



Introduction



Dr José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of East Timor, accepts a copy of the ODE report at its launch in Dili. Photo: AusAID

East Timor was one of five countries included in a study by AusAID's Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) to assess the effectiveness of current approaches to addressing violence against women and identify promising practices. The report of the study—*Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Global and Regional Promising Approaches*—was published in 2008.

The ODE report was released by the Hon Stephen Smith MP, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Australian Minister for the Status of Women, on 25 November 2008 to coincide with White Ribbon Day, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The East Timor country supplement to the report was launched in Dili on 27 November 2008 by Dr José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of East Timor.

The ODE study was undertaken using a participatory approach that focused on women's own experience of violence, and on what does or does not help them in terms of protection and prevention. The research team spoke with 83 people in East Timor, including interviews with 29 people representing 21 organisations, and focus groups in which another 54 people participated.

The ODE report made a series of recommendations for East Timor and the region that are relevant to all organisations and individuals who are committed to preventing and responding to violence against women.

This paper sets out Australia's initial response to the recommendations for action to end violence against women in East Timor. AusAID recognises that ending violence against women requires action over the long term, and that the activities set out in this report are just the first stage in intensifying our efforts to address violence against women as part of the Australian international development assistance program.

Principles and priorities

The ODE report identified a range of principles and priorities structured around a *framework for action* for addressing violence against women. AusAID will use this framework and a set of key principles to guide its contribution to ending violence against women in East Timor.

Principles guiding Australia's contribution

The following principles will guide Australia's contribution to ending violence against women. AusAID will:

- > make a long-term commitment to ending violence against women
- > promote gender equality as a central principle of our work
- > work in partnership with key stakeholders and align with partner government priorities
- > adopt an integrated approach.

Further details are set out in the regional report.

A framework for action

The framework for action sets out three main *strategies* for responding to violence against women:

- > ensuring women have access to justice
- > ensuring women have access to support services
- > preventing violence against women.

The framework for action can be used by all those working to end violence against women.

The box below sets out AusAID’s vision, its aim and the outcomes it will strive to achieve within the framework recommended by the ODE report.

A framework for ending violence against women in Melanesia and East Timor		
Vision: Women in Melanesia and East Timor are able to live free from violence and the fear of violence.		
Aim: To work in partnership—with national governments, civil society, international partners, and men and women—to increase efforts to reduce and respond to violence against women.		
Outcome: Women have access to justice	Outcome: Women have access to support services	Outcome: Violence against women is prevented

The structure of this report reflects the framework for action recommended in the ODE report, with sections on each of the three key strategies—ensuring women’s access to justice, ensuring women’s access to support services, and preventing violence against women—and on efforts to support an integrated approach.

Women have access to justice

Goals for all stakeholders in East Timor

To increase women's access to justice.

This will include:

- > passing and implementing laws and policies that discourage violence and impose consequences on offenders
- > providing women with the means to protect themselves and their children from violence
- > providing women with the information necessary to access their rights
- > ensuring women are treated humanely and fairly by justice system personnel.

Situational analysis

In East Timor, victims of crime (including victims of domestic and sexual violence) access either of two different systems of justice depending on their circumstances: traditional law or the formal justice system. Difficulties that women experience in accessing justice in East Timor include barriers to the formal justice system as a result of distance and costs; a reliance on customary justice approaches, with their weak human rights records; and limited knowledge of laws and their rights. Almost 90 per cent of cases of violence against women are dealt with using traditional justice.

Police Victim Protection Units operate in East Timor's 13 districts. These units take complaints and have authority to investigate cases such as rape, attempted rape, domestic violence, child abuse, child neglect, missing persons, paternity and sexual harassment. The Victim Protection Units are considered to be an important initiative that should be strengthened.

The non-government organisations, the Judicial System Monitoring Program and the Women's Justice Unit, play key roles in monitoring women's access to the formal justice system, particularly in cases of sexual assault and domestic violence. The Women's Justice Unit conducts advocacy and training for the justice sector; in addition, it provides public education on violence against women and on women's human rights. The Victim Support Service of the Judicial System Monitoring Program provides legal support to women who have experienced violence.

