



**RIJ**  
国際難民支援会

Building a  
Future for  
Refugees

# East Timor



## Reasons for Refugee Population:

East-Timor, formerly part of the Portuguese empire, declared independence in 1975 shortly after Portugal dissolved its colonial empire. Within days of the Timorese declaration of independence, however, the country was annexed by Indonesia, with a reported 100,000 Timorese lives lost during the 24 year rule.

In 1999, after many years of unrest, an in-

dependence referendum was held, in which an overwhelming majority of Timorese voted for independence. Following the result, disputes and in-fighting led to unrest and violence, leading to over 290,000 East Timorese seeking refuge into West Timor.

## Refugee Communities:

In the wake of the unrest and violence in East Timor, an international peacekeeping force was introduced, helping rebuild the country and repatriate refugees in West Timor with the assistance of UNHCR and the IOM.

Despite progress made in East Timor, however, it still remains beset by intermittent violence and a fractured social fabric; a lingering consequence of the decades of violence which plagued the tiny nation.

**Number of refugees:**  
0 residing in East Timor;  
13 originating from East Timor  
[source: UNHCR]

**Number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** 900  
[source: IDMC]

## History:

**1975**— Portuguese rule collapses and East Timor proclaims independence, leading to its annexation by Indonesia

**1991**— Santa Cruz Massacre, more than 100 East Timorese pro-independence demonstrators are shot in Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili

**1999**— Anti-independence militia goes on a rampage, killing over 1,000 and causing 290,000 people to flee East Timor to West Timor; international peacekeeping force, led by Australia, arrives into East Timor to stop the violence and help rebuild the country

**2000-2002**— UNHCR and IOM help repatriate most refugees back to East Timor

**2002**— East Timor gains independence

**2012**— Australia ends six-year stabilization mission, pulling hundreds of soldiers; UN ends its peacekeeping operations in East Timor

## Assistance:

- RIJ funded a project which focused on enhancing peace-building skills in fractured communities through peace education, conflict resolution training, community liaison and prejudice reduction
- As a response to the violence in 1999, numerous international organizations provided emergency assistance in the form of food, water, shelter and health assistance

