

Dreaming of a Different life: Steps Towards Democracy and Equality in Timor-Leste¹

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Abstract: Customary gender roles in Timor-Leste have a profound effect on the respective life opportunities of young Timorese women and men, but since independence, there have been challenges to traditional gender roles. This article investigates how young Timorese women, due to their gender and age, face significant limits to their social and political participation and how young women in rural areas continue to be amongst the least heard members of the community. Drawing on interviews with Timorese women and youth, the article analyses the opportunities and limitations for young women to further their education and engage constructively in the development of their communities.

Keywords: Gender; young women; civil society; participation; democracy; Timor-Leste.

1. Introduction

Since independence, Timor-Leste has experienced a period of rapid change, framed by national policies that embrace international principles of equality and a Constitution which provides that “women and men have the same rights and duties in all areas of family, political, economic, social and cultural life” (RDTL Section 17). Within rural communities, however, customary practices continue to dominate the way of life. Most of the population lives by subsistence agriculture in the traditional way with allegiance to customary leaders. Customary practices dictate distinct gender roles for men and women. Women’s work is focussed on the domestic sphere while men are the principle decision

makers. While there has been much attention to both gender and youth issues in independent Timor-Leste, there has been little specific focus on the distinct issues facing young Timorese women.

Today's young women will play an influential role in the wellbeing of the fast growing generation of infants and children, as Timor-Leste has the highest fertility rates in Asia. According to the Demographic and Health Survey 2010, 45% of the population are children of 14 years and under, while 17.5% are youth between 15 and 24 years, (National Directorate of Statistics 12) the age at which most women marry and have their first child.

The provision of sustainable livelihoods for this young and rapidly growing population is a major emerging policy issue for the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (República Democrática de Timor-Leste – RDTL). The majority of the Timorese population and 77% of the labour force reside in rural areas, where subsistence agriculture predominates (RDTL “Combating Poverty” 7). Timorese women are active in the agricultural and non-formal sectors, in selling and marketing agricultural produce managing kiosks (small shops). They play a major role in producing food and food products as well as traditional forms of cloth and craftwork. Thus women play a central role in providing for their families through food production and supplementary economic activities.

This article explores traditional values of gender roles and responsibilities and how they have changed through Timor-Leste's turbulent history. It investigates how a process of change has led to new understandings of “traditions” and the rise of different realities and expectations by young women that have taken place since independence.

2. Gender, Education and Empowerment

The western notion that “youth” is defined by an age-range does not match the reality of Timorese society where, even if still a teenager, young people are considered “adult” once they are married (Wigglesworth, *Becoming Citizens* 4). A married woman is considered to have primary responsibilities for domestic (productive and reproductive) duties and as such a teenage bride is expected to leave school. Meanwhile unmarried men are considered “youth” into their 30s and even 40s.

Most rural Timorese young women are subject to arranged marriages at an early age and have had little freedom to make choices about their own lives. Traditionally senior men hold decision-making authority in Timorese society and powerless people will accept decisions made on their behalf by power holders (Hohe 80). Unequal power relations between men and women, old and young, are the product of well-established customary and institutional practices in which women are considered subject to men's authority.

Education for girls is an important catalyst for empowering women to make changes that are in the interest of themselves and their families. A mother's education, for example, is one of the most important factors in promoting change to positively affect poverty and health outcomes for families. The importance of promoting women's participation in economic, social and community development was highlighted by Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the UN, in his speech on International Women's Day 2005:

Study after study has taught us that there is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women. No other policy is as likely to raise economic productivity, or to reduce infant and maternal mortality. No other policy is as sure to improve nutrition and promote health – including the prevention of HIV/AIDS. No other policy is as powerful in increasing the chances of education for the next generation. And I would venture that no policy is more important in preventing conflict, or in achieving reconciliation after a conflict has ended.

