Australian Council for International Development

Timor Leste Civil Society Analysis

Report of an in-country consultation and desk review for strengthening civil society

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Principle Consultant: Ann Wigglesworth
With Christopher Dureau and Jose da Costa Magno,
Matrix International Consulting

1.   Introduction

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), in collaboration with the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and a group of 18 Australian Non-Government Organisations (ANGOs), identified the need for long-term support to strengthen civil society capability in Timor Leste. ACFID contracted a team of consultants to undertake a literature review, including research into other collaborative program models that could inform this proposed initiative, an in country consultation with a broad range of key actors at both national and district level, and a program design for a proposed civil society strengthening exercise. The research findings and analysis which was undertaken as part of the design process, is provided here to the NGO community as a separate document.

Civil Society in Timor Leste from 1975 was largely organised as resistance, church and youth/student movements. However significant changes have occurred since 2000. In the eight years since liberation the role and size of civil society has changed substantially. The term *civil society* is used to denote the organised groups in society such as *non government organisations* (NGOs), church groups, women's groups, youth groups, media groups, special interest associations etc. which have grown up to bring together individuals on issues of common concern. An NGO is an organisation that complies with a set of organisational development criteria required for registration as a NGO with FONGTIL[1] and/or the Ministry of Justice[2]. In Timor Leste, groups of people engaged in development activities with international donor funding generally refer to themselves as NGOs. Some of the more mature organisations based in Dili have a national focus to their work so can be referred to as National NGOs. *Community based organisation* (CBO) is a term often used for common interest groups that form at village levels. Youth organisations which do not consider themselves NGOs have also started to seek funding from international donors for development activities. In Timor Leste, the vast majority of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are led by the educated younger generation who desire to participate in the development of an independent Timor Leste. These organisations have often found it difficult to obtain donor funding to do what they consider important, and the desire to obtain funds has led sometimes to their greater attention to donor articulated needs than to the needs of the communities which they seek to serve.

2.   Country and Sector Issues

Timor Leste became independent in 2002 following nearly 450 years of Portuguese rule, 24 years of Indonesian military occupation, and two and a half years under United Nations administration. Poverty is widespread in all thirteen districts of Timor Leste, which remains the poorest nation in Asia. The legacy of centuries of under-development neglect is profound. The years of occupation were traumatic, a quarter of the population are estimated to have died, and much of the population engaged in clandestine activities in support of the armed resistance. Almost the entire population was displaced by the scorched earth policies of the departing Indonesian Army in 1999. A high degree of trauma is still evident and political divisions between families and communities are still major factors affecting daily life. Since April 2006 the country's progress has been severely hampered by civil unrest and inter-community fighting resulting in large population displacement, societal divisions and subsequent resettlement of internally displaced people (IDPs).

In spite of the intensity of donor activity and international attention on Timor Leste in the last eight years there continues to be limited development activity based outside of Dili. Civil society organisations were largely part of the clandestine movement opposing the Indonesian occupation up until 1999. The umbrella organisation FONGTIL was formed in 1998 with just 14 registered NGOs[3] mostly involved in human rights and advocacy work[4]. During the emergency period (1999-2001) there was a rapid growth in numbers of new NGOs, which generally had limited skills and resources. By early 2002 there were 231 local NGOs registered with FONGTIL. NGOs formed to meet donor

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[1] FONGTIL is the Portuguese acronym for the NGO Forum, the civil society umbrella organisations in Timor Leste.
[2] A formal registration of NGOs was established by the Ministry of Justice in 2005, but many donors still look for FONGTIL registration which has a number of organisational development requirements. Some CSOs have also been asked to show their FONGTIL registration as a criterion for registration with the Ministry of Justice.
[3] Hunt, Janet (2004) 'Building a new society: NGOs in East Timor' New Community Quarterly, vol 2 no 1 p16-23.
[4] Several development NGOs also existed, set up by international agencies. For example ETADEP agricultural NGO was established by CRS and Bia Hula, a water and sanitation NGO that was established by AusAID.

demand for partner organisations and to participate in work opportunities provided by the millions of dollars of aid pouring into the country.

Some international NGOs employed local staff to assist them in their work. Others used existing and better established Timorese NGOs as local partners. However the access to resources by international NGOs was seen by local NGOs to contrast with their own inability to be part of the rehabilitation effort, largely because of their own inexperience in drafting accountable project proposals or possessing the required technical experience. This and the lack of job opportunities for Timorese in general led to widespread criticism about the marginalisation of Timorese NGOs by the international aid effort[5]. Timorese perceptions that the international community did not place sufficient value on their access to local knowledge and Timorese culture also led to a reticence to submit to western donor's procedural demands. As the emergency program came to an end there was greater attention towards the recognition of the need for NGO capacity building, and the sustainability value in strengthening the local civil society, although a significant number of international NGOs choose to implement programs directly without using local NGO partners. Many international NGOs emergency response activities in 2006 raised further criticisms by local organisations that they had been marginalised, as in 2000-1. The emergency nature of the crisis led some I NGOs which had previously started working with local partners to become operational themselves. Other NGO staff became employees of international programs abandoning their own local NGO.

