

CEPAD



Husi Ita Ba Ita

Centre of Studies for Peace and Development (CEPAD)  
Timor-Leste



# Understanding and Strengthening Resilience for Peace

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Timor-Leste Final Report  
Frameworks for Assessing Resilience



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**Centre of Studies for Peace and Development (CEPAD)  
Timor-Leste**

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## GLOSSARY

### ACRONYMS

CAVR	Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste
CEPAD	Centre of Studies for Peace and Development
CNRT	National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (political party)
Falintil	Armed Forces for the National Liberation of Timor-Leste
FAR	Frameworks for Assessing Resilience
F-FDTL	Falintil – National Defence Forces of Timor-Leste
FGD	Focus group discussion
g7+	Group of fragile and conflict affected countries
HHI	The Harvard Humanitarian Initiative
IDP	Internally displaced person
KKN	<i>Korupsaun, Koluzsaun no Nepotizmu</i> / Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism
LADV	Law on Domestic Violence
MAG	Martial Arts Group
MSS	Ministry of Social Solidarity
NGO	Non-government organisation
PAR	Participatory action research
PNTL	National Police of Timor-Leste
RDTL	Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ZEESM	Special Economic and Social Market Zone which applies to the Oecusse enclave and Atauro Island



## TETUM TERMS

<i>Aldeia</i>	Sub-village
<i>Barlake</i>	Exchange made between the family of the groom and the family of the bride prior to marriage
<i>Be'e no ikan</i>	Fish and water
<i>Fetosan Umane</i>	Refers to a complex set of rules, rights, and responsibilities defining the relationship between a groom's and a bride's family, a relationship between clans which may extend over generations.
<i>Gotong-royong</i>	Indonesian term for 'collective'.
<i>Kaben sai</i>	Social system requiring a women to leave her family property to live with her husband after marriage
<i>Kaben tama</i>	Social system in which a woman remains on her family's property after marriage and her husband leaves his family to live with her family
<i>Konselu de suku</i>	Village council
<i>Lei inan</i>	Literally 'mother law' – term used to refer to the Constitution
<i>Lia mate</i>	traditions of death which include funerals and burials
<i>Lia moris</i>	traditions of life which include engagement and marriage
<i>Lia nain</i>	Literally 'owner of the story', traditional leader with authority to resolve conflicts
<i>Lisan</i>	Tetum and Indonesian (respectively) terms used to refer to the customary justice system or culture more broadly
<i>Lulik</i>	Sacred, holy or forbidden.
<i>Nabe biti bot</i>	Roll out the big mat (a traditional dispute resolution or decision making practice)
<i>Suku</i>	Village
<i>sentimentu solidaridade</i>	Collective or social sentiment
<i>Tarabandu</i>	Customary law
<i>Uma lisan</i>	Traditional or cultural house
<i>Uma lulik</i>	Sacred house



# 1. INTRODUCTION

Frameworks for Assessing Resilience (FAR) is a programme initiated by Interpeace, implemented between 2014 and 2016 with local partners in Guatemala, Liberia and Timor-Leste. The goal of the FAR programme is to understand resilience to violent conflict from a local perspective and to determine how existing capacities for resilience can be leveraged and strengthened to better contribute to sustainable peace.

Over the course of eighteen months, the programme in Timor-Leste has sought to identify and promote resilience sources and capacities through an inclusive and participatory process that engaged communities at the grassroots as well as representatives of government institutions and civil society organisations.

Between April 2014 and December 2015, CEPAD led a multi-phased process to better understand the sources of resilience in Timor-Leste. Subsequently, a multi-stakeholder national working group was convened to articulate recommendations to strengthen these factors of resilience with a view to promoting greater social cohesion and peace in the country. The programme consisted of three key phases which were an in-depth nationwide consultation through focus groups and interviews, a nationwide survey polling close to 3000 respondents which was implemented by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI), national validation forums and a sustained dialogue process with a national working group. This has generated rich qualitative and quantitative data, analysis, recommendations and paths for action to better understand and strengthen resilience for peace. The following report brings together and discusses these results.

Because the term ‘resilience’ cannot be translated into Tetum language, CEPAD defined this as the resources or glue that, until today, has held Timorese society tightly together to confront conflict from the past, or conflict that will arise in the future with capacities to adapt and transform.

This report is the final output of the FAR programme in Timor-Leste. Additional outputs are the Timor-Leste Country Note entitled; ‘Understanding Resilience from a Local Perspective’ which was published by CEPAD in April 2015, and the ‘Population-Based Survey on Attitudes and Perceptions About Resilience And Peace’, which was published by HHI in April 2016.

## 2. PROCESS

The overall objective of the FAR process was to understand what resilience for peace looks like and how it can be strengthened in the Timor-Leste context from the perspective of Timorese throughout the country and across sectors. To achieve this, the research team used a participatory action research (PAR) approach, which aims to ensure ownership of the research process by a broad cross section of stakeholders in Timorese society who are therefore placed at the centre of the actions which emerge.

Taking a participatory and inclusive approach to researching conflict-related issues in Timor-Leste is central to CEPAD's core belief that sustainable peace can only be achieved if the process of addressing key obstacles to, or strengthening capacities for peace are driven by those from within the society, according to a broad-based understanding of the dynamics and opportunities that exist in that particular context. With FAR, as with all of CEPAD's work, the "how" matters as much as the "what" and for this reason, great importance is placed on the research and dialogue process.

In collaboration with Interpeace and HHI, CEPAD implemented FAR using mixed methods research, which included qualitative and quantitative processes. The findings from the initial qualitative consultation phase informed the design of a nation-wide survey which generated complimentary data. Whereas the consultation phase allowed for a deeper participation by a limited number of people, the survey allowed a broader participation base and reached individuals and groups living in more rural areas of the country.

The theme of resilience, which is at the heart of this participatory research effort, lent itself to a process that focuses on people's strengths and assets. CEPAD's research team operationalised this by choosing to adopt a positive starting point for all FGDs and interviews. This was an important way to distinguish the FAR programme from previous CEPAD programmes which, like many peacebuilding initiatives, generally opened discussions by asking about obstacles to peace. This approach opened up a space for Timorese to think differently about their situation. The use of a positive lens led to stronger engagement and the subject-matter provided inspiration for those involved.

The four distinct but interrelated phases of the FAR programme implemented between May 2014 and December 2015 are outlined here.

### Phases of the FAR programme in Timor-Leste

Community consultations	15 focus group discussions and 16 interviews in all district capitals and Dili
National survey	Interviews with 2,975 adult residents in all 13 districts of Timor-Leste
National Working Group	10 members coming from government, civil society and Church meeting together 13 times over 8 months.
National validation	168 participants coming together at the national level in two validation workshops.

## COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

Community consultations were conducted through focus group discussions (FDGs) engaging a total of 252 Timorese in the capitals of each of the 13 districts of Timor-Leste to understand how Timorese conceive of resilience as it is applied in their local context.<sup>1</sup> 16 interviews were also conducted with local and international stakeholders in Dili and some districts. The consultations aimed to identify the elements of resilience that exist in Timorese society and to understand the local capacities and resources that bind Timorese people together in the wake of past violent conflict and helps them anticipate future violence by addressing existing drivers of conflict. A total of 15 FDGs were conducted including one FGD with traditional leaders (*lia nain*) in Liquica District and one FGD with youth in Dili.

### *Impact:*

Throughout these FDGs the research team observed that dialogues were lively and the majority of participants demonstrated a high level of engagement. Based on her prior experience facilitating dialogues with CEPAD, the FAR Lead Researcher observed that; “...when people have been asked about obstacles, it is heavy for them but asking about strengths is a lighter experience for people and they are very happy to discuss together the things that make them strong.” Participants seemed to be inspired by the subject matter and based on observations of the research team, the discussions had considerable depth and it was clear that participants made strong attempts to think through points deeply and analytically.

## NATIONAL SURVEY

The national survey on perceptions and attitudes undertaken by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, CEPAD and Interpeace, provided the quantitative component of the mixed method participatory action research. Structured interviews were conducted with a random sample of 2,975 adult residents in all 13 districts of Timor-Leste. The sample was designed to provide results that are representative of the view of the adult population at the district level.<sup>2</sup>

A standardised, structured questionnaire with open-ended questions was developed around elements, aspects and indicators of resilience, which were derived from CEPAD’s qualitative research, and which ensured that the survey was able to broaden and deepen the ideas that emerged from community consultations. Further discussions and exercises conducted with the CEPAD researchers provided input into the early versions of the questionnaire.

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1 See CEPAD (2015); ‘Understanding Resilience from a Local Perspective; Timor-Leste Country Note’ for a detailed overview of the methods used in the first phase of the FAR research.

2 Refer to HHI (2016), ‘Timor-Leste; Population-Based Survey On Attitudes And Perceptions About Resilience And Peace’ for a more detailed explanation of the survey methodology and results.

The questionnaire covered topics on demographics, information, livelihood, access to and perception of services, social engagement, identity and solidarity, exclusion, leadership and governance, trust, peace, security, violence and disputes, and individual-level resilience. The research team developed the questionnaire and consent form in English. The final version was translated into Tetum. Expert review and team discussions were used to validate the translation.

*Impact:*

The process task of developing a quantitative data collection instrument based on qualitative research results was an elaborate process that required close collaboration between CEPAD, HHI and Interpeace, each contributing with its respective technical expertise. The survey instrument was developed through a number of steps and had overall positive outcomes for the research and the process. The HHI team came together with CEPAD and Interpeace for a number of workshops over the course of eight months in order to effectively integrate the survey into the wider PAR process.

The first was in October 2014 and was an opportunity to accompany the CEPAD research team, together with Interpeace, during analysis of the initial qualitative results. This gave the HHI team a better sense of the data and the key elements of resilience that were emerging. It also provided a good grounding for the survey team in the local context.

The second was a Global Methodology Workshop held in New York in April 2015 which brought together research teams from Timor-Leste, Guatemala and Liberia to compare and discuss results of community consultations and the key findings on resilience. This allowed for a better understanding of how the survey could be used most effectively to test and compliment these findings.

The third was a series of discussions which took place with CEPAD researchers to review initial indicators and to brainstorm possible survey questions. This was an opportunity to make sure the survey design aligned with both the Timorese context and the objectives of the overall PAR process. The instrument was developed in English and considerable time was taken by CEPAD researchers to translate questions into Tetum and ensure that questions were clear. This was also a way to test the appropriateness of questions and the likelihood that they would result in quality data.

The fourth was to review the initial results of the survey and to draw meanings from the data in light of the qualitative research and the local context. This was a very important step in ensuring that data was interpreted and presented in ways that resonate with local actors and that qualitative and quantitative data were compared and contrasted. This was done by HHI, Interpeace, CEPAD researchers and the National Working Group on Resilience.

The overall impact of using the participatory approach to designing and implementing the survey was to give more nuanced and contextualised meaning to the data. It avoided assessing indicators that had little meaning or asking questions that would not be well understood by respondents. The benefit of linking it to the national working group is that the findings then became part of an advocacy process. This generates policy recommendations based on additional evidence whilst ensuring that the contributions to the research of the many respondents is valued through inclusion in a longer term process.

## **NATIONAL WORKING GROUP**

Through a national validation process, CEPAD was provided with a mandate to establish a National Working Group on Resilience (NWG-R). This ten-member group was convened with the objective to develop recommendations for strengthening resilience for peace in Timor-Leste based on further analysis of the findings of the FAR consultations and national validation. Part of its mandate was also to manage the political space within which recommendations and actions were to be presented to key decision-makers in order to ensure multi-partisan political support and long-term commitment to their implementation.

The members were invited based on their knowledge and experience in fields relevant to the four elements of resilience identified through the first phase of the research: culture, religion, leadership and law and security. It was important that the group comprise diverse experiences and backgrounds and that civil society and government were equally represented. Members were also invited based on the formal or non-formal authority they have to influence public opinion and / or policy processes. All those invited accepted the invitation to participate, except two who delegated participation to others from within their institutions.

The NWG-R held thirteen meetings between March and November 2015. The CEPAD research team designed a facilitation plan which would allow the members to review the research findings and analyse these in reference to their own experiences and knowledge of the Timor-Leste context and drawing on examples from their own work. The members then discussed and prioritized recommendations and actions for strengthening resilience in Timor-Leste. Discussions were interactive, with all members given equal space to exchange ideas and draw conclusions. CEPAD kept detailed minutes and provided summaries and progress reports back to the group.

### *Impact:*

From an early stage, good relations were developed with the Presidency and an initial audience was held with President Taur Matan Ruak in July in which the NWG-R members introduced the objectives of the process and sought political support for their work. The initiative was met with a positive response from the President. In October, the NWG-R together with CEPAD organised a round-table meeting in the Office of the President, inviting key stakeholders to review and discuss the group's initial recommendations and actions. These were important steps in gaining political support for the initiative.

Meetings were characterised by a positive and lively dynamic in which members interacted productively with each other. At the outset, the group chose to elect a number of 'leaders' to represent each element of resilience. Members reported that the process allowed them to learn from each other and develop new perspectives on issues that were important to Timor-Leste. Most meetings were attended by 5 or 6 members and remaining members were kept up to date with proceedings and invited to provide input via email, telephone and face to face meetings.

A core group of members have expressed their commitment to continue to advocate for the implementation of their proposed actions and to continue to update each other on this and other matters in their own work with relevance to the FAR process through ad hoc meetings.

## NATIONAL VALIDATION

Two National Validation Workshops were held in Dili as part of the FAR programme. The first took place in February 2015 with the objective to present, prioritise and further develop the findings of the first phase of the research. This event brought together close to 80 participants, representing government, civil society, youth, religious groups, academia, international organisations and security forces as well as participants from the 13 districts of Timor-Leste who had taken part in the district-level FGDs. Initial research findings were presented and discussed in-depth in smaller sub-groups in order to validate results and provide a mandate for CEPAD to carry on with subsequent phases of the project.

The second National Validation Workshop was held in November 2015 with the objective to present the final results of the research together with the conclusions and recommendations of the National Working Group on Resilience. On the theme; ‘Strengthen Resilience; Improve Relations Between the State and Citizens’, this second workshop brought together close to 100 stakeholders from government, political parties, civil society, Church, security forces, rural communities and international actors. The National Working Group on Resilience and the research team presented the results of the FAR process and smaller sub-groups discussed the key recommendations, providing feedback and raising questions and points for further consideration.

### *Impact:*

The positive dynamic and high level of engagement observed in district-based community consultations was again observed at the first national validation workshop. It was clear from the plenary and sub-working group sessions that stakeholders appreciated an opportunity to focus on the strengths that exist in Timor-Leste and to discuss the ways that these strengths are either reinforced or undermined.

There was a high level of engagement in sub-working group discussions and prioritisation was based on the productive exchange of ideas between participants. Questions raised by stakeholders at the national level about the research process and results were answered on several occasions at the first validation workshop by representatives of those who had participated in district-based community consultations, demonstrating a high level of ownership of the process on the part of community members. The second workshop saw a similar positive dynamic and strong level of engagement, and district-based participants had clearly retained a sense of ownership over the process and results, as expressed during sub-group discussions.

A challenge for both workshops was retaining members of government and other state institutions, particularly those in higher-level positions, for the duration of the workshops. It was observed that such participants tended to stay for the opening panel only.



### 3. KEY FINDINGS

Qualitative consultations with communities at the district capital level identified four key elements of resilience; culture, religion, leadership and law and security.<sup>3</sup> Timorese consider these as having the greatest impact on their resilience, noting that these elements are in themselves neutral and can be used both to leverage positive capacities for peacebuilding or can be utilized in ways that undermine peace.

