

CEPAD



Husi Ita Ba Ita



***Timor-Leste: Voices and Paths to Peace***  
Executive Summary

Local Priorities for Peace  
September 2009



*"We are living quietly but not in peace"*

**CEPAD (Centre of Studies for Peace  
and Development)**

Rua Colégio Militar, Bairro Lírio, Motael,  
PO Box 88, Dili, Timor-Leste  
[cepad.info@gmail.com](mailto:cepad.info@gmail.com)

**Interpeace**

7-9 Chemin de Balxert  
1219 Chatelaine, Geneva  
Switzerland  
[www.interpeace.org](http://www.interpeace.org)

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## About this document

This document is an executive summary of the report *Timor-Leste: Voices and Paths to Peace*, which synthesizes 33 key findings from a nation-wide consultation process to identify the main peacebuilding priorities in Timor-Leste. It also summarizes the outcome of a National Forum, which brought together 200 key stakeholders including the leadership of the four sovereign organs of the state, to identify the top 4 priorities issues. The consultation process was carried out through the Programme of Research and Dialogue for Peace (PRDP) and is part of a longer term peacebuilding initiative.

## Background

### The Programme of Research and Dialogue for Peace (PRDP)

This initiative began in Timor-Leste in response to the violent crisis of 2006. This period of unrest revealed the fragility of the young nation and the challenges it is facing in healing the wounds of the past whilst struggling to adopt a new system of state structures.

The PRDP is a joint programme run by Interpeace, a Swiss based peacebuilding organization, and the Centre of Studies for Peace and Development (CEPAD), an independent national NGO constituted as an association under Timorese law. The CEPAD team is drawn from various sectors of society. Along with the core research team, CEPAD has District Liaison Officers in each of the 13 districts to ensure mobilization and participation throughout the districts.

The CEPAD board is composed of persons from each of the sovereignty bodies (Parliament, Government, Presidency and Supreme Court) and from different segment of Timorese society, such as representatives from the Liberation War Veteran's Movement, Police, Armed Forces and Civil Society. They are Dom Basilio do Nascimento, Bishop of Baucau Dioceses; Ernesto Dudu, Veteran and Community Leader; Antonino Gonçalves, Judge at Dili's District Court - (President of the General Assembly); Francisco Branco, Member of the Parliament, FRETILIN party; Pedro da Costa, Member of the Parliament, CNRT party (governmental majority); Cristiano da Costa; Advisor to the Vice-Prime Minister (President of Board of Director); Maria Angelita Sarmento, National Electoral Commission and representative of civil society (NGO Forum); Cornélio Ximenes "Maunana", Tenente Coronel, National Army; Alfonso de Jesus, Chief of Police PNTL; Anthony Preston, Political Affairs Officer, UNMIT; Estanislau Salsinha Martins, Director, Peace and Democracy Foundation; José Luis Guterres, Vice-Prime Minister.

The PRDP programme seeks to contribute to the creation of a climate in which the people of Timor-Leste are better able to identify priority issues impeding the establishment of a lasting peace, understand the origins and the dynamics of conflict and address these together in a non-violent and durable manner.

### Key Principles of PRDP process

The programme's process is based on interactive dialogue and research and is:

- **Inclusive:** Everyone is involved. Widespread inclusion ensures that the solutions that are identified and implemented are representative and legitimate, which makes them less likely to be ignored or undermined.
- **Politically impartial:** By refraining from partisan politics the programme ensures that it plays an effective and impartial role in facilitating genuine dialogue with all stakeholders.
- **Participatory:** Participation is key in helping shape and transform relationships in a society where there is a need to overcome mistrust between groups. It also helps to promote understanding, renew relationships and define new partnerships.
- **Objective:** The work is supported by research findings and facts. The topics are decided upon collectively to ensure full ownership and responsibility for the process.
- **Locally owned:** Local people and groups themselves participate in defining the problem and finding solutions for a more peaceful future.
- **Long term:** There are no quick fixes or shortcuts. Overcoming mistrust and deep divisions requires time. A long-term commitment and investment in peacebuilding will ensure that peace is long-lasting.

### Phase I: The Consultation Process

The process consists of a series of consultations at community, regional and national levels engaging all stakeholders, in identifying and broadening the understanding the complex challenges to peace in Timor-Leste. This approach is deemed necessary as an opportunity for Timorese from all walks of life to critically look at what is troubling their society and to collectively identify and propose common solutions, and ultimately be part of strengthening their country.

