

# Hand-in-hand towards Progress

by

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# Fokupers

- An East Timorese NGO, founded in 1997
- Works on women's issues, especially victims of violence
- Areas of work:
  1. Assistance and counselling for women victims of violence
  2. Education and advocacy on women's rights
  3. Organising women's groups in the rural areas

# Experiences with international partners

*(Individuals & Organisations)*

1. Donors
2. On secondment from international agencies
3. Volunteers

# The impacts on East Timorese Women

- Motivates and increases self confidence to work in strengthening women
- Unveil the domestication of women's issues (e.g. Domestic Violence)
- Enhances the capacity of individuals as well as organisations
- Broaden the perspective of Timorese women

# Challenges

- Inflexibility in project implementation; greatest emphasis on the realization of project activities without consideration of the local situation that is crucial for optimising projects' impacts.
- Emphasis on professional relationship; Inter-personal relationships are less developed
- Constant change of personnel, results in changes of approach, risking project's continuity

## ... challenges

- Gap in capacities, need time to adjust work pace/rhythm
- Certain cultural practices place additional burden on East Timorese women
- Many taboos in the Timorese society hinders development of knowledge, e.g. knowledge on sexuality

# Obstacles

- Government's policy on language favours Portuguese; thus hampers the contributions by foreigners of non-Portuguese background
- Hard for non-Tetun or Indonesian speaking foreigners to work in East Timor
- The attitude of know-it-all of foreign partners on one hand and inferiority complex of Timorese on the other hand; hampers a mutually strengthening work relationship

## ...obstacles

- Lack of understanding of local conditions results in the deployment of inappropriate strategies. Weakens both the movement and work relationships (inter and intra organisations)
- Tutor – pupil relationship in the context of ‘capacity building’ hinders the exploration of local capacities

# Conclusions

- Work relationship with internationals is unavoidable
- Many lessons can be learned for the development of TL women
- An inflexible relationship will destroy the ‘sense of humanity & solidarity’
- If the relationship is too flexible, the movement for social change that benefits women will not advance
- Thus, there is the need for the ‘art’ to build a relationship with the touch of ‘sense of humanity & solidarity’, for the movement to progress.