There is currently no knowledge about exactly how many local NGOs exist as large numbers of registered NGOs are known to be inactive[6]. While many local NGOs have their own clear missions, others have formed to meet donor agency need for implementation staff. New NGOs have continued to form to fulfil service delivery roles, including for development projects such as Community Water Supply and Sanitation Program or for food distribution during the 2006-7 crisis. Some observers note that such NGOs should be considered contractors rather than NGOs, as they have not been established spontaneously to meet locally identified needs. In 2002, ACFID, working with Australian NGOs (ANGOs) embarked on research into NGO aid effectiveness, finding the existence of organisational values is a critical driver to play an effective development role. Effective program outcomes require program activities to be congruent with the values that the organisation represents. Also, effective funding partnerships are contingent on long term relationships where partners work together in trust and mutual learning to resolve issues and problems[7].

There are diverse views on the role of civil society. A perspective common amongst major international development agencies places civil society in a crucial role in the delivery of services, to hold governments accountable and to engage in advocacy to influence the government such that it becomes more responsive to the needs of the people, particularly the poor. The activist role in civil society, however, is one in which NGOs to play a creative and dynamic role in national development. The ability of NGOs to represent a constituency and to strengthen the collaboration between government and community is critical to this 'alternate' view of civil society. Within his view, NGOs work to fulfil their own (rather than donors') vision and mission using local knowledge, initiative and skills to bring about positive change in their society. Strong civil society occurs when organisational development is based on values and principles with a strong commitment to the community NGOs are serving, and have the skills to support the process.

The role of implementing service delivery programs should be just one means for NGOs to achieve development goals, yet donors are often unwilling to provide more than short term funding tied to the achievement of specific project objectives. This results in a stop-start cycle of activity implementation. Development of local capacity needs to be based on the principle of enhancing what already exists, directed towards building self-confidence and empowering local participation. It is important that people are assisted to respond to new environments, and that capacity strengthening programs are a reflection of this. It is important to ensure that local organisations are given the opportunity to express local citizen voices.

As local NGOs seek their legitimacy not from international donors but from the communities they serve, their ability to collaborate with Government will be increasingly important. The Fourth Constitutional Government, which came to

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[5] The literature on this issues is analysed in a paper by Ann Wigglesworth (2006) 'Partnership in Crisis: Lessons from East Timor' in M. Clarke (ed) Aid and Conflict, Nova Science Publishers, New York.
[6] The FONGTIL Evaluation in March 2006 found 332 local NGOs on the membership list. It is likely that the actual number of active NGOs is half this (Wigglesworth and Soares 2006).
[7] Chapman & Kelly (2007);' Why understanding organisational values and relationships is important for assessing aid effectiveness – An NGO perspective' Paper for Doing Evaluation Better Conference, Melbourne, September 2007

power in 2007, is rolling out a program of decentralisation to reach a total of eight districts in 2008. District Assemblies will be responsible for the allocation of funding for community development initiatives, identified through *Suco*[8] Councils. District level government is expected to regulate this process and provide technical assistance through the relevant ministries. Previously trialled as pilots in Maliana and Los Palos, decentralisation processes started in Aileu and Manatuto in 2007 and this year in Cova Lima, Manufahi, Ainaro and Baucau Districts. Projects supported will be predominantly infrastructure projects to be implemented by local contractors. A stronger civil society can support community assessment and planning processes and other 'soft' community development skills to complement infrastructure projects. A strengthening of relations between government, community and civil society will provide mutual benefits and effective implementation of development initiatives within poor communities.

3.   Situation Analysis

A consultation was undertaken as part of the design process from 22nd February to 13th March 2008. This aimed at understanding various stakeholders' views on civil society strengthening through interviews and group discussions with CSOs, NGOs, other international organisations and government bodies. Three districts were visited for consultations with locally based CSOs, NGOs and the District Administrations. These are Cova Lima, Manufahi and Baucau. A FONGTIL facilitated capacity building activity taking place in Baucau at the time of the visit enabled the team to hear views of CSOs based in Los Palos, Viqueque, Manatuto as well as Baucau District.

Aid Concentrated in Dili

Given the huge volume of aid in Dili, it is surprising to find that few international organisations have offices based in the districts. Some have a presence in the District but operate out of Dili. Consequently, except in Cova Lima, most CSOs we met have not received funds from an Australian NGO. The most common sources of support were ETCAS (AusAID) and other embassy funds including New Zealand and Ireland. Support had also been received from UNDP, WFP and FAO, often material in kind rather than cash grants. Most international NGOs implement their own programs, and with a few exceptions, are not focussed on strengthening local civil society organisations. The program suggested from this analysis should aim to build on the experience of those already involved in civil society strengthening, and to provide district based NGOs with improved access to funding to work more effectively for their constituencies own development goals.

