



## Gender in La'o Hamutuk Practice

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La'o Hamutuk's *Vision* is that the women and men of Timor-Leste will control a transparent, just and sustainable development process which respects all people's cultures and rights. However, widespread discrimination from Timor-Leste's history and culture until today has made it more difficult for women to participate in decision-making, as well as to enjoy the benefits of Timor-Leste's natural and human resources.

Although La'o Hamutuk (LH) doesn't have a separate gender research team, we try to include a gender perspective in all our work, exploring the impacts of policies and programs on women and children and encouraging women's participation in decision-making. The following are a few examples of how this was done during 2010:

- In preparing our *Surat Popular (SP)* on the Land Law, LH consulted with Fokupers and Rede Feto for a gender perspective, as well as with Mana Pam. We also ensured that women were equally represented in the pictures, and in strong, active roles (which required asking the artist to redo several drawings). The SP conveys information in a way that can be understood by people who are not confident readers.
- When LH facilitated SP discussions with the communities of Comoro and Fomentu, we made extra efforts to encourage women's voices.
- Our Submission on the Civil Code includes a summary of how land laws will specifically affect women, and are likely to disadvantage them more than men even when gender-neutral language is used.
- LH recorded data on women's participation in the NAPA (Climate Change Adaptation policy) consultations and used this data to lobby for more extensive, community level consultations on climate change. We highlighted the need to involve vulnerable groups, including women. (This was a technique LH had developed for *Rede ba Rai's* (Land Network) monitoring of the 2009 consultation on the Land Law.)
- In our survey of farmers, LH spoke extensively on how best to include women, including:
  - Trying to speak to equal numbers of men and women.
  - While men are attending a "formal" meeting or chatting to important outsiders, other researchers talk to women in their homes, around kitchens, etc.
  - Running focus groups with women.
- LH did presentations to women's groups in Baucau, and was a key liaison between *Rede ba Rai* and women's groups. one of few women active in *Rede ba Rai*, Ines from La'o Hamutuk plays an essential role in her informal talks with women about land issues.

- Our monitoring and analysis of the pilot land titling project of *Ita Nia Rai* in Liquiçá and Manatuto emphasizes the importance of guaranteeing the rights of women to claim their land rights. We monitored the *Ita Nia Rai* Community Meetings in Aileu to see how INR respects the right of women to discuss land issues.
- LH monitors participation of women in Public Consultations on Land Policy by the Minister of Justice. Our February 2010 *Bulletin* reported that 11 district meetings, 46 women and 189 men spoke.
- Women often bear the greater burden of feeding their families, and they tend to work more in the informal sector. Because they have less access to the cash economy, women are more dependent on access to productive assets such as land. LH's focus on food sovereignty addresses some fundamental issues for the health and well-being of women and children.
- In addition, we consistently urge the state budget to give higher priority to primary education and basic health care, rather than male-oriented spending like overseas scholarships to study petroleum engineering. We criticized the allocation of \$31 million in the 2011 budget to petroleum infrastructure feasibility studies, while agriculture (the livelihood for 80% of Timor-Leste's population, in which women have a major role) is only allocated \$15 million.
- Water and sanitation infrastructure provide more support for women (as compared with electricity), and we urge more attention to this area. (The 2011 State budget allocates \$497 million for electricity but only \$25 million to water and sanitation infrastructure.)
- We also criticized the rapid spending of Timor-Leste's petroleum wealth and imminent loan agreements, which are stealing or borrowing from the birthright of future generations of Timorese women and children. Many of the current spending priorities (veteran's benefits, pensions for former office-holders, petroleum infrastructure, scholarships in technical fields, military and police) provide more jobs and benefits to men than to women.
- Many have written about the gender implications of international trade, such as Free Trade Agreements imposing policy restrictions on health care such as pharmaceuticals. La'o Hamutuk's work to increase awareness of the implications of the ASEAN Free Trade Agreements for Timor-Leste addresses this concern.
- La'o Hamutuk continues our own journey to increase our understanding of gender issues. A key part of this relates to the family responsibilities of staff - both men and women. Gender sensitivity is supporting not only women's home responsibilities, but also male staff who model more egalitarian gender roles. Strategies include:
  - Flexibility to allow kids to come to the office if other childcare falls through.
  - A generous policy for maternity and paternity leave.
  - Recognizing that Timorese staff with family responsibilities are often unable to go to events outside of normal work hours, and adopting flexible alternatives.
  - Allowing international staff to take unpaid leave to carry out family responsibilities.
  - Affirmative policy to recruit more women to our staff and board, and as volunteers.
  - Special attention to involve women speakers in our public meetings and radio programs.
  - A zero-tolerance policy for pornography and gender bias in our workplace.