Participants at the first national validation workshop prioritised one aspect in relation to these 4 elements as follows:

- Culture: Traditional non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms.
- Leadership: Relations between state and citizens.
- Religion: Religious peace messages.
- Law and security: Law as a tool to promote and guarantee justice for all.

Community consultations also revealed a set of enabling factors, which ensure that the resilience elements are used in ways that help communities and society to manage conflict and work towards sustainable peace. These can be active or latent, depending on the conditions and context that exist at a particular time and place. These factors are solidarity; conscience; non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms; dialogue; good communication and national unity.

These factors and their existence across different geographic and sectoral groups in Timor-Leste was explored in greater detail in the national survey. The survey provided an opportunity better understand their interaction with culture, religion, leadership and law and security and to test the perceptions that emerged through community consultations.

Through the National Working Group process, members were given space to discuss ways to strengthen resilience for peace in Timor-Leste. Through the group's discussion of qualitative and quantitative results, new prioritisations and emphases were brought to the analysis as outlined in this section, resulting in a set of recommendations and actions which are described in the final section of this report.

Taking this into consideration, the following section has been organised around the set of enabling factors which have been modified slightly to allow more meaningful discussion of results. These are solidarity; conscience; communication and dialogue; non-violent conflict resolution; and national unity and inclusive and legitimate politics. The four elements of resilience; culture, religion, leadership and law and security form sub-headings under each, in an attempt to show the important yet complex patterns and linkages that characterise resilience for peace in Timor-Leste.

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<sup>3</sup> For a full explanation of results of the first phase of the FAR project, please refer to CEPAD (2015), 'Understanding Resilience for a Local Perspective; Timor-Leste Country Note', Dili. [http://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2015\\_05\\_19\\_FAR\\_Country\\_Note\\_Timor\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2015_05_19_FAR_Country_Note_Timor_ENG.pdf)

## **SOLIDARITY**

The capacity to show solidarity (sometimes described as ‘collective sentiment’) to prevent and resolve conflict and work for positive peace was seen by participants as something which strengthens resilience. Solidarity is the key to social cohesion and has a strong basis in the willingness of people to trust and support each other.

It was also clear from survey results that about half the respondents (47%) felt that violence would prevail without such forms of solidarity. However, the survey also revealed that despite its importance, solidarity is not necessarily present at all times and just 41% felt that solidarity is present ‘a lot’ or ‘extremely’ in their aldeia.

As outlined in the section below, there is a strong basis for solidarity found in Timorese cultural rituals and systems, in religious institutions and belief, in leadership and in law and security provision.

## **CULTURE**

Culture plays an integral role in facilitating people’s connections with each other and the role of culture in strengthening relations and building trust within and between families, villages and districts was described as the strongest element of resilience for Timorese throughout the consultations. The National Working Group on Resilience agreed and emphasised that the trust which is mediated through cultural values and practices is one of the greatest strengths to hold people together in Timorese society.

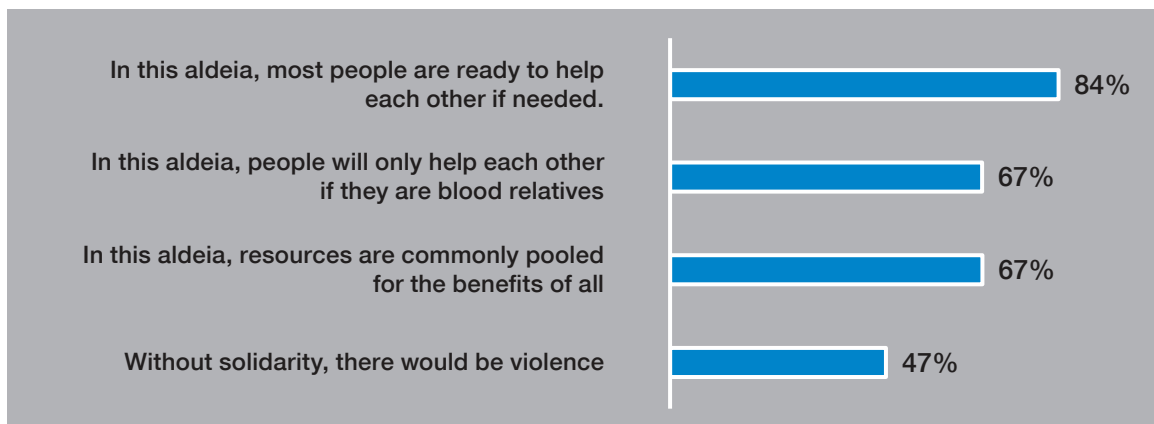
Social relations are based on a strong collective sentiment. This acts as a form of social support for members of families who are in need and resources are commonly pooled for the benefit of all. As explained by one participant from Ermera; “...sometimes something happens to our neighbours and even if we’re not family, when there are hard times, we always help each other. This is how we are held together.”<sup>4</sup>

As the survey results indicate, although just 41% felt that solidarity is present ‘a lot’ or ‘extremely’ in their aldeia, a majority said that people in the aldeia are ready to help each other if needed (84%) and often pool resources together (67%), suggesting strong potential for community support. However, many said people would only help each other among relatives (67%). More generally, few respondents indicated having provided help to neighbours (25%), or having been asked for help (26%) or advice (18%) by friends or neighbours in the year prior to the survey.

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4 FGD Ermera District, 18 July 2014

*Figure 1; Perception of support in the aldeia*



Traditional systems, ceremonies and rituals create solidarity amongst family members and communities. One of the most important and widely cited examples of such a traditional system is *fetosan umane*. *Fetosan umane* is a system of inter-familial exchanges and relationships established through the marriage of individuals from two family groups, the *fetosan* being the husband's family as wife receiver and the *umane* being the wife's family as the wife giver.<sup>5</sup> *Fetosan umane* regulates the exchanges between clans when required for various ceremonies referred to as *lia moris* which are traditions of life and include engagement and marriage; and *lia mate* which are traditions of death and include funerals and memorials.

The National Working Group emphasised the importance of Timorese humane values which have a long history. Members asserted the need to find ways to emphasise and strengthen these. One of these values is the willingness to help people in need even if we don't know them. The members offered further analysis and explanation of the cultural underpinnings of social relations, and identified tools that exist in society which are used to build solidarity and trust. For example *Gotong-Royong* ('collaboration') which refers to collectives and collective approaches to work (particularly farming), community activities, and to organising events.

An important explanation from the NWG-R refers to the practice of *barlake* which is a central component of the *fetosan umane* system. Once two families or clans are united through marriage, they will enter into a long-lasting relationship of exchange of goods and gifts which symbolises and strengthens the bonds between them. This begins with the exchange made during marriage, the *barlake*. This relationship is designed to promote dignity and family togetherness and fosters trust and solidarity between people.

On the other hand, participants in consultations reported that the demands that are made under the *fetosan umane* exchange system can lead to families being asked to contribute beyond their capacity or in such a

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<sup>5</sup> This conceptualisation of marriage is derived from the strong patriarchal culture which exists in Timor-Leste and which is also increasingly contested as is discussed in further on in this report.

way as to exhaust their resources. Often, the method of gathering resources for cultural ceremonies means that families are asked to present their contribution in front of the other families involved. In Bobonaro, one woman participant explained that some people can meet the demands but others can't and this makes some people feel proud and others feel ashamed. Almost half of the survey respondents (45%) also agreed that the cost for such ceremonies is too high.

The undue burden placed on vulnerable families reduces economic inclusion and opportunity. These power dynamics and the shame and exclusion which they produce subsequently undermine the bonds of trust which cultural practices, beliefs, mechanisms and systems reinforce between families and communities, thereby undermining people's ability to cope with and prevent conflict. In fact, where survey respondents reported that there was some risk of violence in their community, 24% of these said this risk was associated with *fetosan umane* - as compared to land disputes (41%), problems with the youths (34%), unemployment (29%), and Martial Arts Groups (15%).

The national survey revealed some important insights into solidarity in Timor-Leste. When asked under what circumstances solidarity is shown, the most common response was *lia mate, lia moris* (90%). Other circumstances under which solidarity is shown include family problems (39%), accidents (36%), natural disasters (31%) and health problems (29%) among others. In most cases solidarity is shown through providing services, assistance (47%), pooling resources together (44%), providing attention (39%) or money and goods (39%), and sharing food (35%). It's also important to note that women reported a lower level of solidarity in daily life (in situations other than *lia mate, lia moris*) as compared to men.

This suggests a complex interplay of solidarity and support among Timorese. Solidarity is strongest as it is expressed through ceremonies and cultural obligations, but day to day support also exists independently of rituals. Looking at the district level, it is shown that in districts (Baucau, Lautem) where cultural obligations are the strongest according to the survey, and arguably the most expensive, solidarity is reported as being strong, but day-to-day support is less frequently available. Inversely, the other districts with less pressure and costs relating to rituals appear to have more frequent day-to-day support. Relatedly, respondents in Baucau and Lautem were less likely than others to agree that people should be treated the same whether or not they can contribute in traditional ceremonies (57% in Lautem and 65% in Baucau compared to 76% nationally). The more negative perception of solidarity from women makes sense in light of the fact that patriarchal culture is strongest in Baucau and Lautem districts.<sup>6</sup>

Fetosan umane and other cultural practices are essential to keep people together. However, such traditions are not static, and most survey respondents (73%) agreed that traditions must evolve to reflect changes in society.

It can be observed therefore that while traditional customs and ritual form the basis of social relations and contribute to trust between Timorese, they can also contribute to the exclusion of some groups. Thus, as some examples given during the consultations demonstrate, the adaptation and transformation of cultural practices is necessary in order to ensure that they continue to promote solidarity and good social relations. For example, in Cova Lima district, (where there is

<sup>6</sup> Unlike other districts in Timor-Leste, Baucau and Lautem do not contain villages that follow a matrilineal social system and therefore patriarchal culture and the traditional practices that come with it is often reported to be stronger in these two districts.

less pressure relating to rituals due to the strong presence of matrilineal social system,) families come together, much in the same way as they do for other cultural ceremonies, but money is pooled together for ‘scholarships’ for selected students, who then promise to complete their education before marrying or having children and also promise to return to their nation and district.<sup>7</sup> This is a creative approach to re-allocating resources for long-term benefit of the community, in so far as improving human resources, social capital and opportunity.

As revealed through the survey, (93%) agreed that *fetosan umane* and other cultural practices are essential to keep people together. However, such traditions are not static, and most respondents (73%) also agreed that traditions must evolve to reflect changes in society (this perspective was least frequent in Baucau, 61% and Lautém, 63%).

The National Working Group discussed criticisms of the *fetosan umane* system and the practice of *barlake* as being about making demands and receiving goods and added that although this can be the result of people’s practice of this, it is not actually the intention. It should promote a balanced exchange as a basis for good relations between clans into the future. More recently and due to other influences, it can lead to obligation which shouldn’t be confused with solidarity. *Fetosan umane* (and through *lia mate*, *lia moris* instruments) does more to promote solidarity than it does to weaken it and is therefore still the most prominent and effective way to keep people together and promote social cohesion.

## LEADERSHIP

The role that resistance leaders played during the Indonesian Occupation particularly those within Falintil (the National Armed Forces for the Liberation of East Timor) was widely seen through community consultations as something which promoted solidarity, rallying Timorese together to fight for Independence. In Ainaro, one participant explained that; “Although Timor is small, if we weren’t working together during our war, we couldn’t have done anything because this unity meant that although we had little, and a small land, we managed to get Independence.”<sup>8</sup> They are enduring symbols of this united Resistance effort and therefore still have the power to bring people together.

On the other hand, consultations with communities revealed a complex picture in which leaders who are also former heroes of the Resistance have both the ability to bring people together but also to create divisions which undermine solidarity and can ultimately lead to conflict. A number of crises in the post-Independence period, the most serious taking place in 2006<sup>9</sup> are seen by many to have been caused by political disputes between former Resistance figures. Moreover, leaders have begun to weaken resilience for peace in Timor-Leste through the abuse of the power given to them by the people and community consultations revealed a growing frustration with the corrupt and self-interested behaviour of leaders and others in public office. One participant in the Dili youth dialogue stated that; “our leaders

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7 FGD Cova Lima, 25 September 2014.

8 FGD Ainaro, 24 September 2014.

9 In April 2006, Timor-Leste faced a major political-military crisis which resulted in 38 homicides and displaced 150,000 Timorese, predominantly in Dili. The crisis was provoked through the actions of 600 soldiers within the F-FDTL (Falintil – Defence Forces of Timor-Leste) who staged an attack on the Government Palace and widespread violence, looting and burning ensued. Violence was thereafter instigated over almost 2 years by various actors down to the neighbourhood level and included assassination attempts on President Jose Ramos Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão. The displacement of 150,000 people in Dili took two years to resolve. This was the most serious conflict seen in the post-Independence period.

think only about themselves and their wealth rather than thinking about the people who still live in poverty at the bottom.”<sup>10</sup> In this way, leaders and current models of leadership can also erode solidarity and create divisions.

The National Working Group’s analysis revealed that solidarity and social cohesion are undermined where certain groups are privileged over others and this was identified as a considerable conflict risk in the near future. One clear example relates to veterans and the processes around determining eligibility for pensions for those who fought in the Resistance movement. The process for recognising participation in the Resistance is ill-defined and contested, prone to favouritism and can lead to conflict.<sup>11</sup>

There is concern that veterans’ payments and the manner in which they are distributed breeds dependency on the state of a certain sector of the society, exacerbated by the fact that many state contracts are also awarded to companies owned and operated by veterans. For this reason, and with the state budget almost entirely funded by oil revenues which are steadily declining, the members asserted the need for a clear policy on social protection. It will take strong and impartial leaders to set clear policy directions which address the emerging divisions around such sensitive issues.

## **RELIGION:**

Overall, religion is seen to contribute to resilience for peace because of the Catholic Church’s role in promoting solidarity and providing protection during the Indonesian Occupation. The messages of peace which are central to all religions and which inspire people to act with good conscience and refrain from engaging in injustice and conflict were also emphasised by participants. One participant in Baucau said that; “religion is part of combating conflict, and the doctrine is to educate and orient us not to create divisions.”<sup>12</sup>

As shown through community consultations, the Catholic Church was seen as being able to protect and inspire people during the period of foreign occupation, thereby building solidarity for a common cause, especially among youth. As described by one participant in Manatuto; “In the Indonesian time, there were many religious activities, but especially activities against Indonesia. Many young people found protection in the Church. This is significant, that religion in the Indonesian time was like a factor that gave support to Independence.”<sup>13</sup>

In the period since Independence, the Catholic Church has continued to play an important role through various activities in society, especially for youth. Some young people in the Dili youth FGD maintained that the Church was important to them; “It’s still strong because we see the Church continuing their programs like socialisation and group activities which always come to our neighbourhoods and this is a good way to strengthen unity in the community and build peace in the nation.”<sup>14</sup>

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10 FGD Dili (Youth), 14 November 2014.

