

Dynamics of martial arts related conflict and violence in Timor-Leste

NGO Belun Policy Brief May 2014



This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Commission through the National Authorizing Office (NAO) as part of the Democracy and Development in Action through the Media and Empowerment (DAME) program. The contents of this report are the sole responsibility of Belun and do not reflect the position of the European Commission, NAO or any other organization

Methodology

This policy brief and the accompanying report are based on focus group discussions and interviews conducted with key informants such as MA members and leaders, community leaders and community members, police, government officials and civil society actors in the districts of Dili, Baucau, Ermera, Bobonaro and Covalima. The field research was conducted between May and July 2013. In total, there were 137 participants in the focus group discussions (FGD) and interviews, including 119 men and 18 women. Additionally, this research was informed by a literature review, media monitoring, EWER conflict monitoring incident data, and a national survey of community perceptions of martial arts conducted in September 2013, involving 831 participants across all districts.

Acknowledgements

This Policy Brief is summarised from the full research report, *'Dynamics of Martial Arts related Conflict and Violence in Timor Leste'*, written by NGO Belun as part of the *Democracy and Development in Action through the Media and Empowerment* (DAME) program. The report captures community and key stakeholder perspectives, as well as conflict monitoring data from Belun's *Early Warning Early Response* system. Electronic versions of this policy brief and the full report are available to download from Belun's website: www.belun.tl/en/publications. This Policy Brief was written by Celestino Ximenes and Hannah Smith.

INTRODUCTION

Whilst members of some Martial Arts Groups¹ (MAG) were seen as clandestine heroes of the resistance struggle in Timor-Leste, their notoriety since independence has grown following frequent incidents of violence and ongoing inter-group rivalries, in many parts of the country. Trails of MAG graffiti remain a visible reminder of how some members of the now outlawed groups have misused their MAG identities to engage in gang-like behavior, and to inflame or settle personal and political disputes.

These days, MAG-initiated violence has predominantly become a youth issue. There is no doubt that youth, as future leaders and as a very large proportion of the population, are the key to unlocking a stable and prosperous future for the young nation of Timor-Leste. Whilst MAG membership includes those of all ages and from all sections of society, including politicians, community leaders and senior members of the security forces, MAG violence is perpetrated almost exclusively by boys and young men. As shown in Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3 (below), MAG violence has now stabilized at relatively low rates in comparison to other youth-initiated violence. However, communities are expressing deep concern that all of these categories of youth-related violence will continue to occur unless the underlying causes are addressed.

NGO Belun's latest research report, *Dynamics of Martial Arts related Violence and Conflict in Timor-Leste* finds that a ban on MAGs will not be effective as a 'stand-alone' solution to end MAG violence. MAG related incidents, along with youth-violence more generally, stem from deep-set structural tensions relating to unequal access to public goods and services (such as education and security); intense competition and unequal distribution and access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment); as well as the jealousies that are borne out of such social and economic conditions.

NGO Belun commends the Council of Ministers, security institutions and the Secretary of State for Youth and Sport (SEJD) through the Martial Arts Regulatory Commission (CRAM) for the ongoing attention that has been given to ending the problem of MAG violence; particularly through the creation of the Martial Arts Law 10/2008, the subsequent Government Resolutions to suspend MAG activities through the electoral period and the disbanding of the three most problematic MAGs. Belun also notes, however, the need for broader consensus-building and dissemination of these laws and regulations to MAG members. Furthermore, Belun urges government, civil society, MAGs, community leaders and donors to work together towards a more holistic and constructive approach to more effectively target the root causes and end MAG violence.

¹In Timor-Leste, defining the term Martial Arts Groups is not straightforward. There are an estimated 15 – 20 MAGs, each with long and complex histories and varied membership. While some are celebrated for their contribution to the resistance struggle, a number were introduced from Indonesia, further complicating members' political and personal affiliations. Some observers say these groups were introduced to complicate the social fabric, cause internal divisions and distract people from resistance politics. Since independence, communal violence and rivalries between groups has sporadically created insecurity. MAGs PSHT and KORK were allegedly involved in much of the violence of the crisis from 2006-07. Not all MAGs, however, have such a notorious reputation. A number of groups have steered clear of street violence and are well-regarded as disciplined and peaceful sporting organisations, including the popular groups Tae Kwan Do, Karate and Kempo. Members of three groups in particular: Kera Sakti, KORK and PSHT, are well known for their involvement in continued rivalries and incidents of violence, and were issued a permanent ban by the government in July 2013. James Scambury's 2006 report, *A survey of gangs and youth groups in Dili, Timor-Leste* is a useful reference for further information on the various MAGs, their constituencies and their histories.