The United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) provides support to the Government of East Timor in the sphere of law and justice. UNMIT is assisting in establishing the rule of law in East Timor through the development of a legislative framework. UNMIT also provides policing support to the East Timor Government through the UN Police, which consists of police officers from more than 40 countries.

East Timor Government priorities and actions to support women's access to justice

The East Timor Government has taken several steps to strengthen both the formal and the traditional justice systems.

Reforms to the formal justice system

As part of the reforms to the formal justice system, the government has included domestic violence as a public crime in the Penal Code. The Penal Code was approved by the Council of Ministers on 18 March 2009 and promulgated by the President on 30 March 2009.¹ Draft domestic violence legislation is currently with the Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI) and is expected to be sent to the Council of Ministers to be discussed very soon.

SEPI (formerly known as the Office for the Promotion of Equality) is the agency within the East Timor Government with responsibility for advancing gender equality. Addressing gender-based violence is one of its four core programs. The role of SEPI is supported by Gender Focal Points in each district administration and in key line ministries.

Access to justice is part of the government's National Priorities Program for 2009.² One of the identified deliverables under the annual action plan is promoting and mainstreaming a culture of gender equality through campaign and advocacy on various laws from a gender perspective. (These laws are the Civil Code,³ the Penal Code and domestic violence law.)

As part of its efforts to improve women's access to justice, the government, through the Ministry of Justice, is developing a gender justice policy. It is intended that the policy will be approved and adopted by the end of September 2009. The Ministry of Justice has also organised training—including for police, prosecutors and judges—on legal issues that uniquely affect women and on identifying and handling sexual and domestic violence cases.

1 Under the new Penal Code, abortion is criminalised. However, it is permitted in cases where the interruption of pregnancy is the only way to remove the danger of death or serious and irreversible injury to the pregnant woman's body, and where it is carried out under the authorisation and supervision of a medical committee by a doctor or health professional in a public health establishment and with the consent of the pregnant woman and/or her spouse. The Penal Code states that this article will also be subject to separate legislation. The draft Penal Code originally included a provision for abortion in the event of foetal abnormality, when the mother was underage (younger than 16 years old) and in cases of incest (where the father had sexual relations with his own daughter) and rape. This provision has been removed, which has raised concern among women's organisations that domestic violence will increase.

2 The Government of East Timor has established seven working groups on the various themes under the National Priority Program for 2009. The themes are food security; access to justice; rural development; human resources development; public safety and security; social protection and social services; and clean and effective government.

3 In relation to the Civil Code, a Gender and Land Law Working Group has been established and has held various workshops to discuss women's right to title, ownership, access and use of land and property, and inheritance of land. This has resulted in the inclusion of provisions in the Civil Code to grant women equal access to land and property.

Policing

The East Timor Government has committed to strengthening the police Victim Protection Units and to addressing the challenges these units face in terms of human resources and financial and logistic constraints. The government is attempting to support the Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste and the Victim Protection Units by collaborating with UN Police and other international agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs). The UN mission has been extended for another year and UN Police has been asked to provide further support to the units.

Reforms to traditional justice structures

The East Timor Government's program on justice includes engagement with traditional justice structures. Research is currently being undertaken by UNMIT and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to inform government policy in this area.

The Ministry of Justice is now working closely with the Justice Sector Support Facility (see below), the UNDP and GTZ (the German government aid agency) to develop the legal and policy basis for traditional justice and formal justice to complement each other, providing fairer and more accessible dispute resolution.

The Ministry of Justice has recently organised several consultations and workshops on traditional justice in Dili and some of the districts. The consultations sought to gather ideas from the community to use in producing a law that will recognise and regulate traditional customs that contribute to the development of the justice system in East Timor. Women's access to traditional justice was the focus of one of the workshops, which sought to gather women's views on how their needs can be met in the traditional justice system. As a result of this consultation, the East Timor Government opted to make the traditional system more responsive by introducing legislation to make local government, especially *Chefes de Sucu* (chiefs of villages) and *Chefes de Aldeias* (chiefs of hamlets), more proactive in reducing domestic violence.