11 In 2015, almost 9% of the annual state budget was spent on payment of veterans pensions (almost equal to the education budget and double the health budget) and for 2016, the proposed allocation is 7%. For further information on this issue, see Belun (2014) ‘Policy Brief 6 – The Social Impact of Current Administrative Processes for Veterans Payments – August 2014 update’ available online at <http://belun.tl/en/the-social-impact-of-current-administrative-processes-for-veterans-payments/>

12 FGD Baucau District, 15 September 2014

13 FGD Manatuto District, 14 August 2014

14 FGD Dili (Youth), 14 November 2014

However, the ability of the Church to foster solidarity has reduced somewhat due to the individual behaviour of actors within the Church that doesn't comply with teachings and creates a disconnect between Church leaders or personnel and their congregations. According to one participant in the youth FGD; "I'm not against religion but I am against some people who work inside [the church]. Jesus teaches something different to their actions."<sup>15</sup>

The National Working Group discussed the role of the Church in the post-Independence period in some depth. They noted that the ability of the Church to bring people together has continued into the post-Independence period, as shown during 2015 with major nation-wide celebrations of the Pilgrimage of the Youth Cross which prompted communities in every district across the country to pool resources, work together and actively participate in events over a period of many months. The high level of self-organisation and participation in Church activities is a testament to its enduring role in building solidarity among Timorese.

On the other hand, the members raised the issue of the declining levels of social support offered by the Church and the high costs for essential services such as obtaining birth and marriage certificates. In their view, this may result in conversion to other religions. However, they emphasised that the Catholic Church's values of justice, solidarity and truth still have relevance in Timor-Leste today and for this reason it's important for the Church to stand in solidarity with the people. Social justice is the key to positive peace because it promotes inclusion and protection of all in the society and pursues the collective good.

Participants in FGDs discussed the proliferation of new religions since Timor-Leste regained independence and there were mixed views about whether this has potential to undermine solidarity and lead to conflict. There have been instances of conflict arising due to more frequent conversion of some to other religions however, as one participant in Manufahi District explained; "Although we have many religions, we refer to national unity to see that this [differences in religion] is just a small thing."<sup>16</sup>

The National Working Group identified the proliferation of new religions as a potential conflict risk for the future and emphasised the importance of inter-faith dialogue as a means to prevent conflict and lead to greater understanding. Moreover, it is not just the Catholic Church that has a role in promoting social justice, but all religions, based on their messages of peace.

As participants in the first FAR National Validation Conference held in February 2015 agreed, all religions have the potential to build solidarity and inspire families, youth and communities through peace teachings. The historical role of the Catholic Church is important to serve as a reference but for the future, it was seen as more important to look at the role of religion generally.

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15 FGD Dili (Youth), 14 November 2014

16 FGD Manufahi District, 21 August 2014

## LAW & SECURITY

The formation of the RDTL Constitution is linked to the restoration of Independence, and so commands the respect of citizens, who refer to it as their *Lei Inan* (mother law).<sup>17</sup> In this sense, the Constitution can promote solidarity by bringing all people under one law. However, participants reported their frustrations that those in positions of power often place themselves above the law. As stated by a participant in Cova Lima; “...there is always this difference between the leaders and the people, even though the law says that all people are equal in the eyes of the law.”<sup>18</sup> This was seen as weakening the ability of law to protect people as well as undermining the solidarity that law has the potential to reinforce within society.

Security actors, including the PNLT and F-FDTL were also seen as contributing to resilience for peace when they were able to work in cooperation with other local entities and in conjunction with local traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. This can strengthen cohesion and solidarity at the local level. This idea was reinforced by the National Working Group with the example of community police councils<sup>19</sup> raised as one initiative that is allowing different actors at the local level to work together to improve security provision and access to justice at the local level.

The national survey revealed some interesting results which reinforce these ideas around security and solidarity. When asked who works to improve life in the community, 73% said all in the community and when asked who ensures security in the aldeia, 74% said the community together. The police were also seen as important at the local level with 62% of respondents seeing police as ensuring security in the aldeia. This indicates a strong reliance on self-organisation and good cooperation with state actors at the local level to improve life and ensure security. For this reason, high levels of solidarity and cohesion are essential for effective security provision.

## CONSCIENCE

Conscience was referred to frequently in community consultations and through the National Working Group process and refers to the individual’s motivation or will to act for the benefit of the greater good or the collective interest, according to a set of values that is fostered within families and may be derived from religious teachings, ancestral narratives or other forms of education. As explained by one participant in the Lautem district FGD; “All people have the ability to contribute and have the individual conscience to contribute and with this we can

### What is ‘conscience’ in the Timor-Leste context?

Conscience is the individual’s motivation or will to act for the benefit of the greater good or the collective interest, according to a set of values that is fostered within families and may be derived from religious teachings, ancestral narratives or other forms of education.

17 FGDs in Manufahi, Aileu, Ermera, Oecussi, Lautem and Cova Lima Districts

18 FGD Cova Lima, 25 September 2014

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create stability.”<sup>20</sup> Conscience is something that can be promoted through certain aspects of culture, religious teachings, law, security and leadership. Another participant in Dili explained, Timorese need conscience to become the authors of their own development.<sup>21</sup>

## CULTURE

Culture forms and influences conscience in complex ways. There are several cultural actors and mechanisms which guide people to make decisions and behave in ways that foster good social relations. These include the *uma lulik* or sacred houses, *lia nain* or traditional leaders and most importantly, the concept of *lulik*<sup>22</sup> itself which is the core of Timorese values. *Lulik* is generally translated as ‘forbidden’, ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’ and it determines sacred rules and regulations that guide relationships between people and people, people and their environment and people and God or the spiritual realm. *Lulik* has a very strong bearing on people’s understanding of right and wrong.

The *fetosan umane* system is reinforced through physical infrastructure called *uma lulik* (sacred house) or *uma lisan* (traditional house) which represents large family groups or clans. These houses offer the protection of the ancestors and are a site for worship, performing of rituals, decision making and conflict resolution. As explained by one participant in the Aileu district FGD; “...some people that don’t know each other can create conflict with each other but eventually come to meet each other in a cultural ceremony such as the inauguration of a sacred house and then they know that they have a family relation. From this, unity is strengthened.”<sup>23</sup> As revealed in the national survey, almost all respondents (96%) agreed that *uma lulik* and *uma lisan* (traditional house) are important to remind people they belong together.

As discussed by the National Working Group, Timorese cultural values and *lulik* place great emphasis on maintaining good relations between people and people, people and their environment and people and God or the spiritual realm. Each person must work to ensure balance between themselves and their environment and between the *umane* and *fetosan* family groups or clans. There are a myriad of rituals and symbols used to ensure this balance and guide people towards the correct behaviour. This ensures peace and tranquillity in the society.<sup>24</sup> If the balance is disturbed, people can expect ancestral punishment in the form of illness, or misfortune. It is the fear of such punishment that compels people to refrain from wrongdoing or engaging in conflict and violence.

The National Working Group deepened the analysis of conscience and focussed on individual choice and action and the benefits to society of a population that is permitted to think critically. Conscience is central here in determining actions and behaviours and as members agreed, conscience is directly related to values. These values are integral to Timorese identity and are unique. As shown through the survey, culture and traditional ceremonies were identified most frequently (75%) among the factors that define the Timorese identity. The formation of good citizens who act in the

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20 FGD Lautem District, 18 September 2014.

21 FGD Dili District, 2 December 2014.

22 For a full explanation, see Josh Trindade (2011) ‘Lulik: The Core of Timorese Values’, paper available online at <http://karaudikur.blogspot.com.au/2012/04/lulik-core-of-timorese-values.html>.

23 FGD Aileu District, 19 August 2014

24 For a more detailed explanation, see Josh Trindade (2015) ‘Relational Dimensions within Timor-Leste Customary Society’, paper available at <http://karaudikur.blogspot.co.id/2015/12/relational-dimensions-within-timor.html>.

interests of the collective good is dependent on good conscience, which is in turn heavily influenced by culture.

As community consultations revealed, there are many examples of people adapting their culture to bring about more positive outcomes for the community and society. Some examples include decisions made within and between families to more effectively balance resources and finances between traditional ceremonies and the education of young people, or acknowledging the need for the formal justice system to deal with matters relating to violence against women and children. As shown through the national survey, 76% of respondents agreed that traditions must evolve to reflect changes in society (for both male and female respondents). Adaptation of culture can lead to better protection of vulnerable groups, particularly women and youth. Such decisions and subsequent actions depend on conscience and an ability to look critically at the negative impacts of certain cultural practices and traditions.

## RELIGION

Religion has a strong bearing on conscience in Timor-Leste and community consultations revealed that messages of peace which are central to all religions are important to inspire people to act with good conscience and refrain from creating injustice and violent conflict.

According to the 2010 Census, 96.9% of Timorese identify as Roman Catholic. Community consultations revealed the idea that by promoting a shared set of values and morals which reinforce good conscience and solidarity, the Church has an enduring role in building peace. The National Working Group discussed the role of Church values including justice, solidarity and truth as having strong bearing on forming people's conscience and that these values are shared by many other religions. Moreover, through facilitating a belief in God and a fear of punishment from God, people's faith in the Church is often intertwined with fear of ancestral punishment which has a strong bearing on thoughts and action.

As the survey revealed, there is a high level of trust in the Catholic Church with 64% trusting the Church a lot or extremely. 51% of respondents also perceived that the Church acts in their best interests, which was higher than any state institution. The survey also revealed that the Church contributes to unity, with 92% noting that church leaders are a source of inspiration for others. One key example of such inspiration was shared by participants in community consultations regarding the visit of Pope John Paul II to Timor-Leste in 1989 and his message to the youth. "The Pope left behind a message that was important to transform young people's thoughts from negative to positive to be able to continue on."<sup>25</sup>

However, it is also important to understand the ways that shared values and morals promoted by the Church are contested or undermined by actions of personnel or through the systems and institution of the Church as it has evolved in the post-Independence period. As the National Working Group discussed, there are negative behaviours associated with the Church and hypocritical behaviour of individuals within it has an impact on the ability of the Church to use its influence to promote good conscience. Nevertheless, members saw a continuing role for the Church in using education and youth formation to build good conscience, particularly of younger generations. This denotes a key role for the Church in using its structure and influence to promote critical thought and action among the population in the pursuit of social justice.

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25 FGD Aileu District, 19 August 2014

## LEADERSHIP

Conscience was linked to leadership mainly in relation to former resistance figures who now find themselves in positions of power and need to have the good conscience to lead with integrity. There was considerable discussion of the need for leaders to place the interests of the nation and the people above their own, to invest in preventing political conflict and promote positive outcomes through using their good conscience for the development and wellbeing of the country as a whole. As one participant in Dili explained, “If resistance leaders continue to hold a sacred role that they held previously in order to bring about the freedom of the people, with idealism, conscience and integrity, that is a big strength that can reinforce Timorese unity.”<sup>26</sup>

Particularly in relation to conflict, conscience is seen to have a strong bearing on the role of leaders in fuelling political conflict, particularly the 2006 political/military crisis. One participant from Ermera District shared his opinion that; “In the past [2006], we saw that they [the leaders] were the authors of the action but then they reflected to themselves that when they are together we can overcome a situation. They created it but in the end they came with good conscience and sat together to return the situation to peace. If they at the top are together, we at the bottom just follow them.”<sup>27</sup> It is clear that leaders, particularly if they have played a role in the resistance, have considerable influence in the post-Independence period and the idea that people follow their leaders was heard several times throughout community consultations.

Drawing on these findings from the community consultations, the National Working Group noted the important role of leaders in setting examples for those they lead, including the public service and the citizens. Timor-Leste is establishing itself as an independent sovereign state after 500 years of colonialism and occupation and the tendency to look to leaders as guides’ means these figures have a clear responsibility to lead by example – particularly in relation to issues of corruption which proliferates rapidly if good examples are not set at the highest level. For this reason, the role of conscience is particularly important. The leaders still have power to inspire citizens and public servants to act for the greater good.

## LAW AND SECURITY

Conscience has an impact on the effectiveness of the formal justice system and the implementation of laws as well as the provision of security. As described above, the values and norms inscribed in aspects of Timorese culture have a strong bearing on people’s decisions and behaviour (conscience) and such a context can present both opportunities and challenges to the effective implementation of formal law, which is in turn necessary to maintain order, regulate social interactions and prevent conflict.

Participants in most district FGDs pointed to law as something which has a role in preventing and addressing conflict. For this reason, it is considered to be an element of resilience and can be a tool for peacebuilding. As stated by one participant in Liquica; “Law is in the interests of the public and the interests of justice and if we don’t have law, justice

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26 Interview, DIT, 26 January 2015.

27 FGD Ermera District, 18 July 2014.

can't be found, but if we have law we can have justice.”<sup>28</sup> However, people also emphasized that the effectiveness of formal law depends on the individual's conscience to abide by it, particularly in this early stage of Timor-Leste's Independence, when state institutions are being consolidated. This presents a problem in instances when laws are not well understood or are developed without adequate regard for the local context, particularly cultural norms and values.

This idea was reinforced by the National Working Group with discussion of the importance of Timorese identity and its bearing on conscience. Punishment is only effective if it is based on the values of the perpetrator which are shaped by his/her culture and lived experiences. Laws that are based on external or foreign values and developed without regard for local context don't work in Timor-Leste.

Reconciling cultural norms with newer human rights concepts is a key challenge for state building in Timor-Leste. Some examples were shared during consultations of formal law bringing about positive change, one being the 2010 Law on Domestic Violence which rendered acts of domestic violence public crimes to be brought before the courts. As one woman in Cova Lima district explained; “Before, domestic violence was considered normal inside the family but now, through the work of the courts, people's minds have started to change.”<sup>29</sup>

In relation to security, the national survey shed some light on the role of various actors in ensuring security. Most respondents (74%) said that it is the community itself which ensures security in the *aldeia*. This suggests that communities look to more localised and informal actors and networks are looked to by communities for security provision which may place more weight on people's conscience to do the right thing.

## COMMUNICATION AND DIALOGUE

Good communication including the effective sharing of information whether through the media, public information, meetings and through government and non-government programmes, and the ability to share ideas in a way that promotes trust and good relations between people and entities was seen by many throughout community consultations as an important component of resilience that can prevent conflict and strengthen peace. In connection with this, dialogue was often referred to as a tool which is familiar to Timorese and which is closely related to non-violent conflict resolution and, as explained by some participants, is also a tool used to facilitate discussions around complex issues facing communities.

Ineffective or a lack of communication was seen by participants as a key undermining factor which leads to exclusion, distrust and conflict. This was discussed predominantly in relation to leadership, law and security. One participant in Viqueque described an example of this; “The contribution of the media in Viqueque is very important because information from mouth to mouth often spreads the wrong information and can create conflict.”<sup>30</sup> Media was seen as a key player in the provision of accurate information.

The National Working Group's analysis as well as the results of the national survey reinforce the importance of effective

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28 FGD Liquica District, 8 October 2014

29 FGD Cova Lima District, 25 September 2014.

30 FGD Viqueque District, 16 September 2014.

communication for conflict prevention and citizen participation and the use of dialogue as a great strength that can be leveraged for peacebuilding in Timor-Leste.

The various ways that culture, leadership, religion and law and security interact with and utilise dialogue and good communication is particularly important to examine. Participants referred to good communication as something strongly linked to inclusion and trust. This is particularly relevant for leadership, law and security. As described by one participant in Manatuto; “...good communication exists at the individual level and within the family. This leads to good communication at the community level. If this can be applied at the district and national level, wherein key parts of society have good communication with each other, we can have resilience.”<sup>31</sup>

## CULTURE

Dialogue is a familiar and effective tool which is commonly used in traditional dispute resolution throughout Timor-Leste. Through the process of *nahe biti bot* (rolling out the big mat), people come together to discuss and resolve disputes. Dialogue aims to promote reconciliation, adherence to customary norms and traditional laws and thereby ensures cohesion and harmony within families and communities. However, as a traditional mechanism for conflict resolution this should be viewed as a tool that can be used more broadly, for example to promote good communication across sectors and to help build relations between people and between communities. For this to be most effective, it's important for dialogue to follow principles of inclusion and neutrality.

