

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN (UNIFEM)

Organizational Overview and Approach to Gender

UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women) established a presence in Timor-Leste with an initial needs assessment in 2000, and opened a country office in 2001. While the UNIFEM Timor-Leste office has substantial autonomy in decision-making and coordination, it is not formally an independent country programme office, instead accountable to the East and Southeast Regional UNIFEM Office in Bangkok.

At a global level, UNIFEM approaches gender in two ways: first, to promote gender equality between women and men, and second, to advance women's status through women's empowerment. Within this overarching mission, UNIFEM has developed a multi-year funding framework that encompasses five goals. Within recent years the Timor-Leste country team has worked to reflect upon and consolidate program directions. In doing so they have positioned their work within two of the five worldwide goals of UNIFEM: to promote gender equality in democratic governance and to end violence against women. UNIFEM is also keen to ensure its country program strategy is in line with national priorities and complementary to the Timor-Leste National Development Plan as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

UNIFEM staff in Timor-Leste collaborate closely with a range of organizational partners in order to implement programs. In doing so, UNIFEM places strong emphasis on developing the capacity of those implementing partners through technical assistance, funding provision, training and mentoring. UNIFEM also maintains a commitment to strengthening those organizations in Timor-Leste with key roles to play in the pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment. Key government partners in Timor-Leste include the Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE) as the national women's machinery, and the Ministry of State Administration, in particular the National Institute of Public Administration (INAP) and the National Directorate for Territorial Administration (DNAT), as bodies with training and overseeing of district administration mandates.

Civil society partners include Rede Feto, Caucus Feto iha Politika, FOKUPERS, Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violensia, Feto Kiiik Servisu Hamutuk, the Alola Foundation, JSMP and PRADET Timor-Leste. UNIFEM also coordinates its activities with other United Nations and international development agencies, including the Asia Foundation and Oxfam.

Programs

While maintaining certain consistencies, UNIFEM's programs in Timor-Leste have grown and changed substantially since the beginning of operations in 2001. Below is a brief summary of current programs.

Integrated Program of Women in Politics and Decision Making

Given its focus on gender equality in democratic governance, UNIFEM in Timor-Leste has worked in different ways to increase women's political participation and participation in decision-making. For example, UNIFEM supported women candidates in the 2001 Constituent Assembly elections, and again in the 2004–05 *sucos* elections, through the PERWL program (see below).

The Integrated Program of Women in Politics and Decision Making, beginning in 2007, continues this effort to develop women’s active participation, leadership and decision-making potential in formal political arenas. Prior to the 2007 presidential and legislative elections, UNIFEM cooperated with other organizations, particularly FOKUPERS, Rede Feto and Caucus, to campaign for women’s participation in the electoral process as both informed voters and candidates. Activities included training for potential female candidates and working with women’s wings and female membership of various political parties to try to increase their internal party standing. Moreover, women from different political affiliations were brought together in an attempt to cross-strategize about how best to represent women’s agendas and promote gender equality. This resulted a cross party Women’s Political Platform being adopted by 12 of the 14 parties contesting the elections. UNIFEM has also developed a media strategy, working with journalists to elevate pre-election media coverage of party activities and promises pertaining to women and gender.

UNIFEM will also continue to support and develop the capacity of those women elected as parliamentary members in the June 2007 legislative elections. Key areas of focus for skills development will include how to analyse and formulate budgets that are gender-responsive, and training in ‘transformative leadership’ whereby elected officials should engage fully with their constituencies in a manner that is accountable and gender-responsive. In addition UNIFEM, in conjunction with partners, will establish mechanisms through which women elected to national and local governance structures share experiences and learn from each other, as well as having regular contact with women’s civil society organizations.

PERWL (Programme for Enhancing Rural Women’s Leadership and Participation in Nation Building in Timor-Leste)

The PERWL program began operations in 2004 prior to the *suco* elections and winds up in 2007. It is designed to increase women’s participation in and knowledge of political and nation-building processes at local rural-community levels. While executed by UNIFEM, the programme is supported by the European Commission and UNDP and involves close collaboration with the Office for the Promotion of Equality as PERWL’s main government partner. PERWL has further collaborated with INAP, DNAT, the Timor Institute of Development Studies (TIDS), Caucus, FOKUPERS and Oxfam in the implementation of program activities.

