

Impacts of National NGO Gender Programming in Local Communities in Timor-Leste

A COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH
AND EVALUATION PROJECT

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TIMOR-LESTE RESEARCH
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RMIT UNIVERSITY
WITH FETO IHA KBIIT SERVISU HAMUTUK (FKSH)
FUNDASAUN ALOLA
GRUPO FETO FOINSA'E TIMOR LOROSA'E (GFFTL)
WOMEN'S JUSTICE UNIT, JUDICIAL SYSTEM
MONITORING PROGRAMME (JSMP)
TROCAIRE
IRISH AID



ANNA TREMBATH, DAMIAN GRENFELL AND
CARMENESA MONIZ NORONHA
WITH ELDA DA COSTA BARROS, MARIO DUARTE,
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Published by Globalism Research Centre.

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ISBN 978-0-9805531-9-2

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Cover image:

A young woman minding a baby
completes a survey, suco Sau

This report is dedicated to local communities across Timor-Leste and those organisations providing them with support that together are working to change the nature of gender relations.

Acknowledgments

This project has been a long time in the making and would not have been realised if not for the efforts of many people and organisations. First and foremost, Timor-Leste Research, RMIT University would like to extend a huge thanks to the partners in this exercise—the local communities, the NGO partners and the funders.

The four organisations involved in the project—Feto iha Kbiit Servisu Hamutuk (FKSH), Fundasaun Alola, Grupo Feto Foinsa'e Timor-Lorosa'e (GFFTL), and the Judicial System Monitoring Programme (JSMP) (in particular the Women's Justice Unit)—have displayed remarkable commitment, vision and faith in allowing staff members to spend significant time on this. We thank the organisations for supporting their staff's involvement and point out that they have not received direct funding to participate in the project.

The communities in which we undertook our research—the people of Ermera sub-district, Atauro Island, Manatuto sub-district, and Venilale sub-district—hosted the research teams most generously and were enthusiastic participants in the research process, giving valuable time and thoughtful feedback. We would like to acknowledge the support given to the project by the NGO beneficiary groups—Centro Haburas Talento and Haklean Moris in Ermera, Aliteno Diak, Hakat ba Oin and Beazoia in Atauro, GFFTL's group in Venilale and JSMP's training participants in Manatuto—and local leaders in particular. Thanks also to Alvaro da Silva Soares, Sancha Miis Salsinha and Irene Soares, Geolivia Maria Henry Madeira and Esperança Salsinha Babo, community members from Manatuto, Atauro and Ermera respectively, who assisted the research team with facilitating surveys in those communities.

Trocaire and Irish Aid, the project donors along with RMIT University, have provided essential support to this project and have been genuinely interested in its outcomes. We appreciate their partnership and vision. Particular thanks to Alex McClean and Kathryn Robertson (Trocaire) and Charles Lathrop, Sinead Lynch and Eoghan Walsh (Irish Aid).

All of the team (RMIT and NGO participants) would like to thank our families who have supported our involvement in the project. In particular, undertaking fieldwork means time away from children and partners, and in our absence often family members at home need to take up additional workloads.

Particular individuals have played vital roles in various stages of the project. Many thanks to Alita Verdial (CEO, Fundasaun Alola) and Mario de Araujo for their support in working with RMIT to develop initial proposals and assembling a group of NGOs interested in participating in the project. Dennis Obel generously shared his experience, ideas and advice regarding evaluation of development projects—an essential contribution particularly to the conceptualisation and planning process. Dinorah Granadeiro, Executive Director of FONGTIL (East Timorese NGO Forum), facilitated the final project workshop in July 2010, which saw RMIT, participating NGOs, their beneficiaries and donors come together to discuss and devise plans based on the study's findings and the outcomes of other project. Isidoro Moniz da Costa diligently transcribed interview recordings. We thank Elizabeth Crompton for her invaluable and timely proof reading of the entire document.

Finally, we extend thanks to our RMIT colleagues from the Timor-Leste Research program and beyond. Mayra Walsh participated to great effect in our preliminary training. She and Victoria Stead also contributed greatly to the development of the Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour survey, and provided other forms of collegial support. Josephine Flint did a great job assisting with writing up some of the statistical data. Todd Bennet, RMIT University's Globalism Research Centre Co-ordinator, has made a fantastic contribution in laying out this report, as he has does with all of our publications. We recognise and appreciate the continued support of our other Globalism Research Centre and Global Cities Institute colleagues, in particular Professor Paul James.

Anna Trembath (Project Manager), Carmenesa Moniz Noronha (Project Assistant), and Damian Grenfell (Timor-Leste Research Program Manager), Timor-Leste Research, RMIT University.

Timor-Leste

Scale: 1:750000



Atauro



Distance (km)

	Dili	Manatuto	Venilale	Atauro
Dili	0	111	111	111
Manatuto	111	0	111	111
Venilale	111	111	0	111
Atauro	111	111	111	0



OECUSSI



SOUTH EAST ASIA

DISTRICTS

- Oecussi
- Liquica
- Timor
- Alto
- Makassar
- Viqueque
- Vicente
- Lamar
- Manatuto
- Venilale
- Chico Line
- Alkaler

Introduction

In recent decades development interventions in the area of gender have been substantial, both in Timor-Leste and across the globe. In the broadest terms we may understand 'gender' to mean the relationship between and the identities and roles socially ascribed to women and men. Gender and development programming has tended to focus upon the differential conditions faced by women and men across varied social, political, economic and cultural realms. Women often experience inequity in terms of access to and control of resources, social status, health and wellbeing, decision-making power, opportunities for education and personal development, and so forth. It is such disparities that development interventions typically seek to address. Socialisation of gender frameworks through which to reorient community understandings of social relations has been another key dimension of gender and development programming.

For all the emphasis upon gender in contemporary development practice, it can be difficult to determine whether positive impacts have been achieved, particularly at the most grassroots level. Development projects that are focused upon building a piece of physical infrastructure, or training in a very specific skill base, can produce more readily measurable immediate outcomes. However, projects that ultimately seek to change social values—the underpinning belief sets that frame behavioural patterns and the social practices of everyday life—are immensely challenging to measure. Social change can be subtle and challenging for local communities to reflect upon and articulate. The patterns of change can be unpredictable. Moreover, it is also sometimes problematic to try to establish a causal incidence between the project itself and the social change that has occurred in a particular local community, in amidst broader transformations in the social milieu.

The challenges of evaluating the impact of gender programming in local communities in Timor-Leste are compounded by the difficulties of undertaking research in this context. With an intensification of globalising processes in the independence era, Timor-Leste is experiencing profound yet highly uneven change. A post-conflict society, it is marked by high levels of poverty, poor basic infrastructure, low levels of literacy, cultural and linguistic diversity, urban migration and isolated rural communities, and the lasting historical effects of Portuguese colonialism and Indonesian military occupation. Hence those working towards gender equality in Timor-Leste must traverse a terrain that is extremely demanding in terms of both achieving and documenting social change.

This report focuses upon understanding some of the impacts of East Timorese NGO gender programming in local communities in Timor-Leste—that is, change at the grassroots level facilitated by national civil society. East Timorese NGOs working in the area of gender in local communities typically target female beneficiaries, and this was certainly the case in terms of the four NGO projects profiled in this report. This report identifies that the NGOs' gender project have had an impact upon the shape of gender in local East Timorese communities. At the level of the most basic summary, the findings in this report show that:

1. Gender projects are having impacts which are seen as positive by women and their extended communities;
2. There are immense structural limitations that mean that the impacts of NGO gender programming tend to remain narrow and fragile;
3. The character of the gender projects provide both advantages and disadvantages in facilitating a process of change to gender relations; and
4. Change is occurring at the intersection of customary, traditional and modern social systems.

In the most shorthand form, 'customary' here refers to a worldview framed by local custom (in particular 'adat' and 'lulik'), where local authority is determined genealogically and the ancestral domain links the natural and the lived world; 'traditional' in this report refers to the overlay of the customary with Christian religious frameworks (particularly Catholicism but also in terms of the Atauro communities discussed in this report, Protestantism); and 'modern' refers to secular, scientific or technical frameworks of understanding, particularly where they tend to underpin development ideologies. These are important classifications for the report and we treat them here as social systems that overlay (rather than supplant) one another and do so in a way that is unevenly constituted across Timor-Leste.

The above four points which summarise the findings of this report are set out in much more detail below, and are in turn reflected in the material across the report, sometimes at the fore and at other points less obviously framing the discussions. This executive summary finishes with a list of recommendations about undertaking gender programming in Timor-Leste based on these findings. We hope that this report also contributes to more globally-oriented conversations about the impacts of gender and development interventions.

Findings

1. Gender projects evaluated in this report are resulting in impacts to gender relations in local East Timorese communities.

- a. Discursive and knowledge frameworks:

At a discursive level, the term 'gender' is coming to be increasingly used in communities. This is no small point given that 'gender' is very often assumed as a generally known concept, not least by international organisations in Timor-Leste. Whilst familiarity with the term seems to be increasing there remain significant groupings of people who have not heard of it or are unaware of its meaning. Of those who do recognise the term 'gender' and can give an approximate meaning to it, there is then contestation over its value, such as whether it is positive or negative, a foreign concept or universally applicable. In particular, contestation in communities about gender frameworks focus upon whether such frameworks benefit women over and above men and to the detriment of familial and community integration. Importantly, discursive gender frameworks are allowing for critical reflection about social practice. For example, in terms of violence against women, it is moving out of a domain of being accepted as normal practice to a situation where, for some groups in communities, there is a clear framework for articulating violence as a legitimate problem.

In this report, changes in discursive and knowledge frameworks are taken very seriously as being an essential aspect of social change. This is not to attach an *a priori* value to discourse, but it is much harder to ensure material changes (particularly changes in behaviour, resource allocation, social priorities and so forth) if people do not have a vocabulary for it. The following six points draw out further subsidiary points regarding the impact of gender programs on local discourse and knowledge frameworks.

- i. All the four projects covered in this report have assisted in changing discourse by introducing and reinforcing through practice gender-related knowledge frameworks and terminology. Significantly, they have done so in communities that have tended to be rural and with higher levels of illiteracy and lower levels of access to information.
- ii. Discursive change in rural communities challenges a common assumption that the capacity to take on new forms of knowledge requires an already-established basis of formal education. This is an essential point to make when considering that many women in Timor-Leste, particularly adult women targeted by the NGOs' programming, have had limited or no access to schooling. For these women to be taking on new knowledge is a challenge to prevailing norms about gender that often suggest that women are less capable of engaging in public discourse. Rather, there was a distinct sense of pride and heightened status about the process of formally acquiring new knowledge by women targeted by the NGO projects. They could use the fact, for example, that they had attended training and been recognised by outsiders as appropriately gaining new knowledge to negotiate changes to gender with men. This report establishes instances, such as with GFFTL's intervention in Venilale, where women have successfully used the acquisition of new knowledge to negotiate a space for themselves in typically male-only public discursive practices.
- iii. The extent to which the individual projects have achieved impact on gender discourses in local communities is varied, depending upon approach. Those that have focused explicitly on this discursive aspect have been more successful. Their female beneficiaries have taken up those frameworks to articulate and legitimise their own practices of change where they may experience resistance to their new practices and gender norms. Female community members have demonstrated significant agency in their ability to use such discursive frameworks to either negotiate a new consensus in their respective familial domains, or to find strength in their own paths where there is continued resistance within families and communities to them as change-agents. Women are also able to move between legitimising a change in gender practices through use of customary ideals of gender complementarity and collective familial and community benefits, and a more modern individual rights-based approach to gender.
- iv. We found that particular beneficiary groups of women had made more overt moves towards harnessing the confidence to articulate their viewpoints than others, and that we could map this differential against the length of time and the approach of the NGO intervention. David Mosse writes that so-called participatory research methods can often still be intimidating for women in that they create a certain social formality, and due to structured gender relations, women are not used to expressing their concerns in public domains to outsiders.¹ However, Mosse also writes that "in many projects which have an explicit 'empowerment' goal, some of the clearest signs of progress concern the increased control that women gain over communicating their

¹ David Mosse, 'Authority, Gender and Knowledge: Theoretical reflections on the practice of participatory rural appraisal', *Development and Change*, vol. 25, 1994, pp. 511-15.

perspectives”.² Similar to the way in which Mosse discusses here, we found that women who had received support were very often quite conscious about making interventions into public discourse in ways not necessarily shared by other women in those communities.

- v. The ability to translate new patterns of discourse and knowledge can be also impacted by how an NGO delivers information. As suggested in the above point, where gender is able to be legitimised across customary, traditional and modern frameworks that underpin East Timorese social relations, change has been more likely to result. Where change to gender relations is pitched at the level of the modern alone, it is more difficult for communities to translate this knowledge to their daily lives. It is far more practical for NGOs to explicitly recognise and take account of how the customary and traditional continue to play major roles in shaping East Timorese lives.

In turn it is likely that communities would greatly benefit from the ability to role-play working through a gender-related issue, such as domestic violence, using new knowledge frameworks, rather than be expected to make the difficult connections between theoretical ideals and complex realities on their own. That is, a more participatory approach to acquisition and finding meaning in new knowledge is more successful than a more one-way transmission of information.

- vi. While the levels of understanding and comprehension of what gender means remains significantly low across the four communities in this report, the vast majority of those who feel that they do understand what it means saw it in a positive light. That being said, in all four communities profiled in this report, we encountered significant informal resistance to ‘gender’ as a foreign and modern imposition with destructive impacts upon communities’ and families’ integration. Such forms of resistance were articulated particularly by those beyond the groups that work with NGOs and especially by men. In this context, it is immensely important that knowledge has been delivered by East Timorese institutions and staff, and within local contexts, so that women and other change-agents are able to demonstrate that it is not simply an outsider-driven process of change. However, it is important also to recognise that such discursive frameworks have not always been successful in positively engaging men as partners in the process of change.

b. Recognition of existing abilities in transforming gender relations and redistributing material resources:

There is evidence to suggest that the current dominant structure of gender relations in East Timor provides some positive opportunities to renegotiate gendered divisions of labour and responsibility. There are clear domains in which women practice high levels of social-familial responsibility, though these are not typically recognised as having equal significance to male lines of responsibility. NGO identification of some of these female responsibilities, such as financial management, health care, income generation and participation in informal networking, have at times provided a base for further recognition, as well as development and adaptation, of women’s roles in their communities.

For example, cultural attitudes in Timor-Leste *tend to*, though do not always, hold that women are better in looking after money than men. Particularly in the rural subsistence communities, it is typically women who control household finances and, for instance, sell goods in local markets. Women also often run small-scale businesses based on female patterns of commodity production, kinship structures and existing practices of the handing down of women’s knowledge. They are typically undertaken in spaces where women’s active presence is acceptable, such as near houses, in food gardens and in local markets. It can be said that an organisation

2 *ibid.*, p. 515.

like FKSH, in approaching women as entrepreneurs and financial managers, are utilising abilities that are grounded within a customary-traditional domain and then adapting those.

In using existing gendered divisions of responsibility to transform gender relations, one factor emerged as quite significant. Some women greatly valued being able to physically move out of the domestic sphere into more formalised, public spaces of collective labour that are recognised by ‘important people’ such as NGOs and are networked at local, national and international levels. This distinction between home and work afforded their labour activities greater status and recognition. This in turn tended to give women a stronger basis upon which to renegotiate their own, their husbands’ and their families’ divisions of labour. These women’s spaces of production also allow for a sense of solidarity and safety in being change-agents—an often-uncomfortable position and one that needs to be collectively defended—and for the sharing of sensitive information (such as about reproductive matters).

Finally, it is important to note while higher profit margins and a positive change in material circumstances may be greatly desired by all the income generation groups we met, money alone was not the sole imperative behind the groups’ production activities. The women recognised that their actions had meaning in terms of shifting gender norms beyond material accumulation. Defence of these women’s spaces tends to be more difficult over the long term, however, when financial results are lacking.

c. Leadership:

In different ways, all four projects sought to encourage women to play a role as leaders within their communities, and while this remains uneven across the projects as well as within them, the programs in this report have to various extents assisted in the development of women who are able to both mobilise and set objectives within their immediate communities. Very positively, the women’s groups we spoke with were greatly keen to share their knowledge and skills with other women rather than retain it as strategic advantage for themselves, and many had established mechanisms through which to exercise such forms of leadership. Women also stressed their roles in intergenerational forms of leadership, greatly desiring for their children and particularly girls to benefit in various ways from the changes they were making in their own lives. In particular, equal educational opportunity for girls was seen as imperative by the women involved in the NGO projects, and was assisted by greater control of economic resources by women.

Changes to women’s leadership tended to be limited, however, to women’s-only spaces such as women’s groups and to domestic realms. In the few instances where women have been able to negotiate an increasing leadership in more public, typically male-dominated domains, this has taken a longer period of time and some level of support from local male leadership. Moreover, such changes have sometimes occurred in relatively unexpected ways—for example, rather than the push by civil society for women to take up positions of leadership recognised in modern realms such as *xefe suco* positions, in Venilale we found that a community had supported a female NGO project participant to become a customary elder (*lianain*). She is instrumental in resolving gender-based conflicts.

Another key way in which we can see women traversing new realms of leadership is in the receiving of outsiders, such as the beneficiary groups receiving the research team in each location, or alternatively state or development organs. Typically outsiders will be greeted and led through communities by male leaders. Participation in the NGO projects and collective organising affords women new kinds of status as community leaders and experts—albeit more likely to be recognised at national and international rather than local levels.

2. There are immense structural limitations which mean that the impacts of NGOs' gender programming tend to remain narrow and fragile.

A key feature of this research project was to encourage NGOs to move beyond seeing their chosen 'beneficiaries' as limited in their agency and somehow free of social context, especially as a way of understanding gender inequalities in local communities. Moreover, the research process encouraged those involved to ask the question of if and how particular projects undertaken with specific groups of beneficiaries could result in change being carried into wider communities. The structural limitations to gender change can be summarised into three major points, as below.

a. That the difficulties of gender change should not be underestimated:

The social context for encouraging change to gender relations is extremely complex and challenging. The NGOs, themselves typically very resource-limited, are engaging with rural communities that experience enormous material and infrastructural needs which may be seen to take precedence over the need for changes to social values. In turn, the interventions are occurring in communities that are experiencing broader uneven change in the independence era, partly through increasing access to the outside world. This often causes complex intersections (and at times tensions) between customary, traditional and modern social systems. In such circumstances, gender has emerged as a kind of flashpoint for a battle between the customary, the traditional and the modern, particularly as a reaction to a sense of disempowerment in controlling processes of change. Women can get caught in this situation, where change to female roles and so forth may be discursively framed as a kind of betrayal or revolt against men where there is an emphasis upon collectivity—family and community—rather than individualism. Moreover, it is also necessary to recognise that in a customary context that emphasises balance and continuity of social relationships (including with ancestors), change to social relations in any way can be a cause of significant insecurity for communities. There is also clearly a sense of 'gender fatigue' in East Timorese communities, posing continuous challenges to organisations working in this area to come up with new and creative ways of approaching gender.

b. That women and men continue to be part of the process of reproducing patriarchy:

NGOs can fall back upon assumptions that women are already supportive of gender change, given that they are the ones that more clearly lose out in patriarchal gender relations. Yet by way of example the statistics from our 'Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour' Survey shows that many women continue to think that it is okay to be beaten by their husbands in certain circumstances. Another example can be drawn from GFFTL's intervention, where in early stages their female beneficiaries in Venilale were quick to discourage each other from learning how to read and write, citing lack of female ability. In this context, women's spaces were essential to negotiating change to female attitudes about women. On the other side of the coin however, male engagement in a process of change to gender relations was largely left out of the ambit of the profiled NGO project interventions—a significant limitation to change to gender relations and contributing to a sense of male backlash against development gender frameworks.

c. That participation in NGO projects places a high level of demand upon women:

In a period where gendered roles and divisions of labour are being challenged and women are encouraged to experience new opportunities, women often end up with a 'double workload'. That is, many of the women we encountered during this

study were enthusiastic about their participation in the NGO projects, but in order to participate, often took on these new roles in addition to their immense domestic responsibilities. Gendered divisions of labour within families often remained largely unchanged.

3. The design of gender programming provides both advantages and disadvantages in facilitating a process of change to gender relations.

a. Limited engagement with men and a focus upon small groups of female beneficiaries:

The programmatic models in this report do overwhelmingly focus on women. Undoubtedly this is not because gender has been misinterpreted as meaning 'women'; rather, the NGOs have chosen to work with the sex that is typically afforded secondary status in patriarchal gender relations. Yet as mentioned above, in the East Timorese context, still-dominant customary-traditional frameworks hold that familial and community integration is paramount, and modern gender frameworks are often read as a challenge to this. It would seem too that very limited engagement with men as potential partners for change opens up some real threats to a broader process of transformation. Due to the focus on collective rather than individual gain in customary-traditional East Timorese social relations, there is great opportunity to involve men that has yet to be fully harnessed. Moreover, a lack of engagement with men tends to leave norms of male attitudes and behaviours relatively unchanged. In the instances where the NGOs' female beneficiaries were supported by male figures in a way that was not overbearing, this proved to be enormously beneficial to the process of gender change. In such instances strategic male support acted as a form of protection and legitimising recognition for the women when they encountered broader community resistance to change.

The lack of NGO resources has meant that there has tended to be a focus on small groups of women as change-agents. In certain respects this has clear merits, allowing for more personal, intensive partnerships with those chosen women. The women's spaces are also essential, as has been discussed, in allowing for safety, solidarity, sharing of sensitive information and collective transformation of assimilated negative gendered attitudes by women.

However, in terms of encouraging broader community change, such an approach of focusing on small groups of women can be limiting, in that it places the burden of change upon a very narrow minority in a context where the majority culture is highly complex and challenging. Focusing on these small groups of female beneficiaries alone risks that they will be ultimately subsumed back into communities' dominant paradigms of gender relations, rather than being able to facilitate broader transformations. That risk is particularly high once the NGO leaves a community at the end of the project cycle.

b. Types of NGO projects:

Two of the NGO projects profiled in this study were directed primarily at advancing the socio-economic condition and empowerment of women, one had the goal of increasing numeracy and literacy as well as improving economic circumstances, and the last encouraged women's use of the formal justice system in instances of gender-based violence. All the projects had clearly defined goals and objectives, and all can be seen as clearly reasonable attempts to address questions of gender inequality in Timor-Leste. However, as is the case in global development processes more broadly, there is a tendency to assume that meaningful and positive impacts to complex gendered social structures will necessarily result from NGO interventions with beneficiary groups. The findings in this report suggest that considerable reflexive thought needs to go into NGOs' theories of change and the resultant design and refinement of projects.

Socio-economic

- i. Securing livelihoods through income generation from small commercial industry (often referred to as 'cottage industry') is very challenging in Timor-Leste. The majority of the East Timorese population lives in a primarily subsistence rather than cash economy and experiences high levels of poverty. There is therefore little expendable income, limiting the development of a consumer market at local and national levels. Timor-Leste's export of goods internationally is largely limited to coffee and natural resources from the Timor Sea, and cottage industries have little existing penetration into international markets. Export mechanisms are often not sufficiently developed, product quality is frequently low, and the cost of items from Timor-Leste is relatively high compared with other countries in the region. Dili is seen as the place to find the 'dollars', especially with the presence of foreigners and relatively high incomes. However, demand for cottage industry products from the '*malae* (foreigner) market' has its real limitations, and access to this market for small business groups can be difficult. Furthermore, poor infrastructure—such as poor roads and lack of transport—also compound the difficulties of marketable production and profit generation for rural communities.
- ii. A further challenge facing women's small business groups in particular is the production of an essentially limited range of goods. Many similar products are produced by women's groups across the country, and this compounds the difficulty of these groups attempting to secure a sustainable consumer market where potential consumers are already limited. The production of a limited range of goods by women's business groups reflects a gender division of labour and expertise in East Timorese society.³ Women, particularly in rural subsistence communities, are socialised into particular skill sets and areas of expertise such as sewing, weaving and other handcraft skills, as well as food production, all of which hold great cultural value. National strategies for encouraging income generation for women have tended to support the transformation of this cultural production into economic production as a way to both lend value to and build upon East Timorese women's existing expertise, and as a platform for economic empowerment. However, this has resulted in an excess of like products, such as tais and tais-based goods, with little possibility that all or even a minimum proportion of women's groups producing such items can find a sustainable consumer demand. Moreover, NGOs tend to assume that where women are able to achieve greater income generation, this necessarily means greater economic or livelihoods empowerment for women (for example decision making about use of those financial resources). We found evidence that this did in fact occur in some instances, but it is worth NGOs thinking critically about the difference between material accumulation and economic empowerment.

Legal-political

- iii. One of the project interventions focused upon increasing women's access to the formal justice system in instances of violence. While there are vast differences between attempts to integrate local groups into national and global economic markets and the attempts to provide education to local communities on legal and political rights, there is also a key similarity. In both models of intervention, the relevance and even success of the project is linked through to processes that are well beyond the control of the community in which the intervention has occurred. Access to and use of formal justice processes is undoubtedly an important topic of public education. However,

³ For further exploration of these ideas, see for example Lisa Frink, 'The Identity Division of Labor in Native Alaska', *American Anthropologist*, vol. 111, issue 1, 2009, pp. 21-29.

if the education and training occurs before the effectiveness of that legal infrastructure and supporting social infrastructure is established then it requires considerable faith for communities to engage with the training (in the same way as it is hard to maintain production without buyers). In this context, socialisation of information alone cannot be expected to have major impacts upon women's use of the formal justice system. Even where domestic violence may be increasingly recognised as an unacceptable practice, women and communities remained unconvinced of the efficacy of the formal justice system, particularly in maintaining community integration and harmony. Moreover, women worried immensely about how they would continue to lead their lives in often tight kinship communities after carrying forward an official complaint of violence, particularly by husbands or other family members. These may be important points to consider in light of impending national efforts to promote the domestic violence legislation passed in 2010.

c. Mode of delivery:

The typical model as practiced by the NGOs in this study and others is to have an NGO headquartered in Dili, close to sources of political and economic power including government and donors. These NGOs then tend to operate systems where staff move between different rural communities, liaise with local leaders and women's groups, and are sometimes assisted by a local organiser. The advantage of this is that links are created between resources available predominantly in Dili and localised communities across the country. Disadvantages of this model include significant use of resources put into moving staff between communities as well as limiting the access to expertise that ends up being concentrated in Dili. Moreover, rural communities across Timor-Leste rarely have the opportunity to learn firsthand from each other's processes of change. Contact tends to extend from centre to periphery rather than between those communities in the margins.

d. Development assumptions about the change process:

Development frameworks tend to emphasise a scientific model of predictable change, and the demands of funding cycles and so forth stress the need to see outcomes in relatively short periods of time as evidenced by fulfilment of planned indicators linked to implementation (such as number of people participating in a training session). As such, NGOs tend to work on assumptions about the change that will result from their intervention which can be to the detriment of looking for evidence of long-term real impact (that is, change that has been rendered meaningful in people's lives), as well as to being open to unexpected and sometimes negative impacts. This framework can also de-emphasise communities' agency to create change according to their own vision, rather than the NGO's vision. Particularly when looking to transform social values, change is likely to be experimental, somewhat unpredictable, and take significant time.

4. Gender change across the customary, traditional and modern

Where there has been impact in terms of gender relations in this report, this has often occurred at the intersection of the customary, traditional and modern. Typically gender and development frameworks emphasise the modern as the site for gender equality. This belies the realities of East Timorese communities, and also overlooks the productive tension between these layers that can be utilised by both East Timorese NGOs and their beneficiaries. We found many instances where women were still grounded in the customary-traditional but were able to engage with gender within a modern understanding (albeit an idealised one), creating a form of social change that carried with it a strong sense of continuity. Examples of this include: utilising customary-traditional gender divisions of labour as a basis for transforming women's material and social power; drawing strength from religious beliefs but being receptive to scientific knowledge about reproductive choice; a

woman becoming a 'lianain' adjudicating matters of domestic violence in a manner rooted in local customary ritual but drawing upon modern frameworks of gender equality; women valuing kinship-based communities but drawing upon an idea of national and international solidarity with other women in a process of change when encountering resistance to change within local communities. This study reveals East Timorese culture and gender relations to be multi-layered, extremely complex at the points of intersection between social systems, and adaptable.

Recommendations

Individual project recommendations can be found in the body of the report. Generalised recommendations are as follows:

a. Customary-traditional-modern relations:

The role of local custom as well as religious structures and beliefs needs to be factored into how changes to gender relations are approached, rather than being seen as a contradiction to the aim of achieving gender equality. Thinking about the productive tension between the customary, traditional and modern may allow new ways into thinking about practical and powerful ways of creating gender change suitable to the East Timorese context. It may also help to limit the take-up of 'gender' as a flashpoint between the customary-traditional and the modern if it can be shown that gender equality does not need to exist as part of the modern alone and mean the destruction of the customary-traditional. Moreover, in pitching at the level of the collective as per customary ideals, men are more readily able to be positively engaged. In summary, changes to social structures, values as well as the structural limitations, remain deeply uneven across Timor-Leste, meaning that it is particularly hard to speak of generalities (as an exception the other way can always be readily found) while also meaning opportunities for change may require a rethinking of the orthodoxies of gender and development.

b. Diversification, layering and integration of gender programming (including inclusion of men):

Some of the most positive and unexpected impacts to gender relations occurred when an NGO, such as Alola, diversified its project to target different aspects of gender relations and in turn drew upon the expertise of multiple institutional partners. More generally then, this may mean that it could be worth pursuing far more layered attempts at instituting changes to gender relations, for instance multi-institutional programs that seek to work across the very localised groups, such as those covered in this report, and more a more general community, for instance giving specific support to leadership at the same time as providing broader information on gender within the community. Such an approach can also work to counter the problem of one NGO's resource limitation, and could be one answer to the dilemma of whether to work toward intensive change with a limited number of individuals, or to try to facilitate broader community change. Moreover, diversified and multi-partner gender programming opens up greater possibilities for engaging men as partners in the process of change.

c. That projects are scaled to the communities of most relevance but are also integrated across multiple scales:

Development programs and policies tend to be projected at the national level and are of course shaped by global development trends. And yet, local communities continue to be of paramount importance to how many East Timorese live their lives, as RMIT's Timor-Leste Research team wrote about in an earlier report:

Across our research people were clearly aware of the nation and demonstrated a strong affinity to it, and often a strong desire to be part of the nation-building process. However in terms of work, family, mobility and levels of identity,

it is more localized communities that provide both the *primary* material and cultural basis of social life for a very large number of people.⁴

If the 'material and cultural basis of social life' for many East Timorese is first and foremost within their local communities, then this is one of the primary arenas where gender is given meaning and gender relations are re-produced and negotiated. Given the continued importance of community at the local in Timor-Leste, our study reveals that gender change is best achieved at a community level when project objectives are also geared toward that local community level.

However, while it is important to consider the local in project planning, beneficiary groups also benefit from being integrated not only at local community scales but also at national and international levels. This is particularly apparent in instances when women encounter resistance to change within their local communities as they can attempt to draw legitimacy for their endeavours by reference to national and international processes and institutions. We found that our 'Social Relationship Mapping' exercise, whereby the beneficiary groups mapped their relationships with different groups, had the somewhat unexpected effect of giving the women's groups comfort by emphasising how their work is supported by and ties into a broader movement for change, both within and beyond local communities.

d. Extending the opportunities for both NGO and community reflective learning and focus upon impacts:

Many of the NGOs and their beneficiaries had very limited opportunities to have time out from activity and project implementation to take stock and reflect upon the process of change—to develop, critique and refine their own theories of change. Moreover, for many this study was the first time that NGOs had sat together with their beneficiaries and other community members, as well as donors, in a formalised way to collectively evaluate progress and listen openly to each other. Many of the beneficiary groups responded very positively to this process. Beyond this, NGOs often have limited opportunity to meet with each other to share what they have learnt. This says nothing of community groups, which rarely have the opportunity to move outside of their own localities to learn from other community groups. In a difficult, slow and often unpredictable process of change, we would encourage ongoing, collective reflective learning practices to be considered central to the consolidation of change.

Moreover, moving away from immediate outcomes to gauging real-life impact is essential to ongoing NGO understandings of whether their programs have been effective. Too often in the NGO and development world, project management occurs from headquarters in Dili, using development planning frameworks which emphasise predictability of outcomes realised in the short-term if implementation of activity plans are followed. That is, "social interventions are understood to culminate in an end point of transformation, which can be planned for backwards in logical, rational and causal steps".⁵ Conventional monitoring and evaluation processes tend to look for expected and immediate outcomes no matter the locality or specific context of project implementation. Throughout this project, we encouraged the NGOs to critically reflect upon their assumptions about their beneficiaries' needs and the change that has been experienced by getting back in touch with the communities in which they undertake their project interventions. Often it can become easy, in the process of busy activity implementation, to focus inwards on a specific group of 'beneficiaries' and forget that outside their engagement with NGO

4 Damian Grenfell, Mayra Walsh, Anna Trembath, Carmenesa Moniz Noronha and Kym Holthouse, *Understanding Community: Security and Sustainability in Four Aldeia in Timor-Leste – Luha Oli, Nanu, Sarelari and Golgota*, Globalism Research Centre, RMIT University, Melbourne, 2009, p. 16.

5 Chris Mowles, Ralph Stacey and Douglas Griffen, 'What Contribution can the Complexity Sciences Make to the Theory and Practice of Development Management?', *Journal of International Development*, vol. 20, p. 806.

activities, 'beneficiaries' are real people living lives in complex social networks of family and community through which gender is constantly threaded. For change to gender to be meaningful for the beneficiaries and beyond, it needs to gain traction in this wider context in which lives are lived daily, and this is likely to be a long process. As such, we emphasised talking with project beneficiaries about the realities of their lives and what the NGOs' projects have meant in their own specific experiences – to understand change in beneficiaries' own terms rather than what the NGO expects. More than that, with the NGO staff we visited parts of the communities that they usually do not spend much or any time in, undertaking surveys, talking with people and visiting them in their homes. Often Dili-based staff, due to resource limitations, may limit their brief field visits to a central place where their beneficiaries undertake their activities. For the staff involved in the study, it was an eye-opener to experience first-hand the material conditions, behavioural practices and attitudes of the communities from which their beneficiaries are drawn.

Acronyms and Glossary of Key Tetun Terms

adat	customary law
aldeia	a territorial demarcation of community, smaller than a suco
Aliteno Diak	Aliteno is a type of tree found on Atauro; 'Good Tree' (CBO in Atauro)
aiknananoik	myth, fable, origin narrative
barlake (also sometimes referred to as hafolin, feto folin and kolen, amongst other terms)	often interpreted in English as 'brideprice'; more accurately meaning the material-symbolic exchange between families of a bride and groom
CBO	community-based organisation
Centro Haburas Talento (CHT)	Centre for Enriching Talent (CBO in Ermera)
Centro Treinamento Integrál i Dezenvolvimento (CTID)	Centre for Integral Training and Development (Canossian-run centre in Baucau)
DSW	District Support Worker
FALINTIL	Armed Forces for the National Liberation of Timor-Leste
Falintil-Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste (F-FDTL)	The Timor-Leste Defence Force
Feto iha Kbiit Servisu Hamutuk (FKSH)	Women are Empowered when Working Together (NGO)
foho	mountain
FOKUPERS	Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Timor Lorosa'e (Women's Communication Forum of Timor-Leste)
Forum ONG Timor-Leste (FONGTIL)	Timor-Leste NGO Forum
fundasaun	foundation
GBV	gender-based violence
grupo	group
Grupo Feto Foinsa'e Timor Lorosa'e (GFFTL)	Timor-Leste Young Women's Group (NGO)
Haburas Kultura	Enriching Culture (CBO in Venilale)
Hakat ba Oin	Stepping Forward / Step to the Future (CBO in Atauro)
Haklean Moris (HAMOR)	To Deepen Life (CBO in Ermera)
ikan maran	dried fish
IPA	Impact Planning and Assessment
JSMP	Judicial System Monitoring Programme (NGO)

kripik	a kind of chip or crisp made from root vegetables
lianain	literally 'the keeper of the word'; a customary elder inscribed with the power of connection to the ancestors and the ability to interpret ancestral law, often central to community resolution processes
lulik	sacred
malae	foreigner / foreign
NGO	non-government organisation
Organização Popular da Mulher Timorese (OPMT)	The East Timorese Popular Women's Movement
PRADET	Psychosocial Recovery and Development Timor-Leste (NGO)
rai lulik	sacred land
suco	a territorial demarcation of community, typically encompassing several aldeia
tais	traditional East Timorese fabric woven primarily by women on backstrap looms
to'os	field or food garden
tua sabu	locally brewed palm wine
uma lulik	sacred house
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNPOL	United Nations Police
VPU	Vulnerable Persons Unit
VSS	Victim Support Services (JSMP)
WJU	Women's Justice Unit (JSMP)
xefe aldeia, xefe suco	village chief or leader

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1. Overview of the Report

1.1 Report authorship

East Timorese NGO staff members researched alongside Australian and East Timorese staff from RMIT University in order to undertake the project *Impacts of National NGO Gender Programming in Local Communities in Timor-Leste*. RMIT worked together with NGO staff from the point of initial project design, through the data gathering and data analysis, and into the final writing up of the report. For many of the staff involved, this was the first time they had undertaken research, and as they needed to continue their NGO work alongside this project, the nature of the tasks varied across the duration of the project.

Obviously the influence of the local NGO workers, their interpretations and experiences framed the findings of this report, and hence the impact of their work on this project is carried across all of its writing. In a more formal sense however, readers will find the NGO co-researcher contributions across the report, particularly in Part II: Study Findings, Part III: Reflections upon the Project, and in Annex Two: The Research Team. Across January to March 2010 every NGO co-researcher as well as RMIT's Carmenesa Moniz Noronha wrote two pieces in Tetun in consultation with Anna Trembath. Much of this writing is drawn from a reflective piece each NGO wrote about themselves and their experiences in participating in this project. These pieces have been drawn upon, across Parts II and III, as well as forming the participating staff profiles in Annex Two.

Each co-researcher was also involved in analysing and writing up the evaluation data relevant to their own NGO's gender project from three methods: their own observation notes and any two of the six evaluative research methods that we used. This report uses these passages of writing in two different ways. First, across Part II there are excerpts of co-researchers' writing. Second, Anna Trembath also used the co-researchers' work to inform the development of findings in Part II. Carmenesa Moniz Noronha has also contributed other pieces of writing which were again used by Anna Trembath to inform the writing of the report. Damian Grenfell worked to refine the report, particularly in terms of key findings, structure and editing.

1.2 Report structure

This report's structure reflects wherever possible an adaptation of international development evaluation and/or impact assessment conventions.⁶ We have done this for two reasons. First, we consider it important that the report contributes in a small way to the global process of development learning by maximising the opportunity for comparison across different organisations, contexts and countries. Second, such a structure stands as an example for the NGOs involved in this process as to how they may write or be involved in writing evaluation reports in the future. That said, this is

⁶ Such as the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Network on Development Evaluation, DAC Evaluation Quality Standards, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, March 2006, www.oecd.org, accessed 19 April 2009; Evalsed, 'Gender Impact Assessment', Evaluating Socio Economic Development SOURCEBOOK 2: Methods and Techniques, European Union, last updated 2009, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/evalsed/index_en.htm, accessed 10 April 2009.

not a straightforward evaluation of a development project and had various unique and complex characteristics, including:

- There being four NGOs and four different projects evaluated, each in a different project site.
- This was a project that sought to marry broader social research questions about the nature of gender change in local communities with development project evaluation.
- Simultaneously combining research training and a research project.

Part I details the project that provided the framework for the research and evaluation study, while Part II focuses on the study's findings. Part III reflects upon the project from the perspectives of the NGO partners and community representatives.

2. About the project

2.1 Project background

This project, *Impacts of National NGO Gender Programming in Local Communities in Timor-Leste*, sought to posit some answers to the question 'what have been the impacts of national NGO gender programming in local East Timorese communities?' by looking at a sample of four NGOs. It also aimed to build the gender-responsive research and evaluation capacity of those NGOs.

Each NGO selected one project to evaluate and one locale in which to conduct research, and two staff were chosen by each organisation to participate in the project. The RMIT team delivered research training and accompanied the NGOs throughout the entire evaluative research process. The project has been run almost entirely in Tetun. Final research outcomes have been produced working between Tetun and English, and this report has been translated into both languages.

This project arose from discussions between RMIT University's Timor-Leste Research program researchers and East Timorese NGOs with a significant focus upon gender. These discussions, begun in 2007 on the back of previous informal collaborations, were underpinned by a desire to challenge the misconceptions that often mark the different domains of research and development in Timor-Leste: between foreign expertise vs. local knowledge, theory vs. practice.

2.2 The project team

In 2008 RMIT initiated discussions with a range of gender institutions, including civil society and state organs. After this broad consultation, the group of four NGOs that ended up participating in the project were essentially self-selecting, displaying commitment from conceptualisation and planning phases even prior to the project gaining funding.

We had planned for the involvement of a men's organisation working in the area of prevention of gender-based violence, and had approached AMKV (Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violensia, or the Association of Men Against Violence). However, unfortunately

this organisation was not in the end in a position to participate. As such, the NGOs involved primarily focus upon female beneficiaries. In using the term 'gender' we are of course not suggesting that 'gender = women'. This project is interested in how such NGO interventions with female beneficiaries contribute to the pursuit of gender equality within communities, and of the impacts both intended and unintended. After all, East Timorese women, particularly in rural areas, are typically part of extensive family networks and tight-knit, face-to-face communities, are often married and have responsibilities as carers. Changes in their lives affect those around them and often in complex ways.

One GFFTL staff member chose not to continue with the project and the NGO was not able to commit another staff member. However director Filomena Fuca has been a dedicated participant. FKSH volunteer and student Ambrosio Dias Fernandes kindly agreed to also join in with fieldwork for GFFTL's evaluation to great effect, and RMIT staff member Carmenesa Moniz Noronha took the place of the second GFFTL participant to analyse and write up data. Congratulations also to Ambrosio and Mario Duarte, who work as volunteers in their respective NGOs and thus have showed admirable commitment in giving their time and effort to this project without pay.

The project team represented a diverse mix of individuals: varied ages, experience, background, personalities, women and men. The RMIT team members have been struck by the hardworking, positive attitudes and enthusiasm for learning and sharing experience demonstrated by the NGO participants. More experienced members of the team were generous in terms of providing guidance and mentorship. Details of the project team can be found at Annex Two: The Research Team. The project team can be briefly listed as follows:

Timor-Leste Research, RMIT University

- Anna Trembath, Project Manager / Lead Researcher
- Carmenesa Moniz Noronha, Project Assistant and Researcher
- Dr Damian Grenfell, Timor-Leste Research Program Manager

Feto iha Kbiit Servisu Hamutuk

- Aida Exposto, Program Officer
- Ambrosio Dias Fernandes, Volunteer

Fundasaun Alola

- Elda da Costa Barros, District Support Worker Project Officer, Advocacy Program
- Maria Fátima Pereira Guterres, Women's Resource Centre Project Officer, Advocacy Program

Grupo Feto Foinsa'e Timor Lorosa'e

- Filomena Fuca, Director

Women's Justice Unit, Judicial System Monitoring Programme

- Francisca da Silva, Women's Justice Unit Coordinator
- Mario Duarte, Volunteer

2.3 Rationale: principles and themes

Research skills development for East Timorese gender-responsive organisations

A key theme that materialised was an aspiration expressed by East Timorese NGOs to RMIT to be actively involved in producing research. On the one hand Timor-Leste seems a highly researched society, and yet given the history of war and colonialism, there remain massive gaps in research that are taken for granted in other societies. This has given the effect that at times it seems that the majority of individuals and institutions producing research about Timor-Leste are not East Timorese. This will change as educational institutions are further developed, though we also hope that research skills become much more part of local organisational practice rather than something that too often 'necessarily' requires an outsider. The NGOs that have collaborated with RMIT in this project have been strong advocates for developing this kind of innovative partnership, articulating the necessity of East Timorese to investigate their own lives, and asking for skills mentoring in order to do so. RMIT's Timor-Leste Research program is similarly committed to the development of East Timorese research capabilities, particularly in an area of key strength, that being gender.

As with other projects, it is important to understand that people's professional backgrounds are distinct and have differentiated objectives. The RMIT Timor-Leste Research team is comprised of researchers trained broadly in the social sciences, while the NGO partners are part of the development sector. For NGO staff members to feasibly undertake a research project that is of benefit to the individuals and their organisations, it was best to design something that is tangibly relevant to and integrated with their ongoing professional lives. An evaluation-style research project seemed to make sense in this context, and to facilitate skills development of practical, ongoing relevance. Moreover it could answer to the necessity of establishing, in a concrete sense, the impacts of gender-responsive development projects.

East Timorese approaches to pursuing gender equality and their impacts upon local communities

Negotiating the gender environment in Timor-Leste is no easy matter. International development agencies working in this area often hold that Timor-Leste is a patriarchal or unequally structured society due to a conservative combination of church and customary beliefs. On the other side of the coin, there is no doubting that there is a strong dynamic of discontent within East Timorese society about the attention that has been paid to the idea of 'gender' in the post-independence era. In this view, 'gender' is considered to be a form of unwanted foreign intrusion, with potentially grave consequences, breaking up families and communities as 'women revolt against men'.

In this context of contestation and challenges, the recognition that there is a diversity of ideas and approaches to gender within East Timorese society, and a significant chorus of East Timorese voices that wants to see change, is of real importance. Ideas about what gender equality means in this context and how best to pursue this ideal sometimes converge with and are further inspired by contact with foreign institutions, specialists and a global development framework of discourse and practice. At other times there is diversion and even tension between 'Timorese' and 'foreign' ways of approaching this complex aspect of social change. In devising this project we both wanted to allow a space for expression of these ideas and presentation of work that does not often get documented, and to discuss some of the East Timorese approaches to gender change. With the discursive dominance of global gender and development frameworks, there

has as yet been only limited research about what can be learned from endogenous organisational approaches to gender. The ten-year point since the 1999 vote for national independence seemed a timely point to take stock of real impacts of East Timorese approaches, given the substantial programmatic and policy emphasis there has been upon shaping a nation where women can realise equality with men

Organisational learning through impact assessment and sharing

A second key theme in these discussions between RMIT and NGO partners was a desire for a space in which to exchange and debate ideas and lessons across organisations and even across experiential, linguistic and cultural boundaries. It can be difficult to find the space, time, inspiration, energy and collegial support to reflect, ask difficult questions, consider whether there are new ways of doing things that have become habitual and lacking in reflexivity, and talk meaningfully with others from whom we can learn and with whom we can share our knowledge. The normal pressures upon this kind of ongoing professional learning are exacerbated in a context such as Timor-Leste. Development demands are real, often overwhelming, and very challenging. Resources are always scarce, most importantly time. Professional networks may be close-knit and forged at a very personal, face-to-face level but the demarcated, formalised spaces and times to share in an effective way are limited.

East Timorese NGOs are very often far less well-resourced and documented than international NGOs and thus have less opportunity for critical evaluation of programming impacts. It is widely recognised that most East Timorese NGOs focus on activity implementation and have little opportunity to measure the impact of this work. Thus the findings of a research project that focuses upon evaluating the impact of programs undertaken by such institutions is of multiple use. For instance, the review of programs is of value to each of the partner organisations as a way of understanding the impact of their work, in establishing a publicly available picture of East Timorese gender-focused NGOs, and to those international organisations that provide institutional capacity development and resource support.

2.4 Approach⁷

The project has been essentially underpinned by two concerns: to facilitate the maximum possible capacity building of NGO partners in the areas of research and evaluation, and to produce high quality research about the long-term impacts of NGO gender programming in local communities. While these twin concerns of capacity building and research quality have had to be carefully managed, they have not necessarily been conflicting. In fact, two principles, as follows, have aided in establishing a complementary dynamic between the processes of capacity building and producing quality research.

Participation

All partners in the project were keen to make it as participatory as possible, recognising constraints such as the limited time available to the NGO co-researchers and so forth. The participatory project approach has included adapting and devising research methods that would be able to provide various avenues through which NGO staff and community members could have their say. The NGO team members have participated in project

⁷ This section concerns the approach to undertaking this project, including its capacity building dimensions. This is differentiated to what is often termed as 'approach' in the field to evaluation, and which will be referred to in social science terms as 'methodology' in this report (see Section 3.2: Methodology).

planning, training, designing and planning their data collection process, the actual undertaking of the data collection, data analysis, production and communication of final results, alongside the RMIT team. Periodically the NGOs have also shared experiences and lessons with one another.

An andragogical, project-based approach to integrating learning with established practice

With partners keen to learn about research, it was decided that a multi-partner evaluation project was the most suitable research model. Adult learning, particularly by busy working professionals, has shown to be best facilitated by an andragogical educational approach.⁸ That is, adults tend to be motivated and engaged with the learning process when they can see how the new knowledge will benefit and can be immediately integrated with their established working practice. This is different to a pedagogical approach where theory and practice tend to be less integrated.

We decided that an andragogical, project-based approach of integrating learning with the partners' current working practice was likely to result in far more effective capacity building. For organisations facing constant resource limitation, the project did not take staff outside their important work into a separate realm but rather feeds back into ongoing process of NGO project refinement. Partners approach the acquiring of new knowledge from a context with which they are very familiar and can immediately experience how this new knowledge is advantageous to their established working practice. Their established work environment becomes the 'classroom' and they see a project through from beginning to end.

Andragogy also emphasises drawing upon a rich experiential base. Partners have been encouraged to draw upon, reflect on, question and deepen knowledge they already possess of their project, organisations, community beneficiaries, gender and Timor-Leste. Throughout the project they also utilise their existing skills base, for example in community mobilising, and their experiential base is not 'left at the door' but rather valued as a critical resource and context for learning. The project has also given partners an opportunity to step back from their regular practices in order to critically reflect; that is, to see their familiar environment with new eyes. The ultimate aim of an andragogical approach to professional learning is to encourage reflective practice, rather than the acquisition of technical skills and knowledge divorced from reality.

We also recognised that evaluation would be most immediately useful to the participating NGOs as a research exercise, and therefore be more likely to foster good results. However we have approached evaluation of the NGO partners' gender projects as an example of one type of research project. Partners are encouraged to recognise that the process, through initial design and planning to production of final outcomes, is transferable to other types of research projects. Moreover, with the evaluation research project involving more than one NGO, partners are encouraged to think beyond their particular projects to broader analysis of the impact of NGO pursuit of gender equality in local East Timorese communities. In this sense the project aims to encourage reflective practice with a national perspective.

8 See for example Malcolm Knowles, *The Adult Learner: A neglected species*, fourth ed., Gulf Publishing, Houston, 1990.

2.5 Goals and objectives

The goals and objectives of this project have been delineated according the three broad parameters of the project: **research, evaluation and capacity building**.

The difference between goals and objectives here reflects the general consensus of development planning, monitoring and evaluation frameworks. A 'goal' may be likened to a long-term mission or change to which the project aims to contribute, but is typically not the sole causal factor in creating that change. 'Objectives' are understood to be forecast social changes or a new situation achievable as a direct result of and in the timeframe of a given project.

