



WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMS IN EAST TIMOR

The Asia Foundation's East Timor programs support the development of democratic institutions and processes and the active participation of women at the national and local levels in all aspects of nation-building. The Foundation cooperates with Timorese organizations to increase opportunities for women in this new democracy.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

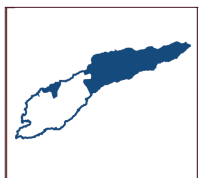
The Asia Foundation works with its non-governmental organization (NGO) partners to increase participation of women and gender awareness in the legal aid and legal empowerment programs. The Foundation supports the Judicial System Monitoring Programme's Victim Support Services (JSMP VSS) specialized legal team, which handles complex and sensitive women's cases from all over the country. These cases are referred by other Asia Foundation-supported legal aid organizations that voluntarily agree to devote at least 30 percent of their case loads to women's cases. Since 2003, legal aid partners have assisted nearly 700 disadvantaged women.

One of the barriers to women seeking legal advice is the lack of women lawyers in East Timor. To address this need, the Foundation supported the legal studies of two women law students whose studies were interrupted by the violence after the 1999 referendum on East Timor's independence. After completion of their studies in the law faculties of Widya Mataram University in Yogyakarta and Wisnuwardana Malang University in Malang, Indonesia, the two women returned to East Timor and now provide legal services to women clients in eight districts in the Dili and Baucau

district court jurisdictions. Increasing the number of women lawyers in legal aid organizations has helped to encourage women to seek legal advice and utilize it to better protect their interests.

In consultation with its NGO legal aid partners, the Foundation developed the *Guide to Legal Services and Professional Code of Ethics*. This handbook establishes standards and criteria for legal aid and is the country's only source of professional guidelines due to the absence of national regulations governing private lawyers in East Timor. One of the key goals of the guide is to improve access to justice for women in pro-bono legal aid service programs supported by the Foundation. A supplementary document, *The Asia Foundation's Guidelines to Mediation*, further contributes to improvements in treatment of women by requiring all cases involving serious sexual or family violence to be referred to the court, better ensuring recognition of women's rights and consistent treatment of violence as a criminal offense.

At the suggestion of its cooperating partners, the Foundation organized a workshop to increase gender perspective in programming for eight NGO partners in cooperation with Men Against Violence, Fokupers, and Oxfam/Australia. The workshop featured presentations and discussions on "gender" and its implications for women's access to justice in East Timor. Each NGO developed an action plan to improve gender perspective in legal aid and legal empowerment programs.



EAST TIMOR

The Asia Foundation has been programming in East Timor since 1992 and established an office here in 2000.

Since 2003, the Foundation's legal aid partners have assisted nearly 700 disadvantaged women.

The Foundation supported a workshop to launch baseline research on trafficking in East Timor – the first report to provide extensive detail on this problem.

The Foundation supported a coalition working to increase women's participation as voters and candidates in the country's first village elections.

The Foundation supports NGOs' use of several approaches to increase gender awareness and women's access to justice. The Fortuna Legal Aid Institute meets with *lia nain*, community legal leaders, to increase their knowledge of gender in informal dispute resolution. They call attention to gender equality enshrined in the country's new Constitution, promulgated after nationwide consultations, and in the human rights treaties ratified by East Timor. The Liberta Legal Aid Institute mentors staff of other legal aid institutes and traditional leaders in domestic violence cases to incorporate basic human rights into the mediation process.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Asia Foundation supported the Alola Foundation's workshop to launch baseline research on trafficking in East Timor – the first report to provide extensive detail on this problem. The Alola Foundation also conducted consultations with women's activists and civil society representatives to develop an anti-trafficking strategy. Elected village councils now have newly established legal responsibilities to raise awareness about domestic violence and develop community-based services. To help them comply with constitutional provisions on human rights and laws protecting women against violence, the Foundation provided technical advice in development of the Office for Promotion of Equality's manual for training of village council members on the law and their new responsibilities. Through this training, village councils will be better able to comply with constitutional provisions.

Many of The Asia Foundation's programs in East Timor have been conducted with the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. Department of State.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

The Asia Foundation supported the national coalition of women's organizations, REDE-Feto, to conduct a national planning workshop for the Second National Women's Congress. The Foundation also supported the participation of women from all 13 districts in the National Women's Congress in Dili, which resulted in a national strategy for women. Additionally, the Foundation supported REDE-Feto's first institutional audit, as recommended by their membership — another sign of its institutional growth and ability to serve women throughout the country.

The Foundation supported the work of the National Alliance, a coalition of organizations focusing on increasing women's participation as voters and candidates in the country's first village elections, to mobilize women in two districts – Baucau in the eastern region of East Timor and Ermera in the western region of the country. The program helped establish district-level alliances to increase the skills and confidence of local women to mobilize themselves rather than relying on women from the capital.

The Asia Foundation is a private, non-profit, non-governmental organization working to advance mutual interests in the United States and the Asia-Pacific region. It is funded by contributions from corporations, foundations, individuals, and governmental organizations in the U.S., Europe, Canada, and Asia, and an annual appropriation from the U.S. Congress. Through its programs, the Foundation builds leadership, improves policies, and strengthens institutions to foster greater openness and shared prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.



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