When used as a tool to share information, dialogue, as a familiar process, is also an effective communication mechanism for Timorese to understand complex issues, discuss sensitive topics and for collective decision making. Participants in Dili discussed the unique situation facing the capital, where rural-urban migration has meant that nowadays, less than 50% of the residents of Dili actually originated from Dili,<sup>32</sup> and many ethno-linguistic groups are living side by side. This creates a complex milieu of traditional actors, practices, beliefs and processes that link back to particular districts or even villages, but which people still rely on to prevent and resolve conflict. Participants placed emphasis on the power of dialogue and good communication to ensure that appropriate solutions are found in situations where parties come from many different ‘cultures’.

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31 FGD Manatuto District, 14 August 2014.

32 James Scambary (2012) ‘Conflict and Resilience in an Urban Squatter Settlement in Dili’, East Timor, Urban Studies, originally published online 20 December 2012.

### **Dialogue as a key peacebuilding tool**

When following the custom of nahe biti bot and the principles of inclusion and neutrality, dialogue can be used to:

- Bring about reconciliation
- Solve conflicts without violence
- Discuss complex issues
- Collectively make decisions
- Share information
- Promote transparency
- Consult on key policies and laws
- Open up channels of communication between the government and citizens

## **LEADERSHIP**

In relation to leadership, the importance of effective communication and dialogue was highlighted in community consultations, through the national survey and by the National Working Group alike. More effective communication is needed between leaders themselves, between key sectors of society and between state and citizens.

Consultations showed that resilience is strengthened when there is trust between people and leaders. Leaders can strengthen this trust through good communication and dialogue in order to better respond to the needs of the people. As one participant from Bobonaro district described; “The leaders are good but sometimes the people’s concerns and needs are heard but then put in a drawer... they should be a bridge but sometimes the bridge has rotting foundations so what can it do? It’s rotting inside and we try to pass...but we can’t. So the bridge is broken. Leadership is only good if it’s a bridge.”<sup>33</sup>

The National Working Group also highlighted the ineffectiveness of consultation processes which could be greatly improved by mirroring familiar dialogue processes rather than following commonly used lecturing or seminar formats. Dialogue is a key tool in much needed efforts to open up communication channels between the people and the government.

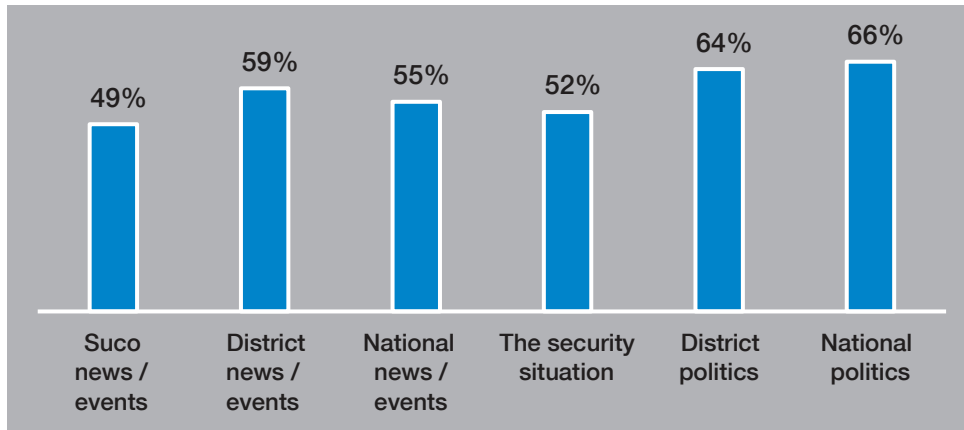
Key results of the national survey deepened these findings and ideas. The survey showed that half or more than half of the respondents described being little or not all informed about news and events in their village (49%), district (59%) or nation (55%), and about the security situation in general (52%), district politics (64%) and national policies (66%). Respondents in Baucau, Ainaro and Lautem districts reported least frequently being informed about national politics. Women reported feeling less informed as compared to men and those with lower levels of education reported feeling

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33 FGD Bobonaro, 28 August 2014.

significantly less informed than those with higher levels.

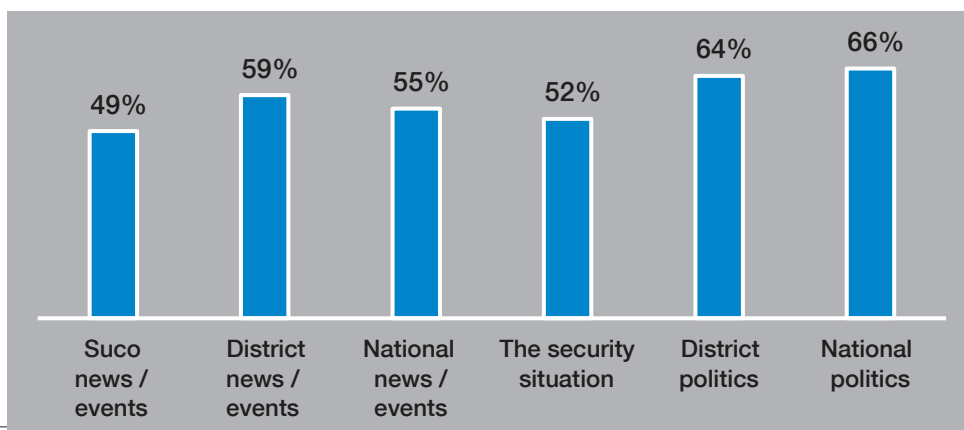
*Figure 2: Self-reported level of information (% little – not at all)*



Considering these low levels of information, it's important to look at the way people access information. Most respondents in the survey have access to a formal source of information including television (38%) and radio (30%). Access to television was much higher in Dili (72%). Some respondents also relied on Aldeia and Suco leaders as their main sources of information (13%), most frequently in Baucau (30%) and Manatuto (25%). Finally, some respondents (14%) relied on friends and family, most frequently in Oecussi (33%) and Baucau (29%). The survey also showed a considerable lack of trust in information sources. Only 36% of respondents reported that they trust the media a lot or extremely.

More generally, many Timorese do not feel free to speak openly about key issues: 58% feel that they are not able to speak openly about politics, 59% about corruption and 47% about what happened during the war. In addition, 83% feel that they are not free to organize a protest or demonstration. This may not necessarily imply that Timorese would feel unsafe talking about sensitive topics or organizing protests. Level of comfort, societal pressure and cultural values may also play a role. On each of these indicators, women and those with lower levels of education reported feeling significantly less free than men and those with higher levels of education.

*Figure 3: Ability to talk or organize with fear (% little – not at all able)*



Throughout community consultations, local leaders were seen to be better placed than national, Dili-based leaders to foster trust and good relations because of their proximity to people and their ability to communicate with their communities and with other key actors at the local level. For this reason, local level leadership is likely to be more trusted and legitimate.

The national survey showed that local leaders were more frequently seen as working to improve life in the community and 77% of respondents agreed with this as compared to 33% who agreed that the national government is working to improve life in the community. This may be attributed to better communication networks at the local level, however the survey revealed that the majority of respondents don't feel that they have a lot of influence over decisions made at the local level. Only 14% of respondents felt that they had a lot of influence over decisions made by aldeia leaders and 12% felt they had influence over decisions made by suco leaders. This suggests that communication and dialogue could be used more effectively in consulting with communities and engaging people in decision-making at the local level as well as the national level.

The National Working Group discussed the importance of using effective dialogue between political figures. During the NWG-R's mandate, a joint police-military operation was actively seeking to arrest Mauk Moruk, a former Falintil Commander who had staged a protest against the government in the east of the country. Mauk Moruk was eventually located and killed by security forces in August 2015. The members felt that this example demonstrated a clear need for national-level dialogue to be used as a tool to better understand and address such challenges to the state, which in their observation had arisen a number of times since Independence. Such a tool, if it involved respected and neutral figures and was implemented according to key principles of inclusiveness and impartiality, could go a long way towards preventing political crises. The members discussed the role of figures from the Catholic Church and other religions in facilitating such dialogues and that this is something that could be made more of in Timor-Leste.

These results make it clear that there is a serious deficiency in the majority of Timorese people's access to accurate information from trusted sources. This has a significant impact on their ability to feel informed and participate actively. At the same time, 48% of survey respondents nominated good communication and 42% nominated dialogue as important to prevent violence arising in the future. Without effective liaison and cooperation between leaders from different sectors, within government, between government and citizens and in the law and policy-making process, trust is eroded and relations between the state and citizens are undermined.



## RELIGION

In terms of religion, participants discussed the need for Church leaders to communicate effectively with other key sectors of society in order to play a role in preventing and resolving conflict. The Catholic Church is recognised for its role in providing a site of information sharing which assisted the Resistance and the Church structure and its wide reach continues to provide a meeting place and facilitate access to information.

At the local level, the ability of Church leaders to work together with other local authorities to resolve conflicts and disputes, particularly among youth, was noted in a number of districts. Religious leaders, when they work together with other community leaders, can also use their standing to reduce panic in times of crisis or national-level conflicts.

As discussed above, the National Working Group also identified a potential role for Catholic and other religious leaders to promote and facilitate dialogue between political actors in times of political conflict. Such figures are arguably more neutral than other figures and have moral authority that is useful in political disputes. This relates to the discussion above on conscience, that religious leaders have the ability to appeal to conscience and faith.

## LAW AND SECURITY

Community consultations revealed that both good communication and dialogue are an integral part of effective provision of security and effective development and implementation of law.

The emphasis placed during FGDs on the importance of consulting citizens in the development of laws and policies was reiterated strongly by the National Working Group.

There are considerable barriers to the effective communication of laws; this includes the fact that legal proceedings are carried out in the official language of Portuguese which is not

widely understood in Timor-Leste, and considerable misunderstanding or incomprehension of key laws due to the use of foreign concepts and principles in key legal documents that are taken from outside the country without sufficient effort to adapt to local culture and context.

Dialogue is a key tool that can be used more effectively to consult citizens on the development of law and policy.

Particularly where there are foreign ideas underpinning certain legislation, it is imperative that consultation is carried

### **Key barriers to effectively implementing formal law:**

1. legal proceedings are carried out in the official language of Portuguese which is not widely understood in Timor-Leste,
2. Foreign concepts and principles in key legal documents are taken from outside the country without sufficient effort to adapt to local culture and context.
3. Distance from courts.
4. Financial barriers.
5. Backlog of cases in the courts lead to long delays.

out in such a way that individuals and communities can come to their own understanding of the meaning of certain concepts and principles and provide input based on their context and experiences.

The National Working Group placed considerable emphasis on the ineffectiveness of laws and policies that are taken from outside the country (often from Portugal or Australia due to the use of Portuguese language and the presence of international advisors) and applied in Timor-Leste. This is commonly referred to as ‘copy/pasting’ of laws. There was agreement that many key laws developed since Independence are far from the reality in Timor-Leste and the members strongly asserted the need to recognize the values that exist in the society in the development and implementation of laws. One member stated that; “Law needs to reflect life.”<sup>34</sup>

National Working Group members also agreed that if laws don’t adequately reflect reality, the implementation of security will be weak and this has an impact on the consolidation of peace. As explained by one PNTL Officer in the Dili FGD, law can only be effective when it is based on dialogue and is clearly communicated to the people it applies to.

More generally, good communication is an integral aspect of effective security provision. The ability of security actors including the PNTL and F-FDTL to build strong communication networks in communities and work effectively with local actors, particularly in the face of a strong belief in, and adherence to traditional justice processes.

As shown through the national survey, there is great importance placed on both community and formal security actors. When asked what needed to be done to improve security in the aldeia, the three most common answers from respondents were to build trust within the community (78%), to develop community security network (48%), and to bring more police (40%). The National Working Group highlighted local security networks and community policing councils as two initiatives that have had some success in improving security provision through the use of effective channels of communication and cooperation between key actors.

Local security networks and community policing councils are two initiatives which demonstrate a positive relationship between law and security as an element of resilience with good communication as an enabling factor. These have had some success in improving security provision through the use of effective channels of communication and cooperation between key actors.

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34 National Working Group on Resilience, meeting #5, July 1, 2015, Dili.

## NON-VIOLENT CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The long tradition of non-violent conflict resolution in Timor-Leste is something that participants throughout community consultations pointed to as a key part of their resilience. ‘Non-violent’ refers to the absence of physical punishment for crimes or wrong-doing and a general commitment to resolving disputes peacefully. This is a cornerstone of Timorese traditional dispute resolution which involves specific rituals, processes and actors. Non-violence is also an important value which is supported to varying extents through culture, religion, leadership, security and law and is discussed here not just in relation to traditional justice at the local level, but approaches to preventing and resolving political conflict and national crises.

One of the National Working Group’s key recommendations for strengthening resilience is to harmonise the traditional and formal justice systems in Timor-Leste. This is partly to ensure that the tradition of non-violent conflict resolution, the tools that have traditionally been used and the values that underpin them are not lost.

### **What is non-violent conflict resolution?**

‘Non-violent’ refers to the absence of physical punishment for crimes or wrong-doing and a general commitment to resolving disputes peacefully. There is a long tradition of non-violent conflict resolution in Timor-Leste and this is a key part of Timorese resilience.

### **Tools for non-violent conflict resolution in Timor-Leste:**

*Lia nain* - traditional leaders resolving disputes

*Uma lulik* - a site for conflict resolution

*Nabe biti bot* – the practice of rolling out a mat to bring parties together

*Tara bandu* - a traditional process of law making

## CULTURE

The use of such traditional mechanisms for resolving and preventing conflict has a strong link with conscience and solidarity, the underlying objective of these practices being to ensure harmony in communities, promote reconciliation and foster strong relations in society, which reflect Timorese cultural values. There are some key actors and processes that were described by participants.

The *lia nain* is the central figure in dispute resolution at the local level as a trusted representative of extended family groups. *Lia nain* are traditional leaders who derive their position from their knowledge of traditional practices, mechanisms and narratives and as described by one participant in Liquica, “People believe in the *lia nain* because they have the role and the power to promote harmony within the families belonging to one traditional house.”<sup>35</sup>

Dispute or conflict resolution commonly takes place in the *uma lulik* and follows a practice of *nabe biti bot* which means rolling out the big mat to bring parties together to discuss problems or conflicts. The *lia nain* presides over the discussion to find a solution that reflects the particular traditions of the family groups represented, usually requiring both parties to make gestures of confession and compensation rather than one party being exclusively shamed and punished. This is the key to ensuring that harmony will be maintained into the future and conflict more effectively prevented.

*Tara bandu*, a traditional process of law making aiming to regulate relations between people and with their environment, is another tool that is used by Timorese to support and reinforce conflict prevention and resolution processes. All of these elements are closely linked to the idea of *lulik* as discussed above in relation to conscience, particularly in that certain actions and wrongdoings are seen to upset the balance between the earthly realm and the spiritual realm, and punishments or protections are seen to come from the spiritual realm.

Despite the importance placed on these traditional processes and their ability to prevent and resolve conflict in a manner which reflects Timorese values, many throughout community consultations and the National Working Group recognised that traditional processes are not always effective in protecting vulnerable people and groups. Through community consultations it was shown that traditional practices are more effective at preventing conflict and protecting people when they don't exclude or discriminate.