Australian support for women's access to justice

Gender justice, especially in rural areas, is a major focus of AusAID's East Timor program and its support for ending violence against women in East Timor.

In 2008, a Justice Sector Support Facility was created by a bilateral agreement between the Government of East Timor and the Australian Government to support both institutional and civil society initiatives to improve access to justice for men, women and children in East Timor.

AusAID is contributing approximately \$10 million over five years (2009–13) for the civil society component of the facility, which includes a civil society grants scheme.

The civil society grants scheme will directly promote gender justice outcomes, including measures to respond to and prevent violence against women. The ODE report's recommendations and findings will guide priorities in funding. One key area will be preventing and dealing with violence against women and girls. Another will be supporting women's access to justice in rural areas, through traditional law and the formal justice system.

In 2008, a Justice Sector Support Facility was created by a bilateral agreement between the Government of East Timor and the Australian Government to support both institutional and civil society initiatives to improve access to justice for men, women and children in East Timor.

At a policy level, the facility aims to strengthen policy and legal reform, including support for the implementation of domestic violence legislation in partnership with SEPI, the Ministry of Justice, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Through the Suai Integrated Justice Pilot, established in late 2008, the facility is supporting a steering committee to educate and involve communities in confronting and solving justice problems. It is doing this by coordinating the efforts of various organisations at the local level—civil society organisations, traditional and formal justice leaders, and donor and government programs. Violence against women and women's access to justice will be among the issues addressed in the pilot.

Australia has also contributed to efforts to improve the capacity of the police to respond to cases of domestic violence. Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste officers have been given some training in understanding and investigating sexual and gender-based violence. This has been delivered in part through the Australian – Timor-Leste Police Development Program, which is managed by the Australian Federal Police.

Women have access to support services

Goals for all stakeholders in East Timor

To increase women's access to support services.

This will include providing assistance to:

- > increase women's access to psychological, medical and legal support
- > increase women's access to safe havens
- > increase support to organisations that provide support services to women.

Situational analysis

Non-government organisations play a major role in East Timor in providing support services to women who have experienced violence.

The East Timorese Women's Communication Forum (FOKUPERS) provides counselling, legal advice, court accompaniment and shelter in Dili; it has gender-based violence focal points in the community in four districts.

PRADET (Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor) provides mental health and psychosocial support for women who have experienced violence and supports women to access other services. PRADET runs a one-stop shop, Fatin Hakmatek, at Dili Hospital that provides medical treatment, counselling, legal advice, some practical assistance with food and transportation, overnight accommodation and referrals to other services.

The ODE report recommended developing systems of temporary shelter for women who have experienced domestic violence in regional areas. Currently, such support can be limited and dependent on individuals' offering women shelter.

East Timor Government priorities and actions to support women's access to support services

Development of social services and protection, including for women and children, is one of the East Timor Government's national priorities for 2009.

The government has established five hospitals, in Dili, Oecusse, Suai, Maubisse and Baucau. These hospitals will help in providing health services to women who have experienced violence.

The government plans to establish centres in every hospital to facilitate the treatment and support of survivors of violence. The centres will provide services such as medical

treatment, police investigation, social services, psychosocial counselling and legal support. Currently, there is one such centre located in Dili Hospital and managed by PRADET.

The government, through the Ministry of Health, also plans to establish acute care centres in every government hospital around the country to provide psychological treatment for those who have mental health problems, including victims of sexual abuse.

The government intends to develop human resources in the health sector, which will include increasing the number of trained doctors in areas such as forensic and psychiatry specialisations to help with cases such as domestic and sexual violence and mental health.

