

**SITUATION ANALYSIS
OF
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN EAST TIMOR**

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OVERVIEW AND SOME KEY MESSAGES

This situation analysis paints a positive overall picture of the state of civil society and civil society organisations (CSO's) in East Timor. People are freely forming civil society organisations, the number of which has grown rapidly and the environment in which they are operating is broadly supportive and permissive.

CSO's face many constraints, and most are weak in terms of institutional capacity, understandable given their relatively recent establishment, East Timor's recent history and the external demands on organisations over this period. There has been little space for looking inward. But they also have a range of strengths, including commitment, energy and an ability to adjust to new situations.

There are enormous expectations on civil society in terms of service delivery, expectations that are going to be difficult to meet. The expectations are from government, the general community and civil society itself. This poses some risks for civil society.

In terms of the NGO community, a reasonable number of those that have been established in the last two years may not survive over the medium term, in their current form. The possible development of a regulatory framework for NGOs, including specification of criteria for what constitutes an NGO is likely to lead to some reduction in numbers. The issue of the development of a regulation governing some or all CSO's is likely to emerge over the coming period.

Some NGO's established in the last two years would probably not be classed as NGOs in other places. Some may amalgamate and some may change their organisational form as the legal landscape is filled in, becoming a company, partnership or cooperative rather than an NGO. Many organisations are very heavily reliant on donor funds—indeed, some were established specifically to access or be a channel for donor funds in the immediate post-1999 period. It is not

clear how many will survive long term, given some lessening of donor activity and changing priorities.

Most NGOs are concentrated in Dili. While this has some advantages given that government policy making will remain centralised, the vast majority of East Timor's people, particularly most of its very poor, live in rural areas. The connection between NGOs and the people, and the effectiveness of service delivery will depend on developing effective outreach mechanisms or an organisational presence at least at the district level.

At the village level, CSO's tend to be more informal, task-based vehicles for collective action—for example, to organise a village clean up. There is

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limited structure to many of these groups. Those civil society organisations that do exist are quite weak in terms of institutional development. Quite a few are unable to classify the kind of group they are and have broad, ambitious objectives that will be impossible to achieve. Most organisations at the district level are also very small—the majority classified themselves as having 1-20 members but they cover large districts, spreading their resources thinly.

A key challenge will be finding ways for the range of civil society voices to get heard, in a context of concentration of NGOs in Dili and institutional weakness and complex decision making and authority structures at the local level. How can government and civil society ensure that NGOs don't just represent themselves but establish mechanisms to hear from and link to the needs and

concerns of the poor and disadvantaged in the community?

Civil society at district and village levels will face particular challenges in influencing policy development given the limited devolution of power. Careful thought needs to go into developing meaningful mechanisms to consult with and seek input from districts and villages in a context of centralised government decision making and limited resources available to both government and civil society.

TYPES OF ORGANISATIONS

The analysis of civil society in East Timor reveals a substantial and varied number of organisations in terms of size, age, capacity, range of activities and access to resources.

There is a large number of youth organisations. The declaration emerging from a forum of youth groups in May 2002 stated that participating organisations would continue to play a role in looking after their members' interests as well as monitoring the performance of government. There has been little articulation of youth policies to date from government but given the high proportion of young people in the population, the needs and concerns of young people are likely to be a continuing priority for government and civil society. The development of the youth sector will be influenced by how youth organisations relate together and the extent to which the emerging umbrella structure takes advantage of their numbers.

A central issue for youth (and other) groups is managing the transition from organisations focused on resistance to groups structured and equipped to function within a democratic context. The skills and determination built up over years of struggle will need to be channeled in new directions and augmented by training and education/awareness raising. This is about cultural and behavioral change not skills acquisition and will take time and require ongoing support and effort.

Women play a major role in the life of East Timorese society at all levels—in political organisations, via informal groups in villages, and through the main women's groups at all levels. The focus of women's organisations spans the range from monitoring of government policies to sewing groups and various public benefit organisations. Particular challenges include expanding women's role in decision making, particularly at the district and village level and in mainstream CSO's. Traditional attitudes and structures currently limit women's effective contribution, even where they have been given a formal role, as with the CEP structures. Some women's organisations will also face challenges in addressing issues related to

sexual and reproductive health in a society where the vast majority of people are Catholic.

Media, particularly radio, has established itself as a key communication mechanism. The level

and capacity of existing outlets will be affected by the withdrawal of the UN presence. But support for public communication tools, especially radio, is likely to remain a priority area for support from the international community because of its significance in a context of limited literacy and poor communication infrastructure.

Trade unions are also beginning to emerge but have not matched the growth of other parts of civil society to date, reflecting in part the focus of activity and international support in the immediate post-1999 period.

RELATIONSHIPS

On the basis of surveys, interviews, discussions and observations, relations between civil society and government are generally good. CSO's are beginning to feel their way with the new government. The rhetoric from government is positive, as is the formal commitment to involving civil society in policy development that is evident in, for example, National Development Plan. Time and resources pressures have sometimes limited the extent of effective civil society participation in recent government initiated consultations. Such pressures

can be expected to continue given the scope of the development challenge in East Timor. CSOs and government will need to carefully manage consultative and participation processes to avoid a perceived gap between commitment and reality becoming a source of friction thereby undermining the willingness of civil society to engage constructively with government. As the capacity of civil society organisations grows, their ability to participate effectively can be expected to increase.

The struggle for independence and the rebuilding after the destruction of 1999 provided a unifying focus for East Timor. In the post-independence period, political and ideological differences and differences in priorities between CSO's and government can be expected to become more prominent. These will need to be managed, as will changes in relationships as members of civil society take on roles in government or the bureaucracy. This points to a need to give some ongoing attention to the capacity of CSO's and government to effectively negotiate and manage relationships.

In terms of relationships between civil society organisations, many groups are beginning to come together and network in a variety of forms. Some are in fairly informal ways and often through ad hoc vehicles such as workshops and seminars. However much more formal ongoing links have developed especially amongst NGO's via the NGO Forum and through emerging networks such as Dai Poplar, (the popular education network) and the networks focusing on the Timor Gap issue; sustainable livelihoods and monitoring of parliament.

At the district level, relationships between civil society and other players are generally good. At the village level, the Chefe du Suco plays a major role as gatekeeper, influencing relationships between civil society organisations outside and inside the village. In terms of development work, the Chef du Suco will be a key influence on local-level relationships between CSO's and government, given expectations that the position will also function as the government's representative at the village level.

The demands of managing multiple, overlapping relationships are significant at the village level.

CSOs need to deal with a series of decision makers—traditional leaders, the Chefe du Suco, churches and the CEP structures. How these various decision making structures will interact is not clear. This poses challenges for civil society, given limited institutional capacity. It also has implications for donors that wish to support civil society at the local level. The capacity of CSO's and NGOs to strengthen their links to East Timor's villages will be one determinant of effectiveness and sustainability over the longer term, given that this is where most people live and poverty levels are highest.

This situation analysis provides a point in time snapshot of civil society in East Timor. Given the rapidly changing nature of civil society it will need to be continually refreshed and updated, most especially by CSOs themselves.

Key Recommendations and Conclusions

This situation analysis has clearly demonstrated that East Timor is fortunate to have an extensive and highly active civil society. While there are apparent capacity development needs it is clear that a solid base exists for civil society to play an active role in the new nation's development. This is true at both national and sub-national levels. There are many ways in which this potential can be realised and strengthened and equally, there may be many ways in which it can be stifled. To achieve the former objective a number of principal recommendations are made. Further discussion on these is to be found in section 9.

Shaping development

Civil society needs to be encouraged to play a role in shaping the development agenda in East Timor over the coming years, at national and sub national level. In saying this it is recognised that only limited capacity exists to take on this function. Equally though, considerable practical experience and commitment exists which provides a solid foundation for building on. This situation analysis recommends that intensive effort be made to support civil society organisations in climbing the steep learning curve which faces them.

At national level in particular civil society organisations face the challenge of become more actively involved in development planning processes, especially processes related to the National Development Plan. This Plan is obviously the key blueprint for the country's development and one which CSOs need to be intimately engaged with. However, it is acknowledged that this task may appear daunting at first. For this reason it is recommended that specific programmes be developed to facilitate CSOs to develop the skills to actively participate in national development planning.

Paralleling this opportunity to become more actively involved in national development planning is a requirement that CSOs commit themselves to engage in informed advocacy. Effective advocacy is not based on criticism alone. It is also based on clear information, thought out analysis and, in some cases, presentation of alternative perspectives and / or policy options. A number of CSOs have demonstrated considerable skill in doing this. However more broadly, CSOs will need to enhance their own understanding of advocacy and the responsibilities that go along with it.

Nation building

At national level also this situation analysis supports previous recommendations that a major civic education campaign be organised on nation building and the role of the citizen and citizen organisations within this. This campaign has the potential to support involvement in CSOs and could also address issues such as the role of voluntarism.

Civil service capacity

Just as CSO capacity will need to be addressed so too the issue of civil service capacity and the capacity of the political system will need to be enhanced. In particular both these systems will need to be supported in the development of a greater understanding of the role of CSOs. They may also need to be supported in the design and operation of mechanisms which can enable the commitment to participatory democracy to become more of a reality.

A particularly important element of this can be the role of the NGO Liaison function within the office of Planning and External Assistance Management of the Ministry of Finance. Through the provision of an upgraded liaison function, supported with appropriate technical assistance, this unit could play an important role in spreading a wider understanding of the role of CSOs and who best to work with them. It is recommended that the functioning of the liaison office be examined to identify how its work can best be supported.

Creating an enabling environment

For CSOs to function effectively they need an encouraging and facilitative environment. Much of this can come as a result of administrative practice although in some situations it may be accompanied by the development of legislative or regulatory frameworks. Discussion on this issue began with UNTAET/ETTA but was never concluded. In the likely event that this option will be revisited this situation analysis concludes that the range and scope of CSO types which exist in East Timor requires a very careful analysis of options before any final legislative framework(s) be developed. In particular it is recommended that such a framework be based on international best practice in this area and that it commits itself to facilitating CSO activity rather than restricting it.

This situation analysis confirms that the role of women in decision making roles, especially at sub-national levels, is underdeveloped. Other evidence would also suggest that women are underrepresented at senior decision making levels in most NGOs. This situation analysis would advocate that a major civic education campaign focusing on the role of women in leadership, especially in CSOs, be undertaken. Accompanying this should be a much stronger focus on capacity building for women to enable them to assume leadership positions and a commitment to gender mainstreaming within CSOs.

Partnership Building

Section 8 of this document has highlighted the many different relationships in which CSOs find and will find themselves over the coming years. Many of these relationships will require the development

of partnerships of different types and level of intensity. This situation analysis recommends that greater attention and support be provided to the process of partnership building. Particular emphasis should be placed on facilitating partnership building between Government and CSOs (at national and sub national levels) and on nurturing partnership development internally amongst civil society organisations.

CSO Governance

In a number of areas of the situation analysis internal governance within CSOs is discussed. Of particular importance is the issue of financial management. The situation analysis presents some evidence that existing financial management

awareness and/or capacity is relatively low amongst most CSOs. It is recommended that support to address this deficit be provided.

Research

Finally, this situation analysis is only a point in time exploration of CSOs in East Timor. Even if more time had been available to extend the analysis, it is clear that the rapidly changing CSO environment necessitates frequent review and updated analysis. For this reason it is recommended that further research be carried out into a number of areas of CSO activity as listed in Section 9.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Civil society is an arena in which people come together to organise in a variety of ways. It is a potent expression of democracy. The people of East Timor have struggled for many years against colonialism and developed multiple avenues through which they pursued democracy and independence. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) played a crucial role in East Timor's progress towards independence.

1.2 In the period since the end of Indonesian occupation the number of CSOs has expanded rapidly. For example, there are now some 230 national and over 100 international NGOs registered with the NGO Forum.¹ CSOs have made an important contribution to rebuilding from the destruction that followed the August 1999 ballot, while also dealing with the challenges presented by the opening of democratic spaces. At the beginning of the independence era, civil society is vibrant and expanding, though facing many challenges, notably in nation building and consolidating East Timor's democracy. Paralleling the emergence of this array of NGOs has been a variety of capacity development initiatives undertaken by national and international bodies.

1.3 In the context of this ongoing transition, the steering committee of UNDP's current civil society project decided to undertake a situation analysis of CSOs, looking at the current state and needs of East Timorese CSOs, as part of developing ideas and directions for future support and capacity building activities.

1.4 The aim was not to conduct a situation analysis for its own sake, although the information generated will have value as a resource on which to build. Rather, it was intended to gather the kind of information that would provide a basis for government, UNDP, donors, East Timorese CSOs and INGOs to develop an appropriate, relevant,

timely and effective program of support for civil society.

1.5 The situation analysis therefore provides a snapshot of the current situation and operating environment facing CSOs and in giving an indication of trends and directions, especially at the district level, it offers an overview perspective. It also begins to describe the local complexity and specificity of civil society, especially those non-formalised relationships that help bind civil society together but are not easily captured.

1.6 The report starts by looking briefly at some definitional issues, in relation to civil society generally and in East Timor specifically. The report provides an overview of the history and evolution of civil society. It briefly reviews developments prior to 1999 and then looks at the post-1999 period noting key developments and areas of activity.

1.7 The report also spends some time looking at the information obtained at the district and village level and tries to answer a number of questions on the types of groups which can be found, the issues they focus on; participation in CSOs; the role of women in decision making structures and others.

1.8 Finally the report sets out some of the main challenges facing CSOs in East Timor, concluding with some recommendations on how support might best be provided to enable CSOs to carry out their activities and to enable Government – CSO relations to be carried out most effectively.

1.9 A more complete version of this report containing information on the research methodology, district level data and the social and economic context in which the analysis is located is also available in English only.

¹ The list and numbers of registered NGOs should not be confused with the membership of the NGO Forum which currently stands at approximately 80 national and 30 international NGOs.

2. NATURE AND ROLES OF CIVIL SOCIETY

2.1 This section provides a brief overview of some general conceptual issues around the nature and roles of civil society. It is designed to provide a context for the specific discussions about the nature and role of civil society in East Timor in the next section. It also indicates some of the ideas that inform donor support for civil society.

What is civil society?

2.2 How civil society is defined can influence the information that the situational analysis seeks to capture, and in turn, a program of support. If particular types of organisations are excluded at the level of definition, they can be effectively rendered invisible. This issue takes on a particular significance in the context of a project designed to inform development of a program of support for civil society.

2.3 There is no single agreed meaning that is invoked by using the concept civil society, although increasingly the differences are at the margins. Civil society is generally used to refer to both groups and activities but there is no universally accepted view of the groups and activities that are included. Most exclude private businesses while normally including business associations such as chambers of commerce. Political parties and trade unions are normally included, but not by everyone. Robert Holloway, for example, argues that political parties are governments in waiting and, in terms of

Civil society is the public space between the state and individuals where individuals can develop autonomous, organised and collective activities of various kinds. It is the space where citizens relate to each other and give collective expression to their demands and judgements on public affairs.

operating values, have more in common with the state than with civil society². But in many countries political parties play a significant community mobilisation role that is similar to self-help groups.

2.4 There is general agreement on the location of civil society as the public space between the state and individuals where individuals can develop autonomous, organised and collective activities of various kinds. It is the space where “citizens relate to each other and give collective expression to their demands and judgements on public affairs.”³ This space is structured and shaped by the state (via laws, regulations, institutions and policies) and by what happens within that space. Civil society, then, is contextual and contingent, takes different forms at different times and in different places, and its precise expression is influenced by the groups and individuals that it comprises.

CIVICUS, the World Alliance for Citizen Action, defines the term ‘civil society organisation’ (CSO) as those organisations which are independent of both the state and the corporate sector, whose task is to hold accountable both the State and the corporate sector in the process of citizen action

2.5 CIVICUS, the World Alliance for Citizen Action, defines the term ‘civil society organisation’ (CSO) as those organisations which are independent of both the state and the corporate sector, whose task is to hold accountable both the State and the corporate sector in the process of citizen action. CSOs are thus those organisations which have not been set up by governments and are not private profit-making commercial organisations, although they are not precluded from receiving financial assistance from either of these two sources,

² Richard Holloway, *Supporting Citizen's Initiatives: Bangladesh's NGOs and Society: A working paper*, PACT Publications, NY, 1996, p.19

³ Alan Fowler, *Striking a Balance: A guide to enhancing the effectiveness of non-governmental organisations in international development*, Earthscan, UK, 1997, p.8.

provided their governance remains independent of these other two sectors.

2.6 This is close to the meaning that the term 'non-government organisation' (NGO) once had. But in the development context, the meaning of NGO has shifted. Sometimes the term is still used as though it was synonymous with civil society, or at least the primary element of civil society for the purposes of development. But others now use 'NGO' to mean more formally organised groups providing relief, welfare or development services. CSO is now generally used as the more inclusive term, covering sections of the community such as organised religion, sporting clubs and professional associations.

2.7 Many CSOs are what some refer to as third party organisations⁴—they gain their legitimacy primarily by providing services for others. Others represent primarily their own members' interests (such as women's groups, trade unions, self-help groups and students' organisations) and may also extend that work beyond national boundaries or to others seen as facing similar problems.

Civil society and governance

2.8 Much of the contemporary interest in civil society among the development community stems from ideas about the role of civil society in governance.

In the process of making governance more inclusive and just, civil society is believed to play the following significant functions:

- provide space for the mobilisation, articulation and pursuit of interests by individuals and groups;
- provide the institutional means for mediating between conflicting interests and social values
- give expression and direction to social, religious and cultural needs;
- limit the inherent tendency of governments to expand their control;
- nurture the values of citizenship required for democracy in a modern nation-state.⁵

⁴ Korten, David (1990), *Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda*, Kumarian Press, West Hartford, p. 97.

⁵ Alan Fowler, op.cit., p.8.

2.9 There is growing recognition that citizen participation and engagement are essential for good governance and real development. But community participation and engagement don't need to be channelled through formally organised groups or focused on specific political objectives to contribute to governance and a vibrant civic life. Simple community involvement and engagement—talking to neighbours or co-workers, working together to maintain public spaces or community facilities, talking or writing to community leaders or politicians—can have a substantial impact. So civil society is more than organised groups. It is also about relationships that link individuals and communities together.

2.10 On the other hand, there is no necessary link—in the short term—between an active civil society, social cohesion and governmental stability and effectiveness.

The theory and practical intention is that as civic institutions become stronger they are better able to make demands on government in terms of services, rights, access to resources, behaviour of state agents, desired priorities, and public policies. Simultaneously, reforms for good governance should enable and provide greater freedom of action for forming and operating civic associations; this pluralises the civic fabric of society. People can freely take initiatives or get together. In sum, there is greater room for choice, negotiation and pursuit of interests.

While these two dynamics are supposed to be, ideally, in harmony, they are usually out of step, because popular pressure for change can build up more quickly than power holders can tolerate or bureaucracies can adapt to. Common results are civic unrest, government repression and a slipping back to old authoritarian habits.⁶

2.11 Explicit efforts are needed to ensure that civic strengthening and good governance are mutually reinforcing. For civil society to contribute to

⁶ Alan Fowler, op.cit., p.14

effective governance, community dynamism and social cohesion, it needs space to operate—a permissive legal/regulatory environment, and policy makers, decision makers and administrators who understand and value the role of civil society.

2.12 A healthy civil society, then, requires more than community participation and engagement, the presence of many active groups and organisations and a variety of linkages between them. It also requires institutions and processes through which claims can be negotiated and mediated. Indeed, the role that civil society organisations are able to play will depend in part on the nature and role of such structures and institutions. Strengthening civil society involves not just building on the ability of groups and organisations to represent and address community needs and interests but strengthening their capacity to engage with each other, with the state and with the market.

3. THE NATURE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN EAST TIMOR OVERVIEW

*"For the first time civil society is flourishing in East Timor. Under the previous regimes NGOs and CSOs were suppressed as colonialism followed by occupation and a large military presence left little room for democracy to develop in East Timor."*⁷

3.1 There is a wide range of CSOs in East Timor including organisations of women, youth, sporting clubs, workers associations, environmental, human rights, development and many other areas of activity. While most of these CSOs have been established in the aftermath of September 1999 civil society groups have been at the heart of East Timor's history of struggle over the past number of years. There are long-standing groups such as the religious orders, church congregations, women's and youth organisations as well as some NGOs. More recently the number and nature of organisations has increased.