The consultant team chose to visit districts which had both strong and weak international presence. In Suai, Covalima district, there are a number of international agencies - Oxfam Australia, CARE, CCF, and GTZ[9] which recently started a capacity strengthening program to support the district decentralisation program have bases. Oxfam Australia has a strong commitment to capacity development in the district. Manufahi's capital Same, on the other hand has but one international office, of the Irish NGO Concern. It is engaged in CSO capacity building but does not support any of the CSOs which turned up at the consultation. Baucau, as the second city in Timor Leste has surprisingly just two international NGO offices. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has a long history of CSO engagement in the eastern districts and World Vision Timor Leste runs a program focussed on youth vocational training. From the information available it appears that there are no international NGO offices in a number of districts (such as Ainaro, Ermera, Manatuto and Viqueque) through which a District Partnership could be established.

The CSOs which attended the consultations were disproportionately those which had never received funding. This was perhaps a reflection of having time to spare than more active CSOs, and that they expected benefits from attending the consultation. CSO staff were highly critical of international NGOs that implement directly rather than work through local CSOs. In Dili few of the stronger local NGOs attended although both strong and weak were invited. We met many CSOs which have sought donor funding from a range of sources. More often than not they fail to attract funding, and when they do it is short term funding for specific activities, and without access to technical support. After completion of the project they again become inactive in field activities while they seek further donor funds. Such cyclical support does nothing to contribute to sustainable relationships with communities, or perceptions that development requires a long term commitment.

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[8] *Sucos* are the administrative unit of a village, divided into *aldeias* or hamlets.
[9] GTZ is the official development agency of Germany.

Limited skills and experience of CSOs

The roles and expectations of CSOs changed dramatically after 1999. Rapid changes in the political, economic and social environment over a few short years means that skills are needed today that were not needed yesterday. There has been a considerable amount of training for 'capacity building' of CSOs in Timor Leste since 2000, but many CSOs express concern that the training they have received has focussed on how to meet project skills and reporting requirements, with little attention to organisational development and sustainable capacity[10].

At the consultations undertaken in Suai and in Baucau (covering the eastern districts) some CSOs had been successful in getting support on the basis of an organisational strategic plan, and annual financial support over a number of years. Such support has been provided by Oxfam Australia, Concern, CAFOD[11] and GTZ. This had allowed them to build organisational skills such as workplans, staff roles and responsibilities etc. The greater confidence which these CSOs displayed was notable. An important aspect of these longer term relationships was the trust built between international NGO and CSO.

Capacity building must start from the perspective that all people have capacity but changes in the context in which people operate create a need for continual capacity building to adjust to a changing external environment[12]. A consistent lesson from capacity building programs in the region has been that support needs to be provided over the long term to strengthen local institutions. This is all the more important in a rapidly changing environment such as that of Timor Leste. Community engagement skills, strategic planning, work plans, staff management skills and developing a skilled governance board make up part of the framework for an effective organisation.

Many CSOs rely on small grant funding which is provided without capacity building support. For an inexperienced CSO this holds the risk that they will fail to meet reporting and financial management requirements, and thus having reduced chances of gaining continued support. The need for more intensive support is recognised by the Dili based AusAID team managing the ETCAS grants program.

In Same most of the CSOs consulted had been unsuccessful in getting their applications to donors approved. The major capacity needs identified by CSOs were in proposal writing, financial management, project reporting and organisational development. English language was a major concern as most donors require project proposals to be in English.

In Suai where CSOs had been more successful in accessing donor support, these concerns were also present amongst the newer CSOs. The need for better skills in community consultation strategies was also recognised as it was noted that sometimes projects do not meet priority needs of the community.

At the large CSO consultation in Dili a diverse range of CSOs identified strategic planning and mentoring as important capacity strengthening needs. It was noted that a lot of training had been provided but this often was not translated into practice due to lack of opportunity to put it into practice and lack of follow up support. In Same, two organisations had received training in financial management but had never received any funds to manage. Training needs to be appropriately targeted both in terms of who is trained and its timing to meet the organisational needs. Attendance at trainings often has resulted in trained staff leaving the organisation for better opportunities elsewhere. To ensure that information from training is understood and informs organisational practices, ongoing supportive relationships are needed such as mentoring support. Targeted one-on-one training in the work place is more effective than training courses.

