

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION IN EAST TIMOR



The Asia Foundation's conflict management and prevention program aims to reduce the effects of violence on development and to help prevent future violent conflict. Events of 2006 show that outbreaks of violence can destabilize economic and democratic development and slow progress. In response to these events, The Asia Foundation is addressing the crisis by linking critical governance vulnerabilities directly to the underlying causes and enabling factors of the violence. The Foundation is facilitating consultations with Timorese leaders to formulate practical recommendations for governance reform for policymakers that will help reduce the potential for violent conflict in the near- to mid-term. Other initiatives help to prevent violence by promoting greater trust and understanding between East and West Timorese in remote border communities through exploration of economic, trade, security, and social issues of mutual concern, and engaging with policymakers to enact reforms that will benefit and stabilize these communities. The Foundation also works with youth martial arts organizations to prevent conflict through strengthening mediation and leadership skills. The Foundation's program is carried out in cooperation with Timorese organizations that are committed to the prevention of violent conflict and its destabilizing effects on development.

GOVERNANCE AND CONFLICT VULNERABILITIES

In response to the violent outbreaks of April and May 2006, and the subsequent governmental and social crisis, The Asia Foundation works to address the tensions that gave rise to the recent violence and that have the potential to incite further conflict.

The Asia Foundation supported a series of working seminars organized by the Timor Institute of Development Studies (TIDS) aimed at reforming governance vulnerabilities that are crucial to preventing further destabilizing violence in the near to mid-term. The seminars brought together Timorese leaders from government, civil society, academia, and local communities to identify precipitating causes of the recent violence and their links to underlying governance weaknesses. The results, a list of actionable recommendations, were presented to the prime minister, president, and other government leaders to support their efforts to prioritize key governance reforms that must be implemented in order to avoid increased tensions and more violence in the period around the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections.

CROSS-BORDER TRADE AND COMMERCE DIALOGUE

Since 2004, The Asia Foundation has worked in Oecussi district with Fundação Fatu Sinai Oecussi (FFSO) and in Covalima district with the Peace and Democracy Foundation (PDF) on a cross-border program to decrease the potential for border clashes, reduce suspicion, and deepen trust between border communities of East Timor and West Timor, Indonesia.

By working with Indonesia's Kefa Repatriation Support Group (KRSG) to facilitate arrangements for West Timorese participation in the dialogues, FFSSO and PDF cooperated with local government actors, civil society, business, *lia nain*, and religious leaders to organize cross-border workshops on practical issues of mutual interest, with an emphasis on markets, trade, border crossing passes for family members, and regional develop-



EAST TIMOR

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Foundation-supported seminars for multi-sector Timorese leaders resulted in recommendations to key government leaders to support governance reforms in order to avoid increased tensions and violence in the period around the 2007 national elections.

ment. The initial series of dialogues resulted in recommendations for the respective national and local government authorities. As a result of the cross-border dialogues in Oecussi, business leaders decided to meet separately to focus on key issues related to increasing private sector opportunities between East and West Timor. The meetings also prompted greater attention from the two national governments to implement a border pass to facilitate short-term cross-border visits.

This year, the program is expanding to Bobonaro district to provide coverage of the entire border between East Timor and Indonesia. In the current phase of the cross-border program, FFSO is working with Indonesian partner Lembaga Advokasi Anti Kekerasan Masyarakat Sipil (LAK-MAS) in the border communities of Oecussi District and West Timor. PDF is working with Yayasan Bentara Sabda Timor (YBST) in the border communities of Bobonaro and Covalima districts with West Timor, Indonesia. In Oecussi and Covalima districts, FFSO and PDF are working with local citizens and leaders to implement action plans on issues developed in the earlier dialogues and to implement recommendations to expand trade and commerce. In Bobonaro, PDF is concentrating on identification of priority issues and development of recommendations for the respective governments.

MARTIAL ARTS GROUPS AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

In 2005, The Asia Foundation supported the Office of the President to bring together martial

arts groups to reduce the likelihood of clashes between members and the government or police, and between martial arts groups.

As a result of this dialogue and mediation program, the leaders of all major martial arts groups — representing nearly 40,000 members — signed a code of conduct and a declaration pledging to resolve conflicts peacefully, to establish a mediation mechanism to resolve disputes, and to create the umbrella organization FOKAMTIL to represent martial arts groups in the country. A new national coordinating council successfully mediated conflicts in three districts of Dili, Liquiça, and Bobonaro. Through timely public service announcements, FOKAMTIL was also highly effective in helping to prevent the participation of martial arts groups in the violence of April and May 2006.

Based on findings from the first phase of this initiative, the Foundation supports programs to strengthen mediation and leadership skills of FOKAMTIL members at the national level in Dili and in the districts to help reduce the likelihood of group and individual participation in violence. Based on lessons learned from the first phase of the program, the Foundation is supporting national and district level training intended to strengthen key mediation and leadership skills, strengthen coordination between district martial arts groups and FOKAMTIL, and increase understanding and compliance with the code of conduct in order to resolve disputes peacefully and in non-violent ways.

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