

## EAST TIMOR COUNTRY SUPPLEMENT

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## 1 BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

This paper is a supplement to *Violence against Women in Melanesia and East Timor: Building on Regional and Global Promising Approaches*, which addresses the issue of violence against women in the region.. The main report describes all promising approaches identified by the team from across the region, and proposes, through a series of recommendations, an action plan relevant for all countries studied. This supplement provides more country-specific information on East Timor, permitting a more nuanced approach to proposed solutions. The regional report and the East Timor report, when read together, provide a comprehensive picture of promising approaches for addressing violence against women, recommendations relevant for all countries and specific direction for where to focus efforts in East Timor.

The process began in 2007, when the Australian Agency for International Development's (AusAID) Office of Development Effectiveness identified violence against women as a major barrier to development in the region, with serious effects not only on the health and welfare of the women experiencing violence, but on their families, communities, and countries (AusAID Office of Development Effectiveness 2007). Following a review of international lessons learned, visits of four to nine days were carried out by the international evaluation team to each of the five countries in the region (East Timor, Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu) during September and October 2007.

Interviews and focus group discussions using a set of participatory exercises were carried out with policymakers, service providers, users of the services, civil society groups, and community members. These were continued by locally recruited researchers, except in East Timor, where the shortage of qualified individuals meant none were available. This was not seen as a serious disadvantage in East Timor because of the remarkable body of recent research on the topic available from the Judicial System Monitoring Programme (JSMP) and other agencies. Selection of the potentially promising practices to be reviewed was made in collaboration with AusAID Post personnel and local activists.

In all, 29 persons representing 21 organisations were interviewed in East Timor, and an additional 54 people were involved in focus groups. (Annex 1 lists organisations consulted.<sup>1</sup>) Regional recommendations on the four theme areas (access to justice, support services for survivors, prevention, and multisectoral coordination) were developed during a workshop in Port Moresby in March 2008, involving the local researchers and representatives of the advisory groups from all countries.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To protect confidentiality, individuals have not been named.

<sup>2</sup> It was not possible to form an advisory group in East Timor due to prior commitments of the suitable candidates.

This is not a situational analysis, nor is it a comprehensive or complete listing of all the good things happening in East Timor. Many inspiring examples of work are underway in all parts of the country on violence against women, but only those brought to the team's attention could be covered. The study examined lessons learned and examples of promising interventions that could be scaled up, or applied in other countries. It focused as much as possible on women's own experience of violence, and what does or does not help them in terms of protection and prevention.

## 2 SITUATION OF WOMEN AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

East Timor (known locally as Timor-Leste) has been shaped by decades of political repression and armed conflict. The country is one of the least developed in the world, and is ranked by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as 150 out of 177 countries in the UNDP human development index. Because of a lack of disaggregated data, East Timor does not yet figure in the UNDP's gender-related development index. Maternal mortality is estimated to be 800 per 100 000 live births, among the highest in the world (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste 2007). Women have lower levels of education and literacy than men; participate less in the formal workforce; and are usually in lower-paid, less-secure work, which exposes them to the risk of sexual harassment. Until recently, women were poorly represented in decision-making bodies at all levels, but great efforts are being made to change this through the continuing nation-building process.

All aspects of life in East Timor suffered as a result of the oppression and armed conflict that began with Indonesia's annexation of the territory in 1974 and escalated to the crisis following the Independence referendum of 1999. Since the new Government was established in 2002, there have been periods of renewed conflict and continued instability (International Crisis Group 2008). Women's vulnerability to all forms of violence and exploitation increases greatly during times of instability and population displacement (Hynes, Ward et al. 2003). Vulnerability from women increased substantially in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps around Dili District that arose in the wake of the 2006 crisis.

Violence inflicted on women and girls during the Indonesian occupation and subsequent military conflicts was what first propelled violence against women to the national and international arena. Since then, it has been increasingly recognised that women experience a great deal of violence in normal life, particularly in the family. Various recent studies have documented the prevalence of physical and sexual violence (Hynes, Ward et al. 2003; Swaine 2003; Robertson 2005).

