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2007 Parliamentary Elections

“Defending Timor-Leste’s independence”

Media release

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FRETILIN scholarship program to promote women’s rights

The FRETILIN government will fund scholarships designed to encourage girls to complete primary, secondary and tertiary education as part of its drive to raise the status of women.

The scholarship program will initially fund a few hundred scholarships for each of the 13 districts, starting next year.

FRETILIN General Secretary Dr Mari Alkatiri said today a second-term FRETILIN government would ensure more girls received the opportunity to attend primary and secondary school and university in Timor-Leste.

The party’s commitment to fund the scholarship program was made during a six-hour dialogue with FRETILIN representatives from Dili and outlying areas.

Dr Alkatiri said the number of scholarships funded would be evaluated each year depending on revenue received from Timor-Leste’s petroleum resources.

“This is an affordable, sustainable and effective initiative by FRETILIN to improve retention rates, particularly from upper primary school to university and ensure that girls complete their education up to tertiary level,” he said.

“There are currently more opportunities for boys to study in secondary school and beyond. This is due to financial and cultural barriers which prevent women from completing their studies.

“You cannot exclude 50% of your population from participating in the economic, social and political development of the society and nation. This is what you are effectively doing if you do not remove the barriers to women realising their enormous potential.

“FRETILIN has a proud record of promoting women’s rights and gender equality. The scholarship program is further evidence of our commitment to equal rights for women.”

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