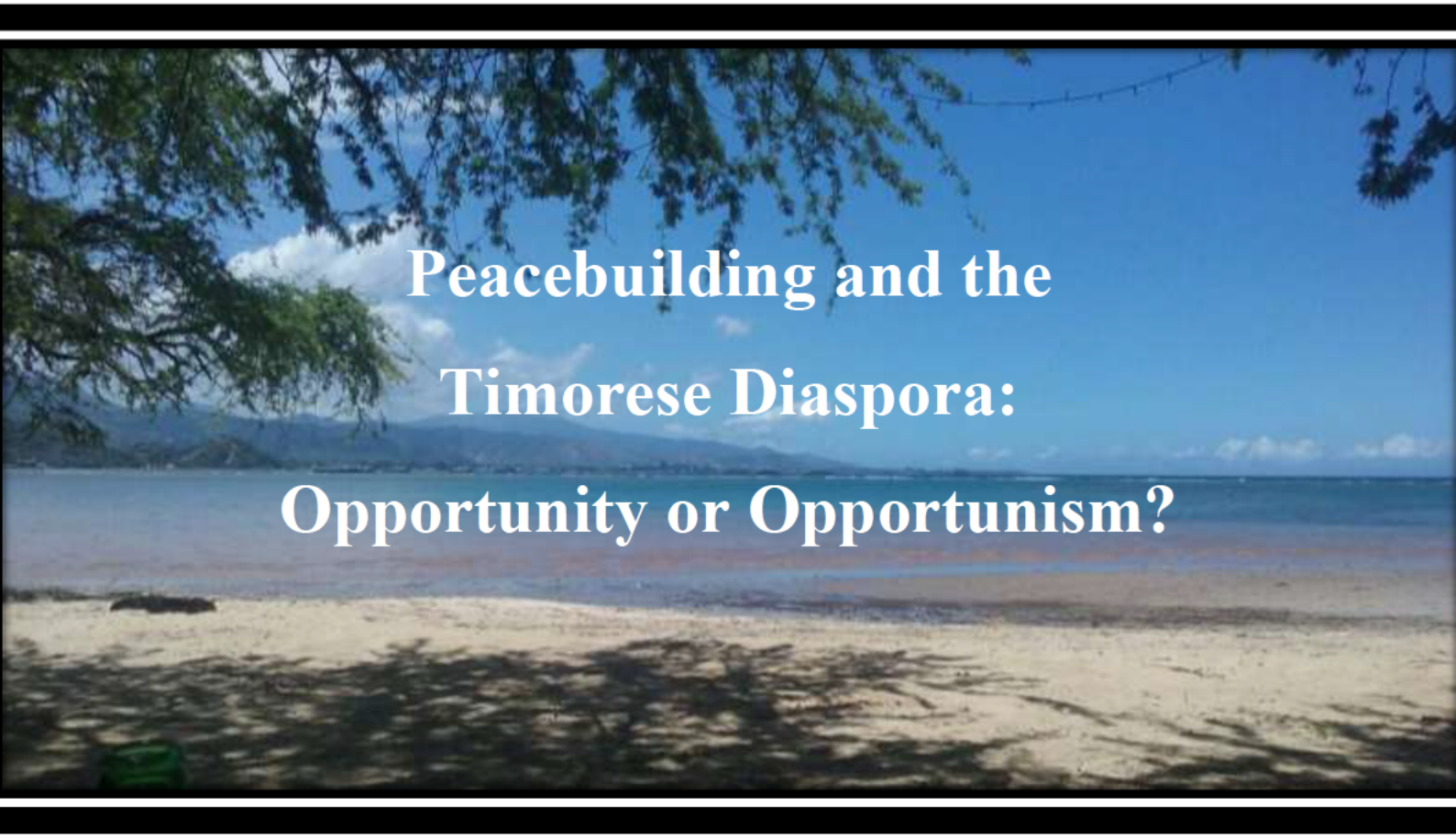

Peacebuilding and the Timorese Diaspora: Opportunity or Opportunism?

Ursula De Almeida

Bachelor of Landscape Architecture, University of Canberra

For the award of Master of Philosophy

University of New England

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Abstract

This study looks at the Australian Timorese diaspora to answer the question: what roles did the diaspora play in conflict transformation processes in Timor-Leste? Participants in the research include Timorese Australians who had left before 1998 and returned to Timor-Leste; Timorese scholarship students who studied at Australian universities, since they most likely had contact with Timorese Australian communities, and development workers who have worked in Timor-Leste. There is an increasing interest in diaspora and their roles in peacebuilding in their home countries. This thesis aims to contribute to this field of research by describing lessons learnt after 20 years of independence in Timor-Leste. Furthermore, this thesis provides an analysis of diasporas' roles in peacebuilding and development, noting their ability to move between insider and outsider roles. Interview data were analysed along three key themes: diaspora returning to Timor-Leste; perceptions of diaspora Timorese, and nation-building. Using indigenous and autoethnographic methodologies, together with reflexive thematic analysis, it was found that Timorese diaspora and student participants have a strong sense of cultural identity, experiences of resistance and resilience, and feeling of belonging to the Timorese nation-state. Many factors created divisions between returning diaspora and the local Timorese. These include peacebuilding programs led by international organisations, changes in working languages, trauma, and political conflicts. By building connections, grass-roots Timorese, Timorese diaspora, returned Timorese students, development workers, and stakeholders can collaborate on the development of Timor-Leste.

Keywords: Timor-Leste, diaspora, peacebuilding, post-conflict development, nation-building

Preface

As is the custom in Timorese culture, I will introduce myself. I grew up as part of the Timorese diaspora community in south-western Sydney during the struggle for independence, arriving in 1979 from Portugal. My parents met when they were students in Lisbon. Our ancestors from my paternal grandmother are from the mountainous region of Basartete. Aires, my father was born in Liquiça during the Japanese occupation period, and his father was very active in supporting the Australian diggers. Our family were active in political activism in Australia from the 1980s, including raising awareness of Timor's struggle for self-determination through culture, advocacy, public demonstrations, and campaigning.

I first visited Timor-Leste on holiday in January 2002 with my cousin to learn more about our cultural roots. The visions conjured by the stories of the happy times that my father had told us about going out into the forests to go hunting and fishing for prawns in the streams. These were not the images that I saw. There were no longer any trees and birds, and no clear running streams. There were destroyed buildings all over Dili, bare hills and dust. We had the opportunity to travel out to the Districts and I vividly remember going to Balibo on a monsoonal day, feeling the eeriness of the empty buildings, and seeing the small, sealed coffin boxes containing human remains. I returned to Timor-Leste in 2003 with the intent to have a Christmas holiday, and unexpectedly started working in what I thought was a volunteer job. I intermittently worked in Timor-Leste in several different roles until 2015. Finally, I visited Timor-Leste in 2017 for my grandmother's *kore metan* (taking off black mourning symbols one year after death). Due to COVID-19 I was unable to return for a visit in 2020.

I was educated in English and have some knowledge of Tetum and Portuguese at a conversational level. At home, we were encouraged to speak English to assimilate into

Australia and to facilitate my parents' understanding of English in Australia. Portuguese was the first language I spoke. I later began learning to speak and write in Tetum when studying at university.

Certification

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software, and conclusions reported in this thesis are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Further, I acknowledge that I have a relative in the Timorese diplomatic service, and this might be perceived to constitute a possible conflict of interest.

[redacted]

16 January 2023

Ursula De Almeida's Signature

Date

Acknowledgments

My respect to all Timorese who gave, and dedicated, their lives for their motherland Timor-Leste, never giving up on their dreams of freedom and self-determination. My sincere gratitude to all Timorese and friends who continue to work for peace in Timor.

I would like to give a big thank you to everyone that participated in all iterations and phases of my research. I've enjoyed interviewing and chatting with all of you. Some made me laugh, some sad, and all gave me a lot to think about. One friend advised, "Give yourself thinking time." Whenever I was feeling overwhelmed, listening back to the interviews really gave me the motivation to keep going.

What began as a study on Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste (FALINTIL) and its reintegration, then moving to diaspora and peacebuilding, has become so much more than I expected. For this, I would like to thank my supervisors Dr Johanna Garnett and Professor Helen Ware. Thank you for your patience, encouragement, and gentle persuasion. I'd also like to thank my previous supervisors Dr Rebecca Spence, Associate Professor Bob Boughton, and Dr Jack Maebuta for their understanding and for working with me during the difficult times. It was incredible to share those moments of light with Rebecca, Bob, and his wife Deborah in 2006 and 2007 in Timor-Leste, when it felt like it was all too much. Thank you for making the journey over to Timor-Leste.