	Research Dimension	Evaluation Dimension	Capacity Building Dimension
Goal	Contribute to an independent, sustainable, participatory research culture within East Timorese civil society, particularly with a strong dimension of gender-responsive research.	Effective evaluation knowledge and practice within East Timorese gender-focused NGOs, particularly focused upon long-term impacts, in order to further the pursuit of gender equality within local communities.	East Timorese civil society, particularly those NGOs working in the area of gender, generate and share relevant research and evaluation.
Objectives	To work collaboratively to answer the question 'how have East Timorese NGOs gender projects impacted local communities in Timor-Leste?', by looking at a sample of four NGOs.	To collaboratively assess the impacts of East Timorese NGOs' gender project in local communities, by looking at a sample of four varied NGOs and their projects implemented in a range of locations. To facilitate the sharing of evaluation lessons between and beyond the NGOs in order to contribute to more effective project planning, monitoring and evaluation.	NGOs acquire basic research/evaluation skills and knowledge, which form the basis for ongoing capacity development in the future so that there is increasing participation in research and evaluation projects. Participating NGOs use the results of the evaluations to contribute to project planning, monitoring and evaluation cycles.

2.6 Implementation process

The project implementation followed a long period of consultation with possible partners over 2008 and into early 2009, including establishing project funds. See Annex Four: Project Phases and Key Activities for a detailed breakdown of activities undertaken during each phase. Below is a brief description of the project implementation across its four phases.

- i. Phase One: Project preparation and introduction to gender-sensitive research and evaluation

May–26 August 2009

Phase One involved project planning and preparation, and intensive training and workshops with partners in research and evaluation. Each partner also established clear plans for their data collection and liaised with their community of choice.

- ii. Phase Two: Data collection, consolidation and entry

27 August–31 October 2009

Phase Two comprised each NGO with RMIT undertaking data collection in local communities, and continuous consolidation and entry of data.

- iii. Phase Three: Further data consolidation, data analysis and production of final written results

1 November 2009–March 2010

Phase Three saw RMIT continuing to consolidate data collected in Phase Two, intensive workshops with partners in data analysis and writing up of results, and report preparation by partners.

- iv. Phase Four: Looking to the future—applying lessons learned, building research and evaluation plans, sharing knowledge

April 2010–January 2011

Phase Four saw RMIT and partners working together to review project findings, draw out key lessons, build research and evaluation plans for the future, evaluate the project, and communicate project results to diverse audiences in Timor-Leste and beyond. During this period the report was also translated, formatted and printed, then launched in Dili and Melbourne, Australia (where RMIT is based).

3. About the study

3.1 Scope

Clearly, there are various ways in which we could have approached posing answers to the major research question ‘what are the impacts of national NGO gender programming in local East Timorese communities?’. In order to give a definable scope to our study, we limited our study along the following lines:

- Organisational intervention into communities examined
- Issues covered and evaluation criteria
- Geographic coverage
- Research participants
- Time period
- Capacity building considerations
- Resources available.

Organisational intervention into communities

We have sought to answer the major research question guiding this project through examining one project intervention focused upon gender in one locality per each of the four national NGOs (that is, East Timorese NGOs typically based in the capital Dili with visions and missions projected at a national level).

Issues covered and evaluation criteria

As is further discussed at Section 3.2: Methodology, we designed this project as a form of comparative evaluation. Given the constraints of time and resources, as well as to enable maximum possible capacity building which requires tight focus on a number of key competencies, we have essentially approached this evaluation as a 'gender impact assessment'; that is, focused on longer-term changes to gender equality in communities that have occurred as a result of NGO project intervention.

Typically, international/global conventions hold that there are five criteria for evaluating development interventions:

- i. Relevance
- ii. Efficiency
- iii. Effectiveness
- iv. Impact
- v. Sustainability⁹

Relevance refers to the extent to which communities' or beneficiaries' real needs were met through the project that is the subject of the evaluation, while efficiency examines the use of project resources or inputs in implementing the project (for example, looking at whether the project was able to be fulfilled on the prescribed budget allocation). Effectiveness represents the extent to which project objectives (that is, changes that are anticipated to be achieved within the project cycle) have been met. Impact refers to the positive and negative, and the anticipated or unanticipated longer-term effects, resulting from the project intervention, often beyond the term of the project cycle. Sustainability refers to the extent to which positive project impacts can be carried forward into the future, and often also relates to whether such a project can or should be replicated by other organisations, in other localities or with new target groups.

Of these five, this study focuses particularly upon impact. We determined we wanted to draw findings both specific to each NGO's project, as well as comparative findings across the projects, and in addition the impact assessment questions also included an open question about any unanticipated impacts (both positive and negative) that may have emerged. Importantly, given that most of the NGOs involved in the project have little to no clear baseline data about gender in their target communities upon which they may quantitatively measure change in the future, we decided to run a 'Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour' survey with community members beyond direct beneficiaries. Thus, in addition to measuring project impact, one of the aims of the study was also to establish some simple statistical baseline information about gender dynamics and practices within the broader community.

⁹ See for example DAC Network on Development Evaluation, op. cit., p. 6.

Geographic coverage

We also delimited the scope of our project through geographic coverage. In this study, we look at how each NGO's project has impacted one local community, even though all the projects in this study have been implemented in various communities across Timor-Leste. We encouraged the NGOs to choose significantly different locations from one another to improve comparability resulting in the selection of four different sub-districts across four different districts (Ermera sub-district in Ermera district; Atauro sub-district in Dili district; Venilale sub-district in Venilale; and Manatuto sub-district in Manatuto district). Only Manatuto sub-district can be considered as including a significantly urbanised element, and even then much of the community remains rural.

Projects tend to be implemented at different geographic scales; for example the projects of JSMP, Alola and FKSH have been ostensibly implemented at the sub-district level, whereas GFFTL works at the more localised level of the suco (administrative territory roughly akin to a very large village). In terms of looking at project impacts upon beneficiaries, we worked at the geographic scale of implementation (that is, sub-district or suco). However, in distributing the Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour survey, it was important to maintain consistency of geographic coverage between the four sites. Thus we distributed the survey at the sub-district level, drawing our sample from a minimum of three and a maximum of four suco in each sub-district, and within those suco, as close to all of the aldeia as we were able to sample from.¹⁰

We established the geographic scope of each of our four sites with each of the NGOs and also some of the target beneficiary groups through the participatory Location Mapping method. There is limited detailed geographic mapping of local communities in Timor-Leste, and so these constructed maps helped us to reference ourselves and decide upon how we would approach the particularities of the geographic terrain in each site. Moreover, such maps are of importance because often communities' understandings of territorial areas such as suco and aldeia boundaries sometimes differ greatly from administrative state maps.¹¹ It was important to do this Location Mapping for each site to establish some scope of understanding of the geographical or territorial terrain, and thus to strategise about sampling, prior to undertaking the fieldwork.

Research participants

Due to time and resource limitations, we decided to primarily focus upon project beneficiaries as defined by the NGOs as our most important group of research participants. However, the NGO team members and their colleagues within their NGOs were also research participants, providing key data through interviews and participatory methods during Phase One of the project, as well as of course feedback about findings in Phase Four. Importantly, we were also concerned with the shape of gender equality in the local communities beyond the project beneficiaries, and how these have been affected by the NGOs' project interventions. In order to investigate this with limited time and resources, we formulated three research strategies:

10 Sub-districts can have only a few suco, such as five in Atauro sub-districts, or a very large number, and population and geographic size of suco can also vary considerably. The same can be said of suco and aldeia.

11 Damian Grenfell, Mayra Walsh, Anna Trembath, Carmenesa Moniz Noronha and Kym Holthouse, *Understanding Community: Security and Sustainability in Four Aldeia in Timor-Leste – Luha Oli, Nanu, Sarelari and Golgota*, Globalism Research Centre, RMIT University, Melbourne, 2009, for example p. 37.

- i. To ensure that our methods utilised with project beneficiaries were directed to investigating not only the beneficiaries' lives as individuals in isolation but their social interactions with families and communities, in which gender is so central;
- ii. Where possible, to include other key community stakeholders, such as local leaders, in our methods such as interviews and participatory group activities; and
- iii. To run the Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour survey with a random sample of individuals, both women and men, young and old, literate and non-literate, across socio-economic classes, from different local communities across the sub-district level. This survey was also run with all project beneficiaries.

Time period

Time period considerations also provided scope in two ways for our study. One way is in relation to the period of time since the start of the project intervention that the study was undertaken. RMIT actively encouraged the NGOs to choose projects that had been running for considerable periods of time or that had finished, as well as sites where implementation (either continuing or finished) had been undertaken over a substantial time period. For various internal reasons such as staff allocation to the study and changes in NGO project direction, for some of the NGOs the study was undertaken as early as one year after the beginning of implementation at that site, and for some much longer. Only one of the NGOs (JSMP) chose a project that had already been closed.

We established NGO project timelines with the NGO staff through the participatory Timeline method as often the project cycles are not clearly documented until carefully mapped as part of this project. These timelines established with the NGOs also provided the basis for discussions with project beneficiaries about comparing their situations *prior* to project interventions and *after* project intervention or at the time of the fieldwork phase. This was particularly important for the Participatory Indicators of Change method, utilised to great effect across the four sites.

The second way in which the time periods provided scope for the study was project management considerations of the time available to us in this research project. RMIT established partnerships with each of the NGOs on the basis that their two allocated staff would each spend a maximum of six weeks of work on the project across its cycle, with the majority of work taking place between June 2009 and the end of February 2010. This was important to establish as the NGOs and their staff all had to balance this project with their existing workloads. We worked with each NGO on a rotational cycle, beginning with training, practice of methods and planning, then fieldwork, and finally training in analysis and writing and production of final research outcomes. Six weeks is not a long time period in which to learn about a research process from beginning to end, particularly in a context where there is limited existing basis for such competencies gained through schooling and university, and written language is still in a state of flux due to the complex linguistic situation in Timor-Leste. Thus, we focused upon the development of key skills: research/evaluation planning and the ability to facilitate mostly participatory, qualitative methods (that can be also utilised for project planning and monitoring, as well as for evaluation). We also tackled data analysis and writing of research results, but on the common understanding that within this project there was not sufficient time to reach advanced levels of analysis and writing. This would require a very substantial time commitment from both the NGOs and a facilitating organisation such as RMIT. Ultimately, we aimed for the improved ability for NGOs to direct and participate in research and evaluation activity and a good understanding of what

participatory, gender-responsive research entails, rather than by the end of the project for the team to be 'experts' able to conduct complex research on their own.

We also had a limited time in the field: an average of five days (Monday to Friday) *including* travel to and from Dili per NGO/research site, so needed to ensure we realistically planned what data could be collected to a good quality in this time. We collectively determined such plans. Of course, we also needed to consult with communities about the timing of our visits (particularly in reference to weather and agricultural cycles). In one example, with GFFTL's chosen community we needed to change the dates of our visit at the last minute because there had been a terrible vehicle accident that caused the death of and injured a number of people from the suco in which we were to visit.

3.2 Methodology

The research and evaluation methodology (or 'approach', as it is commonly referred to in development terms) utilised in this project may be broadly defined as a participatory gender impact assessment methodology. This methodology is explained below.

What is an impact assessment?

We are using the term 'impact assessment' here, but sometimes similar kinds of studies are also referred to as 'impact evaluations'.¹² We consider an impact assessment to be a particular form of evaluation study. Impact assessment is not concerned so much with project implementation (as can often form the focus of traditional evaluation approaches) but rather the real-life effects or changes in people's lives, positive or negative, intended or unintended, resulting from a project intervention.¹³ It further seeks to establish if and in what ways have these changes made a difference, and to a lesser extent to understand the depth of those changes.

The benefits of focusing upon measuring impact are many. Rather than project implementation fulfilment being the primary evidence of a project's value, there is a growing call at a global level for development accountability on the basis of giving evidence of positive real-life consequences. Development organisations, such as NGOs, re-centre upon critically considering the effects upon beneficiaries and communities, based upon what those people tell them, rather than assuming that positive impact will necessarily result from successful project implementation. Moreover, impact assessments provide an important source of organisational learning and re-directing project interventions if necessary.¹⁴ Catley et al. suggest that there are three major questions an impact assessment attempts to answer, as follows:

- i. What changes have there been in the community since the start of the project?
- ii. Which of these changes are attributable to the project?
- iii. What difference have these changes made to people's lives?¹⁵

12 For a discussion about the differences between these terms, see David Streatfield and Sharon Markless, 'What is impact assessment and why is it important?', *Performance Measurement and Metrics*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2009, pp. 135–36.

13 Catley et al., *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 7; Streatfield and Markless, *op. cit.*, p. 134; Frans Leeuw and Jos Vaessen, *Impact Evaluations and Development*, NONIE Guidance on Impact Evaluation, Draft Version for Discussion at the Cairo conference, Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation (NONIE), April 2009, p. 8.

14 Catley et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 7–8.

15 *ibid.*, p. 9.

However, the extent to which impact assessments must demonstrate causality between the project intervention and changes that have occurred is a matter of some debate. The *IPA Road Map's* approach differs from that of Catley et al.:

IPA [Impact Planning and Assessment] concentrates on ... gathering evidence of benefits that have accrued or changes that have been made ... We can reasonably assume that the ... program has *contributed* to the changes identified and has 'added value' but there may be other influences involved so we do not seek to prove a causal relationship.¹⁶

Our approach to causality in this study largely reflects the IPA approach. Where possible, we discussed issues of causality with project beneficiaries to lend our data greater depth and to further understand how impacts have come about. However, in this study we acknowledge that in any fluid environment there are likely be a range of factors that contribute to change, so it is a challenge to isolate these. This is particularly true of the highly active and socialised gender area in Timor-Leste, where a particular project intervention rarely stands alone or apart from other project interventions or other types of interventions, such as policy and advocacy, let alone other influences upon change.

Impact assessment, open to realising impacts both intended and unintended, also recognises how complex and unpredictable the process of change can be. In contrast, a logical framework approach to planning and intervention holds that 'social interventions are understood to culminate in an end point of transformation, which can be planned for backwards in logical, rational and causal steps'.¹⁷ As Mowles et al. argue, in reality often 'the most significant change is unplanned and unforeseen, and is the result of a web of interdependent actions', and that the social system in which change occurs is so complex that there will also be 'unpredictable and unexplained consequences no matter how clear and logical the strategy pursued by any actor'.¹⁸ The impact assessment approach embraces the complexity of social change, and recognises that some of the most important positive changes may differ to the project's objectives, and that there is the distinct possibility of negative unintended effects as well.

Why participatory?

There are various approaches to undertaking an impact assessment. We have adopted an approach that is typically referred to as 'participatory'. A participatory impact assessment focuses upon maximising the ability of project beneficiaries and stakeholders to define and voice for themselves the changes that have resulted from the project. The meaningful participation of beneficiaries in the impact assessment process is not simply desirable but critical if communities are to be empowered to influence the projects designed to benefit them.

Participatory 'tools' (or methods, as they are referred to in the language of social research and we refer to them here) are used to facilitate this fuller participation.¹⁹ A participatory impact assessment methodology emphasises flexibility and adaptation according to

16 Global Libraries Initiative (GL), *IPA Road Map*, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Seattle, 2008, quoted in Streatfield and Markless, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

17 Chris Mowles, Ralph Stacey and Douglas Griffin, 'What contribution can insights from the complexity sciences make to the theory and practice of development management?', *Journal of International Development*, Vol. 20, 2008, p. 806.

18 *ibid.*, pp. 812 and 815. See also Catley et al., *op. cit.*, p. 8.

19 Catley et al., *op. cit.*, p. 9.

context, and attempts to remain as possible to whatever impacts that may emerge, be they positive or negative, intended or unintended. Such an approach attempts to bring together beneficiaries with the NGO or development agency, as well as other stakeholders such as donors, so that 'the impact assessment can create space for dialogue, and the results can provide a basis for discussions on how to improve programming and where best to allocate future resources ...'.²⁰

A participatory impact assessment differs significantly from a traditional logical framework evaluation which measures the value of a given project against pre-defined, typically statistical indicators. Logframes and indicators are far more suited to measuring aspects of project implementation—'process and delivery' rather than 'results and impact'—and can be highly technical, alienating project beneficiaries let alone NGO staff members from participation in the evaluation process.²¹ Pre-defined indicators often lead organisations to focus narrowly on what changes they are expecting to see rather than being open to the many potential positive and negative impacts experienced by community beneficiaries. A traditional logframe approach to evaluation similarly limits the opportunity for community members to put forward their experiences of change or impact experienced as the result of NGO projects.

Our approach seeks wherever possible to be conscious and responsive to gender dynamics affecting participation in the research process. In this sense we were not only researching *about* gender, but taking a gender-sensitive approach to the research process. A participatory approach to impact assessment is typically held up as one of the best evaluation or research processes to ensure the greater, more active participation of women. However, such a participatory approach does not, as Mosse argues, necessarily lead to this outcome. It still requires a critical stance and a high degree of gender sensitivity. Due to 'structural gender relations', women in a context such as Timor-Leste are more likely than men to find it difficult 'to articulate their concerns in public and in acceptable mediums (language and other forms of expression)', even when such research situations are purportedly 'participatory'.²²

Public knowledge is, by social definition, generated by men and not by women. A 'systematic hierarchization' condemns women's interventions and knowledge to the unofficial, private, domestic ... an order equally internalised and expressed by women themselves.²³

Our methodology holds that we are as aware as possible of how gender relations impact upon participation and quality of research data, and we act wherever possible to provide a range of ways for women to be able to articulate their viewpoints through the research process. There is no simple solution for this; rather it requires constant awareness and adaptability.

20 *ibid.*, p. 8.

21 *ibid.*, p. 10.

22 David Mosse, 'Authority, Gender and Knowledge: Theoretical reflections on the practice of participatory rural appraisal', *Development and Change*, vol. 25, 1994, p. 514.

23 *ibid.*, p. 514.

Impact upon what and experienced by whom?

a. Impacts upon gender equality

When speaking of impacts, we are interested in measuring the various effects of the NGOs' projects on gender relations within the target communities.²⁴ What is gauged as an impact could be framed in many different ways. For instance, there could be a whole range of different ways in which projects:

- contributed to greater or lesser gender equality
- increased gender awareness at a discursive level
- impacted other attempts at making changes to gender relations
- led to organisational and/or programmatic changes in communities

For all the myriad possible impacts that we will cover in this report, the underpinning concern is not whether the project has had an impact *per se*, but whether that impact has been positive or negative in terms of developing gender equality. This is based on the assumption that there was significant gender inequality before these projects commenced all four sites, and which continued over the period of the project. These might appear straightforward things to say, but we believe important to spell out as too often assumptions are left unsaid.

As such, the individual NGO projects in this study have focused on finding out what have the impacts been in terms of gender equality, and in terms of whether there has been movement from a negative condition towards a more positive one on an equality spectrum. We are also interested in if there had been any shift in men's subjectivities and practices.

Given that each NGO is attempting to tackle gender inequality in a particular way, we have made every attempt to leave space for the beneficiaries of the four projects to define other unanticipated impacts on gender relations.²⁵

b. Project beneficiaries and their communities

To further the analysis of what was meant by 'impacts' it is important that we are clear in terms of 'impact experienced by whom?' Often development literature emphasises measuring impact experienced by direct project beneficiaries. However, as Leeuw and Vaessen suggest, 'two principal levels of impact' can be differentiated—impact at the beneficiary level and impact upon wider social systems.²⁶ Considering these two levels of impacts broadens impact evaluation beyond either simply measuring whether objectives have been achieved or assessing direct effects on intended beneficiaries. It includes the full range of impacts at all levels of the results chain, including 'ripple effects' on families, households and communities.²⁷ Needless to say this approach further complicates an already-complicated process. Nevertheless in this study we have tried wherever possible to include some sense of these ripple effects—within families, households and local communities—insofar as our time and resource limitation allowed.

24 Evalsed, op. cit., p. 1.

25 See for example Leeuw and Maessen, op. cit., p. 13.

26 *ibid.*

27 *ibid.*

3.3 Methods and sampling

The data collection methods were selected and designed on the basis of:

- the objectives of the study
- the needs of the participating NGOs
- the suitability of these methods in relation to the communities
- RMIT's prior research experience in Timor-Leste.

In addition, we reviewed accumulated global knowledge about participatory approaches and tools used by development practitioners and evaluation specialists. Such participatory tools have developed out of 'Participatory Rural Appraisals' (PRAs), whereby NGOs or development agencies work with communities to facilitate community identification of needs prior to the commencement of the project.²⁸ As such techniques have been applied beyond rural development projects and for a range of ends throughout the project cycle, they are now often referred to as 'Participatory Learning and Action' tools or methods (PLAs).²⁹ We focused primarily on tools (hereby referred to in social research language as 'methods') that are particularly suitable for assessing impact of development projects.³⁰ However, many of the methods we used in the project for assessing impact can be adapted to capture information useful to other stages of the project cycle, such as planning and monitoring.

The participating NGO team members were trained in each individual method through intensive practice grounded in their project experience. Each NGO was then given the opportunity to select which methods they felt would be most appropriate in terms of their use in their data collection, working with RMIT to refine or adjust the selected methods to suit their particular project and the community circumstances where necessary.

We have combined quantitative and qualitative, individual and group methods. No one method we believe is sufficient to result in high quality, sophisticated research which is seeking the answer to an extraordinarily complex question. As such, combining several methods allows for drawing upon the strength of each and ensuring that gaps or limitations in data from one method is addressed within another. It also enables cross-checking of data validity, where for example opinions expressed in interviews may be very different to survey results which, in our experience, can often be one of the best moments in terms of learning.

Furthermore, we have found it important to give communities varied opportunities for engaging with the research process. Not every research method is suited to every individual's or group's circumstances. In terms of gender-sensitive research, we have found mixed-method research is not simply desirable but essential. It can sometimes be difficult to draw women out through interviews and in our experience women are more likely than men to find the survey method intimidating. Straight focus group discussions can also fall flat, with particular women (often those with perceived higher social status or greater formal education) dominating discussion.

28 See for example Mosse, op. cit., pp. 497–526.

29 See for example Sarah Thomas, 'What is Participatory Learning and Action (PLA): An Introduction', www.idp-key-resources.org/documents/0000/d04267/000.pdf, accessed 15 April 2009; Ravi Jayakaran, *The Ten Seed Technique*, China, April 2002; International HIV/AIDS Alliance, *Tools Together Now! 100 participatory tools to mobilise communities for HIV/AIDS*, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, 2006.

30 See Catley et al., op. cit.

With this experience in mind, we carefully selected and designed methods designed to promote maximum participant engagement, particularly of women. Many of the participatory group activities finish with focus group discussions but groups have a clear ‘talking point’—what they have produced through the course of the activity. Our aim was that these participatory activities would engender more free-flowing and detailed discussion, and this has been our experience throughout the project.

The NGOs received preliminary training in seven research methods, as listed:

- i. Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Survey
- ii. Location Mapping
- iii. Temporal Mapping (Timelines)
- iv. Social Relationship Mapping
- v. Participatory Indicators of Change
- vi. ‘Most Significant Change’ interviews
- vii. Observation field notes and photo documentation.

These methods are briefly described at Annex Three: Research Methods. Most of the participating NGOs used six out of seven methods during the fieldwork in communities. Timelines were only used with FKSH’s target groups as other NGOs felt that it would be too difficult for their target groups to remember dates, partly due to limited literacy and numeracy.³¹

As discussed, our primary sample group for all methods except the ‘Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Survey’ were the direct project beneficiaries. However, where possible and appropriate, we also drew data from other community participants (such as *xefe suco*, *xefe aldeia*, sub-district administrators, government administrative representatives, church leaders) through our different methods. In addition, the NGO team members also interviewed each other and other colleagues within their organisations—which was an attempt to demonstrate the level of knowledge that they held, albeit ‘un-said’ until interviewed—and participated in practicing the participatory group methods prior to fieldwork in the local communities.

Our sampling technique for the ‘Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Survey’ was somewhat different. Here we were attempting to establish a more community-wide picture of gender relations. As well as surveying project beneficiaries (to allow a comparison of results between project beneficiaries and other community members), we chose three to four suco in each of the four sub-districts, typically corresponding to those suco from which project beneficiaries were drawn. In the majority of instances where our time and resources allowed, we were able to cover each of the aldeia within our chosen suco. Our survey team, often also including a local assistant, would disperse across the aldeia on foot and suco and approach people in their houses, usually orally administering the survey. We attempted to get even samples from aldeia and suco, and within those samples, even proportions of males and females, young and old. For each sub-district we had a target sample of 100 completed surveys (400 surveys in total). We

³¹ Both factors can reflect different relations with temporality than the linear, calendrical model allows. For example, an NGO such as GFFTL told us that their beneficiary group would not have necessarily used calendar years and months for marking time prior to receiving literacy and numeracy training from GFFTL.

realise that 100 surveys is a limited number if translating the findings to Timor-Leste as a whole, which we do not do. In terms of representing the local communities in which we worked, then this provides a very good sample. Not only do the results help to reveal something of the nature of gender relations in each community, but the process of facilitating the surveys was in itself insightful.

4. Feto iha Kbiit Servisu Hamutuk (FKSH)

4.1 About FKSH

Feto iha Kbiit Servisu Hamutuk (Women are Empowered When Working Together, previously named Feto Kiik Servisu Hamutuk) is a small NGO based in Dili. Below, Program Manager Aida Exposto, a member of the research team, briefly explains FKSH's background, mission and program focus:³²

Feto iha Kbiit Servisu Hamutuk (FKSH) was established in August 2002, as a member of Rede Feto. FKSH works in the economic area, with the mission to: increase and reinforce women's economic capacity, defend women's rights, and organise women's activities, so as to encourage independence. Our vision is for women to socially prosper in the areas of justice, culture and economy.

In order to realise these goals, FKSH established three programs:

1. Increasing women's economic capacity
2. Youth development
3. Organisation sustainability

The objectives of these programs are to increase the awareness and knowledge of women and youth, transform their mentalities, develop their ability to undertake business, and to facilitate the implementation of the vocational training they have received so as to compete in economic markets. If able to compete in economic markets, Timorese women can find economic independence, and this also contributes to reducing domestic violence, improving family nutrition and reducing poverty.

FKSH's presence has grown slowly though surely with funding support from Canadian Catholic Organisation for Development and Peace (CCODP) as our permanent donors from 2004 until the present, and Trocaire from 2008.

FKSH has a strong commitment to lending assistance in order to reinforce and strengthen groups. The beneficiary groups are taking sure steps because they have been able to identify their strengths and weakness and the opportunities and threats they face. They continue to improve and sustain as they move forward.

Aida Exposto,
'Analysis of the Impact of FKSH's Project in Sub-district Ermera'
March 2010

4.2 About the project: 'Increasing Women's Economic Capacity'

Project background

FKSH began their project 'Increasing Women's Economic Capacity' in 2004. It has been progressively implemented in sites across five districts: Dili, Manufahi (Same), Aileu, Ermera and Bobonaro (Maliana).³³ This year (2010) sees the further addition of Baucau. At the point of fieldwork the project had been running for five years. However, in early 2009 FKSH changed strategic direction, particularly to ensure that their beneficiaries were actually women's collective initiatives rather than individual enterprises undertaken in a group's name:³⁴

³² See also Anna Trembath and Damian Grenfell, *Mapping the Pursuit of Gender Equality: Non-Government and International Agency Activity in Timor-Leste*, Globalism Institute, RMIT University and Irish Aid, Melbourne, August 2007, pp. 35–38.

³³ Interview with Gizela de Carvalho, FKSH Founder and Director, Dili, 5 October 2009, and Aida Exposto, 'Analysis of the Impact of FKSH's Project in Ermera Sub-district', March 2010.

³⁴ Interview with Aida Exposto, FKSH Program Manager, Dili, 5 October 2009.

[We began with] ten groups in each district, particularly women's groups involved in small business activities. However from 2009 FKSH adopted a more effective strategy, giving assistance to a minimum of two groups and a maximum of three per district, so that our assistance can continue, control, reinforce and strengthen the groups in moving towards sustainability.

Aida Exposto,
'Analysis of the Impact of FKSH's Project in Ermera Sub-district'
March 2010

FKSH's beneficiaries are women's small business groups typically comprised of women with limited economic independence, such as victims of violence, widows, female heads of households, and women who have previously had limited educational and employment experience. FKSH takes a conscious approach of working slowly and with continuous personal contact with their beneficiaries. While occasionally FKSH may assist with providing small amounts of materials used in production, such as sewing goods, the organisation believes that giving the groups direct funding is not conducive to realising the objectives of self-empowerment and business sustainability. Rather, FKSH seeks to build the skills necessary for business sustainability. This capacity-building is undertaken on a basis of strong relationships between FKSH and their target groups.

FKSH has worked in Ermera district since 2008 (beginning in Gleno sub-district), offering skills training in production of *tais* and foodstuffs, gender training and natural risk disaster management training, amongst other activities. In January 2009 they began to work with their two current community partners in Ermera sub-district, Centro Haburas Talento (CHT or the Centre for Enriching Talent) and HAMOR (Grupo Haklean Moris, meaning 'to deepen life'), who in turn formed the primary group of research participants in this study.³⁵ FKSH plans to continue to work with these groups until they have demonstrated sufficient self-sustainability.³⁶

Project narrative summary: Goals, objectives, outputs and activities

Outlined on the next page are the project goals, objectives, outputs and activities, as identified by FKSH in RMIT-facilitated training that occurred in Phase One of this study. We used an abbreviated logical framework to determine these categories.

³⁵ Exposto, op. cit.; and Timeline Interview with Aida Exposto, FKSH Program Manager, Dili, 29 July 2009.

³⁶ Timeline Interview with Aida Exposto, FKSH Program Manager, Dili, 29 July 2009. In 2010, this project continues in Ermera, Aileu, Maliana and Baucau.

Project: Increasing women's economic capacity

	Narrative Summary
Goal	East Timorese women achieve economic independence through the ability to compete in local, national and international markets. Women's economic independence contributes to the reduction of domestic violence, improved nutrition and less poverty.
Objectives	FKSH works with its beneficiaries—women's small business groups—so as to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise women's consciousness, knowledge and capacity so that the small business groups can undertake their activities with professionalism; 2. Identify, bring together and develop women's skills and talent so that they can achieve a sustainable income; 3. Transform women's mentality so that women participate in and contribute to national development through the family and the local community; and 4. Improve the quality of local products so as to ensure ability to compete in economic markets.
Outputs	Through participation in FKSH's project, the beneficiary groups will: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use record-keeping books for their materials and budgets so as to track their material consumption, control their financial inputs and outputs, and accurately calculate profits. 2. Have an organisational structure and action plan that clearly explains their work. 3. Know how to produce an activity and financial report, prepare proposals and lobby. 4. Be able to speak in public and resolve any leadership problems. 5. Generate quality products. 6. Have access to markets in order to sell their products. 7. Be able to undertake budget and business planning on their own. 8. Have knowledge and capacity in regards to both gender and management. 9. Have high income levels which they are continuing to further improve. 10. Gain experience and knowledge from other groups in order to improve and develop their mentalities and their businesses. 11. Have funds in order to continue and develop their businesses.
Activities	During the course of the project, FKSH facilitates the following activities with the beneficiary groups: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Financial management training and assistance. 2. Organisational management training and assistance (defining organisational structure, individual responsibilities and action plan; how to write a proposal and a report, and how to lobby). 3. Group leadership training and assistance (transformative leadership, decision-making, conflict resolution and public speaking). 4. Market management training and assistance (motivational and technical aspects). 5. 'Gender and culture in management' training and assistance. 6. Skills training (tais, sewing and traditional sweets). 7. Needs assessment, consultation, monitoring and final evaluations.

4.3 Gender and community in context: Ermera sub-district

About Ermera sub-district

Ermera sub-district is one of five sub-districts within Ermera district, located fifty-eight kilometres south-west of Dili and covering 114 square kilometres.³⁷ Gleno became the capital of Ermera district during the Indonesian occupation, while the former Portuguese capital of Ermera Vila remains the capital of the sub-district. Ermera sub-district is dominated by the Mambae ethno-linguistic group, while other Ermera sub-districts such as Atsabe and Hatulia are populated by a majority of Kemak speakers.³⁸ In Ermera, FKSH primarily communicates with its beneficiaries in Tetun. However Mambae is occasionally used.

Marked by its decaying but beautiful Portuguese architecture and the large Canossian church compound, Ermera Vila in suco Poetete is an important commercial centre for the area. It is officially recorded that there are some nine other suco aside from Poetete that comprise Ermera sub-district; however discussions with Ermera residents and FKSH staff identified eleven.³⁹ While Ermera Vila has suffered significant infrastructural decay the town has electricity each evening until midnight. In relative terms at least, there is also reasonable road infrastructure linking the town to Gleno and Dili, providing limited access to markets, goods, services, information and contact with Dili-based institutions. Water is however difficult at particular times of the year, especially in August to October, the height of the dry season.⁴⁰

Ermera Vila, or at least its centre, is a semi-urban environment, while the outlying villages are predominantly agriculture-based and typically located at significant distances from one another. The road infrastructure to these villages tends to be particularly poor which has a wide range of impacts; for instance, the average time an Ermera resident takes to walk to a health clinic is 120 minutes.⁴¹ In terms of this study, one of the impacts of Ermera sub-districts geography and poor infrastructure is that contact between national development processes and communities in the sub-district have been largely limited to Ermera Vila. For example, FKSH's beneficiaries live in those suco encompassing and closest to Ermera Vila. Therefore, the nature of gender change resulting from development interventions is likely to be uneven across the sub-district, favouring those areas where there is infrastructural and institutional support, and easier access from Dili.

In terms of recent history, Ermera district was considered an important base for the petitioner rebel group led by defence force Falintil-Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste (F-FDTL) military dissidents Major Alfredo Reinado and Lieutenant Gastão Salsinha during the period of Timor-Leste's socio-political crisis across 2006 to 2008. Following

37 N. Martins et al., 'An ethnographic study of barriers to and enabling factors for tuberculosis treatment adherence in Timor Leste', *International Journal of Tuberculosis Disorder*, 12(5), 2008, p. 533; and 'Ermera', Ministry of State Administration & Territorial Management, <http://www.estatal.gov.tl/English/Municipal/ermera.html>, accessed 9 February 2010.

38 'Ermera District Profile', Ministry of State Administration & Territorial Management, http://www.estatal.gov.tl/Documents/District%20Development%20Plans%20and%20Profiles/Ermera/ERMERA%20district%20profile_eng.pdf, Gleno, April 2002, accessed 9 February 2010; and Location Mapping interview with Aida Exposto, FKSH Program Manager, Dili, 29 July 2009.

39 'Ermera', Ministry of State Administration & Territorial Management, op. cit.; Location Mapping interview with Aida Exposto, FKSH Program Manager, Dili, 29 July 2009.

40 'Ermera District Profile', op. cit., p.11.

41 Martins et al., op. cit., p. 533.

the 11 February 2008 attacks on President Jose Ramos Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão, a state of siege was declared, which was subsequently renewed four times with the final declaration specific to Ermera district only (until 22 May 2008).⁴² During this period, 100 Joint Command troops were stationed in Ermera district and as Bu Wilson writes, there were allegations from communities in Ermera that military personnel had used heavy-handed tactics during this period.⁴³ In addition, researchers on this project were told that as a result of the effects of the crisis upon Ermera sub-district, people are unwilling as yet to renovate buildings damaged during 1999, particularly more substantial structures in Ermera Vila, for fear of further unrest. These factors, combining the insecurity caused by the crisis and reaching back to the destruction of 1999, are further hindrances in terms of the broader process of development in suco Poetete and the surrounding communities in which this study concentrates.

Ermera's is a mountainous and temperate climate, with a rainy season from October to May, resulting in relative fertility as compared with other places in Timor-Leste.⁴⁴ The area is an important base for the nation's coffee production. Ermera district produces up to 70 per cent of Timor-Leste's coffee, an industry that was developed originally during Portuguese colonial times.⁴⁵ Data from 2002 records that families usually work coffee land of one to three hectares, each hectare producing approximately 250 kilograms of coffee per year, which means several hundreds of dollars of income per year depending on coffee prices. Other important crops grown in the district for local consumption and sale include cassava, rice, soybeans, potatoes, tomatoes and cabbage.⁴⁶ As coffee is increasingly considered as a risky crop due to fluctuations in global prices, vanilla is slowly being pursued as a better export alternative to coffee.⁴⁷ Livestock is also important for agricultural families.⁴⁸

Despite the fertility of the region, poverty particularly in the villages outside of the main centre is apparent. This is supported by results from our survey, with a large majority of survey respondents (65.2 per cent) reporting that their family found it difficult to secure a sustainable income and only around one-third (34.8 per cent) said that they had just enough money to sustain their families' lives (Question 9). FKSH asserts the prevalence of difficulties for families undertaking financial budgeting, a point also supported in government literature:

The population normally relies on income from the sale of coffee for purchasing additional quantities of rice, maize and beans ... Harvesting of coffee occurs between June and August, and the families receive coffee payment at this time. Many families do not budget effectively producing very lean times at the end of their financial year. Food sufficiency is sometimes a problem in the region ... Even during normal times, most of the population lives just about subsistence level.⁴⁹

42 Bu V.E. Wilson, *The exception becomes the norm in Timor-Leste: the draft national security laws and the continuing role of the Joint Command*, Issues Paper 11, Centre for International Governance and Justice, Regulatory Institutions Network, The Australian National University, Canberra, September 2009, pp. 2-3.

43 *ibid.*, p. 5. With regards to the 'Joint Command', the East Timorese police (PNTL) were placed under control of the military (F-FDTL).

44 'Ermera', Ministry of State Administration & Territorial Management, *op. cit.*

45 Vicente de Paulo Correia et al., 'Prospects for Vanilla Agribusiness Development in Ermera and Manufahi Timor Leste', Presentation to AARES Conference, Cairns, February 2009, p. 4.

46 'Ermera District Profile', *op. cit.*, pp. 6 and 8; and Correia et al., *op. cit.*, p. 4.

47 Correia et al., *op. cit.*, p. 1.

48 'Ermera District Profile', *op. cit.*, p. 10.

49 *ibid.*

During the course of our fieldwork, a number of other explanations with gender themes were offered to the research team about why poverty remains evident in Ermera sub-district, despite the land's fertility. Primarily, it was suggested by a number of research participants and regular FKSH staff that the financial burden of cultural or customary rituals is particularly high in this area, soaking up financial resources from the familial domain. This was said to be particularly the case for the price paid at the point of marriage by the groom's family to the wife's family. Researchers were told by community members that the price paid to the bride's family can be as high as \$US 5000.⁵⁰ There was also perceived high expense in relation to both death rituals undertaken so as to resolve conflict.⁵¹

Access to formal education appears to have been limited for many of those surveyed. A significant minority of Ermera respondents (42.4 per cent) had not had any schooling or some levels of primary schooling (Question 4), a similar proportion to results from Venilale and Atauro sub-districts. As will be discussed, Manatuto sub-district showed much greater access to education. While almost one-third (30.4 per cent) had completed secondary school, none of the surveyed respondents from Ermera sub-district had as yet attended university. Despite this, in Question 6 a majority of respondents (58.7 per cent) identified themselves as literate, 28.3 per cent as illiterate and 13.0 per cent as having limited literacy.

These brief comments about the context of Ermera sub-district—its material conditions, geography, history and people—give us some starting point for understanding social life in the local context. A turbulent recent history means that 'peace dividends' have not necessarily been experienced and the population may be risk-averse, which points to distinct challenges in thinking about encouraging any process of change, including to gender relations. Material conditions are difficult, though the fertility of the climate and land provides some potential advantage over other agricultural communities in Timor-Leste, and possibly there has been greater (though uneven) integration into the cash economy through local coffee production here than in other parts of Timor-Leste. Production and a gendered division of labour is structured within this subsistence and cash agricultural economy. Given the focus upon ritual practice, we can surmise that customary beliefs and kinship relations remain of great importance to people, while the Church clearly has a strong presence partly within the centre of the sub-district.

Knowledge of gender

In Ermera sub-district, we focused our 'Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour' survey sample on the three suco closest to the main town where the majority of FKSH's target group participants live. These sampled suco are Poetete, which encompasses both Ermera Vila and rural communities, and which constituted 42.2 per cent of respondents for this survey (Question 2); Ponilala with 27.2 per cent of respondents; and Mirtutu with 26.1 per cent of respondents. A small percentage of respondents (4.3 per cent) also lived in a fourth suco, Legimea. In terms of age, the vast majority (80.4 per cent) of respondents were between 20 and 49 years of age (Question 5)

⁵⁰ Carmenesa Moniz Noronha, 'Fieldnotes from Ermera sub-district', 12 October 2009.

⁵¹ Anna Trembath, 'Fieldnotes from Ermera sub-district', 12 – 16 October 2009. An absolute abolition of ritual practices and associated cultural beliefs was not suggested to be the answer; rather some kind of cap on the costs involved in ritual ceremonies as well as community mobilisation around other priorities such as school education for children. It was felt that customary leaders were distorting the original intentions of ancestors who had established ritual practices, and while this may not be a unique problem to Ermera, it was a recurrent theme in discussions while working there.

In Ermera, over half of all respondents (51.1 per cent) reported that they had not participated in any explicit discussions about the concept of gender, nor had they read or heard about gender (Question 13). That is, over half of our sample did not recall having had any contact with gender socialisation processes that have occurred in Timor-Leste over the last ten years of nation-building, with 39.1 per cent reporting that they had heard of gender. Going by sex, the majority of male respondents (62.2 per cent) said that they had not heard about gender, while less than one-third had (27.0 per cent). The statistics for women were more balanced, with 43.3 per cent of women having heard about gender and 47.3 per cent saying that they had not heard of gender. This suggests that gender programs have tended towards targeting women in a 'women's empowerment' framework, which while legitimate, raises the question to what extent has gender change been limited by de-prioritising the involvement of men.

The most common source of information in Ermera about gender was the media (Question 13), where 41.7 per cent of respondents who claimed to have heard about gender did so via the media. Other responses were more evenly divided between friends and family (13.9 per cent), religious leaders (11.1 per cent), teachers (11.1 per cent), government (11.1 per cent), and an NGO or the UN (11.1 per cent). Only 2.8 per cent of respondents had heard about gender from a community leader. The dependence upon media for information about gender is likely, again, to disadvantage those rural, more remote communities in Timor-Leste, without electricity so that television viewing is not possible. It is interesting that government, NGO and UN socialisation processes have had such limited infiltration in the Ermera context, highlighting the importance of the work being undertaken by FKSH in Ermera sub-district.

Reality reveals that many of us who live in the city and have access to different types of information do not yet know about gender, so how about our peers that live in rural areas? It was clear that they do not yet know of or have not heard of the word 'gender' because of limitations of access to information from media, electronic and otherwise. While there have been great efforts made by government and civil society, most of the time the information dispersal stops at the district and sub-district levels and does not continue down to grassroots communities because of resource limitations.

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Of those respondents who said that they had heard of gender, 69.4 per cent said that they felt confident that they understood what gender means. Of these respondents, 52.0 per cent said that for them gender means that women and men are equal, and a full 100 per cent of these felt that gender is an idea of beneficial use in their daily lives (Question 12), indicating a very positive responsiveness by Ermera communities to gender socialisation, at least amongst those who are aware of the term.

Attitudes about gender

a. Gender roles and relations within the family

In Questions 35 and 36, respondents were asked to identify their aspirations for female and male children in their families. Results for both sexes of children were identical, with 83.7 per cent of respondents saying that they want both their female and male children to go to university, and 6.5 per cent of respondents saying that they want children of both sexes to advance to office work. While this suggests a gender neutral approach in terms

of future hopes for employment, other questions showed how the household remained a distinctly different domain. In selecting a response to the statement 'It is better that a man is head of a family than a woman' (Question 17), a great majority (70.7 per cent) either agreed or strongly agreed, and only 11.9 per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed. A greater percentage of male respondents (75.6 per cent) either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement compared to female respondents (67.3 per cent). While aspirations for the advancement of the future generation tend to be the same despite sex, families still clearly tend to favour male-dominated household leadership, at least in terms of identifying what is the current preference. Together these are indicative of one of the arguments of this report, namely that pursuit of gender equality remains uneven and differentiated across different domains.

b. Violence against women

Over one-third of respondents (32.6 per cent) agreed with the statement 'I can accept it if a man hits his wife if she has done something wrong' and a further 5.4 per cent strongly agreed (Question 18). More respondents answered in the negative to this statement, with 47.6 per cent either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The statistics do not reveal strong differences between men and women on this point, though there are some slight distinctions. More men than women agreed with this statement (35.1 per cent of male respondents as compared with 30.9 per cent of female), while women were more likely to strongly disagree with a husband hitting his wife than men (20.0 per cent of female respondents and 16.2 per cent of male respondents). These statistics show that acceptance of domestic violence in its physical abuse manifestation is both prevalent and yet contested within the Ermera context, with more people against domestic violence between husband and wife than for.

In Question 24 and 25, the survey asked people's opinions on the best means to resolve cases of violence against women: through the family or household; through local leaders such as *xefe suco*, *xefe aldeia* and religious leaders; through *lianain* or *adat*; or through police and courts. Question 24 asked about domestic violence, while Question 25 referred to sexual violence, with rape given as an example.⁵² In Ermera a very significant majority, 70.7 per cent of respondents, said that it was best to resolve domestic violence within the family or household (Question 24). The next preferred options were *lianain* or *adat* (10.9 per cent) and local leaders such as *xefe suco* or *aldeia* and religious figures (10.9 per cent), while 7.6 per cent said that it was preferable to resolve domestic violence through police and courts. It is only in Ermera and Manatuto (9.5 per cent of respondents) that the option of police and courts registered as high a response rate as this, even with this being below 10 per cent.

Across the four surveyed sites there were considerable differences of views about resolution of domestic violence on the one hand and sexual violence on the other. In Ermera, over half the respondents (52.2 per cent) felt it best to resolve sexual violence through police and courts, while 18.5 per cent selected local leaders and 16.3 per cent chose the family or household (Question 25). This suggests that while a husband hitting a wife or parents hitting children may be considered either normal or a breach of social

⁵² While obviously domestic and sexual violence can be overlapping categories, for ease of understanding we separated them out. Typically in Timor-Leste, communities understand domestic violence to mean physical assault and rape or sexual violence as another form of violence that can occur within or beyond the home.

relations able to be resolved within customary kinship relations, sexual violence is regarded as far more serious and criminal in nature and in many cases should be lifted outside of community resolution processes.

Question 26 asked the opinion of respondents about what is the most common reason that domestic violence in the form of a husband hitting his wife may occur. Respondents could select from a range of options or nominate their own reason if not included in the given options. In Ermera, the response that received the highest preference (19.6 per cent) was that domestic violence is elicited through a woman's actions: 'a wife creates a problem by not fulfilling her domestic duties'. However the following responses which placed greater responsibility on men were also popular: 'because the husband cannot control himself and hits his wife even if she has done nothing wrong' (17.4 per cent); 'because the husband is stressed about problems such as money or family issues' (17.4 per cent); and 'because the husband has another woman but does not want to hear criticism from his wife' (16.3 per cent). The range of answers selected by respondents shows that people understand domestic violence as occurring for a range of reasons. For a significant proportion of respondents, women are often the cause of the violence inflicted upon them.

c. Customary culture

Almost half the respondents (47.8 per cent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that '*Barlake* is not really good for women' (Question 21). *Barlake* or other Tetun equivalents (*hafolin*, *feto folin* or *kolen*) is often translated in English to 'bride price' but more accurately refers to a material-symbolic exchange that occurs between families of a bride and groom with the intent of linking those families together. Around one-third of Ermera respondents (33.5 per cent) either agreed or strongly agreed that *barlake* has negative implications for women. Women were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with this statement (50.9 per cent of female respondents) than men (43.2 per cent).

Gendered behaviour

a. Familial relations and division of labour

As in Atauro and Venilale, almost half the survey respondents (45.7 per cent) from Ermera sub-district indicated in Question 10 they were primarily engaged in agricultural labour on a daily level. Following agricultural labour, 18.5 per cent of respondents' primary daily activity centres on the domestic realm: caring for children, cleaning the house and looking after the household. Small percentages of respondents were engaged in small business, worked in an NGO or the church, or were employed in a public office (7.6 per cent, 6.5 per cent and 5.4 per cent respectively). A gender-differentiated analysis of the responses shows that in Ermera, men are far more likely to undertake agricultural labour as their primary daily activity (70.3 per cent of male respondents compared with 29.1 per cent of female respondents). In comparison, women are far more likely to undertake domestic labour as their primary activity (30.9 per cent of female respondents, as compared with 0 per cent of males). In thinking about undertaking projects in Ermera sub-district, then, NGOs such as FKSH need to consider how the NGO activities may impact upon existing labour loads, which for women may include both domestic labour and agricultural labour.

As a researcher I cannot lie to myself: I feel really sad because the reality of women's daily lives means that they encounter limitations everyday ... They really suffer to assist their spouses (fetching water and firewood, growing food crops, going to school, church, hospital the market ... all long distances that they need to walk) while their spouses do not yet really have significant responsibilities in their homes so they wait for their wives to do most things (washing, mending and ironing clothes, cooking and preparing food, caring for children, cleaning the house and so forth). I can imagine that [the women] are the first to rise in the morning and the last to go to sleep because the labour responsibilities that our society gives them

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In Questions 28 to 34, the respondents were asked to consider particular labour activities central to the sustenance of daily life in Timor-Leste and to identify who in their households typically holds greatest responsibility for such a task: older females (in cultural terms, usually considered older by virtue of marriage), younger females (typically considered to be those who are unmarried), older males, younger males, or the equal responsibility of males and females. The responses revealing the extent of gendered division of labour generated for these particular tasks are outlined here:

- *Cooking* (Question 28): This was clearly revealed to be predominantly undertaken by females, either older females (53.3 per cent) or younger females (17.4 per cent). Almost one-third of both male (27.0 per cent) and female respondents (27.3 per cent) said that in their household, cooking is the equal responsibility of females and males.
- *Fetching water* (Question 29): For a significant majority of respondents (63.7 per cent), this work is the equal responsibility of males and females. In those households where fetching water is not a shared responsibility, it is more likely to be undertaken by females (younger women 15.4 per cent or older women 4.4 per cent). While no older men were reported as having primary responsibility for this task, 9.9 per cent households said younger males had the responsibility for this.
- *Fetching firewood* (Question 30): In Ermera males were more likely to fetch firewood. Again, the majority of respondents (59.8 per cent) said that fetching firewood is the joint responsibility of males and females, while 18.5 per cent said that it was the primary responsibility of younger males and 15.2 per cent older males. A gender analysis shows that female respondents were more likely to see females as having equal responsibility for this task than men (63.6 per cent of female respondents as compared with 54.1 per cent of male respondents).
- *Working in fields or food gardens* (Question 32): An overwhelming majority of respondents (73.9 per cent) said that this work is equally shared between males and females, while 15.2 per cent said that it is the primary responsibility of older males. There were no significant differences between the responses of males and females.
- *Cleaning the house* (Question 34): Ermera is the only one of the four sites where responses about who typically has primary responsibility for cleaning the house may go against expectations. Almost one-third of respondents (29.3 per cent) identified this as the joint responsibility of both males and females, while 37.0 per cent identified older males as having primary responsibility and 32.6 per cent

older females. However, a gender analysis of responses would seem to show that female and male views on division of responsibility and labour in regards to house cleaning vary significantly. While only 20.0 per cent of female respondents saw this as an equally shared task, more likely to identify it as a female responsibility, 43.2 per cent of male respondents identified cleaning the house as a joint responsibility.