Weak understanding of civil society

The consultation demonstrated an overwhelming concern by CSOs with their relationship with donors, and little attention to their relationship with communities or with government. Civil society needs to be understood in the context of the society. Organised civil society in Timor Leste is largely made up of the younger generation educated in the Indonesian education system. Most of this generation have a level of education which leads to their expectation of an office job rather than returning to a rural life of farming. The major source of employment for this group is as teachers (for as long as Indonesian language is the medium of instruction in schools) and in the NGO

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[10] See Evaluation of FONGTIL March 2006, also East Timor NGO Capacity Building Scheme Summary Report March 2004.

[11] CAFOD, the UK partner of the Caritas Catholic network, Concern is an Irish NGO based in Dili.

[12] See James, Rick (2001) 'Power and Partnership? Experiences of NGO Capacity Building' INTRAC, Oxford.

sector. This group of people represents an important resource for the country, both government and community and should be supported in its attempts to understand the potential role they can play.

Organisational development within civil society must be supported by capacity building strategies which focus on strengthening the CSOs' ability to play a valued role in society. Organisational development skills to enable a CSO to demonstrate leadership based on a vision and mission which extends beyond the implementation of projects. Their accountability needs to be not only to the donor but to the communities with which they work. Concepts of constituency, appropriate consultation and listening skills, and accountability to the community need to be developed.

A comprehensive understanding of the role of civil society needs to be nurtured such that civil society is seen in relation to communities and government, not exclusively donors. Some CSOs have set themselves up to generate income, delivering NGO projects to the communities as an opportunity for gaining salaries for themselves. It was commented that such opportunism was also exhibited by international NGOs which initiated program implementation to take advantage of emergency funds in 1999-2001 or 2006. The exclusive focus on donor-CSO relations by some NGOs and CSOs eclipses the potential for CSOs to build meaningful relationships within their society.

A change in government in Timor Leste has opened up new opportunities for communities. The potential for CSOs to be part of district based processes for *Suco* development is greatly increased compared to the experience of the past few years. The decentralisation process will result in greater activity in the districts, with District Assemblies being responsible for the allocation of funds to the *Sucos* for infrastructure projects. Community development skills are scarce in Timor Leste. The strengthening of CSO skills for supporting community led assessment and analysis will contribute to local development initiatives which can seek funding from government sources. The social development and organisational skills of CSOs can become an asset within the broader community, while the sustainability of local organisations is enhanced by diversification of their funding base.

Gender and the Environment

Women are under represented in the NGO sector, as in other sectors in Timorese society. Traditional society does not consider that women should be involved in decision making. Although these attitudes are changing it is a slow process. Even amongst CSOs there is little evidence of engaging women except in areas they are traditionally considered to be competent which include financial management and family health related activities. A number of enterprising women have established their own NGOs.

Women are socialised to be quite and submit to men's authority. Men working in local CSOs claim that it is difficult to involve women due to their reticence to speak out. Gender strategies need to focus not only on supporting women's involvement but also in helping male CSO workers to have the skills to encourage women to speak out and participate as equals. Changing gender attitudes is not facilitated by the common perception that gender concerns are western constructs. A focus on inclusive development through the community led planning process will bring women into greater focus for CSOs.

Gender analysis is critical in resolving many environmental issues in rural development. For instance women have a major input into family agriculture, water and firewood collection and need to be consulted on issues of land use and water supply for the protection from deforestation and erosion. The improvement of agricultural practices is an important aspect of community development. It can be supported through increased engagement with district administration's agricultural support programs as well as through sustainable agriculture networks However, the mechanisation of agriculture must be analysed with respect to workload not only in land preparation but also the tasked done by women, such as weeding and harvesting.

4.   Lessons Learned

As part of the consultancy, a **desk review** was undertaken to identify effective capacity strengthening programs in the Asia-Pacific region.

Since independence civil society strengthening projects were undertaken by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), both projects having been completed and evaluated. The

evaluations provide important lessons. The UNDP CSO Support Project[13] had as its objective to assist local CSOs to contribute to the millennium development goals, a concept which was the agenda of the UNDP, not the CSOs themselves. CSOs have their own agendas, and want support to achieve them. The project was found by the evaluators to have underachieved due to its unrealistic goals which could have been avoided by a more participatory approach to project design.

The CRS Engaging Civil Society Project[14] used a two tier model with national NGOs as core partners to support 'satellite' CSOs in a cascade model. It aimed to increase capacities of core and satellite groups, build networks and coalitions and develop advocacy capacities amongst CSOs. The final evaluation report found the 'capabilities, priorities and commitments of the partners were often a mismatch for the expectations of the project'. The project had not recognised that the organisations were at a formative stage of development, most CSOs needing to develop mission and vision statements and put in place basic operational structures. Networking and advocacy were not their priorities. As well, the lack of decentralisation meant district government representatives were unable to respond to CSO advocacy due to their lack of decision making authority. A number of assumptions made in the design were found to be incorrect. The CRS project developed a series of booklets in three languages for capacity building of CSOs which may be useful resources for future CSO strengthening initiatives.

