Timor Leste Conflict Assessment

FINAL REPORT

The Center for International Conflict Resolution (CICR) at Columbia University

and

Fo Liman Ba Malu – Hakat Ba Oin

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For more information about or to provide feedback on CICR’s conflict assessment research in Timor Leste, please contact Sigrid Gruener at sug2001@columbia.edu
LIST OF ACRONYMS & TERMINOLOGY

Adat  Indonesian term for traditional or customary practice

APODETI  Timorese Popular Democratic Association

ASDT  Timorese Social Democratic Association

Belun  Implementing Organization for the SNS project (a CARE, CICR, and Planning Assistance collaboration)

CAAC-CAVF  Commission for Former Combatants’ Affairs-Commission for Falintil Veterans’ Affairs

CAVR  Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor Leste

CBO  Community Based Organization

CICR  Columbia University’s Center for International Conflict Resolution

CNRT  National Council of Timorese Resistance

CPD-RDTL  Popular Council for the Defence of the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste

CSCB  Civil Society Capacity-building project – a CICR-FLBM initiative

EU  European Union

FALINTIL  Armed Forces for the National Liberation of Timor Leste

FDTL  Defense Forces of Timor Leste

FLBM  Fo Liman Ba Malu – Hakat Ba Oin (CICR’s local NGO implementing partner)

FRETILIN  Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor Leste

GDP  Gross Domestic Product

ICG  International Crisis Group

ILO  International Labor Organization

INTERFET  International Force for East Timor

IOM  International Organization for Migration

MSD  Management Sciences for Development

NDI  National Democratic Institute

NGO  Non-Governmental Organization
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>OMT/OPMT</td>
<td>Women’s Organization of Timor Leste</td>
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<td>PKF</td>
<td>UN Peace Keeping Forces</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNTL</td>
<td>National Police force of Timor Leste</td>
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<tr>
<td>RENETIL</td>
<td>National Resistance of East Timorese Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCU</td>
<td>Serious Crimes Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>SGDN</td>
<td>Small Grant Donor’s Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNS</td>
<td>Strengthening the NGO Sector (joint project: CARE, CICR &amp; Planning Assistance)</td>
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<tr>
<td>STAE</td>
<td>Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suco</td>
<td>Village; local administrative unit from the Portuguese era</td>
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<tr>
<td>TL</td>
<td>Timor Leste</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNI</td>
<td>Indonesian Defense Forces</td>
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<td>UDT</td>
<td>Timorese Democratic Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNAMET</td>
<td>United Nations Mission in East Timor</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
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<td>UNTL</td>
<td>National University of Timor Leste</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<td>UNMISSET</td>
<td>United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor</td>
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<td>UNPOL</td>
<td>United Nations Police (also referred to as CIVPOL – civilian police)</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNTAET</td>
<td>United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>U.S. Agency for International Development</td>
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Executive Summary
Columbia University's Center for International Conflict Resolution (CICR) conducted a conflict assessment in Timor Leste during the months of March and April 2004. The objective of this study was to gain a better understanding of the underlying causes and dynamics of conflict in Timor Leste and to learn about current and possible future approaches that international and local NGOs and community groups, as well as state institutions, are taking to manage and respond to conflict factors. The research findings have been used to generate recommendations and strategies for CICR to improve its ability to support NGOs and community groups across Timor Leste to reduce tensions in their communities and contribute to the prevention of future violent or destructive conflict through the Strengthening the NGO Sector (SNS) project.

Over a two-week period the research team conducted 22 interviews and 7 focus groups in four districts of Timor Leste (Baucau, Bobonaro, Dili, and Oecusse). Individuals consulted during this phase included national and district-level government representatives, staff from international and national organizations and community groups, as well as other civil society leaders. Time and transportation constraints unfortunately limited the ability of the team to travel more extensively during this stage of the research. Representatives and community members from several of the districts (including Aileu, Ainaro, Cova Lima, Ermera, Manatuto, Lautem, Liquica and Viqueque) that were not visited by the research team were consulted during meetings in Dili.

Conflict Dynamics: Factors and Actors
The research led to the identification of several critical factors that are currently contributing to conflict in Timor Leste. These include high levels of unemployment, especially among youth and veterans from the resistance period; inadequate access to reliable information; corruption and nepotism within local and national government; poor communication between the government and communities; poor infrastructure; limited transportation possibilities; mistrust, lack of shared experiences, and weak social cohesion between and among communities; perception of physical insecurity; lack of food security; resource scarcity; and a legacy of violent conflict which has imparted to communities a tendency to use violence in resolving conflicts.

These conflict factors are exacerbated by the limited institutional capacity of the state. Particular concern was raised about the capability and professionalism of the national security forces; the fragility of the judicial system; the lack of an effective land and property dispute resolution mechanism; insufficient community representation and voice in parliament; confusion over and insufficient information about government policies; centralization of government; openly adversarial relationships between national leaders; as well as inadequate educational and health care services.

External actors also exert a significant influence on the conflict dynamic in Timor Leste in various ways that are important to acknowledge and understand. Continued fear of aggression by the Indonesian Defense Forces (TNI) and, even more so, by militias perceived to be supported by the TNI is perpetuating a sense of physical insecurity that is particularly acute in border areas. A dispute with the Australian government over the maritime border, and off-shore oil and gas resources, is souring diplomatic relations between the two countries and causing tension within the population. International development agencies have in some instances intensified conflict factors by increasing social jealousy (especially where there is a lack of transparency), by contributing to a sense of raised expectations that are often left unfulfilled, by inducing wage and price inflation and increasing the urban/rural divide; and by failing to coordinate and communicate sufficiently with other development partners, local and central government actors and communities.
NGOs and community groups as a capacity for peace
The actions of some civil society groups have to a certain degree contributed to conflict factors in Timor Leste in the past few years (e.g. by increasing social jealousy within and between communities, raising expectations, exacerbating suspicion of corruption and nepotism etc.). Recognizing the need to mitigate these negative effects, the findings of the assessment indicate that there is a large role for NGOs and community groups to play in maintaining peace and stability during the country’s challenging transition and post-conflict development process. In addition to providing some needed public services in areas where the state is unable to meet communities’ needs (such as education, healthcare, distribution of food and agricultural supplies, and small infrastructure rehabilitation), these groups strengthen social cohesion by connecting communities, working with youth and veterans, as well as positively channeling the energies of women’s and teacher’s groups among others. By engaging communities in activities that directly focus on the concerns of the people and by facilitating information sharing and collaboration with the government, these organizations demonstrate an ability to address conflict factors and to promote peaceful and positive development.

Increasing the capacity of civil society groups to contribute to conflict prevention
During the research several concrete recommendations emerged for ways in which NGOs and community groups can increase the positive impact of their work on conflict dynamics in Timor Leste. Suggestions for international organizations include improving mechanisms for sharing information with communities; increasing cooperation and coordination with other development actors; conducting impact assessments for projects and programs in collaboration with communities; improving communication with relevant government representatives; expanding programming to isolated areas; and supporting programs that empower youth (especially those engaged in martial arts groups), women, and veterans.

Local NGOs and community based organizations (CBOs) are also able to increase their effectiveness in reducing tensions by improving information exchange and dissemination, increasing coordination and participation on programming within their communities; conducting conflict assessments with communities prior to developing and implementing programs; engaging youth, women, and veterans in activities; and establishing cooperative arrangements with government agencies and other civil society organizations.

The assessment team has generated a series of specific recommendations for CICR and other partners in the newly-formed organization, Belun, as they move forward with their work on civil society capacity-building and conflict prevention in TL.

Recommendations in brief

Recommendation 1
Assist civil society groups to develop systematic information exchange and dissemination plans that increase the flow of project information within and between communities. Improving mechanisms for NGOs and CBOs to elicit information from and share project details with the populations they serve can increase transparency, facilitate coordination and promote greater stakeholder participation.

Recommendation 2
Promote the use of the new community development center as a venue for collecting information and sharing resources related to specific activities of the SNS project, as well as a learning space for all interested partners and communities. Facilitating access to materials such as the National Database of Community Development Projects, conflict resolution resources, and literature on post-conflict reconstruction directly responds to the interest and requests of partners for training and knowledge and addresses the need for civil society capacity-building and improved coordination.
Recommendation 3
Encourage and facilitate cooperative agreements and active information exchange between partner organizations and local as well as national government. Increasing dialogue and communication between civil society and the state can help to reduce feelings of exclusion, dispel rumors and suspicion, and improve community understanding of government policies and programs.

Recommendation 4
Continue to promote donor coordination and sharing of resources through the Database and the Small Grant Donors’ Network, facilitate transparent and open discussions on critical policies and practices, support the publication and distribution of materials, and organize networking events where donors and organizations can meet and exchange information. With decreasing donor funding, the need for creating synergies and maximizing efficiency in development activities is critical to ensure sustainability and reduce social jealousy over limited resources.

Recommendation 5
Promote decentralization in the implementation of development initiatives by shifting certain Belun activities such as Open House events to its program offices outside of Dili and continue efforts to engage with partners from a wide geographic scope, giving special consideration to individuals and groups that face challenges related to transportation and are burdened with other responsibilities. Increasing resources and providing opportunities to the most marginalized and isolated communities can contribute to reducing the urban/rural divide, help stem internal migration, and counteract the Dili-centric approaches of international donors.

Recommendation 6
Continue and expand CICR-FLBM’s capacity-building activities with civil society groups in the areas of financial and strategic planning, project management, networking, fundraising, and other relevant subjects. Building the skills of the individuals who run these organizations decreases dependency on donor funding and external expertise, thereby strengthening the sustainability of local initiatives and reducing feelings of vulnerability in communities.

Recommendation 7
Organize conflict resolution trainings and skill-building workshops on topics such as dialogue processes, facilitation approaches, and leadership that strengthen the impact and success of local groups’ development and peace-building activities in communities. Encouraging groups and leaders to take advantage of the materials and data that Belun has to offer can contribute to individual and organizational learning and maximize the potential of NGOs and CBOs to contribute to peace-building.

Recommendation 8
Encourage mentoring relationships between and among civil society groups and other organizations involved in development. Increasing collaboration between the various development partners can build trust and strengthen social cohesion within and across communities.

Recommendation 9
Increase the involvement of women in initiatives to reduce conflict by facilitating improved access to resources and opportunities. Materials on gender and women in peace-building, seminars and discussions on topics such as gender and conflict, and Open House events with themes that are of particular relevance to female partners can support and enhance women’s active participation in development, consequently increasing the overall effectiveness of local initiatives.
Recommendation 10
Facilitate community-based conflict assessments as participatory processes of identifying and analyzing conflict dynamics and generating possible solutions to problems. Engaging multiple stakeholders in the activity, including community members and local government officials ensures development initiatives respond to the specific needs and context of communities and reduces the likelihood of raising expectations without being able to fulfill them.

Recommendation 11
Encourage and support greater and more active participation of youth in community-based initiatives and increase general understanding of their role in the post-conflict development process. Interaction and cooperative agreements between NGOs/ CBOs, universities and community youth can create employment opportunities and provide incentives for youth to make positive contributions in their community.
I. Introduction and Methodology

Conflict is inherent in all societies and is a normal feature of change. Without proper mechanisms for managing or resolving conflict, however, tensions and disagreements between groups can become destructive and turn violent with devastating consequences for communities, and, ultimately, for regional and international stability. Development organizations increasingly are recognizing the complex relationship between development interventions and conflict and, as such, have developed analytical tools to better understand factors that cause conflict in order to assess the impact of assistance on, and identify opportunities for, programming in conflict vulnerable areas. Conflict assessment tools also are applied as part of participatory processes to engage stakeholders in zones of conflict in active learning relationships.

Columbia University's Center for International Conflict Resolution (CICR) conducted a conflict assessment of Timor Leste (TL) from March through April 2004. The objective of this study was to gain a better understanding of the underlying causes and dynamics of conflict in TL and to learn about current and possible future approaches that international and local NGOs and community groups, as well as state institutions, are taking to manage and respond to conflict factors. The research findings were used to generate recommendations and strategies for CICR to improve its ability to support NGOs and community groups across TL to reduce tensions in their communities and contribute to the prevention of future violent or destructive conflict.

The conclusions of the study are also intended to generate a portion of the needed baseline data included in the detailed implementation and monitoring plan (DIMP) for the USAID-funded “Strengthening the NGO Sector” (SNS) project. Thus the research set out to explore ways in which Belun, the newly-formed local organization charged with implementing the SNS project (a collaborative initiative of Planning Assistance, CICR and CARE), can impact conflict dynamics in TL and identify indicators that can be used to measure the effect of the project’s activities on conflict management and mitigation. The assessment focused specifically on the role and capacity of NGOs and CBOs in addressing conflict factors in TL.

The CICR conflict assessment team was composed of four members: three expatriate researchers (two traveling to the field and one providing support from New York) and a local counterpart from TL. The assessment occurred in three phases, beginning with a comprehensive desk study that included identifying and reviewing information on TL and CICR’s programs in the country and conducting interviews in Washington D.C. and New York. During the second phase of the process the research team spent two weeks in TL conducting interviews with representatives of government, security forces, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community based organizations (CBOs), religious organizations, staff of the CICR and CARE teams, and other representatives of the international development community. The team also conducted six focus groups with Timorese civil society groups. In order to ensure consistency in the data collected, the team used a survey instrument as a guide, and adapted it as appropriate. (Please refer to Annexes 3 and 4 for full interview and focus group guides)

The field research included visits to four of TL’s districts, including Dili, and meetings with members and leaders of diverse local communities. The third and final stage of the project entailed an in-depth analysis of data, drafting of possible conflict scenarios, development of strategic recommendations, and compilation of this information into a final report.

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1 Although the country was known as East Timor during previous periods, the official name Timor Leste is used throughout the report to avoid confusion and has been shortened to TL for brevity.
II. Background and History of Violent Conflict in Timor Leste

After more than 450 years of foreign rule, the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste became the world’s newest nation on May 20, 2002. The independence celebrations were tempered, however, by the realization that serious social and economic challenges still confront TL, Asia’s poorest nation. While the bloodshed of the independence struggle has ended, a legacy of chronic poverty and violence challenges the post-conflict development process, contributing to an environment of fear, frustration and low-level conflict.

The Portuguese arrived in TL in 1515 as traders and gradually increased their presence with the settlement of missionaries and soldiers, creating a colonial structure that would endure for hundreds of years. The end of Portugal’s 48-year old dictatorship in 1974 and its movement towards democracy stimulated that country’s decolonization process and gave rise to the prospects of independence for TL. These developments catalyzed the establishment of three main political parties in TL that differed primarily in their vision for the territory’s future. The Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) promoted continuing the linkage with Portugal, while the Timorese Social Democratic Association (ASDT) supported a platform of total independence, and the Timorese Popular Democratic Association (APODETI) advocated for integration with Indonesia. In short time rumors abound about violent actions by the ASDT, which changed its name to Revolutionary Front for Independent East Timor, known by its Portuguese acronym FRETILIN, and wide speculation was made that this group intended to seize power. Aiming to preempt this anticipated event, UDT orchestrated a coup and assumed power from the Portuguese administration on August 11, 1975. Violent civil conflict erupted between the parties and, after the UDT fled to West Timor and Portuguese administrators withdrew, FRETILIN claimed victory and set up an interim government.