Martial Arts, Student and Youth Violence – EWER Incident Data²

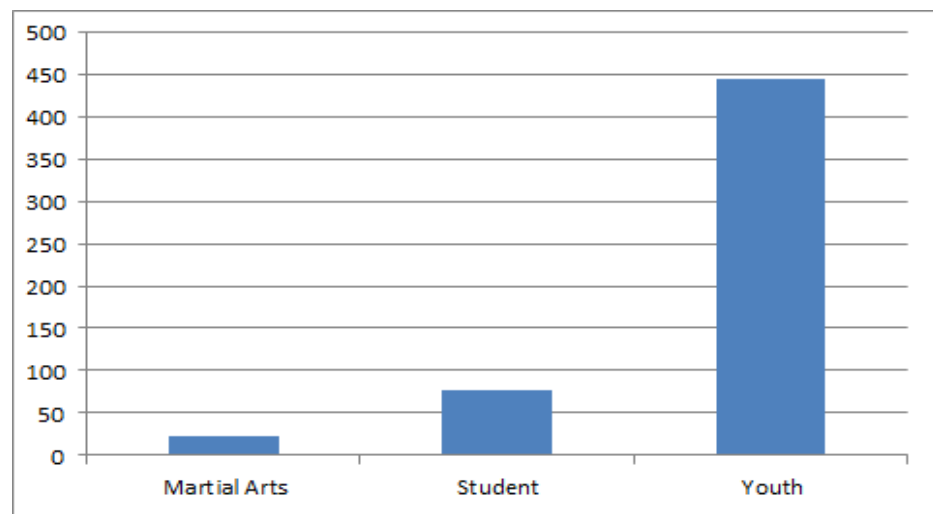


Figure 1: Total number of MA, Youth & Student related incidents - February 2012 to September 2013, EWER.

Figure 1 shows that 545 incidents were initiated by youths, students or MAG members between February 2012 and September 2013. Youth incidents are considerably high (445) compared to student- (78) and Martial Arts- (22) initiated incidents. A total of 1365 incidents were recorded throughout this period.

Figure 2 shows the proportion of Martial Arts, Youth & Student initiated violence, calculated as a percentage of the monthly incident total, for the months of February 2012 to September 2013. The data shows that youths account for the highest proportion of total incidents since it was introduced in February 2012. While the proportion of violence initiated by students and MAO members is much lower than youth proportion (less than 10% on average).

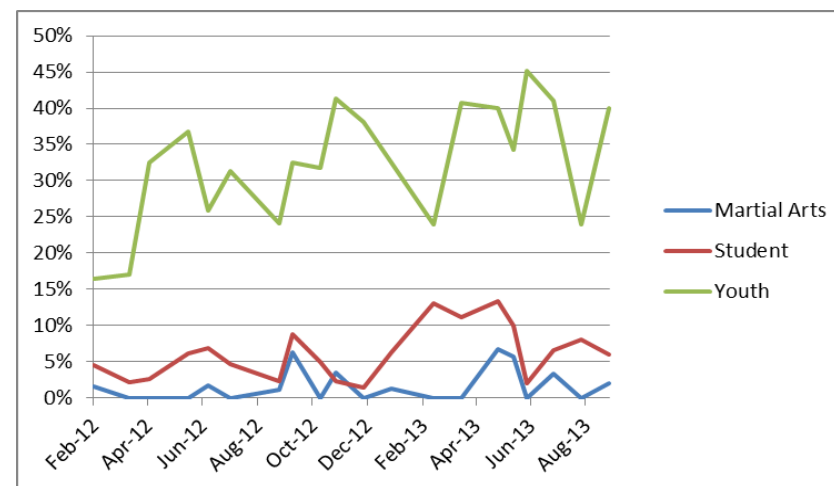


Figure 2: Proportion of Martial Arts, Student and Youth violence – February 2012 to September 2013, EWER.