If empowerment is a process by which people are able to exert more control over their lives, it can be supported by removing obstacles from an individual's path and by giving encouragement to take charge of his/her life (Blackburn 220). A measure of empowerment has been described as the increased ability of the poor to make political, social or economic choices, related to three inter-related, indivisible but culturally determined dimensions: access to resources, agency to define one's goals and act on them, and self-assessment of achievements in the process of empowerment (Kabeer 437-8). Women, however, are likely to accept inequality as being the natural order of things, so women's empowerment requires a change of mindset.

VeneKlasen and Miller have identified the influence of “hidden power” and “invisible power” in addition to overt visible power (47-48). Through hidden power, social control is exerted using customary practices, powerful people or institutions prescribe socially restricted roles and responsibilities of a group. Invisible power refers to the psychological and ideological limitations to participation imposed through an internalised feeling of subordination, social exclusion and inequality (Gaventa 29). Invisible power has the effect of devaluing the concerns of the excluded group.

Participation is one of the principal mechanisms to enable people to exert agency over their lives, to have voice, and ultimately become empowered. Through participation, power relations can be transformed creating new relationships based on greater solidarity and equality. Empowerment results from a participatory process that engages people in reflection, inquiry and action. Internal empowerment is an essential indicator of change in relation to empowerment – people must *feel* that they have more agency and more space to make decisions in relation to their lives in addition to any practical economic or political change which can be measured.

Internationally, attention to the role of women in development interventions has arisen from two principle sources. One is the recognition that it is more “efficient” to involve the female 50% of the population in productive activities, and the other is that there is an ethical imperative to ensure equal rights for women and overcome the disadvantage which results in women making up 70% of the world’s poorest.

Historically, economic development theory placed the family as the basic unit of the household economy with a male head of household, resulting in women’s interest often being overlooked. Ester Boserup first drew attention to the fact that women were often disadvantaged by rural development programs in 1970 in *Women’s Role in Economic Development*. Only after exposing the reality that women in most poor countries around the world play a major role in agricultural production did women start to be considered as contributors to the household economy. Once this became accepted, the participation of women in development projects was promoted to increase the efficiency of production, and the term “integrating women into development” was coined.

The theory of “Women in Development” (WID) thus focussed on analysing women’s roles and access to resources with the aim of making economic development more efficient, rather than being primarily concerned with gender inequities (Parpart 258-260).

With greater attention focussed on issues for women, critics found that “integrating women in development” approaches did not challenge the cause of inequality, leaving women with an increasing burden of productive work on top of their domestic duties. It was argued that an acknowledgement of the inequalities between men and women was essential to develop strategies to challenge the unequal balance of power between men and women. Gender and development theory (GAD) thus identified the need for not only meeting women’s practical needs such as food security and health, but also addressing strategic issues arising for women’s existing roles and subordinate position. Moser drew attention to how women face a “triple burden,” being responsible for the productive role of food production; domestic reproductive activities of cooking, washing, caring for the children, child bearing and also fulfilling roles and obligations with respect to community activities, which could result in them being substantially overburdened (158-60). She also argued that unpaid domestic labour and the community activities that comprise a large part of women’s social obligations are not valued whereas men’s work is valued because it is generally remunerated and carries with it some measure of social status or political power.

People’s participation in and influence of processes that affect their lives is a fundamental principle of development. Empowerment involves redressing unequal power relations that limits this participation and has been described as “the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them” (Kabeer 437).

Hence, women need to challenge those structures of power that demand their silence. They need to actively engage with processes of change that affect their lives. To enable this, existing structures of power need to be recognised, for example both men and women need to recognise that the right to participate requires an adjustment from traditional views where domestic duties are exclusively women’s domain and leadership the domain of men. Women’s full participation will require changing gender norms.

3. Gender issues in Timor-Leste

Customary practices dictate distinct gender roles for men and women, whereby women's work is defined by the domestic sphere and men are the principle decision makers outside the home. A Timorese² researcher, Josh Trindade, argues that Timorese culture considers men and women as operating in different realms within a dualistic concept in which feminine ritual power is protected by the "outside" male political power. The *lulik* or spirit world regulates relationships and social contracts (Trindade, "Lulik" 2). According to this analysis, men and women have complementary roles rather than different status.