I'd also like to thank everyone that joined me in Shut Up and Write sessions. The same goes for everyone that hosted and joined online student communities, like the HASSE coffee catch ups, Zooms with peacebuilding postgraduate students and the UNE Research conference. Thank you for the camaraderie online; I felt it! Also, thank you to everyone who gave me support, my friends and colleagues, and even acquaintances. To all who asked how I was going, especially over years and years, a big thank you.

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My biggest and deepest thanks to all of my extended family. I wouldn't be here without all of you, my biggest cheer squad. Many times, I heard the words, "Not another Almeida" or "There are so many of you." Thank you for all the love and support.

To my grandmother, who always told us how important education is. To my aunts and uncle for their strength, dedication to education, enduring support and comments on the thesis. To my mother, who instilled in me a love of music and the arts. To my sister for always supporting me when I had to give up work. To my brother for giving me a reprieve when I didn't know I needed it. To my second mother for supporting and joining my father to fight for Timor, while helping to put us through university. To my father, who spent countless hours dedicating his life and never giving up on the dream of freedom for Timor-Leste and better lives for the Timorese people. He was always studying and learning, always thinking about how to apply his knowledge to Timor. And always fighting, from his youth until now.

I dedicate this thesis to my father, Aires Eddie De Almeida, pictured here in Suku Liurai, Aileu.

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List of Acronyms

ACCCTO: Timorese China Commercial Association in Timor-Leste

AETA: Australian East Timor Association

APODETI: *Associação Popular Democrática Timorense* (Timorese Popular Democratic Association)

ASDT: *Associação Social-Democrata Timorense* (Timorese Social Democratic Association)

AVI: Australian Volunteers International

CAVR: *Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor-Leste* (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor)

CHART: Clearing House for Archival Records on Timor

CIDAC: *Centro de Intervenção Para o Desenvolvimento Amílcar Cabral* (Amilcar Cabral Intervention Centre for Development

CNE: *Commissão Nacional de Eleições* (National Commission for Elections), Timor-Leste

CNRT: *Congresso Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor* (National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction)

COVID-19: Coronavirus Disease of 2019

CO_2: Carbon dioxide

CSO: Civil Society Organisation

CPLP: *Comunidade dos Países de Lingua Portuguesa* (Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries)

DAA: Diaspora Action Australia

DDI: Diaspora Direct Investment

DANIDA: Danish International Development Agency

DEMAC: Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination

DFAT: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia

ETAN: East Timor & Indonesia Action Network

ETCC: East Timor Cultural Centre

ETHRC: East Timor Human Rights Centre

ETRA: East Timor Relief Association

ETSA: East Timor Students Association

EUDiF: European Union Global Diaspora Facility

FADTRC: Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee

FALINTIL: *Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste* (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of Timor-Leste)

FRETILIN: *Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente* (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor)

GoTL: Government of Timor-Leste

HASSE: Faculty of Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences, and Education

INGOs: International Non-Government Organisations

IOM: International Organisation for Migration

ISSP: International Social Survey Programme

KOTA: *Klibur Oan Timor Asuwain* (Timor Peoples' Confederation)

MDGs: Millennium Development Goals

METAC: Melbourne East Timor Activity Centre

MF: Ministry of Finance (Timor-Leste)

MNEC: Ministry of Foreign of Affairs and Cooperation (Timor-Leste)

NSW: New South Wales

NGOs: Non-Government Organisations

NT: Northern Territory

OPMT: *Organização Popular Mulheres Timor-Leste* (Popular Organisation of East Timorese Women)

OTWs: Overseas Timorese Workers

PhD: Doctor of Philosophy

PSGs: Peacebuilding and State-building Goals

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SIDS: Small Island Developing State

TAC: Timor Australia Council

TAV: Timorese Association Victoria

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UDT: *União Democrática Timorense* (Timorese Democratic Union)

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

UNAMET: United Nations Mission in East Timor (11 June 1999 to 31 August 1999)

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNOCHA: United Nations Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

UNTAET: United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (25 October 1999 to 20 May 2002)

UNTL: *Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e* (National University of East Timor)

USAID: United States Agency International Development

USA: United States of America

VIC: Victoria

VNR: Voluntary National Review (of SDGs)

WA: Western Australia

WHO: World Health Organisation

List of Translations

A Guerra da Beatriz: Beatriz's War

Adat: Tradition, culture

Assimilado: the assimilated (the term for a certain category of people in Portuguese colonies in Africa — Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau)

Balibo: Village near the border between Timor-Leste and West Timor, also the name of a film

Buibere: Timorese woman

Casa dos Timores: Timorese People's House

Chega!: lit. Enough! The name of the report released by CAVR

Dada lia: lit. pulling words, to have a conversation

Foho Ramelau: Ramelau Mountain, Timor-Leste's highest peak

Gerasaun foun: New generation

Haida: Dogfish mother

Hamriik Ukun Rasik An: Stand up for independence

K'aad 'aww: Shark song

Kadalak Suli Mutu: Small streams

Kalan: Every night

Katupa: Woven rice parcel

Kolele Mai: What is the reason?

Kore Metan: lit. taking off black, celebration of person's life one year after their death and symbolic gesture of taking off the black mourning clothes and symbols

Koro Loriku: Lorikeet choir

La'o Hamutuk: Walk Together

Liberdade: Freedom, Liberty

Mai Fali Eh: Come back

Mestiço: Timorese person of mixed race, also can be a term used for middle class

Malae: Foreigner or outsider

Maubere Buibere: Timorese man Timorese woman

Maubere Timor: (Humble) man of Timor

Nacionalismo: Nationalism

Patria Patria: Homeland Homeland

República Democrática de Timor-Leste: Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

Saudades: Longing

Soldado: Soldier

Suku: Village

Tais: Handwoven traditional textile. Inscribed in 2021 (16.COM) on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding

The Boîte: Name of multicultural music organisation in Melbourne

The Boîte concert: A concert held in 2012, called *Mai Fali Eh* – Songs of Timor-Leste

Tia*: Auntie*

Timor Loro sa'e: East Timor

Timoroan: Timorese person

Timor Oan'S: Timor Oan'S (formerly Timor Oan Sira, plural of Timor Oan) is a group of Timorese children of all ages in Australia

Tio: Uncle

Trabalhista: Labour (party)

Tuba Rai Metin: Feet Firmly Gripping the Earth

Uma lisan: Family sacred house

Uma lulik: Sacred house

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Timor-Leste, the Newest Nation

Timor-Leste, the first new nation of the 21st Century, celebrated 20 years of independence in 2022. Whilst the peacebuilding and development processes of the new nation have been a popular subject of research, little has been written about the Timorese diaspora and their role in this field and era. More emphasis is placed on their political activism during the struggle for independence and self-determination (Crockford, 2007; Wise, 2006). Timorese diaspora are seen as job-takers, returning to take up political positions or high-paying jobs in post-conflict Timor-Leste, rather than as partners or contributors to Timor-Leste's development (Askland, 2005; Cotton, 2007; Guterres, 2006; Hughes, 2011).

The research on diaspora communities and their unique insider-outsider perspective is growing, particularly in their contributions to humanitarian assistance and local development initiatives (Cauchi, 2018). This is because:

> Increased understanding about what diasporas do and the value of their contributions is enabling government, non-government organisations (NGOs) and researchers to move beyond outdated discourses that frame diasporas predominantly as war financers and peace wreckers, towards a more nuanced approach that takes in contemporary realities. (Cauchi, 2018, p. 8)

This study focuses on the Timorese diaspora from Australia and their work in Timor-Leste's sustainable development, from within Timor-Leste and from Australia. Sustainable development has been defined "as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[1] While diaspora

[1] Taken from https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda.

may have contributed to the economic development of Timor-Leste, not all may have been working towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It is important to note that Timor-Leste was affected by Cyclone Seroja in April 2021, causing the worst flooding in history. In addition to this natural disaster, the rising case numbers of Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19) were compounded by the crowding of people in emergency shelters and camps. This was a stressful time for all Timorese people inside and outside of Timor-Leste. The research will include the efforts of the diaspora community to provide humanitarian relief and reconstruction funds for the floods and assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study includes a review of the peacebuilding and development frameworks in Timor-Leste, such as the liberal peace-building model based on Boutros-Ghali's *An Agenda for Peace*. The conceptual frameworks include the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), time period 2000–2015, the SDGs target period 2016–2030, and the humanitarian-development-peace triple nexus (Barakat & Milton, 2020).