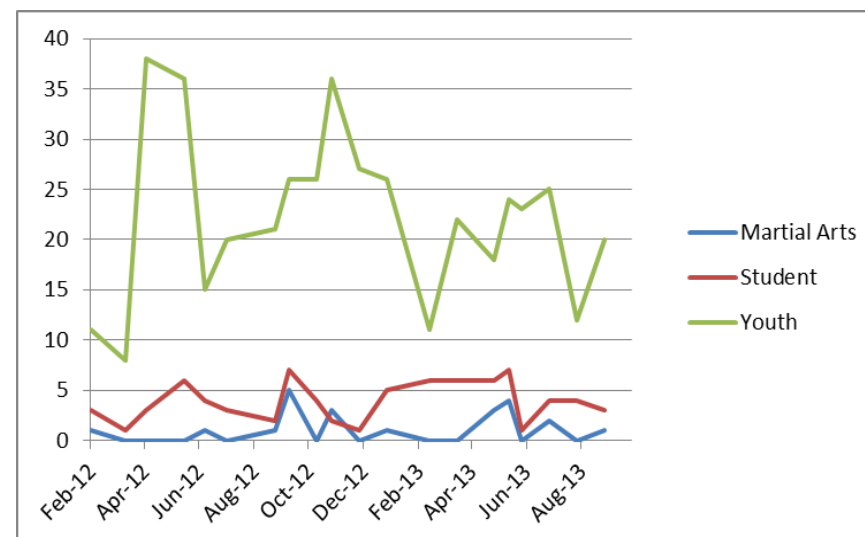


Figure 3: Number of MA, youth & student related incidents recorded per month – February 2012 to September 2013, EWER.

² All data is from Belun's *Early Warning, Early Response* (EWER) conflict monitoring system. For more information on EWER, please visit www.belun.tl. As the incident category 'youth' was introduced in February 2012, youth violence data for before February 2012 is not available.

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This Policy Brief identifies a number of factors underlying and driving MAG violence, and makes targeted recommendations to address these.

ALCOHOL, WEAPONS & PERSONAL VENDETTAS: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MAG VIOLENCE

“I went to Samalete because I heard the incident was related to martial arts and I wanted to investigate. In the end, it wasn’t a Martial Arts related dispute, but a long standing private dispute related to land ownership.”

-MAG Leader, Ermera

Very often the root causes of incidents of MAG and youth violence are tensions relating to land disputes, domestic violence, social jealousies and inequality, and unemployment. In rural areas, land disputes in particular were found to be the most prevalent cause of incidents of alleged MAG violence. Weapons such as samurai swords, machetes and knives – all widely available to youth – are often used in MAG violence. Alcohol or drug abuse often fuels the escalation of these incidents. The main perpetrators of MAG violence are young men aged around 15 – 25 years old, with MAG violence most frequently occurring in densely populated urban areas, largely due to the trend of rural – urban migration associated with the seeking of employment and educational opportunities.

Recommendations:

In order to avoid confusion and the escalation of tensions once the land laws are implemented, and in order to provide accessible, reliable and non-violent mechanisms for the resolution of land disputes, which can become a root-cause of MAO related incidents:

- The National Parliament should immediately continue discussions with the objective of passing the draft Land Laws;
- Government and civil society should continue to work together in raising public awareness of the contents and implications of the Land Laws as well as the available pathways for Alternative Dispute Resolution and mediation;
- The Ministry of Justice, through the National Directorate for Land, Property and Cadastral Services’, Department of Mediation and donor agencies should expand funding for continued support of dispute mediation programs.

In order to reduce the levels of alcohol and drug abuse that often fuels MAG and youth related violence:

- The National Parliament should discuss and develop a law to regulate the production and distribution of alcohol, with an age limit to prevent the sale of alcohol to youth;
- NGO PRADET should continue to be supported in its well-regarded education programs for PNTL and community members on the harmful impacts of illicit drugs and alcohol on physical and mental wellbeing, as well as community cohesion;
- These programs should be expanded through public awareness campaigns led by the Ministry of Health in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Secretary of State for Youth and Sport (SEJD). These should be conducted through school curriculums and within communities;
- The Ministry of Security and Defence, and Ministry of Finance should initiate more systematic inter-agency coordination of F-FDTL Maritime Police, Border Patrol Unit and Customs Unit in preventing the production, importation and circulation of narcotics in Timor-Leste;
- Belun welcomes the inclusion of Timor-Leste under the mandate of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to promote the rule of law and health to address drugs and organized crime in Timor-Leste.

