

# **Timor-Leste: Halt Exploitation, Learn to Prosecute**

Achievements and Challenges in  
Implementing CT Project

Alita Verdial

Alola Foundation Timor-Leste

# Human Trafficking in Timor-Leste: Legal Frameworks

- **Human trafficking is a crime in Timor-Leste, according to the Immigration and Asylum Act, which states in Article 81**
- **New Penal Code Timor Leste (promulgated)**

# What is known about human trafficking in Timor-Leste?

Although awareness of human trafficking is generally low, there are a number of sources of information on human trafficking in Timor-Leste, including:

- Research reports

- International assessments

- Investigations and anecdotal evidence

# What is known about human trafficking in Timor-Leste?

## Research reports: Alola Foundation 2004

In 2004 Alola Foundation conducted an Anti-trafficking for Sexual Exploitation Needs Assessment in Timor-Leste with the following three objectives:

- To assess needs of victims of trafficking in sexual exploitation

- To uncover the scope of trafficking operations

- To understand the context of prostitution and efforts to combat trafficking in Timor-Leste

# What is known about human trafficking in Timor-Leste?

## Research reports: Alola Foundation 2004

The key findings of the current (as of 2004) situation include:

- Of the approximately 250 female sex workers in Dili at the time, 100 were from Timor-Leste, 60 from Indonesia, 35 from China, 30 from Thailand, 20 from the Philippines, and 3 from Australia
- According to the study's methodology, there were approximately 115 potential victims of trafficking in prostitution in Dili, none of which were Timorese citizens
- The study concluded that Timor-Leste was a **destination** country from female trafficked persons in sexual exploitation

# What is known about human trafficking in Timor-Leste?

## International Assessment: US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report

Since 2001, the US Department of State has produced an annual report evaluating foreign government's efforts to combat human trafficking in their countries. According to this year's report:

- Timor-Leste is a **destination** country for women from Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation.
- **Internal** trafficking of Timorese women and girls from rural areas and IDP camps to Dili for sexual exploitation is a problem
- Widespread displacement, poverty, and lack of awareness could lead to the county becoming a source for victims of trafficking
- An attempt was made to traffic Timorese women to Syria, pointing to concerns that Timor-Leste is at risk of becoming a country of **origin**
- There are unconfirmed reports of trafficking in men for forced labour

# What is known about human trafficking in Timor-Leste?

## International Assessment: US Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights

Every year the US Department of State submits a report on the human rights practices of foreign governments to the US Congress. In the 2007 report the following trafficking related issues were mentioned:

- Trafficking of women into the country for forced prostitution.
- Widespread lack of knowledge by the public, victims, and police
- Indications that the country may be targeted as a source country
- Reports of collusion between law enforcement officials and human traffickers

# What is known about human trafficking in Timor-Leste?

## International Assessment: US Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights

In the 2006 report:

- Concerns were raised over the possibility that the country was being targeted as a source country. Beginning in October, dozens of young women were approached regarding overseas job offers. It was generally thought that this scheme was intended to force women into prostitution.

# What is known about human trafficking in Timor-Leste?

## Investigations and anecdotal reports

- In 2006 young women were approached and offered jobs abroad but a local service provider became concerned and an investigation resulted. It is suspected that the recruiter intended to exploit the women once they were abroad.
- There have been reported attempts of recruitment efforts aimed particularly at IDPs.
- Reports of child selling and forced prostitution within Timor-Leste.
- Attempts at taking children abroad without following the legal process.
- Numerous reports of individuals being offered and accepting employment abroad and then failing to contact friends or family

# What is known about human trafficking in Timor-Leste?

## IOM verified trafficking incidences

- Domestic trafficking of boys and girls for the purposes of domestic servitude, agricultural labour, and sexual exploitation
- International trafficking of women and girls for forced prostitution.
- International trafficking of men for forced labour

# Halt to Exploitation, Learn to Prosecute (HELP) I & II Project Funded by US Embassy

- Fundasaun Alola works for the promotion of the rights of women and children in Timor-Leste, and the story of a Timorese woman trafficked in 1999 was the impetus for the creation of the Foundation
- IOM is the leading international organization in the fight against human trafficking, with 15 years experience implementing nearly 500 counter trafficking projects in 85 countries
- Project developed following Fundasaun Alola's research into sex trafficking affecting Timor-Leste (key recommendations)

# Alola-Iom Cont...

- Funded by the United States Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (G/TiP)
- What have done :
  - Raising awareness on human trafficking
  - Assisting in the Inter-Agency Trafficking Working Group
  - Capacity building for government, civil society, and media
  - Skills transfer and staff capacity building
  - Assistance to Victims of Trafficking

# MDG Spanish Fund

- supports the Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) to improve the conditions of women and girls in Timor-Leste through the protection of their rights and their empowerment
- support the establishment of legal frameworks to end domestic violence and human trafficking by enabling women and girls to claim their rights.
- These legal frameworks will establish norms, standards, and practices for the GoTL to operationalise programmes aimed at reducing vulnerability of women and girls as well as improving their protection.

# MDG Fund...

- focuses on budget as an influential policy instrument of the Government to ensure its financial commitment to programmes that will have impact on the lives of women and girls.
  - *Conduct quarterly counter-trafficking stakeholder meetings*
  - *Develop and implement awareness raising public information campaigns*
  - *Assist in the development of a national plan of action*
  - *Develop a national referral mechanism*
  - *Assist in building capacity of suco councils and district administrators*

# Post-conflict

- 1999 crisis: NGOs focused on demands for justice
- 2006: resulted in displacement
- Government priorities focused on displacement
- unemployment
- GBV
- Education system weak
- No vocational training: school leavers facing unemployment
- Different UN mandates: UNAMET , UNTAET, UNTIL and UNMIT
- Security sector issues: 2006 crisis, low level so professionalization in the law enforcement sector. Splintered mandates between international police forces, local police forces, and international and national military forces
- Sustainability issues with changing administration and UN missions

# National Capacities

- Government capacities are low
- Civil society was lacking knowledge, but good desire to address the issue
- Ministries facing challenges: lack of coordination between ministries.
- Lack of trained personnel in line ministries. Ex: provedoria/Ombudsman Office not addressing human trafficking issues, focused on crisis and still a new institution
- Law enforcement: judges and lawyers not trained. Language issues, international judges.

**OBRIGADO**