

LA'O HAMUTUK: EAST TIMORESE INSTITUTE FOR RECONSTRUCTION MONITORING AND ANALYSIS

Organizational Overview and Approach to Gender

La'o Hamutuk: East Timorese Institute for Reconstruction Monitoring and Analysis is a joint East Timorese-international NGO. La'o Hamutuk (meaning 'walk together') is primarily concerned with the East Timorese people's opportunity to participate in decision-making processes, make informed decisions about and direct the development and reconstruction process and provide alternatives to decision-makers. The beginning point of analysis for the organization is that it is largely international organizations that are shaping the reconstruction process in Timor-Leste. As such, La'o Hamutuk argues that such organizations' activities need to be monitored, critically analysed and reported to ensure accountability and transparency to the East Timorese people.

La'o Hamutuk is based in Dili, though staff members periodically travel to other districts to undertake monitoring activities and convene community workshops. The organization has around six permanent staff, with other individuals working part-time or voluntarily. Reflecting the fact that the organization is a joint East-Timorese and International NGO, La'o Hamutuk's staff are comprised of both East Timorese and foreigners. La'o Hamutuk has attempted to develop a non-hierarchical organizational structure, with the position of organizational co-ordinator rotating every year (with the possibility to be extended) to another member of staff and with all staff holding the same rights and responsibilities. The organization is a part of global networks of activists concerned with the interests of international organizations in development and justice contexts.

La'o Hamutuk's objectives:

- **To empower the people of Timor-Leste, especially women, to participate more effectively in the development process.**

(Excerpt from 'Objectives', *La'o Hamutuk Mid-Year Report January–June 2006*, p. 2.)

Attempting to utilise gender analysis across all its activities, La'o Hamutuk is aware that East Timorese people's opportunity to participate in reconstruction and development processes may be gender differentiated due to a legacy of patriarchy and militarism. Thus La'o Hamutuk is conscious to pay particular attention to women's participation in the process. In 2006 La'o Hamutuk sent one staff member to Yogyakarta to receive training on gender and development. The organization also critically reviews its internal politics and structure on a regular basis, and gender is a consideration here, and has set a target of at least 50 per cent of staff positions being filled by women.

Programs

Activities of La'o Hamutuk broadly fall under the categories of monitoring and analysis of the actions of international organizations in Timor-Leste, and the communication of the results of their findings. Major topics of investigation, to which staff teams are aligned, are natural resources (with an emphasis on petroleum development), multilateral institutions, bilateral assistance, rural development, and justice and security.

La'õ Hamutuk works across the languages of Bahasa Indonesia, Tetun, and English, given its target audience is local as well as international.

The following summary will concentrate upon those program activities where gender has been directly implicated.

Publications include regular bulletins that focus upon a particular theme, research reports, statements and press releases. La'õ Hamutuk also produces a Tetun series called *Surat Popular*, which are short documents on particular issues designed to be used in popular or community education activities. La'õ Hamutuk has a comprehensive website (www.laohamutuk.org) which includes all of its publication materials.

In 2001 one of La'õ Hamutuk's regular bulletins focused on the theme of 'Women and the Reconstruction of East Timor', critically examining the extent and form of women's participation in the development of the independent nation (Volume 2, Number 5, August 2001). It covered topics including the campaign for a women's charter of rights, women and rural development, domestic violence, childbirth, and the transitional administration's Gender Affairs Unit and employment track record. La'õ Hamutuk has also produced a *Surat Popular* on 'Women, Men and Social Constructions'. La'õ Hamutuk has a weekly issue-based radio program broadcast on *Radio Timor-Leste* and in 2006 staff produced a program designed for International Women's Day.

La'õ Hamutuk has also organised or participated in various national and international workshops, dialogues and exchanges on gender issues. In 2001 it worked with other organizations in Timor-Leste to host exchanges between Nicaraguan activists working on issues of gender, masculinity and violence and East Timorese women and men. From these exchanges, the Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violensia (the Association of Men Against Violence) was born, with its members expressing a commitment to complement women's activism by attempting to target men's practices of violence against women.

In 2006 La'õ Hamutuk worked with other organizations, including UNIFEM, FOKUPERS and Rede Feto, on the theme of women in politics. One of the results of these discussions was to campaign for a 30 per cent quota of women parliamentarians in the legislative elections planned for 2007.

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