<p>Objectives of PERWL:</p> <p>To promote transformative leadership, politics and communities through the active and reciprocal participation of women as members of constituencies and potential leaders in the political processes and governance at the local and community levels;</p> <p>To enhance the understanding, contribution of and benefits for rural communities, in particular women, on gender mainstreaming the nation building process as a method to further promote the process of transformative leadership and citizenship; and</p> <p>To contribute to government planning, programming, policy development and budget allocation that is based on and responds to the socio-economic situation, needs and rights of rural women.</p> <p>UNDP, ‘Project Fact Sheet: Rural Women’s Leadership (PERWL)’, April 2006.</p>

Completed activities include pre-electoral training of 1,265 women candidates in 13 districts. Training focused on the concepts and principles of ‘transformative leadership, politics and communities’ in order to prepare women for official duties and, if unelected, as active citizens

within their local communities. The training sessions were facilitated by a pool of trainers representing government and NGOs, who were trained by resource persons from the Centre for Asia-Pacific Women in Politics (CAPWIP) based in the Philippines.

After the results of the suco elections were finalised, it transpired that 22 women were elected as *xefi aldeia*, 7 women as *xefi suco* and 2 as elder representatives to the *suco* councils across Timor-Leste. Each suco council also has three compulsory seats for women, including one young woman. After the release of these results, the PERWL team conducted debriefing with women who stood as candidates in the *suco* elections, to hear about their experiences and to identify what lessons these women may wish to impart to elected leaders and other women considering political participation.

Another success of the program has been the completion and dissemination—in collaboration with INAP—of a set of training modules about ‘Strengthening the Role of Women in the Suco Council’. The OPE and INAP trainers were trained on the use of the training modules. PERWL has worked closely with the Local Development Program (LDP) in the implementation a pilot decentralization program in two districts: Bobonaro and Lautem. This program looks at different models of governance decentralization, such as sub-district and district assemblies, and PERWL has been interested in what these alternative models may mean for women’s leadership and political participation in rural areas.

With OPE, PERWL has conducted dialogue between national women leaders and women representatives in the suco councils in 13 districts, an opportunity for women in the districts to interact and raise their concerns with national women leaders representing government ministries, NGOs and women parliamentarians. The dialogue led the participants to agree on the strategies to improve linkages and support systems between national and local women leaders.

To consolidate the continued advocacy of the principles of transformative leaders, PERWL, in partnership with Forum Tau Matan (FTM) has designed and developed rights-based and gender-responsive civic education materials on the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. These materials were disseminated through a workshop in at least one district in the four regions (Aileu, Baucau, Manatuto and Bobonaro) after pilot testing in Oecusse and Lautem. Simultaneously, PERWL is in the process of completing research on the situation of the rural women in Timor-Leste—focused on feminisation of poverty—which is due to be completed early July 2007. This study, being carried out in collaboration with TIDS, aims to contribute to government planning, programming, policy development and budget allocation based on and responsive to the socio-economic situation, needs and rights of rural women.

In 2007, the PERWL programme will be evaluated to assess its accomplishments and impact.

CEDAW SEAP (The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women South East Asia Programme)

UNIFEM is implementing a four-year program to strengthen CEDAW in Southeast Asia (2005–2008), funded by CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency). This programme is designed to facilitate the realization of women’s human rights in the Southeast Asia region through the more effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in seven countries: Cambodia,

Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.

CEDAW SEAP is working toward achieving three inter-linked outcomes as follows:

- Outcome 1: Increased awareness of women's human rights and deeper understanding of CEDAW by state organs and organized civil society groups including women's NGOs.
- Outcome 2: Strengthened capacity of governments and organized civil society at both national and regional levels to promote women's human rights under CEDAW.
- Outcome 3: Stronger political will and commitment to CEDAW implementation by popularizing CEDAW and helping to develop women's knowledge and capacity to claim their rights.