For this reason, the National Working Group put forward a key recommendation to harmonise traditional and formal law and justice processes to strengthen the justice system as a whole in Timor-Leste.

## LAW AND SECURITY

The need to find appropriate interrelations between formal and traditional justice in Timor-Leste is a key challenge for the consolidation of democracy and the justice system. In relation to the rights and protection of women, the FGD with *lia nain* in Liquica revealed that crimes involving family violence and violence against women specifically cannot be effectively addressed through traditional processes and must be referred to the formal justice system.

The national survey showed that most respondents felt that when disputes occur, the best course of action is to offer mutual apology (45%), committing through cultural practices not to do it again (43%), giving warnings to the parties (35%), punishing the other (24%), forgiving (22%) and compensating the offended party (19%). In other words fewer mentioned punitive elements (punishing, compensating) than restorative aspects entailing the restoration of relations between the parties. Interestingly, forgiveness was also not a common response, which reflects an idea that emerged during consultations with key actors in Dili, that Timorese are inclined to forget an injustice, but not forgive the perpetrator. 84% also hold the belief that most disputes can be resolved through dialogue. The results should be viewed in light of the limited understanding of formal justice mechanisms – just 19% said they understood formal justice 'well' or 'very well'.

The National Working Group's rationale for strongly recommending the harmonisation of the two justice systems was that, in their view, very few crimes can effectively be resolved by one system alone as each offers something valuable to the resolution and prevention of conflict and violence. The formal system offers punishment which is designed to align with international human rights standards, however the traditional system offers tools that can help individuals, families and communities work towards reintegration and reconciliation between parties which is essential for social cohesion.

Working Group Members asserted the necessity for certain crimes to be brought before the formal justice system, for example domestic violence and gender-based violence and therefore suggested that a clear process is needed to determine which matters should be brought before which system. Members also asserted that 'reconciliation', when referring to

seeking justice for human rights violations committed during the Indonesian Occupation, does not entail that such crimes be dealt with only through the traditional justice system but need to be brought before formal justice at the national and/or international level.

## LEADERSHIP

The process of harmonising traditional and formal justice systems is complex and requires strong and effective leadership. Community consultations and the National Working Group noted the importance of leaders recognising cultural values and traditions in the implementation of their role and having the ability to consult on such complex policies.

*Tara bandu* has more recently been intersected with formal or state justice processes, and local and international organisations have supported the use of *tara bandu* throughout Timor-Leste to promote good natural resource management and to address certain conflict drivers.<sup>36</sup> This is one example of the intersection of the two systems that could serve as a reference for the broader task of harmonising justice systems in Timor-Leste. However, there are specific processes and rituals that ensure that these traditional tools are used effectively. For example, to create a new *tara bandu*, a community will perform rituals led by key figures and collectively pool together resources for ceremonies.

An important observation made by the National Working Group was that when tools such as *tara bandu* are adopted by government or non-government organisations and turned into projects, they can lose their effectiveness by introducing resources from outside or upsetting the power dynamics that exist in communities. Such practices lose meaning if the community is prevented from fully leading the process. The members also identified considerable duplication in the use of such tools by different government ministries and non-government organisations. The national survey revealed that 55% of respondents proposed that *tara bandu* could be used to prevent future violence in the country which shows the importance of ensuring the effectiveness of this tool is not undermined through misuse. Such problems can be alleviated with effective leadership.

The recognition by *lia nain* during community consultations of the need for formal justice to fill gaps left by the traditional system is significant. It shows that traditional leaders are playing a role in adapting cultural practices to address current issues in the society. These leaders also expressed their frustration that the formal justice system is not yet effective or accessible to all. Access to courts is hampered by distance, financial barriers, and

### **A caution on using traditional tools:**

When tools such as *tara bandu* are adopted by government or non-government organisations and turned into projects without regard for local rituals and processes, they can lose their meaning and effectiveness.

The national survey revealed that 55% of respondents proposed that *tara bandu* could be used to prevent future violence in the country which shows the importance of ensuring the effectiveness of this tool is not undermined through misuse.

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36 For a detailed discussion of the use of *tara bandu* in Timor-Leste, see Belun & The Asia Foundation (2013), '*Tara Bandu: Its Role And Use In Community Conflict Prevention In Timor-Leste*', Dili.

backlog of cases, use of Portuguese language and a lack of understanding of legal processes. They reported that they face difficulties in referring members of their community to formal justice processes due to these barriers and that where attempts are made to take cases to the courts, these cases often return to the traditional system due to the backlog in the courts.<sup>37</sup>

The role of national leadership is essential, not just in leading the process of harmonisation of justice systems but of strengthening the formal justice sector itself. The justice sector continues to face challenges related to human resources, legal training, regulation, transparency and freedom of information, language and adequate protection of victims, witnesses and vulnerable groups.<sup>38</sup>

Concerns have also been raised, particularly in the last two years, over political interference in the formal justice system. In October 2014, the parliament (in closed session) and the government passed resolutions calling for the termination of contracts and of international personnel working in the courts, the public prosecutor's office, the public defender's office, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Legal Training Centre. Consequently, visas of several personnel were revoked immediately. Whereas the government justified its actions on the basis that there were inexcusable errors made in cases concerning petroleum taxes and an audit of the judiciary was desperately needed, speculation emerged to suggest that this was interference to undermine the justice sector's attempts to bring pending cases of corruption against members of the government.<sup>39</sup> Whether or not this is indeed the case, the expulsions were a considerable setback for a struggling justice sector and serve as an example of the need for more effective leadership in strengthening justice institutions.

## RELIGION

As discussed previously, when religious leaders can work effectively with other key figures at the local level, they play an important role in the prevention of conflict. Religious doctrine, which holds messages of peace at its core, can reinforce the principle of non-violence existing in Timorese culture. Moreover, in many districts, the Church is involved in local mediation processes and non-violent dispute resolution. In Suai, participants said that; "Church and culture work together to help resolve martial arts conflict that arises."

As discussed by the National Working Group, religious leaders can also play a role in bringing about non-violent resolution of political conflict at the national level through facilitating dialogue between political leaders.

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37 FGD *lia nain*, Liquica District, 9 October 2014.

38 See IPAC (2015), 'Justice at the Cross Roads in Timor-Leste', Report Number 22, September 2015.

39 See IPAC (2015), 'Justice at the Cross Roads in Timor-Leste', Report Number 22, September 2015.

## NATIONAL UNITY AND INCLUSIVE, LEGITIMATE POLITICS

Linked to solidarity, unity on a national level was referred to many times throughout community consultations as something that contributes to resilience and helps to prevent conflict between different groups. This is reinforced by culture, religion, leadership, security and law. It is something that Timorese see as integral to the process of building positive peace. The pertinence of national unity in promoting resilience for peace in Timor-Leste must be understood in relation to the struggle for self-determination during the 24 year Indonesian Occupation of Timor-Leste, referred to as the Resistance period, during which a patriotic discourse was essential to maintaining morale and commitment to the struggle for self-determination. To this day, the shared history of resistance informs people's sentiments of national unity and contributes strongly to defining a national identity and therefore contributes to unity.

In the post-Independence period, inclusive and legitimate politics is closely linked to national unity and the absence of such can lead to deep and growing divisions in the society and undermine relations between the state and citizens. The National Working Group focussed a lot of attention on analysing the ways that political processes have or have not been inclusive and legitimate and the impact of this on national unity and resilience for peace. The national survey also shed light on some key aspects of political participation, civic engagement and politics. Trust in society and between people and leaders depends on legitimate leadership, inclusive political processes and national unity.

## CULTURE

In its role of fostering solidarity, as discussed in the previous section, culture reinforces national unity in some important ways. Traditional narratives and storytelling are one way. As explained by one participant in the Ermera FGD, "...linked to culture, it tells us that Timorese alone come from four mountains. Grasping this concept or story, people can't make serious problems between Easterners and Westerners. Sitting for *nabe biti bot* we can find a solution and show to others that we can."<sup>40</sup>

Culture and legitimacy are linked in interesting ways in Timor-Leste. The National Working Group agreed that an important source of political legitimacy for leaders in the post-Independence period is the ability to recognise and value context and culture. As stated by one of the group members; "Good leaders know the context and culture. They can have a vision but also know themselves and don't forget their origins."<sup>41</sup>

National leaders are also leaders of the state-building process which is relatively new and unfamiliar in the context of Timor-Leste. In that sense, being able to demonstrate an adherence to traditional processes and practices and an ability to reconcile these with modern democratic institutions and principles not only lends greater legitimacy to leadership but also promotes a more inclusive politics.

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40 FGD Ermera, 18 July 2014. The four mountains mentioned are Mount Ramelau in Ainaro District, Mount Matebian in Baucau District, Mount Kablaki in Manufahi District and Ainaro Districts and Mount Mondu Perdido in Viqueque District.

41 National Working Group on Resilience, meeting #4, 17 June 2015, Dili.

## LEADERSHIP

National Working Group members engaged in several in-depth discussions on the topic of quality leadership, in their view, is grounded in legitimacy and inclusiveness. According to members, quality leaders are those that act for the people, set good examples, motivate and inspire people, act as guides, are committed to the nation, have capacity to make good policy and good laws and can draw on traditional practices. A key analogy members used to focus their discussion was that leaders and the society are like fish and water. Without the water (the people), the fish (leaders) cannot survive and therefore good relations between the state and citizens is essential.

### What is quality leadership?

*According to National Working Group Members, good leaders:*

- Act for the people.
- Set good examples.
- Motivate and inspire those they lead.
- Act as guides.
- Are committed to the nation.
- Have capacity to make good policy and laws.
- Can draw on traditional practices.

*As shown through the national survey, characteristics of a good leaders include:*

- Intelligence - 73%
- Honesty - 70%
- Being hard working - 62%
- Being well known - 31%
- Being a resistance figure - 18%
- Being Catholic - 16%

Whereas legitimacy has been derived in the past through traditional governance systems, the experience of occupation and resistance gave rise to a new generation of leaders who, as described in previous sections, still hold considerable power and influence in government and society in Timor-Leste today. Community consultations revealed that these figures and heroes of the Resistance continue to dominate the political landscape and that the model of leadership espoused during the Resistance period continues to provide a strong reference point for citizens, despite the emergence of a new democracy and the processes that brings, particularly free and fair elections. Thus, political legitimacy continues to be predominantly derived from the legacy that certain figures carved out as leaders of the Resistance, partly because, as suggested by one participant in Viqueque, “many people don’t understand democracy and that people are free to choose whichever party.”<sup>42</sup>

The National Working Group agreed with this assessment and pointed out that the society needs to be prepared to accept new leaders. Legitimacy need no longer come from a role in the resistance struggle. In a similar vein, members felt that leaders should be formed through diverse educational experiences and that political parties need to strengthen their formation programmes.

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42 FGD Viqueque District, 16 September 2014.



There is also a role here for civil society and the Church in forming and educating leaders for the future. Interestingly, the national survey revealed that the three most important characteristics of a good leaders according to respondents were intelligence (73%), honesty (70%), and being hard working (62%). Fewer respondents valued being well known (31%) or being Catholic (16%) and only (18%) valued being a resistance figure. These results may indicate that society is indeed ready to support leaders with such characteristics, in which case, it's important to examine the systems that select leaders.

National Working Group members felt that a better process is needed to allow Timorese to choose true leaders because at this point, elections don't give rise to good quality leadership. Trust can be lost in the introduction of foreign systems and members felt that citizens were often following a process without fully understanding it and not quite trusting the outcome. This weakens legitimacy. This is exacerbated by the political party system which can prevent quality leaders from being placed in key decision-making positions, due to the interests of those who have the power to appoint them.<sup>43</sup>

This narrative and the collective achievement of independence should serve as a source of pride and national unity to hold people together to face the challenge of building a new nation. The experience of occupation and resistance is seen as something which unified Timorese as a process that benefited from the contributions, big and small, of a great many. One participant in the Ermera FGD offered this reflection; "We look to our history and our story of struggle, we confronted [the invasion] in Batugade<sup>44</sup> not as Easterners or Westerners but as Timorese."<sup>45</sup> This narrative could form a strong basis for an inclusive politics, but instead, a dominant narrative has emerged of deference of the population to particular leaders and this comes at the expense of people valorising their own role in the resistance and identifying the resilience that was demonstrated by the people, rather than the leaders. It also leads to competition between key figures for their individual roles to be promoted and rewarded.

Related to the discussion above on the lack of effective communication between the government and citizens on important issues and citizens feeling largely uninformed about key issues as shown through the national survey, there are significant barriers to ensuring that politics and the process of state building is indeed inclusive in Timor-Leste. As discussed above, solidarity and social cohesion have been undermined by problems related to veterans, including the distribution of pensions and rivalries between individual actors. The National Working Group emphasized the need to find inclusive, proactive and transparent solutions to the reoccurring challenges to the state (and individual representatives of the state) launched by individual veterans since Independence, the most severe concerning Alfredo Reinaldo who was killed by security forces in

#### **Conditions needed to bring about national unity in Timor-Leste:**

- Finding fair and transparent processes to determine status and compensation of veterans
- Seeking justice for past crimes and grave human rights violations committed during the Indonesian Occupation
- A narrative of the resistance period that promotes and values the **collective sacrifice.**

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43 The Council of Ministers is appointed by the Prime Minister and the members of the National Parliament are selected by political parties.

44 Location in Bobonaro District which was the point at which the Indonesia first invaded Timor-Leste in 1975.

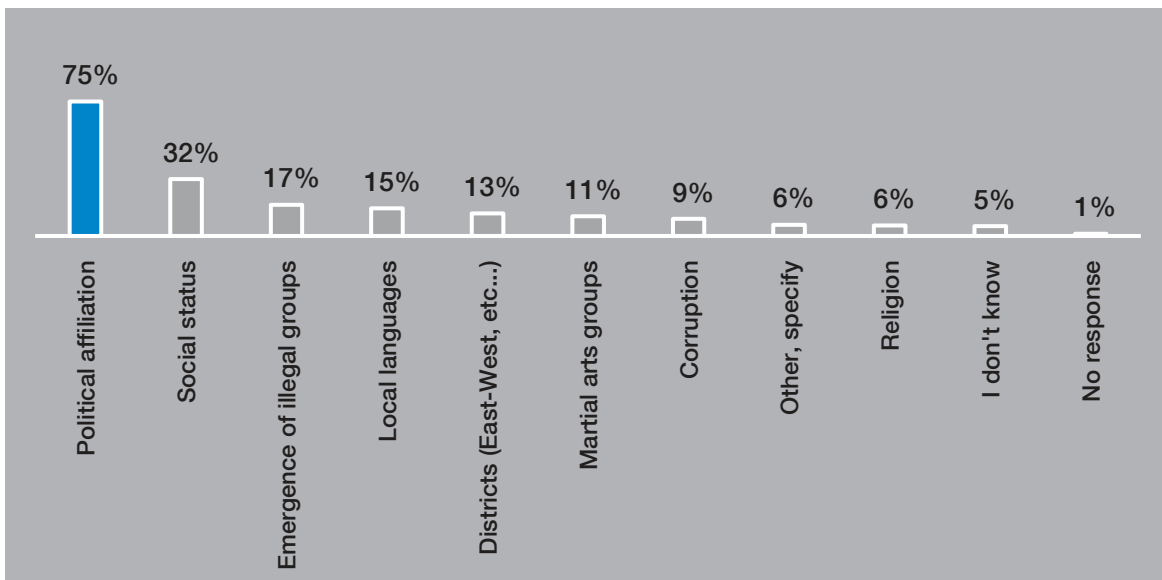
45 National Working Group on Resilience, meeting #4, 17 June 2015, Dili.