3.2 This section looks at how the CSO "landscape" has evolved. It discusses the nature and form of civil society in East Timor and looks at some of the main groups.

3.3 It is questionable whether the rate of growth in the number of civil society organisations can be sustained in the medium or longer term given available financial and human resources, particularly management capacity. Later sections look at some of the issues and challenges that will face civil society over the next few years and what these might suggest to organisations interested in supporting the development of civil society and its participation in East Timor's future.

Describing civil society in East Timor

Terminology and approach

3.4 In discussions with stakeholders for this project, there was general agreement about the location of

civil society as a sector alongside and separate from the state and the market. There was also agreement about most of the types of organisations that you would define as part of the sector. But at the margins of definition there are differences in view. For example, for some the question of voluntarism is often a defining characteristic. Use of this in East Timor would prove a matter of some debate. Given that some national NGOs, INGOs and the NGO Forum have paid staff, and for all other purposes look like and function as part of civil society, this issue would seem to have been resolved in practice. There is also the issue of whether not-for-profit status is a pre-requisite.

3.5 For present purposes, civil society in East Timor is understood as comprising freely organised groups or associations, clearly distinct, independent and autonomous from the state, and formed to express and pursue the interests of their members. It includes the variety of community based groups whose primary purpose for organising is income generation (ie 'for profit' organisations) but who are often also involved in other areas of social or economic concern.⁸

3.6 'NGO' is used to refer to more structured organisations, usually having a constitution, some form of management structure and often in receipt of donor funding. However, the title NGO in East Timor (as in many countries) is usually self awarded. In East Timor the register of citizens organisations currently formed as NGOs is maintained by the NGO Forum. The 'International NGO' (INGO) and 'national NGO' or 'East Timorese NGO' (ETNGO) are used to distinguish between NGOs originating in donor countries and NGOs in East Timor. While NGOs are key 'drivers' of civil society, they are only one part of civil society. 'CSO' is used as the more inclusive term. The broader terminology also includes Trade Unions and the variety of community based organisations

⁷ UNDP project brief 'Supporting civil society to grow', June 2001

⁸ For an interesting discussion on this see Manor J., *Civil Society and Governance – A Concept Paper*, Institute of Development Studies, 1999.

or CBOs that exist as well as media and institutions such as universities. A preliminary typology of CSOs is presented below.

Range and types of organisations

3.7 The form that civil society takes in any given country depends on its history, its values and the way its people have dealt with the challenges they confront. This project has taken an inclusive, non-prescriptive, inquiry-based approach to describing the different types of civil society organisations. Self-definition—how organisations themselves think about their role—was an important guide. We think this is appropriate given the evolving state of civil society.

The form that civil society takes in any given country depends on its history, its values and the way its people have dealt with the challenges they confront

3.8 It would be premature to produce a detailed typology of civil society in East Timor and use it to classify organisations, given the speed at which the landscape is changing. For example, at present there is limited organisation in the labour sector but this is not necessarily a predictor of the place of organised trade unions in the short to medium term. It simply reflects where things are at in a rapidly evolving landscape.

3.9 Based on discussions with stakeholders and reviewing the questionnaires and surveys from the field visits a general overview of types of organisations that can be identified at the moment is provided below. Organisations are still evolving in terms of nature, purpose and primary areas of work. Particularly outside Dili, many are still at the point when they define their organisation's role in relation to the total needs in their community. They do not have clear objectives and strategies, they have not settled on where to focus their energies or how to work with other organisations in their area, and the organisational form or model is not set. They are predominantly reactive, often to funding opportunities, rather than strategic. More generally, it is clear from the results of the field research that many CSOs are more accustomed to describing

themselves according to their purpose, goals and activities rather than by organisational type.

Village level clubs/organisation

Membership groups

3.10 There are many groups that people join for their own enjoyment, such as sports, cultural or general social clubs or hobby groups (for example singing groups). In some cases these are motivated by a third party organisation from outside the village such as OMT, OPMT or FOSKA. In other cases they were established by the community and then attracted funding from donors including international NGOs. There are also village groups and local branches of NGOs that people join because of the benefits they can receive.

3.11 A sizable number of groups are involved with cultural activities, producing traditional dance, art or craft and teaching traditional skills to young people.

3.12 There is a range of national membership groups that also have a presence at the village level including women's organisations, the student movement, faith and youth groups. These organisations also have a public benefit role in that they support local initiatives such as women's literacy classes, some of which are linked to income-generating projects. Some organisations are hybrids, displaying characteristics of cooperatives, private business or microcredit groups.

Self-help or support groups

3.13 The survey carried out as part of the situation analysis was able to identify two types of self-help groups—some that were induced (eg. savings groups, informal arrangements between families to assist with care of disabled people, old people, young children etc), and many that were task-based and part of a wider community mobilization such as a village clean up.

Trade and professional associations

3.14 The research indicates this is a growing area and includes a range of organisations covering professions such as teachers, as well as self-employed people such as fishers.

National organisations

3.15 There are many national organisations that people join for political, ideological or religious reasons, as well as seeing benefits for themselves from membership. Most of these are women's,

youth or religious groups. Many people also join and play a role in public benefit organisations. Some of these organisations have political connections and are also involved in advocacy.

Interim Typology of East Timorese Citizens Organisations		
Mutual Benefit	Public Benefit	Pretender Organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Based Organisations Farmers groups, self help groups, income generating groups etc. Introduced (e.g. CEP Community Councils) Trade Unions Professional Associations Faith Based Organisations e.g. Church Groups Communities of Interest e.g. groups focusing on disability. Mass Organisations e.g. womens organisations such as OMT and student organisations such as Renetil. Recreation Groups e.g. sports organisations Cultural Organisations Non Government Political Parties (???) Networks e.g. of youth organisations like FOSCA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> East Timorese NGOs (ETNGOs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Service Delivery - Advocacy - Information providers e.g. community radio stations - Networks e.g. Hasatil (Sustainable livelihoods network), Dai Popular (Popular Education Network) - Umbrella bodies e.g. NGO Forum, REDE, Organisation Conselho Nacional Juventude Timor Leste. International NGOs*⁹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - generalist - specialized <p>*(INGOs usually comprise a mix of ET Staff and internationals who are obviously not citizens of East Timor. Most INGOs work alongside ET Citizens Organisations))</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faith based organisations (providing services for all, irregardless of religion e.g. hospital services) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private businesses operating as NGOs to access donor funds <p>In the past in East Timor, during Indonesian occupation, a further "pretender" class of organisation existed, namely government organised groups, particularly those with a pro autonomy perspective. In some countries these are known as GONGOS (Government organised NGOs)</p>
Other Civil Society Organisations		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media University 	

The interim typology has divided organisations into mutual and public benefit groups and allocates the different types of organisations to each accordingly. Often though, the distinctions between the two are blurred and, in some cases, an organisation may be both mutual and public benefit. For example, the women's organisation OMT is involved in activities of direct benefit to members but also engages in activities of broader benefit such as public policy and community development projects.

Summary of civil society's evolution to August 1999

3.16 Prior to the August 1999 ballot, a small number of NGOs were involved in limited but important activities, particularly in mobilising support and involvement in the ballot itself. There were also a number of pro-Indonesian, pro-integration organisations, including militia groups, which were also part of the pre-1999 landscape. The church was among the earliest organised

groups involved in humanitarian work and opposition to occupation. Youth and student organisations also provided a focus for opposition to Indonesian occupation.

3.17 But in general, until the late 1980s, operating as a CSO in East Timor was very difficult. One of the earliest organisations was *Delegado Social* (DELSOS), a Catholic Church organisation that evolved into *Caritas Dili*. The longstanding presence of Catholic Church organisations such as *Caritas*, the *Justice and Peace Commission* and others at national and local level has been of considerable importance. Much greater detail on the role of Catholic Church organisations could have been included in this study but was not possible due to time constraints. However, it is recommended as an area for further research and documentation.

3.18 Another long established NGO is *ETADEP*, an organisation principally focused on the agricultural sector and one that has made ongoing strong contributions to work with farmer groups. During this time there was little presence of international NGOs though support from ACFOA (the Australian Council for Overseas Development) to *OPMT* (*Organizacao Popular Mulher Timor*) prior to the 1975 invasion is significant. Other records indicate the involvement of *Catholic Relief Services* and the *International Committee for the Red Cross* towards the end of the 1970's and early 1980's.

3.19 From the mid 1990s other NGOs formed, though the total numbers were small. In 1997, organisations established included *Yayasan Hak* (focusing mainly on human rights issues), *Fokupers* and *ETWAVE* (formerly *Gertak* and focusing mainly on women's rights), and *Yayasan Bia Hula* (focusing mainly on water and sanitation).¹⁰ Women also supported the independence struggle through supporting FALINTIL in the mountains and conducting literacy campaigns.

3.20 The late 1980s and the 1990s also saw the emergence of a youth and students movement, with a focus on resistance to Indonesian colonialism. The movement included young people who were

part of the main political grouping, Fretilin; students in the Externato São José (one of the last Portuguese speaking schools in East Timor) and Catholic seminarians who initiated various youth groups in parishes and schools, mainly in Dili. The movement organised youth demonstrations during the visit of Pope John Paul II in 1989 and the demonstration that led to the cancellation of a visit of Portuguese parliamentarians and the resultant Santa Cruz massacre on November 12, 1991.

3.21 The movement continued to grow and organise. In July 1998, the East Timor Students Solidarity Council (ETSSC), based at the University in Dili, succeeded in organising a demonstration of almost 10,000 people, coinciding with a visit by a high-level delegation of ambassadors. The ETSSC also sponsored a series of community dialogues throughout East Timor. In the run up to the 1999 ballot the youth movement played a major role in awareness raising and information dissemination, often at high personal cost.

Pro-integration groups

3.22 While many civil society organisations emerged to resist Indonesian oppression, quite a number formed to support the policy of continued integration with Indonesia or were directed to pursue this aim. These included *KNPI* (Komite Nasional Pemuda Indonesia), *Front Pembela Demokrasi dan Keadilan*, *SPSI* (a workers' group), *PRAMUKA* (a scouting organisation), *OSIS* (a school students' organisation) and *KORPRI* (a civil servants organisation).

3.23 Changes in Jakarta following the fall of Suharto in May 1998 opened the door to more open political campaigning for independence. This was quickly met by the establishment of pro-integration militia such as *BMP*, *Aitarak*, *Ablai*, *MAHIDI* and others. Under the guise of a pro-integration policy, they were responsible for a campaign of intimidation and terror directed by the Indonesian army and police, often directing their attacks at other civil society groups. In one sense, these groups were arguably an arm of the Indonesian state and therefore outside civil society. But they did operate as part of and interacted with other civil society organisations. Indonesia's sponsorship of pro-integration groups also enabled it to point to a fractured civil society and to portray itself as a

¹⁰ Hunt, J., Background Paper, NGO Forum, September 2001

mediator trying to manage conflict between opposing views.

Civil society's development post-1999

Youth and students

3.24 Post 1999, youth and students were prominent in civic education activities in the run up to the August 2001 election and were involved in the National Planning Commission, particularly the consultative commission. A women's wing of the *ETSSC*—the *GFFTL*—has also been established and is very active in promoting women's literacy.

3.25 The major youth groups are *OJTL*, *Sagrada Familia*, *Fidun*, *Renentil*, *OPJATL* and *Lorica Aswain*. These groups have formed an umbrella organisation, *Organisacao Conselho Nacional Juventude Timor Leste*, which convened a Youth Congress on 4-6 May 2002 to discuss a range of issues including its future directions. 35 youth organisations were represented at the Congress, covering national and district organisations and including *RENTIL*, *SAGRADA FAMILIA*, *OJTL*, *IMPETTU*, *FOSCADIL*, *BERAN LIURAI TIMOR*, *UNIAMORTE*, *CENTRAL HABURAS*, *OPJELATIL*, *CCYC*, *CENCESTIL*, *PEMUDA PROTESTAN*, *UNATIL*, *ISEG*, *IRDI*, *OMJIRTM*, *FITUN*, *ETSSC*, *HAOK*, *GMPD*, *Juventude UDT* and *Juventude Partido KOTA*.

3.26 At this Congress the umbrella organisation changed its name to *Conselho Nacional Juventude Timor Leste* (*CNJTL*). The Congress declaration outlined the roles the organisation should play as including: to defend independence, to fight against nepotism, to participate in national planning policies and to develop human resources and skills for young people. Other objectives include development of youth cooperatives and cultural and training centres for youth.

3.27 One of the most important student organisations is *RENTIL*, which has been involved in the struggle for freedom since 1988. It began as an organisation of East Timorese students attending universities in Java and its work organising the resistance there resulted in the jailing of many of its leaders during Indonesian rule. It is now working to secure a democratic future for East Timor and has participated in the election processes and other nation building programs. Its

headquarters are in Dili. *RENTIL* has been involved in the work of the Planning Commission and in various civic education programs. It is also involved in a number of agricultural activities and has conducted anti-corruption workshops in the community. The organisation also works closely with women's groups and operates a community radio station, *Radio Lorico Lian*.

3.28 The *Gerakan Mahasiswa Pro Demokrasi* [Prodemocracy Student Movement] is a student organisation based at the university. It organises students who attend the university and plays a role in civic education in the wider community. In addition to gender and health training it also runs discussion groups on political, social and economic issues. It also sees itself as having a role in monitoring government implementation of policies and being a watchdog in relation to all forms of corruption and nepotism.

3.29 *ETSSC*, the Student Solidarity Council, will hold a congress in June 2002 at which it will discuss future directions. The group has a strong network. It has considered setting up a student union at the university and is also planning to continue its work in adult education. This focuses mostly on literacy programs for women. Many of the students from this organisation become teachers. It also runs a community radio station, *Radio Rakambia*.

3.30 *FOSKA* is a national Catholic youth organisation which organises religious activities, for its members and conducts seminars and conferences locally and national on church/faith issues. It networks with other civil society youth groups and played an active role in a number of civic education programs. *FOSKA* considers itself as a monitor of government plans and programs has a very widespread presence at the village level, as demonstrated by the district workshop data.

3.31 A number of youth centres have been established in several districts in which all youth organisations meet and where informal training is provided in areas such as computer training.

3.32 A challenge for the youth sector will be to evolve its way of organising and operating which, of necessity, has previously relied on loose structures.

In a democratic and independent East Timor, it will need to develop structures and processes that enable it to seek input from young people and develop priorities and ideas that reflect the concerns and interests of young people.

Popular education Network

3.33 The East Timorese Popular Education Network or *Dai Popular* was formed in August 2001 following a month long exchange by 11 East Timorese community educators and organisers to Brazil. This exchange was funded by the UNDP Civil Society Project. The core objective of *Dai Popular* is to support and develop popular education as a tool in the process of democratisation and social transformation. It sees the role of popular education as central to the task of eliminating economic exploitation and cultural dependency and building a society in which men and women live in equality. *Dai Popular* sees its work as building on the long experience of popular education in East Timor, whether it be via literacy campaigns, co-operatives, crèches, popular health programmes etc. The network membership includes:

Grupo Alabetizacao
Grupo Nove Nove Fokupers
Haburas Foundation
Institute Secular Maun Alin iha Kristu (ISMAIK)
Lao Hamutuk
Pronto Atu Servi
Organizacao Popular da Mulher Timorese (OPMT)
Sahe institute for Liberation
Yayasan HAK

3.34 *Dai Popular* is a particularly exciting development and offers considerable potential to act as a vehicle to support various civic / popular education activities. It has a strong commitment to work with local communities and to enhancing its learning by reference to experiences in other countries.

Women's rights organisations

3.35 As in virtually all countries, women in East Timor occupy an unequal position. Violence against women and gender discrimination are widespread, illiteracy rates for women are higher than for men, and representation in decision making structures and positions is limited. A number of organisations have emerged over the

years, a number of them pre 1999, to tackle these issues, including the national women's network *REDE*, the mass organisations *OMT* and *OMPT*, the NGOs *FOKUPERS* and *ETWAVE* and the young women's organisation *GFFTL*.

3.36 At the root of future issues may be a belief by some women's organisations that women were left behind during the initial reconstruction effort. In July 2000, FOKUPERS noted that:

UNTAET recently circulated a memo announcing the disbanding of the gender commission, due to budgetary constraints. CNRT's gender commission has not been active. The National Consultative Council has 3 East Timorese women, out of a membership of 16. CNRT is also resisting a gender balance quota in the participants of its national Congress. Distribution of aid and employment remain gender biased — aid is distributed to men representing the head of the family, aid distribution [agencies] mostly employed male labourers, Quick Impact Projects (QIPS) employ mostly men in manual labour. In the meantime, women must shoulder the burden of their family survival.¹¹

3.37 In July 2000, some 500 representatives of East Timorese women's organisations held the First Congress of Women of Timor Loro Sa'e, the first post-conflict gathering of representatives, producing a *Platform for Action*. This highlighted issues of particular concern and importance to women in the process of national reconstruction: education, health, violence against women, gender justice for violations during occupation, and a minimum of 30% female representation in public employment and decision-making.

3.38 Women's organisations and networks are generally strong in the villages. But on the basis of work done for this project, it is not clear how the

¹¹ FOKUPERS, Final Report Rehabilitation Program (November 1999- May 2000), July 2000. Support for the program was provided by a number of funders: Oxfam International, USAID/OT1, Urgent Action followed by UNICEF and Grassroots International.

strength of these groups and networks relates to women's roles in traditional decision making structures in the village, if at all. Evaluations of the CEP undertaken to date give some indication of the issues that need to be addressed.

Prominent women's organisations and networks

3.39 **REDE:** The East Timorese Women's Network, Feto Timor Lorosae (REDE), is an umbrella organisation involving some 15 women's groups and NGOs which was established in March 2000. Its members are themselves representative of a broad cross section of society and are often mass based organisations with national membership through to village level. These members are involved in a variety of activities including cultural projects, income generating/small businesses, rights-based organisations and organisations affiliated with political parties.

3.40 REDE advocates on a rights based approach to development, justice, social inclusiveness and gender equity and equality. It also works directly with Timorese women through literacy, income generating and poverty alleviation projects.

3.41 **OMT:** OMT is currently re-evaluating its role, structures and way of operating. It is not clear to what extent OMT is actually functioning to promote the participation of East Timorese women in society. Where the organisation is active, most activities focus on enhancing women's economic participation in traditional areas such as *tais* weaving, baking, horticulture and hospitality. Where OMT is involved in village functions, ceremonies and Church activities, its role is more like an extension of member's domestic responsibilities. It has been suggested that there is a significant physical and social gap between the OMT leadership and grassroots members as the organisation's outreach is limited.¹² Village and hamlet members are often inactive, reflecting both the lack of support and OMT's hierarchical structure.¹³ Nevertheless OMT does have a network

to tap into that is either latent or vibrant in many parts of East Timor.

3.42 **FOKUPERS:** Established in 1997, FOKUPERS is a women's NGO working on women's human rights and empowerment, particularly in relation to women's roles in decision making in the family, society and government. Prior to the independence ballot in 1999, FOKUPERS provided counselling and support to women victims of violence and torture, and an education and information dissemination program. It had an office with 5 staff, a team of 15 volunteers and a shelter opened in August 1999. On 5 September 1999, the FOKUPERS office and shelter was attacked by militia and the organisation's assets, computers, equipment, records and documents were looted and burned.

3.43 After the UN multi-national peace keeping force arrived in East Timor, FOKUPERS regrouped and developed a six-month emergency program to support women victims of the Indonesian state-sponsored violence. Its representatives also met with senior UN officials, international NGOs, members of parliament from various countries, diplomats and others to present findings on violence against women.

3.44 FOKUPERS was an initiator of REDE and played a major supporting role during preparations for the first Women's Congress and was elected Chair of the Congress. In 2000, it worked with Oxfam International to conduct a survey of women's participation in decision making at district and national level. Recommendations arising from the research were presented to UNTAET, CIVPOL and other women's organisations.

The NGO Forum

3.45 The East Timor NGO Forum¹⁴ was established in 1998 to coordinate emergency assistance to communities affected by the 1997/98 drought, supported by Oxfam, AusAID and ACFOA. The

¹² Women in East Timor – A report on Women's Health, Education, Economic Empowerment and Decision Making. Office of the Advisor on Promotion of Equality. ETPA/UNTAET, April 2002.