In December 2002, CEDAW was ratified by the Parliament of Timor-Leste, thus reaffirming the commitment already assumed in Article 17 of the RDTL Constitution—Equality between Women and Men: 'Women and men shall have the same rights and duties in all areas of family life and political, economic, social and cultural life'. By establishing a legal instrument with which all national legislation must comply, the ratification of the Convention represents an important step towards women's rights in Timor-Leste. Ratification of CEDAW also means that states are required to take certain actions to ensure the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of discrimination against women, such as policy and law review and design of appropriate programs, and must regularly report on their progress.

As it is in countries across the world, UNIFEM in Timor-Leste is helping to co-ordinate the socialization and reporting processes of CEDAW. Governments of countries that have ratified the CEDAW Convention are obliged to submit periodic progress reports to the CEDAW Committee. NGOs can also submit their own reports to the committee (referred to as 'shadow reports') to enable its preparations and strengthen its capacity to draw accountability from governments. NGOs can ensure that they are representing the voices of women who may not be visible or responded to by the bureaucrats who write state reports. In particular, they can critically engage with the reporting, implementation and monitoring process.

CEDAW SEAP began in Timor-Leste in 2005 with socialization processes across the country, including workshops with community members. These workshops also provided an important data-gathering exercise relevant to the reporting process about how community members view the state of gender equality and the conditions of discrimination in Timor-Leste. UNIFEM provides technical assistance both to the official and the shadow reporting processes. With the aid of a consultant, UNIFEM CEDAW SEAP staff have since conferred widely with governance, civil society and community organizations to evaluate the extent of gender inequality and discrimination in Timor-Leste and to reflect upon government actions undertaken to reduce these phenomena. A government report has been drafted and submitted to the Council of Ministers for review. Once approved, the shadowing reporting process will begin. UNIFEM has already begun to train and inform women's organizations, and Rede Feto will become the co-ordinating body for the shadow reporting process. It is expected that both reports will be submitted to the CEDAW Committee in 2007 or 2008.

Women, Peacebuilding, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Program

Partially building on a former Peacebuilding and Gender Justice Program, this new project on ‘Supporting Community-led Initiatives to Promote Women’s Engagement in Peace-building and Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence’ focuses on developing the capacity of local governance and community structures, such as district and sub-district administrators, *suco* councils, court actors, police, local women’s organizations and survivors of violence to respond effectively to and prevent the occurrence of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The program will focus on piloting community-based initiatives in two western border districts of Bobonaro and Covalima, where there is reported prevalence of SGBV. It is understood that this prevalence of violence is exacerbated by the districts’ geographical isolation, close proximity with Indonesia and substantial economic disadvantage and hardship.

A baseline study on SGBV is underway, particularly focusing on the availability of support services for SGBV survivors at the community level in these districts as well as gathering information on community attitudes on SGBV. As part of the SGBV campaign, this project has already conducted three debates: one between presidential candidates, one between political party leaders and another between women’s candidates for the parliamentary election. These three debates focused on violence against women.

To implement this project, UNIFEM will work with various stakeholders and partners with whom UNIFEM has built a relationship in its ongoing work in Timor-Leste. These range from government offices such as the Ministry of Interior (particularly the National Police), the Ministry of Labour and Community Reinsertion, civil society organizations such as the Peace and Democracy Foundation (PDF), and the referral pathway of support to victims of SGBV such as PRADET, JSMP, Fokupers and the Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU) of the national police force.

In conjunction with INAP, UNIFEM has also developed domestic violence modules to be used to train *suco* officials about their mandated responsibilities to work towards community-based prevention strategies and the elimination of gender-based violence.

Contacts

Tel: (670) 331 2481
Fax: (670) 331 2408
Email: milena.pires@unifem.org (Timor-Leste Program Coordinator and Coordinator of Integrated Program of Women in Politics and Decision Making, Milena Pires);
dianne.unifem@undp.org (Project Co-ordinator, PERWL, Dianne D. Arboleda);
repelita.tambunan@unifem.org (National Coordinator of CEDAW SEAP);
vicenta.maria-correia@unifem.org (Coordinator of Women, Peacebuilding, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Program)
Address: UN Agency House, Estrada Caicoli, Caicoli, Dili

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