Preceding colonization, women arguably had a higher status than they do today. Timorese customs were influenced by Portuguese colonisation and Catholic missions, which reinforced the role of women as fulfilling principally domestic roles and subject to male authority (Cristalis and Scott 24). What is today considered "traditional" practice may be the result of non-traditional, external influences. For example, Niner identifies the three significant external influences on the status of women in Timorese societies. These are the Portuguese colonial patriarchal elite committed to conservative Catholicism; the violent and militarised society under Indonesian occupation during which women's roles and responsibilities shifted radically; and the progressive international norms and gender policies of the UN administration and international agencies since 1999 (Niner 416). Thus current practices that are termed as "traditional" are cultural norms which have changed considerably over time and that are continuing to change in the post-independence era.

Within customary practice, gender relations are mediated through marriage, which is a union between two families rather than two individuals. Typically rural girls are married at puberty when they are sexually mature, while boys are likely to marry when they are economically productive or independent. Commonly, a young woman will be married to a man 7-10 years older than she (Director of FKSH).³ In a culture where age is a source of status, this difference in age and experience further reinforces the superior status of the husband. Married men start to participate as decision makers as responsible members of society and women as wives and mothers responsible for the household and domestic sphere. Many young rural women thus move directly from childhood to marriage.

Marriage involves protracted negotiations between the families to determine the brideprice or *barlake*.⁴ This is an unequal exchange of goods between families of the bride and groom. The groom provides livestock, typically buffalo, ranging from several buffalo to as many as seventy-seven buffalo for elite families in the district of Lautem. The brides' family give in exchange *tais*⁵ and other gifts of their production of symbolic significance but lower monetary value.

Many men have interpreted *barlake* as giving a husband the right to do as he likes with his wife (Thatcher 76). Research by Oxfam in the southwest of the country found that in traditional Timorese culture it is believed that stability within the household is maintained where the wife is subordinate to the husband as household chief and the key decision maker. Women's participation in decision making may thus risk her husband's anger or possibly a beating as wives are supposed to listen to their husbands and follow their decisions (Victorino-Soriano 20-21). Timorese academics argue, however, that in Timorese culture the *barlake* denotes respect for women, not ownership (Trinidad, Interview; Kehi). These and other Timorese men argue that it is not the traditional practices but the corruption of traditional practices by the introduction of capitalist values which has contributed to *barlake* becoming likened to a commodity value, thus giving rise to some men believing they "buy" women and have complete rights over them within marriage.

Timorese place a high importance on having children and childbearing starts immediately following marriage. Timorese women have large families and statistics published in 2007 indicate Timor-Leste had the highest fertility rates in the world with an average of 7.8 children per woman. A more recent survey suggests a drop in fertility rate, but still high at 5.7 (National Directorate of Statistics 51). Timor-Leste's population is young with 62.5% of the population under 24 years old. More than two-thirds of Timorese women have become mothers by age 25 (National Directorate of Statistics 56). The young age of motherhood and frequent pregnancies thereafter is one of the reasons that it is commonly argued that women are not able to participate in full time work or other responsibilities outside the home (Wigglesworth, *Becoming Citizens* 143).

The history of tragic loss of close relatives by most families together with the influence of the Catholic Church has resulted in negligible interest by either

men or women to have fewer children. Only 3.5 per cent of women with one to three children and 9.4 per cent of women with four or more children have used contraceptives (National Directorate of Statistics 69). The high fertility rate is matched by one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world (National Directorate of Statistics 112). This is attributable to limited access to health services, the frequency of childbirth and poor health and nutrition of many mothers. As well, unwanted pregnancy and high levels of pregnancy related illness, can lead to unsafe abortions and early pregnancy losses particularly amongst unmarried young women (Belton, Whittaker and Barclay 63).

