

CARITAS AUSTRALIA

Organizational Overview and Approach to Gender

Caritas Australia (the Catholic Agency for Overseas Aid and Development) is an Australian-based international NGO with a foundation in the Catholic faith. The Timor-Leste country program's main office is located in Dili, while the organization works across various other districts, including Oecusse, Baucau and Lautem. Caritas Australia Timor-Leste is primarily comprised of East Timorese staff, including at the senior leadership level.

The vision of Caritas Australia is to contribute towards the development of sustainable local communities that are not only self-sufficient and active but that value justice, compassion and human dignity. In order to achieve this vision Caritas Australia places importance on working with locally based NGO partners. While such partnerships can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, the organization has found that this approach ensures greater community ownership and involvement in program activities. Capacities are developed, trust is built and communities feel empowered to mould future program directions. The organization has also determined that a long-term commitment to the local communities in which it works, its programs and its partners is necessary for success in realizing program objectives.

Caritas Australia's main activities in the area of gender are undertaken within its Human Rights, Law and Justice program. Through a human rights lens, the program focuses on sexual and domestic violence. Program activities vary from awareness-raising work to support for survivors and implementing violence prevention strategies. The organization regards the role of men in gender-based violence (GBV) prevention as both particular and crucial and thus has worked to ensure the active involvement of men at staff and community levels.

Programs

Caritas Australia has two flagship program areas in Timor-Leste: sustainable rural development in remote communities, and the Human Rights, Law and Justice (HRLJ) program. Given its emphasis on gender, the following summary will concentrate upon the HRLJ program.

The HRLJ program was established in April 2001. From 2001 to 2004 the major focus of this program was to implement educational activities designed to engage communities to learn and think critically about sexual assault. Caritas Australia developed the first East Timorese training team that could work in the area of sexual assault response, comprised of six women. In 2002 six men were added to the team, where previously only women had worked in the area of sexual assault response training in Timor-Leste. The HRLJ team worked across the thirteen districts and focused particularly on the training of local leaders.

As well as delivering training, the team also worked with media outlets and produced publications designed to reach organizations and communities. These included radio and television programs and a booklet—named *Hatudu Dalan*, or 'to show the way'—about what communities can do when there are cases of sexual assault.

In 2004 the program was restructured and refocused, with the team deciding to move from a predominant focus on assistance to survivors of sexual assault to working in the area of GBV prevention. The program also decided to focus upon specific geographic areas. Currently the

HRLJ program is comprised of four units: Strong Partnership and Empowered Communities (SPEC), Social Awareness and Prevention (SAP), Enabling Access to Social Justice (EAS Justice), and Access to Justice through Traditional Justice (AJTJ).

The SPEC team works predominantly with local partners in order to develop those organizations' abilities to work in the area of GBV within their communities. Organizations are given support with program development and implementation and with locating funding sources.

The SAP team works on training and resource development. It produces materials, such as posters and pamphlets, intended to socialize communities to understanding and responding to GBV. SAP also works to train new trainers in their partner organizations, based on SAP's own training manuals, and to undertake monitoring and evaluation of partners.

The EAS Justice unit works on two major projects: Strengthening Service for Survivors and Prison Support. Through Strengthening Service for Survivors, Caritas works with partner organizations to construct and operate 'saferooms' for victims of GBV: with Forum Peduli Wanita in Oecusse, PRADET Timor Lorosa'e in Dili, and Centro Buka Hatene in Baucau. The Prison Support program runs in the Gleno and Baucau prisons. Vocational training is provided to the male prisoners, and shortly the program will extend to include training in the area of GBV in order to support past perpetrators to break a cycle of violence.

The AJTJ unit is one of the newer developments for Caritas Australia's HRLJ program. It is currently in the pilot phase, and is working to document the traditional justice mechanisms used by two *sucus* (Nipane in Oecusse district and Mehara in Lautem district) when addressing cases of GBV. In the second phase the team intends to engage with traditional justice leaders so as to promote their use of concepts of gender and GBV when considering such cases.

The HRLJ program's local partners include Centro Feto Enclave, BIFANO and Forum Penduli Wanita in Oecusse, ONE and Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violensia (AMKV) in Lautem, PRADET Timor Lorosa'e in Dili, and Centro Buka Hatene in Baucau.

The HRLJ team endeavours to actively engage in relevant national campaigns and networks. It also has a small grants capacity for local organizations to develop activities in the area of GBV.

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Excerpt from: Trembath, Anna and Damian Grenfell, Mapping the Pursuit of Gender Equality: Non-Government and International Agency Activity in Timor-Leste, Globalism Institute, RMIT University, and Irish Aid, Melbourne, August 2007, ISBN 978-0-646-47770-1, pp. 23-24.