East Timor's experience of peacemaking and reconstruction in the period since 1999 has led to a high level of engagement in gender equality and human rights. This is due to a coordinated effort by the United Nations (UN) agencies operating in East Timor (United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET) Gender Affairs Office 2004), as well as to the strong Indigenous women's movement that arose during the years of resistance to Indonesian control. Strengthening civil society has also been a major thrust of international support, both before and since Independence. It is estimated there are more than 500 national and international Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) operating in East Timor, including many with a focus on gender-based violence (Trembath and Grenfell 2007). As such, East Timor has several examples to serve as models for other countries in the region. However, cultural impediments to eliminating violence against women remain strong (further detail is in Chapter 2 of the regional report).

### 3 MULTISECTORAL COORDINATION

East Timor is well advanced in terms of multisectoral coordination compared with the other countries in the study. This began through the UN mission that took control in 1999 and was the first UN peacekeeping operation to have a fully functioning gender affairs office. The focus on gender was maintained during the second UN mission in 2004, which provided support to East Timor's own national machinery on gender equality.

In 2001, a unit specifically for the advancement of gender equality was included in the new Government. Initially called the Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE), it is now known as SEPI—the Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality. Strengthening national capacity to address gender based violence is one of its four core programs for promoting women's equality and empowering women. This office has realised remarkable achievements at the level of national policy and implementation in the six years it has been operating, as summarised in Box 3.1. The national government's appointment in 2004 of Gender and Human Rights Focal Points in every district administration and in key line ministries has also contributed to multisectoral coordination.

At the level of service provision, the Gender Based Violence Referral Partners Network routinely brings all major agencies together, and also advocates for improvements with government and donors.

**BOX 3.1: ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE PROMOTION OF EQUALITY**

Initially known as the Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE), this body is now called the Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI). SEPI has worked on several fronts and with multiple sectors simultaneously. Its achievements include:

- > Legal changes and training of female candidates to increase women's participation in decision-making bodies, including those that hear offences against women, at both national and community levels.
- > Draft legislation on domestic violence to be submitted to Parliament (Box 4.1).
- > A new law giving local authorities duties to reduce domestic violence in their communities (Box 4.4).
- > Development of a network of basic services for survivors.
- > Increased public awareness through extensive civic education and other campaigns.
- > Advocacy with the Department of Education to include in school curricula the right of women to live free from violence.

SEPI recently obtained a grant of more than US\$5 million to work jointly on the economic empowerment of women and protection from violence. Funded activities under this grant (which runs from 2008 to 2010) will include strengthening referral systems and agencies in the districts, especially links between the police and NGOs; training and monitoring of *suco* local councils on implementing their new duties to reduce domestic violence; expanding the system of hospital-based safe spaces into districts; and activities to prevent trafficking, provide rehabilitation for perpetrators and increase men's activism.

## 4 WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Women seeking justice for acts of violence in East Timor face a number of hurdles, including the complex combination of patriarchal legal systems dating from former rulers, the legacy of corruption, the destruction of infrastructure during the conflicts, and the adherence to customary beliefs and practices that are disadvantageous to women. Despite these challenges, East Timor has made some notable progress toward strengthening women's ability to access justice.

### 4.1 Legal reform

Crimes of violence against women are still covered by the penal code inherited from Indonesia. Domestic violence is dealt with as 'maltreatment of women', prosecution for rape involves complex procedures and unrealistic requirements for evidence, and rape in marriage is not an offence. Family and property laws are patriarchal and discriminate against women.

The new government of East Timor has engaged in the massive task of reforming the legislation and processes inherited from Portugal and Indonesia and has prioritised certain legislation affecting women. Draft legislation on domestic violence has been prepared and is pending Parliament's approval of the new penal code. A recent decision from the Government of East Timor to decriminalise the penal code's defamation law should pave the way for passage of the domestic violence legislation.

The draft legislation is wide-ranging in its provisions and progressive in its reference to principles of gender equality, sexual autonomy and human rights (Box 4.1).

