

## **PRONTU ATU SERBI (PAS)**

### **Organizational Overview and Approach to Gender**

Prontu Atu Serbi (PAS, or Ready to Serve) is a small East Timorese NGO based in Becora, Dili. It was founded in 1997 by Maria Dias, who has served as the board director for Rede Feto for several years. Underpinned by Catholic teachings, PAS works to strengthen the local Becora community's future prospects, wellbeing and self-sufficiency. PAS holds that Timor-Leste's governance bodies are currently unable to adequately support local communities, particularly in the areas of health and education, and therefore local communities must do what they can on their own terms. In this sense PAS envisages national development for Timor-Leste being driven from the local community level up, rather than from the central government down. The organization is geared to be responsive to the community's most pressing needs at particular points in time.

Across adaptations to programs and activities, the organization places a strong emphasis on empowering women, children and youth. By 2020—the target year identified in Timor-Leste's National Development Plan—PAS wants the current generation of East Timorese children to have become positive, civic-minded, educated young adults faced with good employment prospects. PAS also wishes to encourage the participation of often-marginalized sectors of the population—namely young people and women—in economic processes, community organizing and civic life.

As well as empowering women through the acquiring of skills and knowledge, PAS seeks to offer forms of support to women in their roles as mothers. PAS holds that large families place a considerable strain on and sometimes limit the opportunities of mothers. Thus, by ensuring education opportunities and health services for children, as well as encouraging children to be mindful of their familial responsibilities, the organization hopes to relieve some of the pressure on mothers. PAS also looks to create links between women in the local community and organizations such as the members of Rede Feto.

### **Programs**

PAS undertakes various activities, and many of these can be broadly classed into the areas of community health, training and education, and community activities.

#### *Community Health Promotion and Services*

PAS has worked with the local community in Becora in the area of disease prevention, medical care and dentistry. A health and dental clinic is part of PAS's grounds in Becora: the organization has visited local schools to teach children about hygiene, and offers free dental services. PAS also provides residential facilities and treatment for people who have been diagnosed with tuberculosis.

#### *Training and Education*

PAS's training and education activities particularly target children, youth and women. At any one time PAS may have over 200 participants in these activities. Literacy and numeracy, in particular, are considered paramount to the future of the community. PAS views literacy and numeracy not only as essential to formal employment prospects, but also as central to

enabling people to engage with national social and political processes as active, informed citizens.

PAS offers informal educational activities onsite as well as locating channels to formal educational activities offered by other organizations. Examples of activities involving children include education about child rights and responsibilities, and moral and religious training. PAS also encourages the community to establish better conditions in which children can study. Youth programs include leadership training and computer courses. Training that involves women tends to focus on developing opportunities for income generation, for example training about restaurant management and sewing skills. PAS has also run large quizzes involving children, youth and young married women about citizenship, with small cash and goods prizes offered as an incentive for participation. Community members can borrow books in the lead-up to these quizzes in order to increase their knowledge.

### *Community Activities*

PAS organises various community activities designed to foster greater community spirit, solidarity and wellbeing. As well as the education and training activities mentioned above, other examples include sporting events, cleaning up local streets, and group song and prayer sessions. The mental states of community members are important to PAS, which recognises that the local community has suffered various forms of trauma. As well as spiritual reflection, coming together to undertake hands-on activities is considered an important part of the collective healing process.

### **Contacts**

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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, Dili, July 2007, ISBN 978-0-646-47770-1, pp. 64-66.*