In order to reduce the circulation and misuse of deadly weapons such as guns, samurai swords and machetes which are often used during incidents of MAG and youth violence:

- The National Parliament should discuss and develop a law to regulate the production, sale and ownership of weapons including guns, samurai swords and machetes;
- PNTL should systematically investigate any reports of civilian possession of firearms and confiscate and destroy any firearms detected within communities.

In order to alleviate the pressures of rural – urban youth migration in densely populated urban centres:

- The Ministry of Education and the Secretariat of State for Professional Training and Employment Policy (SEPFOP) should prioritise the development of formal higher-education institutions and increase the number of vocational training opportunities at the sub-district level to better serve the needs of rural youth.

ORGANISATIONS OR DISORGANISATION? INTERNAL DISCIPLINE & CONTROL

“Often MAG members don’t follow the internal regulations of their group. MAG leaders need to constantly remind members that it is a sport. MAG members need to understand the principles of self-control and discipline that should be central to Martial Arts”

- Youth representative, Ermera

According to various claims, the three banned MAGs, PSHT, KORK and Kera Sakti each have somewhere between 5,000 to 9,000 members. Despite the large scale of these groups, an effective framework for orientating new members, communication and enforcement of good behavioural conduct is not evident. Many respondents described MAGs as disorganised and suggested that many young members lack an understanding of the sport, particularly the aspects of discipline and self-control. Due to a failure of internal communication, control and discipline mechanisms within MAGs, members have been able to mobilise their cohorts in settling personal disputes and conflicts. Participants declared that whilst most MAGs do have internal regulations, they are not organised enough nor have the adequate internal-control and communication structures to enforce these regulations effectively. Thus, some MA members are unaware of the rules and regulations of their group. This provides an important lesson for those groups still practicing, in that strengthening internal communication, controls and disciplinary mechanisms can contribute to minimising potential outbreaks of MAG violence in the future.

Recommendations

In order to establish sound communication, control and discipline mechanisms within the remaining MAGs and to promote good behavioural conduct of members:

- The Secretary of State for Youth and Sport (SEJD), through the Commission for the Regulation of Martial Arts (CRAM), must oblige all MAGs to document and make publicly available their internal regulations. Furthermore, CRAM should assign resources to providing technical assistance to MAGs to i) review and improve internal regulations and ii) create processes and structures that ensure the regular dissemination of this information to all members;

- MAG leaders must enforce regulations and apply sanctions to those members who do not comply, as well as cooperate with police and community leaders to resolve cases where members have been involved in violence or crime;
- MAG leaders, community leaders and community members should cooperate fully with police in order to ensure that all violent crimes committed by members are reported and they are held accountable for their actions.

POLICE IMPARTIALITY AND CRIMINAL IMPUNITY PERPETUATES MAG VIOLENCE

“Sometimes the police have family members who are involved and when police finally respond people’s houses are already burnt down and the children responsible have already run away. The suspects are never captured to face justice... they say it’s been resolved but to date nothing has truly been resolved and the problems continue.”

– Community Member

The impact of the Martial Arts Law (No. 10/2008) in preventing MA related violence has been limited by the effectiveness of its implementation. Sanctions for members who breach the law are not clear, and respondents suggested that some members continually breach it without consequence. Furthermore, many respondents claimed that even if the police did detain suspects, the cases would often never be formally processed. The impartiality of police in dealing with MAG cases was repeatedly questioned by community members. Particularly in Dili and Baucau where a culture of impunity is strongly believed to contribute to the continuation of MAG violence despite the Government mandated suspension of MAG activities

“It is vital to enforce the laws well – justice must be served to those who violate a law”

- Public Servant, Zumalai

Recommendations

In order to address concerns about the partiality of law enforcement and to prevent a culture of impunity from perpetuating MAG and youth violence:

- The Ministry of Justice and the Secretary of State for Security, through PNTL and in cooperation with CRAM should actively enforce all criminal laws, including Martial Arts Law no. 10/2008, to the full extent without partiality or prejudice. This should apply to all citizens, regardless of affiliation to MAG groups;
- The Secretary of State for Security and the PNTL must strengthen internal disciplinary mechanisms for police and ensure that disciplinary procedures are followed for all cases where misconduct is suspected, imposing adequate penalties on those found guilty;
- The PNTL should strengthen community policing, increasing police presence in MAG and youth-conflict prone areas such as Beto in Dili and Kaibada in Baucau. In addition, police intelligence services should be strengthened through the fostering of technical criminal investigation and analysis skills in order to better prevent, detect and respond to conflict;
- Belun strongly supports the new initiative by the PNTL Community Policing Unit and NZAid-funded Timor-Leste Community Policing Program (TLCPP) to begin using a Community Policing Bus as a tool to improve PNTL visibility in Beto;
- The Ministry of Justice needs to cooperate closely with community police and community leaders to ensure that cases of MAG and youth violent crime are processed within the formal justice system to the full extent of the law.