**BOX 4.1: NEW DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATION\***

Following the first National Women's Congress in 2000, the OPE began preparing legislation on domestic violence in consultation with government and civil society stakeholders. A draft was provisionally approved by the Council of Ministers in 2005. Key features include:

- > A definition of domestic violence, which includes both direct and indirect physical, mental or sexual mistreatment that would keep women 'in a stereotypical role associated with gender' or that would 'deny their human dignity, sexual autonomy ... and moral integrity.'
- > Inclusion of relationships such as those 'analogous to marriage', extended family members, household servants and people living in the household.
- > Sentencing can involve alternative punishments to jail at the discretion of the court, and orders for maintenance can be attached.
- > A definition of support services for victims outlining the roles and responsibilities of government, traditional and community leaders, and police and civil society in providing assistance to survivors.
- > Education: the government is required to provide education on domestic violence (e.g., within school curricula).

The 2008 annual plan of SEPI includes budgeted activities for training with legal professionals and the police, and education for the public, once the law is passed.

\*Sources: Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste 2007, and Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality 2007.

## 4.2 Formal justice system

The police themselves say that '*domestic violence is a big part of police work*'. (Senior Commander, National Investigations Office of the National Police of East Timor [PNTL]) However, a 2005 study of police treatment of women found that police generally take action in domestic violence cases only if the victim is seriously injured and asks for her husband to be charged (Judicial System Monitoring Programme [JSMP] 2005).

Like the other countries of the region, the PNTL has set up special units for addressing violence against women. These units face serious human, financial and logistical constraints but have promoted a greater recognition among the police and the public of the seriousness of these offences and have made some progress in improving the police response.

Victim Protection Units (VPUs) were first established in 2000 with UN assistance, under the command of the National Investigations Office. A national VPU coordinates the work of the 13 district VPUs, which take complaints of violence against women and children, either directly or as referrals from regular police, and are responsible for conducting investigations for cases proceeding to prosecution.

The VPUs are located in district police stations. The majority face staffing and resource challenges. The Dili VPU is exceptional in that since early 2007, its five East Timorese staff (three women and one man) have been mentored by eight international policewomen with previous experience in violence against women, provided through the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The Dili VPU has its own building, with attractive and child-friendly facilities, funded by donors. At least some of the international specialists would be better placed in the national VPU, where they could help further develop the framework, tools and training necessary for the district VPUs to better fulfil their mandate. As the UN scales down its peacekeeping operation in East Timor, however, it seems likely these specialists will be withdrawn.

Although there are many shortcomings in the present functioning of the police VPUs, all organisations consulted agreed this is an important initiative that should be strengthened and maintained.

The law can be a valuable tool in reshaping expectations of acceptable behaviour toward women, but only if offences against women are reliably and efficiently prosecuted. In East Timor, a great deal is known about women's experiences with the formal justice system for crimes of violence against them, through the excellent work of the JSMP and the Women's Justice Unit (WJU) (Box 4.3). Through their work, East Timor benefits from the most comprehensive, up-to-date and easily accessible information about women's access to justice of any of the countries in this study. Procedural delays and errors, however, remain rife, with few scheduled hearings taking place.

#### **BOX 4.3: THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAMME AND THE WOMEN'S JUSTICE UNIT**

The **JSMP** is an East Timorese NGO established in 2001 to support the development of the post-Independence judicial system. It is Dili-based, but undertakes training and case monitoring in other districts. It has a well-deserved reputation for producing high-quality reports, which have been used to stimulate and guide policy reform. Several of these exposed the poor record of the judicial system in handling offences against women, which led to the formation of the Women's Justice Unit, a special unit within the JSMP focusing on this issue.

The **WJU** of the JSMP was formed in 2004 to monitor the treatment of women within the formal justice system, particularly in cases of sexual assault and domestic violence. It has a staff of three East Timorese nationals and one international advisor. It continues the JSMP's tradition of producing well-researched reports. Many of the reports of the JSMP and its WJU are available in English on the JSMP website at [www.jsmp.minihub.org](http://www.jsmp.minihub.org).