### Methodology

For the past year, the PRDP has carried out consultations in all of the 13 Districts of Timor-Leste aimed at identifying peace-related issues and concerns as seen by Timorese society. Representatives of all segments of society took part in the process, including government, army, police, the church, youth, political parties, women, martial arts groups, Internally Displaced Persons and business leaders.

Each consultation meeting gathered between 30-60 participants with a total of over 700 people taking part in the community driven consultations. In each consultation, the Timorese team of researchers of the PRDP created a space where the key stakeholders identified what they believed to be obstacles to sustainable peace at either the local or national level.

Three regional conferences in the East, Middle and West of the country (covering all 13 districts) were also held to compare and reflect on local and regional priority issues identified in the districts and to validate the results of these district level discussions. These conferences also served as another opportunity for participants from the different districts to meet and to overcome their mistrust so they are able to work together to focus on the deeper sources of long-term instability in the country. Over 300 participants took part in these regional conferences.

Rooted in the consultations carried out in the Districts and Regional Conferences, a National Report presenting key issues of concern identified by Timorese citizens was elaborated in written and video formats.

The report, entitled *Timor-Leste: Voices and Paths to Peace*, identifies **33 issues** important for achieving lasting peace. The issues were divided into 4 thematic groups: Politics, Justice, Social and Economic issues. Some of the issues are cross-cutting and/or overlapping and are presented as identified by the consultations.

### Findings: Political, Justice, Social and Economic Priorities

Political Priorities	What participants said
1. Leadership and political polarization	Participants found it challenging to talk objectively about the political, social and economic situation at the present time since there is a tendency to associate all issues with 'politics' and the 'leaders' of each party. This is because many people perceive the current political dynamics to continue to reflect the polarization between political parties and leadership figures that appeared in 1975 and persisted through the period of resistance and occupation and into the independence period.
2. Different groups have expectations and needs concerning recognition and compensation for their role in independence	Groups who took part in the resistance movement have contributed in different ways and at different stages during the years of occupation. As such, the various groups have developed different needs and expectations concerning rightful recognition and compensation.

3. Shortening the “vertical space” between ordinary people and political leaders	The extent of the disconnect between citizens and the country’s leaders is rapidly growing. Leaders often see a public that wants everything and is generally uninformed with little to contribute to policy-making and where the public sees decision-making processes completely taken over by special interests and partisan battling.
4. The promotion of individual and party interests over the national interest	<p>This is a complex and troubling phenomenon in a context where the institutions of the state are unable to withstand personal and party agendas. As such, the State is prevented from consolidating its influence and from projecting and protecting the interests of the Timorese as a whole.</p> <p>When participants spoke about the process of democratization in the country, they connected this issue with the question of the style and quality of the political leadership. This was seen as a critical factor in determining the survival of the democratic process itself, the future social and economic development of the country and the potential prospect of future conflict. Participants discussed the crises that have occurred during independence, especially the 2006 crisis and observed that they often occurred when sensitive political issues arose within society. In such delicate circumstances, with certain group interests at stake, lack of coordination, management and good communication between members of the political leadership and between the sovereign state organs on how to respond effectively to the situation, allowed these sensitive issues to become enflamed.</p>
5. Divisions based on “language” and access to political power	The process of resistance and occupation forced many Timorese to live overseas whilst the majority remained within Timor-Leste and Indonesia. Today, a division based on who speaks which languages determine a person or group’s access to political power and the state resources. This in turn gives rise to discrimination with the potential to deepen divisiveness and polarization between groups and threatens the stability within society.
6. Building political “blocks”	Political polarization and miscomprehension between politicians at the political party level gives rise to the creation of political barriers with a potential to turn political opponents into political enemies. This creates a challenging situation as the country tries to consolidate its process of democratization.
7. Clear separation of powers between the organs of sovereignty	Respect and adherence to democratic processes and structures as set out in the national constitution are seen as highly important to Timorese. Weak adherence to the constitution and separation of powers between the four sovereign organs of governance has been seen to create confusion and antagonisms between political groups when decisions by the competent authorities are not upheld and political power is seen to take precedence over appropriate legal channels for responding to issues.
8. Politicization of social and regional identity	In the context of a poorly defined national identity Timorese today tend to associate and identify themselves and others with political influences or the part they played during the years of occupation (for example some are referred to as “Maputo” and “Lisbon” cliques, Australian groups, Indonesian groups, and so on). These identities have been subject to political manipulation and have now become a self-perpetuating feature of social relations which is likely to continue in the future.