Research on sexual and reproductive health programs has found that while much effort is given to responding to reproductive needs, there is less focus on providing necessary information and sexual services for youth, thus leaving adolescents vulnerable to sexual exploitation (Wayte, Zwi et al. 90). The Democratic and Health Survey 2010 found use of contraceptives by women prior to motherhood is also negligible. Surprisingly, perhaps, for a country with a strong Catholic influence, it is common for women to be pregnant at the time of their marriage. Several young Timorese explained that a young woman may intentionally become pregnant in order marry the man she loves. Her family may not otherwise accept the marriage and *barlake* offered but once she is pregnant it will be accepted and go ahead quickly (Wigglesworth, *Becoming Citizens* 126). In this way she is able to exert a form of self-determination. The customary *adat* ceremony binds man and wife in the eyes of the community while the official church registration often takes place several years later. Official registration of marriage takes place at the church ceremony thus official statistics on the age of marriage show significantly older ages than is actually the case (Wigglesworth, *Becoming Citizens* 125).

One of the most frequently mentioned issues for women is that of domestic violence. Young people have observed that it is equally as common among the young couples of today as it was in previous generations (Wigglesworth, *Becoming Citizens* 129). Cultural norms accept that “men resolve problems with authority (including violence) while women are expected to remain silent and stay at home” (Director of Rede Feto). The young age of marriage and responsibility for children, together with the fact that young fathers have often

not established any mechanism for economic support, is blamed for heightened tensions between a couple that often lead to domestic violence. Children are beaten “as a matter of habit” following values that young Timorese learnt in their own family life.⁶

Women who marry young or have a low educational level are at significantly greater risk of violence by their partner, according to research: it was found that over 60% of women surveyed were first married between 10 and 21 years, showing that early marriage is common (Hynes, Ward et al. 316). A staggering 86% of women believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife for reasons such as if she goes out without telling him, she argues with him or she neglects the children (National Directorate of Statistics 214).

The passing of the Domestic Violence Law in May 2010 is of key importance to challenge commonly held beliefs that men have “bride price rights” over their wives. Violence against women is both a cause and a symptom of gender inequality which leads to reduced outcomes for female education and increased poverty for women and their families and economic development activities targeting women is an important mechanism to reduce violence against women (Egan and Haddad 17).

4. Changing social realities and gender

The Timorese have experience of changing gender roles over the past few decades. Women made a major contribution to the independence struggle in Timor-Leste, with the clandestine movement made up of more than 60% women. Women were deeply involved in underground work, risking their lives to transport food to the guerrillas on the front line. Others took up arms and died fighting in the front lines (Cristalis and Scott 39). Timorese women played crucial organisational, political and logistical roles in the liberation movement although the media portrayal of the struggle provides an image of a struggle fought only by men (Aditjondro 127-8). Neither their contribution nor their suffering was given due recognition and no women were included in the formal disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programs (Niner 425).

During the independence struggle the women’s wing of FRETILIN (the nationalist independence party Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste

Independente), *Organização Popular da Mulher de Timor* (OPMT) raised the status of women amongst the political leadership and the political consciousness of women about the values of liberation, democracy and equality. Women in the liberated zones had more freedom than they had before and participated as equals in political discussions. They also challenged Timorese traditions of polygamy and *barlake*, which became outlawed by FRETILIN in the first *Manual Político* (political manual) in the mid 1970s (Aditjondro 130). However, as a result of their roles in the struggle, many women were subjected to systematic sexual violence and rape by Indonesian soldiers and were sometimes rejected by their families. Women's many contributions during the clandestine struggle have now been documented by several feminist authors,⁷ thereby contributing to the recognition that their suffering was a consequence of the war.

After independence, with the influence of the United National Transitional Administration of East Timor (UNTAET) and of Timorese women such as Milena Pires (member of the National Council of Timorese Resistance and later head of the UNIFEM mission in Dili), the Timorese government took progressive steps on gender, enshrining equal rights of men and women in the Constitution and adopting a formal gender mainstreaming policy within the machinery of government (Hall and True 12).

