ho epidemia bo'ot oioin iha tinan 10 ikus ne'e. Iha tinan 2022, Timor-Leste hetan aumentu maka'as iha kazu dengue ho kazu ne'ebe relata liu 5,600 no mate relasionadu ho dengue 58. Iha tinan 2025 (Janeiru - Jullu), rejista ona kazu 909 no mate relasionadu ho dengue (Jullu 77 2025) iha nasaun tomak."

Sitasaun atribui husi Primeiru Sekretáriu Saúde-Embaixada Australia iha Timor-Leste:

"Nu'udar parseiru ba tempu naruk ho Ministériu Saúde, Austrália haksolok atu bele apoia solusaun saúde pública ne'ebé inovativu no sustentável ida-ne'e hodi hamenus signifkativamente, moras ne'ebé hada'et husi susuk, no mate iha Timor-Leste. Solusaun saúde pública ne'ebé auto-sustentável hanesan ne'e úniku tebes. Ida-ne'e sei ajuda salva vida rihun ba rihun - ne'ebé barak akontese barak ba labarik sira."

Ba informasaun liutan kona-ba vizita Wolbachia:

<https://www.worldmosquitoprogram.org/global-progress/timor-leste>

REMATA

Kona-ba Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies):

Menzies nu'udar liña frente ba peskiza saúde no médiku nian ne'ebé dedikadu atu hadi'a prospriedade husi ema sira iha Territóriu Norte, Ázia Pasífiku no seluk tan. Liu husi tau hamutuk koñesimentu sientífiku ho matenek comunidade nian, Menzies haka'as-an atu taka lakuna no forma futuru ida ne'ebé saudavel no ekuitativu liutan iha ne'ebé comunidade sira bele buras.

Kona-ba World Mosquito Program (WMP):

World Mosquito Program (WMP) maka grupu empreza sira sem-lukru ne'ebé maka na'in husi Universidade Monash ne'ebé maka servisu atu proteje comunidade globál husi

moras sira ne'ebé maka hada'et husi susuk. WMP uza baktéria ne'ebé mosu naturalmente ho naran Wolbachia hodi hamenus abilidade susuk nian atu transmite vírus ba ema. Liuhusi aprosimasaun kolaborativu no inovativu, WMP ajuda atu proteje comunidade lokál sira husi moras sira-ne'e iha Ázia, Oseânia no Amérika sira. Hafoin dékada peskiza no implementasaun susesu sira, Programa Mundiál ba Susuk agora hala'o hela operasaun iha nasaun 15 iha mundu tomak.

Kona-ba Action on Poverty (AOP):

Action on Poverty (AOP) maka organizasaun independente, sem-lukru sekulár ho perítu ba dezvoltamentu internasionál liu tinan 50. Sira identifika solusaun sira ne'ebé avansadu, ho impaktu maka'as ba pobreza globál no konekta ho investidor sira ne'ebé presiza atu hasa'e inovasaun sira-ne'e. AOP mobiliza no kolabora ho líder komunitáriu sira, emprezáriu sosiál sira, peskizadór sira, no filantropu sira iha mundu tomak hodi dezvoltave modelu bazeia ba evidénsia atu hasoru pobreza husi nia hun. AOP nia misaun la'os de'it atu hamosu mudansa ne'ebé bele sukat - ami hakarak rezolve pobreza globál ba buat di'ak.

Kontaktu Media Menzies:**Iha Timor-Leste:*****Georgina Moreira, Communications Officer***

Telephone: +670 7671 2066 | Email: georgina.moreira@menzies.edu.au

Fausta da Costa: Communication and Engagement Lead, Wolbachia Timor-Leste

Telephone: +670 7738 1210 | Email: fausta.dacosta@menzies.edu.au

Iha Australia: Email: media@menzies.edu.au

--

Kontaktu Media WMP:**Alex Jackson**

Global Media Relations and Editorial Manager

World Mosquito Program

Telephone: +44 7919 204 149 | Email: alex.jackson@worldmosquito.org;