FRUSTRATION OVER INEQUALITY AND UNEMPLOYMENT ESCALATES TENSIONS

“The problem is not the MAGs themselves but the lack of activities and employment for youth. When young people have no responsibilities they sit in the street and make trouble. If you ban martial arts, they’ll still be unemployed, and they’re still be sitting in the street causing problems. Young people today need the assistance and direction of the Government and their families to help them become peaceful and successful”

– Community Leader, Dili

Frustrations around centralised development processes, nepotism, corruption and a lack of opportunities, employment and services for youth are sentiments echoed by MAG members and young people across the country. These structural strains, particularly a lack of employment, have fuelled youth discontent, and constitute a concerning trend and risk factor in youth and MAG violence.

A high birthrate and youth bulge means that every year a larger cohort enters the labour market. As job creation has not matched this population growth, competition for employment is expected to continue to intensify. High levels of competition for relatively few job opportunities is a source of escalating tension, with youth venting frustrations over a lack of access to work, education and training. Furthermore, many are angered by a perceived favouritism of veterans and nepotism toward a small group of political elites in the allocation of government contracts and resources. Some communities are frustrated about the use of imported rather than local labour by some government contractors.

“A lot of youth development programs, such as those from the Secretary of State for Professional Training and Employment (SEPFOP) are centralised. People in rural areas haven’t yet felt the benefits of such programs and are feeling abandoned. Because of this, there needs to be more dedicated rural programs to build rural people’s skills and develop rural human resources”

–Community leader, Maliana Villa

Outside the district and sub-district capitals a lack of access to development programs, employment opportunities and formal educational institutions means that young people are migrating en masse to urban centres such as Maliana, Baucau and Dili. This leads to a concentration of unemployed and unskilled youth. This, combined with a growing sense of inequality and frustration, as well as the predominance of masculine group identities is exacerbating the risk of increasing youth disaffection and violence.

In MAG conflict-prone areas many youth and community members are calling on the government to prioritise job creation. In Beto (Dili) for example, community leaders observed that the employment of local youth on the Comoro Bridge project as well as the emigration of young job seekers out of the country has had a positive impact on reducing the number of young men sitting idly in the street and subsequently contributing to the reduction of incidents of MAG and youth conflict. In the absence of labour intensive industries in Timor-Leste, the exportation of labour through bi-lateral agreements and foreign worker programs provides a valuable opportunity to ease pressure on the domestic labour market. Such programs could contribute to the development of more skilled and experienced workforce upon return. Furthermore, expected remittance of foreign earned incomes could contribute to alleviating economic hardship and tension within communities.

Recommendations:

In order to address the job shortages, competitive tension and jealousy amongst job seekers, and reduce the economic hardship in rural areas which leads to the concentration of disaffected and unemployed youth in urban centers:

- The Secretary of State for Professional Training and Employment Policy (SEPFOPE) should expand existing programming focusing on rural youth employment, and identify and fosters the specific skills and capacities required to drive agricultural and rural development and further develop sustainable and ongoing initiatives linked to labour intensive private sector development;
- The Government and private sector should prioritise local youth access to employment, contracts and training opportunities rather than imported labour and veterans, in the implementation of rural infrastructure and development projects;
- SEJD, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, civil society and donor agencies should prioritise programs and policies that promote and provide financial and material support to activities that facilitate self-employment (such as agriculture and small businesses), particularly in rural areas;
- Noting that access to rural markets is a key barrier to rural employment and economic development, the Government, through the Ministry of Public Works, is encouraged to prioritise the development of good road and transport infrastructure across the country;
- SEPFOPE should seek to expand and increase the number of programs that send Timorese workers overseas in order to reduce competitive pressures on the domestic labour market.

WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE? YOUTH CALL FOR ENTERTAINMENT

“In the past there were sporting activities which involved all the young people in the area, but we don’t have this anymore. If we have these kind of activities, the area will be calm again... When we don’t have these kind of activities, the kids just sit around in the street and look for problems”

– Veteran, Beto, Dili

There is concern that many disaffected youth lack entertainment and activities that can assist in transforming and replacing violent attitudes and behaviors. For example, during the Government mandated suspension of MAG activities, there were few alternative activities widely available to youth which could have replaced MAG activities and assisted in the transition. It is now important to ensure that there are alternatives to violence, to facilitate the transition away from MAG activities and towards peace, self-employment and community development.

Whilst the action of some MAG members in some areas has cast a dubious gang-like reputation over MAGs in the country, a number of legitimate and peaceful Martial Arts sporting groups such as Kempo, Tae Kwan Do and Karate continue to operate legally. These sporting organisations provide many young people with important avenues for physical, emotional and mental development. They feature a strong track record of peaceful practice, sound disciplinary elements with widely observed codes of conduct.

Recommendations:

In order to provide activities and entertainment that unites and motivates youth within their communities, as well as to replace the outlawed MAG activities with peaceful and constructive alternatives:

- SEJD, civil society and donor agencies should work together to provide incentives such as seed funding, training and mentoring for local youth entrepreneurship and small business activities;
- SEJD, community leaders and civil society should expand support for the development of sporting & cultural activities and entertainment, implemented through schools and SEJD youth centres, at the sub-district and suco level;
- SEJD should work together with MAG leaders and community leaders to provide financial support that promotes the continued development and expansion of well-run, peaceful martial arts sporting organisations such as Tae Kwan Do, Kempo and Karate.

CHILDREN NEED TO LEARN NON-VIOLENCE: THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

“In Railaco, there are a lot of conflicts arising because not all of the children have gone to school. Education is important.”

-Youth Representative, Ermera

Violence is a learned behavior. Non-violent attitudes and skills need to be taught, role-modeled and developed from childhood and throughout the formative years of a person's life. Many participants expressed concern that a failure of education at three levels – in the home, the community, and the formal school system – is contributing to increasing levels of youth violence, including MAG violence.

A number of participants suggested that a lack of guidance and discipline from parents and parental figures can lead some young people to fall into negative spirals of alcohol and drug use and street violence. NGO Belun's *EWER* data shows that incidences of MAG and youth violence are generally higher in densely populated urban areas, where young people have often migrated away from their parents and adult-authority figures in search of work and access to schools.

Much of the alleged MAG violence is perpetrated by high school students and often occurs at or in close proximity to schools. This provides a clear opportunity for interventions to work through the school system, through both the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. However, there are significant challenges to the delivery and quality of formal education in Timor-Leste.⁴ A key challenge is a lack of oversight from the Ministry of Education to the quality of education being delivered and a lack of responsiveness and guidance to resolve violence within the schoolyard.

Recommendations:

In order to promote peaceful, non-violent attitudes and behaviors amongst students and youth:

- The Ministry of Education should take strong action to stamp out corporal punishment which normalises violent behaviour to students. This should be included within the Code of Conduct for Educators across all levels of schooling, which should be finalised and enforced immediately. Non-violent methods of discipline should be employed, and non-violent engagement should be promoted through the school curriculum in conjunction with civic education on conflict transformation. This could include speakers from government, civil society, and community leaders;

⁴ For more information on the challenges to the quality of education in Timor-Leste, see Belun's Policy Brief, *Access and Opportunity in Education*, Dili July 2010.

- The Ministry of Education with the support of development partners working in the education sector, should make funding available and open a call for proposals for the delivery of a talk-back style early childhood education promotion program, through TVTL and/or national radio stations;
- Communities, parents and parental-figures are encouraged to provide good guidance and role modeling to children, particularly through improved and increased communication and through the use of non-violent methods of discipline;
- Belun applaud and encourage the continuation and extension of civil society-led programming such as Plan International Timor-Leste's delivery of parent education and support groups and community pre-schools, and Ba Futuru's delivery of teacher training for early childhood development and promotion of non-violence in schools;
- Community leaders should work together with parents, through local and cultural mechanisms (such as community dialogue) to build consensus that education is not the sole responsibility of the school system. Education and guidance of children should come from within the home **and** community;
- Government, civil society and community leaders must continue working together to combat domestic violence and violence against children by challenging and speaking out against harmful cultural norms associated with this form of violence. This requires strengthening the implementation and education of the domestic violence law at all levels of society, accompanied by the reliable provision of public support services and access to formal justice for domestic violence victims. It is important that these services are readily accessible from rural areas;
- The Ministry of Education, civil society and community leaders should continue to raise awareness and understanding of conflict transformation methods, particularly targeting students by building these programs into the school curriculum.