- *Looking for money* (Question 31): Just over half the respondents (51.1 per cent) identified this as the responsibility of older males, while 40.2 per cent said that responsibility for raising income is equally shared between males and females.
- *Controlling household money* (Question 33): While men were identified as having greater responsibility for raising money for household use, results for Question 33 reveal that older females are often invested with the responsibility of controlling use of monies (65.2 per cent)—an interesting fact to consider given that the majority of respondents identified that the male should be the head of the household. A small minority of respondents (17.4 per cent) said that financial control is the responsibility of older males. Gender analysis of responses shows that females tend to emphasise female responsibility for money control (70.9 per cent of female respondents said that older women have responsibility for this as compared with 56.8 per cent of male respondents). Similarly, male respondents emphasised male responsibility for money control (24.3 per cent of male respondents said that older men have responsibility for this as compared with 12.7 per cent of female respondents).
- Responses to Questions 31 and 33, about raising income and controlling household finances, indicates a strong basis upon which economic livelihoods projects such as FKSH's, emphasising women's economic independence, can be built. That is, in predominantly agricultural communities, there is existing precedent for women's involvement and leadership in sustaining livelihoods in a way that is not always recognised and can sometimes fall away in the move to more urbanised, modern forms of community where labour is more clearly split between private (feminised) and public (masculinised) realms.

I observed that many men consider household work to be a woman's duty and only a minimum of males assisted their wives in for example pounding rice, fetching water, looking after children and so forth.

Ambrosio Dias Fernandes,
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Married respondents were asked (Questions 37 to 39) to identify which spouse in their married partnership has the greatest responsibility to make decisions about particular areas, with the option also to nominate joint decision-making, as follows:

- *Use of household finances*: In Ermera, the majority of married respondents (73.5 per cent) say that they make financial decisions with their spouse. However, as the results from Question 33 revealed, women are more likely to physically control monies than their husbands.
- *Teaching children in the household (including discipline)*: Again, the vast majority of respondents (77.9 per cent) identified this as an area of equal spouse decision-making.

- *Organising the time of the respondent:* 70.6 per cent of respondents said that they make decisions about how to organise their own time with their spouse, and similar percentages of females (21.1 per cent) and males (23.3 per cent) said that they make their own decisions about their own time.

b. Culture

Question 27 asked is it normally the man or the woman who usually moves to the spouse's family on marriage? Like in the other sites, the majority of respondents (69.6 per cent) followed a patrilineal custom of a bride joining her husband's family, while for 16.3 per cent of respondents the man joined their wives' families. Another 14.1 per cent of respondents do not follow any particular custom.

4.4 Project impact in Ermera sub-district

The above detail needs to be read as much more than a set of statistics that sit in isolation the attempts to institute changes to gender relations in Ermera. Together the statistics demonstrate the very difficult context in which attempts to implement gender programs are being made in the community, and the kinds of barriers that NGOs and community-based organisations are regularly faced with. For instance, not only did half the respondents of those surveyed indicate that they had no real sense what was meant by the term gender, but there were few opportunities for the concept to be even introduced to the community (with most who had heard of it having done so through the very limited media in the area). Moreover, working across the responses to questions on gender roles and relations, we still see a high incidence of women and men who think that it is appropriate for the use violence against women, and also a firmly held view of the patriarchal family structure as being the most appropriate one. In addition to this, we also see within community attitudes a strong tendency for the domestic sphere to be the responsibility of women, while the public sphere (especially work) is seen much more as the domain of the man. Each of these factors point to a set of social values where it is extremely difficult for an organisation such as FKSH to effect social change through their partnerships with local organisations; the efforts as outlined below must always be read in terms of that context. However, and as FKSH's efforts with HAMOR and CHT will show, impacts can certainly be made, not least by locating women within the community with existing skill bases and by working with them over extended periods of time.

FKSH's project implementation in Ermera sub-district

In Ermera sub-district, FKSH works with two women's groups: Centro Haburas Talento (CHT, the Centre for Enriching Talent) and Grupo Haklean Moris (abbreviated to HAMOR and meaning 'to deepen life'). In 2008 FKSH came into contact with these two groups at a district women's congress in Gleno, the previous site of FKSH's work in Ermera district. This initial meeting then led to the groups requesting support from FKSH's, with the following narrative demonstrating how the relationship developed.

FKSH received a request from Sister Eufrazia, the coordinator of CHT, composed of eleven young (unmarried) and married women and one man. These members come from different suco and aldeia. A request also came from Helena, the coordinator of Grupo HAMOR, comprising unmarried and married women who were involved in the resistance struggle in Ermera district [during the Indonesian occupation]. Sister Eufrazia lamented that Grupo HAMOR had been established for a long time, but had never received any attention or support.

FKSH received and considered these requests during our strategic planning in early 2009, and we began implementing the currently-ongoing project with these groups very quickly in January of that year.

These two beneficiary groups are located in suco Poetete, sub-district Ermera, district Ermera, which is known as producing the most coffee in Timor-Leste ... Although the majority of the population in this area live as farmers, many also undertake business activities. However the businesses as yet don't respond well to the needs of the consumer.

Because of this, CHT and Grupo HAMOR, under their own initiative, assembled and gathered together their existing skills to produce certain goods. They weave tais [traditional Timorese cloth], make various products from tais, embroider, cross-stitch, make school uniforms, produce traditional medicine, prepare quality coffee, make sweets, and so forth. These activities truly respond to the needs of the consumer, though of course there is room for improvement.

Aida Exposto,
'Analysis of the Impact of FKSH's Project in Sub-district Ermera',
March 2010.

CHT was established on 1 August 2008 by two women, Florinda dos Santos and Geolivia Maria Henry Madeira, along with the support of Sister Eufrazia da Incarnação de Jesus Araujo. Florinda and Geolivia had recently returned from completing the highly-regarded women's empowerment and skills development course at the Centro Treinamento Integrál i Dezenvolvimento (CTID or the Centre of Integral Development Training) run by the Canossian sisters in Baucau.⁵³ Their attendance had been facilitated by the Canossian parish in Ermera.⁵⁴ In an interview, Geolivia and Florinda explained why they wanted to establish CHT:

Geolivia: When we came back [from Baucau], we began to open our centre here. [We thought] I have received many good things, how can I now develop myself further as a woman here [in Ermera]? The capacity that I have obtained, I must share with others. I am very grateful because through this group many people have got to know us, helped us to find a way to share what we know with our fellow women in rural areas.⁵⁵

Florinda: The things that we received [through the course], we wanted to truly realise, because I see that in Ermera, most women do not go to university but still want to become good mothers/heads of households through attending training.⁵⁶

CHT membership was essentially chosen by Sister Eufrazia and the CHT founders, comprising a number of other women who have attended the CTID course. The nine members (including one man) work on their activities in their building from Monday to

53 Introductions from CHT and HAMOR, focus group discussion, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009; and Interview with Geolivia Maria Henry Madeira, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

54 Interview with Sister Eufrazia da Incarnação de Jesus Araujo, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

55 Interview with Geolivia Maria Henry Madeira, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

56 Introductions from CHT and HAMOR, focus group discussion, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

Saturday, and on Sundays assist with church activities. The members come from different suco in Ermera sub-district: Poetete, Rahou, Ponilala, Mirtutu and Legimea. Some need to walk substantial distances to reach the CHT premises in Poetete. At the time of research, CHT was operating from a small building belonging to the Church designated for women's activities during the Indonesian times, which was unused for some time before CHT began their activities.⁵⁷ The building is in the centre of Ermera Vila, right next to the church. Through a successful application to the government in 2010, CHT is building new premises while still utilising their prior building.

Initially the group focused on production of school uniforms, which they found were in high demand. They also offered sewing courses to other women. Since then, they have broadened their goods production to cross-stitched items such as tablecloths, traditional medicinal products made with natural local ingredients such as massage balm, cakes and sweets, bags made of cloth and tais, as well as church clothing such as nuns' habits. In 2010, following the fieldwork for this study, they started a restaurant and catering business in their prior office building, and they retain hopes of acquiring computers so as to teach basic information technology skills to women.⁵⁸ Their primary market for the sale of their goods is local, and they sell primarily through their premises or by fulfilling orders.

Grupo HAMOR, established in April 2008, is comprised mostly of older, married women or widows—twelve active members in total. HAMOR's coordinator Maria Helena Soares, aged sixty-eight, explains why she and the other members decided to establish the group:

[A]s a Timorese woman this kind of work is not something I've just started to do. We had a group during the years 1975 to 1999, doing women's activities like we do now. Then in recent times there was a lot of talk on the television about our fellow women in all districts, yet there was a limited presence [of local groups working on gender] here. We felt really bad. With this thought in mind we urged each other to think this problem through. Why have our female peers in other places been able to do things and we in Ermera have not? That's why we put together this group.⁵⁹

Maria and the other women see the work they do with HAMOR as being an extension of national and women's development programs they were involved in during the clandestine era with OPMT. Maria further explained that they did not want their older ages to be an obstacle to preventing them to courageously stand up for the contribution that women can make toward national development and to motivating other women and girls:

If we are just in our homes doing domestic work, this is not good for us. And we also must do it for our children and grandchildren so that they see they can do things until they are our age as well. When we have died, maybe we will have left them some work or opportunities to carry forward ... We must share what we know, our experience, with other women and with our children.⁶⁰

In the beginning the HAMOR members each put in twenty dollars in order to buy materials for their sewing and weaving activities. HAMOR mainly produces tais and tais

57 Interview with Geolivia Maria Henry Madeia, CHT Finance Officer, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

58 Introductions from CHT and Hamor, focus group discussion, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

59 Interview with Maria Helena Soares, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

60 *ibid.*

goods such as bags, cross-stitched, embroidered and crocheted items, decorations such as artificial flowers, coffee and sweets that are made from local produce such as cassava.⁶¹ The production activities are divided amongst four sub-groups, and the members work in whatever time they can find. HAMOR does not have a headquarters, so the women were undertaking their activities from their homes, though they are seeking funding to build their own premises. Most of the women are family and neighbours from suco Poetete.⁶²

CHT's chosen patron saint and symbol on their uniforms is Saint Verona, to them exemplifying a brave, hard-working woman. The name Centro Haburas Talento or 'Enriching Talent' surmises to them the kind of mission they want to espouse as single or young women. The name HAMOR (an abbreviation of Haklean Moris, or 'Deepening Life') was chosen by its members as it symbolised their attempts and their desires to further deepen their knowledge and skills.⁶³ In general sales have been more difficult for HAMOR than CHT.

Each group has a common cash system, where any monies put in, used or earned comes through their group source. They will periodically divide their profit earnings, as well as maintaining and increasing the group cash which they use to buy more materials and so forth. Both groups appear to be comprised mostly of people with literacy ranging from basic to advanced levels. Through common partnership with FKSH, the two groups have established a close relationship with one another, as suggested by one participant when she explained that between the women the sense of 'connection is good, for example we visit each other... and always contact each other. We show each other unity.'⁶⁴

Impact questions

With RMIT's facilitation, FKSH identified the following questions to seek to answer in order to understand the impact resulting from the project 'Increasing Women's Economic Independence' in Ermera sub-district:

- i. Has there been an impact upon beneficiaries' *economic independence and ability to compete in consumer markets*? If so, how and why? If not, why not?
- ii. Has this project impacted upon the beneficiaries' *participation and roles in their families and community*? If so, how and why? If not, why not?
- iii. Has this project had an impact on beneficiaries' *families' quality of life, particularly in terms of income, nutrition and health*? If so, how and why? If not, why not?
- iv. Has this project had *other impacts* within the community?
- v. How has the project been *adapted* to assure that continued implementation is as effective as possible?

61 Timeline focus group discussion with HAMOR, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

62 Introductions from CHT and HAMOR, focus group discussion, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

63 *ibid.*

64 *ibid.*

Question One: Women's economic independence and ability to compete in economic markets

a. Changing gendered labour patterns

FKSH has developed a successful strategy of choosing partnerships where the beneficiary groups were already working towards women's economic independence. Moreover, as our survey statistics above show, women who act as income generators and the families' financial managers have had a presence within the Ermera community, and hence there exists some level of potential traction for the work of an organisation such as FKSH. Prior to working with FKSH, CHT and HAMOR were already established organisations whose underpinning objectives were framed by the desire to bring positive change to gender relations and to do so by reducing women's economic dependency upon men. This idea has not been interpreted by the groups as a foreign imposition of a development model but arises from their own history prior to Timor-Leste's independence; that is, there is an existing, accepted discursive framework that HAMOR can build upon through access to FKSH to build change in practice. HAMOR coordinator Helena explained that the group came into being essentially to revisit the ideas of FRETILIN and OPMT about women's transformation and pursuit of gender equality as being synonymous with national development. It is within this framework that the group receives acceptance and support from their husbands for their activities, as suggested by Helena when she explained that their husbands accept their activities 'because they have known about the necessity of our opportunities for a long time, since the dark clandestine times. They accept that the things we do develop our nation.'⁶⁵

CHT is explicitly interested in empowering young women who may not have formal educational opportunities to build skills that enable them to be independent and in effect to provide alternative options to female gender roles that emphasise early marriage and childbearing. The founders' involvement in the CTID course, and the continued support from the Canossian order, particularly through Sister Eufrazia, has provided great motivation, empowerment and a framework to imagine the pursuit of women's economic independence.⁶⁶ It appears that FKSH's assistance and intervention has further reinforced the strength of such attitudes, including through helping the groups build further partnerships with other organisations.

In the instances of both groups, FKSH's support for recognising and strengthening women's economic roles has found a foothold in Ermera in that it is able to be read into discursive frameworks existing within the community and supported by institutional frameworks such as OPMT and the Church. Moreover, it does not jar with an existing cultural model of practice where it is considered appropriate for women to manage money and sometimes even to look for income for their families. Comments of HAMOR members such as coordinator Helena (above), that indicate at least some degree of support for husbands for these activities suggest agency by the women in negotiating gender relations and change within their own households and families. Undoubtedly, FKSH's support is essential in helping to provide a basis for the women of HAMOR and CHT to negotiate gender relations within families and communities by lending their activities legitimacy. This may be particularly important for HAMOR, without the

⁶⁵ Interview with Maria Helena Soares, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

⁶⁶ Interview with Geolivia Maria Henry Madeia, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009; Interview with Sister Eufrazia da Incarnação de Jesus Araujo, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009; Timeline focus group discussion with CHT, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

backing of a large community-based institution such as the Church, and where most of the women are married with children, so the demands upon them to fulfil community definitions of appropriate female roles are very strong.

As part of the support given, FKSH has also facilitated the acquisition of practical skills necessary to the realisation of economic independence. Limited educational and professional development opportunities for East Timorese girls and women, particularly from rural communities, mean that many women lack the basic financial management skills that would allow a business to grow. To consider one competency that is strongly advocated by FKSH, bookkeeping skills are seen as essential so as to accurately track profit against expenditure. During our research there were indicators of some change in bookkeeping practice; however, it would seem that the impact from FKSH's training has been uneven. In participating in the 'Participatory Indicators of Impact' method, both groups developed statements about their ability to use financial bookkeeping skills as the most desired and important in relation to FKSH's support. On the one hand, for CHT, the bean-counters placed against 'before' (signifying the extent to which the group was utilising financial bookkeeping prior to FKSH's project intervention) was 26, as compared with 52 for the group's situation at the time of research. This indicates a perception of substantial and meaningful change in this area for the women of CHT. Statements by CHT members also attested to their enthusiasm for learning in this area and the sense of relevance to their lives, a point confirmed by Geolivia who explained how 'before FKSH came to give training, we were still establishing something new and just mixed together our financial records'.⁶⁷

However, the 'before' (44) and 'now' (47) results for HAMOR revealed little perceived change in reality following FKSH's intervention. When pressed to explain why the positive change indicated by the results is only small, the group explained that 'in the past we understood and now we've just increased that understanding'.⁶⁸ Ensuing discussions revealed that there perhaps had not yet been adequate time for the benefits of the training to be made fully apparent to HAMOR. Comments from HAMOR members suggested that financial books were not necessarily being used with regularity and habitual ease and there were various comments to the effect that prior to FKSH's training HAMOR managed their resources carefully, but not necessarily through financial bookkeeping:

[A]bout what comes in and goes out, we always thought of it, we measured it. For example, from one piece of cloth we might sew something, measure it carefully, and with the rest we can make something else. And with the money we get from selling this cloth we don't randomly waste it. We put it back in so that we can do something else to improve our product.⁶⁹

This may seem a small and relatively unimportant point of comparison between the two groups over one skill area. However, if we first take into consideration that both groups have indicated that raising income is important to them, such responses reveal the challenges for women into moving into the cash economy. The difference between the two groups may perhaps be accounted for by placing them in a context beyond FKSH. CHT has a strong basis for such organisational systems through previous experience

⁶⁷ Interview with Geolivia Maria Henry Madeia, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

⁶⁸ Participatory Indicators of Impact focus group discussion with CHT and HAMOR, Poetete, Ermera, 15 October 2009.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

with the CTID course, the influence of Sister Eufrazia and the sense of integration as a group which is reinforced through their daily structured work together. HAMOR, on the other hand, frequently undertakes production activities individually and comes together more occasionally. Moreover, the members have not gone through formal training such as the CTID course which would allow habitualising and becoming accustomed to written and numeric systems and processes. This form of gender change then, in ensuring women's access to economic markets, suggests that there needs to be extensive support for women in doing so, particularly for a group like HAMOR without other significant institutional support. Helping to facilitate the move of women's economic independence out of a discursive framework and into lived reality of practice requires substantial support.

b. Negotiating market dynamics

As FKSH recognises, for all the impact in terms of an empowered attitude of women toward securing their own economic independence and the acquisition of key supporting skills such as financial bookkeeping, their female beneficiaries cannot actually realise economic independence if they are unable to successfully compete in consumer markets. That is, economic independence through small business depends on sustainable levels of sales and profits.⁷⁰ This is where the real challenge lies in terms of the beneficiaries and their communities realising positive impact from FKSH's project, a point explained by program manager Aida Exposto:

[The groups] undertake a lot of production but the market system does not really favour them because their products do not have a great market value so their income therefore is also not sufficient. It is really quite minimal. And when their income is minimal, this discourages them to continue production because they think that even though they worked hard, their goods are not valued.⁷¹

Both CHT and HAMOR face significant challenges in securing enough sales and raising enough profit to secure individual members' livelihood and to sustain the groups into the future. Of the two groups, CHT has had more success in sales. In particular, the school uniforms production is in high demand locally, and CHT has successfully utilised existing skills sets of members in this activity (the male member of CHT was trained in uniform production during Indonesian times and the women who attended the CTID course have advanced sewing skills).⁷² This is typically a seasonal production line, with families buying uniforms at the start of the school year, and so is not enough alone to sustain the group throughout the year. Profits also need to be divided amongst a relatively large group. CHT faces the current challenge of their over-locking machine being broken—essential equipment for the production of high-quality garments. The restaurant and catering business, opened after the period of research, is another promising initiative aimed at the local market (including visitors to the local area) and a positive alternative strategy. FKSH has been instrumental in supporting this expansion, facilitating CHT to lobby and formulate a successful proposal to government so as to build their own facilities in a prime location in the town.

70 For instance, Interview with Gizela de Carvalho, FKSH Director, Dili, 5 October 2009; Interview with Aida Exposto, FKSH Program Manager, Dili, 5 October 2009.

71 Interview with Aida Exposto, FKSH Program Manager, Dili, 5 October 2009.

72 Interview with Geolivia Maria Henry Madeia, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

With support from FKSH, both groups have also now attended two annual East Timorese women's business fairs held at the Mercado Lama facilities in Dili through which they can promote their groups and display and sell their products. CHT found that their traditional medicinal products were particularly in demand, in 2009 selling close to 200 dollars' worth of these products (a relatively good sales figure for them). CHT were also able to see that tais products and other such common products are difficult to market at a national (and international) level due to intense competition and limited demand. Geolivia for instance commented that 'most of the groups were selling tais and cloth products, so people liked our traditional medicines. So we were able to acquire some profit through this.'⁷³

Geolivia further explained that CHT now realises that traditional medicines is a relatively unique product line with potential for consumer demand. She said CHT would be happy to focus on this because the base ingredients for the medicinal products are local plants (such as aloe vera) that they can easily and cheaply harvest, and other ingredients such as *tua sabu* (East Timorese palm wine) and honey can be sourced without difficulty and inexpensively from other places. The challenge lies in finding a way to promote and sell these products on a continuous basis beyond the local community. For instance, the current packaging comprises use of flimsy margarine containers which is unattractive and lacks labels and product information.

The items that HAMOR primarily focuses on—on tais and associated products such as bags, as well as other cloth products, as well as limited foodstuffs such as coffee—unfortunately have limited sales potential into a local or even national market, where there are a multitude of like products from women's groups across Timor-Leste competing to meet a small demand. As such, HAMOR has had very limited success in terms of securing income from their production.⁷⁴ While they are happy that their product quality and efficient use of materials has improved through FKSH's training (FKSH has particularly focused on the production of different varieties of *tais* bags), improved product quality has not yet resulted in good sales,⁷⁵ though the group also identifies their lack of a dedicated collective work space and limited materials as further obstacles to production.⁷⁶ As such, identifying market demand and producing goods that meet such demand is an area that FKSH could further assist HAMOR with.

Despite successes and enthusiasm about future plans, members of CHT still lament that they have not yet seen much monetary return for their substantial efforts and time commitments: 'This makes us a little sad'.⁷⁷ They worry that while they, as young unmarried women, may be able to justify their efforts in terms of the gaining of experience, it would be difficult to continue without profit once they had established families which they needed to look after and financially sustain.⁷⁸

In terms of women's abilities to access economic markets and achievement of economic independence through negotiation of market dynamics is at this point limited. However, through this evaluation we can identify that two immediate strategies hold more

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Interview with HAMOR Coordinator Maria Helena Soares, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

⁷⁵ Participatory Indicators of Impact focus group discussion with CHT and HAMOR, Poetete, Ermera, 15 October 2009.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Interview with Geolivia Maria Henry Madeia, CHT Finance Officer, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

potential than others: diversification of production beyond the limited range of ‘women’s goods’ particularly focusing on identifying unique products such as traditional, natural medicine; and producing items in high demand locally such as school uniforms. Limited impact after just one year since the commencement of project implementation does of course not suggest project failure.

More broadly however, for the women to step fully into production and sales of their goods potentially requires substantial negotiation and change to gender relations within the household, family and community. CHT as single women were less encumbered by female reproductive roles than the women of HAMOR; however CHT members too indicated concerns about how they would continue with their ambitions were they to get married and have children. Undoubtedly the HAMOR women are skilled negotiators of their multiple roles as wives, mothers and business women. However, the question remains to what extent is transformation of gender roles in families being supported, rather than simply women picking up additional responsibilities, a point returned to in the next section. However it is important to note here that FKSH’s support has opened up the crucial first step: helping to carve out and legitimise a safe, supported space in which women have the freedom to pursue their economic and work ambitions. Fuller engagement of men, families and communities in this process may be the next steps.

Question Two: Participation and roles in family and community

Through supporting women’s small business, FKSH further aims to empower women to participate in national development through taking active leadership roles in the small units that are seen to make up the nation—families and local communities. Moreover, this gender impact assessment is also interested in what have been the impacts of FKSH’s project in terms of transforming gender relations in the context in which the beneficiaries live—their families and the communities of Ermera sub-district. Here we examine what impact FKSH’s project has had upon women’s participation and roles in families and the local communities.

a. Husbands and families

In terms of the connection between the activities of women in different groups and their respective households, there is some level of support from within the domestic domain. While issues may arise around divisions of labour due to the extra activity of the women, HAMOR members told us that they can speak to their husbands and reinforce the familial benefits of the activities and their rights as women to participate in activities outside the home:

Usually [our husbands] help [with household chores]. They help but when we go to work in our group we must use the time carefully. We can’t spend all day on something that is not important; if so they would be angry at us. But sometimes we must also put ourselves forward, I am a woman, I can also speak to him, not just say okay I surrender. I say if we are just in the house it isn’t good, we must go to learn something, ask other women what we don’t know and want to learn, so that in the future I can teach my children. If I am just in my house what am I going to learn?⁷⁹

The above statement indicates an interesting renegotiation of familial leadership. It is presumed that chores are the primary responsibility of women—husbands may ‘help’ to ease the burden of responsibility only, rather than take it on as their own responsibility. Moreover, the husband’s authority is implied by the women being careful about how to rationalise time spent away from their reproductive roles. However, the woman’s agency

79 *ibid.*

here is also evident—she is willing to assert herself and risk conflict, using a discursive framework that both draws upon women’s right as well as her maternal responsibility to her children. It was evident that by working with FKSH and also contact with CHT has contributed to reinforcing this attitude of transforming the opportunities of the next generation of women and working in partnership with their husbands to realise a greater gender equality at the household level, particular in terms of re-negotiating division of labour, equality of opportunity and access to the public realm.

However, without its own building or space dedicated to group activities, HAMOR identifies their key struggle as balancing domestic and work responsibilities. Here two women explain the challenges currently faced with the model of individual members producing goods in their own homes:

HAMOR member 1: We each organise our time. My colleagues, I’m not sure about, but to talk about myself, in the morning I must prepare some food quickly so that there is something in the house for the school children, wash all the clothes, put together what to eat at lunchtime, and then find a little time for [HAMOR activities]. After lunch, if there is no need to go somewhere else, usually people rest a little, but I will force myself to keep going without a rest and do some more work. At night I’ll also take advantage of the children going to sleep ... [W]hat is important is that the electricity is still on so I don’t feel too tired, and then do a little bit more. Every day it is like this.⁸⁰

HAMOR member 2: When we use our own homes [for activity and production] it is a really heavy burden because it is very hard to find even one hour. It is really piecemeal because there are difficulties: children, cooking, washing husbands’ clothes. If we had one place in which to work, like CHT, then during one whole day we could help each other, do what we need to do. When we are just in our homes it comes at a great expense, so difficult to find even one hour. You might make one cross-stitch and your child cries, make one or two artificial flowers and your husband comes home and needs to be served food. There are many difficulties we face.⁸¹

In the members’ eyes, a space outside of their homes dedicated to their group activities would legitimise their activities in the eyes of their families and allow them to find time away from children and household chores. When asked how they would manage their domestic responsibilities if they were to spend their days in a different social space, they were confident of familial support:

HAMOR member 1: [Our husbands] can help look after the children, can cook until we get back, wash clothes. They understand because we love each other.⁸²

HAMOR member 2: The older children could prepare lunch, wash clothes. We could be there [in the HAMOR premises] all day doing our activities. Before we’d go to work, we would prepare and set aside what we need to.⁸³

According to the HAMOR women, one of the keys ways in which they could transform gender relations in their families to allow them to engage more publicly with the community and renegotiate division of labour in a way that facilitates their economic independence is through securing their own work space. FKSH has worked

80 *ibid.*

81 *ibid.*

82 *ibid.*

83 *ibid.*

with HAMOR to develop proposals to government bodies for such a social space. If unsuccessful, FKSH may need to find other ways to help married women negotiate their very real challenges in order to participate as they wish to in their families and community, particularly in terms of heavy labour burdens. We did not see any evidence that the groups saw greater incomes as being a way to relieve these pressures, for instance greater incomes meaning that others could in turn be employed to provide familial support. This could be both due to a lack of familiarity of extending paid work by others into the domestic domain, but also an indication of the level of connection to those domains by these women. The women's statement suggested that they would still have primary responsibility for care for their families, even if helped out further by husbands and children. Possibly too the domestic work deficit could fall to other females, such as older girls, to fulfil, as is often the case in Timor-Leste when a woman moves into a form of formal labour. Again, FKSH's work has been instrumental in legitimising and providing support for women's non-reproductive labour, which in turn opens up the potential for change to broader gender roles and relations through a process of negotiation within families and local communities. However that change is likely to gain better traction in a way in which supports the transformation of men's roles as well if it is supported by FKSH or other organisations.

b. Young women and leadership

CHT as a young single women's association is focused upon opening up educational, economic and experiential options for young women across Ermera sub-district. This process has received guidance from Sister Eufrazia and FKSH, which has also fostered other opportunities such as UNIFEM leadership training. CHT's approach builds on a pattern of social integration that tends towards slightly more abstract social relations than immediate kin-based relations, due to involvement with the CTID course and the Ermera parish.

In their vision for the future, CHT would like to further build upon the CTID course in Baucau. Young women from across Ermera sub-district would continue to attend the CTID course, and upon their return, would participate in a three-month intensive course at the CHT centre. During this time, the emphasis would be to empower them to be able to create their own initiatives in their own aldeia or suco in an ongoing way rather than migrating away to Dili for instance.⁸⁴ Here questions of mobility and labour are central to the local sense of what gender equality might mean. CHT has the desire to pursue gender equality within the existing basis of social relations—the local community. Often of course, professional and personal development opportunities are seen by young people including women as existing in urban centres only. CHT is explicitly trying to counter this, namely to build a vision where the women can continue to be part of their local community while renegotiating gender models at that local level. FKSH has greatly helped CHT reach a point where it is able to put the steps in place to realise this objective with potentially wide-ranging impacts in Ermera sub-district.

In terms of the impact of future marriages impacting upon their work, marriage and raising children seems to be something that is assumed part of their future, though the shape of that marriage is being critically reflected upon. For example, twenty-six year old Geolivia explains that they think a lot about gender equality in their future marriages, wanting to be selective in their choice of partner:

⁸⁴ Timeline focus group discussion with CHT, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

About marriage plans, we friends here [in CHT] also plan to create a family but feel we [potential spouses] need to study each other carefully first. We look to our behaviour and our work here, and think about who is brave enough to take on a woman who undertakes lots of activities like this. If you are going to create a family you need to think first about the future. You can't just decide to do it one day.⁸⁵

Geolivia further explained that she and her colleagues want husbands who value gender equality in the sense of understanding that women undertaking work outside of the home is positive, and who respect them as equals. There is, however, a residual concern amongst CHT members about how they would continue to give current levels of time and labour to CHT if they were to have families, as the income generated is very low.⁸⁶ This again relates back to an earlier point of the way in which women are seemingly negotiating with the domestic realm and familial duties, rather than imagining that there may be possibilities for them that mean that they do not have direct primary responsibilities in that domain.

c. Integration into development processes at local, national and international community levels

With FKSH's guidance, the groups have been able to build relationships with a wide range of organisations—governmental and civil society, East Timorese and international, as well as being drawn into a strong relationship with one another.⁸⁷ Not only does FKSH put them in touch with other groups, but as part of its project, works with the groups to develop their lobbying and relationship development skills. They have for example been able to meet and lobby visiting government department delegations. This integration into broader development processes has been accelerated in the case of CHT due to not being reliant on FKSH as the sole supporting institution. CHT has a strong physical presence due to its premises, has gained local legitimacy through providing the local community with goods that are valued, and has built community relations through involvement in the local parish (such as Bible distribution, spiritual development activities, and making church decorations).⁸⁸ In the context of discussing attending the annual women's business fair in Dili, Geolivia comments that FKSH has helped the groups realise the importance of building their own connections:

We got great benefits from this because we could promote our centre. Through FKSH many people know about CHT ... We see that groups that have received training from FKSH do not just depend on FKSH but have other partners ... [T]hey have learnt to make connections with other partners to help them look after their group.⁸⁹

They do however face some envy from within the local community, but defend their activities by arguing that they are looking to develop the community, not simply themselves.⁹⁰

85 Interview with Geolivia Maria Henry Madeia, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

86 *ibid.*

87 Social relationship mapping focus group discussion with CHT and HAMOR, Poetete, Ermera, 15 October 2009.

88 Interview with Sister Eufrazia da Incarnação de Jesus Araujo, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009; Timeline focus group discussion with CHT, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

89 Interview with Geolivia Maria Henry Madeia, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

90 *ibid.*

d. Participation and leadership in mixed-sex domains

Nowhere during our research did CHT or HAMOR offer up evidence that FKSH's project has impacted on their direct participation in decision-making in mixed-sex domains such as community meetings and so forth. While they may do so and we researchers did not hear about it, this kind of impact was certainly not a high in priority in beneficiaries' minds; rather discussion was anchored far more in the immediacy of production of goods and so forth. While CHT has been quite successful in providing leadership in women-only realms, and HAMOR wishes to provide leadership to their own children, FKSH may think about further supporting their beneficiaries to negotiate a mixed-sex terrain to realise greater gender equality. This may mean, for example, greater engagement with men as part of FKSH projects. It would seem this is particularly important for HAMOR as married women with children—far more integrated into mixed-sex familial domains than CHT—for whom as young single women it is easier to engage in women's only spaces and to find empowerment through this. Again though it is worth emphasising that what FKSH has done in Ermera is unique. There is such a lack of other consistent engagement by NGOs in the area that the space that has been opened up for women is, in the context, quite extraordinary and an essential first step in the renegotiation of gender dynamics in the local context.

Question Three: Quality of life of beneficiaries' families—income, nutrition and health

FKSH hopes that through women's enhanced economic empowerment, the quality of their families' daily lives will be improved, particularly in terms of increased income allowing better food diversity and health care. The participatory research methods revealed little evidence to suggest that beneficiaries have experienced this impact. However, the bookkeeping and slightly improved levels of income has had some impact in easing financial pressure and changing mindsets to encourage future planning and careful use of financial resources. Income has slightly improved through occasional sharing of profits (one CHT member for example said she has received around eighty dollars since commencement of their activities in 2008).⁹¹ The women attested to using their income to support children's education and saving some for the future, a practice encouraged by the use of financial bookkeeping as trained by FKSH.⁹² They typically refer to it as 'soap' money—small amounts of money that can be used to purchase necessities—while older women now think carefully about the resource burden of customary rituals, which as explored in the introductory sections about Ermera sub-district are said to be very high. While the rituals are considered important, the women are now more likely to make decisions about the extent to which they can contribute money by careful bookkeeping calculations, which in itself is a way in which women can find greater influence within the customary sphere.⁹³

Income levels from the groups' activities have been too low no doubt to allow a general impact on quality of family life particularly in terms of health, again an area that may need some form of outside intervention in order to make change. The women also had noticeable difficulty talking about impact in terms of their own lives, rather than simply resource changes or activity implementation experienced at a group level. Most

91 *ibid.*

92 *ibid.*; Timeline focus group discussion with CHT, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009; Participatory Indicators of Impact focus group discussion with CHT and HAMOR, Poetete, Ermera, 15 October 2009.

93 Participatory Indicators of Impact focus group discussion with CHT and HAMOR, Poetete, Ermera, 15 October 2009.

discussions came back to how FKSH has aided the groups' production of goods. Some further reflection activities facilitated by FKSH or social training for example in gender frameworks may aid in making links between group activities and the meaningful changes in women's and families' lives that result from these activities.

Question Four: Other impacts

a. Building the sustainability of women's business groups

Even with the challenges experienced in terms of raising income through production of goods, FKSH's approach to working with their beneficiaries certainly has much to commend it. Their emphasis on slow, long-term capacity development rather than giving groups financial resources is slowly being absorbed by the groups and contributing to an attitude of working for their own economic independence rather than being dependent on development aid.⁹⁴ CHT for example demonstrates dynamism that Sister Eufrazia told us has developed over time and represents a significant change from the group's starting point.⁹⁵ However, when asked for their recommendations to FKSH about future project implementation, the women did tend to fall back on asking for material resources. It is a slow process and one made all the more difficult by the very real material resource limitations experienced in rural East Timorese communities. FKSH's approach, however, sets the basis for this slow realisation of self-sufficiency. The groups are unlikely to have generated the same level of motivation as they displayed had they not received support from FKSH. Moreover, FKSH's support lends legitimacy to the visions of all the women, of a greater sense of overall independence and self-confidence.

FKSH argues that for their project to have an impact, they need to work closely and slowly with their target groups over the longer term. Aida explains why it is important to build strong personal relationships with their beneficiaries:

One lesson that FKSH has learnt is that in order to help organise our beneficiary groups, it is best we have very close relationships with the groups even though we may have different backgrounds, ideas, understandings, characters, ... we can come together like a family.⁹⁶

This approach is appreciated by the groups and the groups seem to understand that to realise impact in terms of economic independence is likely to require perseverance over the long term:

[O]ur big sisters from FKSH teach us slowly, don't command, don't put us down, don't say 'hey you really don't know anything' ... [T]hey always show us a slow, quiet road.⁹⁷

FKSH's approach also emphasises integrating learning with practice. The impacts from this seem to be particularly powerful where FKSH's work is prefigured through other forms of trainings such as the CTID course and also reinforced on a daily level by other support networks such as the Church. Here a CHT woman attests to the

94 Interview with Sister Eufrazia da Incarnação de Jesus Araujo, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009; Interview with Gizela de Carvalho, FKSH Director, Dili, 5 October 2009.

95 Interview with Sister Eufrazia da Incarnação de Jesus Araujo, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

96 Interview with Aida Exposto, FKSH Program Manager, Dili, 5 October 2009.

97 Timeline focus group discussion with HAMOR, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

importance of being able to implement what they have learnt to build something of their own within their local community:

[I] attended many things [in the CTID course] and now I have come here and really implemented. For my life I feel that I am able to do something thoroughly in my own district.⁹⁸

The sustainability of the groups through empowerment of their members is a critical basis upon which to build long-term economic independence, and despite the challenges posed by the difficulties of attracting income, FKSH's approach to working with their groups appears to be very positive and successful.

Question Five: Recommendations for the future

As mentioned, participants' recommendations to FKSH tended to focus on asking for some limited material support. However, from the results of the gender impact assessment, the following recommendations have been formed to help further improve the positive impacts of FKSH's project in the future.

a. Competing in consumer markets

In order to better secure income generation, we recommend that FKSH encourages a focus upon goods in local demand (such as CHT's school uniform production and restaurant food production) as national and international markets are limited and difficult to access for rural groups. Unique production lines (such as CHT's traditional medicine) also has a far stronger consumer potential than goods that are commonly produced, such as tais. In order to support production of unique, high-quality product lines, FKSH may need to sit with partners to think creatively and laterally, and possibly outside of the realm of socially-prescribed 'women's work'. FKSH will need to support skills acquisition for high-quality production, like they have done with tais bags. An emphasis on simple, attractive packaging with promotional information about the groups may help with penetration into national and international markets, though it is not advised that the groups focus too heavily on these markets at the expense of the local market.

Like for other organisations and groups working in the area of East Timorese women's small business and income generation, FKSH may greatly benefit from a thorough market analysis study to help provide strategic direction for production, marketing and sales of goods. The common assumption that women's cultural production can be easily and advantageously transformed into economic production does not appear to bear out in reality. This is not to say that women's expertise should not be valued at the level of cultural production; rather the recognition that there may be a limit to its consumer potential, at least without significant degrees of creativity and innovation.

b. Participation and leadership in families and communities

After achieving considerable impact within the women's spaces forged by the groups, FKSH may need to think about how to further support the transformation of gender inequalities in mixed-sex domains such as the daily lives and decision-making of families and communities. At this point in time the emphasis has been upon carving out women's spaces of empowerment that build upon customary or traditional divisions of labour and roles. However, for women to move into new roles in mixed-sex domains (such as speaking in public meetings or taking community leadership or decision-making roles

⁹⁸ Interview with Geolivia Maria Henry Madeia, Poetete, Ermera, 14 October 2009.

usually confined to men) is perhaps the next step and requires some careful thought. This would be particularly important for groups such as HAMOR where membership is comprised of married women who must constantly negotiate gender dynamics at the familial level. It is recommended that if FKSH undertakes activities such as social training to realise this kind of impact, there is a greater inclusion of men as partners for change.

c. Supporting young women's leadership development

CHT has demonstrated initiative in envisaging a program through which they could support the development of young Ermera women so that small business groups are developed across the Ermera sub-district. With support particularly from CTID and the Canossian order, CHT has a strong support network for such an initiative. They could benefit from FKSH's support for strategy planning facilitation, for example, so that they have a clear plan as to how they can realise such a program. Moreover, it would be beneficial to see FKSH emphasise leadership development of young women through such a CHT program, rather than simply production activity skills building. FKSH could work with CHT to lobby and secure the involvement of other organisations that could provide particular types of support to the centre, such as a volunteer focused on organisational development, or expert training in women's leadership. Importantly as well, FKSH's support for CHT helps to ensure long-term impacts of CTID's course. Through building on the intersection of a number of initiatives and support networks, FKSH has potential for strong, long-term impact through CHT. Moreover, this new direction of CHT could geographically expand the impact of FKSH from being quite Ermera Vila-centric to reaching outlying areas of Ermera sub-district, where the needs of women are arguably higher.

d. Integrated reflection and organisational learning opportunities

Bakita, FKSH's Program Officer for Ermera, commented that it can be difficult to encourage the groups to participate in other activities beyond their normal production practices, such as meetings and trainings.⁹⁹ While the women's groups participated with great enthusiasm and vigour in our participatory research methods, they sometimes found it challenging to talk about their initiatives beyond the level of activity implementation and resource accumulation. This indicates that their opportunities for deeper reflection upon practice and periodic organisational stocktaking and learning may be lacking. Being able to make the links between their daily practices and the broader picture is important for retaining a focus upon goals and objectives, as well as reflecting upon challenges and possibilities for future direction. FKSH could facilitate periodic reflection and learning practices, perhaps utilising some of the participatory tools learnt through this project, in order to contribute to the group's future success and the realisation of impacts for the beneficiaries and their families and communities.

⁹⁹ Interview with Bakita, FKSH Program Office for Ermera District, Dili, 5 October 2009.

5. Fundasaun Alola

5.1 About Fundasaun Alola

Fundasaun Alola (the Alola Foundation, referred to below as Alola) was founded by Kirsty Sword Gusmão in 2001. Initially the organisation aimed to bring public attention to the plight of women and girls who had suffered sexual violence at the hands of pro-integrationist militia groups in 1999.¹⁰⁰ Now, Alola's vision is for East Timorese women to have 'equal status in ALL aspects of life (access, participation, role in decision-making, enjoyment of benefits of development) through education, community development, health and community leadership'.¹⁰¹ With its national headquarters in Dili, Alola works across all thirteen districts of Timor-Leste. Primarily supporting women's groups across the country, Alola employs District Support Workers (DSWs) to sustain the projects and to provide communication between communities and the national team. Alola utilises a women's empowerment approach, positioning women as active agents able to work together in order to decide upon, articulate and fulfil their own needs, and to contribute more broadly to community life. A large NGO of over 100 staff, in 2009 an East Timorese woman was appointed as Alola's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), a position previously occupied by expatriates.

5.2 About the project: 'Community development'

Project background

The Community Development project comes under the banner of Advocacy, one of Alola's four major programs. It is linked with advocacy in the sense of encouraging women to become their own advocates in transformation of their lives and that of their communities'. Established in six districts in 2007 (Lautem, Baucau, Viqueque, Manatuto, Liquiça and Ermera), in the following year the project was rolled out to the remaining districts.¹⁰² In the district of Dili, Alola chose to focus specifically on the sub-district of Atauro Island, which forms the case study for the project evaluation. From 2008 to the present, Alola has worked with thirty-nine beneficiary groups across country (three per district). These 'women's economic livelihoods' or 'small enterprise groups' produce various goods for sale or direct consumption, such as agricultural and food products, tais and other forms of handicrafts. The beneficiary groups are supported by a locally-based DSW who travels monthly to Alola's head office to report on progress in their district. Alola also works with various partners such as government ministries and Marie Stopes International to implement core components of the project, drawing on these partners' specialised areas of strength to deliver training and provide information to their beneficiary groups. This integrated strategy aims to ensure as great an impact as possible.¹⁰³ Alola also expects that the impacts of this project are not simply limited to the beneficiary groups but through them to the community more generally, a point explained by Alita, the CEO of Alola, when she says that participants 'can share with their neighbours, their peers. It is not intended that they just hug close the information they receive, keep it to themselves.'¹⁰⁴

100 Alola Foundation, 'History', www.alolafoundation.org, accessed 14 October 2010.

101 Alola Foundation, 'Mission', www.alolafoundation.org, accessed 14 October 2010.

102 Timeline interview with Paulina Asis Belo and Nicolao de Oliveira, Alola Advocacy Program, Dili, 19 August 2009.

103 Interview with Teresa (Alita) Verdial de Araujo, CEO Fundasaun Alola, Dili, 4 December 2009.

104 *ibid.*

The Community Development project aims to support women's economic independence, to develop women's capacity to respond effectively to their own needs in their local contexts, and to promote women's leadership in local community development processes, as DSW Officer Elda Barros writes:

[The project is intended to] empower women in rural areas to know how to utilise their rights in order to participate in all kinds of activities that help them in their lives. They needn't wait for the government to offer assistance; rather, with their own creativity they can develop themselves.

Elda da Costa Barros,
'Analysis of the Impacts of Alola's Community Development Project',
Dili, March 2010

Through the project, Alola wishes to promote women's participation in national development processes via their local communities. In order to ensure women's equal status in processes of local community change, through its integrated project Alola aims to address various challenges, as articulated below by the CEO Teresa (Alita) Verdial de Araujo:

I think that there are many things that are needed in order to push forward women's advancement in terms of how women can better participate in development. We know that East Timorese women come up against many obstacles such as the patriarchal cultural system that does not give space and time to women to exercise their right. Also women's education is minimal, and the cultural problem impacts upon women's involvement in the public realm. There is also the problem of maternal and child health, economic problems, issues of access to information, and so forth.¹⁰⁵

Here Alita demonstrates the complex intersection between gender and culture, with the Community Development program seeking to address the difficulties at both the level of basic material problems as well as advocating for and creating new opportunities for broader social change.

Project narrative summary: Goals, objectives, outputs and activities

Outlined on the next page are the Community Development project goals, objectives, outputs and activities, as identified by Alola staff in RMIT-facilitated training in Phase One of this study. We used an abbreviated logical framework to determine these categories. The project narrative summary below is for the project cycle 2008 to 2009; however the project has continued in 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Teresa (Alita) Verdial de Araujo, CEO Fundasaun Alola, Dili, 4 December 2009.

Project: Community development

	Narrative Summary
Goals	<p>East Timorese women can live with independent financial means secured through their own skills.</p> <p>Women can develop themselves in order to respond their own needs through their own programs, undertaken in their local contexts.</p> <p>Women have effective roles and voices to develop their communities.</p> <p>The capacity of women's groups is strengthened so as to actively participate in the leadership and development of local communities.</p>
Objectives	<p>During 2008—2009, Alola worked with thirty-nine women's groups across all thirteen districts of Timor-Leste (three groups per district). These beneficiary groups undertake economic livelihoods activities such as agriculture, small business or <i>tais</i> weaving. Alola works with these groups in order to:</p> <p>Secure sustainable income generation through financial management capacity building and through local production with market access.</p> <p>Empower women to believe in themselves and be valued in their communities so as to secure income sufficient for families and their necessities.</p> <p>Build the capacity and knowledge of the groups so that they can identify their own priorities and develop initiatives that seek to meet these priorities.</p> <p>Develop the groups so that they are self-sustaining and can support other groups to establish their own programs.</p>
Outputs	<p>Through participation in Alola's projects, the groups will achieve the following results:</p> <p>Through partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, agricultural production (growing vegetables, raising chickens and producing chicken eggs) is successful and they are selling to communities for money and consuming within their families.</p> <p>Through partnership with the Ministry of Finance, the groups develop good basic small business skills, particularly financial management. They are utilising a petty cash system and securing and tracking income.</p> <p>Through partnership with Marie Stopes International, the groups have knowledge of family planning and have received materials they can use to space childbirth.</p> <p>Local products are achieving market access.</p> <p>Continue and strengthen history and culture through women's handcraft production in each district.</p>
Activities	<p>Alola works with the Ministry of Agriculture to give material assistance and facilitate training about fish ponds, planting seeds and growing vegetables.</p> <p>Alola works with relevant agencies to facilitate training about poultry raising.</p> <p>Alola works with the Ministry of Finance to facilitate small business training.</p> <p>Alola works with Marie Stopes International to give training to the District Support Workers (DSWs) so that the DSWs can facilitate community discussions about family planning, contraception and sexually transmitted illnesses.</p>

5.3 Gender and community in context: Atauro sub-district

About Atauro sub-district

In order to understand what impact Alola and the other NGOs have had in local communities such as Atauro, it is necessary to establish some key contours of these specific communities, including gender dynamics. We aimed to do this through the ‘Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Survey’, field observations and informal interactions with community members, and a literature review. Atauro Island is one of the capital Dili’s six sub-districts—the only one that exists beyond mainland Timor-Leste.¹⁰⁶ From the perspective of standing on the 104-square kilometre island situated some twenty-five kilometres north of the mainland coast across the deep Wetar Straits, it is clear that Atauro is a world apart from other parts of urban Dili.¹⁰⁷ The island has five suco. Alola works in three of these along the eastern coast: Maqueli that encompasses the main town of Vila Maumeta in the south, Beloi that has areas both accessible and very isolated, and the more inaccessible Biqueli in the north-east. Vila Maumeta is a bustling little centre of administrative, church and civil society activity, and is home to the island’s one small store that sells a wider range of goods than local kiosks. The ferry port in Beloi operates as another island centre, especially on Saturdays when the once-a-week ferry docks and there is a local fish market run by mostly female vendors. East Timorese families also use the ferry to transport goods back and forth. The island’s two eco-lodges are also located in close proximity to the port. We undertook our ‘Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Survey’ in these three suco (the survey results are discussed in **sections 5.3.2–5.3.4**). Despite transport and logistical challenges, we were able to achieve a relatively even number of respondents from across the three surveyed suco: 35.8 per cent of respondents from Maqueli, 30.3 per cent from Biqueli and 29.4 per cent from Beloi (Question 2).

In Portuguese and Indonesian times, the island was used as a prison with brutal conditions. Many of the families of political prisoners from Indonesian times still reside in Atauro, particularly around the main town, Vila Maumeta. In the independence era, Atauro Island has been promoted as an eco-friendly destination for the expatriate workers or tourists with a sense of adventure. Beautiful natural attractions include stunningly clear water and white sand beaches, world-class snorkelling and scuba diving, and hiking and bird-spotting opportunities.

The attraction of the eastern coast for tourists belies the difficult natural conditions of the island for its inhabitants. Much of the small population of Atauro (around 8,000 people) live in villages scattered along the coast, particularly along the east coast that has the island’s only sealed road. Communities beyond the sealed road are very significantly isolated from one another, let alone from the East Timorese mainland. Most travel between communities occurs by fishing boat, and the cost of fuel for these longer journeys is expensive which in turn limits many islanders’ access to health and other services based on the eastern coast. Here Elda writes about the difficult material conditions of the island:

¹⁰⁶ ‘Profile of Dili District’, Ministry of State Administration & Territorial Management, <http://www.estatal.gov.tl/English/Municipal/dil.html>, accessed 12 July 2009.

¹⁰⁷ Ryan Ver Berkmoes and Adam Skolnick, ‘Atauro Island’, *East Timor Lonely Planet Guide*, 2nd ed., Lonely Planet, Melbourne, 2008, p. 78.

The challenges in sub-district Atauro include the difficulties of public transport from suco to suco, suco to aldeia. [People] must use boats or walk. This is a big impediment to people who want to work in this sub-district. From the information that people in aldeia Arlo, suco Beloi gave us, everything is difficult. They don't really get information and it is a long way to the health centre. There is no transport ... and the road is no good. [We were also told of] one mother from Arlo who went into labour and started travelling to the health centre in Vila Maumeta. But she died on the road ... [The geography] also impacts negatively on the communities who live far from the main island centres, for example in access to markets, looking to make money, children sometimes cannot be bothered walking the long distances to school ...