On November 28, 1975, FRETILIN unilaterally declared TL’s independence. The failure to attract recognition from other parties or the international community left their authority tentative, however, and less than two weeks later the Indonesian military invaded, claiming TL as its 27th province. The United Nations condemned this action, and, affirming the right of the Timorese to self-determination, both the Security Council and the General Assembly called for Indonesia's immediate withdrawal.

The ensuing two decades were marked by an ongoing violent struggle between the armed wing of the leading pro-independence party (named FALINTIL under first commander-in-chief, Nicolau Lobato) and the occupying Indonesian military forces (TNI), during which a quarter of TL’s population is believed to have died as a result of bombings, starvation and systematic killing. On the diplomatic front, the UN facilitated repeated dialogues between Indonesia and Portugal on the status of TL over the years.

Hit by a severe financial crisis that brought about President Suharto’s fall from power in 1998, Indonesia eventually allowed for the discussion of a limited autonomy proposal for the territory. In May 1999 the Portuguese and Indonesian governments and the UN signed an agreement to support a UN-facilitated “popular consultation,” or referendum, that would let the people of TL decide whether to accept or reject a status of autonomy within Indonesia. It was agreed that a rejection of this offer by the majority of Timor’s people would clear the way for preparations to be made for the territory to begin its transition to independence under UN auspices. In June 1999, the Security Council passed resolution 1246, establishing

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3 U.S. Department of State. Background Note: East Timor.
6 Refusing to recognize Indonesia’s annexation of TL, the UN continued to consider Portugal as the administering power.
an observer mission (UNAMET) to facilitate the implementation of the referendum. During the period preceding the ballot, as military and intelligence operations by the TNI and pro-integration militias were directed to increase the schism within the population between those who favored autonomy within Indonesia and those who advocated for independence, violence escalated.

On August 30, 1999, ninety-eight percent of registered voters in TL went to the polls and 78.5% voted against integration with Indonesia and in favor or becoming an independent state. The public announcement of these results sparked widespread violence, instigated by pro-integrationist militias organized and supported by the elements from the TNI. The Indonesian government, widely believed to have been well aware of the violence, did nothing to mitigate the aggressive attacks and the massive destruction that left over a thousand people dead or missing, and nearly 500,000 displaced (250,000 having fled or been transported against their will across the border into West Timor). Almost ninety percent of the nation’s infrastructure was destroyed.

Reacting quickly to the total breakdown of law and order as well as the international outcry against the violence, the UN Security Council decisively authorized a multinational peacekeeping force to use all necessary measures to restore security in TL (Resolution 1264) and on September 20, Australian-led INTERFET forces were deployed. The impressive achievement of the multi-national force in rapidly bringing about peace and stability created a platform for the establishment in October 1999 of the UN Transitional Authority in East Timor (UNTAET). This marked the Indonesian government’s formal hand over of control and created the authority that would govern the territory until its scheduled independence on May 20, 2002.

Current Context
Although the international community in many regards considers the case of TL to be a success story (based on the impressive multi-national peacekeeping operations and the building of a newly independent nation), in actuality the country still has far to go before it can be considered a stable, self-sustaining state. For one, there are several important issues stemming from the 1999 violence that have yet to be addressed. The process of reconciliation, truth-seeking, and justice has been facilitated by an independent Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) as well as a Serious Crimes Unit (SCU), both of which have been examining violations committed during the era that preceded TL’s independence. There have been repeated calls for an international tribunal, but so far the UN has supported the creation by Indonesia of an ad-hoc Human Rights court based in Jakarta to prosecute Indonesian and TL military chiefs, personnel and politicians who have been indicted for human rights violations. Few of these individuals have actually faced trial and only two, TL’s former governor Abilio Jose Soares and former militia leader Eurico Guterres (also Timorese), have actually been convicted for the terrible crimes that were committed against the people of TL. The result of this opaque trial process is the sense that there has been no accountability or justice. Amnesty International as well as other human rights and advocacy groups have decried the work of the ad-hoc human rights courts for being ineffective

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8 Ibid.
9 The exact number of deaths and human rights violations remains uncertain but several estimates place the number of dead much higher, closer to 2,000.
10 U.S. Department of State. Background Note: East Timor.
12 These bodies were both established under UNTAET administration. CAVR is an independent statutory authority with the mandate to investigate human rights violations committed on all sides, between April 1974 and October 1999 and to facilitate community reconciliation with justice for those who committed less serious offenses. Detailed information on CAVR can be found at http://www.easttimor-reconciliation.org. The SCU was established to investigate serious incidents, including murder, rape and torture, that were committed in TL between 1 January and 15 October 1999.
and have called for an independent review and increased international efforts to bring the perpetrators of the atrocities committed in 1999 to justice.

Further contributing to an environment of insecurity and conflict in TL are remnants of the pro-integration militias many of whom moved across the border to West Timor in 1999 along with thousands of citizens displaced by the violence, and continue to engage in cross-border attacks. During years of fighting and resistance, communities suffered greatly and experienced widespread trauma that will require years and dedicated attention to heal. Socio-economic hardships also challenge communities and the newly-elected government faces high expectations of its citizens and the enormous task of building institutions and systems needed to administer the new nation. Low-level conflict continues to simmer. As localized violence has already erupted from the tensions, the urgent need for an ongoing reconciliation process, coupled with community development and efforts to strengthen the ability of TL’s people to manage future tensions are clear.

III. Conflict Analysis
In recent years the international community has increasingly recognized that any development actor seeking to help prevent conflict or, at a minimum, avoid exacerbating existing conflict in the environment in which they work needs to be aware of the various factors that contribute to grievances and divisiveness along structural fault lines. Besides offering a clearer identification of opportunities for integrating conflict-ameliorating and preventive measures into future development programming, this type of analysis provides a means for examining the position and impact of current development activities in conflict situations to ensure that interventions are not inadvertently contributing to the escalation of tensions or instability.

This section of the report identifies factors that are considered to be contributing to conflict in TL and increasing vulnerability, instability and violence. Please note that despite being grouped into categories, many of the conflict factors listed below are, in fact, closely inter-linked and often act to reinforce one another.

**Structural causes of conflict:**

A challenging economic situation: TL is an extremely poor country. It has a per capita GDP of approximately US$ 460, which is less than half the level of other countries in the Asia and Pacific region according to World Bank statistics, and over 40 percent of its population lives below the poverty line of US$1 a day. With a current annual budget of US$ 74.6 million and two-thirds to three-fourths of the population working in subsistence agriculture, the country remains largely reliant on foreign aid and imports of food supplies. Facing the pressure of having to reduce public spending to a more sustainable level, in May 2004 the government of TL announced budget cuts of US$ 40.5 million over the next four years; yet it still faces a budget deficit of US$ 30 million over the same period. Property ownership disputes and lack of a comprehensive commercial code have hindered foreign investment and long-term development during the reconstruction period, causing most analysts to conclude that the country will remain heavily dependent on foreign assistance for the next several years.

Unemployment is exceptionally high, with rates exceeding 40 percent in the major urban areas of Dili and Baucau (closer to 50 percent including underemployment), and is causing significant frustration and resentment across all of the country’s thirteen districts. Wage and price inflation pose serious problems (as described in more detail in the section on international aid) and, combined with the limited capacity of the TL workforce, make the prospects for the country to be able to compete economically with its neighbors rather poor. Several parts of the country suffer from irregular supply and frequent shortages of goods due to low

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15 Oxfam Community Aid Abroad.
productivity and poor distribution, and as a result suffer from a lack of food security. Persistent drought and periodic natural disasters add to the severe poverty and exacerbate an already existing sense of vulnerability.

**Oil resources in the Timor Gap:** Looking ahead to the near future, TL will need to and is relying significantly on revenues from multi-billion dollar offshore oil and gas deposits in the Timor Sea to finance public expenditures, in addition to other external support. It is still unclear what the actual level of these revenues will be, primarily because the government is embroiled in a dispute with the Australian government over the maritime boundary between the two countries, and thus, who has rights to what percentage of the natural resources. Under the current deal, TL is likely to receive $4 billion over the next generation, and this stream of income may increase to as much as $12 billion if the Timorese leadership is successful in gaining access of the full percentage of the resources they claim rights to under international law.

Research has shown that countries with a dependence on primary commodities or natural resources of high value as a large proportion of their GDP face a higher risk of experiencing violent conflict and in TL there is cause for concern. Given the volatility in the price of oil in the world market, a heavy reliance on oil revenue would render the government vulnerable to unpredictable financial flows and to sudden economic shocks. Individuals consulted during the research also expressed consternation about the allocation of funds that are obtained from exploiting the oil and gas reserves of the Timor Sea and the likelihood of increased conflict. Diverse community members stressed that the high expectations of future resources for various development initiatives and especially the false belief that this funding is guaranteed represents significant potential problems. Furthermore, there was widespread fear of the potential for increased corruption related to these resources.

**Lack of access to reliable and accurate information sources (transparency):** Many communities across all of TL’s thirteen districts live with confusion, misinformation and insufficient knowledge about government policies, political and social realities and development initiatives. In some cases this situation can be attributed to physical isolation related to severe geographic challenges, lack of transportation possibilities and poor communications infrastructure. However, people are often denied access to accurate information as a result of social, economic and political discrimination both in rural and in urban areas.

That a significant percentage of the population lacks adequate access to information - and feels uninformed - translates into a heightened level of suspicion and rumoring about government and civil society activities. In the worst case, this renders communities vulnerable to manipulation by groups that are promoting conflict and are potentially prepared to use violent means to further their interests. It also breeds frustration as people are told that as citizens of a new democracy they are free to exercise the right to choose and to feel empowered to effect change, yet they often face constraints from new legislation and official policies of which they have no knowledge. Land and property rights, the nomination of candidates for the upcoming suco elections and import-export restrictions are just a few examples of areas in which a lack of clarity has caused severe tensions within communities. (It is essential to note, however, that for all of these issues mentioned the problem is not merely one of the government not disseminating information about policy, but, more significantly, one of the government not having finalized its policies.)

"Transforming the role of communities from "passive recipients" to "informed and active participants" is a major function of communication and remains a daunting challenge."

- UNICEF Timor Leste Annual Report 2003

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16 Australia initially negotiated the seabed boundary when Timor Leste was still under Indonesian control. TL officials have declared that agreement to be invalid based on the fact that it was made during an illegal occupation.  
17 World Bank Conflict Assessment Framework.
Resentment and social jealousy over new economic or employment opportunities between and within communities is also common, as there is widespread confusion and inaccurate assumptions about the details of funding and activities being implemented in relation to development interventions. In many instances where international donors have selected one or few NGOs or CBOs to implement projects in a community and the details of the interaction are not openly shared there is suspicion of nepotism and corruption that leads to anger and fuels mistrust.

**Limited capacity within communities:** In any post-conflict environment peace-building efforts need to focus on the individuals who make up the very fibers of society and whose participation is crucial if relapses of violence are to be avoided. One of the biggest challenges facing TL as it moves forward with reconstruction and development is the lack of skills within the population that can in large part be explained by years of neglect and low levels of investment in social capital during long periods of Portuguese and Indonesian occupation. According to UNICEF data, less than three fifths of the adult population claim to be literate and 57 percent have had little or no schooling.¹⁸ In its annual review, the organization lists as one of its big concerns and the main impediment to its overall program implementation in 2003 a “lack of qualified human resources in government and civil society”.¹⁹

The limited capacity of communities and local institutions is causing frustration within the population and perpetuating feelings of vulnerability. Individuals often find themselves unable to meet their basic needs and frequently local groups find it challenging to contribute positively to development. As a result there continues to be a heavy reliance on international support and expertise that has been perpetuated to some degree because in many areas international consultants have put systems in place that are overly complex given TL’s small scale.²⁰ Many development initiatives have placed insufficient emphasis on transferring skills to local communities, creating frustration when short-term projects are completed and local groups find themselves unable to continue the work on their own. On the other hand, when donors do not sufficiently take the needs or interests of a community into consideration, groups may engage in projects as long as they are externally-managed and funded if they feel that they are receiving benefits from the effort but may not follow through on initiatives if there is insufficient interest or community support.

In many districts across TL there is also evidence of a heavy dependence on and expectation of continued government intervention to ensure that all social needs are met. These expectations apply to services such as healthcare and education, but also in many cases include employment and price stability. While this perspective is understandable after the population’s experiences during years of living under the rule of Indonesia’s enormous and controlling bureaucracy, this mentality is likely to lead to conflict in the new free market system that the leadership of TL is striving to implement if the people’s expectations are not sufficiently managed.

**Large and rapidly increasing youth population:** According to UNICEF statistics, children make up almost 60 percent of the population of TL, with 19.9 percent under age 5, and the country has a fertility rate of 7.4 children per household, which translates into a high growth rate for this group.²¹ This has led to concerns about the challenges of managing an increasing youth bulge that is stretching the limits of social institutions such as the labor market. High youth unemployment and a lack of productive activities for young people are causing considerable tension in many of the districts and raises TL’s vulnerability to

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¹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰ World Bank. Background document for the Timor Leste Development Partner’s Meeting December 3-5 2003. The report cites, for example, that in many instances technical engineers have been brought in for projects where a local craftsman could have been employed, and that extensive feasibility studies and appraisals were conducted before starting actual work, resulting in an inefficient use of time and money.
future violence. The new government has already recognized the urgent need to focus resources on youth and, with assistance from the international community, has achieved noticeable improvements in health and education services for children since efforts began in 1999. Yet, many challenges remain, and factors such as limited access to education (because of transportation and mandatory school fees), high rates of preventable diseases among children, and youth participation in violent and destructive activities continue to contribute to conflict.

During the resistance movement youth groups such as RENETIL played an important role in communities as part of communications and information networks and were largely recognized for their contributions to the fight for independence. The post-conflict reconstruction phase has unfortunately seen much less participation from, consultation with or engagement of this segment of the population. In response, there seems to be a growing disillusionment by many youth regarding the new government whose expectations are not being met and who frequently feel unrepresented and underserved. As a result a growing number of youth, many of whom belong to organized martial arts groups, have begun engaging in violent activities that negatively affect inter- and intra-community relations. One specific complaint that was articulated in communities is the fact that market activity has slowed as buyers and sellers have been staying away or reducing their presence at the market in response to fear. As a result, prices have dropped, further diminishing the incentive for producers to increase their productivity. TL government leaders, international actors and community members have recognized that the rising violence and destructive interactions among youth pose a great potential threat for future instability. (Please see the section on violent interactions among martial arts groups under proximate causes for additional details).