The internationally supported process of nation building was largely top down. The democratic political system and legal institutions were created in the image of the west and either did not reach the communities or had little impact on the reality of their lives. For instance, laws were written in Portuguese, which was understood by few Timorese, and poor communications infrastructure left rural communities isolated from information and from Dili (Corcoran-Nantes 168). Grenfell describes how the national institutions, laws and policies remain largely irrelevant to the majority of the population who continue to live according to traditional *adat* law in rural communities:

When travelling out of Dili the state often seems to barely touch down within communities at all... The mode of communication remains predominantly oral; forms of social hierarchy are genealogically and patriarchally framed; and the world is understood and regulated by *adat* (customs)

and *lulik* (belief in sacred objects, often fusing the human with the natural world), with Roman Catholicism layered over the top.... In these communities, tribal-traditional social forms tend to regulate the world in a way that the state has yet to come even close to achieving. (Grenfell 11)

The majority rural Timorese population continued to live under customary law and following independence local leaders sought to re-invigorate some cultural values and practices. According to Corcoran-Nantes, the reinstatement of cultural practices that took place after independence resulted in the loss of previous gains made to women's status during the liberation struggle at the community level, just as policies supporting gender equality were accepted in the national political arena in Dili (Corcoran-Nantes 168).

5. Civil society as drivers of change

Non-government organisations (NGOs) are typically drivers of change. They enable new ideas and concepts to take root and challenge the traditions and norms of society. Civil society changed rapidly after independence with an increase from just 24 NGOs recorded in December 1999 to 112 a year later, 90% of these being in the capital Dili (Hunt 99-100).⁸ Today, more local NGOs have started to establish themselves in the districts and in the absence of formal sector jobs these provide important opportunities to young people in the district towns.

In the capital Dili, women have set up various organisations to work for equality for women. FOKUPERS⁹ was set up in 1997 to support women victims of violence during the occupation and since independence has played a major role in bringing issues of domestic violence into the public arena. A network of women's organisations, *Rede Feto*, was established in 2001 as an outcome of the first National Women's Congress, which saw the need to present a united women's perspective in the political arena. *Rede Feto* has played a major role in advocating for a women's quota in parliament and although a quota was not adopted for parliament, political parties face a quota for the inclusion of women candidates. As a result a quarter of parliamentary delegates were women. The NGO *Women's Caucus* was also initiated to promote and support women candidates and encourage political parties to nominate women

(Trembath and Grenfell 27). Young women student activists were instrumental in establishing the *Young Women's Group of Timor-Leste* (GFFTL), running rural literacy projects. *Young Women Working Together* (FKSH) focused on women's livelihood projects.¹⁰ Both established working relationships with the *Organisation of Timorese Women* (OMT)¹¹ to reach the grassroots level, an arrangement that to some extent limited the focus on young women as beneficiaries of their work. In the rural areas the women's organisations OPMT and OMT continue to operate providing a grassroots network that enables the voices of rural women to be heard.

Apart from women run NGOs, the opportunities for women in NGOs are commonly limited according to FONGTIL, the umbrella organisation of Timorese NGOs. Typically women are found only in financial roles, a role traditionally ascribed to women, and "women's" activities such as health education and gender issues (Wigglesworth and Soares). Women activists have expressed the belief that male activists do not want to encourage women in leadership (Co-director of Peace and Democracy Foundation). In this sense Timorese NGOs sometimes reflect the gender inequity evident in society in general. Male activists may not demonstrate concern about how to support women to participate more fully or they lack strategies to counter the institutional and cultural bias.

In Dili, both national women's national organisations and international organisations such as UN Women as well as bilateral agencies have strongly supported the campaign against gender-based violence as well as the promotion of women in democratic governance. Their national level campaigns and dissemination in the rural areas can be challenging for rural women who struggle to reconcile the rights that they have been told that they have with the daily reality of their lives. It is one thing to learn you have equal rights, but quite another to bring about changes in an understanding about social relations that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Several Timorese women's NGOs have recognised this challenge and engage in rural communities using women's economic development projects as a starting point to rural women's empowerment. Effective projects to support women's livelihoods can empower women to ensure that family income

is used in the best interests of their children. Women's empowerment through economic projects may raise their status in the family and by developing confidence and leadership skills may enable them to become more influential in the community. It is commonly assumed in Timor-Leste that projects to support economic development for women will automatically achieve empowerment. This is not the case, as evidenced by research into four gender-focussed Timorese NGOs which were analysed for their contribution to gender change. The research report notes the incorrect assumption that increased income generation by women, for their families, results in greater economic empowerment for women. It was found that in addition to providing economic empowerment, organisations must address gender relations in the community for women's empowerment to be achieved (Trembath, Grenfell and Noronha 13).