Elda da Costa Barros, 'Analysis of the Impacts of Alola's Community Development Project', Dili, March 2010

East Timorese people are often described and describe themselves as *foho* or mountain people. While the island is very mountainous, the indigenous coastal populations consider themselves more *tasi* or sea people than mountain people. The ocean provides the basis for most people's subsistence lifestyle, while the island's land is mostly arid and dry, unsuitable for varied agricultural production. Water sources are very limited. Fishing and seaweed cultivation is determined within the parameters of local custom and are predominantly undertaken by men while women will tend to limited land-based agricultural production and undertake domestic duties. This gendered division of labour is reflected in the survey results discussed in the following sections. Travelling around the island by sea, it is a common sight to see young boys and men diving for fish or fishing from brightly-painted, handcrafted wooden boats. There is purportedly a significant amount of travel between Atauro and the nearby Indonesian islands of Liran and Wetar to the northeast. Not only are fish sought close to the shores of these islands, familial networks also span across these islands.

Undoubtedly, Atauro's difficult conditions impacts upon both educational access and economic livelihoods. Of the four research sites covered in this study, Atauro had the second highest percentage of respondents without any schooling or with some primary schooling only (43.2 per cent). None of the surveyed respondents had been to university, and only 18.8 per cent of respondents had completed secondary school. Of the total respondents, 54.1 per cent identified themselves as literate. Over half (53.2 per cent) of respondents said that it was difficult for their household to find money, and the remainder (48.6 per cent) said that they had just enough money to sustain themselves. No-one identified themselves as economically well-off.

Atauro is also home to a unique set of cultural dynamics. While ninety-five per cent of Timor-Leste's population is Catholic, a significant proportion of Atauro are Protestant, particularly in suco Beloi and Biqueli.¹⁰⁸ Protestantism has a longer history on the island than does Catholicism (which arrived in this part of Timor-Leste after World War II), with a Dutch Calvinist missionary arriving on the island from nearby Alor Island in the early twentieth century.¹⁰⁹ As with the Catholic Church, the Protestant Church on Atauro Island is socially conservative, providing a challenge to organisations interested in socialising sexual and reproductive health and choice information.

The relationship between Protestantism and customary spiritual beliefs on Atauro Island is complex. Across Timor-Leste, customary beliefs typically exist alongside and in uneven relationship with Catholic religious beliefs. While the Lonely Planet's travel

¹⁰⁸ *Lonely Planet East Timor*, op. cit., p. 79.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*; 'Atauro Island', Wikipedia, accessed 13 August 2009.

guide to Timor-Leste makes the comment that in Atauro, 'the animism that underlies Timor-Leste's Christianity is particularly strong', we found evidence to both support and contradict this statement.¹¹⁰ The research team experienced for ourselves the power of the island's reputation for having tracts of uninhabited lands considered particularly sacred and potentially dangerous (*rai lulik*), and stories of the island's *lulik* arose spontaneously at other points during our research. Many of the origin stories (in Tetun called *aiknananoik*) tell of the islanders' first ancestors being creatures of the sea. Moreover, as Womens Resource Centre Officer Maria Fátima Pereira Guterres (Fatima) writes below, people told us of how beliefs in *lulik* regulate social behaviours, including gender relations, in ways that challenge the common assumption of practices such as domestic violence being rooted in customary-traditional values. People fear retribution from land and sea spirits (such as sharks and snakes) if wrongs such as theft and domestic violence are committed:

Even though culture and tradition is strong it is very difficult for us to find stories about domestic violence. For those people whose principal work is at sea, household members cannot be angry with each other or speak sharp words to one another because if they go to sea their culture holds that they will experience disaster. They can die or get injured at sea.

Maria Fátima Pereira Guterres,
Analysis of the Impacts of Alola's Community Development Project,
Dili, March 2010.

To all the research team, while the details may be different, the presence and contours of such customary beliefs were not a surprise as they reflect similar beliefs across Timor-Leste.

In stark contrast to this, however, we encountered some real surprises in terms of an absence of key aspects of customary culture. With Alola's beneficiary group in suco Biqueli, women's fish-drying cooperative Hakat ba Oin (Step into the Future), we undertook a suco mapping research exercise, as we did with the other two groups. We had developed a key of symbols participants could use to indicate various physical features of the community, based on RMIT's previous community mapping experiences across Timor-Leste. When shown the *uma lulik* symbol, participants asked what an *uma lulik* is and whether it was a church?¹¹¹ The entire research team was taken aback by the question, given the predominance of sacred houses across Timor-Leste's cultural diversity and its potency as a national symbol. We had expected there to be *uma lulik* on Atauro. The East Timorese researchers explained what an *uma lulik* is, and were told very firmly by the participants that there are no *uma lulik* within the suco, with one community member explaining 'no, we don't have any of those. We just have our church. Maybe there were once some *uma lulik* in the distant past, but now we just believe in the Church.'¹¹²

On another occasion, we were told that Protestant missionaries had expressly ordered the destruction of *uma lulik* and any other object that is a physical manifestation of customary beliefs.¹¹³ Some Catholic missionaries also did this in other parts of Timor-Leste. *Uma lulik* were also destroyed as an outcome of war with the Indonesian

¹¹⁰ *Lonely Planet East Timor*, op. cit., p. 79.

¹¹¹ Anna Trembath, Fieldnotes, Atauro Island, 12 – 19 September 2009.

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ *ibid.*

occupying army. However, in these instances, the belief system remained even if the supporting architectural structures were gone or terribly damaged. However, in at least some the island's communities, connection with their sacred houses seems to have been severed, consigned forever to the past. Interestingly though in these same communities some people said they still practiced rituals such as gift exchange between families at the point of marriage.¹¹⁴ Perhaps the demise of customary beliefs and rituals has therefore not been even or complete across all of the communities.

After these brief comments that help to establish a picture of Atauro Island, the following sections analyse in detail the results of the 'Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Survey' that we ran in Maqueli, Beloi and Biqueli. This establishes a more concrete picture of the gender context in which positive transformation of gender dynamics is being attempted by Alola and its local partners.

Knowledge of gender

Despite interventions such as Alola's that are primarily targeted at women, a higher percentage of male respondents (34.8 per cent) reported that they had heard of the concept of gender, as compared with just 28.6 per cent of female respondents. In total, only around one-third (31.2 per cent) of respondents said that they had heard of gender (Question 12). This suggests that in the context in which Alola is undertaking its intervention, the process of conscious social change to gender relations is very new and unfamiliar to the majority of the population. This poses a great challenge to the process of change. For example, Alola is working with three women's groups who form a tiny minority in their communities. Beyond their project activities, it may be hard for these groups to embed and sustain gender change in their communities. Here Fatima writes about her surprise as an Alola staff member about realising that many people have not heard about gender and was troubled by negative ideas about what gender means by others:

We hoped that the word 'gender' is no longer something new to the community's ears because many people and organisations have worked to promote gender equality. However the reality when we were at the grassroots and remote areas, when we asked them about the word 'gender', the majority did not know about it and many consider this a new word for them.

Maria Fátima Pereira Guterres,
Analysis of the Impacts of Alola's Community Development Project,
Dili, March 2010.

Of those who had heard about gender, 29.4 per cent identified government as their primary source of information, indicating a relative strong level of integration with the state than in the other sites. Other responses regarding sources of information about gender were as follows: 26.5 per cent from friends, family or other acquaintances, 8.8 per cent from religious leaders and 8.8 per cent from media (Question 13). These results indicate much lesser access to media in Atauro than in our other research sites, where media was a much more significant source of information about gender (45.8 per cent in Manatuto, 41.7 per cent in Ermera, and 22.2 per cent in Venilale). Our own experience of undertaking fieldwork corresponds with this, with the significant isolation of many communities. Even near Atauro's main town (Vila Maumeta) in suco Maqueli where we stayed, the community had no radio access. Instead, a kind of 'town crier' would walk through the streets yelling the day's news just prior to sunrise.

114 *ibid.*

Of those respondents who said that they had heard about gender, 70.6 per cent felt confident that they knew what it means. From this group, the most significant percentage of respondents (44.0 per cent) suggested a definition roughly akin to women and men being equal (Question 15). However, as Fatima writes, even when people knew of gender many had negative conceptions as ‘some people interpret gender to refer only to women and some others think that it means prioritising women’s dignity above men’s, so therefore they think it means that women will not respect men.’¹¹⁵

Attitudes about gender

a. Gender roles and relations within the family

Questions 35 and 36 asked respondents to identify their aspirations for female and male children in their households. Responses for both sexes did not vary significantly, and the overwhelming proportions of respondents desired university education for their children (68.8 per cent for female children and 64.2 per cent for male children). The next most significant percentages indicated preferences for agricultural lifestyles (6.4 per cent for female children and 7.3 per cent for male children) or office work (6.4 per cent for female children and 7.3 per cent for male children). Women’s preference for female children to attend university was higher than men’s (73.0 per cent and 63.0 per cent respectively). Most significantly, 0 per cent of female respondents aspired for their female children to primarily fulfil domestic responsibilities (explained as ‘watch over the house or get married and have children’). This is a trend echoed in the other sites, indicative of a desire for gender change experienced by the next generation, especially of mothers for their girls. The comments of Alola’s mostly female beneficiary groups reiterated this sentiment, of wanting something different for their female children than they have experienced themselves.

Question 17 asked for respondents to mark their response to the following statement: ‘It is better that a man is the head of a family rather than a woman’. A notable result emerged, at least in comparison with the other sites, with 47.7 per cent of respondents (49.2 per cent of females and 45.7 per cent of males) agreeing with this statement. However, a significant minority (37.6 per cent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. This perhaps suggests that on Atauro there is some malleability in terms of gendered perceptions of leadership abilities—a positive indication for an organisation such as Alola which hopes to encourage greater female leadership.

b. Violence against women

In terms of responding to the statement ‘I can accept it if a man hits his wife if she has done something wrong’, a substantial majority of respondents (63.3 per cent) disagreed with this statement, while a significant minority (26.6 per cent) agreed (Question 18). A gender analysis of responses shows that counter-intuitively, higher proportions of women (30.2 per cent) agreed with this statement as compared with men (21.7 per cent).

In terms of domestic violence (Question 24), the vast majority of respondents (84.4 per cent) said that in their opinion it was best resolved within the household or family, with the next highest percentage (only 6.4 per cent) saying it is best taken to local leaders to resolve. This is a concerning figure for gender programs that have attempted to instil the idea of domestic violence as a crime that must be managed by formal justice system. In terms of sexual violence such as rape (Question 25), opinions about how best to resolve

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

such cases differed significantly to domestic violence (typically understood within communities to be husbands beating wives or children rather than sexual abuse).

As with all the four research sites, respondents were far more likely to represent sexual violence than domestic violence as a crime. Almost half (45.9 per cent) of respondents said that sexual violence was best resolved by police and courts, while 23.9 per cent identified local leaders as appropriate mediators, and 21.1 per cent said that a resolution is best found within family or household structures. More female respondents (49.2 per cent) felt it best to be taken to police and courts than males (41.3 per cent).

Question 26 asked respondents to select one out of a given number of options (including an open option for their own reasoning) that, in their own minds, best explains the most common reason why a man may hit his wife. We asked respondents to reflect on their own local community contexts. The answer with the most common response (24.8 per cent) was that this happens because a man is stressed about problems such as money or family issues, followed by 17.4 per cent saying it is because the wife creates a problem by not accepting what her husband says, and 16.5 per cent who identified that it occurs because of a husband's drinking habits. Amongst women, the most common answers were a man's stress about problems such as money and family issues (23.8 per cent), alcohol consumption by men (17.5 per cent), and women creating problems by not fulfilling domestic responsibilities (15.9 per cent). Male respondents also favoured first the response of stress about money or family issues (26.1 per cent), but the second most popular response for male respondents differed to women. A significant minority of men (21.7 per cent) said that husband-to-wife physical abuse occurs when a woman does not fulfil domestic responsibilities. Men were therefore less likely than women to acknowledge the role of male alcohol consumption in creating the conditions for domestic violence, and more likely to blame wives for inciting violence than place responsibility on the male side.

c. Customary culture

Question 21 asks respondents to respond to the statement '*Barlake* is not good for women'. Over half of respondents (53.2 per cent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, while a significant minority (41.3 per cent) either agreed or strongly agreed. Response rates for males and females were very similar. Interestingly, our conversations with survey respondents showed that even in those staunchly Protestant communities on Atauro where customary practice is more significantly absent (for example, *uma lulik* had been burnt and abandoned as a ritual site due to orders from religious leaders), ritual exchange of gifts at the point of marriage was still occurring. For instance, we were told that often families of the groom had to give the bride's family at least several goats.

Gendered behaviour

a. Familial relations and division of labour

Question 10 asked respondents to select from a list or to identify another option to respond to the question: What is your primary daily activity? In terms of labour, similar percentages of female and male respondents reported that the main activity they undertake daily is agricultural: working in food gardens or raising animals (46 per cent of women and 43.5 per cent of men). The above result of a high rate of female engagement with agricultural practice in Atauro stands as an interesting contrast to usual perceptions that men undertake more agricultural labour than women. In the other sites, there were

certainly much greater reported proportions of males undertaking agricultural labour than females. This reflects the common gendered practice unique to Atauro, of men and boys negotiating the seas to fish and harvest seaweed, while women will be responsible for other agricultural land-based activities, such as the growing of maize, cassava and other vegetables, and the rearing of animals.

In Atauro, greater gender differences lay in regards to other forms of labour. As to be expected, a higher proportion of women (14.3 per cent) than men (4.3 per cent) responded that their primary daily responsibilities were domestic (for example cleaning and cooking, looking after children). This is a much smaller percentage of women seeing themselves as first and foremost being engaged in domestic activities as compared with the other sites. Small business activities were also undertaken by a higher percentage of women (11.1 per cent) as compared with men (2.2 per cent). Similar percentages of women and men worked in NGOs or the church (9.5 per cent for women and 10.9 per cent for men), or were engaged in schooling (11.1 per cent of women and 10.9 per cent of men).

Below, Fatima writes about her observations about the gendered division of labour in Atauro:

There were some families that told us about their experiences in the household. They said women have to do many things because in their traditional culture they said that women have to serve men. For example, one older man that we met we asked how do you divide up responsibilities in the household? He answered 'my responsibility is to go to sea to look for money and save money; the rest my wife does'. ...

It is not only men that think that women must respond to all the household needs like cooking, looking after children and washing the dishes. Women themselves consider that they themselves must serve the household, not men, because men's work is just to look for money. [And they think that] this [division] comes from the past.

Maria Fátima Pereira Guterres,
Analysis of the Impacts of Alola's Community Development Project,
Dili, March 2010

Questions 28 to 34 investigated specific labour activities to identify the gender division between particular tasks. Respondents were asked who, in their household, is *primarily* (not solely) responsible for identified task, as outlined here:

- *Cooking* (Question 28): 56.9 per cent of respondents said that women and girls were responsible for this (47.7 per cent older females, 9.2 per cent younger females), while 42.2 per cent of respondents said that females and males equally share responsibility for this task. A gender analysis of the results for this question reveals a slightly different picture, with women's responses emphasising female responsibility for cooking more than the results from male respondents. For example, 47.8 per cent of male respondents said that women and men equally share responsibility for cooking, as compared with 38.1 per cent of female respondents. This perhaps suggests that men were more likely to respond in favour of presenting a picture of equal labour division that may not play out in reality, or that they over-estimated their contribution to this task.
- *Fetching water* (Question 29): 52.3 per cent of respondents responded that this is the equal responsibility of males and females, while 33.0 per cent said it is the primary responsibility of females (older females 18.3 per cent and younger

females 14.7 per cent). Again, a gender breakdown of responses suggests a disparity in perceptions of division of labour. While 60.9 per cent of male respondents said that males and females equally share responsibility for fetching water, only 46.0 per cent of female respondents answered as such.

- *Fetching firewood* (Question 30): Just over half of respondents (51.4 per cent) reported that this was the equal responsibility of males and females, while 19.3 per cent said it is the responsibility of older females. Male and female perceptions of gendered responsibility for this task were relatively even.
- *Working in fields or food gardens* (Question 32): A large majority of respondents (76.1 per cent) said that males and females equally share this work, with 11.0 per cent saying it is the primary responsibility of older females and 10.1 per cent the primary responsibility of older males.
- *Cleaning the house* (Question 34): A large majority of respondents (65.1 per cent) identified this as the responsibility primarily of older females (46.8 per cent) or younger females (18.3 per cent). A significant minority (31.2 per cent) said it was the joint responsibility of females and males, and only 3.7 per cent said it was the primary responsibility of males (younger or older). Similarly to most of the task-division questions, men had a lesser perception of women's responsibility as compared with women themselves. For example, a majority of female respondents (52.4 per cent) said that cleaning the house is the responsibility primarily of older women, as compared with just 39.1 per cent of male respondents.
- *Looking for money* (Question 31): While over half of all respondents (56.0 per cent) said that this was an equal responsibility of females and males, a significant minority (35.8 per cent) responded that this was the primary responsibility of older males. A gender analysis of perceptions of division of responsibility reveals that women were more likely to emphasise their roles than men. For example, 58.7 per cent of females said that it is an equal responsibility as compared with 52.2 per cent of males, and 43.5 per cent of males identified men's primary responsibility for raising income, as compared with only 30.2 per cent of female respondents.
- *Controlling household money* (Question 33): A very significant majority of respondents (70.6 per cent) identified this as primarily older women's responsibility, while 20.2 per cent said that men and women have joint responsibility, and 9.2 per cent said that it was the responsibility of older men. Again, women emphasised their responsibility more than men, with 79.4 per cent of women saying it was older women's responsibility as compared with only 58.7 per cent of men.

For those married respondents, in Questions 37 to 39 we asked them to identify who in their married partnership has the greatest responsibility to make decisions about the following areas:

- *Use of household finances*: The majority of respondents (74.0 per cent) said that they always made decisions about household finances with their spouse, though this response was more favoured by male respondents (77.8 per cent male response rate as compared with 70.7 per cent female response rate).

- *Teaching the children of the household (including discipline)*: Again the vast majority of respondents (87.0 per cent) said that this was an area of equal decision-making.
- *Organising the time of the respondent*: 79.2 per cent of respondents said that they made decisions about how to use their own time with their spouse. Similar percentages of female and male respondents claimed both autonomy over their own decisions and their spouse's primary decision-making power over their own time. For example, 12.2 per cent of female respondents said that they usually made their own responsibilities about their own time, as compared with 11.1 per cent of male respondents. Small percentages of females (7.3 per cent) and males (5.6 per cent) said that their spouse has primacy over these decisions.

b. Culture

The data from Atauro suggests a primarily patrilineal culture. Question 27 asked the respondent to indicate in their family, if there is a marriage, whether it is the husband or the wife who moves to live with his or her spouse in their family or community. A vast majority of respondents (70.6 per cent) said that it usually the woman who moves away from her birth family/community to live with her husband. In terms of male movement to a wife's family, 11.9 per cent reported that this usually occurs in their family, and 17.4 per cent said that there was no usual custom followed—that it depended on the individual circumstances.

Given what we have learned about the context of Atauro—poverty, difficult subsistence lifestyles, isolation, low educational levels, low access to information including about gender, an interesting cultural mix of strong customary beliefs overlaid and in some instances replaced by a conservative Christian framework, and clear patterns of gendered divisions of roles and labour—the next section considers the impact that Alola has had in effecting gender change in Atauro communities.

5.4 Project impact in Alola sub-district

Alola's project in a Gendered Context

The statistics drawn from surveys undertaken in the communities in Atauro demonstrate both the work that still needs to be done in order to achieve even the possibility for broader public change with regards to gender relations. Overall the statistics show just how difficult a terrain it is for NGOs and CBOs to work on gender when levels of recognition on what even gender is remain at less than a third. While there was a sense that people wanted a different future for their children irrespective of gender (as per the questions on education discussed above), the current reality seemed to be one where the domestic domain is one that is associated with the woman while work away from the home was the domain of the man. While in some senses these statistics might simply show what many may expect, in a quantified form they certainly confirm the sense on the ground of how difficult even small programs are considering that there are the discursive frameworks in which to speak 'on gender' have not been widely integrated into the communities, at least those discussed in this research. Of course the attempts to implement change in Atauro are only heightened by the isolation of the island, the lack of material infrastructure, and the absolute limitations in terms of information flows, let alone broad ranging development challenges.

Alola's project implementation in Atauro sub-district

Alola had been working in Atauro since 2008, employing a local DSW Sancha Miis Salsinha. At the point of research in September 2009, Alola had been supporting their particular beneficiary groups for relatively short periods of time. Two of the groups, women's agricultural group Aliteno Diak (the name referring to a local tree) and women's fish drying group Hakat ba Oin (Step to the Future), had been supported by Alola for around one year. The third beneficiary group Beazoia (an amalgamation of Portuguese terms) had been with Alola for only three months. In this instance the project needed to focus on indicators of meaningful, sustainable change and how the project had been thus far integrated into the community, rather than longer-term changes. In the following text box, Elda writes about why these groups came into being and how Alola has sought to support them.

In sub-district Atauro ... there are some families who have sought to come together to establish groups. Though they have limited knowledge, they have great dreams to just make some things so as to help their communities and take part in contributing to national development.

Atauro is a land with many difficulties. Everybody relies on the sea and food gardens ... Women and men know how to dive but a consequence of diving is that many people are deaf. In Atauro leafy vegetables are difficult to find and are usually brought from Dili. The groups are able to grow vegetables but it is difficult to water them. The available water destroys the vegetables because it is dirty and yellow.

Even though they come up against many dilemmas, they work hard to build their groups knowing that one person alone cannot do much ... but when you have a group you can think together to realise something in your suco because other people can help you, and you can find out far more information ...

To the three groups Fundasaun Alola offers the following program: though the District Support Worker we reinforce their activities like horticulture, poultry raising, and give small amounts of money for their businesses. With this program Fundasaun Alola works with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the Ministry of Community Development [which provide materials and training to the groups].

Elda da Costa Barros,
'Analysis of the Impacts of Alola's Community Development Project',
Dili, March 2010.

The individual groups will be discussed in detail below. However, it is appropriate to briefly introduce them here. Grupo Aliteno Diak is based in aldeia Ussubemasu in suco Beloi, not far from where the ferry docks. The female members are family and friends, and work together following weekly schedules of labour to grow vegetables and raise chickens and eggs for sale. The head of the group is Anita Alves, who is supported by her husband Tomas. Grupo Beazoia is a group of women and men based in Vila Maumeta, suco Maqueli. They produce interesting jewellery made of locally-sourced natural products such as dried seeds. The group includes a number of deaf people. Hakat ba Oin is based in aldeia Pala in suco Biqueli. The women of the group buy fish from their seafaring husbands and produce a popular dried fish product.

Impact questions

With RMIT's facilitation, Alola identified the following questions in order to understand the impact resulting from the project 'Community Development', in Atauro sub-district:

- i. Has this project impacted *beneficiaries' economic livelihoods*? If so, how and why? If not, why not?
- ii. Has this project resulted in *impacts upon female beneficiaries' participation and leadership in local communities and families*, including empowerment of other women? If so, how and why? If not, why not?
- iii. Has this project impacted upon *reproductive and family health and choices*? If so, how and why? If not, why not?
- iv. Has this project resulted in any *other impacts* in the community?
- v. How could the project be *adapted* to ensure better impacts in the future?

Question One: Beneficiaries' economic livelihoods

Like with FKSH and GFFTL who also work in the area of women's income generation, Alola's intervention seeks to encourage women's economic initiative and self-reliance, representing a cultural shift away from the idea that men are the primary income earners. As the survey results showed, while over half of the Atauro survey respondents identified income generation as the equal responsibility of women and men, over one-third saw this as a male responsibility. We encountered many vehement opinions to that effect while travelling across the island. Alola's target groups, like those of FKSH and GFFTL, face the twin practical challenges of acquiring sufficient financial management skills (and for some members, basic literacy and numeracy in the process), and identifying and meeting limited consumer demand.

As previously mentioned, at the point of research, Alola had worked with all groups for less than one year (including Grupo Beazoia for only around three months), so it is early days yet in terms of measuring impact upon beneficiaries' economic livelihoods. As Alola's DSW in Atauro, Sancha, noted, there are substantial difficulties in terms of raising money in a primarily subsistence, cash-poor economy:

Sometimes the things that they [the beneficiaries] sell don't get a good sales value because this follows the condition of this land here [in Atauro], everyone is looking for money so who is going to buy?¹¹⁶

Change in this area is likely to be slow. With all three beneficiary groups there has been some limited but still important change in terms of securing better economic livelihoods. Notably, all three groups produce goods which are in some level of demand and at least to a limited extent meet consumer needs.

Moreover, the activities of two of the groups can be seen as a complementary extension of their subsistence lifestyles and the gendered cultural place of women in Atauro undertaking land-based livelihoods activities. Grupo Hakat ba Oin, based in remote suco Biqueli, produces a preserved or dried fish product (*ikan maran*) popular in Timor-Leste. From their seafaring husbands, the women of Hakat ba Oin buy the fish fresh from the ocean. As they demonstrated to us, they immediately split, clean and salt the fish then leave it to dry in the sun. They carefully package the dried fish in plastic bags. Their skills

¹¹⁶ Interview with Sancha Miis Salsinha, Atauro District Support Worker, suco Maqueli, Atauro, 15 September 2009.

in creating a superior product was developed through the support of local Biqueli NGO Siaun and other supporting groups.¹¹⁷

The Hakat ba in members sell their fish across Atauro. In addition to limited sales within Biqueli, they also travel to suco Beloi on Saturdays where a weekly beachside market is held to coincide with the docked ferry from Dili. On Fridays they take their fish to Vila Maumeta (Atauro's main town) in suco Maqueli. Sometimes they also take the fish to Dili to sell. The group generates fairly consistent sales, but of course once the cost of buying the fresh fish has been discounted and profits divided amongst the many members, sales do not result in great take-home income. However, the group is enthusiastic about their activities and told us that they generate enough income 'to help with our children's schooling and to buy small necessities'.¹¹⁸

Agricultural business collective Grupo Aliteno Diak, based in suco Beloi close to the ferry docking point, grow vegetables, raise chickens and harvest chicken eggs on the land of their leader, Anita, and her husband Tomas. The group is well-situated to sell at the weekly Beloi market and also in Vila Maumeta. Their vegetable production is quite unique on Atauro, where fresh water is scarce and conditions often very dry (food staples are typically fish, seaweed and hardy cassava). Their vegetables such as greens are therefore in local demand. Aliteno Diak also sometimes sell their chickens in Dili.

The members of Aliteno Diak told us that they have often developed their agricultural skills through learning the hard way—working out how to access fresh water for the vegetables; learning what to feed the chickens to ensure health and good eggs; ensuring that produce is safe from theft from cats, snakes and even people. They have also strived to develop a good financial system. From their central petty cash, members can borrow small amounts of money and pay back with some interest, which in turn increases their store of petty cash.¹¹⁹

We ran the 'Participatory Indicators of Change' method with Aliteno Diak, and the second highest ranked indicator referred to the change experienced as a result of the petty cash and credit system. The group worded the indicator as follows:

We can sell produce so that we get money and we decide together to put the money in the petty cash. We can create credit for members to respond to personal necessities, but we return this money with interest so that the work we have put in does not get lost.¹²⁰

That the indicator was ranked second in importance indicates that Aliteno Diak sees the improvement of economic livelihoods as central in terms of outcomes they would like to see for themselves. The use of bean counters to indicate the change that had been achieved revealed change had occurred. The score for before Alola's intervention was zero, showing that the members had no collective financial system, and the score at the point of research was 44.¹²¹ The group explained the result by saying simply that 'in the past we did not know about credit but then we received training about this [through

117 Interview with Manuel Bareto, xefe suco Biqueli, Atauro, 16 September 2009.

118 Location mapping focus group discussion with Hakat ba Oin, suco Biqueli, Atauro, 16 September 2009.

119 Introductory focus group discussion with Aliteno Diak, suco Beloi, Atauro, 15 September 2009.

120 Participatory indicators of change focus group discussion with Aliteno Diak, suco Beloi, 15 September 2009.

121 *ibid.*

Alola] and then we knew about credit.¹²² They further explained that they were very pleased to gain this knowledge because in the past they had almost no disposable income, which posed a grave challenge to supporting their children's schooling. Now, the women of Aliteno Diak use the credit system to borrow small amounts of money to support their children's schooling, such as the purchase of exercise books and pens.¹²³

Thus far, the financial returns for Aliteno Diak have been limited. In 2008 the group achieved a total of fifty dollars of profit from the sale of vegetables, and thirty dollars in 2009 to the point of research in September. Their poultry activities had only just begun so they had not yet seen profit from this. We asked the group how much difference the small amounts of income had made in their lives. They explained that they use it to help with fulfilling some basic necessities, as they are fairly free of heavy customary ritual demands upon their financial resources:

[Our income] we feel is not yet enough to sustain our daily lives. But it helps a little ... Like we can buy some 'soap' [a term meaning basic household necessities]. In terms of our adat we don't have a lot of ceremonial obligations; it is important to help each other if a family member dies.¹²⁴

Like with the other groups, Aliteno Diak has not been dissuaded from their activities through the limited income generation. They are looking to the future, wanting to ensure that they can fulfil their children's needs and are happy for the opportunity to be able to work together collectively rather than individually or within only the household.¹²⁵

The group that has seen the greatest financial rate of return for their efforts—Beazoa—was suffering significant financial management issues at the time that we undertook our fieldwork. Beazoa had achieved a total gross profit of around one thousand dollars since they began their jewellery production activities, using natural local materials, in 2006. Alola sells their unique products in their Dili shop, and the group has also successfully used the national women's business fairs in Dili to promote their goods, particularly to foreigners. Alola had been working with the group for three months, though the then-leader of the group was not present during the research activities. The mostly female members of the group were keen to use the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with the male leader's use of the group's funds, and clearly wanted a change of leadership. However, they seemed reluctant to imagine a woman in the position that perhaps suggests unwillingness for the women of Beazoa to engage in such programs without a male in a leadership position.¹²⁶

The group members did, however, attest to having received sums of money (relatively good compared with other women's business groups surveyed in this research project) for the jewellery production. In terms of the work with Alola at this early stage, the greatest change in an economic sense has been due to the access to the Alola shop. We asked them about the change that their income has meant to their lives with one woman speaking about the importance of women not being reliant on men and contributing to household income generation:

122 *ibid.*

123 *ibid.*

124 Introductory focus group discussion with Aliteno Diak, suco Beloi, Atauro, 15 September 2009.

125 *ibid.*

126 Focus group discussion with Beazoa, suco Maqueli, Atauro, 14 September 2009.

For me, if we are just in the home waiting for the men to look for work that is not really good. Us women can also look for work. Even if it is not much we can also sustain our children's lives.¹²⁷

Another woman highlighted the importance of women's abilities to generate income by drawing on her own life:

In the past I was just at home, our husbands were the ones looking after livelihoods ... Then my husband died and [with] this work, it opened up a new road. We feel this is really fantastic for our households and our children ... like we can buy soap or maybe a kilo of rice.¹²⁸

Alola's strategy of not beginning with microfinance (that is, Alola lending money to the groups which would have to be repaid with interest) seemed to be important for building trust with the Atauro communities. Sancha told us that when she was undertaking initial consultations with community groups to identify potential beneficiaries, many groups were wary of partnering with Alola. This was partly because they had had negative experiences with microfinance organisations, not being able to repay their debts and finding this to be a very heavy burden of shame and dependence.¹²⁹ As with FKSH's case study and other stories that RMIT researchers have been told in other communities, people are often quite relieved not to receive sums, even quite small amounts, that they need to repay even if it means forfeiting short-term financial gain. As such Alola's strategy of focusing on training, capacity development and information sharing seems to better answer to the needs of Atauro communities.

All three groups have experienced some change to their economic livelihoods. The financial return may not be great, but it is symbolically and practically very important to the woman that they have earned some money through their substantial collective efforts. For all three groups, this represents a significant shift away from the typical paradigm of men in their households being the primary breadwinners, but also builds upon the cultural space open to women as financial managers and small business people. As in our other sites, the women of Hakat ba Oin, Aliteno Diak and Beazoia are particularly glad to be able to support their children's schooling. Particularly for Hakat ba Oin and Aliteno Diak, the female members do not seem to be disappointed with their financial returns to the extent of inhibiting their enthusiasm for the work. On the contrary, the women were evidently greatly proud of and empowered by their collective efforts, happy to continue striving toward the future. There was less of a sense of empowerment in terms of control over financial destiny evident in the members of Beazoia. However the membership of the group had remained fairly stable since 2006 and is likely to continue if the group is supported to resolve their organisational structure and financial management issues.

Question Two: Beneficiaries' participation and leadership in families and local communities, including empowerment of other women

Alola hopes that the women's activities in their small business groups will result in increased participation and leadership at both familial and community levels, and wants to see the groups empower other women in their local communities.

127 Focus group discussion with Beazoia, suco Maqueli, Atauro, 14 September 2009.

128 *ibid.*

129 Interview with Sancha Miis Salsinha, Atauro District Support Worker, suco Maqueli, Atauro, 15 September 2009.

a. Family leadership

The strengthening of women's leadership roles in their families or households was evident. In the cases of Hakat ba Oin and Aliteno Diak, the women have enlisted the support of their husbands so that their activities become a kind of partnership between wives and husbands. For Hakat ba Oin, this sense of partnership is even formalised to the point where they buy fresh fish from their husbands. Aliteno Diak's husbands are notably supportive, including Tomas, the husband of leader Anita. Tomas himself articulated that the women are in charge of the group but husbands are there to provide whatever support is needed, whether it be ideas or heavy labour.¹³⁰ He and Anita said that they share household work equally, recognising that they are both equally busy with livelihoods activities outside the home and therefore housework should not automatically fall to Anita as wife. The women of Hakat ba Oin and Aliteno Diak have through their own strategies overcome the potential challenge of husbands resistant to change to gender relations within their spousal relationship. Moreover, and as discussed in the previous section, women's economic participation and leadership in their families has increased markedly, with a particular emphasis upon supporting children's education. For example, the answer posited by a member of Hakat ba Oin to the question of why they like being part of the group was 'because we can see our children go to school'.¹³¹

b. Leadership within the groups

Within their own groups, which are primarily women's spaces, Hakat ba Oin and Aliteno Diak have developed efficient leadership structures and appear to work well together. While there is evident commitment from members, the women of Beazoa were at the point of research still very dependent on male leadership. Brazilian priest Francisco Moise, who has lived in Atauro for several years and has supported the establishment of various groups including Beazoa, is keen to see Beazoa stand on its own feet.¹³² However, at the point of research the group was still investing substantial symbolic authority in Padre Francisco, placing the responsibility for resolution of internal problems back onto him. While unhappy with another male leader, the women clearly did not see an option of a female head. Sancha said 'they are not brave enough to speak up so therefore we must facilitate leadership training with them about how women can muster the courage to become leaders'.¹³³ However, she also insightfully commented that the fact that Beazoa's women are talking about their leadership issues is one very positive step in the right direction toward empowerment and leadership development, and this has occurred through Alola opening up a needed discursive space supportive of women.¹³⁴

c. Leadership at a community level

There was not great evidence to suggest that those groups in Atauro supported by Alola were, at the point of research, extending their leadership abilities beyond their own groups into a community domain, particularly in terms of negotiating public

¹³⁰ Interview with Tomas Alves, suco Beloi, Atauro, 18 September 2009.

¹³¹ Location mapping focus group discussion with Hakat ba Oin, suco Biqueli, Atauro, 16 September 2009.

¹³² Interview with Padre Francisco Moise, suco Maqueli, Atauro, 14 September 2009.

¹³³ Interview with Sancha Miis Salsinha, Atauro District Support Worker, suco Maqueli, Atauro, 15 September 2009.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*

decision-making processes in the community. It is to be expected, however, that in developing female leadership competencies, the first domains in which to gain a sense of empowerment are within the women's space of the group and within families. Like the example of GFFTL's target group in Venilale shows, through careful efforts such as public speaking training and with long-term support, women's participation in typically male-dominated community processes can be supported. In 2010 Alola has worked to provide leadership training to their target groups, which is a positive step. In order for women to move into new roles providing community leadership, this may also necessitate the strategic support of male partners. For example, the case study of GFFTL's target group in Venilale illustrates the potential importance of women's groups working with a sympathetic male leader who can be an advocate for change to gender relations (in GFFTL's case the xefe suco of Fatulia in Venilale).

That said, as the next section discusses, the members of the groups have undertaken informal forms of leadership with other women in their communities by spreading information about reproductive and family health and choices. Alola was also seeking to encourage further leadership of other women by giving the groups some funding which they could use to establish a credit system, lending out money to other women and business groups. This was to happen directly after our field visit to Atauro. However, the Alola staff members allocated to the research project were surprised and concerned to learn about Beazoa's internal difficulties. Alola's beneficiary groups are clearly at different stages of readiness to move into new spheres, and Alola should be undertaking very close monitoring of their groups to ensure that their projects are tailored to the specificities of each group. Beazoa, for example, was in no state at that point to sufficiently handle new funds, and in fact this is likely to have made more acute existing stress about financial management.

It should be noted that Beazoa provides an important model to the Atauro community and beyond for how women as well as men with disabilities can be integrated into development processes and work toward self-sufficiency. Many of Beazoa's members are deaf and have speech difficulties, often acquired as a result of fishing activities requiring diving to great depths without proper diving gear. Yet often in Timor-Leste, community attitudes toward disabled peoples can be to treat them as unable to engage in various domains of life and perhaps indicative of mental deficiency. Beazoa members, both deaf and with full hearing, work successfully in partnership with one another, often communicating through sign language. In this sense, the group represents an important leadership initiative in terms of encouraging attitudinal and behavioural change in terms of disability.

Question Three: Reproductive and family health

a. Health, Timor-Leste and Atauro: Contextual factors

Health promotion in Timor-Leste is complicated by a wide range of contextual issues. Rural communities in particular face significant material challenges in terms of access to health information and services. This is certainly the case in Atauro, particularly for those aldeia and suco furthest from Vila Maumeta (the main town) and the centre of Beloi (which functions as a second kind of sub-district capital). For example, when we undertook surveys in remote aldeia Adara in suco Beloi, there was a health clinic but no staff manning it. Many of the Atauro communities such as Adara are situated at significant distance from one another and are mostly accessible by boat or foot only as there are very few strong land vehicles on the island and roads are either in very

poor condition or non-existent. Boat travel is expensive, even for locals, and a ride in a privately-owned four-wheel drive costs twenty-five dollars from the centre of Beloi to anywhere. This is a prohibitive cost in communities with little cash circulation. Transport and road difficulties obviously lessens the likelihood that people are going to travel to seek health services, or are able to access health services in times of emergencies.

The more remote communities in Atauro also have little contact with NGOs or government, and due to lack of electricity do not have access to media, greatly inhibiting access to information. Even radio is largely absent in many cases. DSW Sancha commented that in her opinion, the primary need of women in Atauro is access to information pertinent to women and gender, including health information. She said that it is common enough for young women and girls to become pregnant outside of marriage, and that there are likely to be unsafe abortions occurring. When unmarried girls become pregnant, this causes very significant challenges for them, one being the inability to continue education. Moreover, she told us that women often die in childbirth due lack of access to health professionals' support.¹³⁵

The material obstacles to realising better health in rural East Timorese communities says nothing of subjective reasons why East Timorese may not always seek to engage in modern forms of health practice when it is possible. In customary terms, the way that East Timorese often understand ill-health, death and reproduction of life differs substantially from modern scientific frameworks. Ancestors are seen to play a substantial role in influencing the bodily conditions of human communities, including pregnancy, according to whether ancestral dictates have been duly followed and balance and harmony is present within the kinship community. The influence of the Church, whether Catholic or Protestant, provides another framework through which Timorese communities negotiate health and reproduction.¹³⁶

Reproductive health and choice in particular is an exceptionally challenging area in which to work, particularly due to conservative religious frameworks. Sex is typically considered to be a subject that is not for discussion in the public realm, or if it is, it is only alluded to in very subtle ways. Partly as a result, there is often little biological knowledge about how for example pregnancy occurs, ideas on family planning, or how sexual diseases are transmitted. At a religious ideological level, the Church's consistent message is that sex should only be undertaken by married couples for primarily reproductive purposes and therefore should only be discussed in this context. It is very difficult for organisations to promote use of condoms or to talk about sex beyond the context of a means of reproduction by married couples, let alone address issues such as abortion or sexually transmitted infections. Moreover, due to the reticence to talk about sexual issues in a public realm, communities can shy away from engaging in organisations' overt attempts at reproductive health promotion. In Atauro as in other communities, the Catholic and Protestant Churches have apparently applied pressure to inhibit promotion of the use of condoms as a safe sex and contraceptive behavioural practice.

b. Distributing health information through supporting women's spaces and women-to-women informal networks

In this challenging context, Alola has adopted an interesting strategy of using their support for women's income generation groups as a means to influence health knowledge and practices, particularly in terms of reproductive, maternal and child health. The primary vehicle for Alola's distribution of health and reproductive choices

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

information is the women's income generation groups. Alola works in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Marie Stopes International. The group members spoke very enthusiastically about this as one of the most important areas of impact from Alola's project. They discussed how coming together in order to undertake income generation activities has allowed a women's space in which they can overcome inhibitions about talking about sensitive issues. Moreover, they can speak to one another about their specific issues and informally distribute the information throughout their local communities.

Hakat ba Oin, for example, initially came into contact with Alola through the DSW's distribution of reproductive health and family planning information in suco Biqueli. Suco Biqueli is staunchly Protestant, at least in those aldeia with which we had contact. As discussed in earlier sections, integration into the Church in Atauro Protestant communities may in fact be greater than in Timor-Leste's predominantly Catholic communities, where customary or animist beliefs often sit alongside and sometimes dominate religious beliefs. In Atauro's Protestant communities, notions of adat and lulik have fallen away to a very significant degree, effectively replaced by religious belief frameworks.

The women of Hakat ba Oin told us that they gladly received this reproductive information which they saw as greatly lacking and needed. They referred to the apparent frequency of domestic violence and incest issues, affecting women's and girl's reproductive choices and health. When we posed the broad question to Hakat ba Oin about the benefits of working with Alola, the following reason about access to information was posited, with the women identifying that they are not simply seeking to benefit financially through Alola. Moreover, they told us that Alola's strategy has also drawn men into a much more open dialogue than has previously been available:

Because when I don't meet with other women I'm a little bit scared, like in the past we worked with [local NGO] Siaun but they didn't have female staff. But just in the last year we've realised we need women because a woman to another woman communicate better with each other. Because I see like Senhora Sancha comes here to help and also to speak with women. This is greatly beneficial not because of money but because of good information. For example, just recently we talked about family health. This is really difficult, it is really against our religion so it is really difficult to talk about this. To say that two children is enough is a little difficult but with a good connection like with Alola giving this information, all mothers like it. Then quickly the men come because now the men also want to ask and talk about it, and then soon after that everyone is coming together at one time to talk so this is really beneficial, particularly for mothers.¹³⁷

Our research methods facilitated with Aliteno Diak also revealed the group members' subjective sense of importance they attribute to the change that access to health information has had in their lives. For example, with the 'Participatory Indicators of Change' method, the group defined and ranked as of primary importance a health-related indicator that read: 'I take my child to be vaccinated so that he/she has good health in the future'.¹³⁸ Moreover, Anita, the leader of Aliteno Diak, told us that Alola's support for their group has created change in her life because the group is an effective vehicle through which to receive, discuss and act upon otherwise-inaccessible information:

137 Location mapping focus group discussion with Hakat ba Oin, suco Biqueli, Atauro, 16 September 2009.

138 Participatory indicators of change focus group discussion with Aliteno Diak, suco Beloi, 15 September 2009.

[If I am by myself in the house I do not hear some 'secret words', like I don't hear information, [whereas I do if] cooking or working together in a group [with other women]].¹³⁹

Anita's feedback and the comments of the members of Hakat ba Oin suggests that although there may be cultural and religious restrictions on discussions about sex and related issues, communities—women as childbearers in particular—are relieved to receive sensitively-distributed information that allows them more control over health and reproduction. The women of Aliteno Diak explained that they have been persuaded of the necessity of looking after their own health by Alola's argument that if the women are in poor health, they will not be able to work to raise income: 'If we have good health then we can look for money; if we are sick we cannot'.¹⁴⁰ Previously, they had not made such a connection, or perhaps had been reticent to address issues of reproductive health and choice in their relationships due partly to seeing their own needs and power as secondary to their husbands' and families'. However, to understand the necessity of good health in these terms allows a way to advocate for themselves with their husbands and families, but still in terms of collective or complementary rather than individual or competitive gain.

Lucas Morais, the head of the Ministry of Health's presence in Atauro, is another enthusiastic supporter of the Alola project's health dimension. He said that Alola's project has aided the Ministry of Health to reach parts of Atauro that they had not previously, and that the information is greatly needed, citing the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections. According to Lucas, there has already been one individual who has died from HIV/AIDS on Atauro. He said that usually it is only when women are referred to the Ministry's clinic for treatment that they are able to access information about health and reproductive choice—and by that time, it is usually too late. Moreover, there is the great benefit of woman-to-woman communication of information, in a face-to-face, intimate manner that is sensitive to the cultural context:

The benefits [of Alola's project] is with mothers. We saw that in the past they did not understand about health, how to look after one's health ... With the individuals [usually education would come] at the time of consultation, when a woman comes already sick to have a consultation. So therefore with this program we see that there are really strong benefits, because a woman can be open about what she knows [with other women] ... Perhaps if she feels sick, take for example my sister, she as a woman to talk with me as a man maybe I can't share what I know because I am embarrassed with my sister. In the past the mothers just walked their separate paths in their own households, they did not have a group like the fish drying group [Hakat ba Oin]. But now when they go to dry their fish they begin to share their concerns with each other. This is a really great benefit because at the time there were no activities and the women were just in their homes, they could not access information or share experiences. But when they started to build their groups they began to help each other, speak to each and say 'come here because you can access good planning'.¹⁴¹

139 Interview with Anita Alves, head of Aliteno Diak, suco Beloi, Atauro, 18 September 2009.

140 Participatory indicators of change focus group discussion with Aliteno Diak, suco Beloi, Atauro, 15 September 2009.

141 Interview with Lucas Morais, Ministry of Health, suco Maqueli, Atauro, 14 September 2009.

Lucas also referred, in subtle terms, to how Alola's project has helped to improve the mental and emotional health of women by providing them a positive means of motivation and activity that they may not find in homes where domestic violence—physical or psychological—occurs:

[In terms of] attitudes toward each other within the home, after involvement in this project this began to improve. For example a mother would come here in bad condition because of abuse, looking at the health aspect [of abuse]. The environment [in the home] was not very good. But after creating this group, there has been a big change because a mother has something else to focus on.¹⁴²

It appears that while it may be easy to initially understand Alola's Community Development project as predominantly focused on supporting women's income generation, the area of greatest impact in Atauro has been on improving women's access to information about sensitive health issues. It would pay for Alola to further investigate how the women are applying such information and negotiating sexual dynamics with husbands and partners to enhance their health and reproductive choice.

Question Four: Other impacts

a. Organisational development and diverse partnerships

For the groups with which Alola has worked for longer (Hakat ba Oin and Aliteno Diak), there has been effective support for the development of clear, efficient organisational structures and processes as well as division of responsibilities. Both groups were able to talk us through their organisational structure diagrams. For example, Hakat ba Oin works as seven sub-groups, each with five members. All the groups do the same activity (production of dried fish) and run their own finances but are organised into these small groups for ease and efficiency. The seven sub-groups come together for general meetings. Aliteno Diak, which has seventeen members, has organised labour so that each day, there are two members who work with oversight from Anita as the leader. Two members are in reserve to be called upon to fill gaps in the regular rotating schedule. Beazoa is very keen on receiving Alola's assistance in developing more effective organisational structures.

Alola's strategy of working with other organisational partners such as the Ministries of Health, Social Solidarity, Community Development and Agriculture as well as Marie Stopes International is also effective in delivering a project with broad but integrated impacts. Moreover, it extends the groups' networks and sense of subjective integration into national development processes, countering the sense of isolation that we found seemed to prevail in those communities that had yet to have received organisational support.

b. Changing attitudes about gender-based violence

Not only has Alola worked to distribute health information to their target groups, they have also distributed other types of information pertinent to women and gender relations, such as about gender-based violence and trafficking of women and children. We found some indications to suggest that this information distribution has begun to influence attitudinal and behavioural changes, and perhaps Alola's work with these groups account for the relatively high rate of disagreement with husbands hitting their wives indicated in the survey results. The third-ranked indicator of change that Aliteno

¹⁴² *ibid.*

Diak developed referred to domestic violence, worded 'We teach our children that you cannot hit and swear at each other. Wives and husbands also cannot hit each other'. The group's score for how this statement reflected their situation before Alola's intervention as twelve, contrasted with a score of thirty-three at the time of our research. A member of Aliteno Diak explained the positive consequences represented by this change:

In the past we did not know to teach our children and they also did not listen to us. Then when we received training we were able to hear [about this], we were able to teach our children so that they also hear. If our husbands beat us we are also able to tell them, we have received training and then must look after us, not hit us.

Here the women are attributing attitudinal change in a range of ways, cognisant of both the immediate needs for change as well as the longer-term benefits of it to their households and families, particularly through their children's education. Such a comment also suggests the use of specialised acquired knowledge (through training) as a way for women to assert a higher status in gender relations.

Question Five: Recommendations

a. Careful monitoring and tailoring interventions to suit the individual target groups

It is important to acknowledge that the two Alola staff members involved in the project as co-researchers were relatively new to Alola and to the Advocacy program. However, during the research it was apparent that the staff were previously unaware of some of the specificities of dynamics within Atauro and the individual beneficiary groups. This is not to suggest that the DSW has not done an excellent job of working with the target groups and providing the main link to Alola. All groups were enthusiastic about the work she was doing. However, it is suggested that Alola reconsider the communication and monitoring mechanisms, which emphasise DSWs travelling to Alola's Dili office to make monthly reports and to be involved in a central meeting. It may be better to augment this strategy with supporting the national staff to have more of a regular presence within the district communities, allowing an extra level of transparency, checks and information-gathering. This would also support the subjective integration of the groups with Alola, as face-to-face relationship forging is integral in the East Timorese context.