2008 and the most recent concerning Mauk Moruk who was killed by security forces in 2015. These examples illustrate a lack of tolerance for political diversity and dissenting political voices.

Until leaders are able to promote and value the collective sacrifice made during the period of Indonesian Occupation, through such actions as seeking justice for past crimes and grave human rights violations, establishing a fair and transparent process to determine status and compensation for veterans and addressing issues between individual veterans using peaceful means, politics cannot be inclusive and resilience for peace is severely undermined.

The growing divisions seen in the post-Independence period are drawn predominantly along political lines which then has ramifications for social cohesion. The national survey found that politics and political affiliations were seen as the most divisive factor among Timorese: 75% identified political affiliation among the main issues that divide Timorese, far more than any other factor including social status (32%) or the emergence of government-declared illegal groups<sup>46</sup> (17%) and martial arts groups (11%). Exclusion, bias corruption, abuse of power, pursuit of individual interests over the national interest and lack of communication are all factors which undermine political legitimacy and inclusion, erode trust between the citizens and the state and thereby weaken resilience for peace.

*Figure 4: What divides Timorese? (% of respondents)*



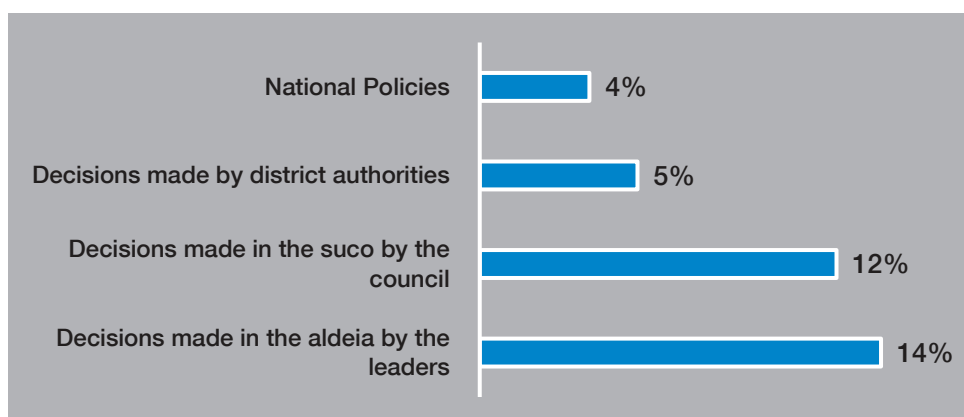
<sup>46</sup> Through Parliamentary Resolution No. 15/2014, released on 3 March 2014 the groups Conselho Revolusaun Maubere (CRM), Conselho Popular Demokratiku – Republika Demokratiku de Timor-Leste (CPD-RDTL) and others were deemed illegal due to contravention of a number of domestic laws. The government then established a number of joint police/military operations between April 2014 and August 2015 to arrest members of these groups. See [http://belun.tl/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Resolution-on-illegal-groups\\_FINAL-20-Marsu-2014.pdf](http://belun.tl/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Resolution-on-illegal-groups_FINAL-20-Marsu-2014.pdf)

The National Working Group also discussed the high expectations that citizens have of their government which may be derived from the high expectations people had of achieving independence. The national survey revealed that people see the main roles of the government being national development (73%) serving the people (72%); to help the poor (46%), indicated ensuring peace (40%) and providing education (30%). When asked to rate the performance of the government in key areas, respondents' perceptions was generally negative. Less than one in three respondents felt that the government was good or very good at fighting corruption (20%), increasing employment (29%), or reducing poverty (33%). A slightly higher percentage – but less than half the population, ranked positively performances in terms of helping the population (39%), guaranteeing justice (42%), or reducing crimes (45%). The inability of the government to fulfil the expectations of the population weakens trust between state and citizens.

The survey reinforced some important findings from community consultations regarding key indicators of weak state-society relations. A low level of trust in state actors was reported with just 39% of survey respondents reporting to trust district authorities 'a lot or extremely', less than the national government (47%), suco leaders (52%), and aldeia leaders (53%). These results are significantly lower than the level of trust shown in other institutions such as the armed forces (65%), the church (64%), the police (62%), or schools (62%).

Just one in five respondents had contacts with a government authority for any reason in the year prior to the survey, and few respondents reported having at least some level of control over decisions made at various levels of government, especially national policies (4%). Women reported less influence and control than men. Just 26% of respondents see district authorities as acting 'a lot or extremely' in their best interest, compared to 33% for the parliament, and 44% for the president's office, similar to suco and aldeia level authorities. However, at the same time just 7% agreed with the proposition that aldeia leaders sometimes fuel conflict, 14% agreed that nationally elected leaders fuel conflict, and just 12% agreed that opposition politicians try to create conflicts.

**Figure 5: Perceived level of influence (% a lot – extreme)**



There is a high rate of participation in elections and almost all survey respondents participated in the last elections of suco leaders (93%) and previous national elections (94%); an even higher percentage (99%) plans to participate in the next national elections. Elections are one of the few mechanisms available to citizens to directly participate in their democracy and this high turnout suggests that if more mechanisms were indeed available, people would likely take advantage of them. Nevertheless, people don't feel that voting actually leads to influence over decisions or policies or a representative state institutions acting in the interests of the citizens.

The National Working Group discussed the idea that politicians refrain from criticizing the government for fear that of provoking conflict or asserted the need for an independent body that was able to open up the channels of communication between the people and the state and make constructive criticism based on consultation with people.

Most survey respondents believed the best way of increasing trust in government institutions was through the improvement in service delivery, including better education (56%) and health care (53%). 53% also mentioned reducing corruption indicating the negative impact of corruption on relations between the state and citizens. Despite the findings reported above, that the majority of respondents reported that they don't feel free to speak openly about important issues (politics, corruption, conflict) and don't feel free to organize demonstrations or protests, a majority of respondents (84%) also agreed that having politicians with diverging opinions is good for the nation and only 20% agreed that people should not protest when they disagree with decisions made by leaders. This is important in light of a lack of power to disagree with decisions reported during community consultations, even when they feel that policies or laws are unjust. As summed up by one participant in Cova Lima district; "Now, people might protest in many places but the leaders will say stop, and we will stop because they are charismatic leaders and have strong influence. This strength is related to the resistance and they are the heroes."<sup>47</sup>

**A mechanism needed for healthy political debate and to hold leaders to account?**

- People don't feel free to speak openly about important issues (58% about politics, 59% about corruption and 47% about past conflict).
- Only 20% agree that people should not protest when they disagree with decisions made by leaders yet 83% don't feel free to organize demonstrations or protests.
- People (84%) agree that having politicians with diverging opinions is good for the nation.

When the results of community consultations, the survey and the analysis of the National Working Group are placed side by side, it is clear that there is not yet an appropriate mechanism in Timor-Leste which allows citizens and opposition actors to voice dissenting views and hold decision-makers accountable.

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47 FGD Cova Lima District, 25 September 2014.

## RELIGION

Religion, specifically the Catholic Church in Timor-Leste, is a symbol of the Resistance struggle and because of this it has potential to strengthen national unity in the post-Independence period. Religious leaders are still well respected and have considerable influence, socially and politically. As shown through the national survey, 92% noted that church leaders are a source of inspiration for others, 64% trust in the church (which is higher than most other institutions) and almost all respondents described themselves as Catholic (99%).

It's important to examine the role that the Catholic Church plays in the political landscape. Community consultations revealed a feeling that the Church could do more to promote social justice and protect rights in the post-Independence era. The National Working Group asserted that the Church has a responsibility to stand in solidarity with the people on key social justice issues such as corruption and justice for past crimes. Their analysis revealed that the role played by the Church during the period of Occupation is sometimes misunderstood as being a political role, when actually, it was working in pursuit of justice and protection of Timorese people. The Churches can continue to play such a role in the recently formed secular state, but this role should be re-asserted with the explicit identity of a politically neutral institution with vast reach and infrastructure to uphold social justice.

The Church and other religions have a role to educate, but with a view to ensuring that such education and orientation fosters critical thinking on the part of communities, rather than aiming to indoctrinate, so that citizens can engage more actively in demanding rights to information, services and justice.

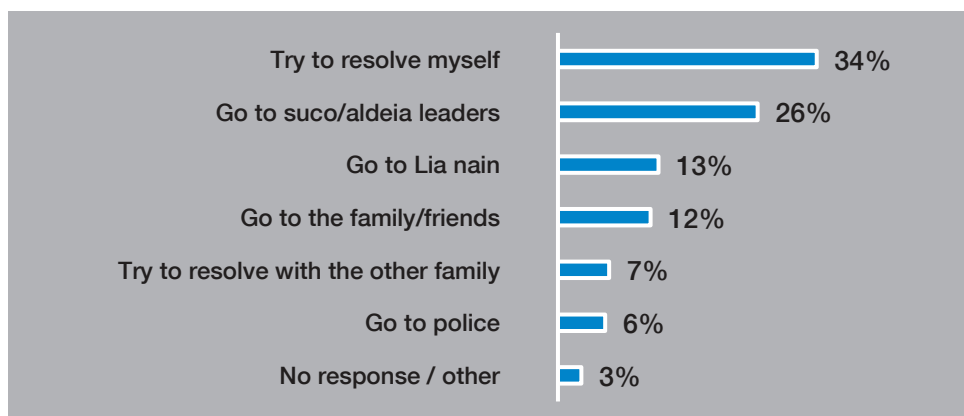
## LAW & SECURITY

Law and security have a strong bearing on national unity as well as legitimate and inclusive politics. Access to justice, equal rights before the law and trust and confidence in key justice and security institutions are essential for fostering inclusion and legitimacy in politics and leadership.

Community consultations showed that many Timorese see law as a necessary and important part of their nation, particularly the RDTL Constitution which is referred to as the 'mother law' (*Lei Inan*). Where all are equal before the law, this can strengthen national unity in the process of consolidating democracy and adapting to changing social norms.

The National Working Group emphasized the need to harmonise the two justice systems existing in Timor-Leste – formal and traditional – and highlighted the infrequency of use of the formal justice system, particularly the courts. It is well reported in Timor-Leste that traditional justice is more accessible and more frequently used by the majority of people. The survey confirmed this with the most common responses regarding resolving disputes being to resolve by him/her-self or go to suco or aldeia leaders. Domestic disputes tended more frequently to be resolved by the respondents themselves. Formal actors such as the police were rarely involved as a first solution. The survey also highlighted a limited understanding of formal justice mechanisms – just 19% said they understood formal justice 'well' or 'very well'.

*Figure 6: Actor contacted to resolve a domestic dispute*



The National Working Group members suggested that the institutions which are more visible and accessible to communities may be more trusted, more legitimate and therefore more effective. In some ways, the findings of the national survey support this idea. Trust was much higher in the police (65%), who are present down to the suco level, than the national parliament which is concentrated in the capital elected through a single constituency system (42%). Respondents also reported that police treat people of all groups fairly and without discrimination (76%), were never or rarely abusive in their contacts with people (74%) and respond promptly to requests for assistance (69%). However, a majority (76%) also said it was possible to avoid arrest by bribing the police, just 39% said the police were ‘a lot’ or ‘extremely’ effective at controlling crimes in the area, and even fewer (10%) perceived the police as doing everything they can to be of service to the community.

It is interesting to compare perceptions of police with perceptions of law and the performance of courts. Despite a lack of access<sup>48</sup> to or preference for formal justice, survey results suggest that a majority understand that equal rights exist before the law (96%)<sup>49</sup>. Only 12% felt that some people were above the law in Timor-Leste, and only 17% felt that the law favours some people or groups over others. It’s important to contrast these results with findings from community consultations which revealed that many feel that those with influence and connections can and do place themselves above the law. The survey also revealed that a majority believe that courts treat people fairly (84%) and that judges and prosecutors are respectful of the rights of defendants (73%). Courts performed better than the police in terms of perception of corruption – just 12% believed it is possible to avoid or reduce a sentence by paying a bribe. About half the respondents (52%) believed that judges can make decisions without interference by government officials.

It’s possible, as National Working Group members suggested, that institutions that are more visible are more trusted, however survey results indicate that this doesn’t necessarily result in effectiveness. It’s important to be aware of the ambiguity of the term ‘trust’ which Working Group members felt may also refer to people’s dependency on certain actors, such as the police, particularly in times of insecurity such as that seen in Baucau and Lautem districts as a result

48 There are only 4 courts serving the country, located in Dili, Baucau, Cova Lima and Oecusse districts.

49 The survey asked specifically about land rights, 67% said that when parents die, daughters have rights on the land they owned.

of the police/military joint-operation taking place at the time of the survey. In these two districts, levels of trust in the police were slightly higher than other districts; 79% in Baucau and 83% in Lautem. Members pointed out that in times of heightened threats to security, people may have little choice but to turn to armed law enforcement. While perceived as somewhat ineffective police nevertheless provide a level of protection and services that no other actor provides.

When considering that the three most common suggestions for what needed to be done to improve security at the local level were to build trust within the community (78%), to develop community security network (48%), and to bring more police (40%), the relationship between trust, legitimacy and effectiveness becomes all the more complex. Moreover, when asked what was needed to prevent future violence, 63% of respondents suggested mutual trust compared to only 13% who suggested good security provision and 11% who suggested equal access to justice.