The East Timor Government has been working closely with NGOs to help to provide support services to women who have experienced violence. It has committed to continuing its support to organisations that provide support to women and children such as FOKUPERS, Alola Foundation and church-based organisations such as the Missionary Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit and Santa Bhakita.⁴ The services provided include medical treatment, counselling, psychosocial support, legal advice and shelters. Most of these organisations provide support in Dili and in the districts.

The Secretary of State for Social Assistance and National Disaster plans to build social houses for vulnerable groups including widows in all districts in 2009. Each district will have 34 to 35 houses.

Australian support for women's access to support services

Strengthening health service delivery at the community level

Ensuring that women who experience violence have access to health services is a key recommendation of the ODE report. In partnership with the World Bank, Australia is contributing \$23 million (over four years from 2007-08) through the Health Sector Strategic Plan – Support Project (HSSP-SP) to support the Government of East Timor to implement its national Health Sector Strategic Plan and Medium-Term Expenditure Framework to strengthen East Timor's health system.

The HSSP-SP promotes the UN Millennium Development Goals in the area of health: reducing infant mortality, maternal mortality and the incidence of illness and death due to preventable diseases. AusAID anticipates that the HSSP-SP will scale up its coverage of maternal and child health programs in 2009-10, significantly increasing both the number of births attended by trained health professionals and the number of health posts across urban and rural East Timor.

AusAID has also provided funds (approximately \$9,000 in 2008-09) to PRADET for the construction of its new office next to the Fatin Hakmatek (Quiet Place) at the Dili Hospital.

4 Santa Bhakita is an orphanage located in Becora Dili. The centre also looks after those who have experienced sexual violence.

Safe houses

The ODE report recommended that opportunities be investigated for developing a local system of temporary shelters for women in response to domestic violence. The Fatin Segura (Safe Place) concept aims to bring existing service providers together to support a network of safe places at a subdistrict level where victims can receive support and where potential victims can come to avoid violence when they feel under threat.

AusAID provided funds (\$80,000 in 2008-09) to the Centro Esperansa ba Feto (Hope Centre for Women) in Salele, in the district of Covalima, operated by the Missionary Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit. The project provides a safe house for victims of domestic violence and support for widows and orphans through education, advocacy, training and income-generation activities.

AusAID, through the Justice Sector Support Facility, will consider opportunities to support other Safe Place projects, including in the context of the Suai Integrated Justice Pilot.

Violence against women is prevented

Goals for all stakeholders in East Timor

To prevent violence against women.

This will include assisting in:

- > raising awareness through coordinated efforts at all levels
- > changing community attitudes about violence
- > increasing women's status in society.

Situational analysis

There is a range of good-practice approaches to raising public knowledge and awareness about violence prevention in East Timor that could be further strengthened. Awareness-raising activities have involved women's groups, NGOs and government and have included activities centred around the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.

The Alola Foundation works at the village level through workshops to raise women's awareness of violence and ways in which they can respond. Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violencia (the Association of Men against Violence—AMKV) is active in engaging men in ending violence against women and working with the community to promote gender equality. AMKV is active in seven districts across East Timor. A man in a remote village of Liquica district, during a discussion on gender-based violence organised by AMKV, said: 'Now I know that if I beat my wife, I will end up in Becora'.⁵

Women have strong representation in the National Parliament in East Timor. Further strengthening women's participation in economic, social and political life in East Timor will assist in changing community attitudes to and preventing violence against women.



AMKV—the Association of Men against Violence—is active in engaging men in ending violence against women and working with the community to promote gender equality. Photo: AusAID

⁵ Becora is a suburb of Dili where the main prison is located.

East Timor Government priorities and actions to prevent violence against women

Activities have been organised by the government, through SEPI, to promote public awareness of the need to prevent violence against women. SEPI will continue to hold its annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence throughout the country. The 2009 International Women's Day, with the theme 'No to Violence, Yes to Gender Equality', was an important opportunity for the government to disseminate information to end violence against women through the production and publication of normative materials, training, exhibitions, workshops and discussions.

The East Timor Government, with help from NGOs and civil society, is conducting community awareness raising on the draft domestic violence legislation.