The WJU also conducts advocacy and training to improve the justice sector's understanding and treatment of cases involving gender issues, in addition to conducting public education on gender violence and women's human rights in all 13 districts. It produces public information materials such as posters, brochures, and radio and television programs explaining how female victims can receive help from the law.

### 4.3 Traditional and community-based justice

Many women do not feel the traditional *adat* system of justice meets their needs because it is administered by men and upholds traditional gender roles and values that favour men, yet the great majority of East Timorese women have access only to this form of community-based justice. For this reason, the OPE and women's activist groups opted to try to make traditional systems more responsive by introducing legislation to make *suco* (local government) councils and chiefs more proactive in reducing domestic violence and assisting beaten wives (Box 4.4).

#### BOX 4.4: DECREE-LAW ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES' RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Decree-Law No. 5/2004, passed in April 2004, outlines the duties of *suco* local councils and chiefs. It is noteworthy in several ways:

- > Use of gender-inclusive language.
- > Inclusion of two women, plus a female representative for youth and elders, in every *suco* council.
- > Permission for women to be elected as *suco* or *aldeia* (village) chiefs.
- > Requirement that chiefs 'promote the creation of mechanisms for the prevention of domestic violence' and 'support initiatives regarding the follow-up and protection of domestic violence, and the rehabilitation and punishment of domestic violence perpetrators so as to suppress the occurrence of such cases within the community'.

An extensive program of training for *suco* councils and awareness for communities is underway and is planned to continue (Chapter 6, Box 6.3). Periodic monitoring and evaluation will assess the effectiveness of this approach to improving community-level justice for women.

### 4.4 Knowledge of laws and rights

*'Women need more training on domestic violence as a crime. They think of it as a normal, acceptable event because it happens daily'* (VPU policewoman, Liquiça District).

Numerous organisations are attempting to fill this need by raising awareness in various ways.

One of the best models assessed by the team involves working with individual survivors. The Victim Support Service (VSS) was established as a unit within the JSMP in 2005 and has four staff members (a coordinator and three lawyers, all women). It provides one-on-one legal support to women and children survivors of physical and sexual violence throughout each case that it takes on. It also tries to assist with material needs, such as transportation, accommodation and food, largely by networking with other NGOs.



While actively supporting survivors in accessing justice, the VSS also works to transform the justice system itself. Its achievements are: fewer domestic violence cases handed back to traditional authorities; longer sentences for offences against women and children; and faster hearing of cases.

In 2005, the VSS was selected by a Domestic Violence Scoping Mission on behalf of the Chief Minister of the National Trust of Australia (ACT) as the most strategic organisation to receive funding support from the ACT (Relationships Australia 2005). As of 2008, it will be funded as an independent NGO.

## 5 SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS

### 5.1 Core support

As elsewhere in the region, core support services for survivors are provided by NGOs. The Government's Department of Social Services (DSS) has four offices in the country but lacks sufficient resources and capacity to carry out its mandate of supporting individuals in crisis and providing child protection services. In Dili, the East Timorese Women's Communication Forum (FOKUPERS) has the most comprehensive services, including specialised counselling, legal advice, court accompaniment and shelter. The organisation is also active in four districts through its community-based gender based violence focal points.

PRADET (or Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor) is an NGO specialising in mental health counselling and psychosocial support. Its system of 'referral pathways' guides survivors of violence through accessing services. This system is being expanded to communities around the country, and in Dili, its centre is the 'safe space' run by PRADET at the government hospital (Box 5.2).

A number of other NGOs offer various kinds of support to survivors and referrals for particular services where needed. Good communication and coordination between the agencies is assisted by the work of the Gender-Based Violence Referral Partners Network described in Box 5.1.