¹³ For instance grassroots members with initiative to start an activity cannot by-pass the sub-district and

district leadership. In many villages and hamlets women have to wait for directions from the district level.

¹⁴ NGO Forum Website : www.geocities.com/etngoforum/

NGO Forum functioned as a network for national NGOs and INGOs working in East Timor at this time.

3.46 The East Timor Strategic Development Planning Conference, held in Melbourne in April 1999 under the auspices of the CNRT, devoted considerable time to discussing the NGO Forum, particularly how to strengthen its role in coordinating the anticipated influx of international aid and in protecting East Timorese interests. In June 1999, 14 NGOs met and decided to re-activate the NGO Forum and formalise its structure, its vision and mission. The meeting appointed a Board of Management and agreed to seek funds to employ an executive officer and staff to relieve the burden on *Bia Hula*, which had served as the Forum office.

3.47 In the destruction following the independence ballot in August 1999, the Forum, like all NGOs, was unable to function. Its staff and members were persecuted and dispersed, its resources stolen or destroyed. Towards the end of 1999 the NGO Forum (FONGTIL) was re-established with the support of ACFOA and OCHA, the humanitarian arm of UNTAET. From this point, the Forum became directly involved in a range of activities including all subsequent donor conferences.

3.48 The register of NGOs managed by the NGO Forum lists 233 formally registered national NGOs and over 100 international NGOs. To this must be added the many smaller community based organisations, women's groups, farmers groups etc, operating at local level, sometimes with the support of larger, better resourced NGOs or local administration structures, sometimes with little support of any kind. The NGO Forum itself now has a membership of almost 140 NGOs and a staff of over 30.¹⁵ It is active in a range of areas including advocacy, capacity development, information provision, research and information technology.

3.49 "In a very short and very difficult period an organisation of standing and credibility has been

¹⁵ A clear distinction should be drawn between the Forum's membership and the NGO Register which the Forum maintains. Not all those on the register are members of the Forum.

built... The NGO Forum now occupies a very important position in East Timor. It helps to bring together a range of NGOs under its umbrella, both large and small, Dili and district based. It enables these member organisations to organise around issues of mutual concern and in doing so helps provide opportunities for shared learning and for co-operative working. It provides important services and acts as a source of information. But it faces many challenges too. The challenge to help NGOs increase their overall capacity to manage their activities. The challenge to learn the new skills required in the task of nation and democracy building. The challenge to innovate. But most of all it faces the challenge of maintaining the vitality of the NGO sector".¹⁶

3.50 The NGO Forum is also having to learn to operate in a new climate where it has to be proactive about issues it chooses to get involved in. In the past, to a large extent, the Forum was quite reactive either working within an agenda set by ETTA or UNTAET, other international organisations and INGO's.

3.51 A recent review of the NGO Forum's advocacy work noted that:

*Despite the strong role of the Forum in initiating advocacy, there has been concern among the NGO members on the role of the Forum as an umbrella, with regard to whether or not the forum is merely a facilitating and supporting institution or an active and key player in advocacy. Many different interpretations have been voiced amongst the Forum Secretariat, the board, the advocacy staff and among the members, on the role that the forum should play. These misunderstandings have created communication problems that could potentially cripple the NGO Forum as a useful network facilitator, or worst, turn it into an isolated NGO working in competition with other NGOs.*¹⁷

¹⁶ Statement by Finn Reske-Nielsen, UNDP Representative & UN Development Coordinator at the 'Open Day' at the NGO Forum held on Tuesday 19 February 2002.

¹⁷ Mansour Fakhri, Joaquim Fonseca, Solange Rosa, 'Advocacy review of NGO Forum', April 2002.

3.52 The review was not conducted as an evaluation but to provide an overview of the advocacy activities of the Forum. The aim was to establish an understanding of the role of the NGO Forum in the past and in the current political context, as a basis for reviewing its role and functions.

The media

3.53 The new constitution recognises the value of a free and independent media. Since 1999, the independent media sector has grown to include a range of commercial and community based print and radio outlets.

3.54 The two daily national newspapers are *Suara Timor Lorosae* and *Timor Post*. Weekly or monthly national publications include *Talitakum* news magazine and *Lian Maubere*.¹⁸ In Same, Bobonaro and Oecussi, community based publications with district-level coverage now exist.

3.55 Low levels of literacy in many areas of East Timor make radio a key medium for information circulation. Four radio stations now operate alongside the national radio service which has developed as a successor to *Radio Untaet*. Of these four, only the Catholic Church affiliated station *Radio Timor Kmanek*, broadcasts throughout East Timor. *Radio Falintil* and *Radio Rakambia* broadcast only to Dili. Community radio stations have also been established and include *Radio Comunidade Maliana* and *Radio Comunidade Los Palos*. At present the broadcasts in a variety of languages for a total of 8 hours per day to the Los Palos area and Lautem district. It has recently acquired a new transmitter and will now cover up to a radius of 40-50 km. A number of other community radio stations are developing supported by the Community Empowerment Program (CEP) and Internews. In the near future it is anticipated that most districts will have a community radio station.

3.56 The development of media, particularly radio, will be important given East Timor's current very

poor communication infrastructure. The sector can help to support East Timor's embryonic democracy and fill the information void that, if allowed, can be a breeding ground for rumour and discontent. Community radio in particular has an important role to play in civic education programmes.

3.57 The National Development Plan has acknowledged this function and has taken the following position on the role of the media in an independent East Timor:

9.14 The activities of the media should have the following central objectives:

- (a) Report with accuracy, impartiality and professionalism the news and issues of national interest including what happens abroad and in particular in the countries of the region.*
- (b) Report in a manner that promotes social peace, development and the promotion of human rights, particularly concerning women, children and the elderly.*
- (c) Follow closely the activities of the state administration and denounce cases of corruption and nepotism.*¹⁹

Church-based groups

3.58 Church based groups are now reflecting on their future role in an independent East Timor. There were a number of joint church initiatives in relation to development of the constitution. Given their history, mandate and beliefs, church organisations can be expected to continue their involvement in the protection and promotion of human rights, in supporting the development of local communities, and in awareness raising, especially on issues such as HIV/AIDS. The role of a number of Catholic Church organisations has been referred to earlier and demonstrates that these organisations possess many networks extending throughout the country. These networks have the potential to play an important role in information dissemination and in the operation of civic education programmes.

¹⁸ In the current context, 'national' indicates circulation in a significant number of areas, not necessarily distribution throughout East Timor.

¹⁹ National Development Plan, p. 109.

3.59 Other church organisations include *Yayasan Kristen Timor Lorosae* (The Christian Foundation of East Timor YKTL). This has two main types of activities, both focusing on support for children by supporting the family unit. Firstly, they support an income generating-type project that helps family units form self-groups /cooperatives by given them start-up capital. They also work in seven districts with advocacy/training around child rights, mostly working in local communities.

Trade Unions

3.60 A number of industry specific unions have been established during the past couple of years. A nurses union was formed in the middle of 2000 and a Teachers Union in November 2000. The latter has a membership of about 600. Journalists too have organised themselves into an association while agricultural, construction workers, carpenters, hotel and restaurant workers are also organising. There has been some industrial action amongst nurses and restaurant workers around issues of pay and dismissals.

3.61 On 26-27 February 2002 more than 100 delegates and observers attended the first East Timor Labor Congress to launch an East Timor Trade Union Centre (KSTL). Participating unions represented teachers, agricultural workers, nurses, construction workers, carpenters, journalists, restaurant workers, NGO employers, medical doctors and port workers. Recently, elements of the labour movement have been prominent in advocacy on the development of new labour regulations, supported by APHEDA, the Australian trade union NGO.

The evolving space for civil society in East Timor's development

3.62 There is a clear commitment among key players to a place for civil society in nation building, setting priorities and policy development. To date there has been deliberate engagement of civil society through key bodies such as the National Planning Commission and the related National Consultative Commission on Civil Society established to provide input into the process of developing a national development plan. These structures were created in such a way as to enable Government and civil society to interact in the

planning process. Civil society was represented on the Planning Commission, via the Consultative Commission and involved representatives of the church, the NGO Forum, youth, and women's organisations. The National Consultative Commission was led by Xanana Gusmao. Its particular responsibility was to advise on consultative mechanisms and engage the institutional elements of civil society, both traditional and modern, to use their networks to maximise the participation of the East Timorese people in the consultation process around the NDP.

3.63 An extensive, though not necessarily deep process was undertaken as a result. This early provision for strong civil society consultation and ultimately, participation, is encouraging. That said, frequent criticisms indicate that adequate timeframes and support will be required for genuinely effective and informed participation from civil society in policy and program development. This is a message emerging consistently in developed and developing country contexts.

An important element of good government is an openness and willingness to involve civil society. Over the last year, the links between the Transitional Administration and civil society have been progressively strengthened. In March, Cabinet decided on several measures to improve coordination between government and NGOs, which are ongoing. Peak bodies representing civil society organisations are developing not only as a voice for the interests of their constituencies but also as valuable contributors to the formulation of public policy. The recently established Planning Commission...provides an innovative model for how government and civil society can work together. The mechanism of consultative committees that formally engage community leaders with government in policy development and planning could usefully be extended to other areas of the administration.²⁰

²⁰ UNTAET, ETTG and the World Bank, Background Paper for Donors Meeting on East Timor, Oslo, 11-12 December 2001, p.7

Regulatory environment for civil society

3.64 There is as yet no legal framework for the operation of civil society and limited legislation and regulation affecting CSOs. During 2000 and 2001, several discussions and workshops considered the issue of regulation of NGOs and CSOs. A working group involving international NGOs, local NGOs and the first and second East Timorese transitional governments looked at registration and accreditation issues. ETTA also prepared a paper setting out the transitional government's perspective on what should be addressed. UNTAET drafted two regulations on the registration and operation of non-commercial organisations in East Timor. For a range of reasons it was decided not to pursue the UNTAET regulation. Various organisations raised concerns about the proposal to collect information on the number, type and nature of civil society organisations operating in East Timor—they were not clear on why such information was needed or how it would be used. Many ETNGOs though were clear that the issue of registration and regulation should be discussed as part of a broader discussion on NGO-Government relations. There also appeared to be a general desire that such a regulation should be developed in partnership with the government of an independent East Timor rather than with UNTAET / ETTA.

3.65 It is anticipated that some kind of legislation or regulation (or regulations) of CSOs may be developed after independence. The process by which any regulatory framework is developed will be an important early indication of the extent of the government's commitment to participatory processes and partnership with civil society.

3.66 A particularly important element of this discussion will be degree of regulation of NGOs. Decisions for example about what constitutes an NGO will have a significant influence over the development of the sector in the short to medium term. The following quote from ETTA's discussion paper on the issue gives an indication of government thinking.

The term NGO refers to a broad range of organisations, some of them formally constituted and some informal that: are independent of government; humanitarian or cooperative rather

than [shaped] by commercial objectives; work in areas such as social welfare, community development, environment, protection of human rights and cultural development; are not for profit (any funds that are earned must be applied to the purpose of the organisation and may not be distributed to the members of the organisation).

NGOs do not include trade unions, political parties, churches or non profit distributing cooperatives.

There are two fundamentally different types of NGOs: those that are organised and operated primarily for the mutual benefit of a defined group of individuals who are also often the members of the organisation e.g. professional associations; and those that are organised primarily for the benefit of the public."

3.67 From the point of view of the government, registration of NGOs provides a number of benefits:

- It promotes transparency and accountability.
- It helps to protect the public including those providing funds to support the work of NGOs from abuses or fraudulent activities on the part of unscrupulous organisations.
- It increases the confidence of donors to contract organisations as implementing partners, thus strengthening the role of civil society.

3.68 The International Centre for Not for Profit Law has produced a handbook on good practices for laws relating to NGOs based on experiences in many countries. The handbook addresses a range of issues that could provide a basis for further discussion about a regulatory framework appropriate to East Timor. However, as has been said on a number of occasions earlier, NGOs constitute only one small, though important part of the range of civil society organisations which exist in East Timor. Any future regulation must bear this in mind and ensure that excessively onerous requirements are not placed on CSOs that might in turn inhibit their capacity to play their important roles.

4. NATIONAL SNAPSHOT: VILLAGE SURVEY

Introduction

4.1 This section presents the results of a survey at village level conducted throughout East Timor during April 2002. The Village Checklist and Questionnaire was administered in each of the 13 districts with the following numbers of respondents replying in each district:

District	Number of respondents ²¹
Aileu	9 men, 1 woman
Ainaro	3 men
Baucau	12 men
Bobonaro	12 men
Covalima	12 men
Dili	8 men, 4 women
Ermera	19 men, 6 women
Lautem	9 men
Liquica	16 men, 6 women
Manatuto	8 men
Manufahi	5 men, 1 woman
Oe-cusse	9 men
Viqueque	14 men
National total	155 persons (137 men, 18 women)

Implementation of village survey

4.2 Data from the Village Checklist and Questionnaire was collected in a number of ways: interviews were conducted in the village homes of respondents, at the village office of the village head and secretary, and during the CSO district workshops. In a number of cases the Questionnaire form was given to respondents to fill out themselves, either during the CSO district workshops or in their homes and then collected later. Not all interviews were conducted one to one. Some respondents were interviewed in small

groups and some others worked together in groups to fill in the forms. As a result, there are a number of identical or very similar answers to some questions from respondents from the same district.

4.3 Because village respondents often had difficulty understanding the questions as written in Indonesian, Outreach Teams often needed to explain and elaborate as well as sometimes provide vernacular translations of the questions. This inevitably resulted in some loss of standardisation in how questions were presented, so that it may not be possible to determine the extent to which common patterns to answers among respondents from the same district were the result of variations in village conditions between districts or the result of variations in how Outreach Teams explained and elaborated on questions.

Validity and limitations of village data

4.4 Considerable variations in the number of respondents per district (between 3 and 25, average 12) and inevitable variations in how Outreach Teams explained and translated the questions limit the validity of the data for generating district profiles and for making comparisons across districts. However, when amalgamated nationally, the validity of the data is greatly strengthened in terms of randomness and sample population size.

4.5 While it is no doubt useful to identify district-level patterns of community processes in villages, it may be more appropriate to understand variations in the dynamics within village communities in terms of a national kaleidoscope rather than as a discreet set of district profiles. There can be significant differences in community cohesiveness, involvement and collective action between neighbouring villages and even neighbouring hamlets within the same district. Such diversity of experience within districts is reflected in the wide range of responses to village survey questions from respondents from the same district and sub-district.

4.6 Literature on recent East Timor history and particularly on the tumultuous events of 1999

²¹ This is the total of respondents who answered most of the Village Checklist and Questionnaire. Many others who barely answered questions were excluded from this collation.

illustrate that villages have their own history in terms of narratives within their own communities and in relation to national developments.²²

Answers these respondents gave on how they would like to be involved in the future development of East Timor were either in terms of the village or the nation as a whole. They did not refer to their districts as an entity with which their contribution might be identified. While this is not evidence of a lack of district parochialism, in view of the medium-term prospect of there being virtually no district level decentralisation of government, it might suggest that at least for people who live in rural villages, the village and the nation hold more importance as sites of collective identification than do districts.

4.7 Respondents were almost all local community leaders, predominantly village and hamlet heads. A few NGO and CSO people who participated in the CSO district workshops also answered the Village Checklist and Questions. Outreach Teams explained that respondents were nearly all male (137 to 18 women) because local community leaders are predominantly male. Most of the female respondents were leaders of OMT district and sub-district branches.

4.8 Outreach Teams gave several reasons for only interviewing local community leaders for the Village Checklist and Questions. Etiquette demanded that they interview the people who they felt should be informed about what they were doing in their village. (One Outreach Team member said that time constraints meant that his team was unable to observe appropriate etiquette in their interactions with respondents.) And given the level of difficulty of the questions in relation to education levels in rural villages, village and hamlet heads were seen to be the most able to understand the questions and best placed to provide the answers. Even then,

²² On how the events of 1999 impacted on specific villages within districts see for example John Martinkus, *A Dirty Little War* (Sydney: Random House, 2001); Helene van Klinken, "Taking the Risk, Paying the Price: East Timorese Vote in Ermera", *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 32, 2000, pp. 27-34; and Peter Bartu, "The Militia, the Military and the People of Bobonaro District", *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Vol. 32, 2000, pp. 35-42.

elaboration and vernacular translation was often required.

4.9 That the respondents are generally people of local influence sharpens the focus of the survey as a considerable sample of views from the top of village society across all 13 districts, albeit predominantly male views. Their responses about decision-making processes and community involvement in village affairs vary considerably. This may indicate a diversity of perceptions and values as well as varying socio-political circumstances in the public life of their villages. As key mediators between the collective organisation and activity of village society and those of the state and other agencies beyond the village, their views are of considerable significance in terms of the current state of civil society in East Timor.

Civil society organisations in villages (155 respondents)

4.10 The table below is the national aggregation of data on types of organisations existing in villages as provided by 155 respondents who completed Question 1 of the Village Checklist and Questionnaire. Not all respondents provided additional information beyond ticking whether or not these types of groups were present in their villages. The amount of additional information provided varied greatly, with a few respondents describing activities or providing names of organisations, how they were organised or convened and also noting whether they were active and if not why.

4.11 Additional information usually consisted of the names of organisations or groups where these are formal organisations with an identity separate from or in addition to the activities they perform. Otherwise, the function of the "group" or the type of activities they engage in was described, indicating that respondents are not referring to organisations, groups or clubs designated by name. Rather they describe collective activities where community members in varying numbers come together to perform particular tasks, to celebrate particular occasions or to participate in particular events. These types of activities are organized as much by precedence as by committee, with some respondents noting that certain leaders, most often village heads, would organize or coordinate some activities, particularly community self-help tasks.

4.12 While many responses indicate a high level of village self-reliance through collective self-help efforts, a lack of funding and facilities was the most common reason given for why organisations or collective activities were not active. Indeed one respondent suggested that traditional dance was no longer practiced in their village because there was no funding for it! It is difficult to access to what extent this sort of explanation reflects an erosion of

voluntarism in community life or whether, as was suggested by a couple of Outreach Teams, it expresses an assumption that responses to our questionnaires in this survey constituted some sort of funding opportunity. In addition to finance and facilities, absence of leadership, skills and organizing initiative were given as reasons for groups becoming inactive.

National snapshot of the types of civil society organisations existing in the villages

Type of Group	Number		Additional Information, given by respondents
	Yes	No	
Self help or support Groups	30	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mutual assistance groups Help at funerals and weddings Orphans groups Informal arrangements between individuals Philanthropy group for youth Groups sharing farming equipment Saving groups Widows assistant groups
Groups involved with producing traditional dance art or craft	41	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handcrafts: tais, carving, pottery Traditional dance Poetry Traditional Marching Music Lakado group Buibere [women's] group
Church or other religious groups	42	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catholic Youth (Foksa/Mudika/PMK) Catholic Scouts Aquilites Catechists Oratorio THS-THM (Catholic martial arts) Canossian (community service) Protestants Charismatics Muslims Buddhists Animists
Charity Groups	15	30	Church-based organisations
Hobby group	29	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spiritual singing Composer groups Choirs
Sports group	39	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Football Volley ball Basket ball Table tennis Martial arts: Indonesian and Timorese forms and Kungfu, Karate, Takwondo

Group formed to address a local problem or need	24	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water user groups Community construction activities Public hygiene activities Village clean up activities Road repair activities Refugee assistant activities
School-related group	19	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kindergarten groups School course groups School expenses organisations
Ethnic or group	28	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council of Elders
Women's group	55	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OMT OMPT Biata Joana group Kustura Handicraft Groups Allotment Sewing circles Catholic women Rate Laek victims support group (Liquisa)
Cooperatives	3	41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumer coops, farmers marketing coops
Political party	42	7	Various political parties
Professional group or trade union	16	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carpenters and Stoneworkers Farmers Construction Fishing Coffee growers
Other groups			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy circles Youth organisations Ojetil, OJT

4.13 By far the most frequently mentioned organisation with a presence in villages in this data is the national women's organisation OMT, followed by Catholic Youth (Foska/Mudika). The most popular team sports are football and volleyball for which there is often a lack of equipment. A few respondents mentioned sports being organized in competitions. There seem to be a lot of branches of martial arts clubs in the villages surveyed.