Moreover, project strategies such as providing funding to establish community credit systems may need to be considered on a group-by-group basis rather than enforced as a blanket initiative, allowing for the fact that beneficiary groups are undoubtedly at different stages of their development and should therefore be supported differently. That also allows for other contextual tailoring, such as considering needs particular to specific localities. In order for national staff to develop strategies and projects appropriate to the contexts in which Alola works, staff need time and opportunities to experience the communities for themselves.

b. Continued support for existing beneficiary groups

In order to realise extended impact, we make the straightforward recommendation to Alola to work with beneficiary groups into the long term. An example such as GFFTL's case study shows what can be achieved when support is intensive and long-term, yet moves at an appropriate pace. All groups were keen to secure Alola's support into the future. In the context of Beazoia, Padre Francisco suggested that Alola help to improve and vary the group's goods production.¹⁴³ As with all income generation groups working in the challenging Timor-Leste market, there is always the benefit of critical reflection, based on sophisticated market analysis, about whether groups are meeting real demand and successfully accessing consumer markets. Aliteno Diak and Hakat ba Oin asked for Alola's help with forms of material support they consider critical to their production activities, such as a larger water tank for Aliteno Diak to use for watering their vegetables. If Alola is unable and unwilling to provide further material support, they need to articulate the reasons for this to the groups to ensure that they understand Alola's strategy and maintain a happy consensus when working together. Moreover, Alola could encourage processes through which the groups come up with their own solutions to such challenges.

c. Extending impacts to more remote areas

In Atauro and perhaps in the other district sites, Alola has an opportunity, if it is deemed that sufficient resources exist, to extend project intervention across Atauro. The DSW was keen to emphasise the difference in information and material access between those areas of Atauro that have greater contact with organisations and national processes—typically those areas in which Alola currently works—and other more isolated areas. We undertook gender surveys in many of these communities by travelling to them on small fishing boats in often very rough seas as well as undertaking an unsuccessful attempt to reach a number of the communities via road. As such the team experienced firsthand the challenges of travel and transport and the realities of isolation, especially as we moved away from the more bustling Vila and Beloi seaside communities. The Atauro representatives of the Ministries of Health and Community Development encouraged Alola to extend work across the five Atauro suco in our interviews with them.¹⁴⁴ However, in order to do so, it is likely that there may need to be more than one District Support Worker, or that her travel and work is supported in new ways.

¹⁴³ Interview with Padre Francisco Moise, suco Maqueli, Atauro, 14 September 2009.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Lucas Morais, Ministry of Health, suco Maqueli, Atauro, 14 September 2009; and Interview with Francisco da Costa, Ministry of Community Development, suco Maqueli, Atauro, 14 September 2009.



A member of CHT completes a survey, Ermera



A member of Aliteno Diak with Fatima and Carmenesa, Atauro



Madalena, GFFTL's local facilitator, Venilale



Mario facilitating a survey with a man from suco Aiteas, Manatuto



Filomena and Ambrosio interviewing Regina, Venilale



Gizela, FKSH Director and Alex, Trocaire Livelihoods Manager, workshop, Dili



Ambrosio and Mayra practise interviewing, training, Dili



Alcina draws a Location Map, Venilale



Aida and Carmenesa undertaking surveys, Ermera



Anna with older woman, suco Aillii, Manatuto



Francisca introducing the group activities, Manatuto



HAMOR's Social Relationship Map, Ermera



Fatima after completing a survey with a woman from Biqueli, Atauro



Eida undertaking a survey with an older woman in suco Beloi, Atauro

6. Grupo Feto Foinsa'e Timor Lorosa'e (GFFTL)

6.1 About GFFTL

GFFTL (Grupo Feto Foinsa'e Timor Lorosa'e, or East Timor Young Women's Group) originated in 1998 as a student organisation to support the independence movement. Initially it was part of the Konselu Solidaridade Universitariu Timor-Leste (the East Timor Student Solidarity Council). The founding members of GFFTL saw a need for an organisation run by young women that could work with women in rural areas. On that basis, GFFTL members decided to continue the organisation after the popular consultation on 30 August 1999. While national independence had been achieved, GFFTL members saw that the achievement of women's independence would require a long and continuing struggle.

GFFTL became an independent NGO in October 2001, and has worked intensively in Baucau, Viqueque and Lautem districts. GFFTL's model of gender change envisages women and men working together in their everyday lives in ways that support the empowerment of women and an equal balance of responsibilities.¹⁴⁵

6.2 About the project: 'Women's Literacy and Sustainable Income Generation'

Project background

Since 2005 GFFTL has worked in eight suco across three districts (Baucau, Lautem and Viqueque) with target groups each comprising fifteen women with little or no formal education. The overarching goal of the project 'Women's Literacy and Sustainable Income Generation' is to empower women to create social transformation through alternative, Freirean-inspired education. That is, GFFTL aims to empower the target groups to be engaged in community public life as well as taking a greater leadership role in their own households, and to be economically and socially independent. GFFTL facilitates ongoing literacy and numeracy education, as well as providing periodic social training and supporting income generation activities. The NGO supported a local literacy facilitator to manage the group on a daily level. The project closed in the case study location, suco Fatulia in Venilale sub-district, at the end of 2010.

¹⁴⁵ For further information about GFFTL, see Trembath and Grenfell, *Mapping the Pursuit of Gender Equality*, op. cit., pp. 42-44.

Literacy is a focus program for GFFTL that is offered to women but without preventing our male compatriots to also learn. After the participants have gained literacy skills, they can integrate these skills through income generation activities. Income generation is often referred to as post-literacy, and involves developing small business initiatives with local products such as bananas, taro, sweet potato and breadfruit.

GFFTL's programs were initially run in eleven districts; only Oecusse and Covalima were not part of this process. However when GFFTL implemented this program we met many obstacles such as transport difficulties and funding limitations, so GFFTL then limited the target groups. Currently GFFTL implements these programs to target groups in Lautem district (two groups), Baucau district (three groups) and Viqueque district (four groups). Participants are all types of women and each group has fifteen participants.

Education is very important to national development in Timor-Leste. Education becomes a basis that allows access to other sectors such as health, economy and social politics. Education has two parts; formal and non-formal. In the time of Portuguese and Indonesian occupation many women did not have the opportunity to access formal education. This is also an impact of the patriarchal system in Timor-Leste. This lack of access has truly affected the participation of women which is minimal, particularly in the area of education. According to the statistics, around 54 per cent of East Timorese women are illiterate.

Literacy is education for adults who did not finish school and in the past did not have an opportunity to undertake formal education. Based on the percentage of illiterate people, non-formal education particularly literacy is a national question; everyone needs to look to this problem, from the state to civil society. Many people are struggling with great effort to rid or reduce illiteracy in Timor-Leste.

Filomena Fuca, Director of GFFTL,
excerpt from 'Analysis of the Impacts of the Literacy and Income Generation Project',
March 2010

Project narrative summary: Goals, objectives, outputs and activities

Outlined below are the project goals, objectives, outputs and activities, as identified by GFFTL in RMIT-facilitated training in Phase One. We used an abbreviated logical framework to determine these categories.

Project: Women's literacy and sustainable income generation

	Narrative Summary
Goal	Local communities are empowered to create social transformation through alternative education. In this context, social transformation means that women have the capacity, opportunity and mentality to involve themselves in the community's public life, as well as household life; and can independently sustain their lives.
Objectives	In eight suco across three districts (Baucau, Lautem and Viqueque), GFFTL works together with one beneficiary group per suco (each comprised of fifteen women who have had little to no formal education), so as to: build the participants' literacy and numeracy capacity; through social training, increase participants' understanding of a range of issues relevant to their life; and increase participants' income through a sustainable income program.
Outputs	In total 120 women (across eight beneficiary groups) have the ability to write, read and count to a basic level. Participants with small children can apply the basic knowledge acquired to assist with schoolwork. All beneficiary groups receive annual training about domestic violence, gender, public speaking, human rights and CEDAW. All beneficiary groups undertake monthly discussions in which community members themselves identify priority issues to discuss and look for a solution together. In all eight areas in which GFFTL works, income generation groups have been formed, and are raising income for the groups themselves and for the families of the group members.
Activities	Needs assessment in Baucau, Lautem and Viqueque. GFFTL works with local authorities to identify participants. GFFTL gives pre-testing to participants to gauge their level of literacy/numeracy, if any, and then continues with the learning process. GFFTL gives social training about: teaching methodologies; gender, domestic violence, GBV, human rights, CEDAW and public speaking; and about how to make the local products to be sold by the income generation groups. Continuous monitoring and evaluation.

6.3 Gender and community in context: Venilale sub-district

GFFTL chose suco Fatulia in sub-district Venilale as the sample location for its project evaluation. In order to better understand and place in context the changes emanating from GFFTL's project intervention in this area, we sought to develop some understanding of the community and its gender dynamics, particularly in suco Fatulia. To do this, the research team undertook a 'Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Survey' across the sub-district. In Venilale we undertook the survey in four suco, covering a very sizeable distance: Fatulia, the site of GFFTL's project intervention (33.7 per cent), Uma Ana Ico (32.6 per cent), Uai-Laha (21.7 per cent), and Uma Ana Ulu (9.8 per cent). A small percentage of responses (2.2 per cent) were from a fifth suco, Uatu-Haco (Question 2). Through this survey process we travelled across the sub-district, collecting data, having many informal conversations with direct project beneficiaries and other community members, and undertaking observational analysis. This section provides a basic introduction to Venilale and reports on the results of our gender survey in the region. This is an important basis for establishing gender dynamics in social life in the area, identifying key gender-based needs and challenges in the region, evaluating to what extent GFFTL's work with its specific beneficiary group has impacted upon broader community gender dynamics, and considering how the beneficiaries can sustain and extend change in their social interactions with families and community peers.

About Venilale sub-district

Venilale is situated in the cool central highlands of Baucau district, approximately fifty kilometres south of the district capital. Located on the main road between the population centres of Baucau and Viqueque, the sub-district capital of Venilale, Vila, is relatively well-served by transport services to both the north and south coasts. Outer areas of the sub-district, such as parts of the suco in which we based our study, are more significantly isolated. Venilale Vila is marked by historic restored Portuguese architecture, including the library, well-regarded schools and the church. It is also the location for the weekly sub-district market, which focuses on trade in agricultural products. While ground water resources in parts of the region are relatively plentiful, leading to a high level of irrigated cropping such as rice production, we found suco Fatulia far drier with difficult access to water. In addition to Tetun, three Austronesian languages – Waima'a, Midiki and Cai Rui – are commonly spoken, as well as Macassae.¹⁴⁶ Venilale was a popular retreat during Portuguese colonial times, and became an important base of support for the independence struggle. Like all locations in this study, Venilale is a primarily subsistence agricultural economy.

This section will focus primarily on suco Fatulia, one of Venilale's eight suco, as the site of GFFTL's project intervention. Fatulia is an outer suco with significant geographic coverage. The suco office and community centre, where GFFTL's literacy project was run, is positioned a significant distance from both the sub-district centre and the road that runs from Baucau southwards. Other parts of the suco run along this major road. Suco Fatulia comprises four aldeia. The majority of GFFTL's group participants come from aldeia Uaitobono and Baha-dato, while a further two come from Uaitoliana. The fourth aldeia, Osuwaki, is much farther away. There are four uma lulik in suco Fatulia which follow the aldeia (so each aldeia represents a clan), which are all members of the *uma rotan*, representing substantial cultural integration across the suco. The *uma rotan* is responsible for local political rule of these four clans, and the xefe suco is accountable to the *uma rotan*.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Timor-Leste Research, 'Venilale', Globalism Research Centre, www.timor-leste.org/place/venilale.html, accessed 3 May 2010.

¹⁴⁷ Location mapping focus group discussion with GFFTL beneficiaries, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 27 October 2009, and interview with Constancio Jose do Rego, xefe suco of Fatulia, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 30 October 2009.

GFFTL chose to undertake their literacy and income generation project in Venilale because the organisation held that Venilale had very significant issues of educational limitations and poverty. Our survey results support this analysis. Of our four research sites in this study, Venilale has the highest percentage of respondents who reported no schooling or some primary schooling (42.4 per cent) and an additional 14.1 per cent had had no schooling or some primary schooling but had attended some form of skills training or course (Question 4). Only 18.5 per cent of respondents had completed secondary school, while a further 22.6 per cent had undertaken some degree of secondary schooling and had attended a professional skills course. By a small margin, Venilale has the highest rate of self-designated illiteracy of our four sites (31.5 per cent of respondents), and a large minority (23.9 per cent) who reported limited literacy (Question 6). Only 44.6 per cent claimed to be literate, less than our other three research sites. An overwhelming majority of respondents (77.2 per cent) reported economic difficulties—a larger majority than in the other sites. Educational, literacy and financial status data combined, the statistics suggest that Venilale residents face substantial challenges in terms of livelihoods and opportunities for personal and community development.

When we asked GFFTL project participants what was important for us as outsiders to understand about their suco, they talked extensively and eloquently about the challenges posed by lack of electricity connection, limited access to water and minimal transport options. Without electricity that is supplied only to the small suco office and community facilities through solar panels, families burn kerosene lamps to provide light at night. Women and children are typically water collectors. The women from aldeia Uaitobono spend an average of two hours per day collecting water (two round trips of half an hour each way), as well as expending considerable energy carrying this water to their homes and their vegetable and rice fields. The closest river is inaccessible to them, and so everyone collects water from one water point, built upon a natural spring. Baha-dato has two water sources but one of them has very little water during the dry seasons so some of the community needs to walk a long distance. The women of Baha-dato said that they need to collect water several times a day because of the many people in their households.

Beyond limiting access to information (discussed further below), water and electricity difficulties can have significant gendered impacts. It increases women's workloads and negatively affects child and maternal health, as women and children spend more time at home and are typically involved in household chores more than men. This is reflected in one of GFFTL's target group participant's explanations:

In my thinking, first about water and the impact on us women, commonly in Timorese culture it is the women who must work in the kitchen, women must look after the things in the house, so the impact is on us because we are the ones carrying the water. We never have very good health because of water: our water source is not well assured because it lies underneath the road. When it rains dirty water enters our water sources, we who consume it get sick. Also the water is far. They say you should wash twice a day but us who live in that far part sometimes wash only once ... About electricity ... usually if we use candles or ground candlenut we don't get sick, but if we burn kerosene we always get sick from its smoke. It makes babies sick constantly with runny noses, because when you burn kerosene the smoke is black.¹⁴⁸

148 Location mapping focus group discussion with GFFTL beneficiaries, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 27 October 2009.

Another adds:

[W]hen we burn a lamp that uses kerosene the smoke is always really strong so children get blocked noses. We go to sisters' hospital or the state hospital and they are always really angry with us. They say you can't burn lamps close to children but in our situation you can't really avoid the lamp because our lives require the lamps, we don't have electricity so what are we to use?¹⁴⁹

According to the participants and the xefe suco Constancio Jose do Rego, limited infrastructure also has the effect of creating stress in families and communities, leading to conflict and sometimes violence, including gender-based violence.¹⁵⁰ We ourselves from the research team witnessed a situation where community members, particularly women, were vehemently arguing about the use of water from the suco community centre tank (the water only comes through attached pipes once every few days). A participant explained why such conflict can arise:

[I]n our village we all often go to our small gardens to water the vegetables, so one will go to collect water, another will go too and take the other's water. They will fight, swear at each other and be violent ... This fighting can occur between women to women, men to men, men and women ...¹⁵¹

Another participant extended this explanation, relating what gendered impacts can be felt in her household due to the difficult water situation:

The water source is far so if there is an urgent reason to leave the house or we need to prepare breakfast, I might send the children to fetch water, but if they refuse to go, I will ask my husband. He says, 'you women just sit and do what? You want to order me every day to fetch water.' So there is no water to wash children and the wife and husband might fight, [or] children and their mother can fight because of water. This is the impact in the household.¹⁵²

The women also spoke about the impact of limited access to health services, and how in particular the lack of infrastructure in general impacted on them, including one who described what can occur during child birth.

[I]n our immediate areas or villages there is not a health clinic so we must walk far, into Venilale town. If we encounter disaster, like the disaster that just happened where a woman went into labour in her house and was going to walk but couldn't because of the distance, so people had to carry her to the main road and then look for a car to take her to the clinic, and that is difficult because it is not like Dili where vehicles come and go constantly ... Our health clinic is really far from us. And in our clinic there are not the facilities for child birth so this is our difficulty. When a pregnant woman is to give birth sometimes the mother and child die because of this kind of situation.¹⁵³

Transport difficulties were seen as a problem in other ways as well. Many vehicles do not enter suco Fatulia because of the poor roads, and as one participant said 'When we

149 *ibid.*

150 *ibid.*, and Interview with Constancio Jose do Rego, xefe suco of Fatulia, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 30 October 2009.

151 Location mapping focus group discussion with GFFTL beneficiaries, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 27 October 2009.

152 *ibid.*

153 *ibid.*

go to sell vegetables that we have planted, there must also be transport. If there isn't transport, we keep the vegetables one or two days and then they go bad.'¹⁵⁴ Discussions with project beneficiaries speak to how infrastructural limitations in many East Timorese rural communities such as Fatulia lead to multiple, gendered impacts, affecting the shape of social relations. Below we report on the specific findings of the 'Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Survey'.

Knowledge

The percentage of survey respondents to Question 12 who reported not having heard about the idea of gender (55.4 per cent) and those who were not sure if they had heard of it (15.2 per cent) is slightly higher than in Atauro and Ermera. This significant proportion of the community who have not even heard of gender speaks to the challenges of promoting change in this area, something that GFFTL and its beneficiaries have experienced. Female and male responses about access to information about gender were statistically very similar. GFFTL group participants made some interesting comments about the effect that the lack of electricity and other infrastructural challenges have had on the community in terms of limiting access to information about gender, the impact of which was explained by the local group co-ordinator, Mada:

[I]n our aldeia Uaitobono, the electricity and water situation is really difficult. We don't really hear clear information because newspapers are hard to find. News from television or radio is also very difficult to access. In our area only a few can access news through television and radio. For us, it is only the church community representative who hears news ... [F]or those women in our aldeia who do not participate in NGO programs, they never hear [about gender] ... [O]ften when we talk the men say 'now that women have rights you are really arrogant'.¹⁵⁵

Difficulties with access to media information are reflected in the survey results, especially in relation to Question 13. Of those respondents who had heard about gender, only 22.2 per cent had done so through the media, with NGOs or the UN being a much more common source of information (48.1 per cent). This suggests a high level of civil society presence in the region—not surprising given Venilale's proximity to Timor-Leste's second largest city Baucau. Small percentages of respondents had also heard about gender through friends and family (11.1 per cent), religious leaders (11.1 per cent), teachers (11.1 per cent), and government (7.4 per cent). Very similarly to the other sites, 70.9 per cent of respondents who reported hearing about gender said that they felt they knew what gender means, and a strong majority of these (85.0 per cent) said they felt it was a helpful idea to apply to their own lives (Question 16).

Attitudes

a. Gender roles and relations within the family

In terms of measuring whether there are gender-differentiated sets of aspirations for the future of female and male children (Questions 35 and 36), the results show that the majority of Venilale respondents wanted their children, female or male, to go to university (77.2 per cent for female children, 68.1 per cent for male children), showing an overwhelming desire for educational advancement for both female and male children. In Venilale, there was the highest agreement rate to the statement 'It is better that a

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

man is head of a family rather than a woman' of the four research sites (Question 10). Almost 80 per cent of respondents either agreed (51.1 per cent) or strongly agreed (28.3 per cent) with this statement, while only 10.8 per cent were in disagreement or strong disagreement. Men were somewhat more likely to be in agreement or strong agreement with 84.6 per cent responding positively as opposed to 75.5 of female respondents. While needing further analysis than what is possible in this report, it is possible to suggest that through this data that parents of both sexes wish to see equal opportunities in education and work for their children's generation, there remains a demand on the current adult generation that males be head of a household no matter who is earning an income or the delineation of other familial responsibilities.

b. Violence against women

Slightly more Venilale respondents were in agreement or strong agreement (51.1 per cent) in Question 18 with the statement 'I can accept it if a man hits his wife if she has done something wrong', rather than disagreement or strong disagreement (44.5 per cent). Within this, there was a higher rate of female agreement with the idea that there are circumstances where a husband can legitimately hit his wife (47.2 per cent of female respondents) than male (41 per cent).

As for Question 24, the resolution of domestic violence (of primarily a physical nature) was considered by a vast majority of respondents (90.2 per cent) to be best resolved within the household or family. This is the highest result from the four sites in favour of familial resolution (with Atauro 84.4 per cent, Ermera 70.7 per cent and Manatuto 65.5 per cent). The answer with the next highest ranking of responses was 'resolution by local leader', at just 4.3 per cent. A gender analysis of responses showed very similar response rates by females and males.

Despite the very strong preference for familial resolution of domestic violence, a majority of respondents favoured police and court resolution of cases of sexual violence (Question 25), reflecting a common perception across Timor-Leste that domestic violence is not a crime and is within the ambit of customary resolution processes. At 68.5 per cent, this is a strong preference for police and court resolution as compared with the other research sites. Only Manatuto showed a similar result at 69.0 per cent, while the preference for this form of resolution was statistically lower in Ermera (52.2 per cent) and Atauro (45.9 per cent). In Venilale, following preferential ranking of police and court resolution came 'resolution by local leader' (13.0 per cent) and familial or household resolution (8.7 per cent). Female and male preference for police and court resolution was statistically very similar (69.8 per cent and 66.7 per cent respective). However, while 12.8 per cent of males favoured familial or household resolution of sexual violence, only 5.7 per cent of female respondents believed that this was the best social structure to support the resolution of sexual violence. Women were also more likely to favour local leader resolution than men (15.1 per cent and 10.3 per cent respectively).

In selecting one response in Question 26 that best explains the most common reason for a husband hitting his wife, almost one-third of respondents (32.6 per cent) said that this occurs because of the wife does not accept what her husband says. A similar percentage (29.3 per cent) chose the reason that the husband is stressed about problems such as money and family issues, while a further 12.0 per cent selected the reason that a wife has not adequately fulfilled her domestic responsibilities. Male respondents were less likely to select the reason placing the husband's stress as central, with the two most common responses by males saying that wives are to blame in 30.8 per cent of instances because

the wife not accepting what her husband says, and 20.5 per cent because the wife creates a problem by not fulfilling her domestic duties. In comparison, the second highest ranked answer by female respondents was about a husband's stress (28.3 per cent).

Together, these statistics reveal a community where domestic violence is considered an acceptable practice by over half of the community and where domestic violence can often be seen as incited by women, suggestive of a significant patriarchal element of married relationships. In this context, working to empower older married women through projects such as GFFTL's is an important move, albeit one that needs to be carefully managed to ensure further conflict is not generated.

c. Customary culture

In Question 21 the respondents were asked to choose the option most suitable to them, in response to the statement '*Barlake* is not good for women'. A higher percentage of Venilale respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (48.9 per cent) with this statement than indicated agreement (35.4 per cent). The next section looks at gendered behavioural norms amongst Venilale residents.

Behaviour

a. Familial relations and division of labour

The majority of respondents in Venilale reported in Question 10 that their primary activity each day is either agricultural labour (56.5 per cent) or domestic labour (21.7 per cent). A small percentage said they go to school (9.8 per cent). Other options registered very small percentages: handcrafts (3.3 per cent), small business (2.2 per cent), working in a public office (2.2 per cent) or undertaking local leadership positions (2.2 per cent).

A gender analysis of results reveals clear indications of a gender division of labour, indicating a preference for men working outside the house and women within the house. In comparison to the 71.8 per cent of men who reported their primary daily activity as agricultural labour, only 45.3 per cent of female respondents chose this option. In contrast, 35.8 per cent of female respondents said that they are primarily engaged in domestic labour, compared with a very small 2.6 per cent of male respondents. Interestingly as well, 15.4 per cent of male respondents said they are engaged in educational activities, as compared with just 5.7 per cent of female respondents. We also examined the gender division of labour for specific tasks, as outlined below:

- *Cooking* (Question 28): A large majority (73.9 per cent) attributed this as the primary responsibility of females in the household, either older females (54.3 per cent) or young females (19.6 per cent). For 23.9 per cent of respondents, they said that cooking is the equal responsibility of females and males.
- *Fetching water* (Question 29): In Venilale 64.1 per cent of respondents said that the responsibility is equally shared between males and females, though 19.6 per cent said that it is the responsibility of older females. Male respondents were more likely to emphasise male roles in water collection than women, with 79.5 per cent of male respondents attesting to the equal gender division of responsibility, as compared with just 52.8 per cent of female respondents. A further 41.6 per cent of female respondents attributed the primary responsibility to either older or younger females.
- *Fetching firewood* (Question 30): Similarly to the fetching of water, the majority of respondents (69.2 per cent) said this is the joint responsibility of females and

males, while a further 19.8 per cent said it is the responsibility of older females. Again, male respondents were more likely than female respondents to emphasise joint responsibility (81.6 per cent and 60.4 per cent respectively), with more female respondents attesting to fetching firewood being the sole responsibility of females (older or younger).

- *Working in fields or food gardens* (Question 32): In Venilale agricultural labour is more likely to be a male responsibility. While a significant minority (42.4 per cent) said it is shared work, 46.7 per cent of respondents said that it is the primary responsibility of older males.
- *Cleaning the house* (Question 34): This was clearly the overwhelming responsibility of females in Venilale, with 53.3 per cent of respondents saying it is the responsibility of older females, and 32.6 per cent saying it is the responsibility of younger females.
- *Looking for money* (Question 31): While a little over half of the respondents (53.8 per cent) said that the responsibility for household income generation is shared between males and females, one-third (33.0 per cent) said it is the primary responsibility of older males. While 20.8 per cent of female respondents credited older females as having primary responsibility for income generation in their households, no male respondents did so.
- *Controlling household money* (Question 33): Like in the other sites, a very large majority of respondents (80.4 per cent) said that older females have primary responsibility for controlling household finances, and only 9.8 per cent attested to older males' primary responsibility for this task.

In this context of highly gendered divisions of labour and responsibility, a project like GFFTL's that encourages women to spend regular time engaging in community activities outside the home and becoming income generators represents a significant change to dominant gender norms.

Questions 37 to 39 investigate the decision-making behaviours of married partners, in terms of the following areas:

- *Use of household finances*: A very significant majority of Venilale respondents (89.5 per cent) said that this is an area of joint decision-making responsibility. While the entirety (100 per cent) of male respondents said that they and their wives make decisions about money together, only 81.4 per cent of female respondents did so. A further 12.5 per cent of female respondents claimed primary responsibility in this area, and 6.3 per cent said that their husbands typically have primacy over such decisions.
- *Teaching the children of the household (including discipline)*: The majority of respondents said that this is a mutual decision-making area (78.9 per cent).
- *Organising the time of the respondent*: A smaller majority (50.9 per cent) said this is a joint responsibility of husbands and wives. The gender-differentiated statistical results show that where decisions are not made together, it is more likely that wives are in charge of organising both their own time and the time of their husbands. For example, half of female respondents (50.0 per cent) said that they make their own decisions about the use of their time, as compared with just 28.0 per cent of males. Of male respondents 16.0 per cent attributed decision-making responsibility to their wives. Smaller again, just 3.1 per cent of female respondents said that their husbands made decisions about how the wife should use her time.

b. Culture

Responses to Question 27, which asks whether usually it is a groom or bride who moves to live with his or her spouse's family and community, suggests a strongly patrilineal culture in Venilale (72.8 per cent of responses saying that it is the wife who usually moves), at least in this regard. In 15.2 per cent of cases the respondents' families they follow a matrilineal tradition while in 12.0 per cent of cases families do not follow any particular custom but decide according to individual circumstances.

Survey results and discussions with community members reveal Venilale to be marked by significant infrastructural, economic and educational limitations, low levels of community knowledge about gender, substantial acceptance of domestic violence and women's responsibility for violence they experience, and clear gender divisions of roles and responsibilities which emphasise women's connection with the domestic realm. In this community context, the next section assesses the impact that GFFTL has had in effecting gender change in Venilale.

6.4 Project impact in Venilale sub-district

The anecdotal experience of GFFTL regarding the difficulty of working on gender in Timor-Leste is well confirmed by the survey data analysed above. Given all the other challenges of working in Timor-Leste, attempting to bring about change in a community when the majority of people there are unfamiliar with what that change may mean could only be extremely challenging. In attempting to inspire women then, as GFFTL has in suco Fatulia in Venilale, it is important that readers of this report take the statistical information presented above as being indicative of the broader social terrain in which their efforts are taking place. Not only is there a high percentage of answers indicating little or no confidence in terms of what 'gender' might actually mean, but when half of the survey respondents also suggest that it is appropriate for a man to hit his wife, it would confirm much ground work on gender equality still needs to be done. These kinds of statistics help to remind us, in a simple short-hand form, of the cultural conditions that frame the work of an organisation such as GFFTL and also the efforts of local women working within their communities for change. So much of their resources need to go into justifying and re-justifying their efforts, and into explanations and socialisation of concepts and ideas that some international actors in particular may assume are a given. Despite this, and as the case study below demonstrates, impacts can be made in both planned for and in unexpected ways.

GFFTL's project implementation in Venilale sub-district

From 2005 until 2010, GFFTL worked with a group of fifteen women from suco Fatulia in sub-district Venilale. These women come from aldeia Uaitobono, Baha-dato and Uaitoliana. GFFTL approached the supportive xefe suco Constancio Jose do Rego to help them select appropriate candidates for the group. The group is mostly comprised of older women (in their late forties and upwards) with families, who have had very little to no access to formal education. The xefe suco told us that the women were keen to be involved as prior to the Indonesian military occupation of Timor-Leste, local Fretilin leaders had promised everybody literacy. However, this promise was unable to be fulfilled, leaving older generations of women highly illiterate. These older women were keen to prove to the community that, against common social perceptions, they had the

ability to learn something new.¹⁵⁶ The group attended weekly literacy classes in the suco administrative centre, coordinated by a young local woman trained by GFFTL, named Madalena do Rego (Mada). After achieving basic literacy and numeracy, the group was encouraged by GFFTL to establish income generation activities, receiving GFFTL training in producing a snack made of local, easily-sourced root vegetables. Across the duration of the project, GFFTL staff members also periodically gave social training to the group in various subject areas, including gender and public speaking.

Impact questions

With RMIT's facilitation, GFFTL identified the following questions to guide and give scope to our impact assessment:

- i. Has the project had an impact upon *women's participation and roles in the household*? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- ii. Has the project had an impact upon *women's participation in the community*? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- iii. Has the project had an *impact upon families' economic wellbeing*? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- iv. Has the project had *any other impacts*?
- v. How could the project be *adapted* to better ensure positive impacts?

Question One: Women's participation and roles in the household

a. Involvement in children's schooling and reinforcing the importance of girls' education

The GFFTL project participants and other key stakeholders such as the Fatulia's xefe suco repeatedly attested to the project beneficiaries playing a more active role in children's schooling through their acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy. This is in line with GFFTL's philosophy, objectives and anticipated changes, with the organisation emphasising women playing a leadership role and being role models within households, as well as supporting the literacy and numeracy of their children, both female and male.

GFFTL's intervention in the community had had a clear impact in terms of women's ability to be more involved in their children's schooling, a point stressed time and again as the women can now sign their children's school enrolment documents rather than just use their thumbprint. This was given much importance by beneficiaries and other community members, with many adding that it was not important to them to achieve a high level of literacy though basic literacy (such as being able to write one's name) and numeracy is a meaningful skills set.

For those of us outside of the immediate context, the importance of being able to undertake the seemingly simple task of signing one's name against a child's enrolment may not be immediately apparent. However, discussions revealed that there are several reasons why GFFTL's project participants see this as so integral. First, there is apparently bureaucratic pressure upon parents by schools and the Education Department to ensure validity by signing rather than thumbprints. For households where both parents are illiterate or the mother would typically do such activities but is illiterate, or for households run by a single mother, this poses a clear problem that can cause significant

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Constancio Jose do Rego, xefe suco of Fatulia, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 30 October 2009.

stress. Second, there is the humiliation that often accompanies being illiterate in Timor-Leste, as illiteracy is often equated to being stupid, and can reinforce a common idea that women are less intellectually able than men. Many of the women attested to a sense of shame when they are not able to sign their name, which at times is reinforced by negative or scornful attitudes from others. It is with a great sense of pride that a mother can step up and take public responsibility for her children's schooling through writing her name as stated on various occasions, including by Regina de Sousa Pereira, forty-eight years old and a single parent/care-giver to four children and one grandchild, when she said '... I feel much lighter, because I can go to the school and sign for my children when the teachers send for us.'¹⁵⁷ Constancio, xefe suco of Fatulia, further explains the necessity in these times of parents having basic literacy and numeracy in terms of facilitating their children's education:

[T]oday all children go to school. This means that they need the mother's and father's signature. And we can also see the change that globalisation has brought, everyone uses telephones. So children want to ring their parents [if schooling elsewhere], telephones always use numbers and names, so with this program they can also advance. They can carry telephones and know 'this is my child's name, I can take this call, and with this number I can call my child'. This is a good advantage for them.¹⁵⁸

Another way that mothers have become more involved in their children's schooling is through helping children with homework, and also involving children to help with their own study. In this sense, GFFTL's literacy and numeracy program is mutually reinforcing to both the mother's and the child's education, and mothers are providing an example to their female children that education is both possible and important. Through such activities mothers also play a leadership role within the household.

The importance of this impact, of mothers involving themselves in the education of their children and being a female role model for them, became especially apparent during our 'Participatory Indicators of Change' activity. The women formed various indicators of change and voted for the top three indicators in terms of importance to them. The following indicator was considered of primary importance: 'We women have the opportunity to learn and gain knowledge, and this knowledge we apply in turn to our children to motivate them in their schooling'. After placing bean counters in 'before' and 'now' piles to indicate how much this sentence represented their situation prior to GFFTL's program, and how it represents their situation now, the results indicated substantial change indeed ('before' = 30, 'now' = 100).

During individual interviews, the women also told us stories that revealed how much this impact is important to them and has meant significant change in their lives. Francisca said that when she was starting with GFFTL's program, her children would help her to form letters, something new for her.¹⁵⁹ Casilda said that her daily routine with her children has changed to involve practice of numeracy and literacy, and she enjoys being able to count with them in a number of languages: Tetun, Portuguese and English. Beyond the immediate educational benefits, she takes pride that she is changing the gender roles to a woman receiving education and being able to actively encourage the following generations in their educational endeavours:

157 Interview with Regina de Sousa Pereira, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 30 October 2009.

158 Interview with Constancio Jose do Rego, xefe suco of Fatulia, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 30 October 2009.

159 Interview with Francisca de Fatima Belo, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 29 October 2009.

After coming back from school to look after my two smallest children, every day I get them to count. I say, 'come, we write one, two, three.' ... We count to ten ... It's like I'm teaching them every day. In the future this will be like a story for my grandchildren. They will say, 'because in the past in the grandmothers' time they went to literacy school then they taught us like this, for the future' ... A story for their future.¹⁶⁰

Through their stories, the other participants attest that their participation in a literacy program and their active involvement in their children's schooling is changing gender dynamics within the household. All of the women have stories of being denied educational opportunities by parents when younger, due to resource limitations and the idea that education of female children was not important. For example, during a focus group discussion following the participatory indicators activity, one woman commented:

[I]n the past, it was like we were in the dark. The male children only went to school; the female children could not. Now it is modern times so that women or girls also have the right to be educated, so because of this we attended school even though we didn't know how to read or write. Now we know how to read and write. We also know how to sign our names. With our children, we also help to teach them, push them to go to school, live for the long-term future that is theirs.¹⁶¹

Women would recount these stories with bitterness, saying that they really had wanted to go to school (see for example Santana's Story of Significant Change). By these women now undertaking education, they are changing the gender dynamics by reinforcing the importance and the ability of females to be educated, as well as showing that women can be successfully involved in life outside the home.

b. Changing gender relations within the family

Many of the participants experienced some initial resistance from husbands and often children about taking part in GFFTL's program, as the other family members were concerned that the women would not be able to fulfil their typical domestic and agricultural responsibilities. Given the survey data that reinforced how strong social norms are that emphasise women's responsibility for the domestic realm, this kind of resistance is expected. However, the women insisted on their right to receive schooling, many saying that they are the only ones in their household who are uneducated and they wish to rectify this.

GFFTL's social training appears to have given the women a framework for speaking with their husbands and families about their right to education, as well as to renegotiate familial gender dynamics, particularly between men and women. In the 'Participatory Indicators of Change' method, the second part of the third-ranked indicator formulated by the women reads: '... [W]ives and husbands share work and make decisions together and respect each other in the household'. The bean counter results signifying how much this indicator represents their situation prior to GFFTL's intervention and at the current time reveals a significant positive change (38 for prior to GFFTL's intervention as compared with 101 at the point of research).

This type of approach seems to have been successful, offsetting common fears that women's rights and gender means the disintegration of families and communities, and making the linkages between rights and gender frameworks, people's daily lives within their families and the broader picture of national development:

160 Interview with Casilda Ribeiro, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 29 October 2009.

161 'Participatory Indicators of Change' focus group discussion with GFFTL's beneficiaries, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 28 October 2009.

[T]hey used to say when you talk about women and men having the same rights ... rights means like in Dili many people are getting separated/divorced. Because they think that foreigners brought this thing here and it makes a wife and husband break up. That it isn't for improving our nation ... But after we had attended the training once, twice, three, four, five times, this enlightened us and we could understand this training shows us our value. While there are a lot of people who are afraid and say that we should not go to such training, we believe in ourselves and believe that this is about developing ourselves, so that we can develop our nation Timor-Leste.¹⁶²

As RMIT University researcher Carmenesa Moniz Noronha writes in the text box below, the strategy of incorporating income generation activities into the GFFTL project is also important in gaining husbands' support for their wife's involvement:

The women in the literacy group had strong commitment even when they were not receiving support from their husbands. However when they started to undertake their income generation activities and received money from this, their husbands started to feel happier about their activities in the group.

Carmenesa Moniz Noronha, Researcher,
'Data Analysis from GFFTL Evaluation',
Dili, February 2010.

Question Two: Women's participation and roles in the community

GFFTL's program in Fatulia, Venilale, has had a positive and meaningful impact upon women's participation and roles in community life. However, some challenges to further change remain. The various ways the female participants are increasingly involving themselves at the community level, and the challenges they face in doing so, are delineated below.

a. Negotiating attitudinal change in regards to gender

The female participants face substantial challenges to attempting change through negative community attitudes. As Francisca and others explained in interviews, members of the community can be quick to put them down, mocking their desire as older people and women for wanting to participate in educational activities. Francisca said that people often comment that she and her colleagues want to 'become like Ana Pessoa in Dili'.¹⁶³ Ana Pessoa is a typically unpopular political figure in many rural areas, seen as epitomising aloofness, haughtiness, a sense of superiority and ambition in a negative sense of the word. Moreover, she is divorced. In these ways she has become a symbol of a type of personhood and femininity that many East Timorese would see as at odds with their ideals and values. As Francisca and others said, the common retort of the participants to such put-downs is to assert that they don't hold lofty or unrealistic ambitions, but rather they simply are fulfilling their right to learn some basic things such as how to write their names.

In such circumstances where they have faced discriminatory or negative attitudes from other community members, the women seem very comfortable in using a human rights framework and the language of human rights to understand and negotiate these attitudes. Francisca talks about how GFFTL's social training has helped her pay less attention to other people's put-downs or jealousies and rise above these. She said, 'Human rights means that when we talk we must allow room for each other, respect each

¹⁶² *ibid.*

¹⁶³ Interview with Francisca de Fatima Belo, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 29 October 2009.

other, and also respect people from outside [our community] ... We can't discriminate against people'.¹⁶⁴ Others talked simply yet eloquently about what a gender framework means for their daily lives, particularly in terms of a division of responsibilities within the household, respecting one another and making decisions together. For example, Francisca said 'Gender means that in the household we work together, whatever is needed to be done we all do it and split up the work.'¹⁶⁵ It seems that GFFTL's social training has been quite successful in providing a framework for women to understand their lives and slowly negotiate attitudinal change in families and communities. This is in line with the theory of Paulo Freire who is an influence for GFFTL. Freirean philosophy holds that informal education of peoples affected by colonisation is a necessary basis for the raising of consciousness and the ability of people to voice the injustices they face.¹⁶⁶ In the case of GFFTL's group in Venilale, informal education has paved the way for the raising of consciousness about gender and the courage of women to speak out about gender inequalities. The way that human rights and gender was expressed to us by participants suggested a focus on strengthening families and communities through respect and consideration, rather than a focus on the female individual which many East Timorese feel is divisive.

It was unclear to what extent the negative attitudes women have faced have reduced over recent years, though various comments suggested that the women still face a lot of suspicion regarding their involvement in a project that espouses gender equality and human rights. For example, using the social relationship mapping method, the women placed the circle representing the local community at a significant distance from the circle representing their own group. When asked to explain this placement, group coordinator Mada commented:

[W]e put it [the circle] as distant because in the community there are some who give us good support so that we can carry development forward, put forward our aspiration, our challenges, our strengths ... [B]ut more often, those who live really close to here [the suco centre], but who don't participate in the group, they always put down the women and say they've lost their mental faculties so shouldn't participate [in GFFTL's program]. But the aunties/women are always prepared to come. Sometimes [other community members] use really rough words, speak like this 'you women are all old and your teeth have fallen out already, are you really going to replace Ana Pessoa, who do you think you're going to become?' But we are always prepared. When we have a workshop and are coming here, they always ask 'what do you talk about?' [We say] 'talking about gender' ... [M]en who understand don't give us much [of a hard time]. [But] men who don't understand say things like this: 'this rights thing in Dili, causes lots of marriage breakups, because of this rights thing'. They constantly talk like this to me, 'if you keep going to such workshops, in the future you and your husband will split up'. [But] I trust myself that my love for him won't end and we won't divorce.¹⁶⁷

The women then still face substantial challenges from the community, particularly from men, in transforming their own gender roles and ideas. Importantly as well, this indicates a limit to how extensive transformations to gender dynamics have been beyond

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ See for example Moacir Gadotti and Carlos Alberto Torres, 'Paulo Friere: Education for Development', *Development and Change*, Vol. 40, no. 6, pp. 1255–1267.

¹⁶⁷ Social relationship mapping focus group discussion with GFFTL beneficiaries, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 27 October 2009.

the specific target group, particularly with men. This is something important to note and reflect upon.

Mada also explained to us about how the women learned also to support each other in their development. She said initially the women were quick to put each other down, reinforcing an idea that as women in their positions they could not become literate and also should not put themselves forward at all. She described a common scenario in their early classes where a woman would go to the front of the class to practise writing something on the blackboard:

[A]lways in the back [of the class there were women] embarrassing or shaming each other, making each other scared, lying to each other: 'if you go up there you'll write it wrongly'. They were always making each other scared so that if one person went to the front they didn't feel brave.¹⁶⁸

Mada says that GFFTL's activities to encourage confidence and a sense of group unity, such as singing and dancing games, helped substantially to overcome these dynamics. The group is now far more cohesive and supportive of each other's efforts rather than seeking to undermine each other. This has been an important step for the group. Without such a network of support, it is all the more scary for an individual woman to step into a new domain of community life. The group, knowing that GFFTL would soon withdraw from the literacy and numeracy component of the program, emphasised that they have a commitment to continue working together as a group, particularly with xefe suco Constancio's continued support.¹⁶⁹

b. Public articulation of knowledge and participation in community decision-making

As attested to by not only the female participants but the xefe suco the women's participation in community meetings has improved substantially as a result of involvement in GFFTL's program, both in terms of its specific public speaking training dimensions and the broader effects of confidence-building and raising women's consciousness that they have a right to participate in decision-making processes. Constancio explained:

[T]hey have had the opportunity to stand out the front [of a group], give their suggestions and proposals, in some public meetings. In the past when the women went to speak in public they were always scared, embarrassed to speak with the men because in meetings, usually it would be men who would speak. For women it was really difficult.¹⁷⁰

He recounted one particular community meeting in 2008 where the women got up in front of the large congregated audience to show what they had learnt so far through GFFTL's class, and were also far more involved in discussions than previously. He said that in the past women have typically cooked for such events, and this greater involvement represents a large step towards challenging the male dominance of leadership processes in the community:

Because us in Fatulia, from Portuguese and Indonesian times and through to Timor's independence, not one woman has ever become village chief once. It's always men, all women are in the kitchen, cooking and bringing the food to the men ...¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Madalena do Rego, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 28 October 2009.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Regina de Sousa Pereira, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 30 October 2009.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Constancio Jose do Rego, xefe suco of Fatulia, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 30 October 2009.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.*

Francisca reiterated the sentiments expressed by Sr Constancio. Prior to participating in GFFTL's public speaking training, she said that 'we just went [to meetings] to listen, we were too scared to ask questions. Because we hadn't yet attended [GFFTL's] training so we were just scared ... [W]e were scared to speak in public; embarrassed.' She says that there has now been a substantial change: 'When somebody says something that doesn't ring true or right to us or it's something we don't know we must ask, 'this isn't really clear to us, we don't really understand so you need to clarify for us'.¹⁷² The group coordinator Mada supported these other statements:

Also, like in meetings with local leaders, or like some NGO comes to give training or undertake socialisation in the suco, they are ready to put forward their ideas and questions, and they are prepared to stand up in front of a lot of people to speak. They are not afraid like they used to be. With this program they've become brave to give their opinions to local leaders.¹⁷³

This significant change in the women's participation in public meetings was also affirmed through the results found through the 'Participatory Indicators of Change' method. The ability to undertake 'Public speaking' was ranked third during the 'Participatory Indicators of Change' method ranked by the women (a count of 38 for the women's situation prior to the GFFTL's intervention as compared with 101 at the point of the research).

The most significant change that I found during the research was ... when the researchers undertook interviews with participants, the many things that they learnt during GFFTL's project they are applying to their daily lives in the family and also in their public lives in the community. This is really interesting for my organisation and I. Also while there isn't a giant change that has been achieved through this project, the participants have experienced change significant to their lives. There has been important change for example in their participation in public as women, they have enough capacity to become *lianain*, and they have the power to influence decision-making within the family. In the past before they became involved in this project, it was very difficult to find men allowing them the opportunity to make decisions, and often women were not confident enough to speak out about how they felt.

Filomena Fuca, GFFTL Director,
'Personal Reflection on the Research Process',
Dili, February 2010.

Speaking individually Casilda did however qualify her comments about the change to women's participation in community meetings by saying that only some of the women in GFFTL's target group now have the confidence to step up and speak in public. This resonates with our experience undertaking focus group discussions and participatory activities with the group. There were certainly some women who were still quite lacking in confidence and needed more prompting than others. Overcoming this dynamic to ensure greater participation amongst women, not simply women in the community more generally, can be difficult, not least as a reluctance to do so is not just framed by gender, but also by kinship, age, education, class and so forth, requiring as a starting point the recognition by organisations working that women are not a homogenous group. That said, and despite some variation in level of participation within the group, the women's participation in our participatory methods was still impressive. The women tackled the mapping, ranking and other visual tasks with great enthusiasm and on their own, as well as speaking forthrightly in focus group discussions (and individual interviews). This in itself is a testament to the extent to which GFFTL's project has had impact upon how confident women are of expressing their concerns and ideas in a public forum, and for contributing to decision-making.

¹⁷² Interview with Francisca de Fatima Belo, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 29 October 2009.

¹⁷³ Interview with Madalena do Rego, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 28 October 2009.

Santina's Story of Significant Change: A Time of Light¹⁷⁴

Santina Godinho lives in aldeia Bahadato, suco Fatulia, in Venilale. Married, Santina has four children ranging from the youngest in primary school (Class Six), to the oldest who has graduated from the National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL) in Dili. At the point of research, Santina had been attending GFFTL's literacy classes for four years and with the other participants, makes and sells kripik (fried vegetable chips packaged in plastic).

Santina recounts why she grew up illiterate:

My father, he was chief. He had old coins but he didn't have money. So I didn't go to school. My older brother lived in the village centre and was school principal. My younger siblings also went to school. I alone didn't go. The xefe do posto [the Portuguese administrative head of the area] said all children should go to school but my father lied to them. [He said], 'my daughter is deaf'. But I wanted to go to school. 'Why did you say that Dad?', [I asked]. [He said], 'you listen to me or I'll beat you. You must look after the cattle and the horses. If not I'll beat you'. Because of this I was scared of my father ...

The posto said someone was going to check my ears but ... my father answered, 'my child is deaf'. And then somebody called to me, 'hey Santina can you hear?' but my father had said if I told them he would beat me to death. So when they asked me this I pretended I couldn't hear. Dad had old coins but these couldn't be used as currency so things were hard. My father made me uneducated. My mother made me uneducated.

While she tells the story of pretending to be deaf with great humour and dramatic re-enactment, it is clear that Santina feels very hard done by. Her childhood experiences have been the impetus for working very hard to ensure her children have excellent educational opportunities:

I must push my children to go to school. Two of them have university education; one has already graduated from UNTL. So my message to my fellow women is that in the past I was no good [but] now I've ensured my children are educated.

When GFFTL offered Santina a chance at education she was determined to take up the opportunity. Her husband didn't initially like the idea, but she insisted on attending class:

He said, 'You are going to do what? You must stay in the house, you must plant vegetables, watch the children, get them to school'. I answered, 'Now how many of us are there? Our four children, they all have been able to go to school, my husband also knows how to read. I am the only one who doesn't know such things'. And I also responded to my husband, 'Why can't I go? If you're cruel like this it's like I can't live normally. I feel that GFFTL must teach two, three words to me, and I must know these words. Because now I really can't read at all but little-by-little I will come to know how'.

Santina explains that she wasn't alone in experiencing initial resistance from her husband to her participation in the literacy program. She told us how the participants typically explain the benefits of going to school and convince their husbands that this does not represent something bad for their families: We clarify to our husbands, we say that this is something good. We say things will be like normal. We must go to class to cleanse our insides, like our hearts, our minds. Everything in the household will be fine as always.

In the early days, other participants who were a little bit reticent needed Santina's encouragement to attend class:

174 Interview with Santina Godinho, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 28 October 2009.

I'd ask them, 'Why don't you also attend this school? This school is good. Why don't you go?' [And they'd say] 'Our hair is already white, our teeth have already fallen out, so we're embarrassed'. [I'd say], 'You can't be like that. Don't be embarrassed. This is a good thing. Because we go, we're brave to speak out, we can stand on our own to give some commentary because we know how' ... I gave them moral guidance, 'This is a good thing, In the past we just put our thumbprint on our children's school documents. Now we know little-by-little how to sign our names.' And they'd say, 'Ok, next time we'll go together'. I gave guidance to my fellow women.

Thanks to the confidence she has gained through involvement in the GFFTL program, Santina has now taken on a position of leadership in her community. She is involved in customary conflict resolution processes, particularly in regards to domestic disputes and violence between husbands and wives:

This [program] has been a path to broader horizons for me because I didn't really know how to speak [in public], I didn't really ask questions, didn't really know a lot of things. But having gone to school I now understand like how to serve our [local] leaders. I [work] with them to enable my female comrades to present their concerns, for example if they've fought, and so forth. This I have learnt already, through the road given to me.

I'm responsible for women's issues, for example if there have been problems in the household, in order to resolve these well. People put me in this position because now I have a bit of courage. In order to adjudicate, they chose me.

Santina explains some of the problems that she helps to resolve:

If there is violence between [husband and wife], or they antagonise each other in the household. They say I'm the 'ketua' or the chief to resolve their problems. I say this, 'now if the woman is wrong, the woman is wrong. If the man is wrong, the man is wrong'. Because you've faulted each other, make peace with one another, fry meat and eat together. We make peace following our customs.

While customary conflict resolution practices continue to be followed in Santina's community, Santina's position does represent a significant change to such practices. She says that 'in the past it was just men' who would adjudicate such issues. Now she works alongside another man to mediate disputes. She attests her ability to take up the position to the confidence she has gained through her experiences with GFFTL and the subsequent respect the community has shown her. 'Because now I'm involved with GFFTL, people chose me to adjudicate problems because I have some courage to undertake this task.'

