

REDE FETO TIMOR-LESTE

Organizational Overview and Approach to Gender

Rede Feto Timor-Leste (the Women's Network of Timor-Leste) is an umbrella network body encompassing national and local organizations for whom women or gender is a significant focus. Rede Feto's current 17-organization membership is made up both of NGOs and community organizations, though Rede Feto has encouraged organizations to consolidate their structures according to legal NGO requirements. The membership is diverse, ranging from high-profile NGOs such as FOKUPERS and the Alola Foundation, to historically significant political movements such as OPMT (Organizasaun Popular Mulher Timor, or the Popular Women's Organization of Timor-Leste) and OMT (Organizasaun Mulher Timor, or the Women's Organization of Timor-Leste), to religious organizations such as Sagrada Familia (Sacred Family) and ISMAIK (Institute Maun Alin iha Kristo, or the Brothers and Sisters in Christ Institute), and others.

Rede Feto was established in 2001 as a direct result of deliberations from the First National Women's Congress of Timor-Leste, held the year before. One pressing need articulated by congress participants was for a strong union that could present women's perspectives to UNTAET. Rede Feto has continued beyond the term of UNTAET, having honed its mission. It defines its mission as struggling for and defending women's interests, supporting women to work for equality and to contribute to national and global development processes, and promoting gender equality and women's rights.

The current Rede Feto members were drawn from the First National Congress of Women Timor-Leste. As well as these 17 member organizations, Rede Feto's structure comprises a secretariat and a board. The secretariat consists of paid staff who implement the network's programs. The five-member board makes program decisions, monitors implementation and liaises with the director. Rede Feto's board has included esteemed names such as Maria Dias, Olandina Caeiro and Kirsty Sword Gusmão. The board is reviewed at general assemblies held every three years. One international advisor from the Progressio, an INGO who has an office and program in Dili, advises and works to strengthen the competence of Rede Feto's secretariat, board and members. Rede Feto's major funder is CCODP (the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace).

Programs

Two major program strategies have been adopted by Rede Feto: advocacy for gender equality and women's rights, and strengthening the organizational capacity of its members. As it has developed, Rede Feto has attempted to move away from direct implementation of programs by the secretariat, beyond building the capacity of Rede Feto members. Instead, where possible, Rede Feto attempts to facilitate its members to be active in their individual programs and also in network programs.

Advocacy for Gender Equality and Women's Rights

Rede Feto has been involved in various campaigns and other forms of advocacy, and regularly attempts to advise governing institutions and United Nations missions in Timor-Leste. For example, in the lead-up to inaugurating the current United Nations mission, Rede Feto presented a letter to the United Nations that called for gender to be considered in the

development of the mission's structures and programs. During the crisis in 2006 the interim Prime Minister asked Rede Feto to nominate a shortlist of candidates so as to fill the vacated position of Advisor to the Prime Minister on matters of gender equality. Further, in April 2007 Rede Feto produced a postcard series encouraging women to be active, self-determining voters in the presidential and parliamentary elections.

Rede Feto counts as one of its greatest advocacy victories the recognition of a National Women's Day in Timor-Leste on 3 November. This date was chosen to commemorate and celebrate the involvement of women in the struggle for independence, as on that day in 1974 a woman named Maria Tarpo died fighting against one of the early Indonesian military incursions of Timor-Leste's territory.

Current Organizational Members of Rede Feto Timor-Leste:

- 1. APSC-TL (Asia Pacific Support Collective Timor Leste)**
- 2. AMST (Asosiasaun Mulher Socialista Timorese, or the East Timorese Association of Socialist Women)**
- 3. Alola Foundation**
- 4. Juristas (Jurists Association)**
- 5. Caucus Perempuan dalam Politik (Caucus Women in Politics)**
- 6. ET WAVE (East Timor Women Against Violence)**
- 7. FOKUPERS (Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Timor Lorosa'e, or Communication Forum for Women Timor-Leste)**
- 8. FMF (Fundasaun Moris Foun, or the New Life Foundation)**
- 9. FKSH (Feto Kiik Servisu Hamutuk, or Young Women Working Together)**
- 10. GFFTL (Grupo Feto Foin Sa'e Timor Lorosa'e, or the Young Women's Group Timor-Leste)**
- 11. ISMAIK (Institute Maun Alin iha Christ, or the Brothers and Sisters in Christ Institute)**
- 12. OMT (Organizasaun Mulher Timor, or the Women's Organization of Timor-Leste)**
- 13. OPMT (Organizasaun Popular Mulher Timor, or the Popular Women's Organization of Timor-Leste)**
- 14. PAS (Prontu atu Serbi, or Ready to Serve)**
- 15. Santa Bhakita (Saint Bhakita)**
- 16. Sagrada Familia (Sacred Family)**
- 17. UNFETIP (Uniaun Feto Timor ba Progresu, or the Progressive Union of Timorese Women)**

Rede Feto, 'Perfil Rede Feto Timor Leste', *Newsletter Rede Feto Timor Leste—Assistensia Humanitaria ba Ema Deslokadus: Rede Feto nia Programa Foun*, Edisaun I, Junho 2006, p. 4.

Strengthening Members' Organizational Capacities

Rede Feto works in various ways so as to develop the organizational capacity of its members. In 2005 Rede Feto undertook an institutional assessment of each organization, and classed them into three categories: those organizations that are very active and well-developed, those that are in the process of development, and those that are largely inactive. Working particularly with organizations in the last two categories, Rede Feto has provided assistance in formulating effective structures, statutes and strategy plans. Organizations are also aided to identify and approach suitable donors, as the less active organizations commonly argue that

their greatest obstacle is lack of funding. Rede Feto has also recently developed a policy and criteria for attracting new membership.

Humanitarian Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Augmenting the two main programs—advocacy for gender equality and strengthening members’ organizational capacity—in 2006 Rede Feto developed a third, more temporary program designed to respond to the crisis: the ‘Humanitarian Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) program. While facilitated by the Rede Feto secretariat, this program is implemented by Rede Feto organizational members and has given an opportunity for lesser-developed members to gain valuable hands-on experience.

This ‘Humanitarian Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)’ program encompasses several components, each with different timelines according to the necessities of the crisis response. In June 2006 Rede Feto and its partner UNHCR implemented the ‘IDPs Shelter Program’. This involved the co-ordination of ‘nonfood distribution’, or items such as tents, tarpaulins, blankets, jerry cans and kitchen sets, in over 36 camps. Around 600 tents across 10 camps were constructed. Rede Feto has also co-ordinated camp management in two camps, and provided security in one.

The second major component of this program, focusing on gender-based violence, ran from June to August 2006. The gender-based violence project was a collaborative effort—involving Rede Feto, UNFPA, JSMP, PRADET and OPE—and was funded by UNFPA. The project team undertook an assessment of the incidence of GBV in IDP camps and the factors contributing to GBV, gave counselling to victims, ensured victims were referred to organizations offering suitable forms of support, trained camp managers in GBV response and facilitated community education about GBV and human rights.

A third Humanitarian Assistance program component, also funded by UNFPA, was giving support to pregnant women in the IDP camps. Rede Feto and partners identified that there were many pregnant women in the IDP camps who may run into many complications without direct intervention. The first step was to identify pregnant women, especially those close to giving birth. The team then established a Maternity Waiting Camp—a special camp for women who were seven and eight months pregnant—in the National Hospital, to ensure that the women could receive immediate medical attention when needed. Hygiene packs from UNFPA and UNHCR were also distributed to pregnant women.

Another substantial aspect of Rede Feto’s work in the camps, an initiative developed with Care International, FOKUPERS and OPE, are women’s committees. These committees comprise female representatives from the camps, and they liaise with camp managers, police, and NGOs and agencies who have a presence in the camp. In particular the organizations who initiated this activity were afraid that once the GBV program in the camps had ended, women would remain silent about GBV and other particular problems they faced in the camps. The committees are a continuing program and have developed successfully, with women becoming active in a range of decision-making and deliberative forums within and outside their camps.

Contacts

Post: PO Box 339, Dili
Tel: (670) 331 7405
Email: redefeto@yahoo.com
Address: Mouzinho de Albuquerque, Colmera, Dili

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