Finally, the research aims to contribute to the body of research on diaspora and peacebuilding, guide discussion, and develop guidelines for diaspora returning to Timor-Leste.

1.2 Relevance and Importance

This research includes both individual and community contributions, because Timorese culture is collective in nature. The main research question is: **What roles do Timorese diaspora communities in Australia play in conflict transformation processes and development in post-independent Timor-Leste?**

The research sub-questions are:

- How are the diaspora from Australia who came to work or volunteer in Timor-Leste perceived?

- What is influencing or dissuading diaspora from Australia to work or volunteer in Timor-Leste after independence?
- What expectations and hopes do Timorese who studied in Australia and development workers have of diaspora communities in the development of Timor-Leste?
- Are there any obstacles for Timorese diaspora to work in the development of Timor-Leste?
- How can Timorese in the diaspora contribute to working towards the achievement of the SDGs?

This study was developed to gain a deeper understanding of Timorese diasporas' roles in conflict transformation processes, the negotiations to end violent conflict, the reconstruction phase, and post-independence peacebuilding after the 1999 popular consultation. I began with the hypothesis that diasporas' positive contributions to peacebuilding in Timor-Leste outweigh the negative contributions, as it is perceived that some diaspora members[2] signed *The Balibo Declaration* (30 November 1975) for Portuguese Timor to become part of Indonesia, and the integration with Indonesia supporters. I also argue that the diaspora can further contribute to peacebuilding, with coordination and collaboration. My study addresses the recent humanitarian efforts from Timorese diaspora in Australia, and how they can fit into the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Further, the research analyses whether the diaspora are considered to be part of local or international development, or both, and what roles they adopt.

I have experience as a member of the Timorese diaspora community in Sydney and have had countless conversations with other diaspora members. For this reason, I wanted to explore the experiences of Timorese who worked in Timor-Leste in the lead up to the popular

[2] João Carrascalão, one of the signatories, was a member of the diaspora in Sydney, and part of the UDT party's political activism.

consultation and withdrawal of Indonesian troops, as well as after independence and analyse whether political activism influenced their decision to return.

The three research objectives are:

1. to contribute to the current field of research into diaspora and peacebuilding;
2. to answer the question of whether diaspora are, or are perceived to be, opportunists who only came back to improve their status and get high-paying jobs; and
3. to provide recommendations for opportunities to build mutual understanding and work together for Timor-Leste's development.

This research is influenced by and refers to previous studies on diaspora communities. Diaspora Action Australia (DAA)[3] established its Learning Network to develop a policy brief on the role of diaspora in peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, and development work. I know of a former staff member of Australian Volunteers International (AVI) that conducted some research on the possibilities and opportunities of diaspora volunteerism that may have contributed to the ethos of AVI Pacific People.[4] The European Union has established the European Union Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF)[5] to conduct work on diaspora communities in Europe. Also, the Australian Parliament recently released a report into the issues facing diaspora communities in Australia, tabled on 4 February 2021. These reports and insights demonstrate the growing interest in diaspora and their influence on their home countries.

[3] DAA (formerly the Humanitarian Crisis Hub) worked with Australian diaspora organisations that promote the human rights of people living in war and conflict, closed 30 November 2021 (http://diasporaaction.org.au/our-work/).

[4] See www.avi.org.au/pacific-people-recruitment and www.pacificpeople.com for more information.

[5] EUDiF is a pilot project funded by the European Union's Directorate-General for International Partnerships under the Development Cooperation Instrument. The project runs from June 2019 until the end of 2022 and is implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (retrieved 16 May 2021 from https://diasporafordevelopment.eu/who-we-are).

1.3 Discussion on the Definition of Diaspora

There are varying and contested definitions of diaspora. In general, diaspora refers to "a distinct identity relating to a community of origin" (Agunias & Newland, 2012, p. 15). The Australian Parliament uses the following definition:

> … a group of people, bound together by a common ethno-linguistic and/or religious identity, who no longer reside in their home country … Though once specific to groups of people who had fled their home country due to fear of persecution, the term diaspora has progressively adopted a far broader definition to reflect the contemporary trends of globalisation and transnationalism. (Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee [FADTRC], 2021, p. 2)

The definition in the *Timor-Leste Diaspora Engagement Policy 2023–2027* (henceforth referred to as the Engagement Policy), includes non-Timorese nationals but they are not included in this study. The Engagement Policy states that the Timorese diaspora are:

> Timorese migrants or their descendants living abroad who maintain links with home based on a shared sense of history, identity, or mutual experiences in the destination country. The Timorese diaspora also includes non-Timorese nationals who have a sense of affinity and belonging with Timor-Leste and who are willing to contribute to its development. (Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Foreign of Affairs and Cooperation [MF & MNEC], 2022, p. 2)

Much of the research about diaspora relates to or focuses on their settlement in their adopted countries (FADTRC, 2021), labour migration and remittances to families and organisations (Nurse, 2019; Soares, 2015; Wigglesworth, 2022), and investment opportunities (Geib et al., 2021); indicating that the diaspora present an avenue for

cooperation between donor countries and developing nations. There is also a growing body of research into how diaspora contribute to peacebuilding, in their home countries and in their adopted countries such as in Somaliland (Galipo, 2011), Somalia (Arrey & de la Rosa, 2021), Sri Lanka, and South Sudan (Cauchi, 2018).

For the purpose of this study, diaspora refers to Timorese people that left during violent conflict or were already abroad, such as Timorese students in Portugal who did not return before the invasion by Indonesia on 7 December 1975. This research focuses on those who came to live in Australia, whether it be directly from Timor-Leste or other countries, prior to the 1999 referendum. Furthermore, this research includes participants from different generations, such as those who left in the 1960s and 1970s, and those who did not see themselves as "elites" or fit within the definition of an elite (Close, 2016; Crockford, 2003). Of interest, Timorese both within Timor-Leste and in the diaspora communities, have been critical of the elite who have come back to take political positions in Timor-Leste (Askland, 2014; Close, 2016).

1.4 Focus and Scope

Timor-Leste is a half island that includes the exclave of Oe-cusse, Ataúro island, and Jaco island. Located about 700 km northwest of Darwin, Timor-Leste is one of Australia's closest neighbours.[6] The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [DFAT] (2021) Figure 1.1 below presents a map of Timor-Leste and its proximity to Australia.

[6] For more information, see https://www.palmscheme.gov.au/countries/timor-leste.

Figure 1.1

Map of Timor-Leste

Source: From Macky, I. (2018.). *Timor-Leste East Timor.* https://ian.macky.net/pat/map/tl/tl_blu.gif

Timor-Leste was colonised by Portugal from the 16th century to 1975, with a brief occupation by Japan during World War II[7]. After introducing coffee in the mid-19th century, and introducing taxes in 1908, Portugal gained stronger control of Timor-Leste. Local uprisings, such as those led by Dom Boaventura, were crushed by Portugal by bringing in soldiers from its colonies in Africa (Braz, 2014; Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor [CAVR], 2005a; Joliffe, 1978; Kammen, 2003).

[7] As mentioned in the *Timor-Leste-born Community Information Summary* (Australian Government Department of Home Affairs, 2018), "The first migrants from the then Portuguese Timor arrived in Australia in 1943, during World War II when about 600 (Portuguese and Timorese) people were evacuated. All but 35 returned after the war." For more information, see https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/files/2016-cis-timor-Leste.PDF.

Portugal itself was under the authoritarian regime of Salazar and later of Marcelo Caetano, where political freedoms were suppressed from the late 1920s to 1974. While most Western countries had undertaken decolonisation in the 1960s, Portugal maintained control over colonies such as Portuguese Timor, even though the United Nations (UN) declared it to be a non-self-governing territory in 1960. The liberation wars in African colonies and the Carnation Revolution in April 1974 led to the fall of Portugal's oppressive regimes (CAVR, 2005a; Joliffe, 1978).

Many Timorese left during the decolonisation process from Portugal[8] for various reasons, including tertiary study, to escape violent conflict, and to avoid economic uncertainty (Hill, 2002). At this time, prior to and after the Carnation revolution, Timorese began forming political associations. The three main parties formed were the *Associação Social-Democrata Timorense* (Timorese Social Democratic Association [ASDT]), later renamed *Frente Revolucionária do Timor-Leste Independente* (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor [FRETILIN]), which campaigned for outright independence, the *União Democrática Timorense* (Timorese Democratic Union [UDT]) party campaigned for independence whilst maintaining links to Portugal[9] and *Associação Popular Democrática Timorense* (Timorese Popular Democratic Association [APODETI]) favoured integration with Indonesia. Other parties included *Klibur Oan Timor Asuwain* (Timor Peoples' Confederation [KOTA]) and the *Partido Trabalhista* (Labour Party) (CAVR, 2005a; Organização Popular Mulheres Timor-Leste [OPMT] 2020; Joliffe, 1978). Some students stayed abroad, while others returned to Timor-Leste in 1974[10]. Most of these students that

[8] Kammen points out there were two decolonisation processes, first from Portugal in 1974-1975 and then from Indonesia/Portugal in 1999–2002: "the resistance was sufficient to hold out until political change in Jakarta, coupled with international attention, would make possible a double decolonization" (Kammen, 2003, p.70).

