
“Community Concern and Violence on the Indonesia-Timor Leste Border”

June – September 2012

The Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) Program uses a volunteer monitoring network of 86 people across 43 sub-districts to gather information on incidents of violence and situational change. This is used to identify areas of particular concern and to develop recommendations for policy reform and intervention both nationally and locally.

EMERGING ISSUE: From June to September 2012, along the Timor Leste-Indonesia border at Oe-cusse and Timor Tengah North, a series of violent incidents were recorded, linked to supporters of the Indonesian Military (TNI) destroying crops and buildings. These incidents escalated into rock-throwing and arguments between neighbouring Timorese and Indonesian communities. The source of this instability is the inability of the two governments to establish firm land borders, amid accusations of construction projects overstepping alleged boundaries.

Key Points:

- Some East Timorese who became Indonesian citizens following independence are having their land in the border region farmed by Timorese without their consent
- BPU (Border Patrol Unit of PNTL) posts lack resources, including vehicles and communications equipment, limiting their capacity to patrol
- The absence of a BPU post in Qiubiselo, Fa’ot Basin in Oesilo sub-district, is of concern to locals and limits BPU effectiveness
- East Timorese in disputed areas are not well informed about the demarcation of nearby land
- Satisfactory area surveying is not occurring prior to projects and construction beginning
- Some in Indonesian border communities do not recognise Timor-Leste’s claim to some land

Immediate Recommendations:

- Both governments must continue high level talks to confirm all shared land borders
- Both governments should draft and sign an MOU between the local TNI and BPU commanders on agreed patrol routes along disputed border areas until borders are confirmed

- Both governments should place an immediate moratorium on all construction projects, including the establishment of any agricultural plots
- Local government leaders in Timor-Leste should communicate to citizens the moratorium, explain the issue, and explain the steps the Government is taking to resolve the issue

Recommendations:

- Community education on:
 - Location of the border
 - Laws regarding the border
 - Conflict prevention and response
- Establishment of regular communication channels between local TNI and BPU leadership
- Increase in human and technical resources for BPU units, including vehicles, outposts and communications infrastructure
- Training for BPU units in conflict mediation, prevention and response

For any further information, questions or clarifications, please contact **Mr. Simon Fallo** simon.belun@gmail.com or 7727 0411.

Incident Timeline

1. June 4, 2012, the people of Bairo Nino, Inbate Village, Sub-district of Nilulat Bikomin (Indonesia), with the support of TNI posted in Nino, kicked and damaged a bulletin board set up by the Government of Timor-Leste in the border region.
2. July 21, 2012 at 12:15 TL time, the Indonesian community in the border region, accompanied by TNI soldiers, as well as the local commander from Nino, entered the border region of East Timor and burned orchards in the Fa'ot Basin (Hu'et Tnana), Bobometo village, sub-district Oesilo (Oe-cusse).
3. July 26, 2012 15:15 TL time, the people of RK Nino (Indonesia), with the support of the local TNI commander (Battalion 744) burnt orchards in the Fa'ot Basin (Buin Penu), Timor-Leste.
4. July 30, 2012 at 11:20 TL time, the local TNI Commander (Battalion 744) with six members of the TNI ventured 250 metres into Timor Leste and arrested a man named Paulo Cono from Aldeia Quibiselo, Bobometo, sub-district Oesilo while gardening in Fa'ot Basin, Timor-Leste. He was questioned and later released.
5. August 8, 2012, in the Fa'ot Basin, Aldeia Quibiselo, Bobometo, Sub-District Oesilo, eight civilians with the help of TNI based in Nino burnt plantations and crops belonging to the people of Timor-Leste in the border region of Fa'ot Basin.
6. August 9, 2012, in Aldeia Quibiselo, Bobometo, Sub-District Oesilo, some people from RK Nino, Inbate Village (Indonesia), with the support of the military and local leaders of Inbate, Bikomi Nilulat sub-district, burnt and destroyed crops in the Fa'ot Basin border region.
7. August 15, 2012, in Aldeia Quibiselo, Bobometo, Sub-District Oesilo, the incidents of August 8 and 9 continued with verbal confrontations and stone throwing between RK Nino communities, and Aldeia Quibiselo, Bobometo (Timor Leste).
8. August 13, 2012, in Aldeia Passabe, Abani, sub-district Passabe, the village of Sunkaen (Indonesia), with the support of the TNI, destroyed crops (onions) and vegetable plantations owned by the villagers of Abani, Timor Leste.

9. August 30, 2012, in Oelbonak, Bairo Pope, Aldeia Passabe, Abani, Sub-District Passabe, a TNI patrol near Oelbonak, Bairo Pope (Timor-Leste), made threats against seven men working in a field in the border region. The TNI suspected them of smuggling across the border.
10. September 19, 2012, at Aldeia Manan, the village of Bene UFE, Sub-District of Nitibe, TNI based at Oepoli (Indonesia) went to the construction site of *Grand Enclave Unipesoal Ltd.*, where they were working on an irrigation project, and ordered them to cease work as the land is under dispute. Following this, Oecusse's BPU gave verbal instructions to *Grand Enclave Unipesoal Ltd.* to halt the project, but did not seek input from senior BPU commanders or the Timor Leste Government. The project is currently suspended.