She says that the community is satisfied with her adjudication because she allocates wrongs fairly. 'If the man is wrong, the man is wrong; if the woman is wrong, the woman is wrong. They trust me.'

We talked about domestic violence in the local community and the situations in which it occurs. Disputes over division of labour and responsibilities in the household was cited as a common reason for the occurrence of violence. Santina gave an example of husband and wife going to their fields together, and then returning home. The husband goes to bed because he is tired and when he awakes he hits his wife because he is angry that she hasn't yet finished preparing the evening meal. We asked her how she would adjudicate such an example:

My solution is like this. In the past, in the time of darkness, only men had rights. Now women also have rights. Now if you go to work the fields together and then return together, women make a complaint like this, 'why is it that the two of us work together to till the land, we come back, he sleeps, wakes up and the food isn't ready, how come he beats me?' I say, 'you go to till the land, woman and man go together. Why is it that you don't both go to cook or perhaps he washes the dishes so that the woman can cook? Why does the man sleep? How come he hits the woman? This is not like the past. Now is now.' I speak like this and allocate the wrong to the man. The man is wrong.

And does the community accept such a judgement? According to Santina, yes they do, especially as Santina does not make the decision alone but with her male counterpart. We wondered whether people such as the couple involved in the situation outlined above apply Santina's words of guidance after the adjudication process.

Yes they certainly apply, I also apply such principles. We can't follow the life of our grandparents, our ancestors, the life of darkness. It's already a time of light, men and women have rights. Not just men.

By sharing responsibilities and carefully managing money, Santina and her husband have been able to ensure that their four children are educated. They work together in the fields and then count the money and save for school and university costs. Santina alone goes to sell their produce because she says her husband 'doesn't know how'. Santina also holds the greater responsibility for money management and explains how she uses the money she earns from the GFFTL-inspired kripik income generation scheme to generate further income:

We make our money from growing vegetables. Like the money that comes in from kripik, my share, I don't waste it. I use it to buy vegetable seeds, carrot seeds. During the four years [with the GFFTL program] I've made a little bit of money to pay for my children's schooling.

I talk and make plans with my husband, some [of the money] we'll use to eat, some to buy washing powder, and we must also save some so that our children can go to school.

It's not always easy to sell the kripik though. Making money from it depends on your luck. Now we've waited to sell two or three days and it's all gone bad. We carried the kripik to the junction on the main road so it could be carried to Baucau, my husband and I have gone about four or five times. We've asked the vehicles here but the Venilale vehicles don't go to Baucau. But we're really far from the junction and the vehicles can't come here because the road is bad.

And how does Santina feel about now being able to read and write at a basic level?

I'm happy. Why am I happy? Because this is a wider road for me. Because I'm not scared, I can stand and speak up by myself without fear. For example resolving issues, I give moral guidance to my female comrades.

Reflecting on the difference between her life in the past and her life now, Santina reaffirms how far her family has come, and the role of GFFTL's program in this transformation:

I want to make one more point ... In 1975 we two, my husband and I, were living in the forest, we didn't have a thing. When we came out from the forest I bought one sarong because I didn't have enough to cover myself. I sat, I looked, I cried because I didn't have any money. Now the two of us have a plan about how to find a little bit of money. Because of this the two of us have to work the land, plant vegetables, sell, get some money. Now we can raise money little-by-little because I go to school.

Santina implored us to ensure people hear her story. 'Please carry my story with you. You mustn't forget it, don't throw it away on the road as you leave. And when you turn in at night, dream about us.' As we were leaving her house, Santina gave the four of us bunches of onions that she had on display to sell, forfeiting several dollars' worth of produce in a generous parting gesture.

c. Community leadership and empowerment of other women

Those more confident members of GFFTL's target group have undertaken various initiatives of their own accord to work together in new ways and to empower other women in their communities. They have also stepped into various community leadership positions. Casilda and her daughter for instance have formed a tais weaving group, Haburas Kultura ('Enriching Culture'), composed of around fifteen women. Francisca explained that when the group initially came together, they each put in two dollars. Haburas Kultura has attended the annual women's handicrafts and small business fair in Dili, attended training in Baucau and have received support from another Baucau-based NGO, Kailulu. They sell their products for five to ten dollars. They wish to be an example to younger women about how to retain culture and build business skills.

GFFTL project participants from aldeia Uaitobonu have also started an agricultural group. While it comprises both women and men, it is led primarily by women. They grow and sell vegetables, and have found funding from varied sources, including the government, NGO Kailulu and a Spanish donor. The women are keen to work with men; their participation in GFFTL's program has not created conflicts between women and men as is often feared by some parts of East Timorese communities. Some of the women have taught other women to make *kripik* (like a type of chip or crisp, which the women then package in small plastic bags and sell), something that is seen as an exciting new product in the community.¹⁷⁵

Besides income generation from making *kripik* within their group, some of the women told us that they passed on the information or trained other women, not just kept the information to themselves. Some of the participants have arranged to acquire their own equipment to further develop their small businesses. It is interesting that the women who have received capacity building from GFFTL have not just used this within their own group but have applied it in other ways in their lives and extended the skills to other people.

Filomena Fuca, GFFTL Director,
'Personal Reflection on the Research Process',
Dili, February 2010.

One of the most interesting results in terms of women taking up new positions of leadership concerns Santana's story. In her aldeia, Santana has been integrated into the customary leadership structures as a kind of *lianain* (adjudicator of conflicts or problems according to customary law). She sits alongside men to resolve problems particularly involving a gender dimension, such as domestic violence, and her resolution emphasises equality between men and women in terms of respect as well as division of labour and responsibilities. She reaches outcomes that are quite different to what is often the case in customary negotiation of domestic violence and other gender-based conflicts, while still working within the emphasis of customary law on restoring balance and harmony in the family and the community. According to Santana and others, she is invested by the community with much legitimacy in undertaking this role. This represents a very interesting example of how customary culture can adapt and incorporate a modern gender framework, as well as being an example of a new form of women's leadership as a result of GFFTL's program.

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Regina de Sousa Pereira, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 30 October 2009.

The enthusiasm of the GFFTL program participants to find new ways to apply their skills and empower other women in their communities, particularly in their local aldeia, is palpable. Constancio said that in a suco where the vast majority of women are illiterate, these older women are an important source of inspiration; they are like a 'symbol' for others.¹⁷⁶ Mada also narrated various examples of the target group members starting up new initiatives or taking up positions of community leadership:

Like Tia (Auntie) Casilda, after she became part of GFFTL's group people chose her to become a community assistant in the church, and then she became head of the tais group Haburas Kultura, and also Tia Santana has become like a lianain in aldeia Bahadato. When there is a problem between a woman and a man she is always involved in resolving it.¹⁷⁷

Xefe suco Constancio did however comment that he felt that the women's financial management skills, even with their new group initiatives, remained limited and would benefit greatly from more attention from GFFTL or another organisation. His role has been an important one in terms of the women's development, and the women spoke of the importance of having a local leader such as Constancio who is supportive and articulate in regards to gender. Change to gender relations can be a challenging process for any community (not just Timor-Leste), and if women attempt to undertake this alone this can create its own set of very real problems. However, to have a respected man in a position of leadership standing alongside them has appeared to lend the women more legitimacy in the eyes of the community, and given them a very important source of courage and support. In the social relationship mapping activity, the women identified their relationship with the xefe suco as the second most important relationship in terms of contribution to their success, after GFFTL.

d. Development of other organisational and social relationships

Through various income generation initiatives, the women have developed relationships with a range of other organisations that have in turn created linkages not only within the local community but also to district, national and international levels. They are able to recognise that they not only have a relationship with GFFTL, but with Rede Feto, consumers, NGO Kailalu and the supporting Spanish donor, the UNDP who has provided them written materials, their own new organisation Haburas Kultura, the sub-district administrator, the Department of Development which has had contact with the new agricultural group, theatre group Bibi Bulak who has come to perform to the women, and the government-run literacy program running in sub-district Venilale (focused on Portuguese).

Question Three: Families' economic well-being

GFFTL's post-literacy program focuses upon using new-found literacy and numeracy skills to develop income generation schemes, including new training on how to use locally grown, readily available root vegetables to make a food product 'kripik'. The survey data revealed that Venilale community norms hold that men are more commonly seen as breadwinners, so this intervention represents a significant change to gender relations and a move towards female economic independence. The women explained that they had divided into three groups, following locality, in order to undertake their kripik activities. They periodically split the proceeds between them. One of the groups

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Constancio Jose do Rego, xefe suco of Fatulia, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 30 October 2009.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Madalena do Rego, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 28 October 2009.

has divided their profits three times, with each individual receiving a total of sixty dollars to date.¹⁷⁸ The women sell the packets in various sizes with the most expensive being fifty cents. Their best customers are school children, with the women selling the kripik in front of their homes to passing children or in front of the school. GFFTL staff also sometimes carry the product to Dili to sell within the office.

The consistent message from the women was that the kripik income generation activity does not bring in a lot of income, but helps to ease the burden of buying necessities such as sugar, coffee, soap, washing powder, clothes, food items, exercise books and pencils for school children, and oil for burning.¹⁷⁹ Casilda, who has had her own kiosk since 2006, uses half of her proceeds to restock the kiosk and half for her household needs. She also says that the income, especially with proceeds split periodically into larger amounts rather than constantly distributed in very small amounts, also helps them to negotiate the taxing demands of customary ritual practice, which can be very resource-draining.

The fact that the women have not found the kripik production alone highly profitable is reflected in the results of the 'Participatory Indicators of Change' method. As formulated and ranked by the women, the second most important indicator of change that they identified concerns income generation which read as: 'We can make a little money to pay for basic necessities such as coffee, sugar, food, our children's schooling, clothes and soap'. The total numbers of counters signifying how much this statement reflects the women's situations before GFFTL's intervention totalled 55, while the total number of counters reflecting the women's current situation numbered 77. Here the positive change indicated by a higher number of counters for the current situation as compared with the past is not as great as the other indicators the women formulated. Not only does this reflect that the women are not making a lot of money from the kripik, but also that some of them already had income generation ventures running prior to GFFTL's intervention. For example, Casilda sold vegetables in a market in Dili until the crisis of 2006 when the security situation made this untenable, so she switched to running a kiosk in front of her house.

Importantly, while the kripik production alone may not be particularly profitable for the women, they use the skills developed through that program so as to access income generation sources from beyond GFFTL. Furthermore, and as Regina explained to us, it is not only the money that is important from her undertaking the kripik project. Rather, she is happy to show her children that she—and women in general—can use education to immediate effect to create better circumstances.

Question Four: Other impacts

a. Self-esteem and dignity

Underpinning all our conversations with the beneficiaries and other stakeholders was a consistent sense of greatly enhanced self-esteem and dignity. It was very apparent that these are women who face real challenges: poverty, sometimes very difficult individual circumstances, a history of dreams and ambitions thwarted by community's preferential treatment of men in combination with limited resources, large labour loads, trying new things at ages that are considered quite old in the context of Timor-Leste (late 40s and upwards). The previous shyness and lack of confidence that was often talked

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Francisca de Fatima Belo, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 29 October 2009.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.*; Interview with Regina de Sousa Pereira, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 30 October 2009; Interview with Casilda Ribeiro, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 29 October 2009.

about would show through periodically. However, the women threw themselves into all activities we facilitated with great enthusiasm and determination, an indication in itself of a growing sense of empowerment. They spoke often of a new sense of pride in themselves and were very keen to put forward their stories and ideas, of relief and excitement in being able to fulfil their long-held dreams of education and skills development, and a sense of ability to undertake new things. There was also a sense of resilience against other people's put-downs or negative attitudes, with the women confident in the value of their activities and in themselves. For example, Regina, who has faced negative attitudes as a woman who was left by her husband, says:

[T]he schooling has opened me inside ... People can fight with each other and I might be tempted to listen but then I think about the *workshop* we attended, they said you can't listen to such things, can't put other people down, can't reduce other people's dignity, people's responsibilities, people's rights ... [If people make negative comments] I answer them like this: dignity and responsibilities are things with value. We can't defame each other. This is something I didn't learn in another place; I learnt it right here.¹⁸⁰

Extending the earlier discussion of signing names, the sense of pride and self-dignity can be assessed in terms of how Regina recounts an instance prior to GFFTL's program where she and some of the other women attended training for women in Baucau. The facilitator asked them to sign in, and she says it was humiliating for them to speak up and tell the facilitator that they were illiterate. Francisca, for her part, is satisfied that people can no longer put her and the other women down in instances where they are called upon to sign their names. She says that in the past people would say, 'if you give her a pen the book will later be full of holes', implying that women could not use the pens and would end up simply destroying their exercise books.¹⁸¹ No longer can people make such comments.

b. Food sustainability

Learning how to make kripik has contributed not only to income generation but greater food sustainability. Many of the participants commented that they liked the kripik product because it meant that they could convert their vegetables into a product that can last months, rather than their usual method of boiling vegetables which (without refrigeration which is the case for all the women) are spoiled within a day.

Question Five: Recommendations

a. Community recommendations

The community stakeholders' recommendations centre on two major points: how to continue to work with the existing group into the future, and how to reach other women who need and want such an intervention.

Income generation

In terms of continuing the activities of the group, the xefe suco emphasises the need for more financial management training, particularly as the women are from their own initiative branching into new income generation projects and receiving relatively significant amounts of funding. He is concerned that they are not yet proficient enough

180 Interview with Regina de Sousa Pereira, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 30 October 2009.

181 Interview with Francisca de Fatima Belo, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 29 October 2009.

to successfully manage larger amounts of money. Regina asks that the suco council continues to support the group in giving them a space to undertake their activities even when the schooling is finished, as she is concerned that if they have to move everything to their individual homes, the group will splinter. This certainly seems to be a distinct possibility, as the women even now are undertaking their other ventures in groups roughly akin to their kinship or aldeia, and it is a substantial walk for them to meet up with each other as it currently stands.

Literacy / numeracy for women at the most local level

As stated above, many of the participants were eager to see GFFTL extend such a program to other women at a more localised level. GFFTL is quite unique in terms of already working within a relatively small locality. Many NGOs based in Dili and working outwards run programs at a district or sub-district level. GFFTL has chosen to focus on the suco level, in the case of the Baucau district working in suco Fatulia, sub-district Venilale. Participants spoke at length however about what limitations even this relatively limited geographical scope can have. Suco Fatulia certainly has substantial geographical coverage. None of the participants in GFFTL's group come from aldeia Osuwaki, more isolated than the other aldeia, located eighteen kilometres from the suco centre, according to Constancio. When we visited the homes of GFFTL's existing target group, in comparison, most were located within a two to five kilometre radius from the suco centre—a not insubstantial but more manageable walk.

Group coordinator Mada spoke about just how many women could be reached by such a program and would be eager to participate, if there were more opportunities at an aldeia level:

At the present in our village there are many who are illiterate. To go [for schooling] to the suco centre, that's only the people who have been chosen, not all can go ... So my recommendations to our sisters in GFFTL is that if possible give training or the literacy program to them, like come to the aldeia level so that the women who are not brave enough or able to travel to the suco centre can be involved at the aldeia level. If it's close then they don't feel scared or tired, they can do some work and then in a short time walk [to the course]. But when they have to go to the suco centre, we might have put their names down but later they will say they don't have time, it's too far ... [They say] those of us who just work in the fields can't go there.¹⁸²

This view was shared by other group participants and the xefe suco.

b. Research team recommendations

Overall the impacts from GFFTL's program are very positive. It appears that the approach of working slowly and intensively over the long-term with women in true need has been very successful in creating significant change in terms of women's participation at familial and community levels, helping to create more sustainable income generation practices, and improving the self-esteem and dignity of particularly older women who have previously had limited opportunities for formal education.

Sustainability of impacts

In terms of future efforts, our recommendations are informed to a large extent by the Fatulia community's own thoughtful recommendations. We understand that the literacy program with existing Fatulia target group has now closed as planned in the program

¹⁸² Interview with Madalena do Rego, suco Fatulia, Venilale, 28 October 2009.

cycle, and the community appears to have accepted this. However, we would encourage GFFTL to have some form of continued presence in the area, even if less intensive, to ensure the sustainability and deepening of existing and new impacts. By following through with the existing group beyond the literacy program, GFFTL can ensure any positive impacts are not lost and that the women are encouraged by ongoing support. Our suggestions for how this continued presence could play out are as follows.

Income generation: Financial management and networking with other organisations

First, given that the existing target group of women appear to be both innovative and ambitious in regards to coming up with new income generation strategies, and many have moved beyond concentrating solely on kripik production, we suggest that GFFTL continue to lend support to the income generation efforts of the group. During the evaluation we mapped the various other schemes that the women have initiated, utilising the skills, knowledge and social relationships gained through participation in GFFTL's program. We recommend that GFFTL works with the sub-groups undertaking these activities to provide financial management training tailored specifically to the needs of those groups. If GFFTL is unable to do so themselves, due to for example resource limitation, it would pay to link in with the other organisations that are supporting these new income generation schemes to work in collaboration with them, or with other organisations with expertise in women's small business financial management capacity building, such as FKSH. Moreover, GFFTL's support for income generation projects should be guided by the principle of encouraging production of goods that will be readily sold (particularly in local and national markets), avoiding the pitfalls that many small women's businesses in Timor-Leste experience where the production of goods (for example handicrafts) face low demand. Like other organisations working in the area of women's economic empowerment, income generation strategies could benefit from a basis in a thorough market analysis. This strategy of continued support for income generation schemes in the post-literacy phase could be broadened to all of GFFTL's program sites, not only Fatulia. This also makes sense in that sustainable levels of income generation across rural communities in Timor-Leste is a very difficult objective to achieve and can take a long time. This is the area also that GFFTL's program has not achieved such a strong impact as others, so it would pay to continue efforts in this regard.

Literacy and numeracy: Further community mobilisation and collaborations

Secondly, as another dimension of GFFTL's gradual withdrawal from a site such as Fatulia, in which the organisation has worked for a long time and has come to the end of the existing program cycle, we recommend that GFFTL works with the community to see if there is a real desire for ongoing programs of such a kind at an aldeia level. If this is a genuine desire from the community, then it is suggested that if GFFTL is unable or unwilling to institute such programs itself, it seeks to empower the community to develop its own strategies of carrying forth the literacy program at the most local level. Again this may mean GFFTL working with the community to further develop linkages with other organisations. It may also mean that the existing group coordinator (such as Mada in Fatulia) runs training with other potential group coordinators. GFFTL could offer periodic support into these groups. This strategy would require the ongoing, active support of local leaders such as xefe suco Constancio, as well as xefe aldeia. Women from GFFTL's existing target group could provide assistance to the group facilitation in their own aldeia. They would be in a good position to mobilise at the aldeia level, as aldeia are particularly marked by strong kinship relations. This may also help to address the dynamic whereby a small number of women (such as about half of GFFTL's existing

target group) become in effect representatives of all the other women and thus there is not equal participation within the target group. It could be worth GFFTL exploring further relations with Baucau NGO Kailalu (as discussed by the group participants), as the women told us that this NGO has run literacy programs in aldeia Uaitobono.

Finally, two points may be made relevant to either GFFTL's future programming or other organisations working in similar communities.

Inclusion of men in processes of gender change

First, for organisations such as GFFTL seeking to facilitate the transformation of women's status within the local community, the involvement of men particularly in workshops or trainings where gender is discussed is critical. Without a kind of positive enlisting of men as partners in the process of gender change, women continue to experience significant pressure about their involvement in NGO gender programs. The impact of such programs upon both the immediate beneficiaries and the broader community is thus limited, or worse, can sometimes heighten divisions and tensions about gender.

Reviewing/extending project relevance

Second, in the research methods such as location mapping, it became evident that there are a range of other pressing necessities in the community with significant gendered effects upon women (such as infrastructural difficulties and limited access to health services). If these needs remain unaddressed, the extent to which other NGO projects can facilitate change to gender dynamics will be circumscribed. Of course, one NGO such as GFFTL cannot address all needs. However, it is worth considering options of advocacy and / or networking with other organisations with relevant resources and objectives. This is not to say GFFTL has not addressed a critical need of their beneficiaries in suco Fatulia, confirmed by the fact that the project beneficiaries certainly found this project of great relevance to them.

7. Women's Justice Unit, Judicial System Monitoring Programme (JSMP)

7.1 About the Women's Justice Unit, JSMP

Founded in 2001, the Judicial System Monitoring Programme (JSMP) initially focused on scrutinising the legal processes established to deal with perpetrators of war crimes and human rights abuses committed during the Indonesian military occupation. JSMP soon extended its mission to monitoring and aiding the progress of Timor-Leste's fledgling judicial system and legislative development processes.

Court and legislative monitoring, advocacy, research and analysis, and targeted training form the basis of JSMP's activities. These activities are underpinned by a vision of a formal legal system that supports and advances human rights, justice and equality, is independent of political interference and free from corruption, and is accessible to all East Timorese citizens. The majority of JSMP's staff members are East Timorese, and many are legally trained. While JSMP is based in Dili it undertakes some activities—particularly training and case monitoring and support—in other districts and court jurisdictions. JSMP frequently produces well-circulated research reports on timely legal issues, published in a range of languages.

JSMP's Women's Justice Unit was formed in 2004 in order to look specifically at the needs and treatment of women within the formal justice system, especially related to sexual assault and domestic violence. Another aspect of the work of the Women's Justice Unit is to undertake advocacy and training to improve the justice sector's understanding and treatment of cases involving gender issues. The Unit's primary concern is to improve women's access to the formal justice system and to ensure that actors within the system, for example police, are equipped with the knowledge, skills and sensitivity necessary to ensure protection of women's rights.

7.2 About the project: 'Training for Women about Gender-Based Violence and Formal Justice'

Project background

This project ran from 2006 to 2008 in all sub-districts of six districts (Manatuto, Baucau, Liquiça, Aileu, Oecusse and Covalima) as well as in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Dili. In each sub-district, the Women's Justice Unit of JSMP ran two days of training with two to three female representatives from each suco. The overall goal of the project was to promote women's access to the formal justice sector and to encourage women to use the formal justice system in relation to violence against women. The project was designed to encourage participants in the training to become leaders or guides in their own suco in terms of supporting women to access the formal justice system if they experience violence.

The formal criminal legal framework in Timor-Leste remains complex, particularly for female victims of violence. The 'Indonesian Penal Code', modified to better conform to human rights standards, formed the basis of criminal law until the passing of the 'Criminal Procedure Code' in February 2006¹⁸³ and the new Criminal Code in April

183 Based on the Portuguese Criminal Procedure Code.

2009.¹⁸⁴ The Penal Code was widely held by advocates of justice for victims of gender-based violence to be too restrictive in its definitions of domestic and sexual violence.¹⁸⁵ The Criminal Code is augmented by other sources of law: the national Constitution, United Nations regulations and directives, and specific pieces of legislation passed by the National Parliament.¹⁸⁶ Since independence, a wide variety of organisations and actors within Timor-Leste have campaigned for the passing of separate domestic violence legislation with wider definitions consistent with human rights and international law standards. It was not until May 2010 that this legislation was finally passed. Hence, at the time in which the JSMP project that is being evaluated here was underway, the legal situation was one where the existing law providing avenues of justice for female victims of violence was still the Indonesian Penal Code. However, organisations such as JSMP anticipated the eventual passing of the domestic violence law and were also attempting to socialise a legal paradigm where domestic violence is resolutely a criminal act.

One of the ramifications of this changeable and complex legal situation was that very few cases of domestic violence were being heard in the courts at the point of JSMP's project intervention, with cases of gender-based violence prosecuted typically involving very extreme forms of sexual violence.¹⁸⁷ There has since been an increasing number of domestic violence cases heard, but still marked by varied success due to the complexity of the legal framework and the often unsympathetic nature of legal actors toward female victims of violence.¹⁸⁸

In JSMP's view women's access to formal justice does not only concern the legal framework, but the strength and responsiveness of the actors and institutions that comprise the formal justice sector, such as national police, courts and staff, the Deputy General Prosecutor for Ordinary Crimes office, and the Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU) of UNPOL and PNTL.¹⁸⁹ There are also a number of civil society organisations such as JSMP's Victim Support Services (VSS), FOKUPERS and PRADET which seek to support women victims of violence, including supporting them through the formal legal process.

184 JSMP, *Article 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code: Creating a Dilemma for Victims of Domestic Violence*, Women's Justice Unit, JSMP, Dili, December 2009, p. 1.

185 JSMP, *JSMP Report Analysing the Draft Penal Code*, JSMP, Dili, March 2004, p. 8.

186 JSMP, *Access to Justice for Women Victims*, JSMP, Dili, July 2004, p. 8.

187 JSMP, 'Press Release: Cases of domestic violence processed by the formal justice system at the start of 2008', JSMP, Dili, 8 February 2008.

188 See for example *ibid.*, and JSMP, *Article 125*, *op. cit.*

189 JSMP, *Access to Justice for Women Victims*, JSMP, Dili, July 2004, p. 9.

Project narrative summary: Goals, objectives, outputs and activities

Outlined below are the project goal, objectives, outputs and activities, as identified by JSMP in RMIT-facilitated training in Phase One. We used an abbreviated logical framework to determine these categories.

Project: Training for women about gender-based violence and formal justice

	Narrative Summary
Goal	To promote women's access to formal justice and to encourage them to use the formal justice system in relation to violence against women. Women's access to justice is one important aspect of addressing the considerable problem of violence against women in Timor-Leste.
Objectives	<p>From 2006—2008, two to three women from each suco in six districts (Manatuto, Baucau, Liquica, Aileu, Oecusse and Covalima), as well as women representatives from Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps have through training achieved an understanding about the formal justice system and its relation to violence against women. This training will focus particularly on three topics:</p> <p>Human rights and responsibilities, including women's rights;</p> <p>Domestic violence and sexual violence;</p> <p>The legal process and violence, and why this process is important for women who experience violence, as well as the community in general.</p> <p>After the training, that female participants become peer supports to other women in their suco or IDP camp if and when there are instances of violence. The women who have participated in the training can help to take cases of violence against women to the formal justice system.</p>
Outputs	<p>Two to three women from each suco in six districts and IDP camps have participated in the training during 2006—2008.</p> <p>A report in three languages: Tetun, English and Bahasa Indonesia. This report includes:</p> <p>Information about the project's implementation</p> <p>Reflection and analysis</p> <p>Recommendations for the future.</p>
Activities	<p>Identify women who can read and write</p> <p>To train groups of a maximum of thirty participants, facilitate training at the sub-district level or in camps for a duration of two days. Participants also submit an evaluation form.</p> <p>Distribute brochures and posters with information relevant to maintaining the lessons of the training.</p> <p>Write the final project report through analysing the participant evaluation formation, staff experience and observation.</p> <p>Distribute the report at the national level.</p>

7.3 Gender and community in context: Manatuto sub-district

About Manatuto sub-district

Establishing some context for gender dynamics in Manatuto sub-district helps us to better understand what impact JSMP's project has had in this area. We sought to do this through the 'Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Survey', field observations and informal interactions with community members, as well as our research directly with JSMP project beneficiaries. Manatuto sub-district, one of five sub-districts in Manatuto district, is located on the central northern coast of Timor-Leste. The main town, Manatuto Vila, is sixty-four kilometres to the east of Dili. The local indigenous population speaks Galoli, a local Malayo-Polynesian language, as well as Tetun and to lesser extents, Indonesian and Portuguese.¹⁹⁰ Of the six total suco in Manatuto sub-district, we surveyed respondents across four suco in the sub-district: Aiteas (the home of 32.1 per cent of respondents and encompassing Manatuto's capital, Manatuto Vila), Ailili (25.0 per cent), Sau (23.8 per cent), and Ma'abat (19.0 per cent) (Question 4). Notably, most of JSMP's beneficiary group is drawn from urbanised suco Aiteas. Parts of these suco were relatively compressed, with borders between aldeia and suco obvious only to inhabitants. Livelihoods in Manatuto sub-district reflect the geography of the area. Unlike in other areas of Timor-Leste, many families do not have *to'os* or food gardens, the hot conditions and arid land in many areas being unsuitable for vegetable production. However, rice is a common crop, and the ocean is also an important food source.

Manatuto sub-district comprises both significantly urbanised and rural communities. Manatuto Vila has significant institutional infrastructure, with a strong state, Church and national and international NGO presence, with the latter two often undertaking forms of gender programming in the area. On presenting ourselves to the Gender Focal Point in the Manatuto sub-district government office, we were greeted by other staff members who seemed so used to gender program representatives of various organisations that one commented 'gender makes our heads crazy'.¹⁹¹ This speaks to not only the accessibility of information and formal processes for this part of the country, but also the cynicism that often follows a kind of gender socialisation 'saturation'.

Our experience of administering the survey in the urbanised part of Manatuto revealed a higher level of literacy than we had found elsewhere, a point reinforced in the survey data. As per Question 4, the educational demographics of our sample in Manatuto differed significantly from the other sites, most likely due to the more highly developed infrastructure in the sub-district and the relative proximity to Dili. One-fifth (20.2 per cent) of respondents had never been to school—less than half the percentage of each of the other sites. The percentage of respondents who have completed secondary school is also considerably higher than the other sites—42.0 per cent in Manatuto as compared with 30.4 per cent, 18.8 per cent and 18.5 per cent in Ermera, Atauro and Venilale respectively. As might be expected, in turn the self-identified level of literacy in Manatuto (71.4 per cent of respondents) is much higher than in the other sites (58.7 per cent in Ermera, 54.1 per cent in Atauro and 44.6 per cent in Venilale), and the rate of total illiteracy is also lower (15.5 per cent in Manatuto as compared with 31.5 per cent in Venilale, 29.4 per cent in Atauro and 28.3 per cent in Ermera). However, in administering the surveys, we certainly found that rates of illiteracy increased dramatically as we

¹⁹⁰ 'Manatuto', *Wikipedia*, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manatuto, accessed 22 August 2010.

¹⁹¹ Anna Trembath, fieldnotes, Manatuto sub-districts, 31 August–4 September 2009.

moved away from the urban Manatuto town to the outer lying rural areas of the sub-district. While educational and literacy data suggests greater opportunities for the population as compared with other places in Timor-Leste, this has not translated into a higher sense of economic wellbeing. Similarly to other sites, the proportion of respondents who said that their household finds it difficult to raise income (61.9 per cent) is comparable with the other sites, and like in the other sites, not one respondent said that they felt financially well-off.

The differences between the urbanised and more rural areas of Manatuto sub-district were reflected not only in people's level of literacy, but in material conditions, such as housing. While most houses in Manatuto Vila are cement houses (referred to as *uma mutin* and often more desired in Timor-Leste), outlying suco and aldeia were typically comprised of traditional housing made of local plant material (*uma du'ut*). People's confidence in engagement with us as researchers also suggested great differences according to the relative distance of a person from institutional processes. During our research process with JSMP's beneficiaries, they spoke at length about a kind of urban/rural divide in Manatuto sub-district, as will be returned to in sections below.

While parts of Manatuto sub-district are urbanised, the importance of customary culture in terms of gender was reinforced to us time and again through the research process. Many of our discussions with JSMP's project beneficiaries focused on the role that customary leaders play in resolution of gender-based violence, returned to in forthcoming sections. Beyond that, customary frameworks for understanding gender arose spontaneously on other occasions. On one occasion, a female member of our research team facilitated a gender survey with a young male member of the community. However, she was unable to sit next to the young man, because he had an injury that was being treated by a traditional healer, and according to customary beliefs, female strangers could affect the outcome of that healing.¹⁹²In addition to the strength of customary culture, as will be explored further below, the Church has substantial authority in Manatuto, which also plays into community resolution of gender-based violence.

After these brief comments designed to help establish a picture of Manatuto sub-district, the following sections analyse in detail the results of the 'Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Survey' that we ran in Aiteas, Ailili, Sau and Ma'abat suco. This establishes a more concrete picture of the gender context in which positive transformation of gender dynamics is being attempted by JSMP and other organisations in the area.

Knowledge of gender

Just over half of the responses to Question 12 (53.6 per cent) said that they had participated in discussions about the concept of gender, or had read or heard about gender somewhere. However, a significant minority definitely had not (42.9 per cent), and only a very small percentage (3.6 per cent) were not sure. As in Ermera, in Manatuto women were more likely to have access to information about gender, with 59.6 per cent of female respondents reporting that they have heard about gender in comparison to 45.9 per cent of male respondents. This raises questions about the prevention of violence, with men more likely perpetrators. The most common source of information for those respondents who said that they knew about gender was the media at 45.8 per cent. The next most common sources respectively were: NGOs and the UN (29.2 per cent), friends

¹⁹² *ibid*

and family (16.7 per cent), government (10.4 per cent), religious leaders (8.3 per cent), and teachers (6.3 per cent). These patterns of information distribution reflect the substantial infrastructural presence in urbanised parts of Manatuto sub-district.

Of those respondents who indicated in Question 14 that they had heard of gender, 77.1 per cent were confident that they understood the term. In response to Question 15, which asked 'According to your understanding, what is gender?', 68.4 per cent of respondents said that gender means that women and men have equality and the same rights. A very high proportion (92.1 per cent) of those respondents who claim an understanding of the concept of gender said that they think that it is useful to their everyday life, suggesting at least initially that there could be a high level of receptivity to new gender frameworks within the community if there was to be more extensive socialisation work done.

Attitudes about gender

a. Gender relations within the family

Respondents' aspirations for the female and male children in their households were similar, with the majority wanting their children to proceed to university; there was only a slightly higher preference for university education for male children (77.4 per cent) than female children (66.7 per cent). The next option with the highest response rates for both sexes of children was office work (9.5 per cent responses for female children and 7.6 per cent responses for male children). A small percentage of respondents wanted their female children to marry and have children (4.8 per cent), while no respondents chose this option for male children, and 3.6 per cent of respondents wanted male children to be business owners as compared with 1.6 per cent desiring this for female children. Several things must be kept in context here though, one being small sample sizes, and another the fact that by being asked what was the priority in terms of their child's future, parents may give one answer fully expecting that their children would get married in any case.

Question 17 asks for a response to the statement 'It is better that a man is head of a family rather than a woman'. In Manatuto 59.5 per cent of those surveyed agreed favourably to this statement (38.1 per cent who agreed and 21.4 per cent who strongly agreed). In contrast, the total of those who either disagreed or strongly disagreed was together just 12 per cent. This is a similar breakdown of responses to the other sites, except in Atauro, where there was a much higher rate of disagreement with the idea that families are better headed by men than women. Male respondents were slightly more likely to agree or strongly agree with the statement (64.9 per cent) than female respondents (55.3 per cent). Almost one-third of all respondents (28.6 per cent) indicated a neutral response, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statement. As across all our research sites, common patterns of discussion revealed that adults, particularly women, want to see generational change for their children in terms of gender norms, but there is an acceptance in the current generation of male leadership as the norm.

b. Violence against women

In terms of Question 18, a majority of respondents—almost half (63.3 per cent)—said that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement 'I can accept it if a man hits his wife if she has done something wrong' (Question 18). While female respondents were more likely to 'strongly disagree' (40.4 per cent) than male respondents (21.6 per cent), overall, male respondents' cumulative disagreement with this statement was slightly higher than female respondents' (59.4 per cent of male respondents as compared with 51 per cent of female respondents). This result indicates that there is not one predominant community norm about the acceptance of violence against women. However, a substantial proportion of the population does believe in acceptability of domestic violence in particular circumstances.

In terms of resolving forms of violence against women (Questions 24 and 25), 65.5 per cent of Manatuto respondents (a similar result to Ermera) nominated the household or family as the best body to resolve domestic violence (primarily physical assault). Small minorities felt it best to resolve domestic violence with the aid of local leaders such as xefe suco and religious figures (13.1 per cent), with lianain or adat (11.9 per cent), or with police and the courts (9.5 per cent). While it is a relatively small percentage of respondents who indicated preference for the police and courts, this is higher than in the other research sites. This we would suggest is linked to the intervention of JSMP and other organisations who have run educative programs in Manatuto town about domestic violence and the legal system, and also reflecting to some extent Manatuto's relative accessibility to Dili and formal processes as compared with the other sites. The results of preferences for community resolution processes over formal legal processes is important to note as we return to JSMP's project intervention below.

The results from asking respondents' opinions about how best to resolve domestic violence are almost turned on their head in terms of responses to how respondents feel sexual violence is best resolved. While police and courts is the least preferred measure for domestic violence, the majority of respondents (69.0 per cent) said that sexual violence is best resolved through police and the court system. Some also preferred local leaders (14.3 per cent) and lianain or adat (8.3 per cent), while only 6.0 per cent said that sexual violence should be resolved within or between families. In terms of resolution of domestic violence, higher percentages of male than female respondents favoured resolution through lianain or adat (16.2 per cent of males and 8.5 per cent of females). This was also the case in terms of sexual violence (13.5 per cent male response rate and 4.3 per cent female response rate). However, males also were more likely to prefer police and court resolution of domestic violence than females (13.5 per cent of males and 6.4 per cent of females). Females showed a higher rate of preference than males for familial resolution (68.1 per cent of females and 62.2 per cent of males) and resolution by local leaders (17.0 per cent of females and 8.1 per cent of males). However, sexual violence is typically seen by local East Timorese communities to be more serious than physical, husband-to-wife violence, and more likely to be seen as a crime. This is reflected in the statistics, where a majority of both male and female respondents thought it best to resolve sexual violence through police and the courts (70.3 per cent and 68.1 per cent respectively).

Respondents were asked to select one option from a set list of responses (or to nominate an alternative) as to what they see as the most common reason why a husband may hit his wife (Question 26). The position of highest-ranked response is equally shared by two quite different options: 1) a husband may hit his wife because the wife creates a problem by not accepting what her husband says or not listening to him (24.1 per cent); or 2) because a husband cannot control himself and just randomly hits his wife, even though she has not done anything wrong (24.1 per cent). Equal numbers of respondents also said that a man may hit his wife because the wife creates a problem by not fulfilling her domestic responsibilities (14.5 per cent), or that the husband drinks too much and becomes violent (14.5 per cent). The next preferred answer was that domestic violence occurs because the husband is stressed about problems such as money or family issues (12.0 per cent). Female respondents were more likely to favour some responses that blamed the wife for creating conditions of domestic violence than the perpetrator of the violence (the husband) and less likely to favour some responses where the husband is responsible. For example, 27.7 per cent of female respondents said that domestic violence occurs when a wife creates a problem by not accepting what her husband says,

in comparison to 19.4 per cent of male respondents. In comparison, one-third of male respondents (33.3 per cent) selected the option about the husband's lack of self-control, as compared with just 17.0 per cent of female respondents. As with Atauro and Ermera, male respondents were far less likely to acknowledge the role of male drinking than female respondents (21.3 per cent of female respondents as compared with 5.6 per cent of male respondents).

c. Customary culture

Question 21 asked respondents to choose a response to the statement '*Barlake* is not good for women'. One-third of all respondents (33.3 per cent) said that they agreed with this statement, while only a very small percentage (3.6 per cent) strongly agreed. A minority of respondents (20.2 per cent) said that they strongly disagreed to the statement, and cumulative disagreement to the statement (at 53.5 per cent) was slightly higher than agreement (44.0 per cent). This however suggests substantial divisions of opinion about those surveyed in Manatuto about *barlake*.

Gendered behaviour

a. Familial relations and division of labour

In identifying their primary daily activity (Question 10), the results corroborate that Manatuto is less of a subsistence agricultural economy than the other sites. While in the other sites between 40 and 60 per cent of respondents said that their primary daily activity involved some form of agricultural labour, this percentage was only 25.6 per cent in Manatuto, with a slightly higher number saying that they mainly are involved in domestic labour (26.8 per cent). Smaller percentages work in public offices (8.5 per cent), go to school (7.3 per cent), work in an NGO or the church (7.3 per cent) or operate small businesses (6.1 per cent). Gender analysis of results shows very strong gender divisions of labour with women's labour concentrated within the domestic realm—interestingly, a stronger trend in a more urban setting than the three other primarily rural settings. Almost half of the female respondents (46.7 per cent) said that they are primarily engaged in domestic activities, as compared with just 2.7 per cent of male respondents. Moreover, men are far more likely to undertake agricultural labour (32.4 per cent of men as compared with 20.0 per cent of women). Similar percentages of men and women worked in public offices (8.9 and 8.1 per cent respectively).

In order to explore gender divisions of labour in households (Questions 28 to 34), we asked respondents to nominate which groups of people (older or married females / males, younger or unmarried females / males) in their household have the greatest responsibility for certain specific tasks central to familial life in Timor-Leste. The results are as follows:

- *Cooking* (Question 28): Similarly to the other sites, it was older females who are invested with primary responsibility for cooking in approximately half of respondents' households (50.6 per cent). In almost one-third of households (28.9 per cent), respondents said it was the equal responsibility of females and males.
- *Fetching water* (Question 29): In Manatuto this was much more likely to be undertaken by females than in the other three research sites. Whereas in Atauro, Ermera and Venilale, in over half of the respondents' households this was reported to be the equal responsibility of males and females, in Manatuto in 48.2 per cent of the responses it is undertaken by either younger females (33.7 per cent) or older females (14.5 per cent). Around one-third of responses (32.5 per

cent) said that fetching water is the equal responsibility of males and females in their households.

- *Fetching firewood* (Question 30): In contrast with fetching water, which in Manatuto tends to be more of a female line of responsibility than male, for a significant percentage of respondents (37.4 per cent) fetching firewood is male work. Equally however, for 45.8 per cent of respondents, this work is considered to be the equal responsibility of males and females. There was little difference in responses between females and males.
- *Working in fields or food gardens* (Question 32): Unlike in the other sites, a small number of respondents (11.9 per cent) do not undertake such agricultural work, owing to the relative urbanisation of sections of Manatuto sub-district. In contrast with Atauro and Ermera, where a large majority of responses showed equal division of agricultural labour, in Manatuto 56.0 per cent of respondents said that agricultural work is the responsibility of older men, while 22.6 per cent said men and women equally share the work. Female respondents were more likely to emphasise female participation in agricultural labour than male respondents. For example, only 51.1 per cent of female respondents said that working in the fields was the primary responsibility of older men as compared with 62.2 per cent of male respondents. While 25.5 per cent of female respondents claimed that male and female members of their household share the work equally, only 18.9 per cent of male respondents answered in such a way.
- *Cleaning the house* (Question 34): Responses to this question showed a fairly equal gender division of labour with just over one-third of respondents (38.1 per cent) saying that it is the primary responsibility of older women in their households—almost the same rate of responses for nominating older men as the responsible group (35.7 per cent). Just over one-fifth of respondents (22.6 per cent) said the work is equally shared between females and males.
- *Looking for money* (Question 31): Older men were nominated as the primary responsibility holders in 44.6 per cent of responses, slightly less than in the other sites, and in 42.2 per cent of responses income generation is considered to the mutual responsibility of males and females. This is one of the few labour activities which for Manatuto revealed some considerable gender-differentiated perceptions. No male respondents said that income generation is the primary responsibility of older women, as compared with 15.2 per cent of female respondents.
- *Controlling household money* (Question 33): As in the other sites, in a majority of responses (84.5 per cent) this was clearly considered to be the primary responsibility of older women. Only 9.5 per cent of responses suggested that this being equally shared.

Questions 37 to 39 of the survey asked married respondents to choose who in their spousal relationship has the greatest responsibility for making decisions across a range of decision-making domains, or alternatively where usually the wife and husband make decisions together:

- Question 37—*Use of household money*: An overwhelming majority of respondents (81.0 per cent) said they typically make financial decisions with their spouse. In the households of those respondents who did not attest to equal sharing of financial decision-making responsibility, wives are more likely than husbands

to make such decisions (10.8 per cent of female respondents said that they themselves make such decisions, as compared with 3.8 per cent of males; while 19.2 per cent of male respondents said that their wives and only 5.4 per cent of female respondents said that their husbands did).

- Question 38—*Teaching children in the household (including discipline)*: Again, a large majority (88.9 per cent) said that the husband-wife team make such decisions together.
- Question 39—*Organising of the respondent's time*: A smaller majority of respondents (66.7 per cent) said that decisions are made with their spouse about how the respondent will organise his or her time. Male respondents were more likely to claim complete autonomy over their time organisation than female respondents (34.6 per cent and 24.3 per cent respectively).

b. Customary culture

Manatuto was the only site in this study where a majority of survey respondents (57.1 per cent) do not follow either a patrilineal *or* matrilineal customary in terms of either the husband or wife entering into the other's household (Question 27). Rather, these respondents reported that it is a circumstantial decision. This may perhaps be due to the increasingly urbanised, modernised nature of Manatuto sub-district, where the rigidity of customary norms may have been broken down in some respects. The next highest response indicated it is usually the new husband that moves (36.9 per cent), indicating a significant percentage of respondents who follow matrilineal customs.

Given what we have learned about the context of Manatuto—of most importance for this project evaluation, a still-common acceptance of domestic violence and the importance of customary and traditional frameworks for understanding social relations and resolving domestic violence—the next section considers what impact JSMP has had in effecting gender change in Manatuto communities.

7.3 Project impact in Manatuto sub-district

We undertook this survey in each of the four communities so that there was a clear picture of the social context in which the respective programs were put into place. This is important in that it would be too easy to judge the relative impacts of a program without knowing the context or the challenges that people face when working to change the character of gender relations. Even in this instance of Manatuto, a centre for agricultural production on a major transit route, and where at least relatively speaking our survey showed higher rates of education and self-designated literacy, there remains many obstacles to just even attempting to introduce the idea of gender. In the first instance, nearly half of those surveyed felt that they were not confident in knowing what was meant by the term gender, meaning that valuable resources need to be used by organisations such as JSMP simply on explanation and justification of what is meant by such a term and why, with so many other development challenges, it is of relevance. Looking at the results generally the picture is one where inequity appears entrenched and in a way where the character of gender relations makes it very difficult even for outsiders to intervene even on questions of significant social change. For instance, in these statistics at least the household remains the key domain for confirming and consolidating gender relations, including being the point of resolution for problems of domestic violence. This is indicative of a broader problem where there is limited social space for workers from organisations such as JSMP to introduce ideas that the police and

justice systems have both a legal and appropriate place in the prevention of domestic violence. To lift a problem out of the household and into public view appears contrary to local norms. Obviously the statistics point to many other kinds of challenges as well, and it is important that these factors are not lost as the next section proceeds to examine the impact of JSMP's efforts in those communities.

JSMP's project implementation in Manatuto sub-district

In 2006 JSMP ran the project 'Training for Women about Gender-Based Violence and Formal Justice' in Manatuto sub-district, as well as the other sub-districts in Manatuto district. In each sub-district, the target make-up of the group of women to be trained was two to three women from each suco in the sub-district, resulting in groups of around fifteen women. These women were known as leaders in their communities in some way, whether it be that they were suco council representatives, teachers, or members of the women's movement during the independence struggle. As such we found in the instance of Manatuto sub-district, the women were typically very literate and also from more urban parts of the sub-district. JSMP ran two days of training with this chosen group, focusing on human rights, gender, and how women can access the formal justice system in instances of violence. The training participants were encouraged to socialise the information within their own suco. JSMP also liaised with local police, government and local leaders such as xefe suco and xefe aldeia.

Impact questions

With RMIT's facilitation, JSMP's Women's Justice Unit identified the following evaluation questions in order to understand WJU's impact of the project 'Training for Women about Gender-Based Violence and Formal Justice' in sub-district Manatuto:

- i. Has this training project had an impact upon the female participants and their community peers in terms of their *comprehension about the formal justice process*? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- ii. Has this project impacted upon *women's use of formal justice* if violence against women occurs in the community? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- iii. Has this project impacted on *women's perceptions of the benefits of resolving their problems through the legal process*? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- iv. Has the project been effective in *supporting female participants to become peer supports in their communities*? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- v. Has this project had *other impacts* in the community? If so, why and how? If not, why not?
- vi. *Recommendations*

Question One: Comprehension about the formal justice system

Our research with direct project beneficiaries (the women selected to take part in the training) as well as other select individuals such as suco leaders revealed limited understandings about the formal justice system in relation to violence against women or gender-based violence (GBV).

In terms of positive impacts, JSMP's training has appeared to have contributed to a two-part process of (a) the community moving toward the idea that violence against women is a legitimate problem rather than acceptable practice, and (b) that the formal

justice system has a role in addressing violence against women. In particular, the female participants in the JSMP program discussed that they are more likely to have the courage and consciousness to recognise that they do not have to remain quiet about violence against themselves or their peers, as one participant Diana commented:

I realised an important change [from JSMP's project] in my life about how to know and see about the problem of violence that arises in my family, amongst neighbours and in the aldeia. Especially us as women, it often arises that there is violence between wife and husband ... [A]s women we also have the right to elevate this problem going forward.¹⁹³

We found certain research methods such as 'Social Relationship Mapping' and 'Participatory Indicators of Change' to be very effective in opening up more in-depth, specific conversations about current community practices regarding cases of violence against women (particularly violence in the home or domestic violence). These conversations revealed people's view on the relationship between domestic violence and crime in a way that was in clear tension to the key aims of JSMP's educative training, namely to socialise the idea that domestic violence is a crime and must therefore be dealt with through the formal justice system. However, in the course of focus group discussions it became starkly apparent that the training participants believed that there were two forms of domestic violence (involving female victims): 'normal' levels of violence that they did not consider criminal; and rarer, more extreme forms of violence that were usually seen as different by the fact that blood was drawn and in turn was considered *may* fall under the ambit of criminality. One participant articulates the widely agreed upon distinction operating at the community level:

There is a difference, there are two kinds [of domestic violence]. One is a crime, like when blood is spilt. The other is [a] normal [level of violence], and this can be resolved within the household. Sometimes we can resolve it outside like with the police, but the police can't make any decision when it's not a crime. So then it's sent back to adat or the suco. In the suco is where the problem is resolved.¹⁹⁴

Not one of the training participants suggested an alternative view of domestic violence and crime. Another participant stated quite explicitly that they did not know that domestic violence was a crime. In the course of discussion, it became increasingly apparent that the participants were unclear that there had been a move away from the Indonesian legal system where there was a very limited definition of violence against women that tended to preclude domestic violence. This may have been because JSMP undertook the training before the new domestic violence legislation had passed and had not returned since, and therefore the participants were confused about what law was in operation. JSMP, like other organisations advocating for domestic violence legislation and working for the improvement of the legal system's treatment of female victims of violence, has been in a difficult situation in the last few years while domestic violence legislation has been held up in parliamentary process, and where actors throughout the legal system are often confused about the criminal status of domestic violence. In this state of flux and uneven systemic change, it is no wonder that East Timorese in grassroots communities are also unclear about how the legal system views and responds to domestic violence.

193 Interview with Diana Juaquilina Pinus Lay, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 2 September 2009.

194 Social relationship mapping focus group discussion with JSMP's project beneficiaries, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 1 September 2009.