The World Bank Community Empowerment Program (CEP) set up local structures for delivery of small development activities across the country in the first years post-occupation. Like the previous two projects reviewed, assumptions were made in the project design concerning civil society roles and local desire and capacities to fulfil defined roles. The CEP program set up parallel structures dominated by young educated people, who fulfilled local expectations by consulting the existing local elders before making a decision. The project evaluation found that structures must reflect existing representational structures. The CEP tried to deliver speedy material assistance with robust institutions of local governance that would 'empower' communities to tackle their own development. Ultimately the pressure to meet their own time frames did not allow a participatory development model to be implemented[15].

These three projects reflected the donor perspectives of civil society capacity needs rather than those of local people. Due to inadequate understanding of and consultation with local organisations and communities the projects set up structures which were not sustainable. This early experience of development aid in Timor Leste sets up a challenge to the current program to draw unequivocally on the local perceptions of needs within the country, building the program in such a way as to support and engage with local structures.

AusAID has supported a range of civil society strengthening projects in the region which take a holistic approach to strengthening of civil society. The Timor Leste NGO Capacity Building Scheme (ETCBS) in 2001-4 supported seven Australian NGOs in partnership programs for capacity building designed by ANGOs. The program was well regarded due to its accessibility, flexibility and responsiveness to the needs. Most partnerships were already in place and strengthened as a result, with working relationships that were more or less equal in decision making and responsibilities. A 'learning by doing' approach was seen as more effective than formal training programs. The training was focussed on technical support for project delivery, but left a gap in institutional development, gender analysis, and participatory development amongst others[16].

The Church Partnership Program (CPP) in PNG takes a **mentoring approach** to capacity development. ANGOs work along side their local counterparts as mentors to build their skills. The mid term review found that long term relationships between the partners and flexibility in approach were important factors which facilitate effective outcomes. The program is highly valued and demonstrates the importance of building on existing relationships for effective mentoring relationships. Flexibility in approach was a key reason for success, with each partnership being able to develop their own approaches over longer time frames provided by the partnership agreement with the

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[13] UNDP 'Strengthening capacity of CSOs in local and national development processes for the achievement of MDGs in Timor Leste' 2003-2006. End of project evaluation by Sara Methven, INTRAC March 2006.

[14] Catholic Relief Services 'Engaging Civil Society Project' 2002-2005. Final Project Evaluation May 2005.

[15] Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project (CEP) 2000-2005. Implementation Completion Report May 2005. For discussion on CEP see Moxham (2004) 'The World Bank in the land of kiosks: Community driven development in East Timor', Focus on the Global South; and Ospina & Hohe (2002) 'Traditional power structures and local governance in East Timor – a case study of the Community Empowerment Program' Graduate Institute of Development Studies, Geneva.

[16] East Timor NGO Capacity Building Scheme – Summary Report, March 2004 by N. Shatifan & A. da Cruz

donor, AusAID. Nevertheless, different opinions were expressed between the local and the international organisations about the partnership. In this program, the PNG partners valued collaboration, sharing and the process approach to the partnership, while the ANGOs focused more on the tasks and outcomes[17]. Similarly research in Cambodia found Australian NGOs referred to NGO 'partners' while local NGOs refer to the ANGOs as 'donors' to whom they were accountable. Even if they received support and capacity building and encouragement they rarely described the relationship as 'partnership'[18].

The Australia-Indonesia Community Development and Civil Society Scheme (ACCESS) in Indonesia and the Community Development Scheme (CDS) in PNG have recognised the need to provide an **accompanied process of learning rather than short term skills training programs.** In these programs project staff, mentors or field workers accompany the process of skills implementation within the organisation's structures, following defined steps which ensure that good development practice is integrated into their work in an incremental manner.

ACCESS[19] is a program which offers an integrated program of funding for local initiatives tied to processes that build capacity of civil society organisations. These processes are established through well developed tools. Project participants can contribute to the improvement and update of these tools through annual reviews. Work is carried out by project staff both directly with communities and through local CSOs, using the ACCESS community led assessment and community planning tools (CLAPP). The participation of marginalised groups in planning and implementation has been supported by a gender and poverty inclusive (GPI) approach, and participatory monitoring and evaluation tools have also been established. These tools have been developed in Indonesian language which may be usefully adapted for the specific context of Timor Leste.

Like ACCESS, the CDS program in PNG supports CSO strengthening with funding opportunities. To ensure appropriate funding for different organisations the project has multiple mechanisms of funding, including Small Grants Program, NGO Strengthening Program, Specialised Partners Program and Strategic Thinking and Learning Program. CDS has achieved access to remote areas through the establishment of provincial 'core groups' and paid field workers to implement the program at the local level[20].