**Legacy of violent conflict:** A majority of the people of TL lived for many years with the reality of constant resistance, armed struggle against repressive occupying forces and violent conflict. Some participated directly in the guerrilla fighting that took place in the mountains during the years prior to independence, others belonged to clandestine networks as part of an intricate communications structure, but regardless of their level of participation, almost all were deeply affected by the turbulence that occurred in 1975 and the violence that swept through the country in 1999 as the Indonesian army reluctantly withdrew its troops. Thus it is not entirely surprising that many Timorese believe their society to have developed a “culture of violence”. Individuals interviewed during the field research repeatedly expressed the concern that people have adapted to years of fighting by incorporating it into their social interactions so that domestic violence, for example, has come to be seen as “normal” and abuse by teachers in schools is wide-spread. The police are frequently accused of mimicking the violent behavior and tactics that were previously the hallmark of the Indonesian occupying forces. Anti-violence campaigns and human rights trainings have been introduced as components of several development and peace initiatives by international organizations such as UNDP and UNICEF, as well as local groups working nationally such as the human rights organization Yayasan Hak and OMT or locally such as Centro Feto in Oe-cusse or Juventude Contra Violencia in Bobonaro.

Confronting past human rights violations and acknowledging the wrongs of the past are considered to be an integral part of the transformation and transitional justice process that is necessary to leave behind the legacy of violence and move forward into a new era of peace in TL. With this understanding, the government established the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (known by its Portuguese acronym CAVR) in 2001 with the mandate to establish the truth of what happened between 1974 and 1999, help victims, and foster reconciliation among TL’s citizens who fought on “different sides”. Although most people are supportive of the work that has been done by the CAVR, many fear

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22 According to a survey of country studies by the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO), if the ability in the market to absorb a sudden surplus of young job seekers is limited, a large pool of unemployed and frustrated people arises. The absorbing capacity of the labor market depends heavily on the degree of diversification and flexibility in the economy, which are not particularly high in TL.

23 One of the main weaknesses of the commission, according to many, is the fact that its mandate was limited to reviewing and judging lesser crimes. Serious crimes such as murder and rape were retained by the overstretched
that justice is for the most part being sacrificed in order to achieve reconciliation and that punishment for the few who have taken part in the commission’s process is not strong enough. In focus groups conducted by the International Center for Transitional Justice in August 2003 many of TL’s citizens expressed feelings of being incensed that a significant number of individuals who were aligned with pro-integration elements and had effectively supported the retention of the Indonesian rule were benefiting from the new democracy, while some of the victims of the Indonesian repression were not. \(^{24}\) Rather than learning that violence is an unacceptable means for furthering ones goals there is a sense that the failure to punish those who were responsible for crimes will perpetuate a cycle of disrespect for justice.

**Weak Institutional Capacity:** TL’s vulnerability to conflict and future violence is significantly increased by the fragile state of its government and public institutions. The USAID Conflict Assessment Framework suggests that in analyzing individual conflict factors and thinking of them combined as making up a causal chain, one can liken institutions to being ”the filter through which all of the other causes have to pass.” The lack of institutional capacity in TL is most crucial in the areas of the parliament, the rule of law, and the security sector. Furthermore, public institutions at all levels and in multiple sectors frequently face problems with legitimacy and efficacy as a result of widespread nepotism and perceptions of corruption.

**Parliament:** In 2001 an 88-member Constituent Assembly was elected by the people of TL with the charge of writing a constitution for the new nation. This task was completed in March 2002. The new law was put into effect upon independence in May of that year, and under a special provision, at that moment the Constituent Assembly automatically became the National Parliament. The current representatives will stay in power until the first parliamentary election is required after five years of independence (in 2006). Criticism of the members of the National Parliament are widespread and include charges of being unrepresentative of the population, failing to consult with the people before implementing major policy decisions, catering overwhelmingly to party interests and lacking basic education and training on how to perform their tasks (most notably drafting and reviewing laws, providing budget oversight and acting as a check on the President).

Many members of Parliament are accused of spending the majority of their time jockeying for political position, rather than the business of writing and passing legislation or fulfilling their responsibility of representing the people’s best interest. There is a sense that legislation is increasingly being drafted without citizen and community consultations. Increasing problems further, there is often little or no communication between various ministries and departments that are drafting their own related and sometimes contradictory legislation. \(^{25}\) Some fear that in certain cases legislation may become a vehicle for corruption.

Programs by international organizations such as UNDP and NDI have made some progress on improving the relationship between parliamentarians and their constituency by organizing community visits and dialogues. It is evident, however, that there is still a severe disconnect between the members of Parliament and the citizens they represent, and the capacity of these elected officials urgently needs strengthening in order to allow them to perform their functions.

> “People here regard the government as something that is not working well, especially the Parliament.”
> - Focus group participant, Oe-cusse

judiciary, with the exception of incidents that occurred between 1 January and 25 October 1999. These cases are being handled by a separate Serious Crimes Unit that was set up in the office of the prosecutor general with special panels that are primarily focused on prosecution and involve little engagement by TL citizens in the process. Most serious crimes that occurred during the pre-independence era have been left unpunished. \(^{24}\) International Center for Transitional Justice. *Crying Without Tears.* August 2003.

\(^{25}\) This is true in immigration law and the Law of Associations for example, where the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Labor and Solidarity and the Interior may all contradict each other.
Rule of Law: In many of the areas covered in the assessment, the population does not have access to state mechanisms for resolving conflict through peaceful means, nor do they have an understanding of how the new “official” mechanisms work. With two open and functioning courthouses in the country (Dili and Baucau) and transportation costs high, communities are frequently left with the responsibility of resolving their own disputes or face long pre-trial detention when the state is involved. Several subjects interviewed expressed concerns about the seeming inability of the criminal justice system to address violent crimes such as murder, rape and assault. Other reports conclude that the rights to due process and to an expeditious fair trial often were restricted or denied, largely due to severe shortages of resources and lack of trained personnel in the legal system. Of particular concern is also the absence of a capable body to resolve the numerous and often highly contentious conflicts that exist over water and land.

This weak institutional presence leaves the door wide open to unchecked corruption and inefficiency, and is also resulting in a failure to develop a coherent culture of law and justice. In a study based on fourteen country cases, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations found that weak institutional capacity of government (to mediate, provide services to reduce dissatisfactions, or maintain sovereign authority) in regions have contributed to the outbreak of violence.

The An Nur Mosque in Dili’s Kampong Alor suburb has been the site of significant tensions and conflict for several months, in a case that illustrates a number of TL’s conflict factors at work. Approximately 275 Indonesian Muslims reside at this compound in a state of uncertainty and fear, and suffering from isolation. Most of these individuals have been residing at the Mosque since before the violence that occurred in 1999, although there have been rumors that some of the arrivals are more recent. Have been denied citizenship in their host country and holding no documents from Indonesia, these people are essentially stateless. Reporting by TV and local media has played up to fears that these marginalized individuals who belong to TL’s minority Muslim population could be related to terrorist networks, although there has not been any evidence to back up this speculation.

On several occasions the PNTL have conducted raids on the location in what police officials claim is a legitimate response to a problem involving illegal immigrants. Critics claim, however, that these interventions have been carried out with excessive force and disrespect of human rights, causing Secretary General Annan in his April 2004 report to urge, albeit gently, that “necessary administrative procedures take full account of the humanitarian and other implications of such actions.” There is clearly a concern that if mismanaged this issue could sour critical diplomatic relations with Jakarta and fuel resentment between the Indonesian and TL populations.

The response to the situation at the Mosque by the TL government has also demonstrated a lack of communication and coordination that the newly-established ministries and departments seem to be struggling with. Some officials have approached the issue as a land dispute and have attempted to deal with the situation through processes appropriate to that type of conflict. Other government representatives have declared the situation to be a problem of illegal immigration, invoking mechanisms created to handle these types of issues. Overall, there appears to be no clear strategy or approach to resolving the challenge facing the people who are deeply affected by this situation.

Security Sector: The national security forces of TL (comprised of the FDTL, the PNTL and their respective special units) are regarded as weak and are often considered to be lacking the capacity to provide adequate security and order. Recent evaluations indicate that the PNTL in particular faces institutional weaknesses that include limitations in terms of experience, legal and policy frameworks, logistical capability (especially in the area of communications) and resource management skills. Membership by some individuals from the police force in martial arts groups intensifies the lack of confidence in the professionalism of the security sector.

28 Under the citizenship law enacted in 2002, only indigenous TL residents are recognized as legitimate citizens, following the definition of those who are born there or whose parents were born in the newly established country.
This weak capacity and lack of trust from the population is exacerbated by visible infighting and competition between the PNTL and FDTL. This problem can partially be traced back to the recruitment process during which a large number of ex-FALINTIL members were incorporated into the defense forces; the police were primarily recruited from the cadre of former civil servants who worked as police during the Indonesian occupation. The training and resources allocated to the two divisions is highly unequal, with the FDTL receiving greater support and better training. Insufficient clarity in the roles, responsibilities and relationships of the various security agencies further reinforces the animosity and lack of coordination between the two groups. Several Timorese also highlighted the significance of the FDTL falling under President Gusmao’s leadership and the PNTL being under Prime Minister Alkatiri’s command, and opined that the two leaders having in the past expressed disagreement with the other’s policies and actions may have reinforced the fissure between the sectors of the security forces, and deepened the population’s mistrust in the political independence and neutrality of these bodies.

Ex-FALINTIL commander, Cornelia Gama (alias L-7) is a poignant example of one prominent veteran’s struggle for recognition and identity. This guerrilla leader from Laga, Baucau has been the feature of continuous debate and speculation among TL communities and within the press. After an incident with PNTL members in early 2004, he was fired from his advisory position with the FDTL. The stated cause for his dismissal was driving a FDTL vehicle after work hours, in violation of government policy. In July 2004, L-7 supporters clashed with police during a protest at the Palacio Governo, and the government has shown reluctance to address their grievances. This case elucidates not only the growing rift between the PNTL and the government, but also the schism between executive and legislative leadership.

Across all districts of TL there is great concern about evidence that police have been abusing their power and frequently using inappropriately severe force in their responses to situations, thereby perpetuating mistrust and resentment by the public. An April 2004 report by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan highlights this finding about the PNTL, stating that there have been “continuing, disturbing reports of excessive use of force, assault, negligent use of firearms, criminal activities, corrupt practices and violations of human rights.”

The creation of special units within the security forces is also viewed as worrisome by several citizens of TL, and has caused unease among international observers as well. In recent months two of these new groups - the bodyguard unit of the Internal Administrative Ministry and the police rapid intervention unit - were supplied with submachine guns and assault rifles. In a nationwide speech on May 20, President Gusmão expressed concerns over the need for a paramilitary-type police unit and western analysts have also registered discomfort over this new development.


(In Timor Leste)… “many parliamentarians don’t have secondary education and don’t speak Portuguese, the language in which the laws are passed. The justice system is practically non-existent. Neither judges, prosecutors nor defense lawyers yet have experience. The government recently ignored a court’s determination that a law was unconstitutional. The army is restless and the police are violent. All this raises questions about the prospects for long-term stability in East Timor.”

External sources of conflict:

**Inflow of international assistance:** In the past few years TL has experienced an overwhelming inflow of humanitarian aid and development funding from bilateral and multilateral donor arrangements. According to figures from the IMF, external financial assistance jumped from slightly more than $100M

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31 Ibid.
in 1999 to approximately $620M in 2000, with the largest contribution coming from UNTAET. Further perspective is given by considering data from the Economist Intelligence Unit, which estimates that in 2002, TL had a per capita GDP of $431, of which $400 was from international funding sources.

This human and financial support that has poured into TL has been essential for alleviating the urgent needs of this poor country, and to start the process of building sufficient capacity so that institutions are created to allow the state to govern independently. However, the impact of the large and rapid injection of resources into TL’s economy has not been entirely positive for a variety of reasons. In many communities, financial grants and employment offered to civil society organizations or individuals within the local population has had the effect of increasing social jealousy, in particular where the allocation of resources and selection of partners have not been executed in a transparent manner. Announcements of large aid packages and development initiatives have also contributed to expectations being raised that have often been left unfulfilled (e.g. many communities do not understand or are not made sufficiently aware of funding criteria for small grants programs). In some instances international development projects have also increased tensions between communities and local government due to insufficient coordination and communication about program design and implementation.

Apart from exacerbating local tensions by contributing to raised expectations, social jealousy and uncoordinated development, international aid has also exerted pressure on village chiefs and weakened traditional structures of authority. Attempting to inject resources into the post-conflict economy rapidly, some humanitarian aid projects have offered workers monetary compensation to engage in communal work such as clearing roads and removing waste. A report prepared for the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies captures the effect of this intervention, pointing out that “The community no longer needed the orders of the village chiefs. Many chiefs felt discouraged and their positions were undermined (apart from the fact that the project had stopped and these tasks were not done any longer).”

Additionally, external aid has had the effect of increasing the urban-rural divide as many donors operate in a manner that is very “Dili-centric”. This has exacerbated migration to cities for employment and has encouraged the government to focus more attention on urban spaces, thereby allocating fewer resources to rural areas. The economy, particularly in urban centers, has experienced wage and price inflation and the housing market has been severely distorted by the large demand for office space and residences by international staff.

**Dispute with the Australian government:**
The discussions and debates related to the issue of where the seabed boundary lies between Australia and TL have become quite heated at times and have led to numerous demonstrations in front of the Australian Embassy in Dili. In a recent interview, President Gusmão declared angrily that in failing to respect the legitimacy of TL’s claim to have legitimate rights to the oil revenues, the Australian government was threatening to make his country into a “permanent beggar...like the Solomon Islands, like Libya, like Haiti.”

Within TL the dispute over oil revenues and the final outcome of the negotiations are most likely to increase conflict within the population if communities are not kept informed of the process. There are high expectations about development initiatives that are supposed to be funded by the income from Timor

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34 Economist Intelligence Unit. [www.eiu.com](http://www.eiu.com)
35 This has been particularly evident in projects in which the participation of a state institution is critical, such as education, healthcare and infrastructure construction. In an interview with a local government representative from Oe-cussi, CICR learned that, for example, some schools have been built with development funds for which there are no teachers available to teach students.
Sea oil that could result in deep resentment and frustration if they are not carefully managed. Furthermore, there have been rumors and accusations of TL government corruption related to the negotiations with Australia over the “Timor Gap” agreement which could grow in intensity and impact with any type of scandal.

Proximate causes:
*In general terms, in the past, development organizations wanting to engage in conflict-ameliorating activities have shown more concern with root causes or structural factors of conflict, such as income inequality, poverty and poor access to healthcare and other social services. These engagements are often considered to be closer to their traditional mandate and tend to have longer implementation periods. However, in the context of post-conflict recovery, it is equally vital for actors pursuing peace initiatives and concerned with a potential relapse into violence to pay close attention to proximate causes of conflict. These are more recent, visible manifestations of conflict that often act to increase or exacerbate structural causes.*

**Language:** The 2002 Constitution of TL named Portuguese and Tetum as official languages and Bahasa Indonesia and English as working languages for the nation. This is particularly challenging for the majority of citizens, since Portuguese is only spoken by approximately 6 percent of the population and Tetum is still in the process of being developed into a standardized written form. 38 Portugal and Brazil have promised substantial assistance with educational materials and training to help implement the policy. However, there is already evidence that the language policy exacerbates existing disparities within the population, and is likely to continue to do so in the near future. Most notably, the use of Portuguese in official transactions has intensified the disconnect that exists between the public and the foreign-educated elite who occupy positions of power and make important policy decisions. Furthermore, the language legislation has created significant barriers to employment and education, as individuals are frequently unable to pass state-sponsored job placement exams or meet minimum job requirements, and has contributed to severe problems in the justice sector. 39 Many members of parliament do not write or speak Portuguese, yet are being asked to interpret and vote on legislation (often written by people from other countries) that they cannot understand.