This idea that domestic violence is not always (and not often) a crime has consequences for how the community justifies its current practices of addressing domestic violence cases that arise. While it appears that there is an increasing pattern of police being involved in intervening in domestic violence, the overwhelming justification of this was not as the first step in advancing a case through the justice system. Rather, drawing police in provided the victim an immediate short-term protection, especially so as to buy time until the situation calms down. Police are not regarded as having any further powers in terms of domestic violence because domestic violence is not considered by the community to be a crime, as the following focus group comment shows:

Because domestic violence is not a crime police don't have the competency to resolve this problem so they send it back [to be resolved at the community level]. When the victim takes the perpetrator to the police this is just to save [her]. The victim takes the man and puts him in the custody cell for 72 hours and then the police call the victim to ask her 'do you want to take back your husband and go home or not?' Then they will talk and look at the solution ... Police can't resolve civil cases, because police never resolve civil cases. With civil cases police send back to adat or to the suco leaders.¹⁹⁵

With this distinction where the community considers most domestic violence practices not to be criminal, according to all research participants, the decision falls upon the victim about how she would like to proceed with the case. Here two participants explain this idea from their own perspectives:

About crimes, police must make a decision following the existing law to take the case to the courts. If it isn't a crime then it's up to the victim, is the victim prepared to reconcile with the perpetrator or not?¹⁹⁶

Just now you asked about whether the perpetrator goes to court or not, this depends on the victim. If the victim doesn't carry forward her problem, the perpetrator can't then take the problem to the court. The victim must take the perpetrator [to court]. If the victim decides that the problem can't be taken any further to court [even though] she feels pain or is bleeding ... She [the victim] is the determining factor, that 'I will take this to court' or 'the problem can be resolved here'. This depends on the victim.¹⁹⁷

This remains the case when a woman repeatedly experiences violence at the hands of her husband:

I think mostly it depends on the victim. The police see that it has occurred two times or three times [but] if the victim doesn't want to [take the case to court] like always then it can't go forward ... If it [violence] occurs two or three times the determining factor is still the victim.¹⁹⁸

This kind of sentiment was usually couched in terms of the victim's right to decide her own destiny. However, at other points in discussions, all of women involved in focus group discussions outlined and agreed amongst themselves that there is enormous social pressure upon a woman not to push for her case to proceed through the courts. This is will be discussed further in following sections.

195 *ibid.*

196 *ibid.*

197 *ibid.*

198 *ibid.*

Finally, there were some indications that the concept of human rights has been misunderstood as meaning that any individual can do whatever they like—a common sentiment in Timor-Leste. In the course of one focus group discussion the training participants spoke about how they have distributed the information they learned through JSMP's training. One example given was how counselling or moral guidance given by these married women to younger unmarried women who find themselves pregnant. In this instance it was said that the older women would tell the younger women that 'this is a time of human rights' and therefore the younger woman could not enforce the father's responsibility toward her and the baby because that would be contravening the man's human rights.¹⁹⁹ Without further clarity from an organisation such as JSMP, such an interpretation of human rights may actually work against the aim of supporting greater equality. This is just one example though, and it does not mean that this discourse has always been carried forward, nor does it mean that other topics of training have been as equally misinterpreted. It does however demonstrate the need for constant follow-up and clarification as training becomes applied through practice.

At least in terms of the groups of women that participated in this project in Manatuto, JSMP's training does not appear to have clarified the relationship between the formal legal system and instances of gender-based violence, at least in a way in which understanding was retained over time. This is understandable, given the complexity of the formal justice system at the time of the project and how entrenched views are with regard to what constitutes a crime and what does not. However, as a key desired impact of the training project, JSMP may need to rethink how to build understanding in this area, particularly around domestic violence. With the recent passing of domestic violence legislation, this could be a timely point at which to revisit those groups that participated in training during 2006 to 2008 and to also try a different approach.

Question Two: Women's use of the formal justice system

We found that one participatory research method—social relationship mapping—was critical to understanding whether there had been a real change toward women accessing the formal justice system in circumstances of violence following JSMP's training with the community. In facilitating this method, we asked participants to use a Venn diagram to plot the process of how an instance of violence against women would usually be resolved within the Manatuto community. They were to show what social groups would be involved, and in what order. We also enquired about what the typical outcome would be. The research participants undertook this activity in two groups. One group mapped the social relationship context of resolution of a case of violence against women prior to JSMP's training, and one group plotted the typical situation after the training. The following quote is an explanation of the community process by one of the participants involved in mapping the situation before JSMP's intervention:

[I]n our suco usually ... [if there was] some problem that arose between a woman and a man, the victim of domestic violence must first run to the **family** (1). If the family agrees that she is to take this problem up, the victim takes it up with the **lianain** (2). If the victim doesn't agree with this, then it is just resolved within the **family**. If [the problem] isn't resolved with the **lianain**, then it goes to the **suco** (4) to be resolved. If it isn't resolved there then the suco makes a report with the suco council then carries this report to the **police** (5). If it is not resolved with the police, then the police looks

¹⁹⁹ Location mapping focus group discussion with JSMP's project beneficiaries, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 4 September 2009.

for the perpetrator to resolve the problem, and then the police would take the report **back to the family** (6). If it is still not resolved within the family ..., then it goes to the **church** (7), and it finishes there. Many times we have followed domestic violence [cases] between women and men that are like this ... The **church is strongest** [most important] in that the problem ultimately ends there because in reality the priest says, 'the church has married you two, it's not the police who have married you two, or any other person'. If the wife and husband re-accept each other along with their families, then the problem finishes there.²⁰⁰

This explanation of the community process to resolve incidents of domestic violence prior to JSMP's training accords closely with what other researchers have written on with regards to customary law practices in Timor-Leste. For instance, Tanja Hohe provides helpful expositions about the roles of various groups and the process more generally of resolving problems through 'indigenous' or customary law. She explains that lianain are the 'local legal authorities' who 'know the history and are in contact with the ancestors ... [and] know the rules the ancestors have set and, therefore, they have the competence to speak the law.'²⁰¹ Usually the meeting held to resolve the issue is organised very quickly by the village chiefs as 'social disorder threatens the continuation of life in the community'.²⁰² The problem will typically be adjudicated by the combination of lianain and village chiefs. Hohe explains:

The agenda of such a meeting is to negotiate the compensation. The actual speaking and negotiating is mainly done by the traditional legal experts. Only they have the competence to finally take decisions and determine the fines. Most of the other authorities have to make sure that the things spoken or the decisions taken are in accordance with their realm of authority ... The objective of such a meeting is to find a solution for good, so community can live together in peace again. If no solution is reached, the group can refer to a higher authority.²⁰³

Following a decision regarding compensation and punishment, the final objective of reconciliation between perpetrator and victim or conflicting parties is considered to be critical in a customary law framework. Hohe explains 'If there is no reconciliation, tension can survive and threaten the community at a later stage'.²⁰⁴ The process in Manatuto seems to accord fairly closely with Hohe's understanding of customary legal process. However there are some significant differences as there tend to be between different locations in Timor-Leste. In particular, community process in Manatuto gives great authority to the Church where violence has not been able to be resolved through customary legal process. With the authority lent to the Church, this appears to limit further the extent to which the community invests authority in the police.

The project impact assessment was concerned to discover whether the community had started to use the formal or modern legal system rather than the customary legal system in relation to violence against women, as a result of JSMP's training program. The social relationship map produced after JSMP's training revealed that there had not been

200 Social relationship mapping focus group discussion with JSMP's project beneficiaries, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 1 September 2009.

201 Tanja Hohe, 'Justice without Judiciary in East Timor', *Conflict, Security & Development*, vol. 3, no. 3, December 2003, p. 343.

202 *ibid.*, p. 343.

203 *ibid.*, p. 344.

204 *ibid.*, p. 344.

great change in this regard. Community resolution through customary law or church adjudication is still utilised in the vast majority of cases of violence against women in these communities, not the state law. The critical difference that has occurred is that police are increasingly drawn into the cycle of community resolution. Here one research participant explained the social relationship map of how domestic violence and violence against women is now approached in the community, following JSMP's training in 2006:

She [the victim] takes it [the case] to the police, and then the police look for the perpetrator. The **police** (1) identify the problem, [see] if the problem can be resolved. The police have one criteria—if the violence is not grave they send it back to for resolution within the **family** (2). If the two families from the perpetrator and the victim can't resolve it, then the problem goes to the **lianain** (3). If the lianain isn't able to resolve it, it goes to the **xefe suco** (4) and other suco council members. If they aren't able to resolve the problem, it goes to the **church** (5). But if the suco leaders manage to find a solution to the case, it doesn't need to go to the church. This is what happens following JSMP's training.²⁰⁵

When we explicitly asked the groups what has changed following JSMP's training, they explained that the greater involvement of police constitutes a change, as explained here by two participants:

Yes they now understand that police are security for everything. Through the training it is said that police can resolve cases like this, like they are security for problems such as these.²⁰⁶

Before [JSMP's training] when this problem arose the Church had the greatest power, [then after JSMP's training] the police have the greatest power.²⁰⁷

However, discussions revealed that in almost all cases, police are considered to be there to 'buy time' and to provide the victim temporary security through holding the perpetrator (usually a husband) while the immediate situation cools down. Police will then usually send the case back to families and community leaders (lianain and xefe suco) to resolve, rather than referring through the court system or contacting other parties in the victim support network that has attempted to be developed by mostly Dili-based NGOs.

When we asked the participants whether they consider the increased involvement of police in cases of violence against women to be a change that is meaningful and positive for victims of violence and women in general, they expressed great reservation. One woman explained:

To me there is change but only a little. Very small. The current situation ... it's very difficult to get rid of this when it means getting rid of Timorese people's mindsets. The conscience that follows our tradition from adat, we are based in this so every single woman and man must lose this mindset. If we don't lose this mindset, this [violence and social aftermath] will just keep arising. We can't lose the mindset totally so we need to reduce it but [until now it has just been reduced] only a little. So to lose this we need change generation to generation.²⁰⁸

205 Social relationship mapping focus group discussion with JSMP's project beneficiaries, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 1 September 2009.

206 *ibid.*

207 *ibid.*

208 *ibid.*

Others agreed that perhaps this was a step in the right direction but that real change, both in terms of prevention of and justice for violence against women, will require substantial effort over a long term, seen in terms of generational change rather than change in the foreseeable years.

Women's use of the formal legal system in cases of violence in Manatuto sub-district continues to be negligible, despite JSMP's and other organisations' interventions to promote women's access to formal legal support. This is partly due to the confusion about the current state of domestic violence legislation, but also due to deeply entrenched cultural views of what constitutes a crime and when and where should the formal legal process be drawn in. On the positive side, the fact that there has been some change in the increasing involvement of police suggests that change is possible—but it needs to occur in a more supportive framework, where all actors are very clear about their rights and responsibilities. However, and as will be discussed, changes to the cultural domain provide significant challenges to JSMP and other organisations working towards considerable behavioural change through encouraging East Timorese communities to increasingly utilise the formal justice system.

Question Three: Women's perceptions of using the formal legal process in instances of violence

Thus far we have examined whether JSMP's training project has impacted upon women's comprehension of the relationship between the formal legal system and violence, and whether or not women are increasingly accessing the formal legal system to respond to cases of violence. In this section, we look at whether JSMP's training changed women's perceptions of using the formal legal process to pursue cases of gender-based violence. The recommendations section at 7.4.8 takes up and responds to the issues outlined here in terms of perceptions of the formal legal process.

a. Women's perceptions of dominant community resolution processes

Before looking at women's perceptions of using the formal legal process to seek justice for violence, it is worth considering how they view the dominant framework for response to gender-based violence in Manatuto sub-district—that is, community resolution combining customary law with Church ruling.

The female participants in JSMP's training consistently emphasised the importance of resolving incidents of violence at the most local level possible starting with the family and working outwards, except for in what they viewed as extreme cases:

When a problem arises, I look to help my female compatriots to take their problem to a competent body that can resolve this problem. But, if it is a problem that we can resolve, we just resolve it in our own area. An example that just recently arose, there was a problem between a woman and a man, we resolved it just within the family by agreement so that the man must be responsible for this child while the child is going through education and until he finds work.²⁰⁹

At points in discussion, the women were keen to show their community in a positive light, as is understandable and often the case in community research processes, as East Timorese people's primary identification is often with their kinship-based communities. Another common theme of discussion was the victim's freedom of choice in deciding how she would like her case to be pursued, with the women initially suggesting in

209 Interview with Juliana de Sousa Henrique Soares, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 2 September 2009.

discussions that it is the victim who chooses to pursue her case through community resolution processes:

The victim tells the family, and the family always asks her, 'do you want to take this further?' If the victim says not to take it any further, then you can't. Because our families can't make the decision because the injury is the victim's so you can't obligate her ... According to my vision and conscience we victims ourselves are the ones who can give a solution to our problems.²¹⁰

This idea of freedom of choice was often couched in human rights framework and seemed to reflect an ideal that the women had assimilated about human rights, rather than the reality of community practice. This is again suggestive that human rights socialisation needs to be approached in a sophisticated manner with communities, particularly in terms of how structural inequalities—gendered and other—may impact upon an individual's ability to exercise certain theoretical freedoms. For example, at various instances during our research in Manatuto, a recent case was discussed where a girl, probably mentally disabled from the descriptions of her, had been sexually assaulted by a group of boys. The decision to resolve this case at the familial and suco level was defended as reflecting her own decision as a right, with no suggestion that her ability to make an informed choice may have been impaired by a range of factors, not least her disability.²¹¹

When we were able to delve deeper and talk about the specifics of what typically occurs in the Manatuto community through group discussions (following on from activities such as social relationship mapping, location mapping and participatory indicators of change), it was apparent that the women do feel ambivalent and troubled about the value of such a community resolution process for female victims. They admitted that usually there are very strong structural limitations to women's abilities to freely exercise choice in terms of pursuing the justice that she would like. It is typically not the victim herself that decides how to pursue the matter but rather families and male community leaders. Other women are not allowed space to involve themselves in the ultimate decision-making of leaders, and that decisions intended to keep families and communities integrated often result in a recurrence of violence for victims.²¹² For example, one woman here comments on the usual community resolution processes:

[T]hey violate the decision of the woman because they give greater value to culture ... Victims continue to be victims because the family don't give the decision to her ... so that in the future it happens again.²¹³

In order to further understand why community resolution processes are not necessarily seen in a wholly positive light by women, and women are not accessing the formal legal process, it is important to ask: a) why do existing community resolution processes continue to hold the power they do in local communities such as Manatuto?, and b) to explore why women are concerned about utilising the formal legal process.

210 Social relationship mapping focus group discussion with JSMP's project beneficiaries, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 1 September 2009.

211 *ibid.*, Interview with Adelino Soares, xefe suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 3 September 2009.

212 Social relationship mapping focus group discussion with JSMP's project beneficiaries, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 1 September 2009; Location mapping focus group discussion with JSMP's project beneficiaries, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 4 September 2009; Participatory Indicators of Change focus group discussion with JSMP's project beneficiaries, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 1 September 2009.

213 Social relationship mapping focus group discussion with JSMP's project beneficiaries, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 1 September 2009.

b. The importance of community resolution processes for the Manatuto community

In an interview, the xefe suco of Aiteas in Manatuto sub-district, Adelino Soares, carefully explained the customary law process for resolving cases of gender-based violence. It is important to note that Adelino has supported and been involved in JSMP's training project, as well as other organisations' programmatic interventions about gender-based violence in Manatuto sub-district. Adelino told us that the system the community uses to resolve problems such as GBV

... is through adat or the existing culture. When a problem occurs between a woman and a man, the lianain order them to give tais to reconcile them through the process of spreading out the large mat (a ritual practice of customary law mediation). They also must promise that the problem that arose will not happen again because the law that applies culturally has also been approved in Parliament ... When a man wrongs a woman, he must apologise to the woman through [giving her] things: money, buffalo, goats, material ... When the problem occurs again a more heavy sanction will be imposed, because of the promise or compact that has been made. This is like a law that is passed from generation to generation.²¹⁴

Further, we asked Adelino why not use the formal legal process for cases of violence:

Because the traditional style is like a custom, but also because we already have a vigorous law. We can see that there are advantages and disadvantages. When you take a case to the court, often you do not get a quick solution. Also there is another problem that can arise—only one party gets the burden or punishment so therefore both parties cannot be satisfied with the court's decision. But when you go through adat, we can dig up the problem for its base to the roots, therefore the problem does not occur again. But, we also must give respect to the formal law that we have.²¹⁵

Adelino's explanation of why the Manatuto community continues to primarily utilise community resolution processes in cases of GBV demonstrates just how complicated the question of justice for female victims of violence is in Timor-Leste. Customary law custodians do not necessarily see themselves as resistant to a formal legal process. As Adelino suggests, in Manatuto the idea that domestic violence is a crime has been absorbed into customary legal practices to strengthen the perceived binding of the promise that is made to not repeat violence in the future. Customary law practices and frameworks of meaning are changing, in some instances, to absorb modern ideas of gender equality and human rights (see for instance Santina's story in the GFFTL project evaluation). Adelino says of community resolution processes: 'In this process, we always mention the words 'rights' and 'gender''.²¹⁶ This is not to suggest that such changes are necessarily advantageous to women, but to highlight that some local communities are endeavouring to respond to changes in the formal law at a national law through adaptation of existing practices. They believe that such responses are positive but the changes also highlight just how strong the use of customary practice continues to be. Nor is the primary interest of customary law custodians necessarily to protect patriarchal relations that favour men over women, but to ensure the continued integration of families and kinship communities and a balance with the ancestors.

214 Interview with Adelino Soares, xefe suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 3 September 2009.

215 *ibid.*

216 *ibid.*

This is not to defend customary law as positive for female victims of violence, but to suggest that in order to realise change in this complicated area of GBV justice and prevention, there are very complicated dynamics at play that need to be recognised and addressed in a sophisticated manner. These issues of continued community use of customary practices of resolution of GBV will be further explored in the **Recommendations** section at 7.4.8. However, here it is sufficient to say that the use of customary law is seen by East Timorese communities as playing an integral role to maintaining the sustainability and stability of families and communities, that customary practices are not necessarily seen in opposition to formal legal practices but are rather adapting and absorbing the changes in the formal legal realm due to the ongoing resilience of these systems, and finally that there are have very real concerns about the efficacy of formal legal processes in sustaining communities.

Inhibiting structural factors for women in accessing formal justice in cases of violence

While the women who participated in JSMP's training do not necessarily defend the value of customary or Church resolution processes as effective and fair for female victims, they hold very real and understandable concerns about whether their interests as victims would be served by pursuing court cases. This is especially the case where the defendant is likely to be a husband, and they are particularly concerned about what would happen to them and their children once a formal investigation of the case was begun, or after a court case has been heard. They understand that pursuing formal rather than community resolution of a domestic violence case is likely to result in individual punishment of the man and the breakdown of a marriage:

Participant 1: Yes this is just because of the reason we've already heard, [a victim] may want to take the case forward but for example like this woman and man want to take the problem to police, this is something that has happened a lot, for example I take him to police, he sleeps [in custody] and then he comes back and says, 'I will have to leave you [if you continue with this case]'. This is like a strong sentiment. We think about where this will end. If he leaves me, what will happen to my children and I? This is the one really big reason why we don't take cases forward.

Participant 2: [O]ne problem is that if we take [a case] to the tribunal, like in the usual cases of a victim experiencing domestic violence, sometimes we women and our peers think if you take [a case] to the tribunal the husband will abandon responsibility of my children and so therefore sometimes cases just stop there and the victim herself takes back the case.

Participant 3: I also want to add [to this discussion about why women don't take cases to court]. Like one of my colleagues has said, this depends on the wife, whether the wife will go to the lianain or to the police. If [a victim] runs to the police, the police send the case back to the lianain to look for a solution if the wife doesn't want [the husband to be jailed / to leave her]. If the problem ends just with the police, one [of the married couple] will end up in jail.²¹⁷

At one level, as is often recognised by organisations working in the field of GBV and justice, a structural impediment to women accessing the formal justice sector to pursue justice is lack of economic independence. Women tend to be economically reliant on

²¹⁷ Social relationship mapping focus group discussion with JSMP's project beneficiaries, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 1 September 2009.

husbands or men in the families and therefore are very worried about what it would mean for the livelihoods of their children and themselves if they were to pursue formal justice and raise the ire of their husbands who would see this as the ultimate betrayal of loyalty. But the responses of the women above also are suggestive of further concerns about how they would live their lives after pursuing justice. It is very difficult for women to imagine how they would continue to retain a place in local communities that, particularly beyond Dili, are closely integrated at a very personal level and through complex kinship structures. Particularly for women from patrilineal East Timorese communities who have become a member of another's kinship community through marriage, the negotiation of a continued place in that community may be very challenging for women. That is, women do not feel assured that their future would be more positive through pursuing formal justice and therefore potentially severing familial and community ties, rather than to stay in a marriage that may be violent.

As the third comment above indicates, the fact that police are continuing to put responsibility for decision-making about advancement of a case back onto the victims of violence places women in a particularly difficult position. With the new domestic violence legislation, police must now investigate and pursue cases of domestic violence no matter what the victim herself says she wants. This should take some pressure off women at least in terms of choosing how the case proceeds if police actually enact their responsibilities as per legal requirements. Beyond police, however, problems in terms of how women are supported in pursuing formal justice and the continued support for them after a court decision is handed down remain, and women are yet to be convinced that they will find the support they require to realise justice in a way that is positive in their lives and for their futures. It does not appear that at this time, JSMP's project was able to impact women's perceptions of the formal legal process in a way that would convince them of the benefits.

For a project such as JSMP's to be more effective in having impact upon women's use of the formal justice system in cases of violence, it would seem necessary for organisations working in the area to recognise with beneficiaries the continued strength of customary and traditional resolution processes, and to address the reality of women's concerns about pursuing their cases through the formal justice system.

Question Four: Training participants as peer supports in their own local communities

In their sub-district level training, JSMP chose two to three women per suco with the idea that they would become peer supports in their suco, helping to socialise the training and provide support to other women to access the formal justice sector. The training participants certainly seemed eager to learn and enthusiastic about supporting each other and other women in their community. They are interested in gender and concerned about women's development and better quality of life for Manatuto women. Many of them have had some kind of background in being part of women's networks, through OPMT during the independence struggle or by currently holding leadership positions, such as being representatives of the suco council. All commented that JSMP's training has helped them to increase their understanding of gender and it would appear that JSMP has had the effect of strengthening those existing women's networks and helping, amongst the women's already-present consciousness and other programmatic interventions, to confirm that women can support each other. The overarching sense from the research was that the women feel greater empowerment by having more of a framework and language for understanding and discussing the idea of equality and women's rights in their community. It appears that the most common form of peer support has been

exercised by the participants in terms of giving what they refer to as 'moral guidance' to other women in the community through informal networking, such as when collecting water, meeting in the church, school or hospital, any women's meetings, and so forth. This guidance usually centres upon two key aspects as a way to try to prevent violence; a) how to build a relationship with one's husband that is strong and mutually respectful and b) ensuring the education of children.²¹⁸

First start with the family, how women and men should understand each other, how men can understand women and women can also use their ideas—they can do things like men but this isn't to put down men. Women and men have rights that are the same, that men can respect women and accept her though and decisions, this starts in the home with the family. When the wife and husband understand each other, respect each other, there is equal dignity ... there is no violence ... [H]ow we can show to the next generation that if we as wives and husbands just beat each other, our children see, in the future our children also beat each other like we do. We talk to our female peers about how our husbands can understand us therefore can accept our decisions. This is what we talk to our peers about, especially married women. So that therefore we open up to each other about what we feel. The things we speak about men must also know ... so that conflict cannot arise. [This is what we say] to our female peers ... 'speak truthfully and open up to each other [in your marriage] and respect your husband so that he will respect you'.²¹⁹

However the women were also honest about the limitations upon them in being effective peer supports within their communities in terms of helping women to access the formal justice system. In terms of cases of violence, it was acknowledged that women hold limited decision-making power within the community, so while they may be concerned to offer support, this tends to be informal or emotional support. One participant explains:

[S]ometimes women look to just support each, or just look to find out information. [But] sometimes other women don't have the power to make decisions about cases or give a solution to the case at hand.²²⁰

Moreover, the participants in JSMP's Manatuto sub-district training are almost all town-based women, and were concerned about the lack of involvement of women from the more rural, outlying areas of Manatuto sub-district. They suggested that their ability to reach these women, even if they technically belong to the same suco, is very limited due to a strong local sense of the urban-rural divide. They would prefer that the training is held at a suco level or involves more women:

Participant 1: The training just in the centre only involved us few; when [it was held] in the centre [JSMP] invited only one or two people. That person doesn't have time to share the information ... We ask JSMP can you share the information especially at the suco level, so that our female peers can understand and hear for themselves.

Participant 2: We think it is possible for us who attended the training to become [peer supports] for our female peers but we ask particularly to the JSMP program to come and empower us further, because we only attended twice in the town. If possible please also go to the rural areas because many women there experience domestic violence and also need the information we heard; they haven't heard because their aldeia are not near town but in the back there, there are many more people.²²¹

218 Location mapping focus group discussion with JSMP's project beneficiaries, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 4 September 2009.

219 *ibid.*

220 Social relationship mapping focus group discussion with JSMP's project beneficiaries, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 1 September 2009.

221 Location mapping focus group discussion with JSMP's project beneficiaries, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 4 September 2009.

While women who participated in JSMP's training appear to genuinely value any opportunity to further their learning and develop their consciousness in relation to matters of greater equality for women, they tell us that they are limited in their abilities to support other women access formal justice. This is in part due to their lack of power within the community, and also because they are too few to reach all women, particularly those in outlying rural areas. They do, however, appear quite active in lending support to women in their immediate vicinities in terms of education about gender relations within the family.

Question Five: Other impacts

As suggested above, the main impact that JSMP's project has had, beyond building women's access to the formal justice system, is in augmenting a wider process of attitudinal change (particularly of women) about gender and empowering women to seek greater gender equality in their daily lives. Most of the participants in JSMP's training have been involved with other organisations' work on gender in the Manatuto area. They are genuinely interested and enthusiastic about the topic, and see JSMP's project as contributing to their growing awareness about this area. The following comments illustrate how JSMP's project has empowered women to negotiate areas of gender inequality in their lives, such as financial decision-making between spouses and changing attitudes about gender-based violence:

Pasquela: After I attended the training I came and talked with my husband. He accepted it well and now we have realised a good understanding about utilisation and transparency in terms of our family budget ... When we attended the training about women's right and violence and then explained later to men, they didn't agree that men also have to do women's work and that they can't hit women. [They said], but when women don't act correctly should men not be allowed to teach them? We said it's not like this. But if some problem arises, there is a law that can regulate us therefore we can't undertake random actions towards women.²²²

Juliana: I really wanted to participate in JSMP's program, because through this program I can show that I have improved and developed my knowledge about human rights, domestic violence, violence against women and children, and other things ... As a citizen and especially as a woman I must know about what are rights and what is domestic violence so therefore I can share this information with my female peers.²²³

Such comments suggest that while JSMP may not have been, at this point, particularly successful in promoting women's use of the formal justice system, the beneficiaries are embracing of a broader process of attitudinal and behavioural change in terms of gender, and see building new knowledge frameworks as the basis for this change.

Question Six: Recommendations

The area of securing greater justice for female victims of violence, as well as prevention of GBV, is undoubtedly a complex one, requiring a view to the long term, as change is likely to be slow. JSMP is working in a very necessary but difficult area at a time where there is great flux and unevenness in the formal justice sector, and therefore should not be discouraged by limited impact at this stage in terms of women's access to formal justice. There are, nonetheless, options for JSMP and other organisations working in this area to

²²² Interview with Pasquela Soares, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 2 September 2009.

²²³ Interview with Juliana de Sousa Henrique Soares, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 2 September 2009.

consider in terms of the future implementation of such projects, based on the findings of this impact assessment. The recommendations have been divided into two areas: project implementation issues, and approaches to enhancing justice for victims of GBV.

a. Project implementation

There are some changes to project design that JSMP may consider adjusting in terms of implementation if such projects are run again in the future.

Targeting more vulnerable women or implementing at a more local level

As explored in **Section 7.4.6**, the achievement of the objective of the training participants becoming peer supports in their local communities has been restricted by a number of factors. This includes choosing only a small number of women to be responsible for large suco and concentrating (in the case of Manatuto sub-district) on women who already have access to other sources of information. This in effect has neglected women who may arguably be facing greater impediment to access to justice partly because of lack of information because they live in rural areas. If JSMP would like to be more confident of facilitating change to knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of women in regards to gender-based violence and access to justice, it may be worth considering the recommendations of Manatuto training participants to undertake training at a more local level than the sub-district, for example the suco or aldeia:

Pasquela: For the future I recommend to JSMP to undertake a program also for our female peers in rural areas, because there many of our peers don't have much of an understanding about this, and also to empower women in other sub-districts that find it really difficult to get information.²²⁴

Juliana: For the future, JSMP must undertake this program extending it to rural areas because many women do not receive this information.²²⁵

Diana: I ask to our female colleagues that work in JSMP that this program doesn't just reach us that know already, but is extended downwards to the levels of aldeia and suco or to other communities so that they can also be empowered.²²⁶

Of course, all development organisations face a dilemma about how best to utilise resources in order to have a positive impact on the need or issue at hand. Is it best to work intensively with a small group of beneficiaries, or to try to reach a greater number of people but meaning a less intensive and sustained intervention? The results of the Manatuto sample suggest that by working at a broader level, the impact of JSMP's training has been reduced rather than enhanced as it might have been undertaken at a more local level. In this light, it would appear better in terms of securing meaningful change to work in a select number of communities and at a more local level, involving both more women and a greater cross-section of women, including the most vulnerable who do not have many other programmatic opportunities for empowerment.

A more intensive, longer-term presence in the chosen communities

Following on from the previous recommendation, it is recommended that in order to realise project impact, JSMP needs to have an ongoing intervention strategy in the chosen communities rather than focus on implementation of singular trainings. Attitudinal and behavioural change in regards to GBV and justice is, as the participants argued themselves, difficult and requires ongoing, long-term efforts. Moreover, we found that

224 Interview with Pasquela Soares, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 2 September 2009.

225 Interview with Juliana de Sousa Henrique Soares, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 2 September 2009.

226 Interview with Diana Juaquilina Pinus Lay, suco Aiteas, Manatuto, 2 September 2009.

retention of knowledge was uneven and in some respects low some three years after the training had taken place. Such a training requires continued reinforcement over a longer period of time, as well as follow-up with the community about how they are applying the knowledge and skills they acquire from such a training, to ensure that application is both taking place and is appropriate to the needs of female victims. Moreover, it can ensure correction of misinformation, which can spread quickly and to the detriment of realisation of positive change. Particularly, such an ongoing presence of an organisation such as JSMP could help beneficiaries apply what they are learning to their daily lives. This would require ongoing support, clarification of information and facilitation of problem solving, and would need to be over a longer-term so it was applied as challenges within the community arose. Like any development organisation, but particularly in the case of such a complex and difficult area, JSMP should be continuously monitoring and evaluating impact in an in-depth, participatory way and at periodic points of time to investigate whether impact is being realised and sustained. Positive feedback of participants immediately following one-off training is not evidence enough that meaningful change in people's lives will be realised and sustained.

Participatory approaches to problem-solving and learning from real life

JSMP already uses some case studies in their training, by giving participants a scenario about a woman experiencing domestic violence and asking the participants to respond in terms of how that victim may feel. It is recommended that JSMP further extend and deepen such a participatory approach in trainings. It was evident that while the training participants were enthusiastic to learn about GBV and other gender issues, they did not yet feel very empowered about how to utilise that knowledge to realise meaningful change in their lives, particularly and most importantly in regards to access to justice. Sometimes this was a case of not making the links between the theory and everyday realities, as in how to make the training actually work. More commonly however, the training seems to be delivered at the level of a theoretical ideal about the benefits of women accessing formal justice and how they would do so. The training participants are left with big questions about how such ideal scenarios correspond with their own very complicated realities, such as their questions about what would happen to them if they were to take their husbands to court to prosecute domestic violence (see 7.4.5). While this is a difficult problem to address at this point in time—the start of a long journey to criminalise domestic violence—some suggestions might be made:

That training participants have the opportunity to learn from the stories of women who have successfully achieved formal justice in regards to domestic violence and for whom this has been beneficial. Women need to believe that it can happen in reality in order to utilise the formal justice system. These stories would need to be told honestly and in detail so as to resonate with training participants' realities, showing the challenges and opportunities the woman faced at each stage, including after the case had been heard in court, and giving an imaginable context to the process. This may even necessitate travelling to visit courts and meet other actors such as prosecuting lawyers and victim support services.

That training participants are empowered to go through a participatory problem-solving exercise. In order to think through how to apply newly acquired knowledge and make the links to daily realities, participants could be encouraged to suggest a scenario that they have experienced themselves or has occurred in the community, and simulate how they could realistically work through that case in order to better secure justice for the female victim. At each stage, the training facilitators are not giving one set of possible answers but rather probing and asking questions. Existing community

practices are openly acknowledged and discussed and other alternative possibilities honestly explored. Communities may, for example, come up with their own mechanisms for supporting female victims of violence.

Inclusion of men and other community actors

While an exclusively women's training space is no doubt necessary to allow women to freely speak and learn, the Manatuto female participants openly discussed the limitations of their ability to create change in their communities, due to women's limited power, particularly in terms of decision-making about community resolution of problems such as violence. It would appear essential to include men and community actors involved in instances of violence (such as police and local leaders: *lianain*, *xefe suco/aldeia*, and church representatives) in training processes in a more extensive way. We understand that community leaders have participated to some extent, and that JSMP has run separate training with police. However a more integrated, inclusive training project that works with various groups separately but then brings all groups together to reach some kind of community consensus may hold greater possibilities for change. Here, men and other actors should be engaged as partners in a process of change to gender inequalities.

Inter-organisational, multi-dimensional integrated initiatives

As there are multiple reasons as to why female victims of violence do not feel confident to access the formal justice system, and because at a community level knowledge, attitudinal and behavioural change in this area is likely to be difficult, slow and uneven, it is suggested that organisations working in the intersecting areas of GBV justice and prevention work together in particular target communities. For example, while JSMP can address the formal justice process side of things, another organisation could work with the community to develop greater economic independence for women. Alternatively, JSMP could work with groups already being targeted by other organisations for gender change to augment existing attempts to facilitate change to gender inequalities and to address violence from a range of angles.

b. Approaches to enhancing justice for female victims of violence

Beyond implementation strategies, there are some more difficult questions concerning how to achieve meaningful change in the GBV and justice area. There are some deep-seated reasons that may be proffered as to why JSMP's intervention and other such interventions have, at this point, resulted in limited positive impact in terms of improving women's access to justice. These are difficult to address and also can be quite controversial, so of course it is up to individual organisations to decide whether they are worth responding to. Here we attempt to define one of the key issues at hand, and then in the following sub-section to respond to that problem with some recommendations.

Different legal systems as representing different ways of understanding the world

The clash is not of legal systems but of paradigms ... Indigenous legal mechanisms are closely connected to the entire social system.²²⁷

While it is not always appropriate to speak of cultural 'clashes', as East Timorese communities tend to work at different levels of integration between customary, traditional and modern systems, in her work Hohe has attempted to understand why there has not been an even take-up of a formal legal process in Timor-Leste. She argues

²²⁷ Hohe, 'Justice without Judiciary', p. 347.

that this is because the practice of so-called customary law is highly integrated into what communities perceive to sustain their social order and the health of their communities. This social order not only requires the resolution of problems (such as violence) that at its most critical level is seen to threaten to divide the unity of the kinship group and destroy the balance within communities. It requires continued 'goodwill' of ancestors (who can both proffer life and cause great suffering) through ritual practice of community resolution and the quick restoration of harmony and balance within communities, before rifts and conflicts can deepen. This is in great contrast with a modern, formal legal system which sees the individual as the base unit of society and conflicts as between individuals.²²⁸ Of course, this becomes very tricky terrain in terms of gender, where advocates argue that individual female victims become subjugated to the collective. Here Hohe explains how conflicts involving a central gender element are perceived in a customary framework and the impetus toward reconciliation:

In cases of domestic violence, rape and adultery, the core disorder appears in the world of social relationships, threatening the peaceful living together of a community. Transgression of social order affects the cosmic flow of values. The 'punishment' needs to restore the imbalance of values that has occurred ... Harmony in the cosmos and for community members is ensured again when the appropriate fine for a perpetrator is determined and reconciliation conducted.²²⁹

This perceived necessity by communities to resolve all possible problems through customary mechanisms intersects, of course, with the perceived inefficacy of the formal justice system.

How to represent the importance of East Timorese social systems and address the securing of justice for individual female victims?

This, of course, is an immensely difficult question and is an issue faced not only in Timor-Leste, but many other societies where customary social integration continues to exist strongly alongside modern systems of social integration. Hohe's work, however, provides some possible talking points through which adaptations of current approaches to this area could be discussed.²³⁰

Strengthen the formal justice system as a viable alternative for communities. Hohe argues that given that there is an overwhelming impetus at the organisational level in Timor-Leste to move toward a thoroughly modern legal framework (such as criminalising domestic violence), rather than some kind of system that integrates the customary with the modern in order to make this viable, communities must be able to see that the formal justice system is effective. We have already discussed this in relation to women and GBV. The formal justice sector must take on, in a meaningful way, the responsibility for the implications for women that pursuing formal justice can mean. Transformation of legal practice needs to be fully supported and communities must be supported in their realisation that this is a difficult process. However given current resources, as an initial strategy this might mean taking on select cases only and providing very substantial resources to those, and then as per the discussion above, using those cases to build broader social change.

228 *ibid.*, pp. 339–40.

229 *ibid.*, p. 341.

230 *ibid.*

Recognise the adaptability of customary systems. Particular wrongs have, over time, come to be accepted by East Timorese communities to be matters for the formal criminal legal system, rather than the customary resolution system. For example, this transition occurred during Portuguese times in relation to murder. It is likely, however, to take a long time.²³¹

*Support this transition to modern legal treatment of GBV through 'legitimising the use of local concepts'.*²³² So that communities do not experience this transformation as a clash between the modern and the customary, where women become doubly victimised if gender becomes an increasing point of social tension, and so that communities do not experience transition in legal treatment of GBV as a threat to their social order, this treatment of GBV may need to be explained at some points by using a framework that resonates with how many people in Timor-Leste see the world. That is, in East Timorese society, balance between the sexes and gender complementarity is seen critical to the social order of communities. An individual human rights and modern gender framework can sometimes be experienced as a divisive threat to communal balance. It may pay to explore approaching formal legal treatment of GBV as a way of assisting in restoring gender complementarity and communal balance. In addition, communities and customary legal custodians could be enlisted to support in certain instances, through adaptation of current practices, access to the criminal system by finding a way for the victim, perpetrator and families to be supported and reintegrated into the community, even if there is a breakdown of a marriage.

231 *ibid.*

232 *ibid.*

Reflections upon the findings

8. Project Team Reflections

During Phases Three and Four of the project, the research team reflected upon the project process and evaluated the extent to which the team was able to realise research capacity-building objectives. Each NGO co-researcher and East Timorese RMIT researcher Carmenesa Moniz Noronha wrote a reflective piece about their participation in the research and evaluation project, excerpts of which are included below. As part of the reflection process, we also held a final workshop in July 2010, in which the project team met with community beneficiary group representatives from each of the four communities and with NGO leadership staff (such as directors and program managers). During this workshop, the four NGO teams and their beneficiaries reflected upon the evaluation results and deliberated upon how to carry forward the lessons learned during the research project into their organisational development and project planning processes.

Below, key lessons learned about the project process are drawn from the co-researchers' reflective pieces and the results of the final team workshop.

8.1 Personal and organisational development, particularly in the area of research and evaluation

A number of the team members wrote about how the project resulted in personal development through the acquisition of new skills, the expansion of experiential horizons and meeting certain challenges and fears. This relates to the capacity building objectives of the project, whereby we aimed to facilitate the development of gender-sensitive research and evaluation skills in East Timorese NGOs. Here Aida Exposto details the skills areas that she developed through the course of the project:

As a researcher I have, of course, gained some new experience, increased my knowledge and got much information through several methods (survey, interviews, social relationships mapping, location mapping, Timeline mapping and observation). I have also learned to better write results, analyse data including as well as other things which will be of benefit to me in particular and to FKSH as an organisation in general.

Aida Exposto, FKSH Program Officer,
'Reflection upon the Research Project',
Dili, March 2010

Mario Duarte wrote about successfully meeting his fears of publicly addressing groups and interviewing individuals. Mario gained significant confidence through this experience:

A challenge I had was not being able to deliver a presentation when it was my time to do so and conducting the interviews. Through this training I have learned the importance of not being afraid and to reassure ourselves by saying that we can do it. It is important to understand this information.

Mario Duarte, Women's Justice Unit Volunteer, JSMP,
'Reflection upon the Research Process',
Dili, March 2010

Ambrosio Dias Fernandes, a volunteer and student, was also enthusiastic about what learning about research means for him in thinking about his future possibilities:

I have learned about the research process for the first time in my life. I understood and applied all methods during the research preparation phase ... Now I expect that through this research we can learn together and share our experiences with each other, particularly with our friends from RMIT University. Recognising that the research process is very complicated, however with effort and cooperation we accomplished the collection of data. The experience gained from RMIT University has made me more confident and ready to undertake further research in the future, specially in Timor-Leste. Because I have learned, studied and applied the theory into practice throughout the research project, it has been a positive and advantageous to my future life outlook.

Ambrosio Dias Fernandes,
FKSH Volunteer, 'Reflection upon the Research Process',
Dili, March 2010

Filomena Fuca relates how the capacity development she experienced during the project benefits not only her but her organisation, as GFFTL can take stock of the change that has been facilitated in reality and think about how to adapt their projects in the future:

During the research process I learned many things such as the different methodologies used in conducting data collection during the research, how to do data analysis and write their results ... It has also been a great benefit for my organisation to learn and to be able to apply these to all its projects, because through this research it is possible to gauge the progress or success of a project undertaken by the organisation. Has there has been any change and what has been its impact upon people's daily lives in accordance with the organisation's mission and its guiding aspirations and objectives.

Filomena Fuca, GFFTL Director,
'Reflection upon the Research Process',
Dili, March 2010.

Francisca da Silva also discussed the various ongoing benefits to JSMP arising from their involvement in the project, not least reinforcing their motivation to continue to struggle for women's rights:

After getting the support from RMIT we think the benefits for JSMP are as follows:

The staff involved in running the program have gained some knowledge on how to undertake research of the program in reference.

1. The knowledge gained can help JSMP in thinking to conduct evaluations for some of its programs in the future.
2. JSMP got an evaluation report for the training program. This can also be a report for donors.
3. JSMP can have a good understanding from its involvement in this program and this experience has motivated JSMP to continue the pursuit for women's rights.

Francisca da Silva, Women's Justice Unit Coordinator, JSMP,
'Reflection upon the Research Project',
Dili, March 2010.

In the excerpts below, Carmenesa Moniz Noronha and Filomena Fuca discuss how the project has encouraged them and given them frameworks to think critically about how NGOs can best achieve impact in the area of gender transformation. Both women talk about the sheer importance of basing development interventions in a deep contextual understanding of the communities in which NGOs are operating, and to move past relying upon assumptions of change. Moreover, from their involvement in the project, both Carmenesa and Filomena reach similar conclusions: that in order to realise positive and sustainable impact in this challenging area, gender-focused interventions must be long-term and intensive; a kind of slow transformational process.

One significant change for me in this project came from the program evaluation from each NGO. Some have had great impact in their communities and other ONG programs have not had much impact. This has increased my experience to think better that in the future when an organisation undertakes a program in a community it will require more time for it to achieve positive impacts. This has also increased my research experience because I heard many different opinions from each of the sites. For example, in some sites it was encouraging to see women participating in more trainings, specially about gender, but in others their negative thinking such as women not being considerate of their husbands when they participate in such trainings, as well as many people separating because of gender ...

Each NGO has been able to see for themselves whether the program has had an impact or not, whether the target group's activities were running successfully or not, and whether there had been any changes resulting from each program. During the course of the evaluation research each NGO was able to see for themselves what was and what was not working for their target group or beneficiaries. For example, was there trust amongst the group members? It was important for them raise this things themselves so that each NGO could do regular follow-ups with their target groups.

Carmenesa Moniz Noronha, RMIT Researcher and Project Assistant,
'Reflection upon the Project Process',
Dili, March 2010.

After my involvement in this project I feel it has been a great experience in my life. While I have been working to promote gender equality, I have often met people who simple speak on the basis of their own ideias and not based on real research that provides factual evidence of the great discrimination againt women. Patriarchal traditions are still deep rooted in the communities and denying women the opportunity to participate in many activities. Lack of information and this culture in itself does not give way for changes to occur in the society's ways of life. Often people who are highly educated do not get involved or influence other women to participate, and it is also difficult to change their views and mentalities. Changing the views or mentalities in the society as I mentioned above, will take a long time and a continuous flow of information, even if slow but constante and sustained ...

Filomena Fuca, GFFTL Director,
'Reflection upon the Research Process',
Dili, March 2010

8.2 Building stronger relationships with and knowledge of beneficiaries and communities

Another dimension that emerged from reflective team discussions and from the writings of the co-researchers was a sense that the project had been important in building stronger linkages between the NGOs, their beneficiaries and the local communities from which the beneficiaries are drawn. In the excerpts of writing below, the co-researchers discuss how important it was for them to be able to see for themselves the reality of the lives lived by the beneficiaries and to move beyond assumptions of change in particular ways. They built concrete knowledge of the gender conditions in the communities in which

they worked, and of the change that had been achieved. Moreover, the project provided an opportunity to see the beneficiaries in the context of their broader communities. This contextualisation was important in terms of reinforcing the great and ongoing need for change, to realise that the opportunities for change facilitated by organisations is often geographically restricted to more accessible areas of Timor-Leste, to consider how gender change may be sustained by a few beneficiaries in their community context where they constitute a very small minority, and to recognise that seemingly small steps are actually hugely important in contexts where the conditions framing gender relations pose immense challenges. Moreover, some of the co-researchers acknowledged that the research process itself was both empowering for the community participants and provided the space in which the NGOs and the community members could meet, listen to each other and build stronger, more inclusive working relationships. This was also a tremendous outcome of the final project workshop, where NGO staff and beneficiaries sat together to discuss the research outcomes and map plans for the future. For many of the NGOs, this was the first time they had worked with their beneficiaries in a way that impacts upon the project planning and refinement process. Some of the community members attested themselves to the sense of self-value that had been fostered through their involvement in the research process and the importance attributed to their thoughts and opinions.

Below, Aida suggests that gaining knowledge of the gender change experienced in the communities as a result of FKSH's intervention has been vital in boosting hers and FKSH's motivation to keep working towards positive impact:

On another aspect, it has inspired me as a program officer/ implementing the program to the beneficiaries in the Ermera sub-district to know more about the impacts/changes/positive outcomes for beneficiaries resulting from the implementation of JSMP program. As such it will used as a reference for further improvement in the future.

Aida Exposto, FKSH Program Officer,
'Reflection upon the Research Project',
Dili, March 2010

I have noticed that the majority of the community is not very responsive towards gender. I have learned from this that men and women have equal rights and value, and it has inspired me to influence my family and colleagues not to follow this [unresponsiveness].

Most significant change that occurred in me was that the information obtained from rural women gave me something positive because I have learned how they really live on the ground. During this exercise, RMIT taught me how to conduct interviews with respect, and I met many people from different backgrounds and was able to motivate and inspire them to speak about their about their day-to-day living.

The benefit I got from this project is that I ... have a deeper understanding of the problems faced by rural women ... This information is important because often people/government do not pay attention or give priority to these problems. I hope that this information can awaken people and make them pay more attention to communities in rural areas.

Ambrosio Dias Fernandes, FKSH Volunteer,
'Reflection upon the Research Process',
Dili, March 2010.

Mario and Francisca of JSMP wrote about how the project has helped them to link their NGO projects to the realities of women's lives and gender conditions in the communities in which they work, and to think through how change is experienced in these contexts:

Based on my experience during the course of the research in Manatuto I have taken note of the fact that even though only thirty people participated in the training facilitated by JSMP, the information delivered by JSMP has not stopped in those thirty people's hands and this situation has fulfilled one of JSMP's expectations at the start of this training's activities.

Francisca da Silva, Women's Justice Unit Coordinator, JSMP,
'Reflection upon the Research Project',
Dili, March 2010.

The most significant change for me as a result from this research is that I have learned about the role women play working daily in their households and within their communities, like doing house work, looking after the children and still having the time to cultivate the rice fields ... Through this research, I have discovered that there are indeed many cases of domestic and sexual violence that occur in Manatuto, but mostly people resolve these cases through customary law and culture and within families.

When they or other female friends encounter a problem on this issue, they can share the information they obtained through this training so that their community can understand. This information is important because based on the data, it develops other women's understanding of the formal legal system whenever they encounter some of these problems themselves. Also, because whenever some problem occurs they prefer to resolve through the existing cultural/customary processes because they are worried with the thought of not having anyone to support their children when their husbands are imprisoned (economic factor, financial support).

Another impact from this training program was JSMP's attempt to improve equality between men and women in the household, such as making decisions together, the need to value women's opinions, the right of mothers and children to speak out and express their views and concerns. Another impact has been that the group of women who participated in the training are passing on the information to other women.

Mario Duarte, Women's Justice Unit Volunteer, JSMP,
'Reflection upon the Research Process',
Dili, March 2010

Elda and Fátima of Alola wrote in detail about the impact upon them and their thinking as NGO workers of seeing and hearing first-hand about the realities of lives and gender conditions, not just from direct beneficiaries but other community members:

We could see first-hand that their life expectations did not agree with the culture and tradition. We also found out information in regards to the impact of gender, which was not strong, and the lack of gender balance in family (relations). (The survey was) important because it allowed us to have close contact with the community in its own environment and learn more about the real conditions, and see first-hand the general situation and more specifically the impact of activities within the family and between men and women in their household.

The research team was received well by the Ataúru community, however in our discussions with them, they always defend their culture and traditions that see women as servants to men and men are seen as the head of the family and the ones who know how to earn money to support the family. Even when women generate an income this is not properly valued. Women continue to serve and not get opportunities for decision-making in the household according to the religion and culture adopted in Ataúru ...

I have learned that through research we can get acquainted with the communities, get to know the living conditions of the communities and families according to the culture and traditions of a place, and the reality lived by women in their local communities. Often people talk about issues based on hearsay and do not have a direct understanding of what is happening or the challenges faced by the communities. Based on research we can identify exactly what people from which aldeia or suco do not have adequate access to information. Through research real information can become a guide for government or civil society to develop action plans in order to respond to community concerns as shown in the research results ...

In my view, this project has been a success because the people nominated by the four organisations to be involved in this project could see firsthand the programs offered by their respective organisations to the local communities or groups.

Elda da Costa Barros, District Support Worker Project Officer, Fundasaun Alola,
'Reflection upon the Research Process',
Dili, March 2010

Filomena and Carmenesa both discuss the research process and its empowering effects for bringing together the NGOs with the communities in a way which encourages greater community involvement in the NGO project cycle, and has a gendered effect in itself in providing a rare space for women to speak out about their own lives. In this sense they are both alluding to how through such a participatory process, NGO workers can be reminded of the great agency of 'beneficiaries' in creating change for themselves and articulating their opinions and experiences. Moreover, their writing also suggests a confirmation of the need for change reinforced by a sense of optimism that change can and has been achieved:

In regards to gender awareness or gender perspective, very few people have knowledge of this. Most (training) did not have with large participation from women or men because based on the survey's data many people do not have knowledge (of gender) or will never participate in any training that addresses gender.

Many people have heard about gender but they think it is about women's rights. Therefore men don't really receive it well because such rights, that is equal rights between men and women, and no gender discrimination in any activities will show that women are empowered and can go against their husbands or men. These ideas have resulted in men not giving the opportunity for women to participate in any course or training ...