Advantages of women's group activities can also be their participation in a network, which contributes to reduced isolation from one another. This enables sharing of issues such as awareness of the domestic violence law and can provide mutual support for women to have a voice in the public arena to vocalise the mutual concerns and issues that women face.

6. Young women's political participation and agency

Among young people, changes in attitudes started to occur soon after independence. A Timorese academic commented that in the past Timorese girls would not leave the rural areas to study but now this has become more accepted (Timorese academic). Although the median years of schooling for girls is still just 6 years (National Directorate of Statistics 33), today's young women are more likely to have aspirations for a better life than their largely illiterate mothers had. Young people increasingly want the opportunity to influence decisions that affect them.

For educated young Timorese women, the urban areas remain of greater attraction. Some young women seek to escape the hold of tradition by remaining in urban centres after completing high school or university education. Young women seek to study, get a job and try to marry someone of their choice thus allowing them to remain in town. Many educated young women express a preference to marry a man who has prospects for an urban job and income,

and a lifestyle that offers greater opportunities than customary rural life and farming does, or seek a professional life themselves (Wigglesworth, *Becoming Citizens* 145). Teaching is an example of an area of work that has started to attract more women. Prior to independence, teachers were almost all men, but in 2006 women made up an impressive 76 out of 113 applicants to the Catholic Teachers College (Director of Catholic Teachers College). This suggests a significant change in expectations among younger educated women.

In the rural areas, participation in local governance presents an opportunity for young women. There are now quotas for representation on the *Suco* (village) Council including two women and a female and male youth representatives. The young woman representative on each *Suco* Council represents young women in the community. Women who take up elected or representational roles on local councils gain increased respect and contribute to an increasing acceptance of women's public role if they are able to make an effective contribution. However, where training and support to fully understand their role is lacking their contribution may be minimal. Young women representatives on *Suco* Councils face particular challenges, not least of which they are often last in line to be invited to training to know their role on the *Suco* Council, or develop leadership and public speaking skills which are so important to their role.¹²

Research was undertaken with four young women on *Suco* Councils in September-October 2011. Of these, two of them believed that the major issue for young women in the communities were unplanned pregnancies. They explained that there is a high incidence of teenagers of 16-17 years becoming pregnant before marriage, who are then forced to drop out of school. Elsa was a representative of young women on the *Suco* Council who was actively trying to inform young women of options available to them including birth control. Customarily, once a pregnancy had occurred the village chief would become involved to get the man to take responsibility for the baby and commonly the couple will have to marry. If the man is already married a traditional *adat* process between the two families will take place to bind him to an agreed level of responsibility for the child, sealed by a traditional exchange of goods. The women themselves have no voice in these processes. Another young woman

representative was involved in a case in which a 30 year-old man had impregnated two young women concurrently, both under 20 years old. He had to marry one and “resolve” the other through customary *adat* system of justice. As women cannot participate in the *adat* process, the role of female *Suco* representatives is limited to provision of information to the female victim but they are unable to influence the decision-making.

Two young women *Suco* representatives were pregnant at the time of the interview. They had little to say about their representational role or their contribution other than giving support to the older women representatives on the council. It is common to hear women criticised (which further discourages other women from participation) because it is difficult for women to travel, they become pregnant and drop out or that they do not speak up to express their views in meetings of mixed gender. It is therefore important that young women, whether married or not, can exert influence within their family to free themselves from domestic constraints to be able to really participate and fulfil their representative roles.