[9] UDT later changed to supporting independence by signing a coalition agreement with FRETILIN in January 1975 (OPMT, 2020).

[10] Of the students that returned to Timor from Portugal in 1974, only one, Abílio Araújo, went to Portugal before the invasion by Indonesia (OPMT, 2020).

returned to assist in the transition to decolonisation, were later killed by Indonesian troops (Da Silva, 2011; Hill, 2002).

A coup ensued in August 1975 by UDT to establish control of Timor. Within 10 days, FRETILIN responded with a countercoup. As the violence escalated, Timorese people began fleeing to Australia on cargo ships (Askland, 2005; Wise, 2006). Members from the UDT and other parties fled to West Timor and the Portuguese administration fled to Ataúro Island north of Dili, slowing down the process of decolonisation that began in 1975, and then abandoned Timor during the Indonesian occupation (CAVR, 2005a; UN 2000).

Meanwhile, under Suharto's leadership, Indonesia was viewed as an anti-Communist power in the southeast Asian region, gaining political favour and support from the United States of America (USA) and Australia. Indonesian armed forces began covert operations across the border in December 1974, training APODETI members in military operations. By October 1975, Indonesian large-scale military operations ensured the occupation of villages in the border region (CAVR, 2005a). During this time, five journalists from Australian news channels were killed in the border village of Balibo on 16 October 1975 (Stewart, 2022).

FRETILIN declared the independence of Timor-Leste on 28 November 1975. The next day, in Bali, representatives from four Timorese political parties signed a declaration under pressure and duress. This declaration is known as the Balibo Declaration, or the declaration of Bali (Barreto Soares, 1996: Crockford, 2007), which stated that Portuguese Timor was to be integrated into Indonesia. Shortly after, on 7 December 1975, Indonesian paratroopers landed in Dili Harbour and advanced across the country. On 22 December 1975, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed resolution 384, recognising "the inalienable right of the people of East Timor to self-determination and independence" (UN, 2000, p. 4). See Appendix F and Appendix G for a snapshot of events from 1512, when the

first Portuguese fleet arrived, during Portuguese colonisation, and Indonesian occupation up to the end of 1997.

1.5 Timor-Leste Conflict

> The war reached every village of Timor-Leste and profoundly influenced the lives of all East Timorese people.
>
> — CAVR, 2005, p. 13

The UN did not recognise the Indonesian occupation, and Portuguese Timor as it was known at the time, was considered to be a territory under Portuguese administration until 2002.[11] During the period of 1975 to 1979, levels of violent conflict were high, and many Timorese were killed or died from starvation (Hill, 2002). In addition, Timor-Leste was closed off from the rest of the world for the first 13 years of the Indonesian occupation (CAVR, 2005a).

In the 1980s, there were more waves of migration and displacement of Timorese families coming to Australia from other countries such as Portugal, Mozambique, and Angola (Wise, 2006). In the 1990s, a series of "embassy jumpers," or Timorese students in Indonesia seeking asylum in foreign embassies, came to Australia after the Dili Massacre (Crockford, 2003). The next movement of Timorese people was after the results of the 1999 UN-administered referendum were announced, with people being evacuated either to Darwin (UN, 2000) and later relocating to tent cities in Australia, or crossing the border into West Timor. The timeline in Appendix D shows the chronology of events that occurred between 1998 and the end of 1999.

[11] For more information, see www.un.org/dppa/decolonization/en/history/former-trust-and-nsgts.

In the period between the referendum in 1999 and the declaration of Timor-Leste's independence in 2002, some Timorese from the diaspora communities in Australia, Europe, and Africa returned to Timor-Leste. These diaspora members worked in their political parties in preparation for elections, and worked or volunteered in UN agencies, international non-government organisations, and advisory roles (Crockford, 2003; Guterres, 2006).

After the 1999 referendum, and during the first 20 years of independence from 21 May 2002, significant events occurred. The elections and the 2002 and 2006 crises are notable, yet exceed the scope of this thesis. While not comprehensive, the timeline in Appendix E aims to show events in Timor-Leste and corresponding events in the diaspora from 2000, when reconstruction was in full swing from 2002 until 2022.

The timelines in Appendix E, F and G have been prepared from a review of research literature (CAVR, 2005a; Department of Veterans Affairs, 2022; Durand & Cabasset-Semedo, 2009; Henriques-Gomes, 2019; Hill, 2002; Muižarājs, 2019; Ninnes, 2011; OPMT, 2020; UN, 2000).

1.6 Timorese Diaspora Communities

Diaspora communities play significant roles in their home countries, adopted countries, and worldwide through their networks with other diaspora communities and global networks. However, much of the work by diaspora communities is self-funded or, in some cases, carried out with support from Australian solidarity groups, not-for-profits, and some local councils. As noted in the recent *Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia* report, there are "a large number of volunteers as well as employees who regularly go above and beyond their paid work to assist people in the [general diaspora] community" (FADTRC, 2021, p. 14).

It is difficult to quantify exactly how many people self-identify as Timorese diaspora because the data do not include those born abroad to Timorese parents. According to the

EUDiF[12], 10,368 diaspora live in Australia while the 2021 Census in Australia states that 9,761 people living in Australia were born in Timor-Leste from 5,173 families.[13] In total, 11,105 people stated that they have Timorese ancestry, 5,086 were born in Timor-Leste, 5,540 were born overseas outside of Timor-Leste, and 5,510 were born in Australia. In addition, 5,676 people born in Timor-Leste were of Chinese ancestry, 1,216 of Portuguese ancestry, 109 of English ancestry and 102 of Indonesian ancestry.[14] According to the definition as stated in this study, diaspora would encapsulate those that identified as having Timorese ancestry. Furthermore, 2,281 people who were born in Timor-Leste arrived in Australia between 1971–1980, another 3,513 in 1981–1990, and another 2,499 in 1991–2000. A total of 1,230 held a bachelor's degree or higher.

Timorese who settled in Australia have maintained ties to their homeland through Timorese organisations and clubs, community events, working with the solidarity movement to hold protests, conferences, and cultural festivals. Many Timorese left during the civil conflict in 1975, anticipating that they would only stay for a short time in Australia and return once the conflict ended. However, once Indonesia invaded, many Timorese families decided to stay in Australia (Ezequiel, 2009) and continue to do so.

Global diaspora networks have been maintained along political party lines that were formed during the decolonisation process. For example, FRETILIN held an Extraordinary National Conference in Sydney in August 1998 with delegates travelling from around Australia, Mozambique, Portugal, Angola, and Timor-Leste (Walsh, 2001).

Some Timorese risked their lives to travel to Timor-Leste during the Indonesian occupation, at times smuggling items for the *Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de*

[12] For more information, see https://diasporafordevelopment.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CF_Timor-Leste-v.3.pdf.

[13] For more information, see https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/5206_AUS.

[14] Census respondents had the option of reporting up to two ancestries.

Timor-Leste (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of Timor-Leste [FALINTIL]) guerrilla fighters and the clandestine networks (OPMT, 2020). Many Timorese diaspora could not go to Timor-Leste if their names were on the "blacklist" or for fear of reprisals on family in Timor-Leste (CAVR, 2005b).

1.7 Conceptual Framework

This thesis is framed by the SDGs, the current UN development framework, as well as the MDGs that informed the East Timor National Development Plan in 2002. Prior to the MDGs and SDGs, the document *An Agenda for Peace* (Boutros-Ghali, 1995) was developed in 1992. This was the first document to define the concept of post-conflict peacebuilding. The second edition was published in 1995, 50 years after the UN was formed. The SDGs Roadmap for Timor Leste has not been integrated with the 2011-2030 Strategic Development Plan (SDP), but there has been some harmonisation, some alignment, with the goals and the framework is valid since Timor-Leste, as leader of the group of fragile states (g7+ group), ensured that SDG17 was included (Courvisanos & Boavida (2018).