Several programs have seen the importance of moving beyond project funding processes to engage with local government and support linkages between CSOs and local governance structures, including ACCESS and PACAP in the Philippines. PACAP comprises two programs, the Responsive Assistance Scheme (RAS) community development project funding mechanism and the Focal Community Assistance Scheme (FOCAS) which engages national stakeholders in a process of identification, development and prioritisation of projects. FOCAS was found to have developed 'robust and influential partnerships' at senior governmental level, thus creating linkages between community driven development and local government units. This approach has effectively bridged the gap between capacity building of local government which has long been part of 'good governance' and the civil society strengthening forms of aid which have generally been supported independently of each other. It has become evident that linking these sectors can better support effective government leadership of development [21] which in turn leads to more sustainable development.

PNG, Indonesia and the Philippines are countries with many years of development experience and local and regional government systems and mechanisms are more established for relating to civil society than in the case of Timor Leste. The fourth government of RDTL has set an agenda of increasing its engagement with the population and has expressed interest in working together with civil society. There is now a unique opportunity to work with local government and CSOs to support the implementation of appropriate mechanisms for community engagement and development processes. The ETCSSP will work not only to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to work with communities, but also their ability to engage with government, and to extend knowledge of community led processes across the range of stakeholders.

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[17] PNG Church Partnership Program 2005-9. Mid-term Review by L. Kelly, J. Cousins, M. Brash, May 2007.
[18] Chapman & Kelly (2007) op. cit.
[19] Australia-Indonesia Community Development and Civil Society Scheme 2002-2007. Review of ACCESS By Ian Patrick and Leya Cattleya June 2006.
[20] Community Development Scheme 1999-2007, Final Evaluation Report, May 2007.
[21] Philippines-Australia Community Assistance Program 2005-2010. Mid-term review: Effectiveness and strategic direction. AusAID September 2007.

The desk review produced a number of lessons for ETCSSP which are:

- A civil society strengthening program must be developed in response to the conditions of the country context – models from elsewhere cannot be implemented directly.
- An important quality in the success of partnership support programs has been flexibility in design which has enabled the projects to adapt to different agencies' ways of working.
- Project design must reflect CSO views of their roles and capacity strengthening objectives.
- Short term grant funding for project activities may not result in sustainable outcomes - support is needed over a longer term.
- Organisational development support provided through existing long term partnership relationships to complement project grant funding can provide a significant increase in an organisation's ability to operate independently.
- Civil society strengthening activities need to be implemented at a pace appropriate to the local organisations. The need to achieve project output targets and timeframes can undermine the capacity building processes.
- It is important to ensure that women are in the mainstream of the development process and not sidelined to gender specific issues.
- Community centred processes can be facilitated by participatory planning and monitoring tools for continuous learning.
- Decentralisation of decision making can constructively engage all stakeholders including government, community and civil society. To be accepted, structures set up by programs must recognise the existing structures within the society.
- Sustainable development activities can be supported by collaboration of multiple stakeholders at local, regional and national levels. Civil society strengthening strategies involving building linkages with local government are effective.
- In Timor Leste capacity building has been overly focussed on technical skills for project implementation, with less emphasis on organisational development support or community engagement for needs assessment.

5. *Existing AusAID and other donor/multilateral Programs*

The goal of AusAID's draft Australia-Timor Leste Development Assistance Strategy *'to assist in the building of a stable and prosperous Timor Leste'*, includes a commitment to *'engage with civil society to promote peace and reconciliation'.* This program will engage with and support civil society in contributing to the three strategic areas in AusAID's draft country strategy, namely *'democracy, security and justice'*; *'economic development and management'*; and *'better services for better lives'*. Importantly, as the new government of Timor Leste seeks to deliver its program of decentralisation, a better functioning Civil Society offers a potentially important mechanism for linking communities into constructive policy dialogue with the RDTL government.

AusAID has been a significant supporter of Timor Leste since 1999 with substantial resources allocated to capacity building programs. While much of this aid has been focussed on the RDTL government, civil society sector programs such as the Timor Leste NGO Capacity Building Scheme (2001-4) and AusAID's Timor Leste Community Assistance Scheme (ETCAS) have been found to be timely and effective, and highly regarded for their outreach to NGOs, CBOs and church organisations in the districts. However, AusAID reporting processes have been found to focus more on output indicators (quantitative indicators) than processes and outcomes (qualitative indicators). The fund is considered by AusAID in Dili to be under-resourced, and the need for capacity building support to local organisation is well recognised but beyond the scope of the program.

