

# Community Policing in Timor-Leste

Since 2009, The Asia Foundation has worked alongside the *Polícia Nacional de Timor-Leste* toward a locally relevant and sustainable model of community policing in Timor-Leste that makes a lasting impact on peace and security. The Community Policing Support Program is jointly implemented by The Asia Foundation and the New Zealand Police, supported by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



When Timor-Leste gained independence in 2002 one of its most pressing priorities was to build a functioning police force to help ensure peace, stability, and justice. Establishing *Polícia Nacional de Timor-Leste* (PNTL) required the government to address significant challenges related to limitations of experience, resources, and institutional systems.

From the beginning, the government, along with international development partners, was focused on strengthening safety and security in Timor-Leste through community-focused approaches to policing. The concept of community policing can mean many things to many people, however, all models share a focus on addressing potential or actual security problems through strong relationships between police officers and citizens.

Community policing helps communities by preventing disputes and allowing for constructive, evidence-based responses to disputes after they have occurred. Community policing helps police by improving their access to information and ties to the communities they work in. Community policing helps governments by building people's trust and understanding of the state's institutions and processes of law enforcement.

For more than 10 years, The Asia Foundation has worked alongside the PNTL to support the development of a Timorese model of

community policing. The progress and success of the model's implementation is reflected in findings from the Foundation's *2018 Community-Police Perceptions Survey*.

## THE TIMORESE MODEL OF COMMUNITY POLICING

The Asia Foundation's work over the past decade supporting the development of a Timorese model of community policing has progressed through a number of stages and programs. Since 2016, the Foundation has partnered with the PNTL, the New Zealand Police and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) to implement the **Community Policing Support Program (CPSP)**. This program supports implementation of a now well-established model of community policing across the whole of Timor-Leste, consisting of:

- **Municipality Security Councils (MSC)**, functioning in all 12 municipalities in Timor-Leste, plus the Special Region of Oecussi. MSCs represent the highest authority of community policing outside of Dili. The councils meet every four months and are led by PNTL district commanders and district administrators. Officials from relevant ministries, PNTL officers, community policing council chiefs, women's representatives, and a range of other government and civil society stakeholders also participate. The role of



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54% of the general population and 86% of community leaders are familiar with the term "community policing."

83% of citizens, 93% of community leaders and 95% of police say they are working together to address security problems at the local level.

4 out of 5 citizens with a Community Policing Council (CPC) in their community say that CPCs are effective at maintaining security.

MSCs is to prevent and reduce conflict and crime at the district level by identifying and collectively working to respond to sources of insecurity.

- **Community Policing Councils (CPC)**, working at the *suku* (village) level. Of Timor-Leste's 452 suku, more than half now have a local CPC, existing across all of the country's municipalities and regions. Each council is made up of suku police officers, as well as a diverse range of community members. CPCs meet every two months, working as part of suku councils to develop strategies to prevent and respond to security concerns.
- **Suku Police Officers (Ofisial Polisia Suku, or OPS)**, who have been deployed to all 452 suku to work collaboratively with communities to prevent and respond to crimes. OPS implement the philosophy of community policing through the VIP Strategy – Visibility, Involvement, and Professionalism.
- Ongoing development of **legal and policy frameworks** for community policing. The CPSP provides support, advocacy, and advice to strengthen the policy foundation for more community-focused forms of policing at all levels of government. Community policing is currently recognized within the Preamble to the PNIL Organic Law, PNIL's Strategic Plan, and suku law.

In its current 2016-2020 phase, CPSP is focusing on: facilitating professional learning and development, primarily via the development of appropriate training curricula; improving systems of reporting within and between PNIL and civilian authorities; and continuing to strengthen the legal and policy framework for community policing.

## **FAIR AND INCLUSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNITY POLICING MODEL**

The greatest challenge for any model of community policing is to ensure that its principles and practices are applied fairly and inclusively at all levels within the police force and the community. For CPSP, this demands a focus on addressing violence against women and children (VAWC), especially domestic violence, the most prevalent form of crime in Timor-Leste. Furthermore, the CPSP recognizes the underrepresentation of women within PNIL and structures of communal

governance as a barrier to equality and justice.

CPSP is working to ensure that the Timorese model of community policing is being applied more fairly by:

- Providing small grant-funding and other forms of assistance to give women's security groups a greater voice in community policing structures and processes.
- Helping community policing actors to better understand and use the network for referring VAWC cases.
- Improving CPC and OPS reporting on cases of violence against women.
- Developing and integrating appropriate modules into PNIL training.

CPSP is working with the Foundation's Nabilan (Ending Violence Against Women) Program to strengthen its response to VAWC.

## **FROM THEN UNTIL NOW: A DECADE OF SUPPORTING COMMUNITY POLICING IN TIMOR-LESTE**

The Asia Foundation's first program of support for community policing in Timor-Leste began in 2009, when a partnership was formed with the PNIL to undertake a pilot project—Conflict Mitigation through Community-Oriented Policing—funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In 2011, the project was expanded into a five-year program targeting 11 municipalities in Timor-Leste, with support from USAID and the New Zealand Aid Programme. *Hametin Kooperasaun Hamutuk Polisia ho Komunitade* (HAKOHAK, or Strengthen Cooperation between Police and Communities) ran until December 2015. The program helped the PNIL to develop and begin implementing its model for community policing.

CPSP consolidates accomplishments in community policing policy and practice achieved during the course of the HAKOHAK program which preceded it, and its partner program, the Timor-Leste Community Policing Program implemented by the New Zealand Police. Having helped establish a Timorese model of community policing, CPSP partners are now focussed on supporting PNIL to deepen the roots of community policing in Timor-Leste through nationwide implementation.

*The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through a network of offices in 18 Asian countries and in Washington, DC. Working with public and private partners, the Foundation receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.*



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