In Universities, where Portuguese was selected to become one of the primary language of instruction, students frequently select courses of study that allow them to take classes in English rather than in Portuguese. Many students who were sent to Portugal over the past two years on scholarships that were granted with the intention of promoting the new language policy have dropped out of their university courses and either returned to TL or sought employment in the UK and Ireland. A professor from the National University of Timor Leste (UNTL) explained that these are signs of the younger generation rebelling against the decision to make Portuguese an official language, a decision that has dissatisfied many citizens. It is not unreasonable to conclude that the language divide could intensify, with a Dili-based elite of Portuguese speakers clashing with frustrated, disenfranchised masses elsewhere.

**Limited freedom of expression:** Since gaining independence TL has been regarded as having one of the freest presses in Asia, and the government has received praise for its openness to public and international scrutiny. 40 In recent months, however, there are strong signs that the media is increasingly coming under pressure and being restricted in its ability to provide free and independent reporting on issues that are

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38 There are approximately 35 different languages spoken in Timor Leste with Tetum being the most widely known.
39 An interview with a UNDP representative revealed that judges are often unable to speak Portuguese but are required to interpret Portuguese law, which is a cornerstone of the new legislation in Timor. Similarly, judges who speak Portuguese but not Indonesian are unable to interpret Indonesian law, another major component of the Timorese legal system. The result has been serious unpredictability and inconsistency in justice proceedings. Trials have often been held in Portuguese without interpretation services resulting in defendants not being able to understand their own trials. This is slowly being remedied with training and increased use of translators.
viewed as critical of government officials or policies. Anecdotal evidence indicates that there have been more than a few instances of reporters being seriously rebuked or fired for having written articles that raise questions about dealings or motives of public officials. Media sources are often accused of being highly partisan and political. A recent proposal to create an independent TV station as an alternative to the government-owned one was rejected by the prime minister. Of additional concern is new draft legislation presently being considered by the TL government that would curb press freedom by making defamation a criminal act.

**Domestic violence:** The high level of violence and abuse that has been targeted against women within households throughout the country is of significant concern to both international and local stakeholders in TL. In violent conflict settings, the experience of generalized conflict outside the home often becomes fused with incidents of violence within the home and leads to increased levels of domestic violence during periods of open fighting as well as post conflict. International research has raised awareness of the evidence that shows a propensity for domestic violence to increase in post conflict environments, and a variety of hypotheses have attempted to explain these linkages. In TL there has been insufficient research to conclude whether the actual rate of domestic violence has been increasing or whether the international community has increased the visibility of this problem.

Anecdotal evidence from primary and secondary sources indicates that domestic violence has a significant impact on conflict dynamics within TL communities. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) has been one of the lead agencies in gender work in TL and collaborates with the Office of the Prime Minister for the Promotion of Equality on national and local level initiatives to combat the high level of gender-based violence in the country. An important component of this effort has been to provide assistance in drafting new domestic violence legislation that is to be reviewed and implemented as part of the Penal Code for TL. While this inarguably marks a positive step towards the protection of women, the enforcement of the new legislation is likely to increase conflict within communities in the near-term, where the concept of the formal justice sector extending its mandate into realms that have until now been “managed” entirely through informal community (or adat) systems is regarded as intrusive and inappropriate.

**Violent interaction between martial arts groups:** Involvement of youth in martial arts groups has a long tradition in TL and remains a popular activity across all thirteen districts. There are several different martial arts groups, all of which have a national scope with membership in separate chapters that are delineated according to geographic regions of the country. Some of the groups trace their origin to Indonesia or China, while others claim to have been founded in TL. While membership and participation in these groups in and of itself is not viewed as problematic, the violent clashes that increasingly occur between some of their members are causing significant concern in many communities and have contributed significantly to conflict. Martial arts group activity was brought up in several focus group discussions and interviews during the assessment research, with the majority of participants suggesting

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41 In May, an Australian freelance journalist was arrested for charges of being in the country illegally as well as for weapons possession. He denied these allegations, claiming to have been targeted because of his research on Prime Minister Alkatiri, a position that several other sources have supported. Although cleared by the court the man was deported from Timor Leste.
44 While the CICR team was conducting its research UNIFEM was preparing to conduct a comprehensive study on the vulnerability of Timorese women in order to explore the degree of the challenges facing women.
45 Several participants from a focus group held in Oe-cusse argued that police interference in domestic issues involving accusations of abuse contribute to increasing conflict within the community.
46 A recent Timor Post article reports that 26 people were detained after clashes among martial arts groups in the village of Urahu in the outskirts of Dili on June 15 that left four people dead. In a separate incident a police convoy was attacked by suspected members of a martial arts group.
that the violence can be attributed to a lack of employment, education and recreational opportunities for youth. Recognizing the need to address what could potentially become a bigger problem in TL, the Parliament has taken up debate on the subject of martial arts groups, but little action has been taken beyond that.

In addition, widespread rumors of “ninja gang” activity are increasingly common, particularly in Dili. To date, no suspects have been apprehended related to these reports. These urban legends likely stem from perceptions of insecurity directly linked to TL’s history of militia violence. In the mid-1990s, several infamous ninja gangs terrorized suspected clandestine activists and others who supported independence across the country. In response, neighborhood defense guards were organized by youths to protect against these ninja gangs. Some of these youth groups morphed into martial arts groups later.

IV. ACTORS
The above analysis of conflict factors discusses the involvement and importance of several actors who are central to the conflict dynamics of Timor Leste. However, there are a few additional actors who are often associated with violence and disturbance in the country that deserve closer examination. The term “actor” refers to individuals, groups or institutions contributing to conflict or being affected by it in a positive or negative manner.

CPD-RDTL: Viewed by some as a political party and considered by others to be a rebel movement, the Committee to Defend the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste (CPD-RDTL) is an opposition group with nation-wide support and considerable following. It originated from a split in the FRETILIN party in the 1980’s and is led by a former resistance courier, Antonio Tomas Amaral da Costa (aka Ai-tahan Matak). CPD-RDTL has aroused frustration and anger within the current national leadership because of its vocal rejection of the elected FRETILIN government and repeated demands to have the constitution restored that was drafted when independence was first declared in 1975. The differences between that document and the current constitution, and the implications it would have on the current situation of TL, are admittedly not about words but about principle, and highlight the need by this group of former resistance fighters to be able to participate in the formation of the new state and receive recognition for their contributions to the achievement of the country’s independence.

Over the past few years the international community and leaders within TL’s society have voiced concern about the intention of the group to destabilize the current administration and members of the leading FRETILIN party, and there has been wide speculation about their ability to do so. A few attempts have been made to bring the group’s leaders into the mainstream political realm, including the January 2003 National Dialogue with CPD-RDTL, involving President Gusmao, Prime Minister Alkatiri, and Special Representative to the Secretary General Kamlesh Sharma. Although engagement in public events has improved public understanding of issues, such as the role of the FDTL and UNMISET, these efforts have not been entirely successful. Fearing that CPD-RDTL rhetoric and activity may, in fact, be growing in appeal and contributing to instability, the government has at the same time also used harsh measures to crack down on the group. This has included police raids on suspected supporters of the opposition group

47 The Gada Paksi (Dili), Besimerah (Liquica), and Laksaur (Cova Lima) were some of the most notorious of these ninja gangs; they were renowned for their trademark black hoods.
48 While the exact number of members or sympathizers is not known it is estimated to be significant and growing. According to the CPD-RDTL leadership, the group has representatives in several different countries around the world but denies any ties to militia groups in West Timor.
49 The group considers itself to be the legitimate government and the “true” FRETILIN, denouncing the FRETILIN party members currently in power as illegitimate leaders, and criticizing that some of these officials did not stay in TL during the Indonesian occupation. In the past CPD-RDTL has been known to use the FRETILIN symbol to represent its work.
50 Timor Leste Local Media Monitoring, 27 Jan 03.
that some say were carried out with unnecessary brutality. Representatives of the Catholic Church have been trying to mediate the conflict between CPD-RDTL and the police to avoid future violence.

**Veterans from the resistance:** During the many years of struggle for independence, thousands of TL’s citizens participated in the clandestine resistance movement in some capacity. Most of these individuals have moved on to productive activities since the end of the fighting and have found various ways of participating in the reconstruction and development of the new nation. The government and several Timorese communities are still having difficulty, however, with some former “freedom fighters” who have not yet been able to overcome the challenge of reintegrating into society as civilians and express frustration over not receiving what they consider to be their fair share of the peace dividend. Many of these individuals believe that they have been passed over for privileges and opportunities that they deserve and feel marginalized and neglected.\(^5^1\) Those who fall into this category frequently lack the basic skills that are needed for the majority of the jobs available in communities, most notably literacy.

Divisions within the veteran community are evident in the expansion of organizations such as CPD-RDTL, the Association of Ex-Combatants of 1975 and Sagrada Familia, and demonstrate the need to address feelings of exclusion and isolation among those who fought for independence.\(^5^2\) President Gusmao has made an effort to meet with and engage veterans and former combatants through the work and recommendations of CAAC-CAVF, two veteran’s commissions created in September 2002. These initiatives have been helpful in reducing some of the veterans’ frustrations but there are still many unemployed former combatants who have grown increasingly disillusioned since the celebration of independence. Going forward it will be imperative to continue to reach out to this group and let them know that they are not forgotten, ensuring that any support to veterans is not perceived as a replacement for general support to the community and with care not to exacerbate social jealousy.\(^5^3\)

**Refugees and Militias in West Timor:** Over 250,000 TL nationals fled across the Indonesian border to West Timor in the period immediately preceding and following the 1999 referendum. While most of these refugees returned to TL following the cessation of violence with the assistance of structured resettlement programs implemented by several agencies including IOM and UNHCR, an estimated 28,000 people remain in West Timor.\(^5^4\) Many of these individuals were affiliated with and supportive of the Indonesian government and military during its occupation of these territories and very few have expressed an interest in returning.\(^5^5\) In the second half of 2003, under an agreement between the Indonesian and the TL governments, 12,000 of these former refugees were relocated from camps along the border to other areas of West Timor where they are thought to be more easily integrated in a sustainable manner.\(^5^6\) The remaining 16,000 are still concentrated in areas of West Timor that directly border the districts of Bobonaro, Cova Lima, and Oe-cusse in TL.

As the socio-economic situation in TL stabilizes, and other durable solution options are made available for civil servants, police and former hard-line militia elements, it is expected that at least 3,000-5,000 persons may opt to return to TL. The presence of the remaining former refugee population in the vicinity of the border area is considered a potential threat to stability. On 1 January 2003, UNHCR invoked the Cessation of Refugee Status Clause so those individuals from TL who are still in West Timor are no

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\(^5^1\) When on February 1, 2001 FALINTIL was disbanded, six hundred and fifty of its former members were selected to form the new defense forces for the country (FDTL). Those who were not selected were reintegrated into society under the FALINTIL Reinsertion Assistance Program funded by the World Bank and USAID.

\(^5^2\) Rees, “The UN’s failure to integrate Falintil veterans may cause East Timor to fail” September 02, 2003.


\(^5^4\) "Agence France Presse” “Thousands of East Timorese get their own homes in Indonesian West Timor” 18 January 2004.

\(^5^5\) According to UN statistics fewer than 100 former refugees returned during the first three months of 2004.

longer recognized *prima facie* as refugees. The government of TL has expressed its commitment to encouraging the return of its nationals still residing in West Timor. President Gusmao has been especially committed to this effort, working in collaboration with international organizations such as IOM and Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) to find the best ways to enable former refugees to come back.

While there has been humanitarian concern about the basic living conditions and economic sustainability of the individuals who remain in camps in West Timor, the primary context that draws attention to this group is the presence of militias who infiltrated the refugee sites back in 1999 and are suspected of still being there. There are no reliable estimates on the number of militia members in West Timor but violent cross-border incursions have been reported as recently as the final months of 2003. The possibility of future violence related to these groups is very real and is a cause for concern. Furthermore, many argue that without a proper mechanism to reintegrate these actors, their mere presence along the border will continue to fuel fear and rumors that could prove to be highly detrimental to the fragile economic and social situation of TL.

**Indonesian Defense Forces (TNI):** While most people in TL agree that the Indonesian government is not directly causing trouble in TL any longer and do not perceive it to be a significant external threat to security, there is still concern about the TNI who are stationed throughout the porous border regions of West Timor. There was widespread relief among citizens and international staff in TL when it became certain that the UN peacekeeping forces stationed along the border to broker the relationship between the PNTL and the TNI had their mandate extended for another year. There is still significant fear of the well-armed Indonesian military by the people of TL and considerable doubt about the capacity of the substantially weaker Timorese police to provide adequate protection. According to an un-named source within UNMIS ET Security, the TNI frequently acts “like a bully” and enjoys treating the PNTL “like children”. The Secretary General’s report of April 2004 refers to the relationship between the two sides as “tentative” and suggests that it “require(s) further development and consolidation”. Although unsubstantiated, people also have expressed concern about Indonesian forces supporting militia agents in West Timor who pose a significant threat to the stability of the border region. Furthermore, there is strong suspicion that lower level TNI officials are involved in illegal activities such as smuggling, bribery, revenge killing and banditry.

**V. Triggers and Conflict Scenarios**

Conflicts often have unpredictable dynamics, and frequently events that precipitate violence cannot be foreseen. However, there are often identifiable moments in which vulnerability to conflict will be increased, especially when several known conflict factors are present in a country or community. These moments are often referred to as windows of vulnerability, when certain events have the potential to act as “triggers” to spark violence. Similarly, some factors are believed to act as "accelerators," working to steadily increase the significance of root causes in the conflict context. Several potential triggers and accelerators are identified here along with possible impacts and outcomes in order to raise awareness of future windows of vulnerability. These plausible events and possible conflict scenarios that could transpire in TL over the next five years have been developed based on input from Timorese and international subjects interviewed by the assessment research team.

Please note that the scenarios presented here are not mutually exclusive and are not arranged by any rank or order. Furthermore, a combination of two or more of these future windows of vulnerability occurring, and leading to the described scenarios, simultaneously is possible. It is reasonable to expect the potential for violence to increase with the number of scenarios unfolding at any given time.

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57 Ibid.
58 WSP International Assessment 2003.
1) **Reduction in UNMISET presence and engagement**

On May 20, 2004, two years after the country gained full independence, the UN Mission in East Timor (UNMISET) was scheduled to conclude. Recognizing that although significant progress had been made during this time with the assistance of UNMISET, TL continued to require international support in certain areas before reaching self-sufficiency. The Secretary General recommended an extension of the UN presence in order to smooth the transition of the new state institutions taking over all operational responsibilities. As a result, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1543 on May 17, 2004, authorizing the extension of UNMISET for a period of one year with a review after six months. This was the second time that this mission was extended by one year.\(^59\) The resolution called for the extended mission to be reduced in size, however, and to limit its involvement to specific tasks. These include 1) support for public administration and justice systems in TL and for justice in the area of serious crimes; 2) support for the development of law enforcement in TL; and 3) support for the security and stability of TL.