Views of Village and Local Community Leaders (155 respondents)

4.14 The following section reports the nationally aggregated findings from the Village Checklist and Questionnaire.

On links between organisations in villages (92 responses)

4.15 56% of the respondents indicated good and harmonious cooperation and coordination of activities among the various organisations active in their villages. Of these positive responses, 15% referred to discussions and exchanges of ideas among organisations. Another 15% highlighted cooperation with the church and the activities of local church groups. 5% described organisational links as being informal and between friends²³ whereas another 3% said that they consider it their

²³ Indeed it seems likely that informal ties and personal acquaintance is the primary medium of links between organisations in village society.

responsibility as village leaders to participate in all organisations present in their village.²⁴

4.16 25% of responses focused on links between organisations being activated if a conflict or dispute arises between the organisations concerned²⁵. The close informal contacts between people belonging to different organisations was implied by a respondent who noted that contact with other organisations is unavoidable whether or not they are in conflict. So presumably the links activated between organisations here refer to liaison between leaders and influential members of organisations to resolve the conflict or issue that has arisen between their organisations.²⁶ In some of these cases respondents referred to liaising with neighbouring village leaders to resolve conflicts between their villages.

²⁴ Outreach Teams reported that village heads generally consider they have such a responsibility. If the practice of village heads extending their patronage to CSOs is indeed widespread, then the role of village heads as mediators to relations with village community groups with whom agencies from outside the village need to deal becomes all the more pivotal. This may make poverty-alleviation measures directed towards particular groups in village communities all the more complicated, whatever else such personal/official patronage of village heads means for the autonomy of CSO activity in the village sphere.

²⁵ Nearly half of the responses of this type (11) were from the 15 respondents in Aileu, Ainaro and Manufahi who were interviewed by the same Outreach Team. Few respondents mentioned the role of organisations in a subsequent question on resolving conflicts and disputes in villages. While only one respondent explicitly identified political parties as the source of inter-organisational conflict there were quite a few concerns about political issues and references to rumours of threatening forces in response to other questions. It seems likely that tensions between political parties or groups, party-affiliated organisations, or people belonging to CSOs and identified with political parties or groups may have been implied but unstated in many responses focusing on inter-organisational conflict.

4.17 20% of respondents, half of them from Ermera, answered that there were no links between organisations in their villages.

On dealing with community problems such as storm damage to public facilities (115 responses)²⁷

4.18 Around 75% of responses focused on disaster relief and reconstruction referred to village self-help and mutual assistance initiatives. Of these around half only mentioned community self-reliance measures. The other half of these responses foregrounding village self-reliance are divided evenly between those who qualified community self-reliance as being "according to our capacities" and those who explicitly stated that in addition to community self-help they would report the extent of the problem to government and seek its assistance. (One respondent each would seek assistance from NGOs, the church and the PKF respectively.)

4.19 11% of respondents focused on the role of village leaders in addressing the problem without explaining how, while another 12% would investigate the problem and report to government for assistance. (Again one would report to an NGO).

4.20 Overall there is a spectrum weighted at the end of community self-reliance and initiative, a mix of local labour and requests for outside material assistance in the middle, tailing off to simply reporting to government for it to solve the problem. (Of these one complained that the requested assistance never arrives.)

On dealing with legal disputes (125 responses)

4.21 Only 10% of respondents said they would simply refer the matter to the police /judiciary

²⁷ Although the question gave an example of storm damage to a community building, only about 80 respondents addressed the question in these terms. While the distinction is not always clear, the remainder answered in terms of problems with social causes. These have not been included here as their responses are similar to those concerning legal disputes or other conflicts between community members in the following question.

/government, indicating a high level of local responsibility for civil dispute resolution.

4.22 47% only mentioned local procedures for resolving such disputes. A little over half of these primarily referred to hamlet and/or village heads with many also including traditional elders as authorities competent to hear disputes. The remainder (just under half) foregrounded to role of local custom or traditional elders with a few citing "the family principle". Many of these also mentioned hamlet and village heads as being involved in hearing disputes. Together these two overlapping patterns of responses indicate two levels of local administration playing roles in conflict resolution, the hamlet and the village, with traditional elders forming another stream of authority adjacent to the hamlet/village hierarchy. Interestingly respondents are divided fairly evenly between those who foreground the local administrative structures of hamlet and village and those who highlight the role of traditional sphere in resolving disputes between community members.

4.23 Around 40% mentioned roles of both local (hamlet and / or village) and government authorities in resolving disputes. Half of these said minor matters are handled in the hamlet or village but criminal cases are handed over to the police. (Several referred to the need to classify the case to determine how it should be settled.) Overlapping these references to the police, the other half said that if the matter cannot be handled by hamlet and village authorities it is submitted to higher levels of administration (sub-district and district, which would mean the police in criminal cases.)

4.24 In several other responses, from Ermera and Liquica, this question evoked references to the presence of militia, and another from Covalima to pressure for people with grievances to keep quiet "or else be terrorised by political parties or the *Isolado* [a dissident 'Falintil' group]."

On village leaders facilitating community access to district administration (117 responses)

4.25 16% gave "no" responses. Only two of these gave explanations, viz. because of transport and communication difficulties and "There has been no village administration here for almost 3 years."

Another 13% simply answered "yes" or implied "I have done this."

4.26 71% of respondents specified channels or procedures for putting community members in contact with the district administration. From these responses the village office (village head and secretary) is the main point of mediation, with the sub-district office is also mentioned in more than one in three explanations. Nearly a third also mentioned traditional elders and hamlet heads as also facilitating such contact. The frequency of specific channels for citizens to contact the district administration is as follows:

- 5% via traditional elders/local leaders
- 6% via traditional elders and village head
- 5% via hamlet head
- 11% via hamlet and village heads
- 29% via village head and/or secretary
- 35% via village head/secretary, via sub-district office
- 4% via village head direct to district (by letter or phone)
- 1% via local "security authorities"
- 3% via our organisation
- 1% delegate one person to attend meeting

On making decisions on important issues affecting everyone²⁸

4.27 Of those who interpreted the question as intended, 87% said a community meeting is held to deliberate the issue and reach a consensus. In no cases was voting mentioned as a mechanism for reaching decisions in community meetings. Some explained that consensus about the issue precedes the decision while others said that the decision and consensual agreement would be binding on everyone. This suggests that participatory democracy is very prevalent in village society.²⁹

²⁸ The question in Indonesian translation is ambiguous. Roughly half (55) interpreted the question as it was intended. The remainder responded in terms of handling disturbing rumours that cause apprehension and fear among the community.

²⁹ These responses are mainly from hamlet and village leaders. It would be interesting to put this question to "ordinary villagers" for comparison.

4.28 Of the remaining 13% (6 respondents) one remarked that community involvement in decision-making has greatly diminished since the end of the [independence] struggle, while another claimed the reverse.

4.29 The four others that did not mention community meetings focused on the decision-making role of community leaders, one noting that the village head is still dominant. Two from Covalima were unhappy with how things get decided in their villages, one complaining that village leaders exert influence on community members through inequitable allocations of aid resources, the other that community members just goes along with whatever is decided out of fear.

On responding to disturbing rumours in the community

4.30 Around 35 respondents referred to how disturbing rumours are handled in the village while a similar number said there were no rumours or negative issues in their villages. Obviously the spreading of disturbing rumours and their content are taken very seriously. A village head in Oecusse explained: "To maintain stability in the village it is most important that the community are not influenced by rumours/issues intended to disturb village stability."³⁰ Another said, "We don't want other people politically influencing us".³¹ In many of

³⁰ Such answers illustrate the insecurities faced by traumatized communities for whom sources of information about local affairs are overwhelmingly word of mouth. However they also echo the counter-insurgency discourse of the Indonesian military. In this tradition, leaders can easily make the claim that issues of community concern, particularly when raised in association with people or agencies from outside the village, are the work of possibly subversive troublemakers.

³¹ Presumably this means all non-locals and expresses an apparently widespread suspicion and nervousness in villages about politics and politicians. That the word 'influence' has negative connotations in many of these responses has implications for advocacy strategies of CSOs in village contexts. While 'influence' wins few friends among these village respondents, one managed a positive spin with "Its okay to influence people as long as it is done constructively."

these types of responses the causes or agents of rumour/discord seem to be in or near the village.

4.31 Many responses indicated the need for prompt action before matters get out of hand. 23% (all but one from Ermera) said the rumor/issue is investigated and analysed before action is taken. Another 20% said community members report such matters to community leaders, while 8% said it is reported to the police. One respondent said the community would arrest the offender.

4.32 Three from Liquica simply noted that the *Besi Merah Putih* militia were in the vicinity and another from the same district said it is rumoured that group(s) have been formed to wreck havoc. One from Baucau said that developments of a political nature sometimes worry the community. However three others said their community takes no notice of rumours.

On Community Participation in Village Development

On how local people have been involved in developing community facilities (120 responses)

4.33 59% of respondents cited community self-help without mentioning project assistance. These community self-help activities are task-based collective efforts usually without payment.³² Some added the need for guidance and coordination, with one combining collective community effort with "awareness raising". 5% said the community held planning discussions about developing such facilities. 3% said only part of the community was directly involved, such as a working group or parents in the case of a school.

³² In contrast to these portraits of community self-help and self-reliance from village leaders, in the CSO survey several NGOs involved in service delivery to village communities complained that village beneficiaries often perceive their programs as 'projects' from which they also should be rewarded. (The Indonesian term 'proyek' has acquired the negative connotation of 'cash cow project.')

While not referred to in this survey it is also often claimed that the World Bank 'three dollar' a day wage payments for community work such as for village road repairs have eroded the voluntarism of much task-based community self-help activities.

4.34 11% referred to a mix of local labour and external support, of which 40% said or implied that local labour was paid from project funding. Half of these these insisted that projects must be transparent with clear work agreements.

4.35 3% focused on the role of agencies beyond the village: international agencies, the church and NGOs respectively.

4.36 30% indicated little or no local involvement. A third of these said locals should or want to be involved, which probably means they haven't been to date. Another quarter of negative responses said projects from UNICEF or NGOs do not involve locals. One said: "If there were no NGO to assist, then the community would actively participate". Others said people were too busy to be seriously committed, another that the community only monitors project implementation. One from Dili said facilities such as schools were built by the government. Another said no projects have come to the village.

On how the community is involved in planning village development projects (119 responses)

4.37 57% of respondents describe very inclusive community involvement in local planning processes. Of these about three-quarters indicate bottom-up planning processes with deliberations beginning in the community. A few refer vaguely to co-operation and participation but most refer to community meetings to deliberate plans through consensus or to elicit community suggestions. (Only one mentions the CEP Concelho du Suco in this process.) Six respondents specify community involvement in planning community self-help activities. Another 15 specify meetings at both hamlet and village level, of which 9 add that the plan is then submitted to the sub-district. Two complain that the government never responds to their plans.³³

4.38 9% of all respondents see planning as initiated and coordinated among village leaders, almost all of them saying they consult and seek

feedback from the community about their planning proposals.

4.39 Two others said that it is only the sub-district coordinator who consults the community on planning matters. Two saw NGOs or organisations as playing the primary role in planning village projects. Four responded in terms of Planning Commission consultation.

4.40 34% of responses indicated little or no community involvement in planning. A third of these said the community should or wants to be involved, which seems to imply they haven't been yet. The few additional comments provided are that the sub-district coordinator does not even consult the village head on planning, that the community is only involved in the impact of plans, and that there is a lack of trust between community and government. Only one respondent rejected the idea of community involvement in planning, saying planning is the government's job.

4.41 In all some two thirds of respondents say the village community is involved in planning and half of these describe extensive community input from the bottom up. Perhaps this is something of a leading question, and as in Question 6(c), given the current prevalence of discourse on community participation and involvement in planning processes, village heads and other leaders may have overstated the extent to which they initiate such processes in their villages. Nevertheless, many of these responses are sufficiently specific and descriptive to be taken seriously and investigated further. While participatory decision-making processes might not yet be standard practice, they seem to have become the standard by which village governance is measured by village leaders themselves.

On involvement in the future development of East Timor (99 responses)

4.42 There were a great variety of responses, most speaking in terms of their own participation rather than that of an organisation. Those who simply listed their development priorities have been excluded.

³³ Perhaps these are proposals involving requests for funding.

30% explicitly focused on involvement in local community development as follows:

- 9% by promoting community self-help work, of which added they would do this through community organisations.
- 6% through bottom-up, grassroots development
- 4% through advancing village prosperity
- 4% through meeting basic needs
- 2% by forming community groups

29% focused on relationships with supra-village agencies:

- 11% through cooperation with government
- 6% through their organisations
- 1% by conveying community aspirations to government
- 4% through cooperation with NGOs and CSOs
- 5% stated government needs to involve communities
- 1% stated NGOs need to involve communities

Other aspirations of involvement:

- 16% through active participation, some adding patriotic comments about nation building
- 5% from planning through to implementation
- 1% by promoting peace and reconciliation
- 2% by promoting good management
- 2% through educating children

8% stated they need to increase their capacities first

Concluding remarks

4.43 The Village Checklist and Questionnaire data shows that a great deal of village life is experienced and organized collectively, where the public sphere between kin and state occupies a much larger space than it does in the few urban communities of East Timor. Much collective activity in villages is conducted informally around specific tasks and through personalized ties of mutuality and reciprocity rather than through formal organisational structures, functions, roles and membership, although these latter forms of modern civic organisation are also common.

4.44 Initiatives to promote civic participation in village communities need to take account of the informality and immediacy of public life in village society, where organized formalities may not reflect how decisions on issues affecting the community at large are actually arrived at. For example, customary forms of authority and collective imagination seem to be no less influential for their lack of modern organisational development.

5. NATIONAL SNAPSHOT: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Introduction

5.1 In April 2002 members of CSOs filled in the CSO Questionnaire during one-day district workshops where they also completed a SWOT Analysis for their organisation. There were comparatively few women who participated in the CSO workshops. Where more than one member of the same local branch of an organisation participated in the workshop, their questionnaire responses were compared then combined and treated as one, whereas members of different local branches of the same organisation were counted separately. People who were not members of CSOs also participated in these workshops and their responses have not been collated for this report. In addition to a majority of these non-CSO

respondents, quite a few CSO respondents did not complete more than the first page of the 10 page, 36 question questionnaire and these were also set aside. Those who did complete most of the questions often provided little information in their answers.

5.2 Nevertheless, many questionnaires were answered thoroughly and articulately, indicating that many members of CSOs are comparatively well educated and can be assumed to make up a significant proportion of the numerically small intelligentsia of district towns and villages. When combined as an amalgamated sample of CSOs from around the country, these questionnaires provide a great deal of useful information on CSOs from a good mix of East Timorese CSOs.

5.3 While the CSO workshops were held in all 13 districts there was only time to collate the CSO questionnaire data for eight districts, with numbers of CSOs represented from these districts as follows:

District	Number of CSOs
Aileu	10 organisations
Baucau	10 organisations
Covalima	18 organisations
Dili	24 organisations
Lautem	20 organisations
Liquica	11 organisations
Manatuto	8 organisations
Oe-cusse	20 organisations
Total	121 organisations

5.4 The actual number of organisations is something less than 121 because different local branches of the same organisation, even within the same district, were treated as different organisations, given considerable differences in the history and activities of local branches of the same national network.

Quantitative data

5.5 Data from Questions 1 to 15 have been quantified as follows:

Area of operation

Level	Village	Sub district	District	National
Number of groups	39	22	40	29

5.6 National-level organisations refer to local branches at village, subdistrict or district level of organisations or networks with an office in Dili and branches in several or all districts. While organisations such as the national women's organisations OMT and OPMT have extensive networks across the country, many others classified here as national-level organisations may aspire to how a nationwide presence but as yet only have branches in a couple of districts, while several well-established East Timorese NGOs have branches in four or five districts.

5.7 The large number of groups organized at district level suggests that district towns are important hubs of CSO activity with active local intelligentsia. The large number of organisations organized at village level tells us that grassroots CBOs are well represented in this sample.

Year of organisation's establishment

1979	1980	1981	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
1	3	1	1	5	1	2	5	9	9	22	20	2

5.8 Not surprisingly, a great many CSOs from this survey have been formed during the transitional administration. Although only two organisations included here were formed during the first four months of 2002 it is too early to say whether the proliferation of CSOs, and particularly NGOs, over the last two and a half years is beginning to subside.

The average age of the people involved in the group

Age	10-15	15-20	20-30	30-40	40-50	50-60	Over 60
No. of groups	19	52	92	59	23	14	9

5.9 The CSOs surveyed constitute a relatively youthful population with large numbers of teenagers in youth organisations and school and recreational clubs, and the greatest numbers of members from these organisations overall being in their 20s.

Proportion of women and men in the group

Proportion of women /men	No of Groups
All men	12
Most men	55
50/50	12
Most Women	15
All women	19

5.10 The many organisations made up entirely or predominantly of men suggests something of a sexual division of labour in CSOs whose activities are unlikely to be explicitly directed towards men only. The 19 organisations and groups that are made up entirely of women are most likely all women's organisations, including several district and local organisations as well as several local branches of the national women's organisation OMT and more rarely of OPMT. It is unclear from this collation whether organisations with

majority female memberships are also explicitly women's organisations.

5.11 This data indicates that the proportion of women holding decision-making positions in these organisations roughly correlates with female proportions of overall membership above. However it is noteworthy that the participants who represented their CSOs in the district workshops as respondents for this data were overwhelmingly men.

No of decision making positions	No. of Groups
Less than one quarter	45
Between one quarter and half	32
Between half and three quarters	10
More than three quarters	24

The number of members in the organisation

Members	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-40	40 +	100+	200 +
No. of groups	14	25	14	18	8	13	7	2

5.12 That 40% of these organisations have no more than 10 members and 70% have no more than 20 members indicates that many probably operate fairly informally in terms of structure and governance. Many respondents gave the same number of people for members of the organisation as for members of the board, suggesting either that they were unclear of the difference, or that in practice all members participate directly in governance of the organisation, which in the case of small organisations is likely to be fairly informal.

No of members on the board	No of Groups
3	16
5	9
6	10
9	6
20+	11

8.13 Newly formed and as yet unfunded organisations that are seeking to establish programs and activities usually need to supply a list of their office holders in funding applications. In such cases these positions may be nominal rather than operational. Those respondents who wrote that their organisation had twenty or more members of the board probably did not understand the question and in many cases their number of board members

was the same as their number of ordinary members of their organisation.

Specific positions on the board

5.14 President, Secretary and Treasurer are the main board positions listed. Other board positions mentioned included program or departmental heads, public relations and advisors. (In many cases founders of organisations, who often seem to be well-connected patrons, may not be much involved in governance.) Branch member respondents may have been unclear of organisational structure, although two respondents mentioned the national presidium of their national office. Some local church group branches that have national networks, such as Catholic Youth and Catholic Scouts, referred to advisory and oversight roles of their parish priest.

Position on the board	No of organisations
President	18
Secretary	18
Treasurer	18
Others	10

Balance of paid and unpaid staff/volunteers

Paid or unpaid	No of groups
All paid	24
All volunteers	72
Mixed	14

5.15 This data confirms a widely shared assumption that the vast majority of CSOs, including NGOs, have unsalaried staff, although they probably receive payment from project funds as available.

Types of organisations

Types of Groups	No. of Groups
Faith Based groups	15
Indigenous community based groups	7
Ethnic/traditional organisations	13
Political party	1
Employment related	16
Professional association trade association	11
Cooperatives	14
Student organisation/Youth organisation	16
Recreation/cultural organisation	17
Advocacy organisation	9
Capacity building	45
Other	10

8.16 Many respondents either did not tick any of these organisational types or ticked several. Around one third of respondents (45) ticked 'Capacity building' as well as one or more other categories, indicating a high level of identification with education and training roles among CSOs.

Purpose, goals and activities of groups

5.17 Many respondents indicated that their organisation, often small and underresourced, is nevertheless involved in a wide range of activities. The large number of organisations involved in non-formal education, particularly when combined with considerable numbers involved in civic education and health education, indicates that CSOs are key providers of adult and community education and training in a variety of fields.