The government has committed to supporting AMKV to help to raise awareness and change the behaviour of men and youth towards women.

The East Timor Government is also seeking to increase women's status in society through the economic empowerment of women. Creating employment and supporting livelihoods for local women are key priorities for SEPI, which has supported 24 women's small business groups in Dili and the districts. With the support of the Gender Focal Points, SEPI has established a team to monitor and evaluate the work of these groups. SEPI's support is designed to facilitate the production of marketable products and provide sustainable income for women. Economic empowerment of women—especially those in remote areas—will help to reduce the level of violence against women.

Despite the fact that East Timor is well placed in terms of women's participation in politics, much work needs to be done, especially at the local government level. The government will continue to encourage women to be involved in every level of politics. This includes encouraging women to be candidates in the upcoming *sucu* (village) and municipal elections, which will be held in late 2009 and early 2010. (Under the East Timor 2004 election law, female representation at *sucu* council is mandatory.) The election of women to *sucu* councils and as *sucu* leaders may have an impact on reducing violence against women.

Australian support for preventing violence against women

Working with civil society

Support for civil society

AusAID's East Timor Community Assistance Scheme is a small grants scheme that supports community initiatives throughout East Timor. The scheme provides assistance at the community level—including for local NGOs, community-based organisations and religious groups—with the aim of achieving better living conditions for East Timorese people. Since 2000, the scheme has supported 14 community-level and local NGO activities on gender equality issues. In 2008-09, support was provided to Bacau Buka Hatene (Friendship and Learning Centre) in Baucau district for its activity in promoting women's rights in rural areas through media.

Working with men and boys

AusAID partnered with the UNDP Pacific Centre in supporting a Pacific and East Timorese delegation to attend the ‘Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys to Achieve Gender Equality’, held in March 2009. The delegation included representatives from East Timor.

AusAID has acted on the ODE recommendation to increase support to AMKV and strengthen its community-based education program, focusing on encouraging men’s participation in the pursuit of gender equality. In 2008-09, AusAID provided a grant of approximately \$60,000 to support the work of AMKV. The Justice Sector Support Facility is also working in partnership with Caritas and AMKV to develop its strategic plan and strengthen its management and governance arrangements.

AusAID will investigate opportunities for community-based organisations in East Timor to engage and share learnings with Pacific organisations working with men as advocates for the elimination of violence against women. In particular, AusAID has had preliminary discussions with the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre about individuals from East Timor participating in training through the centre’s Male Advocates Program.

Working with faith-based organisations

AusAID is a Principal Partner to the International Women’s Development Agency initiative ‘Asia Pacific Breakthrough: The Women, Faith and Development Summit to End Global Poverty’, to be held in December 2009. The summit will bring together faith-based, women’s and development organisations from across Asia and the Pacific to discuss opportunities to work together to advance gender equality, including to end violence against women.

As mentioned above, AusAID is providing funds to the Centro Esperansa ba Feto (Hope Centre for Women) in Salele, operated by the Missionary Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit. The project provides a safe house for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Supporting women as peacemakers

AusAID is commissioning research on the impact and challenges of implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325⁶ on women, peace and security in partner countries. This research will focus on the four interrelated areas of Resolution 1325: increasing participation of women in decision-making and peace processes; ensuring gender perspectives and training in peacekeeping and security; protecting women and girls from violence; and gender mainstreaming in all peace and security concerns. The research will focus on two in-depth case studies of Fiji and East Timor to highlight best practices, provide transferable lessons and make practical recommendations on how AusAID can measure, evaluate and advance the participation of women in peace and security issues.

In March 2009, AusAID provided support (\$43,000 in 2008-09) to the ‘Women for Peace’ conference in Dili, hosted by the Alola Foundation. The conference strengthened awareness of women’s roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, focusing on women and youth as positive forces for change and building regional networks to achieve sustainable peace and stability in East Timor. AusAID funding contributed to a 14-week roadshow exhibition of art and theatre that was produced as part of the conference, providing outreach to the districts and enabling widespread engagement with conference themes and outcomes.