- One likely effect of the transition to a new and smaller UN mission for TL is the potentially significant economic impact on the local market from the reduction in the presence of international staff. Several departments and units are expected to scale back or phase out their operations, translating into a significant decline in employment opportunities for Timorese as local support staff.\(^60\) Furthermore, there will be fewer ex-patriots renting houses and office spaces (often set up in private residences), eating in restaurants and paying for services such as cleaning and transportation. The anticipated result will be an increase in overall unemployment, a downward pressure on wages and a decline in capital circulating in the economy. Anecdotal evidence collected during the assessment research already shows this effect being felt in some communities, including Oecusse and Baucau. It is likely that in this scenario Timor will experience rising criminality such as theft, muggings and extortion by means of roadblocks.

- Although the peacekeeping forces that have been providing support and training to the fledgling Timorese defense forces and assisting in the provision of a safe border through regular patrols will not be leaving, there will be a reduction in the number of forces. This reduced UN presence may result in a heightened feeling of popular insecurity.

- The decrease in support for already weak and fragile institutions such as the judiciary and the parliament could lead to their deteriorating further at a time when their involvement in drafting legislation, establishing regulatory mechanisms and reversing the trend of rising criminality is crucial for the development and stability of the country. This deterioration could manifest itself in a multitude of ways, including an increase in corruption and nepotism, greater lack of transparency and accountability, decreased communication and consultation with local communities, and an increase in the length of time needed to resolve court cases. All of these factors would contribute to rising public frustration and anger against the state and could lead to rising number of demonstrations, strikes and protests.

- The mandate of the Serious Crimes Unit (SCU) that was created by UNTAET in 2000 to oversee investigations and indictments concerning genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, murder, sexual offenses, and torture that occurred in 1999 has not been extended by the new Resolution. The UN-staffed unit that has been working under the legal authority of TL’s prosecutor general is required to complete all investigations by November 2004, with all trials and other activities finished no later than May 2005. There is widespread belief that

\(^{59}\) The mandate for UNMISET was first set to expire in May 2003.

\(^{60}\) This reduction in UNMISET personnel is significant because it compounds the effect of several other international organizations also scaling back their programs and reducing their budgets in TL at the same time.
at the end of this period, however, a majority of the individuals responsible for serious cases of human rights violations will not have been brought to justice, and that the evidence against them will subsequently be expunged. A perceived lack of justice for crimes committed in 1975 and 1999 has in the past and will in the future continue to significantly detract from the process of reconciliation and trust-building within and between communities. Although not a large threat, there is a possibility that some communities could experience sporadic acts of violence against individuals who are believed to have participated in past atrocities, as people feel the need to take justice into their own hands.

**Program implications:** The reduction of UN staff and related activity in TL is an inevitable and necessary future development. Building the capacity of civil society, and thereby strengthening communities and increasing self-sufficiency will contribute greatly to softening the blow of potentially negative impacts from the transition and minimize the likelihood for violence to occur as a result of this change. Initiatives to promote awareness through dialogue, efforts to facilitate communication and an improvement in relationships between the state and communities can also be instrumental in reducing possible future tensions related to this scenario.

2) **Suco (village) Elections**

The elections for suco-level leaders that are scheduled in successive rounds beginning in September or October of this year are a positive step towards decentralization of government structures. A report by UNDP summarizes the objectives of the process as being “to legitimize the authority of local representatives”, to “help avoid parallel structures at the local level, decreasing the likelihood of political tension and the potential for violence”, to “help strengthen and widen the principles of democracy and good governance” and to “enhance citizen participation in the democratic process.”

There is concern, however, that during this period Timor could experience an increase in posturing by political parties and see a rise in FRETILIN’s attempts to limit power and activities of political opposition groups. Some NGO representatives interviewed expressed concern that candidates running in the village elections could choose to identify themselves with the majority party simply in order to secure funding, thereby increasing the frustration of the opposition. NGOs also have lamented the government’s decision to limit their involvement in the socialization (civic education) processes required to make the endeavor successful.

The UNDP report warns that a hastily prepared electoral exercise without a comprehensive voter education component could potentially be destabilizing and articulates the urgent need for material support and technical advice (especially in the area of communications) to the administrative body charged with overseeing the election. Considering this finding, it is especially troubling to learn that the government has declared that all NGOs and external actors wanting to be involved in any way with the elections had to register with the Technical

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61 UNDP. Support to The Suco Elections p7.
62 An example of the majority party’s willingness to use its position of authority to keep rival parties from gaining power occurred in March of this year, when several public officials were expelled from their jobs and were made subjects of official investigation after having attended events organized by opposition parties. Officials claim that the participation in these events took place during working hours and thus represented a violation of government rules. Others claim the meetings were held on a Saturday. The reaction from the population was one of visible and audible anger and frustration; unfortunately the incident seems to have had the intended effect of creating reluctance by some public servants to openly engage in such activities in the future, at least in the near term.
63 NGOs and CSOs that have not registered with the government before engaging in civic education and public awareness-raising initiatives face stiff fines or other penalties. Since the timeframe for registration was very limited, many civil society representatives did not have the opportunity to register and will most likely not be allowed to assist in the electoral process, even peripherally.
Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE) before an early June deadline.\textsuperscript{64} With little information available about exactly how this registration process, or that of nominating candidates, needs to be conducted (and only offered in Portuguese or Bahasa Indonesia) there is great concern about the potential for increased conflict.

- If there is a sense that the suco elections are not conducted in a democratic manner, it is reasonable to expect an increase in tensions and frustration that could lead to protests, and potentially destructive demonstrations against the central government. Greater activity by opposition groups could elicit further attempts by the ruling FRETILIN party to implement restrictions on the press and employ intimidation tactics such as politically motivated investigations or arrests.

Program implications: The local elections for suco leaders have great potential to act as a positive force if they are conducted with care and sufficient support. Building the conflict resolution skills of civil society, promoting information exchange and providing opportunities that empower community leaders can contribute to reducing conflict that is likely to occur during and as a result of these elections.

3) \textbf{Corruption Scandal within the government} (or abuse of power by government official)

Some of the main causes for protests, particularly in Dili, have been resentment over government corruption, abuse of power, and perceived disrespect of citizens' rights, as well as frustration over the inability to combat poverty and unemployment. The destruction of the Prime Minister’s brother’s house during the riots of December 2002, as well as the threats of violence that have been made against his family and other high-ranking administration officials in the past year, are proximate signs of this problem. Research has shown that severe conflicts are commonly preceded by a crisis of state legitimacy.\textsuperscript{65}

- If corruption scandals continue and more evidence of the government abusing its power emerges, there is a good possibility that more street protests and more violence could occur, especially if police use excessive force to quell these disturbances as they have in the past. This rising citizen unrest and corruption, combined with a weak legal system and fractured leadership, will continue to deter desperately needed foreign investment that could help improve the economic difficulties facing the country.

- A state with pervasive corruption and a weak and ineffective judicial system is an ideal environment for organized crime. If the escalation of violence is not addressed through the strengthening of state institutions, there is a possibility that TL could become more attractive to mafias of various nationalities (anecdotal evidence already points to organized trafficking of persons, in particular for use in the sex trade). An increased presence of organized crime is highly likely to result in more violence.

Program implications: The likelihood of localized violence to transpire as described in this scenario is relatively high. Initiatives to engage marginalized communities, increase communication and information exchange, as well as facilitating collaboration between the government and civil society can help to reduce tensions related to corruption and nepotism.

4) \textbf{Incident involving police brutality}

From the beginning of its formation the PNTL has been regarded with extreme suspicion and has been unable to win the trust of Timorese communities and citizens. This can be partially explained by the fact that several members of the police force are viewed as having been pro-

integration with Indonesia and having cooperated with the Indonesian forces during the violent period prior to independence. Furthermore, as discussed in the above analysis on weakness in the security sector, there is ample evidence to suggest that the police are prone to responding to situations with inappropriate force and brutality. In the past this behavior has for the most part resulted in feelings of frustration, resentment and a perpetuated lack of trust and sense of vulnerability within communities. However, there have been incidents where the resulting conflict has become much more violent such as the riots in Dili in December 2002, which are said to have been in large part a response to the police having used excessive force in dealing with a minor incident involving students.

Furthermore, it has become the norm for the PNTL to conduct routine traffic stops, and stories abound of police using excessive force in carrying out this activity – particularly in interactions with youth. Frequent accounts have been made of incidents in which members of the police force require individuals to perform physical exercise (usually push-ups) for their enjoyment, and if refused, are quick to employ aggressive tactics, including assault and battery. As the level of frustration within the youth population rises from being subjected to frivolous brutality and humiliation, an increase in confrontations is likely in the future.

- If the police continue to demonstrate a lack of sensitivity and respect for human rights and professionalism in carrying out its duties it is likely that future violence will occur in the form of increased riots and demonstrations. Furthermore it is probable that the legitimacy of the justice sector and respect for the rule of law will deteriorate and with its decline there will be heightened vulnerability to a rise in criminality and violent conflict.

Program implications: Similar to the previous scenario, there is a good probability that TL will continue to experience episodes of localized violence due to excess use of force by the police. Extending support to civil society groups working on civic education, anti-violence programs and human rights training can help to counter this type of conflict and decrease the potential for an escalation of violence related to this problem. Improving the communication between government agencies, security forces and communities can also be useful for addressing police brutality.

5) Cross border incident: a confrontation involving the TNI and the PNTL or a Timorese community

Land disputes and incidents involving the illegal trading of goods, hunting and crossings occur regularly along the border with West Timor, and have on occasion involved the seizure by TNI of TL nationals and by the PNTL of Indonesian nationals. As discussed earlier in the report both of these security forces have been accused of frequently using excessive force in handling these types of situations.

- It is possible that if the PNTL managed a situation on the border involving one or more Indonesians poorly, that the TNI would use the opportunity to intervene forcefully. The result could be a cross border confrontation between these two sides, which could lead to violence and would certainly heighten the sense of insecurity on the part of the Timorese.

Program implications: There is a low probability that this scenario will become a reality, due to the continued presence of UN peacekeeping forces on the border to mitigate potential problems and the understanding that such an event would trigger an immediate intervention by the international response unit. However, it is important to still consider the implications of the possibility given that PKF presence is temporary and that the mandate of the military liaison group whose task it will be to facilitate contacts between the Indonesian and Timorese forces, support demarcation efforts and monitor security-related developments will end in one year. Initiatives to promote dialogues on the issues of security and facilitate communication between communities and the state will help prepare for the eventuality of the departure
of the peacekeeping forces and reduce the potential for tensions to arise when this takes place. Strengthening conflict resolution skills and building capacity of community leaders in border districts in particular will also contribute to the prevention of future violence due to cross-border activity.

6) New government and instability in Indonesia

Indonesia is in the process of a national presidential election, an event that is being watched with great concern and trepidation by the international community and leaders in TL. Elections are frequently regarded as moments of vulnerability, as they are by definition competitive events with unpredictable outcomes. Former deputy force commander of UNTAET, Michael Smith, points out in a discussion on TL’s future that “security from external aggression depends largely on the future stability of Indonesia, which in itself remains unpredictable.66 TL’s government leaders appear to agree, and demonstrate strong efforts to ensure smooth relations with their neighbor, including a resistance to the establishment of a UN tribunal to try Indonesian forces accused of crimes committed during the independence movement.

One of the candidates who entered the Indonesian presidential elections but failed to make it past the second round of voting is former army Chief General Wiranto, someone closely tied to the autocratic rule of former President Suharto and considered by many Indonesians to be a national hero.67 Another retired general, former security minister Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, is the leading candidate facing incumbent Megawati Soekarnoputri in a September run-off vote. The idea and discussions surrounding the possibility of having a new Indonesian president with close ties to the TNI have forced many to revisit painful memories of not long ago and has caused recognition of the fact that Timorese citizens still feel rather vulnerable. Analysts at the International Crisis Group, an international NGO that has been closely following Indonesian political developments, predict that regardless of the final outcome of the election, democratic institutions will come under increasing challenge in Indonesia unless the elected government can address basic demands and aspirations, and that the challenges for that country remain enormous.68

- Political instability in Indonesia could pose a threat to TL by affecting its important diplomatic relations. The Timorese government has been in the process of important negotiations with Indonesia over several pressing issues such as trade, border demarcation and population movements. Increased fragmentation in the Indonesian administration may create difficulties for the positive discussions to continue. A delay in the resolution of these important issues is likely to increase frustration and could lead to an escalation of conflict, particularly in the border communities where regulations on trade and land issues have been the source of considerable tension.

- Instability in Indonesia would also be likely to have an impact on that country’s economy, as foreign investors grow wary of increasing financial risk and, as a result, capital inflows slow. If Indonesia’s economy slumps it could mean less investment capital coming from Jakarta and from Indonesian capitalists into TL. It would also cause prices in Indonesia to become even lower in comparison to those in TL, making it more difficult for TL to compete

66 Smith p159.
67 In 2002 General Wiranto was indicted by a UN tribunal on war crimes charges relating to the violence that swept over TL in 1999. An arrest warrant was issued by a UN-backed tribunal in Dili but the charges were dropped by TL’s Attorney General’s office and the warrant was cancelled. Several leaders within the Timorese national government including President Gusmao and Foreign Minister Ramos-Horta have downplayed Wiranto’s culpability for war crimes and have demonstrated a reluctance to support efforts to bring the general to trial citing the importance of maintaining smooth relations with Indonesia for economic survival.
economically and increasing the incentive for Timorese to try to buy goods across the border where they can get a lower price.

- The victory of an Indonesian presidential candidate with close ties to the military or the tendency to demonstrate a hard line security policy might increase tensions in TL. If the TNI felt authorized to ramp up operations in order to demonstrate its power and deter future movements towards autonomy or independence within its territory, the impact could be felt in a variety of ways. Intimidating military exercises or increased military build-up in border territories would greatly contribute to feelings of physical insecurity within TL’s communities. An increase in arrests of people from Timor trading along the border or closure of movement between the two territories would also have a likelihood of leading to violence.

Program implications: While the likelihood for large-scale cross border violence between Indonesia and TL in the near future seems unlikely, there is a good possibility for localized incidents of aggression and conflict to occur. Efforts to help reduce tensions that could lead to this scenario include dialogue on the importance of economic diversification, activities that strengthen the self-sufficiency of communities and support for civil society groups, especially in the vulnerable border districts.

VI. Peace Capacities

There is growing awareness among actors engaged in development and peace-building that in order to make a positive contribution to resolving or preventing violent conflict, it is imperative to have an awareness of what sources of tension exist in a society as well as an understanding of the complex linkages between conflict factors. Being mindful of events that may precipitate violence is also essential. CICR believes that in order to be truly effective in mitigating violence and promoting positive interactions, it is equally essential to recognize communities’ capacities for peace. An analysis must therefore also highlight the mechanisms, behaviors and relationships already present in a society that allow conflict to be a natural manifestation of change without becoming destructive or turning deadly. By fostering positive elements that are inherent in a society (or have been shaped over time) that allow people to resolve their differences peacefully, development actors will increase the likelihood that projects and programs are well received by communities and have the intended positive results.