Purpose, goals and activities	No of Groups	Examples
Formal Education	16	Pre primary and primary education material distribution
Non formal Education	56	Literacy, pre school, computers, languages environmental health (usually put under 'Health' below)
Civic education	29	Education around democracy, right, participation, decision making
Health	27	Health educ, environ health, nutrition, water supply
Agricultural activities	38	Livestock fisheries crops, land issue terracing, community development
Advocacy	18	Various
Human Rights	30	Women's and children's rights, right to work
Others		Sport, martial arts, music

5.18 That many organisations report that they are involved in a great variety of fields suggests a lack of focus and direction. However such variety of involvements may be an outcome of the circumstances of their personnel and a logical response to the environment in which they operate. It seems that NGO and CSO personnel are flexible

generalists rather than technical specialists. This is no doubt a result of their prior education and work experience, plus the predominantly non-specialist NGO training programs many have had access to since 1999. This generalist flexibility is also no doubt a product of the high levels of adaptability demanded by radically changed and changing

circumstances in the past few years. As adaptable generalists CSO personnel are well placed to mediate and translate a variety of relations between local communities and outside institutions and initiatives.

5.19 It needs to be recognised that the lack of focus implied by a wide diversity of activities is problematic in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. On the other hand, the wider institutional and historical context in which CSOs have been operating over the past two years may have encouraged organisations not to limit their activities to one or two fields. New NGOs that strive to get established in an environment marked by short-term project funding and changing donor specifications may be inclined to adapt planned programs and activities to fit current funding opportunities.

5.20 For district and locally based organisations, a flexible and wide-ranging approach to the sorts of activities they get involved in may indicate that they seek to broker a range of relationships between their local communities and various outside institutions and agencies. Where organisations are based in or close to the communities they work with it may be easier to do this than if they occasionally visit target communities from Dili.

Responses to Qualitative Questions

CSO relationships with client/member communities

Identifying community needs and aspirations

5.21 How respondents said they gather information about the needs and aspirations of their client communities or members seems to depend more on organisational type and purpose than level of institutional development and program procedures.

5.22 More than half the respondents reported some sort of consultation with target groups and communities about their needs. In most cases this seems to take the form of discussions and meetings with community groups and/or leaders rather than formal surveys. A few organisations reported close collaboration and joint decision-making with client groups. Faith-based groups use

their organisational and church networks to gather information on community needs. Some groups use more informal networks or discussions among friends to gather such information on community conditions.

5.23 Members of locally based organisations or branches of national organisations may feel they already know the needs and aspirations of the communities in which they live. Several respondents simply state that the needs they seek to respond to are real. This is not surprising given the close proximity of local members of such organisations to their 'target communities'. Their "frequent contact and attention to community concerns", as one respondent put it, may make formalized needs analyses seem unnecessary, even for those who have the skills and training to implement them.

5.24 'Activist' respondents may be more inclined towards "consciousness raising", such as in the case of one district youth organisation, or investigation of particular issues, as in the case of advocacy and local newspaper groups. Others said they wait to respond to specific complaints or requests for assistance, such as those involved in casework on domestic violence.

5.25 Some of the organisations surveyed do not see themselves as community service organisations. They primarily serve the needs of their own members according to predetermined organisational codes, such as in martial arts clubs, Catholic scouts and perhaps to a lesser extent extra-curricula high school clubs. Or like a local music group they may 'do their own thing'. The various cooperatives or collective small business efforts primarily serve the income generation needs of their own members. These groups focused on meeting the livelihood needs of their members described their community involvement in terms of accepting new members (creating jobs) or in terms of the market for their products and services.

Evaluating programs/activities

5.26 There were twice as many organisations that reported undertaking some sort of information gathering about community needs and aspirations compared to those saying they undertake periodic

or ongoing monitoring or consultation with clients/members in evaluating their programs and activities. These evaluations such as reported seem to be typically informal, based upon ongoing observation of participant attitudes and responses. Only one or two said they conduct post-activity evaluations. Quite a few simply reported that the groups they serve are satisfied.

Promoting community participation

5.27 Sustaining community participation was often seen to follow from meeting community needs and aspirations, which was mainly inferred from attitudes and responses of client groups, particularly by their attendance at group activities and meetings (i.e. sustained participation.) Interestingly, two respondents from church groups did not regard community responsiveness as relevant in evaluating their activities. Indeed they expressed an aversion to evaluating levels of active participation in view of their mission of non-discriminatory service to anyone who might wish to participate.

5.28 One respondent saw providing ongoing, concrete and participative programs as the key to community participation, while several others suggested beneficiaries are responsible for their own participation and work programs. Perhaps these answers overlap with several respondents who referred to problems with community perceptions of their programs, including expectations that community groups be paid to perform activities. One said communities view their organisation's programs as 'projects' [opportunities to get money], thus reinforcing dependence.

5.29 A respondent from an income generation group referred to the necessity to earn a living as guaranteeing active participation in their activities.

Finances

Funding sources

5.30 Roughly half the organisations surveyed in Lautem, Baucau and Oe-cusse receive donor funding, compared with a third or less in other districts. Other sources include the Church and support from the local community. Church-based

organisations and recreational clubs do not seem to consider seeking donor funding but many of these groups do expect financial and material support from government.

5.31 Income generating activities include sale of their produce or products (vegetables, sewing, tais, soap and furniture) or charging fees for services (cycle and motorbike repair, training courses). Some are at least partly funded by their own members (although very few say their organisations have membership fees). Quite a number as yet have no funds and are currently seeking donor support. One reports to be purely voluntary (a local women's trauma counselling group).

5.32 Many plan to continue to receive or seek donor funding and quite a few hope to receive government funding in the future. Considerably more than are currently doing so are hoping to set up income generating activities, although whether as a source of organisational funding or as income for members is unclear. One mentions a plan to set up a cooperative and another to facilitate micro-finance for clients to make them financially self-sufficient. Some hope to expand their operations and many hope to develop their resources or improve product quality and marketing.

Financial reporting

5.33 Few details are given about the types of financial reports prepared, responses dealing mainly with frequency. Reports are most often monthly and quarterly with very few annual reports. Perhaps many of these are oral reports. For example, one respondent explained that the branch treasurer reports on finances to local members of their organisation in a monthly meeting.

5.34 Many respondents said their organisations do not prepare financial reports. Only one indicated why--their people are illiterate and proceeds from the sale of the group's produce are immediately dispersed to members. Many others imply that financial reporting is a donor requirement rather than an internal organisational procedure--more or less 'no donor, no funds to report'. However, one

organisation which said it is funded by three donors also said it does not prepare financial reports.³⁴

Financial oversight

5.35 Many respondents did not answer this question. This probably indicates they were not familiar with the issue, whether because there are no formalized procedures of financial oversight or the respondents are not familiar with their organisation's procedures. Among those who did respond, the number of board members involved in financial oversight ranges from one (it is not clear whether this is the person who manages the finances or someone else providing oversight) to more people than a governing board is likely to have. In many cases all the organisation's members seem to be involved in financial oversight and perhaps this refers to treasurers orally reporting on finances at organisation meetings.³⁵

Relationships

Collaboration with other local CSOs

5.36 Most respondents reported good cooperation in very general terms with other CSOs.³⁶ Examples include sharing of information and ideas and discussions on specific issues, coordination of activities and less frequently, sharing of facilities and personnel, for example in offices and training.

³⁴ With no banks outside Dili, few auditing companies in East Timor and respondents citing deficits in management and other skills lacking within their organisations, financial reporting and oversight is an important challenge for CSOs in East Timor.

³⁵ Many of the organisations and groups surveyed only have a handful of members, where the number of people given for the 'board' is often the same as the number of members in the organisation.

³⁶ 'CSOs' was translated as 'civil society groups' and many respondents referred to their client or beneficiary groups in answers to this question. Others seemed to refer to the local community in general, reflecting a common tendency to equate 'civil society' with the community in general.

Several examples of shared implementation of programs and community activities indicate that some organisations work in partnership in some fields. There was also one mention of coordination to avoid overlapping and duplication of service provision.

5.37 There were few negative responses and no details were provided in such cases. It is interesting that there were no complaints about competition between organisations or comments about organisations not sharing information about funding and program opportunities, since these issues were identified by some of the Outreach Teams as a significant weakness in NGO networks.³⁷

Partnerships with international agencies, INGOs and donors³⁸

5.38 Most organisations surveyed indicated that they do not have partnerships with international agencies or INGOs although many are seeking and hoping to form working relations with international agencies. Those organisations that have formed such partnerships commonly work with two or three agencies.³⁹ Many reported having close working relations with their donors or that the relationship is new and still developing but greater numbers indicated that links were still formal and focused around funding applications.

5.39 Again church groups as well as recreational and high school student clubs are not oriented

³⁷ Perhaps the process of filling in the questionnaire in small groups with other local CSOs encouraged some diplomatic responses to this question.

³⁸ Many respondents in this and the Village Questionnaire seem to identify all international organisations--UN agencies, INGOs and bilateral development agencies--under one category, either as 'NGOs' or 'donors'. Indeed Outreach Teams reported that many respondents initially perceived this survey exercise as an opportunity to seek funding from a donor. This may have led some CSO respondents to foreground their lack of funding and facilities.

³⁹ This probably indicates that such organisations are more established, but it is no doubt easier to form working relations with international institutions once the threshold of one such link has been realized.

towards seeking such partnerships and respondents from local branches of national women's and youth organisations may not be aware of international links mediated through their national offices. Respondents from a high school student club and a youth group are interested in developing links with universities and students for conducting field research.

5.40 Opportunities for greater cooperation with international agencies and donors sought by respondents frequently include provision of funding and sometimes particular types of equipment, technical/expert support in management, finance and service delivery, in-house training and ongoing program support generally. Desires for financial oversight and long-term funding were also mentioned. In contrast, several respondents, all from Dili, would prefer that donors provide the funding and leave implementation in the field to their organisation.

5.41 While many respondents indicated they already worked closely with donors, desires for close working relations on an equal footing with implementing partners were also frequently expressed in terms of openness and transparency, sharing of ideas, mutual assistance and donor adaptation to and understanding of local conditions. Many respondents would also value greater opportunities for direct face-to-face contact.

Relations with government

5.42 Contacts with sub-district and district administration seem to vary considerably among CSOs within and between districts. Some Dili respondents mentioned contacts with national-level administration. Fewer respondents reported contacts with the section of the administration related to their areas of operation. Some respondents reported no contacts and those with contacts seldom provided details. Those that did range from minimal notification of their activities to rare cases, mainly from Lospalos, of close cooperation, coordination and even joint implementation of programs.

5.43 Attitudes towards district administrations varied from generally unsympathetic perceptions of government as remote, inactive and unresponsive,

particularly from respondents in Covalima, to quite positive views, notably in Lautem. Regardless of how district transitional administration is regarded, respondents in all districts have high expectations of government support for CSOs. Indeed they describe their hopes for greater cooperation with government in precisely the same terms as their hopes for greater cooperation with international agencies and donors outlined above. Several add the need for government attention to grassroots issues and community needs, with occasional references to government recognition or official status and maintaining a sphere of independent operation. Those organisations including church groups that are not oriented to seeking support from donors and international agencies expect the district administration to assist them.⁴⁰

Relations with local community and traditional leaders

5.44 This question was almost always answered, indicating that CSOs see local community and traditional leaders as key mediators or brokers of their relations with the community groups and clients they work with. While views of district administration were often less than sympathetic, those few respondents who made negative remarks about community leaders were careful to be diplomatic or qualify their criticisms. These qualified remarks include the importance of observing local custom while still keeping up with modern developments, the need to be unbiased, and the importance of keeping to agreements that have already been reached. However such comments are rare as almost all respondents report good cooperation with local leaders. Good relations are variously described in terms of coordination of and occasional participation in CSO activities, respect for or identification with local custom, mutual consultation and harmonious or respectful dialogue.

Mass media and public relations

5.45 Most respondents expressed very positive regard for the media and many noted its importance. The few criticisms offered concerned a

⁴⁰ Such expectations of government assistance may be difficult to fulfil in terms of current national planning frameworks.

lack of media coverage of CSO activities, or of issues facing civil society or of grassroots issues in village communities. Others remarked about too much focus on elite politics and leaders, limited circulation and a lack of political independence.

5.46 Use of the media in public relations seems quite limited with many respondents saying they have not yet had media coverage of their organisations and activities. Those that had commonly include media coverage of special events such as ceremonies to hand over project equipment. Music groups referred to public performances at election campaign rallies. Some respondents have been sources for media stories, with one reporting close relations with local journalists. Two respondents were from local weekly newspapers.

Challenges

5.47 Challenges or difficulties were nearly always described in terms of lack with very little variation between districts. Problems and areas identified as lacking are ranked below from the most frequently mentioned area to the least.

Funding;
Facilities, particularly transport and communication;
Equipment, machinery and fuel;
Skills in management, administration and specific technical skills;
Information;
Confidence;
Community understanding of programs;
Training;
Marketing of produce;
Government support.

The follow problems or insufficiencies were only mentioned once:

English language; Uncertainty of land tenure;
Lack of transparency of INGOs/international agencies; Work ethic; Small business liquidity;
Uneven distribution of assistance causing social tension and envy; No organisational constitution

Training

5.48 Respondents have participated in a wide range of training courses in the 12 months prior to answering these questions. There was great variation within and between districts as to the number of courses any single respondent had attended during the previous 12 months. While the average is slightly more than one course or workshop attended per participant, many did not access any training. Respondents from all types of organisations were aggregated together but during collation of the data it was quite apparent that respondents from NGOs generally accessed more training opportunities than those from non-NGO and local community CSOs. Therefore ways need to be found to deliver greater training opportunities to people from these latter groups, particularly for those living outside district towns.

5.49 Much of the training received might be considered generalist rather than specialist. This is no doubt a response to general training needs and support for organisational development. There also may be a necessity in convening training programs directed at NGOs and CSOs that programs not be too specialist since participants invited to attend such training activities often have to be drawn from organisations with different types of programs in order to ensure a sufficient number of participants are available to attend a workshop.

5.50 Participation in training is ranked below from the most frequently mentioned area to the least. While NGO management and leadership training was the type of training most frequently mentioned, it is also identified as the skill in greatest need of development (see Challenges 5.47 above).

NGO Management and leadership training;
Computers ;
Finance and administration;
Human rights;
English/languages;
Civic education;
Gender;
Domestic violence;
Training of Trainers;
Capacity building;
Election monitoring;
Health;
Proposal writing;

Community relations;
PRA ;
Journalism;
Agriculture;
Cooperatives ;
Counselling;
Adult literacy;
Sewing and weaving

The following areas were only mentioned once:

Livestock; Fisheries; Small business; Advocacy;
Anti-corruption; Inter-religious dialogue; Strategic
planning ; Scouting; Animation.

Concluding remarks

5.51 Overall the civil society organisations surveyed for this Situation Analysis have low levels of formal organisational development. The survey is not able to distinguish whether the organisational structures and procedures reported are nominal or effectively operational. Since the vast majority of these organisations have only been formed in the last two years, they are still in the initial stages of

institutional development. However length of organisational history is not in itself a good indicator of formal development, since many of the non-NGO networks, groups and CBOs active in local communities have a much longer history than newer but better resourced NGOs.

5.52 On the other hand, formal organisational development may not necessarily be the best indicator of organisational effectiveness, particularly in a context such as East Timor where informal grassroots proximity and solidarity has been astonishingly effective in mobilizing community resistance to the massive and elaborate organisational architecture and machinery of an oppressive state. Indeed, formalizing and professionalising grassroots movements can often negatively impact on their legitimacy as mobilizers of the communities they seek to serve and represent. It can also direct energies away from unmeasurable contributions on the ground to formal discursive representations of what they say they are (supposed to be) doing.



6. OTHER PERSPECTIVES ON CIVIL SOCIETY

Government

6.1 The National Development Plan was launched in May 2002. It was the product of 8 sectoral working groups that included members of civil society. This plan clearly states that CSO's will play a key role. Perhaps because of civil society's membership in the Planning Commission, the document includes some quite specific references to the objectives of civil society and its role in various aspects of East Timor's development. The importance of strengthening an already robust civil society is explicitly recognised, as is civil society's role in governance, service delivery, disaster preparedness, assisting vulnerable groups, contributing to economic security through involvement in micro savings and credit programs, especially in rural areas, and in the implementation and monitoring of the plan. One of the goals of the Plan therefore is to "[s]trengthen an already robust civil society and create opportunities for its constructive engagement and participation in national life and enhance the participation of citizens in public and national affairs."⁴¹

6.2 A complementary goal follows emphasising the desire to "[p]romote good governance through popular participation" and through "transparent and accountable civil society organisations".⁴²

6.3 The National Development Plan also envisages development of "an independent oversight capacity capable of encouraging transparency and which will allow civil society and citizens to monitor the public service in order to minimise corruption".⁴³

6.4 Although government sees its role as "ensuring access to and affordability of basic social services," this does not mean that the government believes it should deliver all the services. As in many countries in the region, NGO and religious organisations in East Timor have been involved in delivery of some basic social services.⁴⁴

6.5 On the issue of monitoring the plan, government also sees a role for the type of country-wide consultation used to develop the plan.

6.6 Follow up planning exercises could usefully follow the same format, with some activities being conducted on a nationwide basis and others being performed at ministry level. More generally, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of participative processes.

6.7 The Plan recognises specific roles for civil society in education and identifies the need to delineate the respective roles to be played in the sector by government, church, NGOs and local communities. It sees NGOs being very important to the future of the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector.

Views from the district level

6.8 Forty district-level civil servants were interviewed across the 13 districts including 5 District Administrators. 13 DDOs were involved in the district workshops and provided their opinions on the role of civil society via group work. Interviews were also conducted with 5 members of the Constituent Assembly and 20 representatives from district branches of the following political parties: PD, PPT, FRETILIN, PSD, UDT, KOTA, PARENTIL, ASDT.

6.9 There was general agreement among the administrators and representatives of political parties that were interviewed that civil society organisations have an essential role to play in building the new nation. Civil society's contribution should be in partnership with government at all levels including the village level.

6.10 All those interviewed considered that some form of regulations was required. Many said regulation in some form would be useful for civil society in increasing accountability and transparency, and facilitating the development of good relationships between government and civil society. They also stressed that both formal institutional relationships and personal relations

⁴¹ National Development Plan, 2.13(l)

⁴² Ibid, 2.13(n)

⁴³ Ibid, p.114

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.49

were important in building partnership. Many of the administrators said they had good relations with CSOs. Several interviewees considered that civil society should also have a watchdog role and that CSO should be able to criticise government policies.

6.11 Some concerns were raised about the lack of participation in the planning process from weaker, less organised civil society groups at the village level. They felt that the power and experience of the *Chefe du Suco* relative to others in the village limited their effective participation and they considered that ways need to be found to genuinely hear from less empowered villagers.

6.12 Many of the interviewees clearly expressed the view that civil society has a major role in building frameworks for democracy. But many also noted that the understanding of democracy was low in some civil society organisations and that this was a major challenge for civil society. Another weakness identified was lack of skills in most organisational areas. One person raised the issue of CSOs not fulfilling their promise to the community but did not provide any specific details.

Challenges included how civil society would interact and work with traditional structures.

6.13 On the nature of government—civil society relationships, many said that this would depend a lot on the government's commitment to continue to consult, to allow for participation of civil society in all development processes and to provide a high level of transparency. One of the bureaucrats interviewed considered that the government bureaucracy is still 'autocratic'. Insufficient attention to human rights was also thought to be an issue that could affect relationships.

6.14 In terms of a vision for the future, those civil servants interviewed clearly expressed the hope that civil society and the government would work closely together in 'harmony' and that each would understand the others role. They saw the role of the government being to allow civil society the freedom to express itself and "giving direction or guidance". On the issue of changes observed in civil society in the past two years, one person highlighted "the ability of many to use the media to give their opinions and to speak freely."



7. CHALLENGES : MANAGING MULTIPLE ROLES

7.1 In the current phase of rapid development and transition, civil society is operating on many different fronts. Indeed, individual organisations are performing a wider range of roles and addressing a wider range of issues than is typical of a more established context. For example, in the register of NGOs held by the NGO Forum, many organisations list multiple functions.

Nation Building

7.2 The challenge of nation building is one that must be faced at many levels. It is not only an issue for those who operate in Dili or at the national level but it is an issue for communities and organisations in villages, at sub-district and district levels and at national level. And the Situation Analysis does indicate both a willingness and a capacity to participate in this nation building.⁴⁵ This willingness needs to be harnessed at all possible levels and the principles of participation underpinning the NDP matched by the reality of ongoing practice.