Peacebuilding as a concept was first introduced by Galtung (1975) together with the concepts of negative peace, "the mere absence of direct violence" (Arrey & de la Rosa, 2021, p. 241) and positive peace, the "absence of any indirect form of structural and cultural violence" (Arrey & de la Rosa, 2021, p. 241) providing "conditions that enable people to live a full life" (Cauchi, 2018, p. 9). *An Agenda for Peace* "can be considered [peacebuilding's] official come-of-age" (Arrey & de la Rosa, 2021, p. 241).

In this document, post-conflict peacebuilding is loosely defined as "rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife; and building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations formerly at war" (Boutros-Ghali, 1995, p. 43). Furthermore, Boutros-Ghali describes peacebuilding as the counterpart of preventive

diplomacy, which seeks to avoid a crisis. Thus, post-conflict peacebuilding is a tool or method to prevent a recurrence of conflict (Boutros-Ghali, 1995).

The companion document, *An Agenda for Development* (Boutros-Ghali, 1994), outlines the UN's role in post-conflict development, such as in rebuilding mechanisms of governance, civil society, and judicial systems. Further on, the document details that "improved education, health and shelter, together with an increase in meaningful employment opportunities, will contribute directly to reducing poverty and its consequences." (Boutros-Ghali, 1994, p. 10). Both documents also discuss the role of civil society in peacebuilding, noting that:

> A vigorous civil society is indispensable to creating lasting and successful social development … Locally based NGOs, in particular, can serve as intermediaries and give people a voice and an opportunity to articulate their needs, preferences and vision of a better society. (Boutros-Ghali, 1994, para. 107, pp. 19–20)

In April 1999, a conference on strategic planning for Timor-Leste was held in Melbourne to garner technical knowledge and expertise of Timorese diaspora in Timor-Leste in preparation for the popular consultation a few months later (Freitas, 1999). Conference delegates were divided into working groups in governance, administration, and participation; economy, agriculture, and tourism; education; health; and infrastructure and environment.[15] The key outcomes from the conference are discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2. The foundational work for Timor-Leste's first strategic plan was developed at this conference with the aim of transitioning towards independence after a period of autonomy.

[15] The author attended this conference and was part of the infrastructure and environment group.

The "Melbourne Plan" was no longer relevant after the 1999 the post-popular consultation destruction and the socio-politic context, and in addition, not many Timorese participated in the plan's development (Noronha, 2016).

The first Strategic Development Plan was developed in 2002 after a nationwide consultation for a vision for 2020. During the development of the plan, international consultants were assigned to each working group that was formed for the development plan (Planning Commission, 2002, p. 11) while the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) was in administration between 25 October 1999 to 20 May 2002.

The UN introduced the MDGs in September 2000, followed by the SDGs, adopted by the UN Summit in September 2015 to include "a new way of working" (Howe, 2019, p. 7). The humanitarian-development-peace triple nexus is of interest to post-conflict development and the implementation of the SDGs. This nexus has been promoted by the current UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, and aims to break down the three 'silos' of humanitarian assistance, development, and peacebuilding and increase collaboration while enabling the growth of local operations (Barakat & Milton, 2020). Although some humanitarian actors criticise the triple nexus (Barakat & Milton, 2020), Howe (2019) argues that it offers a means to support the achievement of the SDGs.

Changes in humanitarian assistance delivery were discussed in 2016 at the Humanitarian Assistance Summit, culminating in the Grand Bargain Agreement that called for "engagement between humanitarian and development actors" (Howe, 2019; UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2016).[16] In addition, the 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015) was established as a development framework encompassing peace and humanitarian issues (Howe, 2019).

[16] See also https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/grand_bargain_final_22_may_final-2_0.pdf.

Another emerging framework for development is the localisation of humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding work. International efforts are usually short-term and have a limited understanding of the root causes of conflict, humanitarian crises, and underdevelopment driven by grievances, inequality, and exclusion (Chopra, 2002; Howe, 2020). The re-emergence of past conflicts between political elites, and local Timorese grievances, led to the 2002 and 2006 crises in Timor-Leste (Castro & Trindade, 2007).

Timor-Leste was one of the founders of the g7+ Group of Fragile States. A notable representative was the Minister of Finance of Timor-Leste at the time, Emilia Pires, also a Timorese diaspora member from Melbourne. The concept of fragility first emerged in the 2000s (Howe, 2019) around the time Timor-Leste began its state-building process. The g7+ formed in 2008 after the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra. As described by Pires (2015, p. 111), "we, the fragile states decided to organise ourselves … to join our voices and make them louder; to influence those sitting on the other side of the table, our international development partners." Over the following three years, the g7+ called for the New Deal for Fragile States, including a localised approach to fragility (Barakat and Milton, 2020). The New Deal includes five Peacebuilding and State-building Goals (PSGs): inclusive politics, security, access to justice, economic foundations, revenues, and services delivery (Pires, 2015).

These processes and frameworks above have shaped the development of Timor-Leste as a state and nation. Some evidence (Chopra & Hohe, 2004; Gorjão, 2002) shows that the early state building processes may have excluded grassroots Timorese where "UNTAET decided not to integrate Timorese into its transitional structure, but rather to recruit locally a separate civil service" (Chopra, 2000, p. 32). These early structures may have also caused division between returning Timorese diaspora and local Timorese, such as UNTAET passing a resolution that the Land and Property Unit be transferred to the portfolio of João

Carrascalão, a key UDT party member who returned to Timor-Leste after living in Sydney (Gorjão, 2002) and by default through employment in these structures as described by DM45: "I think that (welcoming atmosphere) changed a little bit with the role of the UN in Timor. Because then I think it started creating divisions between Timorese society." Kammen (2003, p. 83) also notes:

> Tensions between East Timorese heightened, in part because UNTAET carefully limited its interaction to a select elite, in part because of the problematic transformation of FALINTIL into the national defense force, and in part too because of the establishment of political parties and ensuing electoral competition.

1.8 Overview of Thesis Structure and Summary

This thesis describes the characteristics of Timorese diaspora from Australia that participated in peacebuilding in Timor-Leste.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. This chapter has established the scope and focus of the thesis, the research questions, conceptual framework, and historical context.

The next chapter includes a literature review of research into diaspora and peacebuilding. Chapter 3 presents the methodology for this study. The fourth and fifth chapters present the research findings and discussion respectively. The sixth and seventh chapters propose further steps, a list of recommendations and implications, and an overview of research results.

Chapter 2. Locating the Diaspora in Peacebuilding and Development

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the gaps in research about diaspora, as most research is focused on elites and the conflicts they create, more so than the positive contribution diaspora make to Timor-Leste's development and the government's work towards achieving the MDGs and SDGs. To establish the background of this study, this chapter provides an overview of the current influencing policies and frameworks in Timor-Leste, as well in Australia and globally. This discussion is followed by a review of research on diaspora's contribution to peacebuilding and development, publications by Timorese researchers, and research on Timorese diaspora in Australia.

2.2 Current Policies and Frameworks

The Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) recently launched the Engagement Policy, and *National Diaspora Engagement Action Plan, 2023–2027* (henceforth referred to as the Engagement Action Plan) on 22 June 2022. It must be noted again that the diaspora identified by the GoTL is broader than the diaspora that are part of this study (refer to section 1.3). The aims, based on the vision and mission statements, are to:

- strategically support the development of Timorese diaspora communities abroad
- provide tools through which to build a mutually beneficial relationship between the diaspora and Timor-Leste
- acknowledge and accelerate the role of the Timorese diaspora as an active co-creator of the future development of Timor-Leste at home and abroad
- establish the baseline institutional and operational frameworks to initiate a reciprocal relationship of impact between Timor-Leste and the Timorese diaspora

- enact diaspora engagements that contribute to the wellbeing of both these constituencies in collaboration with key external supporters (MF & MNEC, 2022, pp. 2–3).

This first Engagement Policy was developed by the GoTL in coordination with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). This policy demonstrates the perception that diaspora can contribute to peacebuilding and development in Timor-Leste, and contribute to opportunities for partnership and collaboration. As argued by Arrey and de la Rosa (2021, p. 241), "all social actors can become peacebuilding agents. Peacebuilding is, thus, a collective effort where any contribution matters and none is negligible."

Estimates of Timorese living abroad range between 39,000 and 50,000 persons, mainly in Indonesia, Australia, the United Kingdom (UK), Portugal, Greece, and the Republic of Korea (MF & MNEC, 2022). The Engagement Policy points out that diaspora organisations are not formally registered as NGOs and, therefore, the Engagement Action Plan aims "to support the confidence and capacity of the Timorese diaspora to shift towards a process of formalization and proactive involvement in the development of Timor-Leste" (MF & MNEC, 2022, p. 6).