The greatest benefit I found (from the survey) was not just for myself personally but also for the targeted group. Apart from participating as the beneficiaries of the GFFTL project, they also learnt new ways on how to express their feelings towards the whole project as well as how they could extend their network or share their knowledge with other people...

The most significant change for me during the course of the research, the unexpected change from GFFTL's project, was when the researcher interviewed the participants on what they have learnt from their own involvement with the GFFTL project, (and they said that) they have learnt many things that they were able to apply in their daily lives, within the family and the lives of other community members. It was very interesting for me and my organisation to know that even when there were no big changes to the project, they have experienced significant changes in their lives; they have, very importantly, participated in the public affairs and one has shown enough capacity to become the lia-na'in and as well they now have the capacity to influence decision-making in the household. Before they got involved in training it was very difficult for men to give them an opportunity to make a decision and often women did not have the courage to talk about what and how they felt...

It was not only merely about benefits as there were great challenges faced by the researchers when undertaking the survey at the local community level. The benefits to the participants have been the significant changes in their daily lives, by applying the knowledge they acquired from GFFTL's project. I have learnt so much and while this will be of benefit for myself personally, it will also benefit my organisation as I have mentioned before.

Filomena Fuca, GFFTL Director,
'Reflection upon the Research Process',
Dili, March 2010.

I am very happy because we often met with women and ask for their opinions and ideas even if they had no schooling. An old woman from Ermera Sub-district said that she was happy when she gave her opinion, and the researcher was going to use it in the report, so she felt that her opinion was important even though she has never been to school. This has made them look forward and made them think that their ideas could also be important within the family, instead of just waiting for the men's ideas....

Through this project I was able to understand each person's situation in the communities from the four sites. The information I've gathered shows that a vast number of women continue to do only the domestic chores within the household. It made me think about the future and the need to continue to fight for women's rights so that they can also have the opportunity to learn new things instead of just cooking and minding the children. This is what I learnt from this research and evaluation.

I think that the implementation of the project was good because we got the information that we needed in terms of the objective which was to learn about people's understanding of gender. During the research we found lots of information, we saw the people's reality at the community level and came across the fact that many people still don't know about gender. Some know about gender but don't act upon the information that they have.

The reality within the community is that the majority of people are yet to understand about gender, human rights, democracy or domestic violence. Although some have a bit of knowledge about gender in the sense that women and men have equal rights but in reality when questioned about their activities within their household, women were the one who always cooked and look after the children.

Carmenesa Moniz Noronha, RMIT Researcher and Project Assistant,
'Reflection upon the Project Process',
Dili, March 2010.

While this section focused upon co-researchers' reflective writing about the research project process, the following section will look at the results from the final project workshop, which was particularly interested in mapping a route forward for the NGOs following their involvement in this research project.

8.3 Moving forward

While the final project workshop reinforced the conclusion that it had been a valuable exercise for the four NGOs to take part in, all saw the need to continue building their research and evaluation skills into the future. In particular, a common consensus was that the most difficult research skills areas of analysis and writing up of research results would require ongoing, long-term development in order to master. All four NGOs devised proposals during the workshop about how to build upon this research project, focused on distribution of research results, continued capacity development in the areas of research and evaluation, and project refinement based on the evaluation recommendations. These proposals were to be delivered to the NGO leadership teams for discussion and for building into workplans for 2011. FKSH, for example, has devised a plan by which their two participating members Aida and Ambrosio will provide training to other staff members in the evaluation methods learned during this project, and then FKSH will apply these methods as a team to undertake their 2011 evaluation. They have also committed to attending further evaluation methods training to be provided by one of their donors, Trocaire. GFFTL will use the results of the evaluation in their next annual strategy planning. All NGOs have detailed socialisation and lobbying plans in order to disseminate the results of the research.

Some of the NGOs identified during the workshop particular areas of their projects that they would like to improve in future implementation, based on the results of the evaluations. For example, JSMP acknowledged that will adapt their training to include specific case study examples of how communities could move to resolve cases of violence against women using the formal justice system, and will work further with police to ensure that they are fulfilling their legal responsibilities in terms of gender-based violence cases. FKSH plan to undertake training with their beneficiaries about how to analyse market conditions and demand (a Participatory Market Analysis), and to further assist their beneficiaries in fulfilling market demand.

The research was a wonderful moment to personally meet people in their own local communities and ask them about their views, ideas and get information we require from them in a free manner. Moreover, the research allowed me to get an insight into the real lives of the community. That is, I was able to personally hear their voices and concerns, see with my own eyes things they do, the way they feel and want they want.

I never dreamed or thought that one day I would be able to go into a community and conduct research on gender, but my biggest hope is that everyone understands what gender is about, value it and practice it in real life that men and women need equality in all areas such as access to education, health and politics ... and other is a just way. I am however happy and very thankful because I was able to get an opportunity to take part in the research

While I know that no big changes were made during the course of the research and the survey done at the local communities, the information that we obtained as a team from the communities about their different realities has helped me look forward to realising change in some small little ways.

I decided to participate in this training because I believe my time doing the research is very important for my organisation since I am like a bridge or the means of strengthening the relations between the organisation and the local community. I can report back to the organisation whatever I hear and see on the ground.

Maria Fátima Pereira Guterres, Womens Resource Centre Project Officer, Fundasaun Alola,
'Reflection upon the Research Process',
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Annex One: About the Timor-Leste Research program, RMIT University

About Timor-Leste Research

Timor-Leste Research (TLR) (www.timor-leste.org) is based at RMIT University and is primarily situated across the Globalism Research Centre and the Global Cities Institute. Researchers from the Globalism Research Centre (www.rmit.edu.au/globalism) have been working in Timor-Leste since 2003, and as with other sites within Australia and the Asia-Pacific, our main intellectual task has been to understand processes of change and continuity, and to think through cultural-political questions such as nation-formation in a globalising world. We endeavour to work across the divide between abstract theory and applied research and we seek to develop strong collaborative connections with communities, civil society and state organisations in our research areas. RMIT's Global Cities Institute (www.global-cities.info) was inaugurated in 2006 and brings together key researchers in order to understand the complexity of globalising urban settings. As part of the Global Cities Institute, the Timor-Leste Research Program has developed its work to incorporate Dili as a major site for its research.

Timor-Leste Research Program Objectives

RMIT's Timor-Leste Research Program is committed to both intellectual and ethical objectives. At an intellectual level, our objectives include:

- Seeking to understand processes of change in contemporary Timor-Leste, specifically the process of nation-formation;
- Developing innovative research methods suitable for the East Timorese context; and
- Ensuring that our academic research findings contribute wherever possible to development policy and program design and community knowledge in Timor-Leste.

At an ethical level, our objectives include:

- Building innovative knowledge about East Timorese society that is applicable, socially progressive, accessible and widely distributed in both Timor-Leste and globally, including both within and beyond Universities;
- Ensuring that our research program is transparent and accountable in Timor-Leste, and involves locally-based partners wherever possible;
- Building the research capabilities of East Timorese communities, organisations and individuals, and emerging researchers from Australia and internationally; and
- Including a diverse range of East Timorese voices in data collection and written outcomes.

Research Themes

Our research in Timor-Leste is interested in the connections between identity and nation formation, from the transition as a Portuguese colony to an Indonesian-occupied territory, through to the independent republic that Timor-Leste is today. Within this overarching framework, we work across a number of thematic areas.

Gender: Our research focuses particularly upon the social effects of gender programming and advocacy by state and civil society organisations. We also consider the intersections between gender and ideas of nation, community, culture, tradition and security.

Justice and Security: Our research seeks to understand how the juncture between justice and security has impacted upon patterns of social integration, identity and violence. A major focus of our work has been the national impact of CAVR within Timor-Leste. Intersecting closely with the theme of 'community', we have also developed the concept of 'Community Security' as a major focus of our work.

Nation Building: We are interested in how and why forms of governance have been adopted, why the attempts to change the economic structures have taken the form that they have, and the subsequent impact on identity and people's relationship to nation and state. We are also interested in the effects of Timor-Leste becoming a nation during a period of intense globalisation.

Community: We seek to understand how local communities define themselves and work comparatively between urban and rural sites. Our approach to community is largely framed by the two concepts of 'community sustainability' and 'community security' which help us understand the condition of communities and how the potential for either resilience or for conflict may occur.

Projects

Broadly speaking, the Timor-Leste Research Program undertakes qualitative research. However, in recent projects this has been broadened out so as to include quantitative methods, especially with the use of household and individual surveys. We have experience in working across our four thematic areas, and have worked extensively both in rural communities and in urban centres. The following are a list of selected projects and partnerships, both past and continuing.

- *Impacts of National NGO Gender Programming in Local Communities in Timor-Leste* (2009-10), funded by Trocaire and Irish Aid in Timor-Leste and RMIT University
- *Knowledge Pathways: The Introduction of New Food Security Technologies in Lautem, Timor-Leste*, Concern Worldwide, 2010.
- *Nation-Building across Urban and Rural Timor-Leste: Gender, Justice, Peace and Security, Development and Governance* (2009), A Conference to Reflect on 10 Years of Nation-building in Timor-Leste, Dili, Timor-Leste, 8–10 July 2010.
- *After the Violence? Truth, Reconciliation and National Integration in Timor-Leste* (2007–08), funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Grant
- *Community Sustainability and Security (July 2007–2009) undertaken in Fatumean (Covalima district), Luro (Lautem district), Venilale (Baucau district), and Kampung Baru (Dili district)*, funded by RMIT University, Irish Aid, Oxfam Australia (in Fatumean) and Concern Worldwide (in Luro).
- *Vota ba Futuru: The Presidential and Parliamentary Elections 2007.*
- *Mapping the Pursuit of Gender Equality: Non-Government and International Agency Activity in Timor-Leste*, (October 2006–July 2007), conducted in conjunction with The Office for the Promotion of Equality (now known as the Secretariat of State for the Promotion of Equality), Prime Minister's Office, Timor-Leste, with funding from Irish Aid in Timor-Leste and RMIT University.

- *Policy Options for Oecusse: Economic Development and Border Policy*, June 2007 (Consultancy for Oxfam in Timor-Leste).
- *Challenges and Possibilities: International Organizations and Women in Timor-Leste*, forum 9–11 September 2005 with English and Tetun reports and CD. Conducted in conjunction with Community and Regional Partnerships (RMIT University) and East Timor Women Australia and various NGO, agency and government partners in Timor-Leste.

Research Training Facilitation

TLR has also developed a Research Skills Training package designed specifically for the Timor-Leste context which can be delivered in English or Tetun. This package has been delivered to a number of government and NGO partners, and typically runs for two full days. During the current project, NGO participants received training and participated in intensive workshops, as well as practiced field work, geared towards gender-sensitive, participatory evaluative research.

Annex Two: The Research Team

Participating Staff from the Timor-Leste Research program, RMIT University

Anna Trembath

Ongoing Position: Timor-Leste Research Gender Coordinator and Researcher, Dili and Melbourne-based

Project Role: Project Manager, Lead Trainer and Researcher / Evaluator

About Me: I started travelling to Timor-Leste in 2004, and since that point my life has been divided between Timor-Leste and Melbourne. I also began working at RMIT University as a researcher in the same year, and in 2005 I helped to organise the international conference 'Challenges and Possibilities: International Organizations and Women in Timor-Leste', held at RMIT University and attended by over twenty East Timorese who travelled from all over Timor-Leste. This involved quite a degree of on-the-ground preparatory and follow-up work in Timor-Leste, and it was through this process that I got to know many of the partners involved in the project from which this report is drawn. It was also through this experience that I became very interested in the dynamic movement for greater gender equality in Timor-Leste, and how gender is understood and experienced in differentiated ways in a rapidly changing and complex society such as Timor-Leste. This has subsequently become my research and study focus. As well as working as a researcher and project manager with RMIT University's Timor-Leste Research program, I am currently undertaking doctoral studies looking at how gender is changing in Timor-Leste's period of independence.

I have thoroughly enjoyed being part of this project. The team has been wonderful to work with and we had fantastic experiences undertaking the fieldwork in the communities who warmly welcomed us. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn so much about East Timorese society and how to achieve gender change from the other team members and from the four communities.

Carmenesa Moniz Noronha (Neza)

Ongoing Position: Timor-Leste Research Administrator and Researcher, Dili-based

Project Role: Project Assistant, Trainer and Researcher/Evaluator

About Me: My name is Carmenesa Moniz Noronha. I was born in suco Deudet in Lolotoe sub-district, Bobonaro district. I am 26 years old. My first work experience was in 2002 when I was still in senior secondary school at Dom Martinho Maliana. I worked as an observer in Lolotoe for the voting process for the presidential elections. After I finished secondary school, in 2005 I attended a ten-month women's course in CTID (Centru Treinu Integral e Dezenvolvimento, or the Centre for Integral Training and Development) with the Baucau Canossian sisters. We also participated in teaching primary school in Kota Lama in Baucau and taught computer skills at the NGO Forum in Dili. After this course, I worked until 2007 in the Lolotoe Library as Assistant Librarian, classifying, cataloguing and attending to clients.

I commenced work with Timor-Leste Research, RMIT University, in July 2008. Initially I was a research assistant for the project 'Understanding Community: Security and Sustainability in Four Aldeia in Timor-Leste'. After this, I was the Survey Manager for the State and Justice project that we undertook across five sub-districts. From June 2009 I have worked as Project Assistant for this current project. With this project I have

participated in all processes with the four participating NGOs, and we have undertaken research in four sub-districts. In terms of report writing, because GFFTL had only one participating staff member, I wrote up some of GFFTL's data from Venilale sub-district.

My interest in gender and in participating in this project:

I'm interested in gender because this project contributes well to slowly moving people's thinking in Timor-Leste. Also, in terms of myself, I saw that in the time of initial meetings about this project, mana Alita (from Alola) and maun Mario (from Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violensia) were strongly debating about *adat* (customary law) and gender. I was really interested in the discussion and wanted to learn more about gender so as to have a wider understanding about matters relating to gender like this. I feel this is really important so that people cannot continuously say that gender is a *malae* (foreigner) idea.

In my experience undertaking research with RMIT in communities before this project began, many men consider women to belong in the kitchen only; unable to do anything else. For example, when we have undertaken surveys in the past there was one question that said 'women also have an important role in resolving problems in the community'. Some men did not agree with this. They thought that only men have the capacity to resolve community problems.

I wanted to participate in this project because when we look at the realities of everyday life, there isn't significant change particularly for our female compatriots in rural areas. Women's activities every day are to look after children and work in the house. However in other nations women can do everything; they can build houses, be drivers of public transport and so forth.

Dr Damian Grenfell

Ongoing Position: Timor-Leste Research Country Manager, RMIT University Research Fellow and Lecturer

About Me: I was born in Melbourne, Australia in 1971. I first travelled to Timor-Leste in 1994. I returned to Timor-Leste in 2003 and have lived there for much of the time since, and now I am married to a woman from Timor-Leste and we have one son. My interest is in gender because Australia is a deeply patriarchal society and I don't believe that humans can live happily or in a fulfilling way in such circumstances. Therefore I seek to work on gender where I can, in my work place and in my research work, which also includes in Timor-Leste. Men have a role to play in overturning patriarchal relations, both in terms of creating particular kinds of social space and especially in relation to other men.

Participating Staff from FKSH

Aida Exposto

Ongoing Position: Program Officer, 'Increasing Women's Economic Capacity'

Project Role: Researcher and Evaluator

About Me: My name is Aida Exposto. I was born in Ermera district, 10 April 1967. My father is Celestino Exposto (Falechido) and my mother Juliana da Costa. I have a family of nine: seven girls and two boys.

During Indonesian times I worked in the public service, in the Economics and Development Division and Finances Division. After Timor-Leste got independence, in 2004 I had the opportunity from Feto iha Kbiit Servisu Hamutuk to facilitate small

business training to ten beneficiary groups in Manufahi district. After this experience, FKSH Director Gizela de Carvalho appointed me to work in FKSH as Program Officer.

For a long time, while working as a public servant in the past as well as now in an NGO, I have also involved myself and had positions in many organisations, including Organizaasaun Pramuka, Dharma Wanita, PKK, KNPI, Senhoras Catolicas. I am also the Coordinator for the Movement for the Restoration of Charismatic Catholicism (Movimento Renovasaun Carismatica Catolica or MRCC) for the Comoro parish and the MRCC General Coordinator for Dili and Baucau dioceses, sit on the Parish Pastoral Council and am the Chief of Bairro Fomento I Comoro.

I also have additional skills such as designing training modules, facilitation, and leading training in areas such as: small business, organisational management, financial management, management leadership, market management, gender-based violence, life skills, reducing natural disaster risk, voting education, women's district conferences and national congresses.

My interest in gender and in participating in this project:

The impact from the long period of other nations' occupation of the Timor-Leste nation has contributed to and strengthened the patriarchal culture that limits East-Timorese women's access to all aspects of life and increases their marginalisation. For example, the legacy of occupation has contributed to prevailing views such as women don't need much education, women's voices don't need to be heard, women shouldn't make decisions, and so forth.

I know it is not easy to move a culture that is already firmly rooted. But I feel optimistic about change even if it will be a long-term process. In order to realise this change, as a woman and a 'child of Timor', I have a moral obligation to collaborate wherever possible, to continue consciousness-raising with women about gender. I am committed to contributing to raising people's consciousness that gender isn't just about women or biology, but talks about balance and imbalance between women and men, so that women can realise equality in access, participation and outcomes.

As an activist, many times I have got opportunities in this land and overseas to attend or participate in many events, programs and training that is relevant to my work or organisation, in order to elevate my capacity so that I can undertake my work with professionalism. However, in terms of research, for me this represents something truly new and the first time I have involved myself in a project such as this.

As such, I am grateful to FKSH and to RMIT University for giving me this opportunity, that with maximum sacrifice and effort offers orientation, materials and all facilities to us over a long period, beginning with the preparation phase through to implementation and writing of results. Personally I feel happy and satisfied, because with this research I can go to rural areas to see at close quarters and directly get to know the situation, conditions and understanding of our compatriots there, particularly in regard to gender.

When I received the opportunity to be involved in this research project, I happily accepted, though I had some worries. But I am a person who likes challenging work and am always optimistic whatever the situation or conditions may be. Therefore I was motivated to learn and accumulate new experience about a well-run research process. Another motivation was that the research would be implemented in areas in which FKSH works (four suco in Ermera sub-district), with FKSH's beneficiaries: Centro Haburas Talento (CHT) and HAMOR Group. The significance of this is a real advantage for FKSH from this research project.

Ambrosio Dias Fernandes (Rosio)

Ongoing Position: Volunteer with FKSH

Project Role: Researcher and Evaluator

About Me: My name is Ambrosio Dias Fernandes. I was born in Lospalos on 9 December 1986. Presently I am studying at the National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL) in the faculty of education sciences, particularly in the English department.

I worked in the NGO PAS (Prontu atu Serbi) for four years. Initially I was a dental assistant then became involved in the gender programs. I was the facilitator of the CEDAW, Gender-Based Violence and Human Rights program supported by Irish Aid. I was also a member of the umbrella working group for the CEDAW civil society shadow report, and was a facilitator at the National East Timorese Women's Congress in Dili and the district conference in Lospalos. My role in FKSH is voluntary researcher that wants to support this organisation to evaluate the impact of their project in the community.

My interest in gender and why I decided to participate in this project:

I am grateful for NGO FKSH in particular mana Gizela as Director and all of the staff for their support, because they believed in me enough to offer this opportunity to learn about the entire research process. To become a researcher is not something that is easy; it needs for us to learn and practice the methods. With their support I had the opportunity to become a researcher undertaking research about the impact of national NGOs' gender programs, particularly in terms of women in remote areas.

Personally I had a strong commitment to involving myself in this project because for five years I worked with in the organisation PAS, a member of Rede Feto. This experience gave me strong motivation and inspired me to be gender-sensitive. For example, to cook, wash clothes, clean the house and so forth.

Participating Staff from Fundasaun Alola

Elda da Costa Barros

Ongoing Position: District Support Worker Project Officer, Advocacy Program

Project Role: Researcher and Evaluator

About me: My name is Elda da Costa Barros, aged 44. I was born in suco Manutasi, Ainaro sub-district, Ainaro district. I have ten years of working experience. I have been an activist and founding member with Caucus NGO, and was Coordinator for Political Education and Leadership Training for thirteen districts in 2002-2003. In 2004-2005 I was coordinator for the suco election program, preparing women from districts, sub-districts and sucos in Ainaro to nominate themselves as candidates for the suco elections. I also worked with staff from STAE in Voter Education, at the suco and aldeia level. In 2006-2007 I was the General Election Coordinator for KOMEG organisation to recruit observers, given them training and prepare them to observe the Parliamentary and Presidential Elections.

As a representative of Caucus I entered the Working Group as Assistant to the CEDAW Program, collecting data from five regions concerning education for the draft alternative CEDAW report, together with GFFTL and FMF. Across 2008-2009 I was also Caucus Dili Coordinator preparing women to participate in suco elections, organising and facilitating them to learn how to speak in public and undertake campaigning in their electorates.

With support from The Asia Foundation, Caucus also implemented a temporary program to give voter education training to xefe sucos from six sub-districts in Dili district.

In June 2009 I became a facilitator for Fundasaun Alola, undertaking socialisation about the results of the international conference about peace across thirteen districts. In July 2009 Fundasaun Alola offered me the position of Project Officer, with a responsibility for seven districts (Aileu, Ainaro, Manufahi, Covalima, Maliana, Dili/Atauro and Oecusse) and the activities of twenty-one groups in those districts.

My interest in gender and why I wished to participate in this project:

Everyone must know about the importance of creating gender balance because in our RDTL Constitution, in Article 16 it writes about Universality and Equality, and in Article 17 it says that women and men have the same rights and obligations in all areas: family, culture, economy and politics. As a good citizen one must contribute to the nation through accessing and sharing information so that everyone can implement their obligations in each family based on the law of our Constitution. Gender is not about women or men; gender looks to implementation in family or society so that everyone understands and gives respects to each other following every person's rights that are guaranteed in national and international law.

I wanted to involve myself in this project so as to learn together with communities—older women and men, young people, and Alola's groups—and look directly into each other's eyes to understand their realities at the grassroots. I also really wanted to learn about research because often people talk about research, but in reality it is something I had never directly participated in. So at the time that our manager sent us to participate, we accepted this with a strong will because the project was to raise people's capacity in research.

Maria Fátima Pereira Guterres (Fátima or Fhaty)

Ongoing Position: Women's Resource Centre Program Officer

Project Role: Researcher and Evaluator

About Me: I am Maria Fátima Pereira Guterres (Fhaty), 27 years old. In my family there are six people; three males and three females. I am the fifth child of Maria Pereira and Antonio Pereira born in Baucau, 17 December 1982. But until this time I can't recognise or imagine my mother's face because when I was two years old and my younger sibling was just a few months, our mum said goodbye to us to go to another world (died). But this didn't shut the door on us to live and find love because our dad was smart and courageous. He found new inspiration so that when I was three, he took me and my younger brother to the Baucau Canossian nun's college and my two older brothers to the priests' so that he could live, suffer and work for our future. However this didn't continue because when I was in the second year of pre-secondary schooling, my dad had to leave us again so that he could rest quietly for the remainder of his life as he was sick much of the time. This sickness I myself don't understand or know to this day. I still don't want to try to ask or know because I know he is tired and has suffered too much already for us, so I prefer he rests. With this reality, I am most thankful to my Canossian nuns who from infancy considered and treated me as their child and family, and also to my five brothers who became like my gold, with us supporting each other in difficult moments. And to everyone who helped me morally and spiritually in my life, I am very thankful to the extent I cannot express in words, but I hope that you all along with the souls of my mum and dad can be together to find happiness.

In terms of my work experience, after secondary school from July to December 2001 I worked with Suzana Amaro from Portugal to undertake research about Timorese culture in communities and translated from Portuguese to Tetun. In 2002 I worked in the Organizasaun Dezenvolvimentu Báziku (ODB or Organisation for Basic Development) as secretary. From 2003 to 2006 I worked in the office of Movimentu Juvenil Salesiano (MJS, or the Salesian Youth Movement), Dom Bosco, Comoro, and also participated as an MJS member.

From 2007 to 2008 I worked with Fundasaun Alola's Advocacy Program in the sub-program Womens Resource Centre as a volunteer. In March–June 2008 I undertook pedagogical practice at the S. José Balide College school. In September 2008–July 2009 I was Secretary for the Second International Women and Peace Conference at Fundasaun Alola. From August 2009 to the present, I work in Fundasaun Alola as Project Official for the Womens Resource Centre.

My interest in gender and in participating in this project:

Before I talk about gender I wanted to recount a little story. Twenty-something years ago, one woman was happily awaiting the day she was to give birth. Her husband was also happy because he hoped that the child to be born was going to be a boy so as to help him, because at that time cultural activities were a big priority. The day came for the baby to be born and finally the mother received her baby's presence with great happiness. When her father heard the tiny baby's murmur he excitedly entered the room, hoping to see that what he had dreamed of had become a reality. But no; it was contrary to what he had hoped. So when he saw the baby the father was quiet and remained silent for a moment to take a breath before saying: 'Oh well ... doesn't matter!'. And this father accepted reality.

This baby is me. I forgot to ask, what were my mother's feelings at that time? But I hope that my mother was really happy because I was like an image of her face. To this moment I am grateful that I was a girl because of this gift.

This history of mine I heard from my older brother when I was about to finish secondary school. I didn't think to take this as a problem but this is just a small example that I would like to put forward about gender. From that moment I tried to think and ask myself, if in that moment I was born a male would I be of greater value? What's so special about a boy's personality? What if I had been born a boy that later was a drunk without a loving heart who is full of violence and has no future? These questions and imaginings don't have a response and to this day I have this memory when we talk about gender.

I'm really interested in gender not because I am really clever in this area but because it pulls my attention to think back to 1998, when I was in second year at secondary school at the Venilale College and staff members from FOKUPERS (I don't really know but I think it may have been mana Micato or mana Laura Abrantes with some men) came to speak about gender. They also shared their experiences as Timorese women that struggled to contribute to independence in collaboration with men in that period. The question that I took from was how can we, in collaboration with men as our work partners, progress and develop the nation starting from small actions to large ones.

To this day not everyone is yet familiar with the word 'gender' and many people—public servants and learned people—when they hear about gender consider that it refers to women; how to raise women's rights. They don't feel that the word gender talks about equality between women and men in all aspects. In contrast with this, there are some

people who even though they don't know, haven't heard about or don't really understand about gender, practice good gender behaviour in their life. One concrete example of this I found in Atauro during our research. One husband gave liberty to his wife to participate in activities in a women's group in their suco and the husband and wife decided to divide their time to help each other respond to the housework, like cooking and looking after the children. He said 'I must allow my wife to participate in these activities because women have the same rights as men'. From the examples, stories and realities that I have outlined, I am interested in collaborating better in terms of gender.

Research is an excellent opportunity to directly meet with people at the grassroots to freely ask them their thoughts, ideas and necessary information. This activity was an interesting and fantastic opportunity for me because I could go to the communities directly to see and feel the life realities at the grassroots level. I know that we won't facilitate a large change during the time of research with grassroots communities but through the information that we found, this can help to open eyes and make changes in some small steps. I decided to participate because I believed that research is very important to contribute to my organisation as a bridge and means to strengthen relations between the organisation and grassroots communities; I can inform my organisation about what I have heard and found in the communities.

Participating Staff from GFFTL

Filomena Fuca (Mena)

Ongoing Position: Director

Project Role: Researcher and Evaluator

About Me: My name is Filomena Fuca. I am 27 years old. I was born in Oecusse on 10 July 1982. I have an Education degree from the National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL). In 2001 I was an observer for the voting for parliament. In 2003 I volunteered with GFFTL. Initially I was a trainer in public speaking, training women from all 13 of Timor-Leste's districts, and in 2004 I facilitated workshops for those who were to socialise the RDTL Constitution. From 2005 to May 2006 I was a permanent staff member with GFFTL, as well as having responsibilities with the Education and Training Commission. During this time I learnt many things. In March 2007 I was honoured to take the position of Acting Director of GFFTL, initially to be a temporary position while we awaited our previous director to return; however this wasn't realised so I have remained Director until the present time. As Director my work is to write proposals and reports, undertake diplomacy, look for funding, undertake monitoring and evaluation, oversee the budget, and so forth.

My interest in gender and why I decided to participate in this project:

When I initially was planning GFFTL's involvement this project, I did not know that I would be one of the participating staff members. However when I attended the initial training that focused on various methods used to undertake research I became very interested and was very happy that I could learn something new and many things that I had never dreamed that I would learn. When I truly understood the objectives of this research I believed in myself to actively participate, so as to measure or look at the impact of GFFTL's projects, particularly in regards to gender.

To talk about and understood more deeply about gender is a big motivation for me because I like to speak about and struggle to promote gender equality. In talking about

gender, often people see the marginalisation part, that women are always second place: many women don't really get the opportunities of access in whichever area; the participation of women is limited because they don't have the confidence of their partners: men. The dissemination of information about gender has not really resulted in maximum participation of women because to talk about the subject of gender, only some people understand. In my experience the majority of people who have a good level of education do not agree with the information about gender that has been disseminated. I feel that we strive hard and yell loudly to people whose education is very limited, but if the people in good positions are not interested in gender, how can we create change in people's lives, particularly in families and communities. Often our female compatriots or men's wives may participate in important events but only under direction to cook and look after guests. It's quite difficult to change people's mentalities, thoughts, traditions from the grassroots if people who have good education don't know about important issues relevant to gender.

A gender perspective is easy for people to learn, but difficult to practice because the patriarchal system is very strong and causes misinterpretation. If we're talking about gender, everyone knows it is about women and men but to understand gender concepts at a deeper level, usually it is only some who are interested. To talk about gender isn't simply to talk about the biological differences between men and women; it is to look at balance and imbalance in various areas, for example everyday family life, public life and participation in national development.

When I tried to learn about gender, some people thought I wanted to struggle and defend women's rights to become more important than men's. When I was studying secondary school I myself didn't know about gender. In 2003 when I worked as a volunteer with GFFTL, which struggles for gender equality, I learnt and began to understand about gender. When I understood I recalled behaviour from the past. In my thinking to talk about gender is about what one person does to another, referring particularly to behaviour. Behaviour is created by people so there is the possibility of change. To give a concrete example, based in traditional culture it is held that cooking and washing clothes is women's work and it's not right or just to give this to men to do. With this example I invite you to understand or re-think; gender is difference between women and men that people have created and therefore can be changed over time.

Participating Staff from JSMP's Women's Justice Unit

Francisca da Silva (Sisca)

Ongoing Position: Women's Justice Unit Coordinator

Project Role: Researcher and Evaluator

About me: I was born in Manatuto on 25 February 1976. I am married with three children. In 2001 I began my professional life, working with UNDP undertaking civic education and then with UC Canada as a trainer to rural women in sustainable livelihoods. In 2002 I moved to the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) as an outreach officer. My work at JSMP began in 2005 and in 2009 I became the Women's Justice Unit Coordinator.

My interest in gender and in participating in this project:

I was interested in participating in this project because I wanted to know about what change has resulted in the community. And if there hasn't been any change, why? I have

often talked with my Timorese colleagues and said that women understand their rights and responsibilities, but this understanding does not have a solid base or justification. I also wanted to obtain new experience about something in which I do not have previous experience, therefore this opportunity is good for me to learn something about research.

Mario Duarte

Ongoing Position: Women's Justice Unit Volunteer

Project Role: Researcher and Evaluator

About me: My name is Mario Duarte. I am 24 years old and was born in Dili. At this time I do not yet have work experience because following secondary school I attended a computer course. My organisation is JSMP and my current position is a voluntary staff member with the Women's Justice Unit.

My interest in gender and in participating in this project:

I am interested in gender because I want to know about women's situations and women's roles, as well as the problems that women face. Many young men talk about women as different but don't try to find out about women's situations. I also want to know about justice. I wanted to involve myself in this project because I wanted to learn what research is and how to undertake it. Before this project began I did not yet know about research. Since I finished secondary school and was not able to continue my education at university, this is an important opportunity for me. Usually people who have only finished school do not find such opportunities as I have with this project. Thank you to RMIT University and JSMP. Through involvement I also wanted to find out more about JSMP's projects that they undertook in past years. This project also assists me with my future.

Annex Three: Research Methods

Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Survey (Used by all NGOs)

The partner NGOs are implementing their projects with typically little to no baseline data about the gendered conditions of the local communities in which they work, and sometimes limited informal knowledge. The quantitative Tetun-language survey, completed by individuals verbally or written, aids the NGOs to gather data upon which to better understand the gender dynamics of the communities, which in turn is expected to feed into the development project cycle. Moreover such surveys may be repeated in the future by the NGOs if they wish to statistically measure change.

Two samples have been taken in each community: those direct beneficiaries of the NGO projects, and a random cross-sample of the broader population at the sub-district level (researchers taking small samples from individual aldeia and suco by visiting people in their homes). Comparison of these samples aids in establishing whether the NGOs' projects have had impacts at the broader community level.

There are other more indirect advantages to the survey method:

- It gets NGO staff out into people's everyday environments and away from the small project implementation area with which they will typically be very familiar and which are often based in a central area (for example a sub-district centre). This can encourage learning and reflection about the realities of people's lives and an understanding of the local environment and the differences between different aldeia / suco (for example the contrast between the sub-district centre and outlying areas).
- The survey allows for broad participation of community members, not only those directly involved in NGO projects. Typically the NGOs' projects target women but the survey allows for an understanding of the social context in which women live by also involving men and the broader community.
- The survey, typically administered verbally by the researchers, generates much informal discussion between participants and researchers. These discussions play a vital role in researchers gaining a detailed understanding about gender attitudes, knowledge and behaviour in the broader community. The NGO staff wrote up these conversations in their field notes and were most interested in the results. Each NGO presented the gendered particularities of their research site to the other NGOs in our reflection meeting on 23 October, based on the results of the surveys and the discussions generated through the process of facilitating surveys.

Location Mapping and subsequent focus group discussion (Used by Alola, FKSH and GFFTL)

This involves a group of NGO project participants making a map of their local community (suco or aldeia) using symbols. The group presents the map to the researchers and other participants, and the researchers facilitate a focus group discussion based on the map.

Objectives and Advantages:

- Assists the researchers to determine the geographical boundaries of their research site;
- Can act as a good icebreaker as it generates a relaxed group environment and active participation, starting from a point with which participants feel familiar;

- Suitable to use with participants of limited literacy (as we found in Atauro with Aloia and Venilale with GFFTL);
- Allows the participants to present detailed information about their local environment, including community strengths and challenges;
- In terms of evaluation, provides a 'talking point' through which to establish critical concrete data: for example where project activities are undertaken, where project participants live, and the distribution of skills, knowledge and resources gained through participation in the NGO project throughout the community.

Timelines and subsequent focus group discussion (Used by all NGOs as an internal exercise, and by FKSH in their research site)

Timelines involve plotting important dates on a horizontal axis. Again it becomes a 'talking point' upon which to base a focus group discussion.

Objectives and Advantages:

- Captures detailed information about the implementation of the NGO project / progress of a community group;
- Establishes clear information about when the NGO project implementation began and ended (if the project has already been completed). This is essential information for being able to compare the difference, if any, in participants' lives comparing the situation prior to NGO intervention and after the project has ended (or the current time if the project is continuing);
- Can also aid in establishing if there have been other external factors that may have also created impact in the community.

Social Relationship Mapping and subsequent focus group discussion (Used by JSMP, FKSH and GFFTL)

Social Relationship Mapping is achieved through use of a Venn diagram. Groups make and present their map, and the researchers facilitate a focus group discussion based on the results.

Typically a Social Relationship Map unpacks a community group's relationships with other individuals, groups and organisations. Each grouping is represented by a circle. The size of the circle represents the importance to the community group, and the distance between the community group and the other groupings represents the strength or closeness of the relationship.

With JSMP we used Social Relationship Mapping to better understand the problems that JSMP aims to impact: the justice process for victims of domestic violence. JSMP's training participants produced maps representing the local actors involved in deciding how to resolve situations of domestic violence, the relationships between the actors and the typical resolution reached. One group made a map about how domestic violence was typically approached before JSMP's training, and the other group represented the situation after the training. Results were compared and discussed.

Objectives and Advantages:

- Encourages active participation;
- Suitable to use with participants of limited literacy;
- Is visually attractive and engaging;
- Allows for discussion about how the NGO has impacted their beneficiaries' social relationships (for example opening up new linkages or strengthening existing connections) and the general context in which the beneficiaries operate;
- In the experience gained through the project, this is a most successful method for also generating participant learning and reflection. Participants found it very interesting and engaging. Many comments were made to the effect that it helped them better understand their position in the wider social context, that they realised they were not operating in isolation—that there were many people involved in assisting them achieve goals, that an individual or group's contribution may not be financial but still important, that it assisted them in remembering all those people or organisations with whom they had contact, and that they were able to think more strategically about further developing the relationships important to them. In Ermera participants asked for materials to be left with them so that they could continue refining and adding to their map. In the example of JSMP, this method was vital in establishing the specifics of how communities approach cases of domestic violence and whether JSMP's intervention had had any impact on those processes.

Participatory Indicators of Change and subsequent focus group discussion (Used by all NGOs)

The other group methods—location mapping, timelines and social relationship mapping—lead logically to arguably one of the most important evaluation methods, developing and using Participatory Indicators of Change.

Developing and using Participatory Indicators of Change is a three-stage process:

1. *Formulating the indicators:* The participants develop their own Indicators of Change arising from their participation in the NGO project. An indicator in this context is a sentence detailing in a concrete way how the participants have used what they have gained through participation in the NGO project to generate positive change in their lives, or the positive change that they would like to see. We asked participants to develop three indicators. Researchers assist in honing sentences based on discussion with the participants.
2. *Developing an order of priority:* Using a voting system (we used dried beans), the participants develop an order of priority of the indicators. This helps the NGO understand what impact is considered most important by their beneficiaries.
3. *Comparing 'before' and 'after / now' to measure change:* Finally, participants consider each indicator and each person use dried beans to represent how the sentence represents their personal situation prior to participation in the NGO project, and after the project finished / the current time if the project is continuing. If they put more beans in the latter category than the former, this indicates that positive change has occurred. Participants are encouraged to show if there has been no or negative change. Results are compiled.

Finally, the researchers facilitate a focus group discussion, through which participants explain the indicators they developed, the order of hierarchy, and the results of measuring impact.

Objectives and Advantages:

- Participants are empowered to identify themselves what change has occurred in their lives, and what change is important to them. Changes both anticipated and unanticipated by the NGO may emerge;
- Each participant's role is important and if they are reluctant to verbally contribute, they are able to contribute through their 'dried bean vote';
- Can be adapted to situations where there is limited literacy;
- The NGO gains an accurate picture of exactly what change / impact has occurred, the extent and why it has eventuated. In all instances, participants were very honest in conveying if there had been little or no change and were able to clearly explain the results. The NGO partners have been very interested in re-using this method in the future.

'Most Significant Change' Interviews (Used by all NGOs)

We have adapted the 'Most Significant Change' approach to evaluation so that it forms the basis of one of our methods, semi-structured individual interviews. With each NGO we developed a simple set of around five questions to guide the interview, based on eliciting information from interviewees about the most significant change that has resulted from the NGO's project, at an individual/family level, group level, and community level. Participants were also asked about any problems or negative impacts that may have emerged from the NGO project, and recommendations for the future. Interviewees may be direct beneficiaries or community members knowledgeable about the NGO project, such as local leaders. The participating NGO staff have also undertaken MSC interviews with other staff involved in the project that is being evaluated.

Objectives and Advantages:

- To establish personal, detailed and concrete stories of significant change occurring as a result of participation in the NGO's project;
- Open to participant to identify the change that is important to them as well as any problems that have occurred. Changes both anticipated and unanticipated by the NGO may emerge;
- The NGO can understand how and why the lives of their beneficiaries have been impacted in reality;
- Gives an opportunity for in-depth, frank discussion that might not be generated in a group method.

Observation field notes and photo documentation (Used by all NGOs)

All participating NGO staff were given a small notebook in which they would write notes daily during the course of the fieldwork. Three themes were suggested as a starting point for their notes:

1. What they observed / learned about gender in the research site;

2. What they observed / learned about the impact of their project in the local community;
3. Reflections upon the research / evaluation process.

All NGO staff were active notetakers and many have of their own accord developed their handwritten notes into Word documents.

NGO staff also had the opportunity to use RMIT cameras to document the research process. Many were very keen to do so.

Objectives and Advantages:

- Researcher observation and photo documentation, while inadequate on their own, are very important methods to add to others. There are many things that the researcher sees, hears and experiences during the course of fieldwork that are not captured in the 'hard data' generated through the other methods. Field notes and photos are essential in ensuring this information complements the data from other methods;
- Observation can provide detail and texture to research outcomes;
- Helps to ensure that the fieldwork is a reflective process;
- Researchers can continuously identify what information they have already gained and where the gaps lie so as to ensure maximum quality of data captured;
- Helps to consolidate and entrench lessons.

Annex Four: Project Phases and Key Activities

All phases also included project oversight and administration from the Melbourne RMIT base, facilitated by Timor-Leste Research program country manager Damian Grenfell.

Phase One: Project preparation and introduction to gender-sensitive research and evaluation, May—August 2009

Key Activities	Month	Description	Staff	Location
1. Project Preparation	May–June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refining conceptual basis for project - Developing project goals, objectives, outputs, activities and inputs - Developing provisional workplan - Logistical set-up including securing an RMIT office - Consolidating staffing arrangements with partners - Designing data collection methods 	RMIT project staff in collaboration with NGO partners	Dili
2. Project Planning Meeting	May	One-day meeting to decide upon key objectives and develop workplan	Staff from each partner NGO, facilitated by Anna Trembath, Damian Grenfell and Carmenesa Noronha	Dili
3. Training: Introduction to Gender-Sensitive Research and M&E (Theory, Project Planning and Data Collection)	June	<p>Two-day participatory training in Tetun to full project team</p> <p>Modules delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to M&E What is Research? Research Project Planning Research Design Preparation for Data Collection Methods for Data Collection Gender, Research and M&E <p>All participants received a Tetun training manual.</p>	<p>Two staff from each partner NGO trained by RMIT staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Damian Grenfell Mayra Walsh Anna Trembath Carmenesa Noronha 	Dili

Key activities	Month	Description	Staff	Location
4. Intensive Research & Evaluation Workshops	July–August	<p>Four days intensive participatory workshops and research planning with each individual NGO partner (Tetun)</p> <p>Activities facilitated:</p> <p>Defining the Project to be Evaluated using a Logframe</p> <p>Formulating the Principal Evaluation Questions</p> <p>Method 1: Location Mapping</p> <p>Method 2: Timeline</p> <p>Method 3: Social Relationship Mapping</p> <p>Method 4: Participatory Indicators of Change</p> <p>Method 5: Most Significant Change</p> <p>Semi-Structure Interviews</p> <p>Fieldwork Planning</p>	Two staff from each partner NGO trained by Anna Trembath and Carmenesa Noronha	Dili
5. Preparation and delivery of evaluation and research manuals	July–August	Upon completion of the research and evaluation workshops with each NGO (Activity 4 above), RMIT staff prepared Tetun manuals for each NGO capturing details of all activities, outcomes, research plans and photos. These manuals were used as guidelines for data collection in the field (Phase Two) and may be used to guide the NGOs' research and evaluation activities in the future.	Carmenesa Noronha and Anna Trembath	Dili
6. Survey Workshop	August	2-hour workshop with all partners to train in survey method and refine a Timor-Leste Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Survey	Staff from each partner NGO, facilitated by Carmenesa Noronha and Anna Trembath	Dili

Phase Two: Data collection, consolidation and reflection,
August—October 2009

Key Activities	Date	Description	Staff	Location
1. Preparation for fieldwork	Ongoing during Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refining of fieldwork plans - Consultation with communities - Logistics 	RMIT project staff, NGO partners and participating local communities	Dili, Manatuto, Atauro, Ermera and Venilale
2. JSMP's data collection in the field	31 August–4 September (5 days)	<p>1. 2 research/evaluation workshops with 10 women (JSMP training participants):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social Relationship Mapping (Process of resolving domestic violence in Manatuto); - Participatory Indicators of Change; - Location Mapping; - Focus Group Discussions; - Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Surveys <p>2. 81 individual Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Surveys completed in 4 suco in Manatuto sub-district</p> <p>3. 4 semi-structured Most Significant Change interviews (3 training participants, 1 xefe suco)</p> <p>4. Observation notes taken by all researchers</p> <p>5. Photo documentation</p>	<p>JSMP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Francisca da Silva - Mario Duarte Soriano <p>RMIT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anna Trembath - Carmenesa Noronha <p>Community surveyor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ambu 	<p>Sub-district Manatuto, Manatuto district</p> <p>(Suco Ma'abat, Sau, Aiteas and Ailili)</p>

Key activities	Date	Description	Staff	Location
3. Alola's data collection in the field	12–19 September	<p>1. 3 workshops with 22 participants from 3 women's economic livelihoods groups from 3 suco in sub-district Atauro (Grupo Biozoia, Grupo Aliteno Diak and Grupo Hakat ba Oin):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Location Mapping; - Participatory Indicators of Change; - Focus Group Discussions; - Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Surveys <p>2. 109 individual Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Surveys completed in 3 suco in Atauro sub-district</p> <p>3. 7 semi-structured Most Significant Change interviews (2 beneficiaries, 1 Portuguese priest working with Grupo Biozoia, 1 sub-district administration staff, 1 Ministry of Health staff, 1 xefe suco, Alola's District Support Worker)</p> <p>4. Observation notes taken by all researchers</p> <p>5. Photo and video documentation</p>	<p>Alola</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elda Barros - Maria Fatima Pereira Guterres <p>RMIT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anna Trembath - Carmenesa Noronha <p>Community liaison and research assistant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sancha Miis, Alola's District Support Worker for Atauro 	<p>Sub-district Atauro, Dili district</p> <p>(sucos Vila Maumeta, Beloi and Biqueli)</p>
4. FKSH's data collection in the field	12–16 October (5 days)	<p>1. 2 workshops with 17 participants from 2 women's economic livelihoods groups in sub-district Ermera (Centro Haburas Talento and Grupo Haklean Moris):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timelines of groups' histories; - Social Relationship Mapping; - Participatory Indicators of Change; - Focus Group Discussions; - Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Surveys <p>2. 91 individual Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour surveys completed in 3 suco in Ermera sub-district</p> <p>3. 3 semi-structured Most Significant Change interviews (2 beneficiaries, 1 nun assisting one of the groups)</p> <p>4. Observation notes taken by all researchers</p> <p>5. Photo and video documentation</p>	<p>FKSH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aida Exposto - Ambrosio Dias Fernandes <p>RMIT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anna Trembath - Carmenesa Noronha <p>Community survey assistants from CHT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geolivia - Iza 	<p>Sub-district Ermera, Ermera district</p> <p>(sucos Poetete, Mirtutu and Ponilala)</p>

Key activities	Date	Description	Staff	Location
5. GFFTL's data collection in the field	26– 30 October (5 days)	<p>1. 2 workshops with 14 participants from 1 women's literacy & income generation group in suco Fatulia, sub-district Venilale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Location Mapping; - Social Relationship Mapping; - Participatory Indicators of Change; - Focus Group Discussions; - Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Surveys <p>2. 93 individual Gender Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Surveys completed in 4 suco in Venilale sub-district</p> <p>3. 7 semi-structured Most Significant Change interviews (5 beneficiaries, 1 local facilitator, 1 xefe suco)</p> <p>4. Observation notes taken by all researchers</p> <p>5. Photo and video documentation</p>	<p>GFFTL: - Filomena Fuca</p> <p>RMIT: - Anna Trembath - Carmenesa Noronha</p> <p>Additional Researcher: - Ambrosio Dias Fernandes (FKSH volunteer)</p>	<p>Sub-district Venilale, Baucau district</p> <p>(sucos Fatulia, Uma Ana Icu, Uma Ana Ulu, Uailaha)</p>
6. Most Significant Change interviews	Ongoing during Phase 2	Participating staff from NGO partners undertaking interviews with other staff from their organisations involved in the project they have chosen to evaluate	NGO partners	Dili
7. Data consolidation and entry	Ongoing during Phase 2 and into Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisation of all data from the field - Survey data entry into SPSS - Transcription of interviews and focus group discussions 	<p>Data organisation: Anna Trembath</p> <p>SPSS survey data entry: Carmenesa Noronha</p> <p>Transcribing: Azi Noronha and Mariano da Silva</p>	Dili
8. Reflection and Evaluation Meeting	October	<p>Half-day meeting, encompassing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Photo reflection - Sharing of experiences and learnings between partners - Evaluation of key project activities - Writing of Most Significant Changes stories 	Participating staff from Alola, FKSH and JSMP	Dili

Phase Three: Further data consolidation, data analysis and production of final written results, November 2009—March 2010

Key Activities	Date	Description	Staff	Location
1. Data consolidation and entry	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisation of all data from the field - Survey data entry into SPSS - Transcription of interviews and focus group discussions 	<p>Data organisation: Anna Trembath</p> <p>SPSS survey data entry and transcribing : Carmenesa Noronha</p>	Dili
2. Training in data analysis and research writing		Five days of training workshops	Facilitated by Anna Trembath, all staff in attendance	Dili
3. Partners' writing	January–March	During this period, the NGO co-researchers and Carmenesa Moniz Noronha wrote their report contributions, using guidelines and with supervision from Anna Trembath	All staff	Dili
4. Report production	Ongoing	RMIT coordinated the production of the final report, using the partners' contributions	Coordinated by Anna Trembath, Damian Grenfell and Carmenesa Noronha	Dili and Melbourne

Phase Four: Looking to the future—applying lessons learned, building research and evaluation plans, sharing knowledge, April—January 2011

Key Activities	Date	Description	Staff	Location
1. Report production	Ongoing	RMIT coordinated the production of the final report, using the partners' contributions	Coordinated by Anna Trembath, Damian Grenfell and Carmenesa Noronha	Dili and Melbourne
2. Final project workshop	July	One-day workshop facilitated by Dinorah Granadeiro and the East Timorese NGO Forum (FONGTIL), focused upon discussing the research results and making plans for the future	<p>Facilitated by Dinorah Granadeiro and FONGTIL</p> <p>Attended by all project team members, other NGO leadership representatives and representatives from each of the four beneficiary groups</p>	Dili

Suffering that elevates happiness

by Maria Fátima Pereira Guterres (artist name Tifha)

7 March 2010

Inspired by participation in the research project

Woman...your time has come
Rise already! From your darkness
To show your face of happiness
Happiness that enriches the world.

The morning sun has announced itself
It needs your love and your suffering
Nature itself declares your Strengths
They are part of you though you may not see.

Do laugh! With you rainbow colours
Wipe away the ill thoughts that exist
And again bring forth the sunken hope
So don't be afraid for you're not alone.

You are the Mother and the Sister
You are the Queen and indeed the Heroine
You are deserving of this name
For you are willing to dignify your happiness with tears.

Tears that mix suffering and happiness
Happiness and suffering that others never feel
Though you may die to bring happiness to the world
Still you become the victim, still you're the one not good.

Thank you for your Great love
That brought me into this world
Thank you...!! I couldn't pay all your favours
But I come from you and I am your wealth.