7.3 The challenge to encourage and facilitate continued participation at village, sub-district and district levels will have to be met not only by communities at these levels but also by government officials and by NGOs working with local communities. A well-conceived civic education program, as proposed in the NDP, is also important to enable discourse and debate amongst the population on a range of development issues, as proposed in the “Our Nation, Our Future” document.

7.4 Civil society is a key partner in building the new East Timor and sees itself as such. No single view has been articulated but many NGOs and CBOs see their role as to work in co-operation with the emerging government. The CSOs surveyed seek to build close relations of cooperation, coordination and partnership with government, and many village leader respondents also emphasised a desire to work with government and for government to

actively include them. This includes a hope that government will give greater attention to grassroots community issues and to vulnerable groups, and sits alongside a desire to ensure that CSOs will continue to have room to operate independently of government, that partnership does not diminish the right of civil society to criticise and that the expression of criticism is not viewed as disloyalty or opposition to the new government.⁴⁶ These are challenges and concerns for civil society in many countries. Managing them constructively will require efforts from civil society and the new government and awareness of and respect for each other’s rights, roles and responsibilities.

7.5 In September 2001 the NGO Forum organised a two-day members’ workshop on NGO-Government relations following discussion about the possible development of a regulation and registration process by ETTA. While not necessarily opposed to such a regulation, many NGOs felt that the first step should be discussion of the broader issue of how NGOs and Government should relate to each other. The workshop produced rich and varied discussion. There was a consensus among those NGOs present that some sort of regulation of NGOs is appropriate. It formed the basis for an NGO Forum Working Group to begin formulating a charter of NGO-Government relations as an important reference for further exploration of this issue.

Governance and holding to account

Good governance requires that the distribution of power and resources be held open to account.. Civil society globally and NGOs in particular are increasingly seen as part of the apparatus of checks and balances comprising the operation of any democratic system of governance, supplementing the traditional separation of powers doctrine. This will be another complex role that NGOs will have to manage, professionally sensitively and maturely, recognising and managing all

⁴⁵ Many of the village leaders we surveyed express strong identification with and commitment to development of the nation. See Section 4.38 “On involvement in the future development of East Timor”.

⁴⁶ See Section 5.42-43 “Relations with government”.

*and any tensions that might arise. In reality NGOs will, on one hand, have to act as a partner with the state and perhaps, on the other, have to publicly criticise it, should its standards of operation and/or accountability decline. The reverse is certainly true also. Government may also feel justified in criticising civil society for its shortcomings, real or perceived. So, can partnership, broadly defined, sustain this tension? The simple answer is that it has to.*⁴⁷

7.6 And in the future independent East Timor civil society will have to play a key role in ensuring that high standards of governance and accountability prevail. The degree to which this role will be accepted by the new government remains unclear but it is one that civil society organisations have already assumed.⁴⁸

7.7 Also accepted, by some civil society groups at any rate⁴⁹, is a recognition that if high standards are to be demanded of government then high standards must be also be demanded of civil society organisations. Consequently there is a responsibility to ensure that the highest possible standards of operation and accountability apply to their own organisations and some initial thinking has begun in the NGO Forum on the development of an NGO Code of Conduct.

7.8 In order to ensure the highest possible standards of operation amongst CSOs, particular attention will need to be placed on issues of financial accountability and oversight. The survey of CSOs for this Situation Analysis indicates that levels of financial management, reporting and oversight are inadequate in many organisations, especially at the district level. Many implied that financial reports are a requirement of donors rather

⁴⁷ Statement by Finn Reske-Nielsen, UNDP Representative & UN Development Coordinator at the 'Open Day' at the NGO Forum, Tuesday 19 February 2002.

⁴⁸ Falaakh, *Enhancing Accountable Governance to Support Poverty Eradication*, HDR Background Paper, 2002.

⁴⁹ This principle was broadly accepted by those NGOs participating in the September 2001 NGO Forum workshop on NGO-Government relations.

than an internal organisational procedure.⁵⁰ However many CSOs are aware that their financial procedures need to be improved, since they themselves identified a lack of skills in management and administration as one of the most significant challenges their organisations face.⁵¹ Limitations of financial skills and procedures within organisations are exacerbated by the very limited availability of professional auditing services in East Timor and of financial infrastructure in districts.

7.9 In keeping with the overall climate of accountability and transparency called for in the NDP, CSOs must themselves take steps to ensure that financial management is of the highest possible standards. But it is equally necessary that they get access to financial training, assistance in developing bookkeeping and accounting systems together with oversight procedures to enable them to meet standards that will increasingly be demanded of them in a scenario where funding availability becomes increasingly restricted.

Shaping development

7.10 Involving civil society in development helps ensure the consideration and creation of innovative, alternative visions and strategies for development. Our surveys confirm that CSOs and local community leaders wish to be involved in the development of policies and plans.⁵² Rather than operating as a builder working to someone else's design, civil society in East Timor intends to remain a designer of development strategies and an agent of change.⁵³

7.11 In many countries, governments are struggling with the challenge of actively involving civil society in setting directions, rather than consulting with civil

⁵⁰ See Section 5.34 on financial reporting and oversight.

⁵¹ See Section 5.47 on challenges faced by CSOs.

⁵² See Section 4.37-41 on planning village development projects.

⁵³ NGO participation in the biannual donors' conferences on East Timor have been one expression of this. Particularly for the Canberra donors' conference in June 2001, sectoral NGO Forum Working Groups consulted the NGO community very extensively and held workshops to formulate briefing papers on national development across all sectors addressed at the conference.

society after decisions have been made and involving them in the implementation of policies and programs.

7.12 The formal involvement of civil society in the work of the National Planning Commission is a significant step and indicates the in-principle interest in engaging civil society in policy making at the highest level. But for many developed countries, there is a substantial gap between the rhetoric of citizen participation, including via civil society organisations, and the reality. The policy-making role is a new and challenging one for the government and for civil society. Making it work will require commitment, time, patience and the investment of intellectual resources.

7.13 In order to be active participants in the development process, CSOs need to be supported and resourced, not only with money but also with skills, knowledge and information. In this way CSOs can help to play a more constructive role in designing and implementing development strategies at all levels – a role that will need to move beyond consultation to real participation in program and policy design. At the most basic level, this Situation Analysis indicates the necessity for support to enable the participation of local community members in decision-making and planning on issues that directly affect them.⁵⁴ Moving from local participation to the national level brings its own complexity and requires CSO leaders to involve themselves in arenas and discussions that may be new and quite unfamiliar, for which they will need support.

7.14 It is still unclear how and to what extent government will continue to engage with the population. Consideration needs to be given to how the exercise of previous popular consultations on the constitution and on the NDP can be replicated but deepened to be genuinely participative. The NDP identifies that a robust civil society indeed

⁵⁴ While many village and local community leaders reported broad and often bottom-up community involvement in decision-making and planning processes at hamlet and village level, communities will need support to make such high levels of participation a practical reality. See Section 4.37-41.

exists, but methods of communication, engagement and participation will need to be designed and implemented, presenting many challenges for administrators and politicians.

Advocacy

7.15 For many CSOs in East Timor, though not for all, advocacy or lobbying will form a core part of their operation. Individual organisations may have quite specific areas of interest that they wish to see reflected in government policy, in legislation and in the operation of state institutions. In order to pursue these interests, organisations will pursue advocacy strategies of greater or lesser complexity. Some organisations will simply voice their concerns to responsible civil servants or politicians, often without having a clear idea of the solution to their concerns. On the other hand, many NGOs, *Yayasan Hak* being one example, invest considerable time and skills in the development of well worked out policy positions and pursue the acceptance of these positions via a variety of avenues.

7.16 Collective action also forms an equally important part of the advocacy agenda. Not all issues are the exclusive concern of individual organisations. In addition, many small civil society organisations lack a strong advocacy capacity of their own and therefore rely on joining with others to express their interests. The operation (in theory at any rate) of the various NGO Forum working groups provide such an opportunity. Groups dealing with NGO Government relations, with the Constitution, civic education and a variety of sectorally oriented topics have been organised, though admittedly with differing degrees of success. An important feature of such collective advocacy is the capacity it creates to share skills and knowledge, thereby widening the range of organisations from whom effective advocacy can be another means of pursuing their interests. The operation of this dual mode of advocacy, individual organisation and collective organisation, holds considerable potential for change.

7.17 Advocacy actions may not, of course, always be directed at government. They might equally be targeted at international organisations, at the donor community or indeed at the private sector. And within this the role of protest and demonstration

does not have to be forgotten. It is sometimes a mistake, as advocacy actions become more sophisticated, to forget that protest and demonstration are still core democratic rights.

Provision of services and information

7.18 Many East Timorese CSOs are involved in service provision as a result of the destruction of basic services following the 1999 ballot. Services such as water and sanitation, health, housing, and formal and informal education services (including literacy training) are gradually being made available to more people, with civil society organisations playing a crucial role. The NDP recognises that this role in service provision will be considerable in the coming years: “the role of government should be limited to providing those essential services that the private sector and CSO’s are not in a position to deliver”.⁵⁵

7.19 This expectation places a considerable pressure on the shoulders of CSO’s. Equally “Our Nation, Our Future” reported many local communities seeing CSOs as key providers of a variety of services and resources. Whether CSOs will be able to meet the scale of expectations now visible remains to be seen not only in terms of the provision of the actual services but also in terms of the capacity to manage the resources involved. Additionally it remains to be seen whether CSOs currently involved in both service delivery and advocacy will continue to play an advocacy role as the opportunity to avail of government contracts expands.

7.20 CSOs played a major role in raising awareness of the August 2001 elections, the constitution, the presidential election and the independence process. CSOs were also extensively involved in voter and civic education programs. Given East Timor’s extremely limited communication infrastructure, this CSO involvement remains essential for effectively developing and disseminating information. Enabling wide access to information on issues such as elections, disaster management, the role of women and human rights will require ongoing support for:

- emerging community radio stations (low levels of literacy make radio a key medium for information circulation)
- several important NGO bulletins and magazines published in Dili, and
- CSO-based weeklies published locally in some districts.

7.21 The CSO district workshop surveys and the survey of local community and village leaders identified a deficit in information that is available to many communities.⁵⁶ Many CSOs felt there has been a lack of media coverage of grassroots community issues and local CSO activities and pointed out the lack of print media circulation.⁵⁷ Often rumour and gossip substitute for accurate and reliable information, sometimes leading to anxiety and fear in communities.⁵⁸ Poor information dissemination also inhibits sharing of positive experiences and learning. For example, how one community solves a problem may help another community overcome similar difficulties, or inspiration from one area may spur another group to get involved in similar activities. Equally, for CSOs operating at the national level, accessing information from the districts is important to enable them to play representational roles with government.

7.22 Civil society can play an important role not only in disseminating information but in stimulating debate and discussion, including about options for the future of East Timor, issues affecting the country, international developments and their impact on East Timor. Over time, access to information and involvement in analysis and discussion should also strengthen the capacity of local communities to plan, to be involved in decision making and to control their own development.

Civil Society as a source of alternatives

7.23 In its role as an architect of development civil society organisations face the challenge to innovate. Many of these organisations, especially

⁵⁵ NDP, Section 4.40.

⁵⁶ See Section 5.47 on challenges for CSOs.

⁵⁷ See Section 5.44 on mass media.

⁵⁸ See Section 4.30-32 which indicates the problems that disturbing rumours pose in village communities.

those longer established, already have a track record in innovation, displayed in their central roles in the independence struggle. But now there is a new struggle, one in which innovation and the capacity to provide alternative viewpoints will be even more in demand, not only at the micro or project level but also at the level of national planning.

7.24 Additional skills and the capacity to analyse new situations will have to be broadly built in subject areas previously untouched so as to enable civil society to be proactive rather than reactive in the design of development strategies. In particular, ensuring the identification of alternatives to the dominance of free market economics and in 'real life' where competition rather than co-operation becomes the acceptable norm, will rank among the most important of these strategies. The creation of specific linkages with Universities and civil society in other countries will be of major importance in meeting this challenge.

7.25 This role will also require CSOs to ensure that certain issues are not allowed to fall off the agenda of the state or other key players or that only lip service is paid to dealing with them. CSOs especially will have to confront inequality and promote social development. It will have to champion human rights and reinforce environmental protection. It will have to ensure that the position and rights of women are advanced. All of these are East Timorese and global struggles and solidarity with other countries will be an important tool in achieving progress on them.

Ensuring the vitality and sustainability of democracy

7.26 At the time that East Timor is becoming the world's newest state, some commentators are pointing to a deep malaise in long established democracies, reflected in indicators such as low voter turnout, low levels of trust and respect for politicians, or an interest in racist, scapegoat politics.

7.27 An opportunity exists in East Timor to build a nation that values the participation of people in the day-to-day operation of democratic structures—to create a culture of participation, where engagement

is the norm rather than the exception. Xanana Gusmao expressed his vision at a public consultation in Oecussi when he urged participants not to see democracy as a house into which you peer from outside, but as a house that you enter and feel at home in.

7.28 Enabling this level of engagement is a substantial challenge for established states with established ways of doing things. But in building structures and processes anew, East Timor has the opportunity to learn from experiences elsewhere and to jump some of the less participatory stages from which others are now transiting. There is an opportunity from the start to maximise citizen involvement in decision-making, locally and nationally. This is the trend internationally, but among OECD countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), progress is relatively slow because barriers to participation remain to be addressed. While building from scratch brings challenges, it also brings immense possibilities.

7.29 The concept of human development prioritises people's participation in decision making. This reflects a view that representative democracy and its associated structures are not of themselves sufficient to sustain a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive democracy. Participative democracy complements representative democracy and helps ensure the overall health of the democratic system. The OECD suggests that "When engaging in activities to strengthen their relations with citizens, governments do not give up their right and duty to make policy and decisions. Instead, they introduce new ways to exercise it."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ *Engaging Citizens in Policy-making: Information, Consultation and Public Participation*, PUMA Policy Brief No. 10, July 2001, p.9

Pointing the way: moves to involve citizens across the OECD

There is growing recognition that consultation and participation are central to good policy making, to genuine democracy and to building sustainable, inclusive well-functioning societies. A recent two-year OECD study found that all member countries are looking for new, and complementary, ways to include citizens in policy making, noting three key trends:

- The quality and scope of government information to the public has increased greatly in the past decade
- Consultation and opportunities for citizens to provide feedback on policy proposals is also on the rise
- Active participation and efforts to engage citizens in policy making on a partnership basis are still rare and usually undertaken as pilots.⁶⁰

The OECD has summarised the benefits, actions and outcomes it sees flowing from involving citizens as follows:

Reaping the benefits...

Strengthening relations with citizens is a sound investment in better policy-making and a core element of good governance. It allows government to tap new sources of policy-relevant ideas, information and resources when making decisions. Equally important, it contributes to building public trust in government, raising the quality of democracy and strengthening civic capacity. Such efforts help strengthen representative democracy in which parliaments play a central role.

...by taking concrete steps...

In strengthening their relations with citizens, governments must ensure that:

- information is complete, objective, reliable, relevant, easy to find and to understand
- consultation has clear goals and rules defining the limits of the exercise and government's obligation to account for its use of citizens' input;
- participation provides sufficient time and flexibility to allow for the emergence of new ideas and proposals by citizens, as well as mechanisms for their integration into government policy-making processes

...to build commitment and capacity Governments must invest adequate time, resources and commitment in building robust legal, policy and institutional frameworks, developing appropriate tools and evaluating their own performance in engaging citizens in policy-making. Poorly designed and inadequate measures for information, consultation and active participation in policy-making can undermine government-citizen relations. Governments may seek to inform, consult and engage citizens in order to enhance the quality, credibility and legitimacy of their policy decisions...only to produce the opposite effect if citizens discover that their efforts to stay informed, provide feedback and actively participate are ignored, have no impact at all on the decisions reached or remain unaccounted for.⁶¹

7.30 Building civic forums, experimenting with different models of genuine community government, developing formal linkages with CSOs, decentralisation of power and other initiatives are just some of the approaches to sustaining a healthy, inclusive democracy.

Consultation and participation

7.31 These terms are sometimes used interchangeably, in East Timor and elsewhere.

The concept of human development prioritises people's participation in decision making. This reflects a view that representative democracy and its associated structures are not of themselves sufficient to sustain a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive democracy.

⁶⁰ 'Engaging Citizens in Policy-making: Information, Consultation and Public Participation', *OECD Public Management Policy Brief No. 10*, July 2001. The full report of the study was published in October 2001, together with a handbook for policy makers.

⁶¹ *Engaging Citizens in Policy-making: Information, Consultation and Public Participation*, PUMA Policy Brief No. 10, July 2001, p.1

They are, in fact, distinct concepts. Sometimes they are used to mark different points on a continuum, from passive transfer of information

from one party to another, through to active and equal participation in all stages of decision making.

Strengthening democracy by strengthening government-citizen relations

Democracy rests on the consent of citizens. In order to assure this consent, representative democracy bases itself on a set of traditional formal rules and principles – such as on elections and accompanying campaigns. Representative democracy is also based on ongoing interactions among government and citizens in between elections... How can governments strengthen their relations with citizens? In practical terms, this means:

Information

Government disseminates information on policy-making on its own initiative – or citizens access information upon their demand. In both cases, information flows essentially in one direction, from the government to citizens in a one-way relationship. Examples are access to public records, official gazettes, and government web sites.

Consultation

Government asks for and receives citizens' feedback on policy-making. In order to receive feedback, government defines whose views are sought on what issue during policy-making. Receiving citizens' feedback also requires government to provide information to citizens beforehand. Consultation thus creates a limited two-way relationship between government and citizens. Examples are comments on draft legislation, and public opinion surveys.

Active participation

Citizens actively engage in decision-making and policy-making. Active participation means that citizens themselves take a role in the exchange on policy-making, for instance by proposing policy-options. At the same time, the responsibility for policy formulation and final decision rests with the government. Engaging citizens in policy-making is an advanced two-way relation between government and citizens based on the principle of partnership. Examples are open working groups, laymen's panels and dialogue processes.

From information to consultation and active participation, the influence citizens can exert on policy-making rises.⁶²

7.32 To date there have been various examples of using consultation as a mechanism to engage with a wider audience and encourage participation. The Constitutional Commissions talked to a large number of people about their dreams, aspirations and visions for the constitution. The National Consultative Commission consulted widely as part of the development of the National Development Plan. Initial reports suggest that the consultations were well attended and quite innovative in approach.

7.33 Consultation however is not a substitute for building inclusive, participative structures at all

levels. If it is used primarily as a tool for legitimising decisions that have already been made, not only will citizens disengage from future consultations, with potential cost and time implications, but policy making will be less well informed and grounded. Development of consultation principles jointly by government and civil society could be one way to ensure that parties are clear on the terms of the consultation and the link between their involvement and the decision making process.

7.34 There are a number of potential models on which to draw in developing principles that fit the East Timorese context. The recent study by the OECD has suggested the following key principles.

⁶² *Citizens as Partners: OECD Handbook on Information, Consultation and Public Participation In Policy-Making*, OECD, 2001, p. 15-16

The OECD's guiding principles for successful information, consultation and active participation of citizens in policy-making⁶³

Commitment - Leadership and strong commitment to information, consultation and active participation in policy-making is needed at all levels – from politicians, senior managers and public officials.

Rights - Citizens' rights to access information, provide feedback, be consulted and actively participate in policy-making must be firmly grounded in law or policy. Government obligations to respond to citizens when exercising their rights must also be clearly stated. Independent institutions for oversight, or their equivalent, are essential to enforcing these rights.

Clarity - Objectives for, and limits to, information, consultation and active participation during policy-making should be well defined from the outset. The respective roles and responsibilities of citizens (in providing input) and government (in making decisions for which they are accountable) must be clear to all.

Time - Public consultation and active participation should be undertaken as early in the policy process as possible to allow a greater range of policy solutions to emerge and to raise the chances of successful implementation. Adequate time must be available for consultation and participation to be effective. Information is needed at all stages of the policy cycle.

Objectivity - Information provided by government during policy-making should be objective, complete and accessible. All citizens should have equal treatment when exercising their rights of access to information and participation

Resources - Adequate financial, human and technical resources are needed if public information, consultation and active participation in policy-making are to be effective. Government officials must have access to appropriate skills, guidance and training as well as an organisational culture that supports their efforts.