Caritas Australia plays an important role in engaging with the Catholic network of organisations as well as supporting its own community development work, including support of local CSOs particularly in Oecussi. The Catholic Church was an important element in Timorese society during the occupation, providing both refuge for individuals and public advocacy in support of liberation. Many of the NGOs which started pre-1999 focused on human rights issues and had close links to the church. Since independence the moral authority of the church has diminished. The departure of Bishop Belo, followed by the alignment of the church with an anti-government stance

since 2005 has resulted in many turning away from the church. The Timorese Catholic Church is fundamentally conservative in its practice, with a strong adherence to hierarchy and the gender status quo, although it seeks compromises with traditional leadership to accommodate traditional spiritual practices alongside Catholic practices. A report into how the Timorese Catholic Church can engage in development has found that the church has played an invaluable role in the crises of 1999 and 2006, but that its aid tends to encourage passive recipients and dependency. It suggests that the Catholic Church needs to reassert its pastoral role by listening to their parishioners and empowering communities to engage with the development processes taking place in the country[22]. Caritas Australia is engaged in supporting this process, and plays an important developmental role within the church network.

Amongst the Australian NGOs, Oxfam Australia stands out in having provided a significant amount of support to the CSO sector, both to national NGOs and district based CSOs. Its support of national NGOs including FONGTIL, Rede Feto, Fokupers, and Hak is generally done in collaboration with other donors (notably Concern and CAFOD), with each partner supporting part of the CSO's multi-year strategic plan. This arrangement provides stability for the CSO while not creating a dependency on one donor organisation. In Cova Lima district where Oxfam Australia is based, it has encouraged the development of a network of local CSOs through which it has facilitated support to a range of small CSOs. In Oecussi District Oxfam supports similar work through REINO, a CSO network, together with Caritas Australia.

Concern is an Irish NGO which has a strong commitment to CSO capacity strengthening with district offices in Los Palos and Same as well as Dili. It runs partnership programs over 4-6 years and provides mentoring for PRA and integrated planning and action processes. Grants are approved by the district program team. Concern also run their own programs, with CSO participation, such that Concern staff and CSO staff 'make mistakes and learn together'. Concern staff have a range of technical skills to support CSOs as needed. Concern often co-funds national NGOs with Oxfam Australia.

CRS current capacity support for CSOs is through 'Kmanek CSO Support Project' which operates in Lautem, Baucau, Viqueque, Liquica and Bobonaro Districts. It has a focus on strengthening relations between local government and CSOs. CSOs can learn about how government works and how they can get involved in the decision making process. CSO partners are chosen according to their vision and mission. An MOU defines how much support they receive. Receipts must be provided every month. A results framework format is used to identify the impact in the community.

Like CRS, UNDP has followed up its earlier CSO capacity building program with a smaller and more focussed program. Their civic education project entitled 'Supporting CSOs and promoting citizen participation' supports CSO-government dialogue with a community field worker in each district, and provides small grants as well as training about government institutions.

Belun is a well-resourced national NGO established and supported by Columbia University. It works in every district, focusing on organisational strengthening for maximising resources and reducing tensions. Belun has established tools to support community planning and peace strengthening work linking the community, Suco Council and government. Small grants are provided. It holds a database on CSOs around the country.

The German Government aid program GTZ has started a new Rural Development Program in Cova Lima and Bobonaro districts focussing on increasing food security in rural communities. Community development planning, agricultural extension services and better infrastructure will be achieved through training and facilitating access to government funds for decentralisation and agriculture. Three local NGOs have been identified for delivery of components in community activities.

To date much advocacy work of the NGO sector has been based on an adversarial model, and has sometimes come into conflict with local government representatives who themselves have little experience or understanding of the role of civil society. In recent years party politics has often dominated relationships between CSOs and government. CSOs need to identify with their constituency and *advocate for their constituency's interests*, rather than present themselves as *advocates against the government*. Effective relationships between community, civil

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[22] Dr Annette Field 'Acknowledging the past, shaping the future: How the churches and other religious communities are contributing to Timor Leste's development', Caritas Australia, January 2008.

society and government need to be nurtured for civil society to play a constructive role in development in Timor Leste.

6.   Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (RDTL) programs

Fund for Civil Society Organisations, Office of the Prime Minister: For the first time a government fund has been allocated for the support of civil society organisations (CSOs) under the office of the Prime Minister. The $5 million fund aims to foster the institutional development of CSOs to partner with government in development. A committee will be established including NGO representatives and sectoral representation. At the time of writing, the program was in planning, criteria were yet to be developed and staff yet to be recruited for program implementation and monitoring.

Local Development Program: (Programa de Desenvolvimento Local - PDL) is part of the decentralisation process run by the Ministry of State Administration, first piloted in one sub-district in Bobonaro in 2005. The following year Los Palos become the second pilot. Aileu and Manatuto Districts initiated the decentralisation process in 2007, and this year four more district administrations are being prepared for managing the decentralisation process.