States transitioning out of conflict are often fragile and saddled with complex problems, which makes them highly vulnerable to resurgence in violence, and as elaborated in the above analysis TL is no exception. The team’s research found, however, that there are numerous positive forces within TL’s communities that contribute significantly to peace and are instrumental in counteracting tensions. These peace capacities provide opportunities for promoting a smoother and more productive post-conflict reconstruction and development process.

Customary practices: Within TL’s communities, traditional structures of leadership and the *adat* (customary) process of dispute resolution have retained their importance and legitimacy, and are still widely recognized and respected. In many instances these familiar mechanisms remain the preferred means of addressing conflict, particularly in civil cases but quite frequently involving criminal cases as well. The *adat* laws, which are not monolithic and may vary across the country, have been applied in various environmental protection campaigns and are often the source communities rely upon to resolve land disputes, minor criminal offenses such as theft, and other intra- or inter-family conflicts, including domestic violence.69 The existence of community-supported mechanisms and leadership structures that facilitate the resolution of these conflicts are instrumental in reducing current tensions given the weak capacity of formal judicial structures to address disputes related to pressing issues such as land and property claims. Supporting these leadership structures that are locally recognized and incorporating the

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widely practiced adat traditions into new institutional systems can strengthen the impact of peace-building initiatives while empowering communities to address their own concerns.

**The Catholic Church:** Religious institutions have played a critical role throughout TL’s turbulent history and continue to be a significant positive force in communities. The Catholic Church holds a particularly influential position in TL, as an institution with a structure that has the ability to reach almost all communities. A recent UNICEF report recognizes the importance of this role, emphasizing the potential for this religious institution to act as a unifying force for the 95 percent of the population who ascribe to the Christian faith.  

From the sub-village to the national level, almost all community members demonstrate a strong religious commitment. During the assessment, several groups noted the role of the Church in bringing people together and promoting the importance of peace, even among groups with conflicting interests. Recognized and respected by both the government and diverse communities, religious institutions can create opportunities for different actors to address concerns collectively and peacefully. The Church-affiliated Scouts are particularly important since they engage youth across the country in positive social welfare and development activities. The Church also continues to make substantial contributions in the sectors of health and education, frequently providing communities access to facilities and services where the government lacks sufficient capacity or presence.

**The media:** The critical role of the media in conflict mitigation and management has become widely recognized by development and peace actors, and is increasingly receiving deserved attention in post-conflict areas. In TL this holds true as well, and is important to keep in perspective. An Asia Foundation survey found that in TL the radio is the most widespread means of disseminating information to communities. Given the high rate of illiteracy within large segments of the population (estimated to average approximately 43 percent), a long history of oral communication, and the ability of roughly 69 percent of the population to access radio, the potential for radio to play a significant role in promoting peace is considerable. The CAVR provides a good model of using this capacity in their decision to disseminate critical public information through radio broadcasts of public hearings. Community groups, local NGOs, the Church, as well as government bodies can equally make use of the 17 radio stations spread across the 13 districts, to improve access to information within communities.

**Youth:** The high percentage of youth in TL’s population and the rapid rate at which the size of this group is increasing were discussed above as factors considered to be contributing to conflict vulnerability. However, it is important to recognize that there is also great potential for TL’s youth to contribute to peace and development. The literacy rate for 15-24 year olds is 83.9 percent, compared to a significantly lower rate of 48.2 percent among 35-44 year olds, and 27.5 percent for 45-54 year-olds. Strong national networks and organizations such as RENETIL, Scouts, and martial arts groups connect and engage young women and men in structured activities from the national to village level and across districts and are powerful means of channeling their energy into furthering positive causes or issues. Martial arts groups deserve particular attention given the demonstrated influence they exert on communities and the strong relationships they have with local populations and with the church. The experience of youth during the resistance is an important factor to recognize and incorporate into post-conflict initiatives. Although many were not directly involved in the fighting, they frequently played integral roles in communication and supply networks, and their energy and enthusiasm must be positively harnessed.

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70 UNICEF Annual Report, Timor Leste, 2003  
75 Ibid.
Veterans: Similar to youth, the veteran community in TL is often identified as a potential challenge to the new nation, as mentioned in the analysis section. However, their unique experience can also be viewed in a more positive light, as providing a strong voice of national pride during the post-conflict transition period. The national identity that unified most communities during the resistance is easily overshadowed today by the current development challenges that often weaken social cohesion. Many of the former combatants have close relationships with their communities, as well as cross-district linkages, and continue to maintain a certain influence and stature within society. The trust and respect accorded to veterans should not be underestimated, and their first-hand understanding of the impact of violence imbues them with a certain sense of legitimacy to promote peaceful responses to current tensions. Engaging veterans in community-based peace initiatives can demonstrate to community members, especially the younger generations, the possibility of moving from violence to non-violent means of addressing conflicts.

Social networks: Civil society in TL has a history of being vibrant and powerful, and is recognized as having been central to the success of the country’s independence movement. Many of the national clandestine networks remain strong and are considered to have significant influence within communities. While the secrecy that shrouds the relationships that exist within these groups and the mystery behind how they operate often instills suspicion and skepticism in outsiders, the potential for these networks to contribute to peace should not be dismissed. For example, the OMT/OPMT structure that was formed to organize women’s participation in the resistance movement still operates at the national and regional level, creating opportunities and needed support for its members, including counseling, employment assistance and many other services. The youth group RENETIL, mentioned above, is another example of an organized structure that exists within and between communities with great potential to be utilized for positive development. The rapid emergence of countless NGOs and CBOs since independence that have formed to further a variety of specific causes demonstrates the willingness and enthusiasm of community members to participate in the post-conflict development process as well as in conflict prevention activities. The parent and teachers associations that lend support to the fragile education sector are other examples of the numerous civil society networks that exist nationally serving as a peace capacity for their communities. The breadth and scope of these groups provides evidence that community members from isolated sub-villages to the dense urban center of the capital can be engaged in initiatives to address an equally diverse range of concerns across the nation.

VII. The capacity of NGOs and CBOs to reduce conflict and prevent violence in TL

As mentioned in previous sections of the report, the number of civil society organizations in TL has grown dramatically since the violence ended in 1999. Today TL’s NGOs and CBOs come in many different configurations and sizes, have a wide range of geographic scope and functional areas of focus and vary greatly in their human resource and institutional capacity. This makes it difficult in many ways to generalize about their ability to influence conflict dynamics and to articulate succinctly the specific ways in which they can and do perform a role in conflict prevention. However, it is important to emphasize this very point. Given the enormity of the challenges faced by the country and the fragility of many of the newly created state institutions in TL, citizens often must use non-official channels to address their needs, creating a large opportunity for these groups to impact the process of conflict prevention and management in a very significant way. Rooted within communities these NGOs and CBOs are in an ideal position to strengthen social cohesion and engage the most marginalized members of society. Some of the greatest challenges facing NGOs and CBOs in TL are closely linked to and are a component of the conflict factors elaborated in the analysis section of the report. Limited human resource capacity creates difficulties for organizations in terms of project and financial management, and greatly decreases the likelihood of their initiatives’ sustainability. Inflows of international assistance and prescriptive development programming have often created expectations of what initiatives should look like that at times result in requests from civil society groups that do not always make sense or seemingly fail to
reflect the greatest needs of the communities. Examples of this type of incongruence include requests for computer training in areas that have limited electricity and low literacy rates, and “socialization” or civic education programs where the definition of these initiatives cannot be fully explained. Failure to fully understand the requirements and mechanisms of foreign donors sometimes leads to raised expectations by groups and communities that are damaging if left unmet, and, due to insufficient mechanisms for communication, heighten suspicion, mistrust and resentment by communities about the use of funds and other resources. Furthermore, local groups often find themselves unable to transition away from dependence on foreign donor support, both financial and in terms of technical knowledge.

Identifying and acknowledging the strengths, weaknesses and challenges NGOs and CBOs face is the first step in the critical effort to increase the capacity of these groups to contribute to conflict management and mitigation. The detailed recommendations below attempt to outline several concrete ways that CICR and Belun can build this capacity through their work and more generally strengthen the resistance of TL’s communities against future violent conflict by engaging civil society.

VIII. CICR/FLBM HBO Analysis

CICR initiated its civil society program in TL in response to a request by President Gusmão for assistance with post-conflict reconstruction. With a $322,000 small-grants fund, the Civil Society Capacity-building Project (CSCB) aimed to support community-based development initiatives and nurture the energy and enthusiasm at the grass roots level of society in TL, thereby increasing their capacity to contribute to positive change. From the outset, the project was designed with a national scope and focused through a lens of conflict resolution and prevention. CICR and its local counterpart FLBM have demonstrated responsiveness to several of the conflict factors elaborated in the above analysis. Opening an office in Dili in April 2002 and announcing a national call for proposals, the team has established relationships with over 200 local NGOs and CBOs across all thirteen districts. Over the course of two years the team has distributed small grants to over 100 civil society groups and continues to work with each group to support sustainable initiatives, always aiming to reduce dependence on donor funding and external assistance.

Through regular meetings with local and national government representatives as well as other international and local organizations, the team actively disseminates information about its program activities and encourages partners to do the same. The team coordinates a monthly meeting bringing together several small grant donors and maintains a national database of development and peace initiatives in TL. Monthly Open House events in Dili encourage communication and information sharing among partner organizations by providing a venue for groups to network and get to know each other, allow the CICR-FLBM team to receive feedback on their work, and promote awareness of government programs or issues relevant to communities through presentations by guest speakers. These efforts also are intended to facilitate greater collaboration and communication among civil society groups, to reduce the potential - particularly high in a country of such a small size - for development initiatives to result in redundancy, inefficiency and confusion within communities, which can be quite harmful.

With an aim to address tensions caused by the high level of unemployment, the CSCB project strives to allow communities to increase productive opportunities, especially for young people, through training programs and skill-building activities. The team also provides mentoring and support on project design, proposal development, and financial management to partner organizations engaged in the program. Thus through financial as well as human resource assistance CICR-FLBM makes a positive contribution to reducing conflict caused by the limited capacity of communities, helping civil society groups meet basic needs of some of the most marginalized citizens of TL and promoting positive development. Recognizing the potential for social jealousy in communities where civil society initiatives have insufficient popular support or participation, the CICR-FLBM team conducts regular visits throughout project implementation to avert potential problems. Particularly in areas outside of Dili, follow-up visits improve understanding of the CSCB project and enable the team to manage expectations within communities.
While the overall impact of the current CICR-FLBM initiatives on conflict dynamics in TL is positive, it should be noted that the thorough and detailed process of proposal development and review, intended to promote capacity-building among civil society organizations in TL and to ensure self-sustainability, has resulted in a slow disbursement of funds and thereby increased tensions in some communities. Efforts to clarify the program’s process and to ensure that project information is perceived as transparent and available to communities have been successful to a certain degree but confusion and frustration are still apparent. During meetings in Oe-cusse and Baucau, where the assessment team received several inquiries about the status of proposals and funding opportunities, the challenge of communication and follow up was apparent. Transportation constraints due to vehicle and road conditions, as well as distance and human resource limitations of the team appear to be the primary causes of the difficulties, and highlight CICR-FLBM’s ongoing need to explore options for improved communication strategies. Open House meetings seem to be well received, and provide an ideal venue for information sharing among partners as well as for providing the additional training and learning materials that are frequently requested. The potential of these regular gatherings to increase the program’s impact on conflict prevention in TL has not yet been fully exploited.

Acknowledging the success of CICR-FLBM’s work and recognizing the numerous challenges that still need to be addressed in TL, the SNS project offers an opportunity for the team to learn from its experience and to grow stronger. Reflecting and building on the history and commitment of Planning Assistance, CARE International, and CICR, the Belun team was formed in June 2004 to implement the SNS initiative.76 The team is being registered as a local NGO in TL and will continue to serve communities nationally, seeking to prevent conflict and reduce tensions by developing the capacity of partner organizations and improving current relationships and networks with civil society organizations, academic institutions (both inside TL and abroad), donors and the TL government. Incorporating CICR-FLBM’s framework, while expanding team structure and establishing offices in both Dili and select district capitals will enable Belun to realize its objectives and maximize its capacity to prevent conflict.

IX. Findings and Conclusions

While the era of violence and resistance against a foreign enemy is over in TL and the country’s attainment of independence in 2002 is deemed a success story, the situation facing the country is complex and fragile. In conflict terminology one could characterize TL as being in a state of unstable peace where there is still the potential for the stability that has been achieved to unravel. The road to lasting peace undoubtedly promises a few hurdles along the way. The political situation is somewhat precarious, with the current government facing increasing opposition and strong criticism about its diplomacy, failure to achieve sufficient economic progress fast enough and lack of will to thoroughly pursue justice for the crimes committed in the pre-independence period. State institutions remain extremely weak, dependence on external support (both financial and technical resources) is high and the economic situation poses an enormous challenge. In general the likelihood for widespread conflict is relatively low but the potential for localized violence to erupt is good and is highest in the border districts of Oe-cusse, Bobonaro and Cova Lima.

Despite the numerous factors contributing to conflict within TL there are also significant indications of positive forces that have been acting to constrain violence and build peace. Civil society initiatives have been particularly instrumental in promoting development and counteracting tensions within communities. Efforts to support and strengthen the NGOs and CBOs that are addressing the needs of communities, when implemented with sensitivity to the conflict dynamics outlined in the earlier sections of the report have a tremendous potential to prevent future violence and should continue.

76 Members of FLBM have transitioned into Belun and this new name was chosen for the organization to reflect the larger team and new opportunities for strengthening the team through partnership.
X. Recommendations
As indicated in the earlier analysis, the CICR-FLBM team is already making a significant contribution to conflict prevention in TL by addressing a number of factors that are causing tensions within communities. Following are a series of suggestions for approaches that CICR and Belun could take to increase and deepen the impact of these initiatives and to guide the implementation of future conflict-sensitive programming. The recommendations are organized into 3 categories: 1) improving information dissemination and communication; 2) increasing the capacity of civil society to participate in development activities, thereby promoting sustainability; and 3) raising awareness of and ability to respond positively to conflict dynamics within local populations, local government, and the international community in TL. Please note that despite this categorization, as with the conflict factors, there will be significant ambiguity and overlap, and the grouping should not be considered restrictive.

1) Improving information-sharing and communication within and between organizations, communities, and local government.

Recommendation 1: Assist civil society groups working in partnership with Belun to develop systematic information exchange and dissemination plans that increase the flow of project information within and between communities.

At present, the CICR-FLBM team strongly advocates and encourages open and sustained communication with its project partners and aims to model this behavior throughout the grant-making process and generally in its interaction with communities. To further this effort, the team could initiate activities to explicitly develop specific information dissemination and exchange plans with each partner to increase transparency throughout project implementation and evaluation and promote greater stakeholder participation. Strengthening coordination with and projecting openness to communities will make it easier for implementing partners to address potential concerns or challenges to projects at an early stage, therefore increasing the likelihood of success once implementation has begun.

Investing time establishing information plans with partners also would allow the team to increase the effectiveness of the National Database of Community Development Projects and the Small Grant Donors Network (SGDN). Reflecting on positive past experiences working with local NGOs and CBOs to review financial management plans before distributing funds, it is highly probable to expect that earlier discussion of information exchange could be of great value to organizations and their communities. Communities also have been highly receptive to engaging in sustained information and communication.