**BOX 5.1: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE REFERRAL PARTNERS NETWORK**

Begun in 1999, the Network's current non government members are the FOKUPERS, PRADET, JSMP VSS, Oxfam Australia, the Alola Foundation, Rede Feto, and the Association of Men Against Violence (AMKV). Government is represented by the national VPU and the DSS. Multilateral donors are the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The Network has two approaches to improving collaboration and coordination of support services:

- > A working group, which meets regularly to develop a shared approach to case management, with standardised protocols for data collection, training and materials.
- > The Referral Pathways Group, a sub-group of the Network, meets weekly to discuss difficult cases and to assist each other logistically, in contacting outlying areas, finding transportation for witnesses or safe accommodations for women and children being victimised at home. The Network has also played a key role in keeping track of the movements of suspected traffickers exploiting women and children in the IDP camps. Members (several of whom are men) attend consistently, and value highly the moral and practical support they receive.

## 5.2 Safe havens

FOKUPERS runs a safe house in Dili offering accommodation (both emergency and longer-term), counselling and referrals for women and child victims of abuse. It also supports groups doing similar work in several other districts. A problem affecting most shelters is the risk of being overwhelmed by people displaced by the conflicts, which is holding back the expansion of shelters to all parts of the country. In some places, sympathetic individuals, such as the wives of district administrators, arrange temporary shelter (JSMP 2005).

## 5.3 Health services

PRADET runs a facility at Dili Hospital where survivors can receive medical treatment and other forms of assistance in a safe environment. The 'safe-space' or 'one-stop shop' approach to providing sensitive and coordinated care is being promoted in many countries. PRADET's project is a good example of its kind (Box 5.2).

PRADET's work on creating a formal medico-legal protocol for violence against women also deserves mention. It has developed and is piloting a standard pro forma in East Timor's three languages to facilitate the collection during medical examination of evidence for use in legal prosecutions. This is standard recommended practice, and the World Health Organization (WHO) has published a manual outlining procedural guidelines (WHO 2002). PRADET's approach is unique in that it combines evidence collection for domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse in one pro forma. This makes for a lengthy and expensive document, and it remains to be seen whether this method will prove to be practical.

**BOX 5.2: PRADET'S SAFE ROOM PROJECT (FATIN HAKMATEK)**

In 2002, PRADET established a safe space in a room in Dili Hospital to provide treatment for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. In 2006, it transferred to a purpose-built facility on the hospital grounds, where it operates on the one-stop shop model, offering medical treatment, counselling, legal advice, some practical assistance with food and transportation, overnight accommodation and referrals to other resources. Key features include:

- > A well-designed facility with strong security and a separate entrance to an interview room so police can take victims' statements without entering the main building.
- > A homely environment with space for staff and volunteers to work, relax and cook, with private interview rooms and confidential recordkeeping.
- > Trained female staff who receive regular support since the outset of the project from one consistent international mentor and others as required.
- > Open seven days a week, with after-hours service.
- > Good connections with other agencies working on violence against women and ongoing support groups for survivors of different kinds of violence.
- > Training opportunities for doctors and other health workers.

The space is much-needed: in the first eight months of 2007, *Fatin Hakmatek* assisted 144 clients, including survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, child sexual abuse, abandonment and attempted suicide.

## 6 PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE

A range of approaches to prevention is being used in East Timor. Arguably, East Timor's prevention efforts are the best developed of all the countries included in this study. However, there is still much to do to strengthen the prevention response to violence against women. The goal for East Timor should be to build on the good practices already evident in the country.

### 6.1 Awareness raising

A range of awareness-raising campaigns have been held in East Timor (especially around the global 16 Days of Activism to Eliminate Violence Against Women) and the printed materials have been distributed to the general public. In addition, various groups have been involved in raising awareness for men, women, youth and leaders; making the prevention of domestic violence a legal duty for local authorities; and linking awareness work to other activities.

SEPI and women's NGOs have done a great deal of awareness-raising around the country, particularly on domestic violence. As the team's male interpreter said: *'Previously, we never heard about domestic violence. Now we hear about it all the time'*. Further efforts are needed to target policy- and decision-makers. *'Everyone in communities now knows what domestic violence is because we have done a lot of*

*communication around the country. But some people at the highest levels don't! They need awareness at their level!*' (Idelta Rodriques, Secretary of State, OPE/SEPI)

FOKUPERS' program of community action assists women's groups to set up projects and supports local strategies on domestic violence, such as accompanying survivors through the court process or acting as advisors to *suco* chiefs when hearing cases of offences against women.

