

Timor-Leste



photos by Conor Ashleigh

The Asia Foundation assists national government, local governments, the private sector, communities, and non-governmental organizations to work toward peace and prosperity in Timor-Leste.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Recently independent Timor-Leste faces serious challenges to ensuring fair and open access to justice for its citizens. The Asia Foundation's program focuses on building an independent judicial system; establishing competent, accessible legal aid services and dispute resolution mechanisms with an emphasis on reaching rural populations and the most disadvantaged; and furthering citizens' knowledge of justice. The Foundation supports the Judicial System Monitoring Program (JSMP) to monitor courts and judicial processes and to produce reports and recommendations to increase accountability and transparency. The Foundation also supports JSMP's Legal Research Unit to provide legal research and analysis on new laws while in the drafting process. With the Ministry of Justice, the Foundation is supporting a nationwide public legal information campaign. Through a network of legal aid organizations, the Foundation also extends affordable legal services to disadvantaged citizens with particular emphasis on the rights of women.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND ELECTIONS

As a nascent democracy, Timor-Leste is still establishing its governing institutions. The Foundation works with government bodies – National Electoral Commission (CNE) and Technical Secretariat for Election Administration (STAE) – and local civil society organizations to ensure local and national elections are credible, fair, and

peaceful. The Foundation supports a coalition of civil society organizations to conduct voter education campaigns and election monitoring, as well as to provide public comment on the electoral framework. The Foundation has also supported newly elected local officials in the districts of Baucau, Bobanaro, Oecusse, and Ainaro to effectively carry out their mandates by providing learning opportunities in participatory planning and civic action.

LEGISLATIVE AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

During formation of the Parliament, The Asia Foundation provided technical assistance to the Constituent Assembly's work drafting the Constitution through advisors on issues such as citizenship, freedom of speech and association, and the constitutional obligations of the president. By establishing the nation's first Parliamentary Library and Research Service, the Foundation has assisted members of parliament and parliamentary committees to improve the quality of legislative analysis and debate, increasing capacity of staff to support the legislative process, creating more responsive policies, and providing more rigorous program oversight. The Foundation is also supporting the parliament's efforts to hold public consultations on draft laws, such as on electoral laws and municipal framework.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The legacy of violence in Timor-Leste continues to influence the pattern of development in the



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

The Foundation's Books for Asia program began operating in Timor-Leste in 2004, and has since donated nearly 55,000 books to schools, libraries, non-governmental organizations, and public sector agencies throughout the country.

The Asia Foundation supports the active participation of women in all aspects of Timor-Leste's development.

country. In an effort to encourage enduring peace, The Asia Foundation supports communities and police to work together to identify threats to peace and order, and to clarify roles and responsibilities for providing neighborhood security. The Foundation conducted the first national community-police perceptions survey, in coordination with the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL) and the Secretary of State for Security (SoSS), to inform policymakers and to serve as the basis for further programs. At the border with Indonesia, the Foundation has worked with local organizations Fundação Fatu Sinai Oecussi and Peace and Democracy Foundation, to enable citizens in the Oecussi and Covalima districts to identify solutions to practical economic, social, and security challenges presented by their location. The Foundation and local partners, in coordination with the Australia Nusa Tenggara Assistance for Regional Autonomy program, support the border communities to lobby policymakers to ensure that the newly drafted border regulations respond to the lives of communities on both sides of the border and reflect actual border crossing practices. Additionally, the Foundation has supported the efforts of the Office of the Prime Minister to ensure a sustainable and timely return of internally displaced people from the 2006 crisis, in which 37 people were killed and 100,000 were left homeless. The Foundation has supported mediation training for the dialogue teams of the Ministry of Social Solidarity and has provided grants for small activities promoting goodwill between returnees and communities as symbols of the demonstrable benefits of peace.

ECONOMIC POLICY REFORM

With the Timor Institute of Development Studies, The Asia Foundation conducted a three-part trade and investment study. The study examined patterns and barriers to trade with Indonesia and provided a comparative analysis of costs related to export-oriented manufacturing in Timor-Leste and Indonesia to identify the most critical impediments to increased investment. These studies produced much-needed basic data on trade patterns and volumes in Timor-Leste that will be used to inform further programs.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The Asia Foundation supports the active participation of women in all aspects of Timor-Leste's development. The Foundation works with the Office for Promotion of Equality to improve the ability of village councils to raise awareness of vio-

lence against women and to establish community based mechanisms to reduce violence. The Foundation supported local organization Rede Feto to conduct a country-wide consultation process to identify priority areas for women's empowerment which culminated in the third National Women's Congress in Timor-Leste. The Foundation also supports legal aid organizations and JSMP's victim support services to provide accessible legal advocacy services for women and specialized assistance to ensure their equal treatment under the law.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In order to assist in the development of the country's foreign affairs capacity, The Asia Foundation has worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation since 2001. The Foundation has supported diplomatic training for ten new diplomats in the U.S. in a customized program on policymaking in a democratic context. The Foundation also contributed to the development of policies for recruitment, training, and evaluation of ministry staff and diplomats, and to the development of the ministry's library. In order to broaden young Timorese exposure to foreign affairs, the Foundation has supported diplomacy and public policy programs at the National University of Timor-Leste. The program has included a regular seminar series for students and faculty, Internet access, and a special collection of materials for the university library.

COMMUNITY-ORIENTED POLICING

Experience has proven that technical assistance to police alone is insufficient for improving security, and that it is essential to develop a set of community-oriented norms and practices for the conduct of policing functions. Through the USAID-funded project Conflict Mitigation through Community-Oriented Policing (CMCOP), The Asia Foundation is playing a significant role in supporting both the police and Timorese communities to develop a new partnership, enhancing police legitimacy and responsiveness to community needs. CMCOP aims to improve the performance of police and build public trust by fostering collaborative community-police partnerships that use a problem-solving approach to respond to the security needs and expectations of the community.

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



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