

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)

Organizational Overview and Approach to Gender

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is one of the largest United Nations agencies working in Timor-Leste. It has had a Timor-Leste Country Office since 1999, and is based at UN House in Caicoli, Dili. UNDP works with governance institutions, other agencies and CSOs, and communities. Its overarching aim is to promote and work towards global development goals in Timor-Leste, and to do so in tandem with the East Timorese government's National Development Plan.

Like many other international agencies and NGOs, in the years following the destruction of 1999 UNDP has moved from a emergency response phase to a reconstruction model. UNDP's current priority is to promote sustainable development guided by a long-term perspective and taking account of Timor-Leste's material conditions. The organization has consolidated its focus areas in Timor-Leste for the period 2003 to 2007 as follows: promoting democratic governance, poverty reduction and community development, managing energy and the environment, achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and HIV/AIDS.

Gender Disparities:

Women in Timor-Leste generally have a lower status than men. While the Constitution provides for gender equality, women and girls suffer significant discrimination—in the household, the workplace and the community. Girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school, and two-thirds of women aged 15–60 are illiterate, compared with about half of men. Women also suffer discrimination at work: they have lower participation than men in the formal labour force and they are paid significantly less than men for similar work (PAP, 2003).

Women are also likely to receive less food than men. One-third of women aged 15–49 are malnourished and suffer chronic energy depletion (UNICEF, 2003). Many women lack access to information and family planning services. As a result, fertility rates remain high and many women die in childbirth—up to 800 per 100.000 births. Women now have access to more information on reproductive health but their right to health continues to be hindered by cultural factors, particularly in rural areas.

United Nations Development Programme, *The Path out of Poverty: Integrated Rural Development – Timor-Leste Human Development Report 2006*, UNDP, Dili, January 2006, pp. 15-16.

UNDP's objective of gender equality is considered an appropriate end in itself as well as essential to realising effective, long-term development. UNDP's Corporate Gender Strategy outlines the agency's gender policy in Timor-Leste and the strategies it believes are necessary to achieve this. The organization utilises the strategic approaches of gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment to pursue gender equality. For UNDP, gender mainstreaming means ensuring that impacts upon women and men are considered across each focus area, that staff and partners have the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure the pursuit of gender equality, and that when giving policy advice to government bodies gender equality is always promoted.

UNDP has also developed a close partnership with UNIFEM. In practice this means that UNIFEM will often design and implement pilot projects aimed at supporting women's empowerment. If these are successful then UNDP may assist to expand the project.

Programs

Projects

Given the breadth of UNDP projects, a small selection of projects involving gender mainstreaming are discussed below. In 2006 UNDP undertook a critical internal review of these projects, seeking to establish whether in fact the projects were achieving their stated objectives in relation to gender equality.

Democratic Governance—The National Parliament: Capacity Building in the Parliament Sector

Within the focus area of Democratic Governance, UNDP supports the institutional capacity building of the National Parliament in order to ensure that it functions as mandated in the Constitution. As part of this project, female parliamentary representatives are encouraged to come together for workshops, awareness sessions and to share experiences. One objective of this activity is for women to have the confidence and skills to fulfil and define their roles within parliament, including though not limited to representing women's voices.

Despite the comparatively high proportion of women in parliament, challenges have been experienced in relation to their efficacy and power. UNDP attributes these challenges to a number of factors. These include party divisions undermining potential unity between female parliamentary representatives and men in parliament allowing little freedom for women to express opinions, make decisions and carry out responsibility. To combat these challenges, UNDP intends to further develop the space for women to come together beyond party lines and without men. It is also seeking to strengthen gender mainstreaming across the parliamentary project, rather than limiting it simply to addressing women.

Poverty Reduction and Community Development—Oecussi Ambeno Community Activation Project (OCAP)

This project aims to empower community groups in Oecussi to develop small enterprise activities, for example the raising of livestock, with a view to trading with West Timor. A number of these groups receiving microcredit loans from UNDP involve only women, and women are considered to be a key target beneficiary group. A current challenge being addressed by UNDP is to involve more women as 'Community Activation Facilitators', leadership positions that are currently dominated by men.

Democratic Governance—Programme for Enhancing Rural Women's Leadership and Participation in Nation Building in Timor-Leste (PERWL)

UNDP works with UNIFEM and other partners such as the Office for the Promotion of Equality to undertake this project. The project aims to assist and encourage the participation of women in building new social, political and legal systems in Timor-Leste. The PERWL program envisages these new systems as being designed so that they ensure widespread social involvement and the upholding of human rights as well as being able to respond to different gender needs. Project activities include leadership training for female electoral candidates living in rural areas and developing training modules about transformative leadership practices.

Research and sex-disaggregated data

Along with UNIFEM, governance bodies and other institutions, UNDP has recognised a need for the gathering of quantitative data sets about social, economic and political conditions in Timor-Leste that differentiate between women and men. This is deemed to be able to provide UNDP and other institutions baseline data about material conditions existing in-country and to allow for effective gender-responsive design of programs. In 2006 UNDP published its Human Development Report for Timor-Leste, which aims to measure the extent of human development against the Millennium Development Goals. This report broke down the human development indicators along sex lines, and included gender analysis about the disparities of development progress between women and men.

Intra-institutional Development

UNDP has recognised that, despite a stated institutional commitment to gender equality, in practice gender has often been a sidelined element of the agency's work due to various factors, including staff skills, resource allocation and a lack of a systematic approach. With this in mind, from 2005 to 2007 UNDP has been focusing on turning its gender policy into successful practice within the institution.

This has meant working closely with all staff to ensure that they are equipped with the capabilities and desire to pursue gender-based goals in their work, and to ensure that projects are effectively designed and implemented according to gender analysis. It has also meant developing meaningful approaches, strategies and tools for project staff to utilize in project development, as well as ensuring appropriate budgeting allocations for dedicated staff positions. UNDP is also committed to effective participation in the United Nations Consultative Group on Gender (UNCGG), through which the gender focal points of the United Nations agencies and the World Bank come together.

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