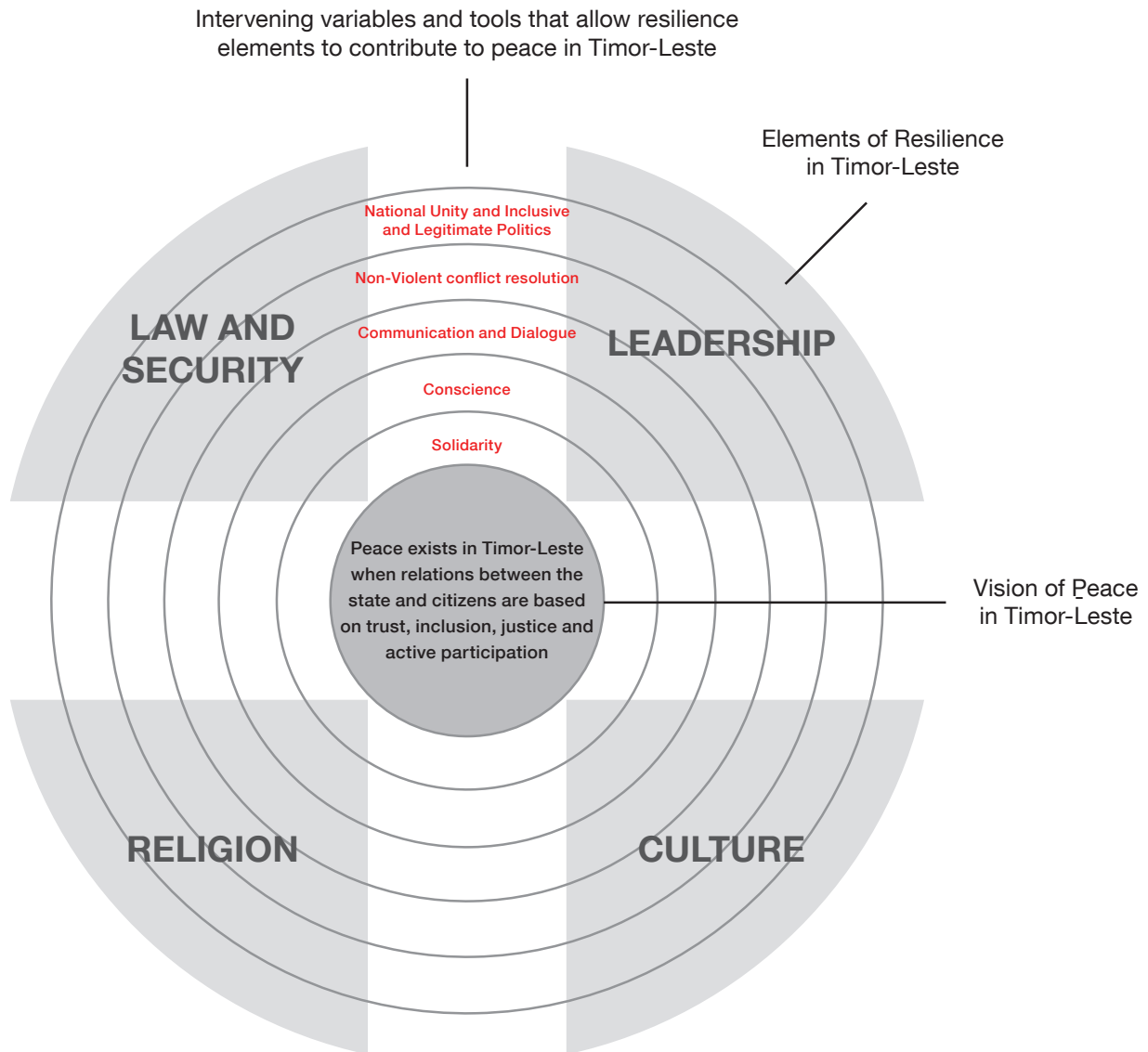
It is interesting to compare the most common suggestions for what was needed to prevent future violence; mutual trust, *tara bandu* and good communication and dialogue, to the most frequent causes of insecurity mentioned by respondents. Responses included the presence of illegal groups (35%), the presence of people under the influence of drugs or alcohol (23%), thieves (18%), youth gangs (17%) and martial arts groups (13%). Three of the five main sources result from organized groups (illegal, martial arts, and youth).

The causes of insecurity, however, varied greatly across districts. Illegal groups were especially frequently mentioned in Baucau (76%) and Lautem (55%), while youth groups and martial art groups were most frequently mentioned as sources of insecurity in Dili (35% and 26%, respectively). This suggests that Timorese are strongly in favour of preventing violence using tools which have the potential to repair social relations, encourage mutual understanding and reconciliation and integrate marginalised groups into society.

Main causes of insecurity	Most common suggestions for preventing future violence
Illegal groups (35%) People using drugs or alcohol (23%) Thieves (18%) Youth gangs (17%) Martial arts groups (13%)	Mutual trust 63% <i>Tara bandu</i> 55% Good communication 48% Dialogue 42% Good security provision 13% Equal access to justice 11%

## CONCLUSION

What emerges from the findings of the four interrelated processes of the FAR programme; community consultation, survey, national working group and national validation is that the ability of Timorese to demonstrate resilience in the face of conflict in such a way as to bring about peace depends on trust, inclusion, justice (including social justice) and active participation at the local and national level.



As the first phase of the research revealed, without an active citizenship and responsive government, reinforced through good conscience, good communication, dialogue, solidarity, a positive sense of national unity, inclusive politics and legitimate leadership, the process of strengthening resilience to prevent future conflict and the building of peace is severely undermined. For this reason, examining the relationship between the state and citizens and the ways that this relationship might be leveraged to promote inclusion and build trust is a crucial basis for strengthening resilience in Timor-Leste.

Qualitative and quantitative data show that the Timorese population does not have adequate access to information and does not feel free to speak openly about political issues or corruption and does not feel free to organise demonstrations



and protest against decisions they feel will impact negatively on them. The majority recognise the importance of diverse political opinions for their nation but they also recognise the political affiliation is one of the primary causes of division in Timor-Leste, often leading to conflict. At the same time, there are low levels of trust in key state institutions and a perception that decision-makers are not acting in the best interests of the people.

This situation has clear implications for the consolidation of democracy in Timor-Leste because if people are uninformed and unwilling to discuss important issues facing their nation, they lose the opportunity to participate in decision-making and influence decision-makers. People thereby remain voiceless and allow those in power to act according to their own interests rather than the national interest. Mechanisms, aside from elections, for peacefully expressing diverse political opinions, providing input into decision-making processes and holding governments effectively to account are severely limited.

This research didn't limit the understanding of resilience in Timor-Leste to the prevention of violent conflict, but looked at resilience more importantly as that which can help to achieve sustainable peace. For this reason, the National Working Group's emphasis on legitimate and effective leadership and the role that leaders need to play in fostering trust, inclusion and active participation is integral to establishing strong relations between the state and citizens.

It's necessary that a population is able to think critically for quality and legitimate leadership to emerge. A critical population and a responsive government are mutually reinforcing, as described with the analogy of fish and water used by the members of the National Working Group. It was also shown through the national survey that those with higher levels of education were more informed about issues, felt more free to speak openly about important issues and had more frequent contact with authorities.

There is a strong belief in mutual trust, communication and dialogue as the key ways to prevent violence arising in the future. There is also a preference for and strong belief in traditional justice processes and dialogue for resolving conflict and disputes, and there is acknowledgement of the important role of formal justice too. The National Working Group on Resilience felt that harmonising the plural justice system in Timor-Leste and strengthening social justice were two key recommendations for strengthening resilience, as outlined fully in the next section.



# 4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

## PRIORITISING LEADERSHIP

Following in-depth discussions of the research findings and analysis of key tools and recommendations for strengthening resilience in Timor-Leste, the National Working Group on Resilience decided to focus particularly on the element of leadership as the central point and link the other three elements of resilience to this, for the reason that the potential of the three other elements to contribute to resilience for peace is dependent on leadership. Members felt that the key to resilience lay in relations between the state and citizens, which as outlined above, rely on trust, inclusion, justice and active participation. From this analysis, the members put forward a vision for Timor-Leste:

### NATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON RESILIENCE'S VISION FOR PEACE:

That Timor-Leste has the right conditions to promote good quality leadership at all levels in order to strengthen relations between the state and citizens based on our values, on justice and on trust between each other in our society.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Build on the role of the Catholic Church and other religions in advocating for social justice* to make the most of the structure and influence of the Church and other religions in efforts to build conscience and increase commitment to social justice in the society through education and formation of society and leaders and facilitation of political dialogue. Social justice is the key to positive peace because it promotes inclusion and protection of all in the society and pursues the collective good.
2. *Harmonise the plural justice system* to better integrate the formal structures and processes of the state which ensure protection of rights with traditional structures that promote integration and reconciliation. Timorese values are to serve as a reference in formulation and implementation of law and justice processes and a clear mechanism is to be found which can determine the role for each justice process in the resolution of cases. These objectives are best achieved by making vast improvements to consultation and participation in the development and enactment of laws.

## ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE THESE RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of civic education to strengthen resilience for peace

The National Working Group agreed that the most effective action to improve relations between the state and citizens and work towards their vision for quality leadership to emerge was to strengthen the provision of civic education in the country.

In the medium term, civic education where it can effectively increase critical thinking among citizens, will lead to more informed voting choices, active participation, demand for information and consultation and will thereby enable citizens to better hold their government and those in public office to account and in so doing, improve the **institutions** of the state.

In the longer term, civic education can prepare **individuals** for future leadership and ensure that the younger generation is ready to lead with professionalism and integrity. The people and their leaders are like fish and water (*be'e no ikan*). Active citizens and responsive governance are mutually reinforcing and if both are playing their roles, **trust** between people and government is strengthened, there is better access to justice and **conflict is prevented**.

### **A definition of civic education:**

Civic education refers to processes that use critical thinking to encourage people to apply their values, beliefs and capacities as members of communities in order that they become active citizens, hold their government to account and organize themselves to bring about positive outcomes in society.

## A NATIONAL COMMISSION TO STRENGTHEN CIVIC EDUCATION

The National Working Group have proposed that a National Commission on Civic Education be established with a mandate to oversee and coordinate civic education efforts throughout Timor-Leste to promote more effective use of this important tool. [See annex 2 for the NWG-R's full proposal].

The National Commission would have a three-fold mandate to:

1. Advocate for a collective approach to civic education in Timor-Leste and coordinate existing civic education initiatives.
2. Promote a 'Resilience-Based Approach' to civic education [see annex 3], with consideration of the values and tools that exist in society and which can strengthen Timor-Leste's capacities to show resilience.
3. To conduct monitoring and evaluation of civic education initiatives particularly to ensure that the reach and duration of civic education is sufficient to ensure that all have access to this important.

## **POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR A NATIONAL COMMISSION ON CIVIC EDUCATION**

The National Working Group propose that the National Commission sit under the Office of the President of the Republic for the reasons that the this is the highest sovereign organ in the state, the President is the Head of State and a symbol of the unity of the independent state, the President is the guardian of the constitution and the Presidency is a politically neutral institution.

Consultation on this proposal took place in a number of ways. Firstly, in October 2015, a round table event was held in the Office of the President to give the National Working Group on Resilience a forum to present key conclusions, recommendations and their proposal to key stakeholders at the national level. The event was attended by 33 participants representing government institutions, civil society, religious institutions, academia and the armed forces.

Secondly, to reach those stakeholders who had not attended the Round Table and to seek broader feedback on the proposal, CEPAD conducted interviews with several organizations and intuitions between October and November 2015.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Validation Workshop brought together close to 100 stakeholders from government, political parties, civil society, Church, security forces, rural communities and international actors. The NWG-R and the research team presented the results of the FAR process and their proposed actions and small groups discussed the mandate and structure of the National Commission for Civic Education, providing feedback and raising questions for further consideration.

Productive discussion was seen throughout this consultation which demonstrated strong appreciation for the results of the research and the National Working Group's analysis; strong agreement with the need to improve civic education in Timor-Leste and considerable support for the idea for a National Commission on Civic Education.

Some questions and suggestions raised during this consultation included the need to ensure that the Commission is unique and doesn't duplicate or encroach on the mandate or function of any other existing body, that the Commission focus on coordinating what already exists rather than proposing new programs, to think carefully about the target groups for civic education, to promote an approach to civic education which avoids bringing materials and programs from outside, to promote an approach or method that fit with the needs (practical and learning) of communities and to base the approach and work of the Commission on the results of the FAR research.

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50 The research team was not able to secure interviews or participation from representatives of the National Parliament, the Ministry of Education or Partidu Demokratika (PD) Party.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

A core group NWG-R members together with CEPAD will continue to advocate for the implementation of the proposed actions and will work to effectively disseminate the findings of the FAR research, the Proposal for the establishment of a National Commission on Civic Education and the Guide to a Resilience-Based Approach to Civic Education. Members of this advocacy group will update each other on their progress and the application of research findings and recommendations in their own areas of work through ad hoc meetings.

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# **ANNEX: GUIDE TO USING A RESILIENCE-BASED APPROACH TO CIVIC EDUCATION IN TIMOR-LESTE**

**Guidance Document for Timor-Leste  
A RESILIENCE-BASED APPROACH TO CIVIC EDUCATION  
National Working Group on Resilience (NWG-R)  
& The Centre of Studies for Peace and Development (CEPAD)**

## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

The idea for developing this short guide to a Resilience-Based Approach to Civic Education arose from discussions and analysis of the National Working Group on Resilience (NWG-R) over eight months between April and November 2015. The NWG-R had a mandate to discuss and analyse the results of a participatory research process carried out as part of the Frameworks for Assessing Resilience programme (FAR), a joint-initiative of Interpeace and the Centre of Studies for Peace and Development (CEPAD). The objective of FAR was to enrich and transform thinking about how to understand and strengthen resilience in Timor-Leste.

Qualitative and quantitative research was carried out using through mixed-methods participatory action research process (PAR) designed to understand resilience to conflict in the Timor-Leste context from the perspective of the local population and to determine the ways in which capacities for resilience can contribute to sustainable peace.

### **WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS GUIDE?**

- To promote an approach to civic education in Timor-Leste that is based on resilience research.
- To suggest methods for civic education that can contribute to strengthening relations between the citizens and government.

### **WHO CAN USE THIS GUIDE?**

This guide is designed for any organisation or institution engaged or interested in implementing civic education in Timor-Leste, including but not limited to:

- Government and its various Ministries (especially the Ministry of Social Solidarity, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Justice)

- The National Parliament and its Commissions
- The Office of the President of the Republic
- The Judiciary
- The Anti-Corruption Commission (KAK)
- The Human Rights and Justice Ombudsman's Office (PDHJ)
- The National Electoral Commission (CNE)
- Local NGOs
- International NGOs
- United National Agencies
- Development Partners
- Schools and Universities
- Churches and religious institutions

## **HOW SHOULD THIS GUIDE BE USED?**

- In carrying-out effective planning for civic education in the country
- To strengthen the implementation of civic education programs in the country
- To monitor and evaluate civic education programs in the country
- As a reference for implementing civic education programs in the country

## **WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF USING THIS GUIDE?**

- To create civic education programs that reflect the Timor-Leste context and are thereby more effective.
- To implement civic education that can contribute to strengthening resilience for peace in Timor-Leste through promoting and fostering critical thinking.
- To understand how to use a variety of tools, including important traditional mechanisms, in the specific contexts in which they apply.
- To promote deep and effective consultation and socialisation with communities which ensures some benefit for those communities.
- To promote active participation and encourage groups in the society to organise themselves and drive various actions needed for their own development.

## SECTION 2: RESILIENCE FOR PEACE IN TIMOR-LESTE

### WHAT IS RESILIENCE IN TIMOR-LESTE?

In the context of Timor-Leste, as a young nation recently emerging from violent conflict, CEPAD understands resilience to be that which holds Timorese together in such a way that enables them to respond to conflict through non-violent means. This may involve confronting, managing, distancing, adapting, resisting, and transforming in the face of conflicts.

Without a local translation for the term, ‘resilience’ is described as the resources or glue that, until today, have held Timorese society tightly together to confront conflicts from the past and which allow Timorese to confront conflicts that might arise in the future, in an adaptive and transformative way. As suggested by one participant, resilience is that which gives Timorese the inspiration to organise themselves to bring about positive outcomes for society.

Through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) held in the 13 districts of Timor-Leste and a National Validation workshop in Dili, CEPAD identified **4 elements** that contribute to resilience for peace in Timor-Leste; these are culture; religion; leadership; law and security.

These are the four elements that consultations revealed as the key to resilience for peace in Timor-Leste, however it’s important to recognise that these are actually neutral elements. Consultations also revealed that under certain conditions, these four elements can either contribute to resilience for peace or contribute to undermining peace.

Community consultations also revealed a set of enabling factors, which ensure that the resilience elements are used in ways that help communities and society to manage conflict and work towards sustainable peace. These can be active or latent, depending on the conditions and context that exist at a particular time and place. These factors are solidarity; conscience; non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms; dialogue; good communication and national unity. Alternatively, undermining factors which work in conjunction with the four neutral elements of resilience to weaken peace include; corruption, exclusion, pursuit of private interests, abuse of power and poor communication.