PDL funding is based on the district population, with $4 per capita (up from $2.50 last year) allocated. 30% of this can be expended by the District Assembly, and the remaining is for projects in the sub-districts. Two members from each Suco Council participate in a Sub-District Assembly, and representatives from the Sub Districts Assembly attend the District Assembly. Projects identified at suco level are considered at the Sub-District Assembly. Prioritised projects will be forwarded to the District Assembly, where sub-district representatives must defend the project for it to be supported. Once funded, approved contractors will bid to implement the work. At the time of the consultation preparations were being made for the training of district administration staff and suco leaders to engage in this process.

The President's Office: The President wishes to make an immediate response to the needs of the people, without the delays that bureaucracy causes. The Civil Society Adviser to the President manages the requests from the community. Since the start of this government in August 16,000 requests for support have been received, of which 11,000 have been forwarded to the appropriate Ministry and 5,000 were awaiting processing. Since the courts ruled that the President is not permitted to administer a budget from government, a *Poverty Reduction Task Force* has been established to seek funds from donors and corporations.

Ministry of Economy and Development: Funding for rural development is currently through the Ministry of State Administration and the Ministry of Agriculture. Under the Ministry of Economy and Development, the government will set up a think tank to look at how to assist rural communities, particularly veterans, elders and IDPs, with the aim of reducing tensions. The National Research and Development Committee under this Ministry will also establish nine sector working groups to revise work plans of the different sectors. In 2009 the World Bank funded National Directorate for Rural Development which supports small enterprise development will be located within the Ministry of Economy and Development. The National Directorate for Rural Development also supports the Institute of Microfinance (IMFTL) for the provision of small loans at low rates of interest.

Ministry of Agriculture: A Community Development Fund has been established with a budget of $10,000 allocated to each Suco Council 'to reduce poverty by supporting farmers groups develop self-sustainable agricultural activities in rural areas'. Cash distribution of these funds started prior to the 2007 elections (notably in Dili) causing many to claim it was a vote buying exercise. Some districts such as Cova Lima established a process requiring a proposal to be presented, and 40% of funding to be provided initially with the remainder given on completion. In Cova Lima projects included purchase of goats or pigs for vulnerable families, constructing of roads to the fields, repair of irrigation systems, reforestation projects. Some of these projects had been completed and suco leaders travelled to Dili to collect the final payment.

Conclusions

Local CSOs often have difficulty accessing project aid which requires English writing skills and an understanding about how to write a project proposal. These are skills which CSOs most commonly seek to gain. Reviews of AusAID's civil society support programs identify organisational development needs such as developing a sense of identity and mission, community mobilisation and participatory development practices, project planning, proposal development, monitoring and evaluation, financial accountability as key areas for further capacity building. Another consistent lesson is that 'capacity building' is too often equated with training, whereas, capacity building only occurs if the training is able to be implemented through changes in organisational practice.

The desk review conducted as part of this consultancy demonstrated that project based aid has been found to have constraints for effective development. Lessons from AusAID programs in Timor Leste, PNG, Indonesia, Philippines and other countries consistently point to the need for greater focus on development outcomes rather than project outputs, and longer timeframes and greater flexibility for project implementation processes to meet local, rather than donor, expectations and enhance sustainability of the outcomes.

Local CSOs have limited experience in development processes in Timor Leste's short history of independence. There has, however, been little donor focus on assisting organisations to develop projects through a process of collaboration with the community who will benefit from the project. The CSO-donor relationship often causes the CSO to give most of its attention to meeting donor reporting requirements, rather than focussing on the quality of their development intervention.

An understanding of the role of CSOs as active players in the development context also requires a greater focus on strengthening the relationships between CSOs and the government. The community development skills of local CSOs will in the long term enable CSOs to play a constructive role in the processes of Suco project development within the decentralisation process. Such engagement will contribute to their sustainability through diversification of potential sources of funding.

A process-driven development model is required to engage program partners in learning and sharing to achieve a development outcome. CSOs need support to better contribute to participatory development planning and implementation of activities with communities. A process of learning-by-doing through mentoring can enhance CSO skills in all aspects of the project cycle including participative goal setting and engaging the beneficiaries in all aspects of proposal writing, budget management and report writing, monitoring and evaluation.

Given the very recent experience of development work in Timor Leste, a knowledge base of appropriate skills for development practitioners should be institutionalised within Timorese universities or independent training providers. NGO collaboration could contribute to developing accepted effective community development practices appropriate to Timor Leste based on community led, inclusive development. This will contribute to sustainable provision of quality community development training within the country.

Sustainability in civil society sector development is necessarily a multifaceted issue. NGOs generally lack security of funding, yet internationally many have survived over the long term through short term development funding. It is important that they can engage in dialogue with international donor agencies and keep abreast of the changing concepts of appropriate and effective practices in development to provide enhanced organisational ability. The key to sustainability for CSOs is to be able to assist communities articulate the voice of the most disadvantaged in the society, and to be able to demonstrate the ability support communities to work with governments and outside support agencies more effectively and appropriately.