## 6.2 Women's empowerment

Because women's status is low in East Timor, maintaining and increasing their participation in political leadership positions and economic and social status at all levels must be a priority. This means strengthening women's participation and leadership in community development and economic programs, as well as increasing women's representation in national-level leadership positions, including in Parliament.

## 6.3 Political participation

There is recent evidence demonstrating that having more women in government has a positive impact on the provision of public goods to communities.<sup>3</sup> The team is not aware of similarly rigorous research on the impact of women leaders on violence against women. However, intuitively the team would expect more women leaders (in national parliaments, local governments, senior public and private sector positions) to have a positive impact on efforts to reduce violence against women. Compared with the Melanesian countries in this study, East Timor is well placed given the significantly greater participation of women at all levels of politics.

East Timor has strongly promoted the political empowerment of women as a means of preventing violence against women. Remarkable progress has been made in increasing women's participation in public decision-making and leadership. During the 2001 national elections, for example, affirmative action measures resulted in a national Parliament with 26 per cent female membership. This proportion has been maintained in subsequent elections. The Independent Electoral Commission, which oversees and monitors the three levels of elections, has 25 per cent female membership. Women are increasingly represented in high positions in Government (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste 2007). Box 6.1 describes an innovative grassroots approach to empowering women that has beneficial effects on violence against women.

<sup>3</sup> Beaman, L Duflo, E Pande, R & Topalova, P 'Women Politicians, Gender Bias and Policymaking in Rural India' (UNICEF, December 2006), p. 4.

**BOX 6.1: PARTICIPATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF RURAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP**

The Participation and Enhancement of Rural Women's Leadership (PERL) program was not designed primarily as an intervention to reduce violence against women, but it has had positive results in addressing violence against women. PERL targets elections for *suco* councils and chiefs, which in 2004 were given both the power and the duty of protecting women from domestic violence (Box 4.4).

In preparing for the first *suco* elections in 2004, UNIFEM (cost-sharing with the UNDP and the European Commission) began a large-scale program of 'transformative leadership training' for potential female candidates. Roughly half of all female candidates (1265 out of 2596) received training and 29 per cent elected. Seven of these were elected as *suco* chiefs and 22 as *aldeia* chiefs.

The long-term impact on these successful candidates and their family lives, as well as their participation in council decision-making, was evaluated in 11 districts at the end of 2006. Examples of the findings include:

- > Increased confidence and ability to speak up, both in the family and in the council.
- > Less conflict and violence in the family, attributed to their husbands paying them more respect. *'Men are happy when their wives are elected. It's a privilege for the family.'*
- > Some husbands more willing to share money and domestic chores with wives, thereby reducing domestic disputes and violence.
- > Some elected women able to raise the issue of domestic violence with their councils, as well as other women's issues, such as family planning, sanitation, children's vaccinations, school facilities and women's sports.

In 2007, UNIFEM and other donors introduced the five-year Integrated Program for Women in Politics and Decision-Making to build on gains made, with a component aimed at promoting women's effective engagement in local conflict prevention and peace-building.

Source: Program documents and evaluation, interviews with UNIFEM staff.

## 6.4 Economic empowerment

In the longer run, economic empowerment of women will strengthen violence prevention efforts in East Timor Islands (as well as having many other positive development outcomes). Economic development programs in East Timor, particularly those targeting women, need to incorporate education around violence against women and gender relations. If not carefully addressed, programs increasing a woman's access to economic resources can put her at risk of increased violence. This is particularly true in settings where a woman's status is low, because increasing her income can lead to greater conflict within the family (Koenig, Hossain et al. 1999). On the other hand, if such issues are addressed within the community and among women leaders, these programs can significantly contribute to reducing violence against women.

Community-mobilisation activities and micro-finance programs in East Timor that involve education about rights and violence against women are likely to significantly reduce the levels of violence against women as well as improving repayment rates in

micro-finance activities.<sup>4</sup> There is a strong base of activities from which to take this agenda forward in East Timor, including through the work of Alola and Oxfam, who use economic or community development opportunities as entry points for raising awareness about violence against women (Box 6.2).