The Engagement Policy lists five 'characteristics'[17] and policy recommendations for each characteristic. Namely, the Engagement Policy recommends categorising the diaspora, supporting the vulnerable, building network infrastructure, promoting values-led engagement, and engaging diaspora capitals (see MF & MNEC, 2022, p. 7). This policy also identifies five types of diaspora: Overseas Timorese Workers (OTWs), vulnerable diaspora, rooted diaspora, gendered diaspora, and next-generation diaspora. Of the five types, this research

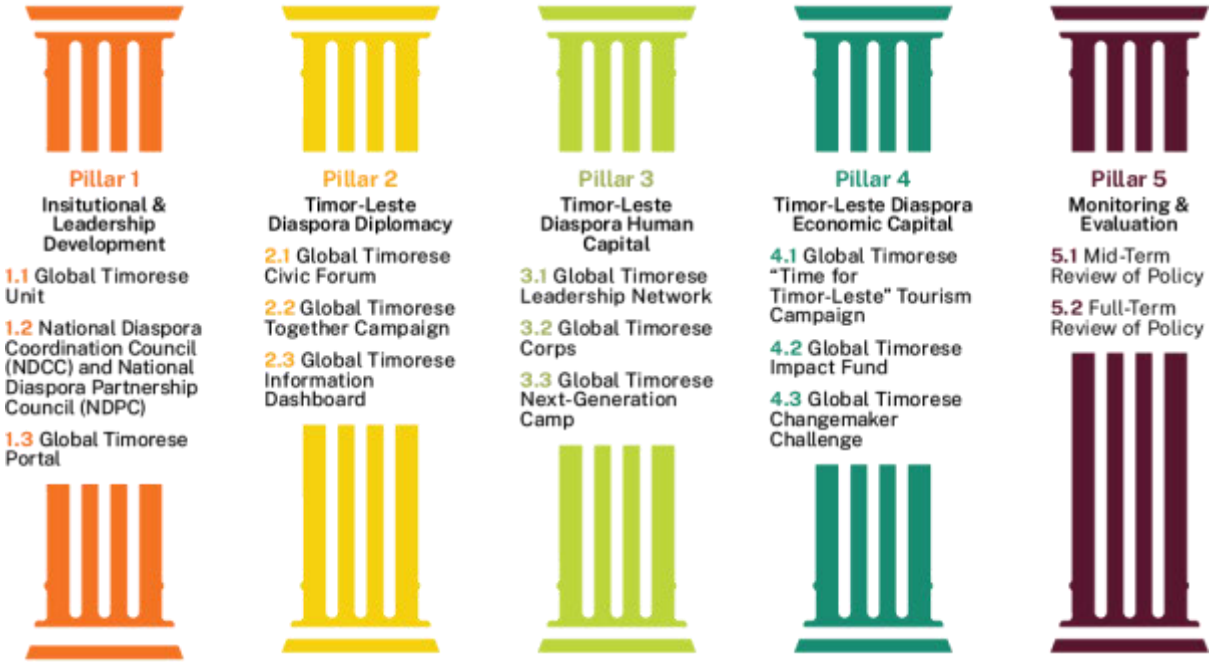
[17] The policy refers to the *Draft Report: Characteristics, Competencies and Motivations of the Timorese Diaspora* prepared by IOM. However, this report is not yet available for review.

focuses on "the rooted diaspora specifically addresses those who are not part of specific labour migration programmes and are beginning to establish deep roots in their adopted homelands" (MF & MNEC, 2022, p. 10). Also, but not specifically, this research focuses on "the gendered diaspora specifically focuses on the women of the Timorese diaspora" (MF & MNEC, 2022, p. 10).

The Engagement Policy's objectives are structured into five pillars, aimed at ensuring active participation, as shown in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1

Five Pillars of Key Policy Recommendations for Diaspora Engagement



Note. From MF & MNEC. (2022). *Timor-Leste National Diaspora Engagement Policy 2023–2027* (Executive Summary), https://timorleste.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Diaspora%20Policy%20Executive%20Summary.pdf.

The recommendations in Pillar 1 involve the governance framework under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomatic missions, working together with representatives from the Prime Minister's Office, the National Diaspora Coordination Council (NDCC) (1.2), the National Diaspora Partnership Council (NDPC) (1.2) and the Global Timorese Unit (1.1).

The Global Timorese Unit will be the lead institutional actor, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (MNEC) and will include two representatives from the Federation of Global Timorese Organisations once the federation is established. The NDCC will be an inter-ministerial council to guide the process of policy implementation. The NDPC will provide links to partners to be kept informed of governmental plans and to provide support for these plans.

In Pillar 2, the recommendations include a structured dialogue with the Timorese diaspora (2.1); a campaign of cultural diplomacy through a core calendar of celebrations such as competitions for diaspora stories and senses of Timorese identity abroad (2.2); and processes for data collection and distribution of findings such as demographics, skills inventory, investment preference, financial behaviour, and return plans (2.3).

Pillar 3 first includes a recommendation to create networks that support human and economic development (3.1). The second recommendation in Pillar 3 is to provide a short-term programme. This programme will facilitate the return of diaspora skills and contribute to socio-economic development with the pilot target sectors, including agriculture and manufacturing, civic empowerment, and education (3.2). The final recommendation in Pillar 3 proposes a global camp for the next-generation Timorese diaspora (those born outside of Timor-Leste). This camp will provide opportunities for the young diaspora to explore and experience their ancestral connection to Timor-Leste; build collaborations through channels including civil society, education, and local development; and contribute to the socio-economic development of Timor-Leste (3.3).

Pillar 4 involves generating capital, such as year-long tourism initiatives (e.g., ecotourism and community tourism) for diaspora to return for community, familial, and official diaspora celebrations (4.1). This pillar also proposes an independently brokered impact fund for Timorese diaspora to access more structured philanthropic and humanitarian

support, plus financial education and financial literacy tools to diversify the use of remittances (4.2). Pillar 4 includes a third recommendation to implement a diaspora business marketplace competition, such as a diaspora entrepreneurship challenge (e.g., submitting business proposals that address key socio-economic challenges for economic sustainability in Timor-Leste) and an entrepreneurial challenge (4.3). These marketplace competitions will provide opportunities for entrepreneurs in Timor-Leste to access a suite of business development support.

Pillar 5 involves monitoring the impact of the Engagement Policy by collaborative assessment of the policy implementation process (5.1) and the external audit of the full-term implementation and development of the second policy between 2028 and 2030 (5.2).

This comprehensive policy document outlines opportunities for diaspora to contribute to the development of Timor-Leste, and work is already underway to engage with the diaspora. However, it is unclear whether the GoTL engaged Timorese diaspora members in the development of the policy. The joint IOM Migration Policy Institute's *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development* has informed the policy, and 10 of the SDGs were selected by the GoTL as priority goals for diaspora engagement. These priority goals are shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2

Priority SDGs Identified for Diaspora Engagement

Note. From MF & MNEC. (2022). *Timor-Leste National Diaspora Engagement Policy 2023–2027 (Executive Summary)*, https://timorleste.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Diaspora%20Policy%20Executive%20Summary.pdf.

In order to implement the SDGs in Timor-Leste, Jain et al. (2021) argue that they need to be localised through bottom-up engagement and support from grassroots Timorese. This argument is based on research with 26 organisations in Timor-Leste in 2017 and 2018. These organisations are described as: seven Financial Institutions (FIs), including two banks, two microfinance institutions, and three credit unions; 11 business enterprises, including eight private enterprises and three social enterprises; two Timorese Civil Society Organisations (CSOs); and six NGOs, including one international and five Timorese NGOs (see Jain et al. 2021, pp. 233–234). To conduct this research, Jain and colleagues (2021) utilised a Habermas model of societal evolution and analytical framework, including Lifeworld, addressing culture, society, and personality; Steering Media, addressing power and money; and Systems, addressing organisations, institutions, and operating responses. These researchers found that overarching goals SDG16 (Peace, Justice, and Social Institutions) and SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals) were ranked lowly (fourth) by participants, even though these goals are ranked first by the Government. The FIs participants prioritised economic and social SDGs, while the NGOs and CSOs prioritised ecology,

energy, and inclusive SDGs such as SDG5 (Gender Equality) and SDG11 (Inclusive Sustainable Cities, Jain et al., 2021). Note that the Engagement Policy identifies SDG5, SDG11, SDG16, and SDG17 as priorities, and that no ranking is indicated. This suggests that the Timorese government prefers diaspora in working towards overarching goals.