Case Study: The Peacebuilding Potential of MAG Members – The Transformation of Judas.

In the District of Aileu, venturing 90 minutes from Dili into the depths of Timor-Leste's central mountain range, is an area known as Daisoli. Here, cabbages, tomatoes, green leafy vegetables and carrots thrive in dark, fertile and often precariously steep terrain. In this area are 13 young men who collectively make up the group *Juventude Daisoli* (Youth of Daisoli), also known as 'Judas'.

In the wake of violent conflict and amidst the challenge of high youth unemployment, inequality and poverty, Judas have beaten the unfavorable odds stacked against them. They have broken out of a cycle of violence and made an inspirational self-transformation that has promoted stability and development in their community.

Gone are the years of martial arts group clashes that once menaced the public market place and dragged young men down in destructive spirals of violence. Today these one-time street rivals work together in the fields, growing fresh produce to sell at the same market they once terrorized, using the proceeds to support nonviolent youth activities in Daisoli.

The initiative to build a cooperative business together was entirely their own, and the young members of Judas have never received any financial support from government authorities or NGOs. It wasn't the pursuit of wealth that originally united the young men behind the enterprise. Judas found their common ground in a love of making music, prompting a truce between the groups and decision to pool their money and build an agricultural cooperative. Using income from the sale of fresh produce, the first investment the group made was to purchase a set of musical instruments and sound equipment, which they now use to put on free performances at community events.

The size of the harvests and the profits received have grown modestly but steadily over the years for Judas. The young men hope to continue expanding their agricultural activities once the rainy season sets in, and are looking to build on their understanding of commerce and entrepreneurship in order to sustainably manage the expansion of their cooperative.

Angelino Tilman, Deputy Coordinator of the group, explains that many of the girls from the community are still studying but in the future they hope to invite women to join. They recognise that women have valuable contributions to make, particularly for the sustainability and good management of the group.

The young men are humble, admitting that they aren't perfect and that it hasn't always been easy. Initially, there were disagreements and tensions between members over how to use the proceeds from the cooperative. It's been a learning process, they explain, and over time they've learnt to get along and to manage their activities using a simple leadership structure. Judas remains dedicated to continuing in the future and to overcoming any further obstacles that may arise.

In Daisoli, many people credit Judas for restoring peace and stability in the area, and continue to encourage the group to grow. These days, the young men reject violence and urge the government, civil society and young people themselves to take more direct action to ensure that the potential of youth as actors of community peace and development is fully realised.

As with young men and women all across the nation of Timor-Leste, the young members of Judas are fast growing into the future leaders of their community. There is much to appreciate and learn from the inspirational example set by these transformed young men from Daisoli.

CONCLUSION

Whilst the outlawing of problematic MAGs was a popular and appropriate response to ongoing youth violence involving some MAG members, further measures are now imperative to address the root causes of such violence. As a stand-alone solution, a ban on Martial Arts groups will be ineffective; as such violence is symptomatic of deep set structural tensions. Through this research communities expressed that MAG violence in Timor-Leste is now part of a broader trend of youth disaffection and frustration regarding access to state services and the provision of public goods, jealousy over competition for scarce employment and opportunities, a normalisation of impunity for violence, boredom and alcohol abuse, and the insufficient development of non-violent education and attitudes for children. More holistic approaches are now required to counter the concerning trend of youth rage that threatens to destabilise and hinder the development of Timorese communities.

To reverse this trend, key priorities for government are job creation and private sector development, impartial policing and more responsive patrolling of MAG and youth violence prone areas, and increasing access to and quality of education and training, particularly for rural youth. Providing reliable access to these public goods and state services in all communities will contribute to both diminishing the key risk factors of poor education outcomes, criminal impunity, economic inequality and rural-urban migration. For communities and civil society, early intervention through the promotion of non-violence and conflict transformation skills, in particular through programming targeting early childhood development and parenting skills, and more extra-curricular personal development activities run through schools and SEJD youth centres, could assist in alleviating growing youth disaffection and violence across the country.