Elsa, on the other hand, was a young woman representative who found a space in which she could put her ideas for youth into practice. She consulted with other young women, as well as the male youth representative, to know the issues of young people in the community. Elsa worked to establish for the first time sporting activities for young men and women and to organise competitions with neighbouring communities. It was clear that she had potential to go far, in spite of her education ending when she graduated from high school, and that the representational role on the *Suco* council had enabled her to further develop skills and leadership.

7. Conclusion

Young women with initiative can find pathways towards a different life from that of their mother and grandmother. There has been a significant opening up of attitudes towards women’s increased public role in Timorese society, yet they often struggle with the dual role of fulfilling their domestic responsibilities and fully engaging in public life. Access to post-primary education or opportunities for work with an NGO or local representation can enable young

women to better negotiate space to free themselves from subordinate positions. Those that have courage to do so gain increasing respect from their husbands or fathers and brothers.

The expectation about a woman's behaviour in rural areas can be a real barrier to active participation in decision-making. The young women have little opportunity to develop social skills or further their education once they are married. As the majority of the population is under 25 years there are many young women who would benefit from opportunities to build their skills and self-confidence to be able to make their own decisions. Elsa gave advice and leadership to encourage and help other young women in the community to avoid getting pregnant, at the same time taking the first step to realise her dreams. She was showing leadership and gaining skills, making changes to start a transformational process that will undoubtedly enable her to be valued as a citizen able to participate well beyond the domestic realm.

Notes

¹ This paper draws on research undertaken in 2006 for my PhD thesis on young male and female activists in Timor-Leste, and also research undertaken for the International Institute of Electoral Assistance (IDEA) on the inclusion of women in democratic processes in 2011. My thanks to IDEA for allowing my use of the data for this paper.

² I use "Timorese" to refer to the peoples of the nation of Timor-Leste (East Timor), excluding the people of Indonesian nationality of West Timor.

³ Because in my thesis research I was required to keep participants' names confidential, the five interviewees with whom I spoke for that project will be referred to by title only here.

⁴ Barlake is the term used for the ritual exchange of goods between the bride's family and the groom's family, often translated in English as either bride price or dowry.

⁵ Traditional Timorese woven cloth, worn as a skirt by both men and women in traditional ceremonies.

⁶ At the launch of a UNICEF report on violence against children "Speak nicely to me" in Dili in August 2006, the Deputy Minister of Education and Culture spoke of how, during the liberation struggle, people became accustomed to living with violence which, he suggested, is perpetrated by young people who repeat the behaviour of their parents when they have families of their own.

⁷ See Alves, Abrantes et al., Cristalis and Scott, and Conway.

⁸ The numbers grew further with 231 local NGOs at the end of the emergency period, but many of these collapsed after the emergency and rehabilitation aid funding ended. Many were established by young Timorese looking for a way to contribute to development of their communities while others were more opportunistic looking for a salary.

⁹ FOKUPERS is the Indonesian acronym for East Timor Women's Communication Forum. It was the first independent women's NGO to form.

¹⁰ Grupo Feto Foinsãe Timor Lorosãe (GFFTL) was the women's wing of the student organisation ETSSC, which became a separate NGO after independence. Feto Ki'ik Servico Hamutuk (FKSH) set up in 2004. It changed its name to Feto iha Kbi'it Servico Hamutuk meaning Strong Women Working Together, retaining the original acronym FKSH.

¹¹ OPMT formed as FRETILIN's women's wing during the occupation as mentioned previously. The Organização da Mulher Timorese (OMT) was established as the women's wing of Conselho Nacional Resistência Timorese (CNRT) in 1998, which mirrored OPMT but embraced women from broader political affiliations within the pro-independence movement. Both organisations continue to exist.

¹² The four interviews I carried out with young women on local councils was part of a global study on the inclusion of women in democratic process, which I carried out in Timor-Leste in September-October 2011. The research commissioned by the International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Inclusion (IDEA), will be reported in a report of the global study "Strategies for Inclusion – Lessons from the Field" in 2013.

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