The ‘Women for Peace’ conference in Dili, hosted by the Alola Foundation, strengthened awareness of women’s roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Photo: AusAID

6 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000. It is the key international framework that addresses the links between the protection of women from violence and the promotion of women’s participation and leadership in peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts.

Recognising and promoting the rights of women with disability

AusAID, through the International Seminar Support Scheme, supported the attendance of two representatives from the East Timor Government at the Pacific Regional Forum on Women with Disabilities and the Pacific Regional Disability Conference in Vanuatu on 20–23 April 2009. One of the key components at these conferences was discussion of the sensitive issue of violence against women with disability.

AusAID has provided support for a disability adviser to the Government of East Timor, to finalise a National Disability Policy and implementation plan and to develop community-based rehabilitation approaches, both of which may provide frameworks for addressing gender and disability issues.

Gender equality and empowering women

The ODE report noted that efforts to reduce violence against women are intrinsically linked to women's political, social and economic empowerment. The report recommended that Australia ensure all its interventions focus on promoting greater equality between men and women.

Gender equality is a guiding principle of Australia's international development assistance program. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring that the needs, priorities and interests of women, as well as men, are considered in all development activities and at every stage of the development process.

Women's leadership and decision making

Female representation in politics remains one of the strongest areas of equal gender participation in East Timor.

AusAID is providing funding through UNIFEM (\$400,000 over two years from 2007-08) for the Integrated Program for Women in Politics and in Decision Making, which supports the development of a political vision of women as citizens and decision-makers. Its current focus is on transformative leadership, politics and communities, including capacity-building support to women parliamentarians, support for the women's wings of political parties, and the resourcing of a Women's Resource Centre. Support to the women's caucus in the National Parliament is provided through the Women's Resource Centre.

Training in specific skills building, including gender-responsive budgeting training for members of parliament, was delivered in November and December 2008. Further skills building will include learning sessions on basic gender concepts and transformative leadership in relation to the nation-building process.

The direct beneficiaries of the program are primarily women politicians, although men are also included in key activities. However, it is intended that the ultimate beneficiaries of the program will be poor women who will be helped by the efforts of women officials to ensure that development programs are responsive to the needs of the poor and of poor women in particular.

AusAID is providing funding through UNIFEM for the Integrated Program for Women in Politics and in Decision Making, which supports the development of a political vision of women as citizens and decision-makers.

Women's economic empowerment

AusAID, in collaboration with the International Finance Corporation and the World Bank, is undertaking a series of Gender and Investment Climate Reform Assessments, including in East Timor. These assessments will result in a 'gender toolkit', to be released later in 2009, that will show policymakers and business organisations how to ensure that both men and women benefit from improvements in the business-enabling environment within a country.

Research on the potential for gender-responsive budgeting in East Timor is currently being funded through AusAID's Australian Development Research Awards (\$200,000 over three years from 2007-08). The research, to be completed by December 2009, will identify the potential of various gender-responsive budget approaches for progressing women's economic empowerment. It aims to increase policymakers' capacity to promote women's economic independence through participation in both waged employment and self-employment. Further, it is intended that policymakers, donors and other stakeholders will benefit from understanding how gender-responsive budget approaches can enhance women's empowerment.

An integrated approach

Goals for all stakeholders in East Timor

To deliver a coordinated and comprehensive response to violence against women, including among government and non-government actors, at the national and local levels.

This will include:

- > developing and implementing plans of action for preventing violence against women at national, provincial, municipal and community levels
- > supporting interagency taskforces on violence against women (for example, within the context of the reporting on progress required by East Timor as a signatory to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women)
- > conducting national coordinated campaigns and awareness-raising activities
- > collaborating on training and capacity building of local stakeholders across all sectors.

Situational analysis

Multisectoral coordination is relatively well advanced in East Timor, both at government and service-provider levels.

As noted above, SEPI is the government agency with responsibility for advancing gender equality, and addressing gender-based violence is one of its four core programs.