Co-ordination - Initiatives to inform, request feedback from and consult citizens should be co-ordinated across government units to enhance knowledge management, ensure policy coherence, avoid duplication and reduce the risk of "consultation fatigue" among citizens and civil society organisations. Co-ordination efforts should not reduce the capacity of government units to ensure innovation and flexibility.

Accountability - Governments have an obligation to account for the use they make of citizens' inputs received through feedback, public consultation and active participation. Measures to ensure that the policy-making process is open, transparent and amenable to external scrutiny and review are crucial to increasing government accountability overall.

Evaluation - Governments need the tools, information and capacity to evaluate their performance in providing information, conducting consultation and engaging citizens, in order to adapt to new requirements and changing conditions for policy-making.

Active citizenship - Governments benefit from active citizens and a dynamic civil society, and can take concrete actions to facilitate access to information and participation, raise awareness, strengthen citizens' civic education and skills, as well as to support capacity-building among civil society organisations.

7.35 In the East Timor context therefore there are some options worth exploring in the short term. One approach to monitoring that is cost effective and can be implemented fairly rapidly is to involve people (the clients) in scrutinising the quality of service delivery. The population can play an

important role in evaluating the performances of the public sector, projects, NGOs and other stakeholders involved in the delivery of essential public services. CSOs can play a role in facilitating public feedback.

⁶³ OECD, *Engaging Citizens in Policy-making: Information, Consultation and Public Participation*, October 2001, p.15

Tools for supporting community participation

7.36 There are also many tools and approaches that support community participation and might facilitate civil society's involvement at the district, sub district and village levels. Examples include:

- Public meetings and hearings, including about budgets
- Maps of social inclusion and exclusion—maps that show where money has been spent and who has been more or less favoured by public policies
- Rapid diagnosis of a problem or issue through self-perception of the actors involved
- Participatory budgeting
- The Panchayat reforms in West Bengal, which have created both direct and representative democratic channels that devolve substantial administrative and fiscal development power to the individual villages.⁶⁴

Civil society as an employer

7.37 CSOs are an important source of employment in East Timor, although exact figures are not yet known. Organisations will need to develop employment policies and practices, human resource development plans, recruitment and succession plans, to develop, support and sustain their effectiveness as organisations. As elsewhere CSOs will need to address issues such as transparency in employment practices, contracts for staff, supervision arrangements, ensuring good management practice. In common with many countries, these skills are currently limited in East Timor. Developing them will require commitment and support from CSOs and their funders. Given the number of relatively small organisations, it may be useful to explore innovative approaches to skills development, learning and mentoring such as rotation of staff among a number of organisations, peer support networks, bringing in technical assistance to work with a cluster of organisations.

⁶⁴ *Real Utopias v Experiments In Empowered Deliberative Democracy*, January 2000

7.38 While CSOs are an important source of employment, it is important that they, and NGOs in particular, are not created simply as a job creation or income generation strategy. The numbers of CSOs has been growing at a fast rate. There is a strong desire to respond to the needs of East Timor but there may also be some that see starting an NGO as an easy way to tap into the considerable donor funding which is currently available. This risks spreading available resources very thinly, potentially impacting on the viability of all organisations. Donors would also have to invest efforts in distinguish between NGOs set up to meet a genuine need and those established more for the purposes of job or income creation and may look at tighter conditions on funding. Finally, it may lead to a level of reservation among the donor community about the rapidly expanding NGO sector.

7.39 A culture of corruption characterised Indonesian rule in East Timor. Most people do not want to see this return in an independent East Timor. Civil society organisations and others will need to establish and demonstrate high standards of operational and financial management. This is particularly important for the credibility of civil society in its role as critic and government watchdog and as a promoter human rights and social justice.

Ensuring the vitality and sustainability of civil society

7.40 The continued viability and vitality of civil society will require, among other things, a continued willingness to question and be questioned, and a commitment to ongoing development of skills and structures. The capacity of CSOs to do this will be influenced by future external funding levels and priorities. Identifying ongoing funding mechanisms will facilitate the continued evolution of civil society.

The challenge of government funding

7.41 While there are those who argue that CSOs should not accept funding from government, others argue the importance of government recognising and validating the activities of CSOs, for example by providing grants, service contracts etc. The CSO survey shows very high levels of expectation of government support of CSOs, including provision of

funding, facilities and partnerships in program implementation. Indeed, they look to government for assistance and cooperation in precisely the same terms as their hopes for assistance and cooperation with international agencies, INGOs and donors. Moreover, local CBOs not oriented to seek donor funding expect support for their organisations and activities to come primarily from government.⁶⁵

7.42 The challenges of managing funding are not dissimilar from those of maintaining an independent and critical voice while working collaboratively with government. There is a risk that government may give preference to 'friendly' CSOs, with potential implications for levels of funding and focus of activity. There is a danger of self-censorship or cautiousness in the interests of protecting funding. There is also a danger that, in accepting funds from government, CSO activities may be skewed towards government priorities rather than those of their constituents or communities. Transparency in the allocation of resources and pursuing a diversity of funding sources will help minimise these kinds of risks.

Donor driven agendas

7.43 The presence of substantial external resources can distort the focus and operation of CSOs, especially in a context where the development needs are substantial. In practice, training in proposal writing is often focused on identifying what donors will fund under current programs, which implicitly encourages organisations to adapt their program plans to fit donor specifications. Focus on funding opportunities can also create a dependence on external resources and focus attention on short-term projects that fit donor specifications rather than development of ongoing programs. The current situation in East Timor makes this difficult to avoid. But it does need to be monitored and managed. Mechanisms to preserve longer-term support for CSOs will be useful for these and other reasons. Options (eg a form of a trust fund or longer-term endowment fund) need to be identified and established before the level of funding interest subsides.

⁶⁵ See Section 5.42 "Relations with government".

Volunteerism

7.44 During resistance to Indonesian colonialism, activists in a whole variety of organisations worked without pay to achieve certain goals or realise a particular vision, sometimes by choice but often of necessity. Currently, there is a trend towards requiring payment for many activities, which is in many ways understandable in view of the

Many organisations involved in resistance activities had a clear philosophy, strong goals and visions—liberation of the country and its people. With independence, CSOs need to re-examine and redefine what drives them.

availability of substantial external resources, including the example of salaried and well-remunerated international staff working with CSOs in INGOs and international agencies. A willingness to pay (sometimes excessively) for services or activities previously provided on a voluntary basis has undoubtedly distorted the nature of voluntarism in East Timor. Whether this will naturally readjust itself over time remains to be seen but until it does it needs to be acknowledged that the commitment to voluntarism has been damaged. This in turn may lead to problems of corruption and financial mismanagement. Civil society everywhere relies heavily on unpaid work and there is a risk that the development of civil society will be undermined if contribution is linked to money. Many CSOs will need to employ staff, either full time or part time. But if activities are primarily undertaken on the basis of payment, this raises real issues of sustainability.

7.45 Nearly 70% of the CSOs surveyed reported that all their staff work as volunteers, with over 10% of others having a mix of contract and voluntary staff. Recent meetings at the NGO Forum among local NGOs and international volunteer organisations towards setting up some sort of East Timorese volunteer core have discussed how to promote volunteerism and acknowledge the valuable contribution of volunteers, at the same time ensuring that the many people doing voluntary work in CSOs are given opportunities to develop their skills. In view of the difficult economic circumstances faced by many people involved in

CSOs, unless their basic needs are somehow provided for they are not going to be able to contribute.

7.46 Many organisations involved in resistance activities had a clear philosophy, strong goals and visions—liberation of the country and its people. With independence, CSOs need to re-examine and

redefine what drives them. An organisation's vision, values and philosophy are the basis for its energy, direction, legitimacy and support. If the vision, values and goals are not clear, the effectiveness of strategies and actions will be hard to sustain over time.



8. CHALLENGES II: MANAGING MULTIPLE RELATIONSHIPS

Overview

8.1 Civil society is a complex web of relationships between people and groups, structured and bounded by a complex interaction of culture, history, laws and regulations. The health of these relationships is important to the health of civil society. The capacity to develop, maintain and manage relationships is also an indicator of organisational effectiveness and sustainability.

The world of NGOs [non-governmental development organisations] is dominated by choosing relations with others, making them work well and combining their effects towards their own vision and mission. NGOs must be skilled in balancing a variety of unsteady and often unpredictable relational pushes and pulls... Selecting responses and modifying relationships is a continual occupation of NGO leaders/managers and staff. Getting this right can make the difference between success and failure in development work..⁶⁶

8.2 Some relationships are more important than others in the context of a situation analysis of civil society in East Timor.

8.3 In this complex web, six core linkages stand out in terms of relevance and significance:

- relationships between civil society and the state;
- relationships between civil society organisations;
- relationships between civil society organisations and the communities they work for and with;
- the development of regional relationships;
- linkages between civil society and international organisations;
- Linkages between CSOs and funders.

8.4 Civil society organisations will also be called on to perform, manage and integrate many different roles: nation builders; architects of development; part of the democratic checks and balances; advocates for change and for particular policies; service providers; suppliers of information and analysis and more. Some of these roles, which were discussed in the last section, will be complementary, others may produce tension.

8.5 The demands of role and relationship will be particularly significant in dealings between civil society and government. CSOs face the challenge of cooperating and working with the state, sometimes as partners and collaborators, while at the same time maintaining a critical capacity.

In summary, then, there are:

- multiple relationships to be managed
- organisational cultures and values to be learned and accommodated
- differing priorities to be analysed and managed
- personalities to be understood;
- power relationships to be managed and challenged, and
- resources and information to be shared.

Civil Society – State Relations

8.6 The relationship between civil society and the new East Timorese state will be crucial to East Timor's development. Civil society will need to build relationships with various parts of the state—the executive or government, the parliament (Constituent Assembly) and whatever sub-structures or parliamentary committees might be created by it, and the bureaucracy. Civil society will also have to engage with the judiciary and judicial processes, including monitoring human rights.

8.7 The experience of dealing with the Indonesian administration has left its own legacy and not all experiences of the UNTAET administration have been positive. Nonetheless, many CSOs have demonstrated that they are willing to engage positively with the emerging structures of the new

⁶⁶ Alan Fowler, op.cit., p.93.

state. The development of these relationships will take time and patience and a willingness to learn about each other's priorities, constraints, cultures and ways of working.

Political parties

8.8 CSOs will need to build linkages and understanding with all political parties to ensure a widespread understanding of civil society's role and perspectives. CSOs also need to recognise that the boundaries between political parties (and their members) and civil society organisations (and their members) may be blurred and that people may be members of both. Many people are part of a number of different communities of interest simultaneously, and this in itself is an important democratic right. At the same time procedures are being established to ensure that CSOs remain non-partisan. For example the NGO Forum's Constitution prohibits office holders of member NGOs from also holding office in political parties. While the letter of this principle may not always have been followed, there is broader acceptance of the principle extending beyond the membership of the NGO Forum and it was also applied by leaders of student organisations who resigned their positions in order to contest the Constitutional Assembly election in August 2001 as political party candidates. That candidates with CSO backgrounds ran for a range of political parties indicates that civil society groups have links with parties across the political spectrum.

The Presidency

8.9 The Constitution of East Timor defines the role of the President as "the symbol and guarantor of national independence and unity of the state and of the smooth functioning of democratic institutions".⁶⁷ According to the Constitution the office of the President does not have a specific, named role in regard to civil society. However, it would appear logical and necessary, given the responsibility to symbolise and guarantee independence, that the office of the President would seek to develop a range of formal and informal linkages with civil society. Given the previous role of the President in heading up the Consultative Commission, continuation of some related function would appear

to make sense. The office of the President therefore offers a number of important potentials:

- it can help provide another bridge between civil society and the government. However, it should not replace direct CSO-Government linkage.
- it can facilitate strategies to ensure that consultation mechanisms developed during the national development planning process are continued and deepened.
- it can act as an important motivator and patron of civil society organisations and could possibly play a role in ensuring the maintenance of high standards of accountability and operation.
- it can play a particular role in ensuring that the voices of the poor are not forgotten and that they find a route directly to key decision makers.

District, sub-district and village government

8.10 Government and administration will be centralised at the nation level for the time being. If sub-national systems of government and administration are introduced, civil society may want to position itself to influence the shape and functions of government structures, as well as influencing and shaping policy.

Village governance

8.11 Following extensive and often coercive penetration of village society by the Indonesian state, under the transitional administration village-level institutions were substantially left to their own devices or to assistance programs of NGOs and international agencies. Village heads and other local community leaders became relatively autonomous representatives of village interests, mediating links between the collective organisation and activity of village society and those of the state and other agencies beyond the village.

8.12 It is clear from the CSO survey that CSOs seeking to conduct programs and activities in villages see village leaders as important mediators or brokers of their relations with the local community groups they seek to work with.⁶⁸ It also became apparent to Outreach Teams conducting the Village Checklist and Questions survey that

⁶⁷ Constitution of East Timor, Section 74.

⁶⁸ See CSO survey results in Section 5.44 "Relations with local community and traditional leaders".

village heads generally consider that they have a responsibility to participate in all organisations and groups active in the villages.⁶⁹ If this is the case, their role as brokers of extra-village institutions and village communities is supplemented by that of patron of CBOs and community groups active in their villages. It is uncertain to what extent these village head functions of personal patronage and institutional mediation restrict the scope and independence of CBOs to represent their own interests within the village and have their interests voiced and heard beyond it? Whatever the answer, government influence over village heads is likely to increase if they once again become government employees, when they will not only play the role of representatives of village interests but also of the government that employs them. It would seem then that village heads may be in a position to exert significant influence upon both the development of civic and organisational life within the village and the extent and nature of inclusion of village communities in the public sphere beyond it.

8.13 Although it seems that the role of village head is pivotal for the development of a range of relations, viz: among village CBOs; between village CBOs and NGOs from outside; and between village community and government, the village office is by no means the only nexus of these relationships. The more informal influence of traditional leaders as arbiters of local customary lore overlaps those of the hamlet/village administrative hierarchy, as does the role of the church.⁷⁰

8.14 The views of village and local community leaders as elicited in survey questions on resolving local disputes, on decision-making about issues affecting the local community, on planning of village development projects and on collective self-help activities all show high levels of community participation and initiative.⁷¹ Furthermore, respondent descriptions of these processes are more often indicative of bottom-up initiative rather than top down consultation. Of course the relatively brief fieldwork of this study cannot even begin to

access the extent to which respondents have provided normative idealizations rather than factual descriptions of community life in their villages. Nor is it clear the extent to which the participatory agenda implicit in the questions themselves might have elicited responses measured to satisfy. Nevertheless, it seems that participatory and consultative modes of organisation and leadership are a model for public life in villages and for village leaders themselves.

8.15 Overall, on the issue of CSO-State relations, there appears to be an inclination among most players towards fostering co-operative and supportive engagement. There appears to be a strong desire to move from the politics, practice and culture of opposition and resistance, the formative experience of most civil society activists, to an approach dominated by constructive partnership. Sustaining this will require an investment of time and understanding by civil society and the state. It will also require respect for the legitimate roles of both civil society and the state in the ongoing challenge of nation building. In the words of one commentator, a strong state requires a strong civil society.⁷² This will require an investment in institution building so that the state can embrace and accommodate participatory democracy, not simply democracy defined by election and representation.

Relationships between civil society organisations

8.16 In a very short period of time many East Timorese CSOs have forged strong alliances, formal and informal, short and longer term. The NGO Forum is an obvious example. But there is a lot of work ahead, including working with CSOs in the districts, ensuring contacts between more highly organised NGOs and counterpart community based organisations, partnership building, capacity development, information supply and alliance building.

8.17 A number of different bilateral CSO-CSO relationships exist or potentially exist, each with its own characteristics and complexities. The following

⁶⁹ See Section 4.15-17 "On links between organisations in villages".

⁷⁰ On the arbitrating and mediating roles of traditional or customary leaders see Section 4.22.

⁷¹ See Section 4.37-41.

⁷² *Citizen and Governance*, Report by the Commonwealth Foundation, September 1999.

table illustrates some of these – others could be added.

ET NGO's (national level)	ETNGO's (national level) ⁷³
ET NGO's (national level)	ETNGO's (local level)
Mass movement organisation (e.g. youth / women)	ET NGO's
Church organisations	ET NGO's
ETNGO's (national level)	Community Based Organisations (CBO's)
ET NGO's (national level)	Local communities
ET NGO's (local level)	CBO's and /or local communities
INGO's	ET NGO's (national level)
INGO's	ET NGO's (local level)
INGO's	CBO's and /or local communities
INGO's	INGO's

⁷³ To date co-operation between NGO's as often occurred via the NGO Forum. More recently though various other networks of NGO's have begun to emerge, such as Dai Popular, focusing in specific areas of interest or shared concern.

8.18 Others could be added to this table. The reality of some of these relationships may be more complex than initially apparent. For example, many INGOs, in working with local communities, may work alongside an East Timorese NGO or in other cases may work directly with a local community. Similarly ET NGO's may work with a local community based organisation or might develop some type of new loose structure built around a project activity e.g. water user groups.

8.19 International NGOs (INGOs) have demonstrated strong commitment to and solidarity with the East Timorese struggle. Some have established a presence in East Timor and developed a variety of partnerships with different NGOs and CBOs. The quality of these vary with some premised on shared values, equality and good communication, others displaying little more than cosmetic adherence to these principles.

8.20 There is of course one key critical element underpinning all of these relationships, notably how appropriate and effective partnership can be built. A considerable amount of work has been done internationally on the elements of genuine partnership. In general, it is easier to sustain the rhetoric than the practice. There are real structural difficulties in achieving genuine partnership where there are disparities of size and resources.

8.21 The term partnership is also often used in an aspirational rather than a descriptive sense, but it does reflect the equal footing and mutuality sought by CSO respondents when describing the kinds of relationships they aspire to: openness and transparency, sharing of ideas and donor adaptation to local conditions.⁷⁴ Establishing formal equality of decision-making power can be politically and culturally challenging. These conversations need to be had, and a basis for ongoing genuine partnership identified.⁷⁵ Such discussions would also inform partnership building between local NGOs and community-based organisations.

⁷⁴ See Section 5.38 "Partnerships with international agencies, INGOs and donors".

⁷⁵ NGO Forum workshop on partnerships, early 2001, Janet Hunt source??

8.22 In a small country facing a big development task, it will be important to explore the potential for co-operation between NGOs, community based organisations and the private sector, especially at the local level. This might include very practical activities such as sharing skills and building organisational capacity by providing opportunities for work placements.

8.23 From a CSO perspective, the development of good linkages between the different organised levels of civil society will be important. It will be especially crucial that linkages, formal and informal, are built between the NGO community, youth organisations, womens organisations and church based structures. In this way, the potential to strengthen civil society voices may be realised. Equally it allows for the diversity of civil society and views within it to be heard while at the same time recognising the need for the views of individual component parts to be valued.

Civil Society Organisations – Local Communities

8.24 A particularly important relationship mentioned above is that which exists or may exist between more established CSOs and local communities with whom or for whom they work. Long term, the legitimacy, relevance and credibility of CSOs, especially NGOs, depends on building and maintaining high quality communication with people in these communities. Many are already identifying this as a priority. The circumstances of East Timor will require a continuation of proven strategies and the development of new and more innovative ones, given the present limited communication infrastructure. Rural areas will present a particular challenge and will require comprehensive and integrated responses.

8.25 CSO respondents report a wide variety a ways in which they seek to engage the communities they work with⁷⁶. Most determine client or community needs through informal discussions in the communities they choose to work amongst, or through exchange of ideas and information among friends, with other CSOs and during training workshops. Others derive their understanding of

⁷⁶ See Section 5.21-29.

community needs from their proximity and attention to community concerns and some wait for specific requests for assistance. Respondents' understandings of means of promoting community participation also vary greatly: from participative programs that meet community needs and aspirations to faith-based service that does not distinguish levels of responsiveness, to those saying the responsibility for active involvement lies with the beneficiaries themselves.

8.26 Discussion about the complexities of representation and how CSOs 'represent' the interests of their communities or of communities for whom they work will be important in building the linkages between CSOs and communities. Expectations need to be consistent with the stage of organisational development and the level of resourcing, rather than some idealised model. While representativeness is important to accountability, civil society needs space to evolve. A prescriptive approach that raises representativeness above other dimensions of organisational effectiveness and legitimacy risks stifling the development of civil society. More generally, requirements of CSOs in terms of structure and process should be in line with what is expected of other parts of East Timor's emerging democracy.