Recommendation 2: Promote the use of the community development center as a venue for collecting information and sharing resources related to the specific activities of the project as well as a learning space for all interested partners and communities.

The preliminary plans for future initiatives related to the SNS project show that there is already the intention for Belun to develop a community development or knowledge center for the activities of the organization, as well as a learning space for all interested partners and communities. The assessment team lauds this idea and strongly supports the thinking that lessons learned during the course of the project must be captured and shared openly in order to contribute to greater effectiveness and success.

In addition to being a repository for institutional knowledge, the community development center should house resources that partners can use to strengthen their own work and exchange knowledge with other partners such as the Database. Additional resources should include material on conflict resolution techniques and approaches (with success stories of local processes and examples), case studies on post-conflict reconstruction, literature on development and technical areas of interest, and other materials on training and education that directly respond to the requests of partners for training and knowledge.
Furthermore, the development center could become a central source of information on government policies and initiatives that are pertinent to the partners’ work.

In order to become an environment of active learning, the community development center should also become a forum for roundtables, seminars, and dialogues on current issues concerning communities in TL, in collaborating with the National University’s Development Department and utilizing the various academic resources available through Columbia University in New York. The use of information and communications technology should be explored where appropriate to facilitate dialogues and exchanges with international partners on critical national issues such as post-conflict development challenges and opportunities, civil society-government relations, or civil society’s capacity to positively contribute to and affect national policy. Partners should be encouraged to use the center for organizing discussions of interest to them, and scholars to present research, with the engagement of Timorese living abroad when possible. This effort would help to bring together academic study and the practice of development and conflict prevention and resolution. The international and local dialogues can contribute community-generated responses to tensions and locally-relevant alternatives to using violence as a response to conflicts.

Lessons learned through seminars or discussions can be archived at the center and shared with a larger community through CICR’s larger network of scholars and practitioners.

**Recommendation 3: Encourage and facilitate cooperative agreements and active information exchange between partner organizations and government representatives and agencies.**

Belun can address the lack of systematic communication between local NGOs/CBOs and government by encouraging greater collaboration between current partners and relevant national and local government offices. Strengthening civil society’s capacity to provide needed social services to marginalized and isolated communities is a powerful and important means of addressing a number of the conflict factors affecting communities in TL. However, in order not to increase tensions and to maximize the positive impacts of development initiatives, a stronger emphasis needs to be placed on coordination and communication with government offices in all sectors. Belun should promote cooperation by facilitating information-sharing events with local government officials and strengthening the capacity of service-providing NGOs who may be potential partners for local and national government offices. Increasing dialogue between civil society and the central government will reduce feelings of exclusion, promote transparency, and improve community understanding of government policies and programs, potentially decreasing the levels of current frustration expressed over lack of transparency within government.

**Recommendation 4: Continue to promote donor coordination and sharing of resources through the Small Grant Donors’ Network and the National Database of Community Development Projects. This can be achieved by facilitating transparent and open discussions on critical policies and practices, supporting the publication and distribution of materials, and organizing networking events where donors and organizations can meet and exchange information.**

The SGDN, created and maintained by the CICR-FLBM team, can become more instrumental in strengthening relationships between donors and civil society organizations. The Network’s notable increase in participation since its formation in February 2003 demonstrates its ability to convene transparent and open discussions on critical policy and practices among donors. Belun can support the publication and distribution of policies or shared community resource materials generated through the network, leading to greater effectiveness and impact of its work. The team can hold events where donors and organizations meet and exchange information, and wider dissemination of appropriate donor contact information will encourage bilateral relationship-building and empower NGOs to engage with donors. Ultimately, these activities can contribute to maximizing efficiency in development, reducing social jealousy over limited resources and lessening existing tensions between communities and donors.
2) Increasing the capacity of civil society to participate in community development

**Recommendation 5: Promote decentralization of development initiatives by shifting certain Belun project activities to its program offices outside of Dili and continue efforts to engage with partners from a wide geographic scope, giving special consideration to individuals and groups that face challenges related to transportation and may be burdened with other responsibilities.**

The frustration expressed by communities related to the centralization of activities and resources in Dili has impacted CICR-FLBM’s partners, many of whom live in more isolated areas with fewer transportation possibilities. The planned expansion of project offices into some of the districts will begin to reduce the urban/rural divide, improve the team’s understanding of partner organizations, and enable partners to follow-up and acquire the team’s support more readily when needed. The human resources provided by the team will have a greater impact with district offices, with the Dili-based team members facilitating national linkages complemented by the district-based team members, who can strengthen relationships and regional knowledge that may contribute to the larger Belun program.

Developing additional Open House meetings in district offices and expanding participation to include relevant civil society members, government representatives, and other development partners can enable partners with travel limitations, as well as home, farm, or community responsibilities to participate and benefit from networking and information sharing opportunities. Diversifying participants will increase awareness among organizations and partners working in a region and promote greater district level communication between and among organizations and government representatives. Communities can be encouraged to address economic diversification and develop initiatives to increase private sector investment locally. Involving government representatives in the Open House events can encourage representatives to engage more with civil society, provide communities opportunities for needed dialogue with state representatives, and facilitate linkages between communities with little access to information and their local government representatives. The interest expressed by communities for local Open Houses demonstrates the activity will not only be welcomed, but will have a significant impact on partners. The various resources brought into each region will help stem internal migration and can create successful regional level models of networking and coordination.

**Recommendation 6: Continue and expand capacity-building activities with groups in the areas of financial and strategic planning, project management, networking, fundraising, and other relevant subjects.**

Belun can increase the effectiveness of current capacity-building efforts by developing systematic tools that partners can use to improve their financial and program management skills as well as strengthen other organizational capacity, thereby decreasing dependency on donor funding and external expertise. Best practices should be documented from current activities, in collaboration with partners, to create a set of guidelines or resource documents to help partner organizations through the various phases of their work. The district offices should enable greater distribution of resource materials, with district-based team members providing practical support. Encouraging partners to share their experiences will further strengthen the capacity of local organizations to learn through examples, reducing feelings of vulnerability in communities as well as acknowledging and recognizing positive local contributions.

Belun support also can reach partners in the form of resource materials housed at the community development center and available in the district offices. Regional initiatives such as trainings, mentoring activities and community dialogues can ensure human resources from Belun are available to people outside of Dili. Trainings should be open to and encourage participation from all interested parties, including members of the private sector, civil society and students, as well as government representatives. Particular emphasis should be placed on trying to support local organizations in exploring the possibility of conducting trainings in their area of expertise in order to promote sustainability.
Recommendation 7: Organize trainings on conflict resolution and assessment and skill-building workshops on topics such as dialogue processes, facilitation approaches, and leadership that enable local groups to facilitate activities in their communities.

The expressed demand for conflict resolution training and skills by local partners provides an opportunity for Belun to support community responses to local tensions that have the potential to lead to violence. Open House events, regional field offices and the development center should all be considered as possible venues to hold trainings or seminars on conflict resolution approaches, assessment methodologies and project development. The teams should use their affiliation with Columbia University to draw upon the wealth of resources available through a wide network of conflict resolution experts and scholars. In certain situations, the appropriate use of information technology can also facilitate local and international scholars and practitioners engaging in discussions on relevant issues, creating a unique forum for local partners to develop creative solutions to community challenges while sharing their experiences with an international audience.

Belun can continue to encourage open communication and respectful working relationships by engaging partners in a sustained process that is flexible and relevant to the specific context of each community. The team can support partners to develop stronger community and organizational affiliations by providing training on facilitation and dialogue methods, recognizing the distinct challenges and realities affecting each community. The diversity of experiences during the conflict and current concerns creates a demanding environment for local NGOs and CBOs. Enabling partners with skills and resources to help them navigate and discuss community concerns will strengthen initiatives and maximize their potential as a peace capacity. Partners will have an increased ability to address tensions within their organizations, subsequently allowing them to respond better to concerns from communities or other partners.

Recommendation 8: Encourage mentoring relationships between and among civil society organizations and other organizations involved in development.

Belun can encourage networking in various ways, using its resources such as the SGDN, the Database, the Open House, and promoting synergistic partnerships more generally. These efforts, however, can be increasingly effective, if Belun partners can engage with other organizations as mentors. Organizations can be encouraged to both “be mentors” to others and be “mentored by” other organizations. Belun can facilitate a process in which interested organizations may elicit their interest in either relationship and connect with an appropriate mentoring partner. The Database can serve as a reference for interested partners, allowing partners easy access to potential mentors in every village. Belun can provide, through literature and activities developed and available at the regional and national levels support for the mentoring relationships. These activities may involve other development organizations and can expand to draw upon CICR’s network of partners globally, building trust and strengthening social cohesion within and across communities.

3) Increasing community, organization, and donor understanding of and capacity to respond positively to conflicts and factors increasing conflict in Timor Leste

Recommendation 9: Increase the involvement of women in initiatives to reduce conflict by facilitating improved access to resources and opportunities.

Despite the participation of female partners and women’s organizations in many initiatives, structural inequalities challenge the opportunities of TL’s women to engage in formal development and peace-building initiatives. Belun should therefore focus particular attention on ensuring women have improved access to the resources and activities that will enable them to more fully contribute to development and addressing tensions in their communities. At the national level, the development center can offer
resources on gender and women in peace-building, hold seminars and discussions on topics such as
gender and conflict (involving local and national organizations and networks such as FOKUPERS, the
Office for the Promotion of Gender and Equality, and Alola) and organize trainings that double as
networking opportunities for women.

Open House events offer another possibility to focus attention on special themes that are of particular
relevance to female partners, and should rotate between the offices in different districts to encourage the
participation of partners who may face challenges with transportation. The format of these events should
be flexible to allow for children to be present and be scheduled with explicit sensitivity to household
responsibilities. Female partners could be engaged in dialogues on how program activities and resources
can be more useful to women in communities. The SGDN could be encouraged to discuss and evaluate
collaboratively the impact of donor policy and practice on women’s participation in development.

Belun should tap into the Columbia University network to learn about other successful models of
engaging women in conflict prevention and acquiring resources for partners to use in developing gender-
sensitive community programs. In response to evidence that TL faces severe challenges of gender
discrimination and domestic violence, particular effort should be made to evaluate the impact of various
project components on the gender dynamics in TL. In order to be in a position to be able to respond
appropriately to the special needs of women and women’s groups, Belun should also continuously assess
its own internal staff gender balance and make adjustments as necessary.

**Recommendation 10: Facilitate community-based conflict assessments as participatory processes of
identifying and analyzing conflict dynamics and generating possible solutions to problems.**

Belun can support partners in conducting conflict assessments within their communities, encouraging
wide and diverse participation in these initiatives and raising awareness among partners of existing
concerns and tensions within their areas. Eliciting concerns in a participatory process that engages
members from a variety of groups in the community will greatly increase the potential for initiatives to
effectively reduce tensions and prevent conflict. By acknowledging concerns before programs are
implemented, partners have an opportunity to manage expectations and revise project designs to ensure
the anticipated outcomes are appropriate to the expressed concerns. Communities will benefit from
increased participation in development and dialogue on community concerns, potentially catalyzing other
local responses to tensions.

Belun could invite groups to present or share the findings of their community conflict assessments at
seminars or Open House events. Allowing partners to exchange information about conflict factors and
solutions in this way would be instrumental in creating understanding and awareness of conflict dynamics
that are common to many communities. An additional benefit would be the potential to turn the
experience of past successes and failures into lessons learned. Furthermore the opportunity for
participants to share their evaluations and analyses could be an empowering experience.

A further recommendation would be for Belun to develop the practice of incorporating conflict analysis
exercises into their regular Open House meetings. Since it is possible that it will take time before some
communities are at a point where they are prepared to conduct their own assessments, this would be a
means of keeping the subject alive for them in the interim. Having an ongoing discussion about conflict
issues and dynamics will build partners’ analytical skills over time and keep participants focused on the
importance and relevance of their work in relation to conflict prevention. Furthermore it would help
Belun monitor the conflict situation over time and gain a greater understanding of the impact of their
projects on the conflict environment.
**Recommendation 11: Encourage and support greater and more active participation of youth in community-based initiatives and increase general understanding of their role in the post-conflict development process.**

Belun should encourage and emphasize the importance of youth participation in all project activities. Increased youth participation in initiatives that aim to respond to tensions, especially by individuals involved in martial arts groups, can have a tremendous impact on communities. Empowering youth with positive opportunities and alternatives to conflict-promoting activities can greatly reduce their incentives to participate in destructive actions. Belun can use its district offices as local resource centers for youth interested in peace-building, providing literature and research material on relevant topics and organizing activities such as dialogues and training workshops for youth. Regional youth networks and organizations should be invited to participate in District Open House events or to give presentations at such gatherings, and partners working closely with youth in community-based initiatives should be given extra support.

The development center should be used as a forum to facilitate mentoring relationships and collaboration between university students, development organizations and youth groups, allowing students to get practical experience on development issues and promoting opportunities for young people to contribute positively to development in their communities. Organizations should also be encouraged to work with students and youth through internships or project specific support with an aim to develop longer-term partnerships. Engaging youth in community-based conflict assessments would also provide a good opportunity to increase the participation of this group in pertinent and constructive activities that promote peace-building.

**XI. Gauging impact and measuring success**

In the past few years, international development organizations have increasingly emphasized the need to focus on monitoring and evaluating the impact of their work and this is no different in the field of conflict resolution and prevention. The burning question so often raised is: *How do we know that we have contributed to building peace or preventing conflict?* The answer, unsatisfactory as it may be, is that we do not know for sure. A study conducted for the University of Ulster’s International Conflict Research (INCORE) concludes that “because conflict resolution interventions are often small, and because so many variables shape the link between an intervention and the prospects of peace, analyzing the link is extremely difficult.”\(^77\) A report commissioned by the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of the Joint Utstein Study of Peace-building, echoes this finding.\(^78\) It states that “In short, any attempt to attribute positive overall change to one project or group of projects has a misleading starting point” noting however that “each might make a contribution”.\(^79\) The authors therefore suggest that projects be evaluated on the basis of their fit with an overall peace-building strategy. Thus one can conclude that for Belun, in using this approach, it would be appropriate to conduct an evaluation of its work in the context of USAID’s overall country strategy for conflict management in TL.\(^80\)

Nevertheless, CICR also ascribes to the broad thinking laid out by the *Reflecting on Peace Project* (RPP), an impressive endeavor by the Cambridge-based NGO Collaborative for Development Action, which notes that a peace program is effective in contributing to “peace writ large” (peace in the country) if it

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\(^{78}\) The Joint Utstein Peacebuilding Study was developed by the Evaluation Departments of the foreign development cooperation ministries of Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the UK to carry out a survey of peacebuilding experiences and identify key findings for analysis and comparison. The first report was issued in April 2004 and is available at [http://www.prio.no/files/file44563_rapport_1.04_webutgave.pdf](http://www.prio.no/files/file44563_rapport_1.04_webutgave.pdf).

\(^{79}\) Utstein report p59.