#### **BOX 6.2: COMMUNITY-BASED INCOME GENERATION AND AWARENESS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

The Alola Foundation was established in 2001 in response to the horrific abduction and gang rape by militia of Alola, a 14-year-old girl. The organisation offers three-day village-based workshops, which begin with interactive methods for stimulating discussion of the main forms of violence and discrimination experienced by women in their daily lives. Women are then assisted in identifying small and manageable steps they can take in their own lives to reduce violence and discrimination against women and themselves.

The Foundation has teamed with Oxfam to enable rural women's groups (most of whose membership is younger than 30) to set up income-generating cooperatives at the culmination of the workshops. These help reduce women's economic dependence on men. Continuing training and support to the cooperatives, including marketing opportunities, are also provided.

### **6.5 Engaging men**

The international evidence is clear: changing men's attitudes and behaviours to reduce violence against women is crucial. East Timor is the only country visited that has an active organisation of men who have become social activists after analysing their own personal practices (Box 6.3). These activists are well-suited to encourage greater and broader participation by men in the struggle to end violence against women and promote gender equality.

#### **BOX 6.3: ASSOCIATION OF MEN AGAINST VIOLENCE**

The Association of Men Against Violence (AMKV) is an East Timorese men's NGO that has maintained a high level of volunteer activism despite only sporadic, project-specific funding (from Oxfam, Caritas Australia, and UNFPA). It is a stellar example of 'south-to-south' capacity-building, having been formed following the trainings conducted in Dili in 2002 by the well-known Nicaraguan organisation, *Fundación Puntos de Encuentro*. It has 15 focal points in seven districts (with six in Dili) and a fluctuating number of other volunteers.

Wherever possible, AMKV begins engaging the community by helping groups of community men organise around their own priorities, which usually involve income generation (e.g., money earned from community gardens, doing carpentry work, or selling snacks). Discussion of violence against women and gender equality arises naturally during these activities.

AMKV is also noted for innovative 'guerrilla tactics'—creating mini-awareness moments whenever opportunities arise, during which members initiate loud conversation about gender equality (e.g., while riding on a bus or attending a cockfight). They have also been funded to conduct their own workshops with returned refugees, with groups of self-admitted violent men, with men in IDP camps, with community groups and leaders of both sexes, and with students. AMKV runs sessions on 'internal reflection and peer mentoring' for members, to assist them maintain standards of personal behaviour that reflect the organisation's goals.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see: Pronyk, PM & Hargreaves JR, et al. 2006, 'Effect of a structural intervention for the prevention of intimate-partner violence and HIV in rural South Africa: a cluster randomised trial', *Lancet* 368(9551): 1973–83; Kim, JC & Watts, CH et al. 2007, 'Understanding the impact of a microfinance-based intervention on women's empowerment and the reduction of intimate partner violence in South Africa', *American Journal of Public Health* 97(10): 1794–802.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 Conclusions

Both the Government and civil society in East Timor are to be congratulated for firmly grasping the opportunities offered by post-conflict reconstruction and nation-building to tackle violence against women. UN missions and donor agencies have also played influential roles, supporting the Government's capacity to address gender equality issues, including violence, through the OPE/SEPI. This strategy has paid off. Of all the countries in this study, East Timor's Government has taken by far the strongest lead on violence against women. Strong government leadership has allowed SEPI and civil society actors to attract additional external funding. This funding has often been used to support well-designed programs that use multipronged approaches, address the strategic needs for gender transformation, and respond to the practical needs for service provision and institutional change.

East Timor has demonstrated promising practices in virtually every aspect of the theme areas profiled in earlier chapters. East Timor has a short history as an independent nation, so most of the interventions described in this report are recent. Remarkable progress has been made in a short time, and it will be crucial for East Timor to consolidate gains made and extend them into the rural hinterland. There are no grounds for complacency, and decades of work remains to be done. East Timor should be mindful of what has happened in Papua New Guinea (PNG) which established a national program of action on domestic violence in 1985 and then, after five years of intense work, did not sustain the program's financial, technical and political support. In the end, gains made quickly vanished. Hopefully, East Timor will learn from this experience and continue to go from strength to strength.