9. Definition of “western” democracy and local understanding	The term “democracy” has been defined and used in different ways and often is misunderstood. Most people think of democracy only in terms of rights that it conveys, rather than institutional elements and duties and obligations of citizens. While participants recognise that democracy in Timor-Leste is still in a formative stage and that it needs time to develop, the lack of understanding of the term is putting the process of democratization of the country at risk. Some participants also stressed that traditional mechanisms, which have been used in Timor-Leste since ancestral times to identify solutions to problems, must find a place within the nation’s democratic system.
10. The authority of local structures	At the local level there are two systems of governance: a formal system of the suku (village) council and an informal system which supports traditional customs and law. Limited resources (facilities and financial) make the work of these two local governance systems very difficult and weaken the authority of the xefe sukus (village chiefs). Some participants also said that some xefe sukus are also seen to be following private or party-led interests rather than fulfilling their roles in the interest of the whole suku. Some xefe sukus who participated in the focus groups said that the lack of facilities and resources is particularly critical during times of crisis and conflict as their limited authority means that they have no means to buffer the power of party coordinators or martial arts group leaders in mobilising people to create confusion and violence in the community.
11. Politics and citizen apathy	Timorese feel they are insufficiently engaged in issues of great importance to them and that they lack mechanisms and channels for the expression of public opinion. This factor, combined with the lack of accountability in politics, lends to citizen apathy toward politics.
12. Communal violence	Communal violence and gang warfare, in particular between rival martial arts groups, have created a sense of insecurity in the country. High unemployment rates and a large population of disaffected youth make it easy to mobilize and use them as instruments of violence in times of crisis.
<b>Justice Priorities</b>	<b>What participants said</b>
13. The ineffective formal judicial system	Timorese do not fully understand the country’s laws and formal judicial system. The laws and judicial process are in Portuguese, a language not spoken by the vast majority of the population. Furthermore, the system is severely understaffed (there are 13 judges in the country with a caseload backlog of 5000 cases). Such challenges have fuelled frustrations among Timorese and strengthened the culture of violence and mob justice.
14. Lack of trust in the legal system	Lack of justice affects the judiciary system and increases the amount of crimes and human rights violations as well as the number of criminals and victims. This gives rise to civil disobedience and disrespect for the institutions of law and order, and paves the way for criminals to repeat the same offences or to perpetrate other crimes. According to participants, the administration of justice also frequently suffers from a lack of transparency, impartiality and firmness from the implementers of justice to maintain their independence and integrity in the face of external pressure and political intervention. This has the potential to damage the future of state institutions as external intervention can weaken the power of judicial decisions (especially weakening and impeding decisions from the tribunal).

15. Traditional justice	Traditional justice mechanisms that have been in place for hundreds of years, yet are not formally recognized in the legal system, continue to operate to some extent alongside the formal legal system. While there are many benefits to using the traditional justice system (issues are resolved in a short time, inexpensive, etc.) many participants (notably women) felt that the system often does not uphold human rights and democratic values.
16. Transitional justice	Justice for crimes against humanity committed during the Indonesian occupation (1975-1999) is a sensitive and highly controversial issue that has been politicized. Despite national and internationally sponsored transitional justice initiatives, Timorese are becoming increasingly frustrated by the lack of “justice” and by the reluctance of the political elite respond to their demands.
17. Land disputes	Increasing land disputes are proving to be a serious stumbling block to the country’s development. Without clear ownership laws and with many records destroyed property and land disputes have become a major source of tension throughout the districts and communities. Border disputes between sub-districts, sucos and aldeias are also on the rise.
18. Cultural and commercial relationships between populations in the border zone between Indonesia and Timor-Leste	The demarcation of the border is important to facilitate cultural and commercial exchanges and relations between the two countries. However, drug and human trafficking for prostitution are on the rise in border areas and increasing tensions between the 2 nations.
19. Impunity	When participants spoke about justice, the word ‘impunity’ frequently arose. They used this word to refer to those cases in the tribunal where political influence has been seen to affect the judicial process. The perception that justice is being undermined by political influence contributes to social apathy and lack of respect for the rule of law. This further opens a path for criminals to continue to conduct criminal acts and for victims to take justice into their own hands.
<b>Social Priorities</b>	<b>What the participants said</b>
20. Conduct a thorough historical review of the resistance and the occupation	Many of the major divides today in Timor date back to the relationships, actions and roles of different individuals and groups during the struggle for independence from Portugal and the resistance to, or cooperation with, the Indonesian occupation. Following national independence, the country has sought, with very limited success, to recognize and compensate those involved in liberating the country from foreign control. Poverty and an exclusionary, patron-client system in Timor has fuelled resentment and a further sense of injustice towards those who founded the new nation. To this day, no Timorese has detailed the complex history of the resistance, the occupation and the struggle for nationhood.
21. Timorese values and morals	The long war and experiences during the occupation and resistance affected the values and morals of Timorese. Today, many are vulnerable to the morals and values from other countries. In some districts, participants said that the presence of foreigners contributed to the circulation and consumption of pornographic materials which decrease Timorese morals and values. Without proper management of these values, such contradictions can also open the path for conflict or violence within the family and communities.