Regional links

8.27 East Timor's CSOs can benefit from strengthening relations at the regional level. Other countries have had similar experiences or have valuable expertise in relevant areas. A range of exchanges and study visits has been undertaken and more are planned.

8.28 Regional experiences have also been passed by sharing training and analysis skills. Civil society trainers from the region, particularly from Indonesian NGOs, have contributed to capacity development programmes. Mechanisms need to be established to ensure that the longer-term value of such regional co-operation is realised. Individual learning is of limited value if it does not help build the collective civil society capacity. Learning needs to be shared, institutionalised and integrated into ways of working.

Civil society - international organisations

8.29 International organisations can be expected to have an ongoing presence in East Timor, given the scope of the development challenges. Their access to resources, expertise and experience offers substantial potential benefits to East Timorese civil society. But working with international organisations brings challenges, in terms of understanding their respective mandates and roles, structures, ways of working, reporting requirements etc, and then using this knowledge to support locally determined priorities. International organisations are themselves still developing and learning in terms of the most productive ways of working with and supporting civil society.

8.30 CSOs revealed a limited understanding of the roles of many international organisations, the differences between them and the UNTAET mission and the differences between UN agencies and INGOs. As many UN agencies now active in East Timor have ongoing, funding and other relationships with civil society organisations and are committed to maintaining these involvements over the longer term, changes in focus are needed. The international organisations need to focus on information sharing and strengthening institutional linkages, while the CSOs need to focus on UN agencies and INGOs as potential sites of support, influence and change.

8.31 International financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Asia Development Bank are now working to help CSOs broaden their view of IFIs. Even so, few CSOs fully understand the IFIs function, their substantial political influence and control of monetary powers or their likely impact on the future of East Timor.

8.32 The presentation of the World Bank's Community Empowerment Programme (CEP) as being a form of local democracy has not been universally well received among CSOs. It has prompted suspicion and hostility from some. Some East Timorese have accessed information on IFIs in other countries that has raised concerns about the degree of control the IFIs will have over East Timor's directions and policy detail. Some have focussed particularly on the situation of heavily indebted countries in Africa and Latin America, and

the focus on economic restructuring rather than on human development, and regard these as paths to be avoided.

Civil Society – Funder

8.33 Funding sources for CSOs include international NGOs, international organisations, international foundations, trade unions and directly through bilateral aid programmes. Some funders are based in East Timor while others operate at distance. All will have funding priorities and most will have different requirements before funding will be provided. They will vary in their level of experience in and knowledge of East Timor. Virtually all will have monitoring and reporting requirements.

8.34 When a CSO establishes a funding relationship with a funder, it assumes certain responsibilities and obligations. Fulfilling these is important for continued funding of individual organisations and for civil society organisations as a whole.

8.35 Equally though, funders will have to assume greater responsibilities to ensure that they provide and manage funds in a way which strengthens rather than weakens organisations. In particular the tendency to disburse grants to suit a donor agenda or a donor timetable or to meet the need to be seen to spend money needs to be resisted. Equally provision of funds should increasingly be accompanied by higher levels of support for management, monitoring and planning where this is necessary.

8.36 Maintaining space for direct funding relationships between funders and CSOs, independent of government, is also critical for sustaining the capacity of civil society to develop and flourish. It enables civil society organisations to pursue their own priorities and encourages innovation. But there is also a need for information

on funding for CSOs and about activities and relationships to be shared. There is little to be gained from duplication, competition or the creation of parallel structures.

Co-operation and critical partnership: managing inevitable tension

8.37 Civil society is generally committed to the task of nation building and appears to be committed to trying to build working and effective partnerships with government. Some of these partnerships are already emerging while other mechanisms to enable partnerships to develop are yet to be put in place. But regardless of commitment, civil society's "checks and balances role" will almost inevitably cause some tension with others, notably government.

8.38 Civil society will, on one hand, have to act as a partner with the state and, on the other, publicly comment and criticise. Government may also feel justified in criticising civil society for perceived shortcomings. So, can partnership, broadly defined, sustain this tension?

8.39 If partnership is the route generally accepted by civil society then the challenges facing the country are such that mature and realistic approaches to partnership will have to be taken, criticism levelled when justified and an emphasis placed on constructive rather than personalised and destructive comment. For civil society the emphasis must be based upon its moral and intellectual power, not on the achievement of 'quasi-party' political power.

8.40 Alternatively, civil society could choose to remain outside of partnership with the state, pursuing its own activities, maintaining its distance, minimising the danger of appearing to become part of the state. In practice, both approaches may operate at the same time with different elements of civil society preferring particular approaches.

9. CONSIDERATIONS, QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The main purpose of this situation analysis was to begin to develop a picture of civil society in East Timor. This has involved the collation of information and data from a variety of sources and has produced the analysis presented in the last two sections. Based on this analysis some considerations, questions and recommendations are set out below.

On Nation Building

9.2 The situation analysis demonstrates that a solid core of CSOs exist in East Timor to participate in nation building. The simplicity of this statement however in no way underestimates the challenges which exist to enable CSOs to participate constructively in development processes. Support and assistance to respond to the aspirations of civil society to participate in the nation building process will need to be provided. The exact nature of this support and assistance will need to be decided but based on the material contained in the National Development Plan and the outcomes of the popular consultation document a number of immediate options arise.

9.3 Before these however comes a very simple but at the same time complex ingredient – a genuine commitment to and belief in the involvement of CSOs. Experience worldwide has demonstrated that the involvement of CSOs often extends little beyond rhetoric and cosmetic acceptance, often to please donors or to legitimise actions. In East Timor the National Development Plan sets out an ambitious role for CSOs. It is to be hoped that this ambition now extends to the Plan's implementation.

9.4 Underpinning the involvement of CSOs is a broader understanding of the role of the citizen and by extension, citizen's organisations, in nation building. To address this the development and implementation of a civic education programme focusing on the central theme of participation in nation building could begin. Such a programme could focus primarily on the promotion of debate and dialogue amongst the citizens of East Timor on issues of concern to them. As such it

should be designed to take place over a sustained time period. It should allow adequate time to build civic education methodologies and skills and to develop appropriate materials for use. It should also seek to work as much as possible through existing CSOs which have capacity in this area, especially those with an expertise in popular education and communication.

Shaping development

9.5 At the national level, CSO leaders who are involved in a range of national planning issues need to be resourced to enable them to deal more effectively with the new demands placed upon them. A recent example of this is provided by the NDP process. CSO involvement in the implementation of the plan is now envisaged. It will be important that adequate attention is given to the development of the skills and analysis necessary to enable informed and constructive engagement. Equally CSOs will need to prioritise engagement with the National Development process. To date this has been limited.

9.6 To support the emergence of stronger participation at local level increased emphasis should be placed on the development and use of skills in participatory planning and development. This will require the development of a strong capacity to introduce and disseminate these skills throughout the districts via a variety of CSOs. As with financial management programmes, it is important that an East Timorese institution be supported to deliver programmes focusing on participatory methodologies.

9.7 Paralleling this opportunity to become more actively involved in national development planning is a requirement that CSOs commit themselves to engage in informed advocacy. Effective advocacy is not based on criticism alone. It is also based on clear information, thought out analysis and, in some cases, presentation of alternative perspectives and / or policy options. A number of CSOs have demonstrated considerable skills in doing this. However more broadly, CSOs will need to enhance

their own understanding of advocacy and the responsibilities that go along with it. Continued and enhanced engagement with communities is seen as particularly important in this respect.

Empowerment of women

9.8 In terms of future support for civil society organisations, there is clearly a need for further specific programs encouraging and supporting women's participation in decision making at all levels if the voices of women are to be heard and East Timor is to access the potential of its population.

9.9 The experience of the CEP project indicates the challenge. While a gender balance in committees was a requirement of the project, World Bank monitoring and evaluation shows that women's actual participation was low, they weren't making decisions and were often in traditional support roles such as supplying refreshments. So even if women are put into decision-making positions, this is no guarantee of genuine and effective participation in decision making. There is a need for a long term approach to women's involvement in decision making, including both additional training and more discussion within communities about the value of women's involvement and how to realise greater participation from women and men in community structures and processes.

9.10 Within the context of traditional structures, ways need to be found to encourage ongoing dialogue among men and women about the benefits of involving women in decision making and the value of utilising the full range of skills and ideas in the community. Otherwise, there are many examples internationally of where traditional roles and attitudes continue to constrain women—including in places such as Vietnam where women have had a very prominent formal role in political life. Supporting men and women to identify where women's contributions are being limited by gender stereotypes and to discuss the implications of this in terms of the community's development will be important in broadening the opportunities for women and for mobilising the village's assets.

9.11 Amongst CSOs a particular responsibility to mainstream gender equality issues and perspectives exists. This may be a slow and gradual process but it is one which effective CSO example can lead to an important multiplier effect in the wider community.

9.12 Based on discussions in this and in other reports it is recommended that:

- Action be taken to support efforts to tackle violence against women, particularly focussing on attitudes among young men. Particularly because so many of the population are under 15, there is a real possibility to influence the attitudes of the next generation of adult men. But the prominence of violence in East Timor's recent history is a powerful legacy. Consideration might be given to combining programs designed to build positive relationships with women with a broader focus on reconciliation.
- Supporting women's involvement in decision making at the district and village level and within CSOs should also be supported. The success of women in the Constituent Assembly elections provides an important opportunity to use local role models in discussing with communities the benefits that come from drawing on the full range of skills and talents within the local community. It is recommended that the civic education programme referred to in the "Our Nation, Our Future" document be supported and assisted by UNDP.⁷⁷

On CSO Governance

9.13 It is generally accepted that CSOs must play a role in monitoring and commenting on the activities of government to ensure that high standards of operation are maintained. However, equally important is a commitment by CSOs to make sure that high standards of operation are maintained within their own organisations. Many CSOs have grown quickly, some too quickly and are sometimes faced with daunting financial and organisational management responsibilities. These responsibilities need to be taken seriously.

9.14 Throughout this document the growing role of CSOs has been obvious. It should not be forgotten though that many of these groups have been in

⁷⁷ Planning Commission, *Our Nation, Our Future*, April 2002.

existence for a very short period of time and therefore expectations must be realistic. Care should also be taken to ensure that the weight of expectation is not such that it causes CSOs to collapse under it. In this regard particular attention may need to be given to supporting CSOs involved in increased levels of resource management. This may take the form of financial systems development, training or more likely in-house mentoring by qualified and experienced managers. The option of developing programmes in NGO management could also be explored.

9.15 Other forms of capacity enhanced will continue to be necessary. However, in the future capacity actions will need to be based in institutions and programmes run and delivered, as much as possible, by East Timorese. While external support and training expertise has been valuable it is not sustainable. Therefore mechanisms to enhance existing East Timorese institutional ability to deliver and organise training programmes, mentoring schemes, learning networks etc. should be explored.

9.16 In addition CSOs themselves should be encouraged to develop mechanisms to ensure high standards of operation and accountability. This might take the form of an accountability programme, to which CSOs would voluntarily subscribe.

Absorption capacity

9.17 Absorption capacity is an issue that will need careful consideration given the level of interest in providing support to CSOs. Strengthening existing assets and capacities is essential if CSOs are to effectively contribute to the development of civil society and of East Timor generally. Given the broad and ambitious nature of the objectives of some CSOs and the scope of the development challenge, there is an unwillingness to say no to funding. The history of constraints on civil society and uncertainty about the duration of external support may also play a role.

9.18 This does not mean that organisations have the capacity to deal effectively with the level of external resources provided, or that their priorities would coincide with those of the funder, in the

absence of financial assistance. There is also some evidence that those East Timorese NGOs that have some capacity are the main focus of donor assistance and are at risk of becoming over extended. All players need to encourage and engage in careful, honest assessment of what is realistic and achievable, rather than what is desired. More generally, this suggests that there would be value in giving priority to strengthening the capacity to plan among CSOs, and in focusing on a CSO's assets and how they might be strengthened.

9.19 CSOs, particularly outside of Dili, vary significantly in terms of their capacities and levels of organisational development. A new program of support needs to be designed in a way that is flexible and can provide differentiated and targeted support.

On the administrative context

9.20 Central government and ministries will develop and implement policies and programs based on the National Development Plan . Undoubtedly, the range of structural and process factors associated with how this government decision-making happens will have a major impact on civil society's role. It is not yet clear how government will organise to involve CSOs in the process. For example, will it set up committees or boards of inquiry in which citizens can participate? How will different departments relate to the range of CSOs relevant to their areas of responsibilities? Equally, how will the district or eventual regional level of government and administration develop its relationships with CSOs? These questions remain to be resolved.

9.21 "UNDP acknowledges the central role of NGOs in the process of building a new democratic system in East Timor and indeed in building the nation itself."⁷⁸ It is clearly necessary that an organisation such as UNDP should, through its wide range of programs, help to strengthen emerging processes. It should also take a lead role in facilitating other UN agencies to do this.

⁷⁸ Statement by Finn Reske-Nielsen, UNDP Representative & UN Development Coordinator at the 'Open Day' at the NGO Forum held on Tuesday 19 February 2002.

9.22 At the sub national level, concrete plans for the introduction of local or regional government have not yet been developed, though preparatory work has commenced. To assist this UNDP might consider ways in which it could support the development of tools, processes and mechanisms and strengthen relevant skills associated with community involvement at these levels. Such support could build on consultations undertaken to date by the central government and the district Administration. In particular the work begun through the Consultative Commission could be continued, possibly in association with the office of the President. In particular, there is a need to strengthen the role of the poorest sections of society through supporting processes to gather information on their views, concerns and opinions, and by strengthening understanding among the various layers of government of how to actively engage and empower poor and marginalised groups. Valuable models exist in other countries that could demonstrate how this was done (eg. South Africa).

9.23 Support now could also strengthen the position of local communities to participate in discussions about the form of any decentralised system of government when these eventuate. It could provide an opportunity to learn from mistakes elsewhere and develop institutional and personal relationships before formal structures of local governance are introduced, so that there is some experience and capacity on the ground on which to draw and build.

Building Civil Service Capacity

9.24 UNDP's program on strengthening the civil service includes a project on strengthening administration at the district level through capacity building programs that provide District Development Officers (DDOs) with practical hands on tools in areas such as project management and community participation.

9.25 The challenge now is to develop other kinds of support for civil society participation that could help give effect to intentions in the National Development plan. The plan says that the process of consultation used in its development will continue into the implementation and monitoring phases but

it is not clear how this will happen, particularly given limited capacity and resources at the district level. DDOs will play an important role in this process. However resources and structures are needed to facilitate their involvement.

9.26 The National Development Plan emphasises the importance of participatory processes and engagement with civil society. But it is unclear how government will build the capacity of its civil service to work constructively with civil society. For example, will they develop a common level of understanding of civil society among the civil service? How might civil service capacity development programs support mainstreaming of a role for and engagement with civil society? This could perhaps be integrated into initial civil service training and induction manuals or handbooks.

9.27 The governance and public sector management program for the civil service identifies over seventy projects for which it is seeking funding. It appears that only a small number of these deal explicitly with supporting and building the capacity of the civil service and CSOs to work together. This programme of support should enable the development within each department of participatory approaches that will enable them to involve civil society in policy and programming processes. Given the need identified in the last section to ensure parallel development of the governmental and civil society sectors this is particularly important.

Institutional liaison arrangements

9.28 At national level relationships will be built across a wide range of government departments. However it will be important that there is a centrally located bureau that will assist and encourage the development of good and constructive NGO-Government relations.

9.29 At present the NGO liaison function is located in the Office of Planning and External Assistance Management of the Ministry of Finance. Based on some international experience it is recommended that this office be strengthened and supported. In particular it is suggested that this office play an important role in supporting the development of participatory approaches in national government

structures, in conjunction with the Ministry for Internal Administration.

Supporting a twin track approach and permissive regulatory frameworks.

9.30 Earlier sections have addressed issues dealing with both administrative and CSO strengthening. It is important that both occur. Explicit efforts therefore are needed to ensure that civic strengthening and good governance are mutually reinforcing. For civil society to contribute to effective governance, community dynamism and social cohesion, it needs space to operate—a permissive legal/regulatory environment, and policy makers, decision makers and administrators that understand and value the role of civil society.

9.31 This may or may not require the development of legislation to govern CSO activities. However, if legislation is the preferred option, based on international practice, it is important that a number of principles be observed. These include:

- Ideally, the development of the regulatory framework should happen in partnership with key civil society organisations.
- Any regulation should ensure that fundamental principles such as the right to freedom of association are protected.
- Legislation should always be able to meet the test that it is enabling and facilitative rather than controlling or restrictive.
- This research has demonstrated that there are many different forms of CSO. Any future regulation must recognise and must develop instruments (multiple if necessary) to provide an enabling environment for the different organisations to carry out their activities.
- If future legislation envisages the development of a CSO registration system(s) it is important that the requirements and operation of such a registration system do not place an undue burden on CSOs. The operation of the registration system, wherever it is located, must be adequately resourced.

9.32 The development of legislation to govern the activities of civil society organisations is a complex but very important issue. If the Government chooses to pursue the legislative option, adequate support should be provided to it to access the best

possible advice. It is recommended therefore that UNDP, if requested by Government, provide a high quality international legal expert in this area to advise and support the development of such legislation.

Role of the Presidency

9.33 The previous section briefly identified that the office of the President has considerable potential to support and facilitate the functioning of civil society. Whatever the role that is identified it will be important that it is supported and resourced. In particular research into how comparable presidencies function in this regard could be explored.

Building Linkages and Partnerships

9.34 Chapters 7 and 8 outlined the range of intra-CSO relationships that exist or potentially exist. At present these relationships display a variety of characteristics, moving from genuine partnership on one hand to a more traditional and less progressive donor-recipient relationship on the other. (It appears that may be true across many of the different CSO relationships.) It is necessary that attention be given to the development of more genuine partnerships at all different levels. This will require an investment of time, resources and energy into trying to do things differently to promote stronger and more meaningful partnerships. A particularly important vehicle for this will be the many grants programmes provided by a number of donors. It is essential that these grants programmes increase their focus and related resource allocation to support the process of partnership building and communication.

Provision of information

9.35 Difficulties caused by inaccurate information and rumours have been referred to in previous sections. Equally the need for CSOs to have access to accurate information to enable them to participate more fully in development activities has been highlighted. To address the information deficit which clearly exists it is recommended that support be provided to enable a two way information programme to be developed. This

would focus on the provision of information to and between districts on issues relevant to CSOs. It would also seek to ensure that district level concerns and perspectives would be well known at national level.

Voluntarism

9.36 In the civic education campaign on nation building mentioned earlier particular attention should be paid to the issue of volunteerism and this should form a distinctive component in its own right. This could look at issues such as why volunteerism is important, the history of volunteerism in East Timor, volunteerism in other countries etc.

9.37 Consideration might also be given to the development of mechanisms for recognizing in kind contributions in funding applications. If this was accompanied by a requirement that a local contribution be made but could be met by in kind contributions it might help to reinforce the notion of volunteerism.

Recommendations for further research

9.38 In the time available to it this situation analysis could only hope to provide a point in time picture of civil society in East Timor. Given the importance of civil society, as evidenced in the National Development Plan, continued research into civil society and its role, structures and related issues will need to be undertaken. Different forms of support will also have to be provided to allow this research to happen, both financial and methodological.

9.39 A number of areas are proposed for future action:

- Training programmes on the design and use of participatory research approaches.
- Support for the development of methodologies to carry out participatory village profiles with a view to strengthening the focus on assets based development.
- Support for the development of social inclusion / poverty reduction mapping.
- Development of more detailed district profiles, including the development of district data bases of civil society organisations.

- Research into the role of CSOs as economic actors, particularly as employers.⁷⁹
- Research into the development of sustainable funding mechanisms for CSOs, including the possible development of a long term endowment fund.
- Ongoing development of a CSO Typology.
- More detailed research on the role of youth and youth organisations.
- Research into the evolving relationships between more formalised CSOs and traditional decision making structures.

⁷⁹ The research carried out at John Hopkins University on civil society in a number of countries could provide a useful model for this.