Participants at the National Validation prioritised one aspect in relation to these 4 elements as follows:

- **Culture:** Traditional non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms
- **Leadership:** Relations between state and citizens
- **Religion:** Religious peace messages
- **Law and security:** Law as a tool to promote and guarantee justice for all

The National Validation also gave CEPAD a mandate to establish a National Working Group on Resilience in order to conduct further analysis and develop recommendations and actions to strengthen resilience in Timor-Leste.

## **FAR SURVEY RESULTS**

To deepen and better understand Timorese capacities for resilience, CEPAD worked with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative to carry out a nation-wide survey which reached 2,975 Timorese through random selection. The survey revealed some interesting results which reinforce the need to strengthen the provision of civic education in ways that can promote critical thinking and active citizenship.

## **INFORMATION**

The survey sought to understand access to information and the extent to which people at all levels in the society felt informed about important events. This relates to the understanding that good communication is important to strengthen relations between the state and citizens. The survey showed that the majority of Timorese do not feel informed about events and important information in their suku, district and nation, particularly regarding security and politics. 66% did not feel informed about politics at the national level.

The survey also showed that the main source of information for the majority of people is television and radio. However, Only 36% of respondents reported that they trust the media a lot or extremely. Moreover, the majority of respondents didn't feel free to speak openly about politics, what happened during the war or about corruption and 83% didn't feel free to organise a protest or demonstration.

It's important to note that those respondents with higher levels of education felt more informed and had better access to information such as government programmes and public spending. Those with higher levels of education also felt freer to speak openly about important issues such as corruption and politics and felt freer to organise protests or demonstrations.

Women respondents generally felt less informed compared to men and less free to speak openly about important issues or organise demonstrations, compared to men.

## **WAYS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE IN THE FUTURE**

The survey asked respondents to propose ways to prevent violence arising in the future. 63% also identified mutual trust, demonstrating the importance of good social relations and relations between citizens and government. 42% proposed dialogue and 48% proposed good communication as key ways to prevent violence and when asked what the government could do to prevent violence arising, 50% said dialogue and 51% said good communication.

## GOVERNANCE

The survey showed that in general, leaders at various levels were not seen to be working according to the interests of the people, respondents felt they had little influence over decisions made by leaders at all levels and low levels of contact with authorities was reported.

Only 25% felt that their national level representatives were working according to the interests of the people, 26% for district authorities and 33% for the national parliament. Slightly better perceptions of the President (44%) and Catholic Church (51%) were reported.

Only 14% of respondents felt they had influence over decisions made at the aldeia level and only 4% felt they had influence over decisions made at the national level. 20% reported having contact with a variety of authorities over the last 12 months and this was lower for women as compared to men. Those with higher levels of education reported higher levels of contact with authorities.

## WHAT DIVIDES TIMORESE?

Despite not feeling well informed or free to speak openly about important issues, 84% of survey respondents felt that diversity in political opinions was good for the nation which suggests that Timorese support political diversity and the role of critical opposition parties in national politics. However, 75% also identified political affiliation as the most divisive factor in Timorese society.

## SOLIDARITY

Solidarity is critical to hold Timorese together and ensure social cohesion. Survey results showed that solidarity in Timor-Leste is related mainly to cultural practices and beliefs.

84% of respondents agreed that members of the community are ready to help each other when needed in their aldeia. 93% of respondents felt that *fetosan umane* and other cultural practices were very important in holding Timorese together and 90% reported that Timorese are willing to provide assistance to each other mainly during ceremonies related to life and death, such as weddings, funerals and memorial rituals. Women reported lower levels of solidarity in the aldeia compared to men, especially when asked about solidarity shown on a daily basis (not connected to cultural ceremonies).

The majority of respondents also agreed that traditions need to adapt to reflect changes in society which is important when considering the negative impacts of certain cultural ceremonies and practices that were reported in community consultation, particularly in relation to women.

## **KEY CONCLUSIONS**

Survey results show that the Timorese population does not feel adequately informed and feels that communication and dialogue are key ways to prevent violence arising in the future.

Timorese recognise the importance of diverse political opinion, yet don't feel free to speak openly about politics, corruption or what happened during the war, especially women. The majority believe that political affiliation is the most divisive factor in Timorese society.

This situation has clear implication for democracy because if people don't feel free to discuss important issues in their country, they lose the opportunity to participate in the political life of the country and remain silent and disengaged, as shown by the low rates of contact with authorities and lack of influence over decisions made at all levels of governance.

However, the survey also revealed that those with higher levels of education are more likely to feel informed, feel freer to speak openly about important issues and have had more frequent contact with authorities.

This shows that information, communication, dialogue and education are critical factors to promote and enable citizens to participate in their society.

## **HOW CAN WE STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE FOR PEACE IN TIMOR-LESTE?**

Following in-depth discussions of the research findings and analysis of key tools and recommendations for strengthening resilience in Timor-Leste, the National Working Group on Resilience decided to focus particularly on the element of leadership as the central point and link the other three elements of resilience to this, for the reason that good quality leadership at all levels of the society can ensure that the three other elements hold Timorese together to be able to contribute the process of consolidating peace and development.

Members felt that the key to resilience lay in improving relations between the state and citizen. Leaders and society are like fish (leaders) and water (people), the two being dependent on each other. Timor-Leste can become resilient for peace when there are good qualities and legitimate leaders and the people are able to think critically in order to select good leaders and hold them to account. From this analysis, the members put forward a vision for Timor-Leste:

That Timor-Leste has the right conditions for good quality leadership to emerge at all levels in order to strengthen relations between the state and citizens based on our values, on justice and on trust between each other in our society.

## **STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE FOR PEACE THROUGH CIVIC EDUCATION**

NWG-R members identified civic education as a key action needed to attain their vision for a Timor-Leste which is resilient for peace.

When civic education is implemented effectively, it can bring about positive impacts in the medium and long-term. Civic education which is coordinated, gradual and long-term can foster critical thinking among the population in order to bring about positive change in the society.

In the medium term, civic education has the power to give rise to more well-informed citizens, able to demand information and consultation to critically examine various situations affecting them. Communities can therefore participate more actively in the processes of development. Subsequently, voters can select leaders that are legitimate based on their knowledge and conscience and demand accountability from government and those in public office.

In the longer term, civic education can contribute to the preparation of good quality leaders for the future through the formation of individuals from the next generation able to lead with professionalism and integrity.

Active citizens and responsive government compliment and reinforce each other like fish and water and when the two are carrying out their roles well, they will strengthen relations between the state and citizens, improve access to justice and prevent violent conflict. This is resilience for peace.

It is important therefore to define civic education as processes that use critical thinking to encourage people to apply their values, beliefs and capacities as members of communities in order that they become active citizens, hold their government to account and organize themselves to bring about positive outcomes in society.

The approach to civic education outlined in the following section proposes a number of objectives, tools, methods and principles which are derived from the capacities of resilience emerging from the work of the National Working Group on Resilience and the FAR programme. In this sense, the resilience-based approach can strengthen the provision of civic education by making use of capacities and structures that already exist in the society and in strengthening the provision of civic education, this approach can also strengthen resilience for peace.

### **SECTION 3: APPROACHES TO CIVIC EDUCATION**

#### **OBJECTIVES: CIVIC EDUCATION SHOULD AIM TO ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:**

- To give motivation to promote action and self-organisation.
- To promote and foster critical thought.
- To awaken and inspire communities and society based on recognition of strengths.
- To encourage communities themselves use information and ideas to make decisions and define action.
- To increase knowledge and participation of communities in the process of national development and peace-building.

## TOOLS: CIVIC EDUCATION SHOULD MAKE THE MOST OF THE FOLLOWING TOOLS

### Interactive dialogue:

Good relations and communication between participants and facilitators is essential. To ensure participation in civic education activities, it's important to use a method of dialogue which is interactive and which places the facilitator in a role which gives space to all to share their ideas and opinions. In interactive dialogue, participants and facilitators share ideas and learn from each other.

### *Nabe biti:*

*Nabe biti* or *nabe biti bo'ot* (rolling out the mat) is a long-standing Timorese tradition which is generally used in local-level dispute resolution and traditional justice. It is a powerful and trusted symbol which creates a space for dialogue and discussion. In the present time, this symbol can be used in conjunction with the principle of open dialogue to make decisions, discuss important issues together and become familiar with new ideas. People are seated in a circle and all are given equal opportunity to share ideas and give inputs.

### Methods to ensure inclusion and representation

Any methods used in civic education should first and foremost promote ownership on the part of participants, of the process of learning and of designing actions. It is important to bring people from all sectors of society together to be able to identify, understand and strengthen their resilience capacities.

The following list is commonly used by CEPAD in its programmes to ensure representation at the community level:

- Local and traditional authorities; including sub-village and village heads and council members, and traditional leaders.
- Youth & students
- Women (particularly housewives, widows, activists, victims, leaders) with a particular effort to include those that are not regularly invited to participate in such activities
- Professionals; including teachers and health workers
- Catholic Church; including Nuns and Priests
- Other religious affiliations; Protestant, Islam.
- State authorities; including District Administration, Sub-District Administration, Ministry and State Secretary focal points.
- People living with disabilities including women, men, older and younger people
- Political parties
- Former resistance actors and veterans; including ex-combatants and activists
- Private Sector; including business owners and collectives



- PNTL (police)
- F-FDTL (army)

#### Participatory methods:

Facilitators should use creative formats in order to maximise interest and engagement from participants. Some examples include:

- Ensuring an open format rather than a lecture format.
- Showing films with relevant material which can prompt open discussion.
- Dividing participants into smaller groups who can then present back to the wider group for further discussion.
- Interactive theatre to allow participants to play character roles and explore sensitive issues in a less direct format.
- Using games and activities to engage participants.

#### Promote and reinforce collective conscience/sentiment:

Through civic education which recognises values that exist in Timorese society, we can continue to promote and reinforce people's collective conscience to live side-by-side in society in a peaceful environment as Timorese.

#### Reference to values:

Values are implicit in every civic education module or activity. Regardless of the topic, it's important to identify and reflect on the values that civic education programs and activities are reinforcing before implementation.

In the implementation of civic education, we need to ensure that material is developed with consideration of the values and beliefs that have been passed down through generations and which encourage people to respect each other and show solidarity in communities and society.

Giving space for participants to identify values that have relevance to the material can ensure that programs are more effective and key messages are better understood by participants.

Civic education that refers to Timorese values needs to also take into account religious values, specifically related to the Catholic religious tradition, however, efforts should also be made to look at religion in reference to Timorese culture rather than as a set of values in and of itself. A resilience-based approach to civic education also avoids indoctrination of participants but rather, adopts an approach of learning together in reference to the daily experiences of participants.

#### Reference to the history of resistance

The history of resistance against the Indonesian Occupation from 1975 to 1999 serves as an important reference in the lives of Timorese. Many made significant sacrifices and overcame oppression in order to achieve self-rule and the achievement of Independence is an important source of inspiration.

It's important to reinforce this story of resistance as a great strength which shows a long-term commitment to work together for a better and more just future. In the same way, the contributions of all citizens able to think critically can improve the process of development for the attainment of a better life for all.

## **FACILITATORS**

In the implementation of programs, it's important to work closely with trusted figures at the local level. These may come from local leaders, traditional leaders, youth leaders, the Church (catechists, priests, nuns), figures from other religions, and others that can gather and gain confidence of community members. Civic education initiatives may communicate new messages, concepts and sensitive content that will be received in a much more effective manner if participants trust in the facilitator or co-facilitator.

## **OTHER WAYS OF DISSEMINATING INFORMATION**

Face-to-face modes of communicating information and discussing complex concepts are the most effective, however, other modes such as television and radio can also assist to spread messages, especially to more rural areas.

## **SPACES AND PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

Depending on the topics covered, it's important to look for spaces that are secure, neutral and inclusive. Some examples of spaces which may exist at the local level include youth centres, learning centres, Peace Houses, Church spaces and community and village buildings and other spaces where people feel free to speak openly and that are conducive to a good dynamic of discussion.

## **PRINCIPLES: THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME KEY PRINCIPLES FOR CIVIC EDUCATION INITIATIVES TO FOLLOW**

### Civic education must be permanent

A common challenge faced by civic society organisations in the provision of effective civic education is dependency of funding through short-term project cycles. However, if civic education is to play a role in reinforcing critical thought and action, it must be long-term and continuous.

Careful planning of initiatives that promote communities as driving and owning the process of change can help to ensure that people are committed to continuing action after projects come to an end. Similarly, partnering and collaborating with other organisations and institutions can lead to better use of resources, can avoid duplication and have better impacts which reach all areas and include all groups in the society.

### Take a positive starting point

Based on the experience of the FAR program, it became clear that participants showed high levels of interest, felt more satisfied and more actively contributed to discussions when these opened on a positive note. For example, asking about strengths of individuals and communities or positive values that exist and have helped people confront challenges, can give courage and better hold people's attention to engage actively in topics and issues.

Civic education initiatives cannot be effective or empowering if based on an assumption that the 'provider' knows all and the 'recipients' know nothing. Using values as reference and giving people space to identify and explore the relevant values and experiences that are important to them avoids a situation in which people feel that their knowledge is lacking or that they are not intelligent.

### Create an open space for participants

Creating an open space for participants to make meaningful connections between their values, experiences and daily life and the material or concepts being introduced and discussed can facilitate better comprehension of new ideas and help people to take ownership of the process of gaining knowledge and defining actions to take.

### Use interactive methods

It's crucial to avoid top down, lecture or seminar type formats for civic education. Engaging communities and encouraging active participation can be done through open discussion, showing an appreciation and respect for all ideas and opinions and setting up a format in which participants and facilitators learn from each other.

### Be neutral

It's important to avoid indoctrination or dissemination of political opinions or agendas. Rather, allow space for people to draw their own conclusions from the material or ideas presented. It's important that participants learn from each other, which requires giving everyone the opportunity to put forward ideas, challenge and question.

The process or facilitation must not favour some groups or individuals over others but must be neutral in order to gain trust from communities. This can better ensure inclusion, participation and enthusiasm.

### Make particular efforts to include all groups

Efforts must be made to include all groups and to adapt content for each group. Often, the same marginalised groups in society or in communities are excluded from programs and activities. These include women (especially vulnerable or isolated women), people living with disabilities. Sometimes, people in such groups need to be particularly encouraged to attend activities and these need to be made accessible to them. Working with advocacy or other groups that represent people that may be 'harder to reach' is one way to avoid excluding these participants.

In Timor-Leste, particular efforts need to be made to reach those living in remote areas as distance provides a major obstacle for communities to connect and engage with programs in their district or village

### Adapt content to specific contexts

Civic education cannot be effective unless context is adapted to the specific context in which it is being applied. Local languages and cultural aspects need to be taken into account. Using participatory approaches which allow community members to make decisions and drive the process can help to ensure that material is relevant and appropriate. If material reflects daily life experiences, it is much more likely to be effective for learning.

### Adapting content to education different learning needs

When designing programs, it's important to do careful assessment of the needs of participants with low levels of literacy and with disabilities that impact on their learning preferences. All should have the opportunity to participate.

Different modes of communication including written pamphlets or other materials, films or audio recordings can be used to disseminate information and provide learning opportunities.

### Strengthen or reinforce existing initiatives before starting something new

One major barrier to the effective implementation of civic education is that duplication in programs and target groups. It's important to conduct a thorough assessment of what programs or initiatives exist at all levels and from different types of organisations – big or small. Things to consider include areas of coverage, target groups, materials, and topics. Past programs can also serve as a good reference point from which to improve and build upon.