

Local kids' charity Milk appeals to S'poreans: Help Timor Leste families

# Mums & their kids live in filth

◆ Young children endure unsanitary conditions in Timor Leste's refugee camps.

By Rachel Lin  
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**S**HE is a young mother with a baby. But instead of enjoying every minute with her newborn, she has been forced to hide in a refugee camp and live in fear.

Nina Belo (not her real name) of Timor Leste was caught up in the recent chaos there, and fled to the camp.

She is only in her early 20s and she had a 1-month-old baby with her.

Even in the refugee camp, her troubles were not over.

Gangs came and threw rocks at the women.

Desperate, the women and children begged soldiers to let them into the port, just for a while, for protection.

The soldiers did not let them in. Finally, the police dispersed the gangs.

Nina then moved to a camp for pregnant women, set up by a hospital. If it hadn't been for her baby, she wouldn't have been let in.

Her case is one of many that The Aloia Foundation, a charity which works to help women and children in Timor Leste, has to deal with.

Now, the Mainly I Love Kids (Milk) Fund here has launched a public appeal for the families of Timor Leste.

The fund helps underprivileged children here by supporting their education and medical treatment.

It has also been working with The Aloia Foundation since 2004 to improve healthcare for women and children in Timor Leste. Many of the refugees there are children.

**Around 150,000 people have fled their homes since the violence began earlier this year. Half of them are under 15 years old.**

The money raised in this appeal will go to the Aloia Foundation, which will spend it on food, relief items and other essentials for the women and children living in the camps.

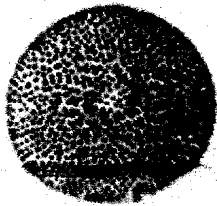
The cramped conditions there leave them vulnerable to disease.

Children are particularly hard hit. Proper sanitation is difficult to maintain, and many children suffer from malnourishment.

It is even difficult to get reliable information on diseases in the camps because of the unrest.

Said Milk Fund executive director Ng Bee Leng: "We want to give hope and relief in a time of crisis."

◆ **You can make donations directly to Milk Fund. Or you can drop your contribution into donation tins at SPC petrol kiosks, MRT stations and Delifrance outlets throughout Singapore.**



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