The Gender-based Violence Referral Partners Network (Rede Referral)⁷ supports multisectoral coordination among service providers in responding to violence against women. The network brings together service providers, government and multilateral donors to develop a shared approach to case management. Organisations also assist each other logistically through the Referral Pathways Group, a working group of Rede Referral, on issues such as accessing transport and finding accommodation for women and children who have experienced violence.

⁷ Rede Referral is a networking group composed of government bodies, UN agencies and international and national NGOs.

East Timor Government priorities and actions to ensure an integrated approach

The East Timor Government ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2003, pledging to protect women's rights and promote equality between men and women.

Since its establishment in 2001, SEPI has been the driving force within government in terms of multisectoral coordination. SEPI is the lead government agency in producing and distributing information and educational material on gender equality; in addition, it conducts awareness-raising campaigns in all districts. It also promotes dialogue and collaboration among other government agencies, civil society organisations and international agencies to promote gender equality.

SEPI is supported by 16 Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in line ministries and 12 GFPs at district level. It has delivered training to the GFPs to help them to prepare individual action plans. SEPI is also working with the GFPs to support them to integrate gender perspectives into the Government's National Priorities Program for 2009.

The East Timor Government has decided that SEPI will have a formal status in the 2009 National Priorities Program process for the first time. It will participate in two working groups—Food Security and Rural Development—and maintain an active interest in two others—Access to Justice, and Social Protection and Social Services.

Strengthening the capacity of the GFPs has become one of the main strategies for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment across government. One problem, however, is the lack of human resources and budget required to achieve this. To address this concern, SEPI has strengthened its collaboration with various agencies and NGOs to deliver training activities and provide international gender advisers to support the GFPs. Currently, two international gender advisers have been placed, one in the Ministry of Education and another in the Ministry of Agriculture. SEPI plans to develop and strengthen the mechanism for coordination among the GFPs.

SEPI's 2009 Action Plan has been drafted and approved. Activities in the plan aim to:

- > implement an integrated gender policy approach
- > ensure the participation of East Timor in national and international gender events
- > ensure the continuation of the drafting of the periodic CEDAW report
- > ensure analysis of policies and legislation projects from a legal perspective of gender equality
- > consolidate and develop GFPs through the establishment of connection and coordination mechanisms at the central and district government levels
- > conduct gender training for all civil servants
- > promote a culture of equality through campaigns, and production and publication of normative materials
- > improve SEPI's human resources.

In early 2009, SEPI took over from UNFPA as the lead coordinator for Rede Referral. The purpose of Rede Referral is to advocate against gender-based violence in all its forms, monitor the protection situation of women, girls and other groups at risk, and ensure timely access to appropriate support and care services (legal, health and psychosocial) for victims of violence.

The East Timor Government's National Statistics Directorate and Ministry of Health are undertaking a national Demographic and Health Survey in 2009. In contrast with the 2003 survey, the 2009 survey will include a module on domestic violence. The survey will provide a strong evidence base for future government responses to domestic violence and coordination among relevant government agencies.

Australian support for an integrated approach

AusAID has regular representation on the Dili-based Gender Thematic Working Group, a networking and coordination forum comprising representatives from the East Timor Government, UN agencies, international development agencies and international NGOs. The working group has established a taskforce to coordinate events and initiatives aimed at raising awareness of gender equality and progressing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. These include, for example, International Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, which is actively sponsored by the President and the Prime Minister of East Timor.

AusAID is contributing \$200,000 to support the national Demographic and Health Survey, mentioned above. The East Timor Government is carrying out the survey, with support from donors such as AusAID and USAID and a number of UN agencies, including UNFPA, the UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNIFEM. AusAID is an active member of the Stakeholders Group that is assisting with the conduct of the survey.

The Australian Government will work in partnership with other donors and stakeholders in promoting gender equality in East Timor. It will promote and increase donor harmonisation as set out in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness 2005 and the Accra Agenda for Action. East Timor will participate as a case study to monitor compliance with the Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations, and has asked Australia to be a mentor in this process.