22. Social class	Stratification of Timorese into different classes, based on financial aspects and “linguistic ties”, are creating new tensions and alliances as access to state resources and political power are limited to certain social groups.
23. Social groupings, unequal treatment and access	Discrimination combined with the practice of corruption, collusion and nepotism is limiting access state services and marginalizing certain social groups.
24. Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism (KKN) <sup>1</sup>	This issue pervades all aspects of Timorese life, from the presumed actions of the political elite to the smallest transactions in communities. The Timorese fingered this phenomenon as one of the chief factors of resentment, instability and perpetual crisis in Timor.
25. Social envy	Social envy has the potential to give rise to various conflicts based on social injustices.
<b>Economic Priorities</b>	<b>What the participants said</b>
26. Public Administration/Public Sector	In building its public administration almost from the ground up, public institutions are facing a number of challenges. The effectiveness of the public administration is hindered by pervasive corruption. As such, the public administration is not necessarily staffed by officials who have both the competence and the will to serve.
27. The private sector, investment laws and finance laws need to give priority to local initiatives	The complex investment and financing laws, long processing times for approvals, the unclear tax liability, the prohibitive cost of doing business, make it hard for Timorese to compete with foreigners in the small but growing private sector.
28. The tendering process for projects and overseas businesses affected by Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism	The tendering process for projects is not transparent and is subject to corruption, collusion and nepotism. Local businesses also frequently encounter difficulties in meeting the criteria and 'gratuities' associated with foreign business. Because of many conditions and complications, including financing, equipment and qualified personnel there are obligations for local people to enter into joint business ventures with foreigners. The dependency of Timorese on people from other countries is giving rise to an array of disadvantages for local people.
29. Dependency on the petroleum production funds	Being an oil-dependent nation increases the country’s vulnerability to market fluctuations and could put at risk the future generations if the fund is not managed prudently in accordance with the principle of good governance.
30. Unequal rural development between districts	There is considerable variability between districts and within districts in the standard of public services and development opportunities. This unequal distribution is giving rise to tensions between districts. The result of the migration flow from rural to urban areas is also giving rise to social tensions in the capital city.
31. Food security (quality and quantity)	Food security is a serious problem throughout the country. Insufficient food production, low quality production and difficulty accessing local market have led to a dependency on imports. Transforming subsistence farming, which dominates the agriculture sector, into an export-oriented industry, is a challenge.

<sup>1</sup> “KKN » is a locally used acronym for Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism



32. Local production (quantity and quality) and access to markets	Subsistence agriculture and the condition of local and national markets do not assist in increasing or maintaining the quantity or quality of food and hygiene. This means that goods cannot achieve a sale price because those with money are spending it in shops and Chinese supermarkets or those of other foreigners.
33. Unemployment	The country suffers from a significant unemployment problem which is an important factor contributing to political instability. Consequently, there is an increase in domestic violence, crime rates, drug use, alcohol consumption, pornography, etc.