A companion document to the Engagement Policy is the Remittance Mobilization Strategy (henceforth referred to as the Mobilization Strategy) for Timor-Leste (MF & MNEC, 2022b). The Mobilization Strategy identifies organisational, operational, and attitudinal/behavioural challenges and opportunities for human, physical, and financial capital. Diaspora are divided into five potential roles (Ardovino & DeBass, 2009 as cited in MF & MNEC, 2022b, p. 7[18]):

- The *brain gainer* deposits "knowledge and technology as well as capital and access to advanced markets in developed countries" and includes advisory roles.
- The *altruist technologist* contributes "major conduits of technology and business know-how" and "importation of technologies in tune with local realities and cultural sensitivities."
- The *brave capital investor* is "less averse to political risk and economic shocks than others" with their commitment outlasting other types of foreign investors.
- The *catalyst* is the first mover who promotes capital recycling.
- The *diplomat* generates avenues for commercial diplomacy.

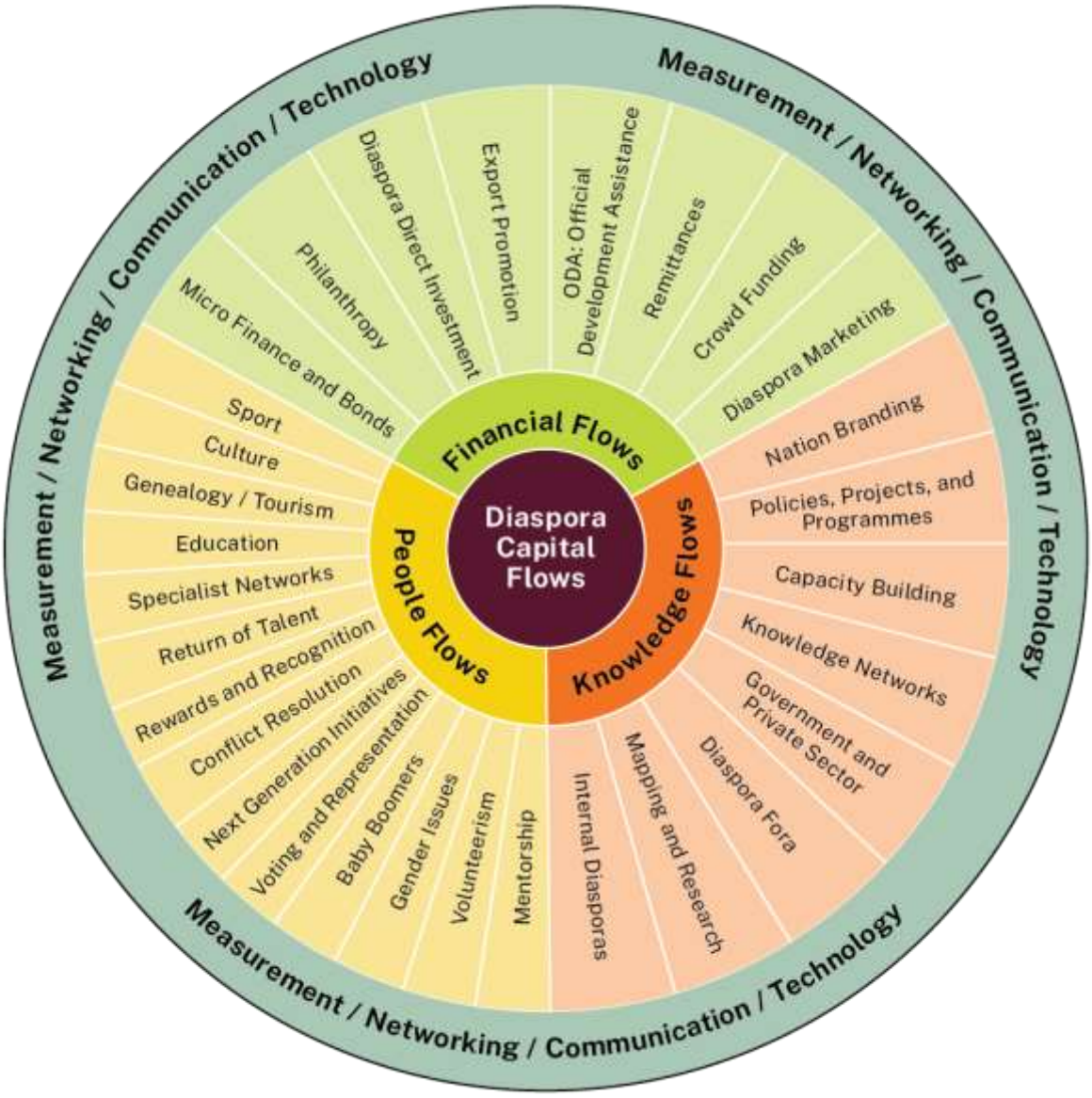
The Mobilization Strategy also looks at the Diaspora Capital Flows Wheel (Figure 2.3) and three pillars of investment, (i) Policy, Procedural, and Product Development; (ii)

[18] See Ardovino and DeBass (2009, pp. 7–10) for more detail. The document relates to USAID and United States government opportunities in Diaspora Direct Investment (DDI) so general terminology has been used.

Community Impact: Financial Education and Empowerment; and (iii) Diaspora Investment and Infrastructural Development (MF & MNEC, 2022b).[19]

Figure 2.3

Diaspora Capital Flows Wheel



Note. From MF & MNEC. *Remittance Mobilization Strategy for Timor-Leste*, https://timorleste.un.org/en/196067-remittance-mobilization-strategy-timor-leste.

[19] While outside the research scope of the thesis, some diaspora and partners are already acting in these roles, albeit at a micro-scale (e.g., supporting families in Timor-Leste) and at times at an individual level (e.g., scholarships).

The Engagement Policy and Mobilization Strategy indicate that the GoTL is implementing diaspora programmes and schemes for international development cooperation. Sinatti and Horst (2015, p. 135), conducted a study of several European countries and their implementation of similar programmes and schemes. These authors argue that a focus on return, and the assumption that diaspora are rooted in places of ancestral origin, confirms "sedentary bias;" a natural relationship between people and place (Bakewell, 2008; Malkki, 1992, cited in Sinatti & Horst, 2015, p. 141). Furthermore, diaspora may "develop multi-directional, rather than binary, trajectories" (Sinatti & Horst, 2015, p. 146), indicating that Timorese may move between more than two countries. Sinatti and Horst also explain that "demanding development engagement on basis of national belonging is a political claim" (Sinatti & Horst, 2015, p. 142). These development demands may explain why some Timorese, such as those from the UDT party or pro-Indonesia supporters, are unwilling to return, as their idea of national identity may be politically different to those in Timor-Leste. Sinatti and Horst (2015) also found that migrant associations are highly transnational, relying on coordination and exchange between diaspora living in different locations. This presents an excellent opportunity for the GoTL and the government of receiving countries, such as Australia and Portugal, to coordinate with existing transnational organisations. Development should focus on "new aspects of migrant contributions to societal transformations in countries of origin and residence" (Sinatti & Horst, 2015, p. 148). These societal transformations, such as strengthening gender equality work in Timor-Leste, are important for the GoTL to consider when policy implementation begins.

In Australia, there is no government policy on diaspora. When compared to migration, diaspora policy for both diaspora communities in Australia and Australians abroad, is less regulated (Phillips, 2022). The senate inquiry in 2021 on diaspora, where six public hearings were held between September to November 2020 and ninety written submissions were

received, resulted in the report “Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia” (FADTRC, 2021). This report contains eighteen recommendations of which the strengthening partnerships recommendations are (FADTRC, 2021, p. 126–127) (emphasis in original):

> **Recommendation 14**
>
> 6.55 The committee recommends that the government consider establishing a single point of contact for Australia's diaspora communities.
>
> **Recommendation 15**
>
> 6.56 In the context of better leveraging the unique expertise in Australia's diaspora communities, the committee recommends that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade develop an internal policy on diaspora community consultation, to make such consultation a systematic element in its policy development processes.
>
> **Recommendation 16**
>
> 6.57 Acknowledging the value of diaspora-led development and humanitarianism, the committee recommends that the government support, where appropriate, the attendance and participation of active Australian-based diaspora organisations in intergovernmental dialogue and debate on relevant topics.