The recommendations outlined in the regional report on priorities for supporting anti-violence against women initiatives are all relevant for East Timor. In addition, the team suggests a number of priorities for support within East Timor (described below).

Australia is well positioned to play a supporting role in this endeavour by systematically integrating into all its programming, strategies to reduce violence against women through human rights and gender sensitive approaches.

### 7.2 Specific recommendations for East Timor

**Support implementation of the new domestic violence legislation**, which should be passed by Parliament shortly. The effectiveness of the legislation is contingent on its sound implementation. OPE/SEPI's access to international expertise, positions the office well to lead the implementation effort.

**Provide technical and financial support to the VPUs** at the national level by creating standard procedures and protocols for continued training and mentoring of police officers throughout East Timor, and also at the district level by providing logistical support to all units and upgrading district-level police facilities generally.

**Investigate opportunities for developing local systems of temporary shelter for women** as part of the response to domestic violence required from *suco* councils under Decree-Law No. 5/2004.

**Promote the economic empowerment of women as a long-term prevention strategy.** This could be achieved by expanding community-level awareness and skills-building for women, such as the Alola/Oxfam workshops. *‘We have the ideas, we have the people, but we just don’t have the strength or the resources to implement what we want. There are a whole lot of groups that wanted to participate in these workshops, but we could only bring in three. Our resources don’t allow us to reach the other groups’* (Oxfam staff member).

**Strengthen the AMKV.** This innovative organisation should be encouraged to consolidate and expand in more areas of the country. Providing core funding for the AMKV would enhance its stability and credibility and make it more effective. The group is doing groundbreaking work in the region, and its leaders and members should be given opportunities to participate in the global movement of men against violence against women through visits to other countries and attendance at conferences.

### 7.3 Specific recommendations for Australia

**Be explicit and proactive in supporting gender equality and human rights in policy dialogue,** encouraging, motivating and assisting the Government of East Timor to deepen its commitment to address violence against women.

**Incorporate a human rights and gender perspective into all Australian-funded activities.** This will reinforce Australia’s efforts to maintain a high-level policy dialogue about the problem of violence against women in East Timor. All program designs should include relevant gender analysis to identify opportunities to address violence against women. The access issues faced by rural and vulnerable women should be considered in all service delivery and law and justice programs.

**Encourage better coordination of development assistance to reduce violence against women.** A large number of donors are already providing assistance to the Government of East Timor and local groups to address violence against women. However, some efforts overlap and, therefore, may not be achieving maximum impact. Improved donor coordination on gender equality issues generally, and violence against women specifically, would help identify further opportunities to strengthen the national response to violence against women. Australia should take a leadership role in improving donor coordination.



**Increase support for women's empowerment, particularly economic empowerment,** subject to efforts to minimize violence backlash by incorporating education around violence against women and gender relations in all empowerment interventions. AusAID's community development program provides a key opportunity to pursue this agenda.

## ANNEX 1: ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED<sup>5</sup>

### Organisation

OPE/SEPI

PNTL National Investigations Office

Police VPU, Liquiça

Police VPU national headquarters

Police VPU, Dili

IDP camp, Dili (camp organisers)

JSMP

GBV Referral Partners Network

(Members from UNICEF, IOM, JSMP, UNIFEM,  
Oxfam, PRADET, FOKUPERS, national VPU, lawyers)

PRADET

Oxfam Australia

Alola Foundation

Participants of a joint Oxfam/Alola workshop on violence  
against women, gender, and financial management in Liquiça  
(involving 30 participants)

AMKV

Caritas Australia

UNFPA

UNIFEM

UN Human Rights Monitoring Unit

Asia-Pacific Support Collective

Irish Aid

AusAID

Australian Federal Police

<sup>5</sup> To protect confidentiality, individuals have not been named.