### National Forum

The 33 priorities were presented at a two date meeting, a National Forum in August 2009, which brought together some 200 representatives of all walks of Timorese society, including the leadership of the four sovereign organs of the state including:

- H.E. President **José Ramos-Horta**, recipient of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize
- President of the National Parliament, the Right Honorable **Fernando Lasama de Araujo**
- Deputy Prime Minister **José Luís Guterres** (Member of the General Assembly of CEPAD)
- Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Right Honorable **Antonino Gonçalves** (also Chairman of the General Assembly of CEPAD)
- **Mr. Mari Alkatiri**, Secretary-General of Fretilin and former Prime Minister 2002-2006



President Ramos-Horta highlighted the “diseases” affecting Timor-Leste and the need to stem the spreading of destructive rumours



Political rivals Alkatiri (l) and Lasama share a podium, express statements of peace and explain their perspectives on past crises



Vice-Prime Minister Guterres pledged the Government’s full support for the programme

Representatives of academia, the church and other NGOs also participated in good numbers. Perhaps most impressively however, organized delegations from each of the 13 districts (10 participants per district and 15 from the capital Dili) also attended with enthusiasm and demonstrated commitment to ensuring the continued connection of this process to the population in their home districts. This was crucial in real and symbolic terms as the yawning gap between the population and the authorities in Dili is one of the greatest weaknesses facing the country.

During the meeting participants reviewed and debated the findings and main conclusions of the report. An accompanying video was also shown of people throughout the country



One of the eight break-out groups discussing priorities

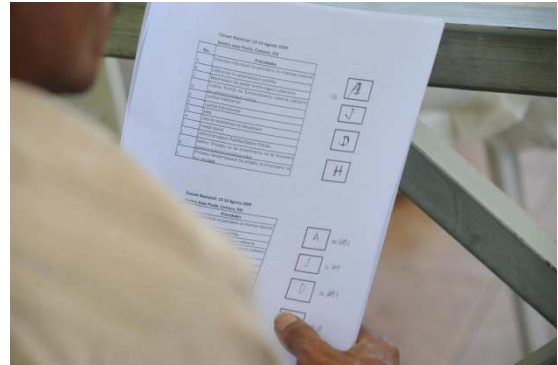
sharing their views on the core obstacles to peace in Timor-Leste. The video proved a powerful tool to bring home the messages and concerns of people.

### Setting Priorities

During the two day meeting, particular focus was given to the vetting of potential priorities for the next phase of the PRDP. Eight working groups organized under the 4 thematic areas of Politics, Justice, Social issues and Economic development, were formed to assess and prioritize the 33 issues. The objective was to reach consensus on the 4 most important obstacles to peace in Timor-Leste.

These are:

1. **The promotion of individual and party interests over the national interest.** This is a complex and troubling phenomenon in a context where the institutions of the state are unable of withstanding personal and party agendas. As such, the State is prevented from consolidating its influence and from projecting and protecting the interests of the Timorese as a whole.



Participants distilled the list of priority issues to the four most crucial obstacles to long-term peace in Timor-Leste

2. **Conduct a thorough historical review of the resistance and the occupation.** Many of the major divides today in Timor date back to the relationships, actions and roles of different individuals and groups during the struggle for independence from Portugal and the resistance to, or cooperation with, the Indonesian occupation. Following national independence, the country has sought, with very limited success, to recognize and compensate those involved in liberating the country from foreign control. Poverty and an exclusionary, patron-client system in Timor has fuelled resentment and a further sense of injustice towards those who founded the new nation. To this day, no Timorese has detailed the complex history of the resistance, the occupation and the struggle for nationhood. The Timorese chose this as one of their crucial objectives in order to reconcile with their past and with each other.



The National Police took an active role in the discussions

3. **The ineffective formal judicial system and the culture of impunity.** There are limits in the broad understanding of the country's laws and formal judicial system. The laws and judicial process take place in Portuguese, a language not spoken by the vast majority of the population. Furthermore, the system is severely understaffed (there are 13 judges in the country with a caseload backlog of 5000 cases). Such challenges have fuelled frustrations among Timorese and strengthened the culture of violence and mob justice.

4. **Corruption, Collusion and Nepotism (KKN).** This issue pervades all aspects of Timorese life, from the presumed actions of the political elite to the smallest transactions in communities. The Timorese fingered this phenomenon as one of the chief factors of resentment, instability and perpetual crisis in Timor.

**Next steps**

The National Forum provided CEPAD with a mandate to continue its work and to concentrate on the four priority issues identified at the meeting. The objective will be to engage Timorese society on these priority issues with a view to formulating broad-based consensus solutions to the causes of the conflict and instability.