\(^{80}\) USAID’s two stated objectives in TL are 1) institutional and policy changes that support private sector development including the revitalization of the local economy; and 2) strengthening democracy and good governance.
leads beneficiaries to develop peace initiatives, produces (or contributes to the creation of) political institutions to handle conflict grievances, prompts people to resist violence and provocation and results in an increase in people’s security. Based on the assumption that Belun’s project is designed to respond to conflict factors and aims to meet these criteria, the following indicators are suggested for gauging progress in the next three to five years:

- Number or percentage of participating communities conducting systematic participatory conflict assessments facilitated by NGO/CBO leaders
- Number of project proposals and/or implemented activities that include cooperative arrangements between NGOs/CBOs and local or central government
- Number of project proposals or implemented activities that include cooperative arrangements between two or more participating NGOs/CBOs
- Number of NGOs/CBOs that hold regular meetings with community youth to discuss conflict issues and development projects
- Number of NGOs/CBOs that have effective information dissemination policies and procedures (within their community about their own activities)
- Number of NGOs/CBOs that promote or contribute to information dissemination and exchange within their communities
- Number of NGOs/CBOs that have arrangements to connect university students with community youth in development projects
- Number of communities with conflict mitigation teams set up (3-5 people, responsible for monitoring conflict environment) that include an NGO leader, a member of the local government and at least one youth; should also develop an established communication plan.
- Number of NGO/CBO leaders attending peace education workshops
- Number of NGO/CBO members attending/participating in the implementation of conflict seminars/roundtables
- Number of partner communities exhibiting improved systematic donor coordination
- Number of NGOs/CBOs conducting gender sensitive evaluations of development activities

Lastly, it is recommended that the team monitor on a continual basis for any unintended positive or negative results from the project and its activities, analyze this information and respond programmatically in a contextually meaningful way. Lessons learned should be recorded and shared with partners and other relevant groups as part of the effort to improve communication and cooperation.

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Annex 1. Individuals and Groups Consulted

**Government of Timor Leste**

**District Government of Bobonaro**
Manuel Gomen de Araujo, Superintendent of Education
Jose Goncalves, Vice-Administrator, Atabae Sub-District
Beatrice Ximenes Martins, Deputy District Administrator
Arcanjo Ribeiro Tilman, District Development Officer

**District Government of Oe-cusse**
Fransisco Bano, Vice District Administrator
Domingos Maniquin, District Development Officer

**Ministry of State Administration**
Jill Engen, Advisor
Archangelo Leite, National Director, Territorial Administration

**National Directorate of Planning and External Assistance**
Domingos Marques, NGO-Government Liaison Officer

**National Parliament**
Alquilino Guterres, Parliamentarian

**National Police**
Pedro Belo, Commander Baucau

**Timor Leste Embassy, Washington, D.C.**
Constancio Pinto, Representative

**Timor Leste Mission to UN**
Jose Luis Guterres, Ambassador

**Civil Society Organizations and Representatives**

**Catholic Church Oe-cusse**
Padre Ermegildo Almeida

**CAVR**
Kieran Dwyer, Advisor

**Centro Feto Oe-cusse**
Liliana Hei, Coordinator
Francesca da Cunha

**Chefe Suco Costa, Pante Makassar A, Oe-cusse**
Manuel Luis Ribeiro

**CPD-RDTL**
Antonio Tomas Amaral da Costa (Ai-tahan Matak), Coordinator
Jose Martins, (Teke-liras), Vice-Coordinator
Focus Groups with CICR-FLBM Partners
1. Escola Primaria Maucale, Baucau
2. Grupo Marines, Maliana, Bobonaro
3. Juventude Balibo, Balibo, Bobonaro
4. Juventude Kontra Violencia, Atabae, Bobonaro
5. Juventude Maliana, Maliana, Bobonaro
6. Mingguan Lifau Post, Pante-Makassar, Oe-cusse
7. April Open House, Dili
   COBHA, Cova Lima
   Denore, Liquica
   Dikin Foun Soibada, Manatuto
   Efordan, Viqueque
   Elsaday, Dili
   Fo Liman Ba Malu-Ke’e Rai, Baucau
   Grupo Feto Maubara, Liquica
   Grupo Fila Rai, Baucau
   Grupo Haburas Capacidade Comunidade, Baucau
   Grupo Ita Nia, Ainaro
   Grupo Juventude Kontra Violencia Atabae, Bobonaro
   Grupo Laclo, Aileu
   Grupo Likede’e Foundation, Liquica
   Grupo Maubara, Liquica
   Grupo Oan Kiak-Seical Oan Kiak, Baucau
   Grupo Raenaba Maubara, Liquica
   Haburas Lelan, Dili
   Hakaras, Cova Lima
   Harii Capacidade ba Juventude, Baucau
   Hatilosfoun, Lautem
   IMPESA, Oe-cusse
   Instituto Cultura Nacional Timor Leste, Dili
   Kelompok Tani Hakmatek Maubisse, Ainaro
   Klibur Hit An Hamutuk, Baucau
   Le Kede’e Foundation, Liquica
   Lebukoe Maubara, Liquica
   Leno Dalan, Ermera
Mata Dalan, Dili
Moris Foun Atabae, Bobonaro
Naroman Timor Foun, Ainaro
Organizasi Pemuda Teknik Profisional, Baucau
Probem, Dili
Raimard, Dili

**International Organizations in Timor Leste**

**ARD**
Rod Nixon, Advisor

**Asian Development Bank**
Zacharias da Costa, Inter-Agency Coordinator

**CARE**
Bishnu Pokhrel, Capacity-building Manager
Jill Umbach, Country Director

**CICR**
Rebecca Engel, Program Director
Brian Hanley, Project Director

**International Organization for Migration**
Luiz Vieira, Chief of Mission, Dili
Joao Bernardo, Oe-cusse

**National Democratic Institute**
Sandra Veloso, Senior Program Manager Civic Forum

**Oxfam Australia**
Jeff Yoder, Team Leader

**UNDP**
Naoki Takyo, ARR and Chief, Poverty Cluster
Endre Vigeland, Program Officer, Governance Unit

**UNHCR**
Kai Nielsen, Representative

**World Bank**
Rui Hanjam, Social Development Officer
Annex 2. List of Documents Consulted


Land and Property Directorate, National University of Timor Leste and ARD. *State Property Administration/Lease of Government and Private Property*. Dili, October 2003.


Muscat, Robert. *Investing in Peace: How Development Aid Can Prevent or Promote Peace* 2002


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Annex 3: Interview Protocol

Introduction and purpose of the conflict assessment

In recent years international organizations, humanitarian agencies and the development community have begun to approach the challenge of violent conflict with the notion that there are a number of predictable patterns to conflict. Understanding how these patterns play out in national settings is an essential step in designing targeted conflict prevention programs.

We are an independent research team from Columbia University's Center for International Conflict Resolution (CICR) that is based in New York. Our objective in conducting this study is to develop a detailed, in-depth understanding of the underlying causes and sources of conflict and conflict dynamics in Timor Leste and to learn about the approaches that state institutions, international and local NGOs and other actors have taken to manage and respond to conflict factors in Timor Leste.

The assessment will also examine the specific impact of current programs and projects of local and international NGOs as these relate to conflict dynamics. This research aims to provide recommendations to Planning Assistance, CICR and CARE in finalizing a comprehensive implementation plan for the “Strengthening the NGO Sector” project (SNS) that is geared toward reducing conflict vulnerability in the short and medium term as well as strategies to have a long-term positive impact on conflict dynamics. This may include initiatives to target root causes of conflict, supporting peace capacities and affecting the incentives or disincentives for violence among actors.

At the completion of our research we will be preparing a final report for the Planning Assistance, CICR and CARE team outlining the findings and conclusions of the research and recommendations. We will not be making individual attributions in this report but we would like to ask if you are comfortable with our listing your name in the list of sources consulted.

The two parts of the Interview

First we would like to ask you a few general questions about your perceptions of conflict in Timor Leste in the present and near-term. After that we would like to focus on the capacity of the work of your organization (agency, institute, etc.), to find out more about its current activities in this area and to hear how you see this work in relationship to the conflict issues we discuss in the first part of our conversation.

Identifying symptoms of conflict dynamics in East Timor

Would you say that there is conflict in Timor Leste at present?

What are some of the most common ways in which conflict currently manifests itself in Timor Leste (in your region)?

Sources and proximate causes

What do you consider to be the main sources of these conflicts? (economic, social, ethnic, political, religious, etc.)
Have these factors been worsening, improving, or staying about the same as they have been in the past three years?

Are there more, less or about the same number of factors contributing to conflict in the past three years?

What collective actions (including policies) contribute to conflict?

**Actors**

Who are the parties involved in conflict in Timor Leste and what are their motives / incentives?

What awareness do they have of their capacity to influence conflict positively or negatively?

What are their peace incentives?

What is the relationship between the parties?

What do you think the relationship of NGOs and CBOs has been to conflict dynamics in TL?

Would you say that NGOs and CBOs have been managing and responding constructively to conflict factors and community needs in TL? How does this vary between the thirteen districts?

What would allow NGOs and CBOs to be more capable of responding to conflict factors?

**Windows of Vulnerability**

What kind of political or economic events have spurred aggrieved groups to violent conflict in the region over the past year?

What expected future events might spur groups to engage in violence over the next six to twelve months? [Departure of UNMISET? An election?]

What do you think is the likelihood of conflict becoming more violent in the next six to twelve months? Very Likely, likely, possible, not likely.

**Peace Capacities**

What are some of the options for reducing conflict factors that you are aware of having been explored already?

What specific changes in policy or behavior of international actors may reduce tensions in the area?

What peace capacities currently exist?

Now let us talk more specifically about the activities of your organization (agency, institute, etc.) and how in your perception this work relates to the conflict dynamics in Timor Leste.

To conclude, we would like to ask if there are any other relevant factors that we have not yet discussed today that you consider to be important in understanding conflict dynamics in Timor Leste?
Annex 4: Focus Group Facilitation Notes

FACILITATOR’S GUIDE

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

*Welcome* participants and thank them for their time; introduce Sigrid, Sunita and Luis. *Explain* that the aim of this focus group discussion is to collect information for a conflict assessment that CICR is conducting in Timor Leste. Give CICR background and involvement in Timor Leste if necessary.

*Define* what we mean by conflict assessment. **Briefly outline** CICR’s involvement in and approach to conflict assessment: *We believe that the deepest understanding of the causes and dynamics of any conflict, as well as the design of the most appropriate approaches to address tensions and prevent future violence within a society, rests with the members of the communities experiencing the conflict. It is our challenge to help articulate and capture this valuable information and insights in order to improve our work here in Timor Leste.*

*Explain* the purpose of this assessment: *“This research aims to increase CICR’s understanding of how our work and that of our partners contributes to the reduction of conflict and to inform the design of better approaches for supporting our partners in their initiatives to address tensions in their communities.”*

*Outline* the broad objectives for the focus group:

- *to collect thoughts and perceptions about where there are tensions between groups in Timor Leste and what the underlying causes of these conflicts (tensions) are;*
- *to identify expected or possible future events that are likely to increase conflict between groups in Timor Leste over the next six to twelve months;*
- *to hear perceptions about the capacity of the state to manage and respond to conflict factors in Timor Leste and how this varies between districts;*
- *to identify past and current policies and activities by CICR and other actors that are successful in reducing tensions in Timor Leste;*
- *to gather suggestions and ideas for how in future CICR can best support local partners in their work to reduce conflict (tensions).*

*Ask* participants if they understand the focus group objectives. If not, explain again using different words.

*Stress that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions we will be asking or the exercises we will be doing. Explain that it is important to us that people feel comfortable speaking their own thoughts from their own experiences.*
Emphasize that the information we are collecting will be used exclusively for our own purposes to generate an analytical report but we will not be making individual attributions.

Ask each participant to introduce him or herself and share whatever key information they believe is important to know about them.

EXERCISE: IDENTIFYING SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES OF CONFLICT

Explain that before trying to understand what is causing conflict in Timor Leste we first need to locate where conflict exists and identify what signs we look for to let us know that there is conflict. These are often referred to as symptoms.

Explain the meaning in this context of the word symptom: a visible sign or indication of the existence of societal tensions. (provide the analogy of a fever being a symptom of a disease) [Examples can include: strikes, demonstrations or other protests; movement in populations (refugees, IDPs, emigration of minorities or elites); increase in membership of armed groups, increase in references to inter-societal ethnic differences by politicians or media, etc.]

Invite participants to reflect for two minutes on the question: “What things can we identify in Timor Leste that indicate that there are tensions or instability?” (What lets us know that there is conflict? Participants can be encouraged to tell stories from their experiences that demonstrate symptoms of conflict.)

Elicit and record symptoms.

Ask participants to identify whether this symptom is recent or has been present for a long time and what its trend is (increasing? decreasing? stable?)

Record responses.

Ask participants to take each symptom in turn and think about and try to identify its immediate cause. (Tell them to do this it is helpful to ask why did this happen? Why did so and so do that?) Elicit and record causes.

As each cause is being recorded, ask participants to dig deeper to uncover what might be underneath that cause.
Capture responses.

Finally, ask participants to consider the scope of the symptoms and causes (“Does this affect everyone or just some people in the community” “Does this conflict exist only in one or in many communities in Timor Leste?”)
Record answers.

Ask participants to think about and comment on whether any patterns or lessons strike them from looking at the list. (E.g. more economic than political; localized in one part of the country, affect only a particular segment of society, etc.)
ACTORS ANALYSIS

Explain to the group that now we will take a closer look at the groups or individuals who are involved in conflict and their relationships in the communities. By this we mean parties who are increasing instability or acting destructively or violently; as well as groups that are increasing peace. Stress that while this list could be endless, we want to focus here specifically on the main actors.

Invite participants to reflect for two minutes on the questions: “Who are the principal actors engaged in conflict in Timor Leste? What are one or two characteristics that can most accurately describe this group or individual?” Participants should individually brainstorm a list of the principal actors on a sheet of paper.

After a few minutes, give each participant in the room the opportunity to share their list. Create a master list on a flip chart adding all actors identified without any edits.

Draw a matrix for listing actors, positions (demands), interests, and relationships (connections). Ask participants to help complete the matrix.

FACILITATED DISCUSSION

Explain that for the last part of the focus group we will be asking a few questions in a discussion format that we hope will generate an interesting conversation, and that everyone is invited to share their ideas and thoughts as they feel comfortable.

WINDOWS OF VULNERABILITY

What political or economic events have caused a sharp increase in conflict or led to violence in Timor Leste in the past six to twelve months?

What expected or possible future events can you identify that are likely to increase conflict between groups in Timor Leste over the next six to twelve months?

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE REDUCTION OF TENSIONS AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN TIMOR LESTE

What is the capacity of the state to manage and respond to conflict factors in Timor Leste and how does this vary between districts?

How has the work of NGOs and CBOs affected conflict in Timor Leste since 2002?

Reflecting on the symptoms and causes of conflict identified in the earlier exercise (point to the list which should still be visible in the room), can you identify any particular activities that address any of these symptoms/causes?

What past and current policies and activities by CICR have been/are successful in reducing tensions in Timor Leste?

What are some of your thoughts and suggestions for how in future CICR can best support local partners in their work to reduce conflict (tensions)?