While there were no submissions or mention of Timor-Leste, this report does provide some guidance on future partnerships between Australia and Timor-Leste with possible involvement of the diaspora communities in both countries. A possible opportunity is the *Australian Aid: Friendship Grants* program under DFAT, “which aims to bring some of the best Australian community organisations, including diaspora groups, into the Australian aid

program by providing grants of $30,000 to $60,000, allowing them to expand or enhance their existing international development activities." (FADTRC, 2021, p. 17, paragraph 2.20)

The report also mentions DFAT's Office of the Pacific work in engaging with "members of Pacific diaspora communities in a number of areas, including policy development. DFAT valued the input of members of Pacific diaspora communities into consultations that informed Australia's new development strategy, *Partnerships for Recovery*, and into the design and implementation of a number of *Pacific Step-Up* projects." (FADTRC, 2021, p. 97). It was recommended by some organisations that submitted statements that DFAT should establish a diaspora liaison to work with diaspora communities (FADTRC, 2021, paragraph 5.92)

Timor-Leste took part in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the implementation of the SDGs in 2019, as member states are encouraged to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country led and country driven" (United Nations, 2015, paragraph 79). The Government of Timor-Leste established a VNR secretariat to manage the data collection, consultation and writing processes. The secretariat re-convened the SDG working group who will continue to monitor progress on the SDGs. Representatives of civil society, religious organisations, media, private sector, Government Ministries and Parliament make up the SDG working group. Development partners, including the United Nations, and additional civil society organisations are acting as observers. SDG 16 peace, justice and strong institutions was chosen by the GoTL as the overarching theme of the report. In the text of the report, diaspora gets one mention, as a source of additional funding for progressing towards the SDGs (Government of Timor-Leste, 2019, p. 106).

The Sustainable Development Report 2022, written by Sachs et al. (2022), includes the SDG index and dashboards of all member states, including Timor-Leste. The report writers make the statement that peace, diplomacy, and international cooperation are needed for progress to be made on the SDGs and that a global plan to finance the SDGs is needed, detailing roles of the G20 countries to financing, lending and flows to Multilateral Developmental Banks, and the

International Monetary Fund and credit-rating agencies to assist with debt sustainability and management (Sachs et al., 2022, pp. vii-viii). Diaspora are not specifically identified in the report but diaspora communities that live in G20 countries, such as Australia and UK, may be called upon to be included in large scale philanthropy for Timor-Leste's SDGs programs.

2.3 Research on Diaspora in Peacebuilding and Development

There is a wide body of research on diaspora in general, with some increase in research on the role of diaspora in post-conflict peacebuilding and development. This section will look at research on other diaspora communities and then at research on Timorese diaspora communities work in the triple-nexus. Existing global movements, such as EUDiF, IOM and the United Nations Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA), harness knowledge about diaspora and their capacities, particularly in response to humanitarian crises (Diaspora Emergency Action & Coordination [DEMAC], 2021).

There has been some research on the role of diaspora peacebuilding in countries with internal conflicts, such as Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Somaliland, Somalia, and in diasporas' home countries or within their diaspora communities (Arrey & de la Rosa, 2021; Cauchi, 2018; Galipo, 2011). Cauchi (2018) found that peace is built on mindset change; harmony in Australian diaspora contributes to peace in home countries; and diaspora wield political and social influence as transnational actors and stakeholders. In addition, "diasporas are neither wholly insiders or outsiders, but a rich hybrid mix, whose perspectives are informed by the interaction of multiple cultures" (Cauchi, 2018, p. 30). Diaspora also fill in gaps that may have been missed by international organisations. Galipo (2011) discusses diaspora contributions to peacebuilding in Somaliland through social and financial remittances. Social remittances include ideas, values, and norms that diaspora transfer to their homeland. These social remittances include community development and business investment (Galipo, 2011). From Galipo's research, diaspora intervention cannot be categorised as either good or bad.

Like Timor-Leste, Somaliland lacked strong institutions, and diaspora contributed to human capital development in health and education. A lack of government policy on diaspora engagement has enabled diaspora to interfere in clan politics and affect the balance of power through their political influence.

Arrey and de la Rosa (2021) write about the experience of the Somali diaspora in Denmark and their work in multi-track diplomacy. What differs from the other cases presented above is that the Somalia government is invested in peacebuilding through the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), which works on projects in Somalia as well as financing two diaspora organisations. They found that:

> Somalis were one of the oldest asylum-seekers groups in Denmark, [making] Somalia a priority country for Danish diplomacy, which explains the paramount role played by bodies like DANIDA in Track 1 (official diplomacy) and Track 2[20] (conflict resolution) programs and, through it, the role played by some diaspora members in those tracks. (Arrey & de la Rosa, 2021, p. 255)

Mueller and Kuschminder (2022) write about three strategies for diaspora to counteract and prevent with returnee stigma, "adapting to the country and its culture," "signalling commonality, approachability and respect," and "addressing stereotypes, labels and misconceptions*"* (Mueller & Kuschminder, 2022, Introduction section, para. 3). Their findings are based on research with "diaspora members engaging in short-term return visits for knowledge transfer in Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Somaliland" (Mueller & Kuschminder, 2022, Introduction section, para. 3). This thesis also aims to provide recommendations for Timorese diaspora who wish to return for work or volunteering. Return visits in this study were part of a diaspora-return program where diaspora were supported financially and

[20] This multi-track diplomacy has nine tracks. The next seven tracks are Track 3 (remittances, investment and trade), Track 4 (Personal involvement in NGOs), Track 5 (Knowledge transfer), Track 6 (Advocacy and awareness-raising), Track 7 (Faith in action), Track 8 (Philanthropic Funding) and Track 9 (Media).

provided accommodation, much like the AVI's volunteers program. The AVI now has a Timorese person in the role of Country Manager, which will greatly facilitate diaspora returning to adopt roles in knowledge transfer. For example, one effective strategy was providing host organisations information about the knowledge transfer program, and explaining the selection criteria. Participants used different strategies both within the host organisation and in the community. The experiences of other post-conflict nations provide valuable information for the GoTL, Timorese diaspora, and stakeholders to consider.

In terms of diaspora involvement in truth-telling commissions, research by Young and Park (2009, p. 348) provides a "practitioner's perspective" (p. 348) of Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (LTRC) Diaspora Project. This is the first truth commission to actively engage diaspora communities in all aspects of the process. The researchers highlight Haitian diaspora as instrumental in getting a truth commission off the ground in the 1990s. Furthermore, the authors mention Sierra Leone's failed attempt to engage with diaspora through their Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) successfully engaged with Liberian diaspora and also provided funding (Young & Park, 2009, p. 349). In the case of Timor-Leste, only refugees living in West Timor were interviewed by CAVR. Also, there was no legal process for the reconciliation commission in Timor-Leste to act to prosecute crimes, as "prosecutorial justice [was] not a priority" (Robins, 2012, p. 83). Further, there was no legal process for adopting a transitional justice approach (Robins, 2012). Timorese political leaders have also dismissed the idea of taking human rights abuses by Indonesian military leaders to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

The unique role of diaspora peacebuilding, within diaspora communities and countries of origin, has been acknowledged by Galipo (2011), Cauchi (2018), and in the recent parliamentary committee report (FADRTC, 2021). Furthermore, the role that diaspora

play in political activism and advocacy is well recognised in the case of Timor-Leste, as shown in the above sections. As Cauchi (2018) writes, “It is useful to reflect on the role of the diaspora in regime change in many conflicts that are now, in hindsight, considered legitimate armed struggles, such as the independence of East Timor” (footnote 1, p. 8), and hence contributing to peacebuilding in Timor-Leste.

In her research, Cauchi (2018) analyses diaspora living in Melbourne, and their peacebuilding projects, at an organisational level. In a report commissioned by DAA, Cauchi researched and worked with organisations from Sri Lanka and South Sudan. Her research focuses on these organisations’ inter-ethnic harmony work within their communities, the uniqueness of their insider-outsider perspective, and the way diaspora can move between their home country and Australia. The research looks at humanitarian assistance, peacemaking processes, and conflict resolution—but not the truth-telling process in diasporas’ home countries. The themes identified by Cauchi (2018) are community harmony, social and political influence, transnationality, identity, and perspective. This research also looks at differences between diaspora-led peacebuilding and reconciliation compared to other approaches within their home country or externally. Cauchi (2018) argues that peacebuilding should be multi-sited to include countries of diaspora settlement.

DEMAC conducted real-time research on the diaspora response to the 2021 floods in Timor-Leste, interviewing 15 diaspora organisations (see DEMAC, 2021, p. 47). Then, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with five of the Chinese-Timorese diaspora organisations and their local partners in the Timorese China Commercial Association in Timor-Leste (ACCCTO) in Timor-Leste, along with interviews with those working in the GoTL, UN and INGOs.

During the 2021 floods, the amounts raised by the 15 diaspora organisations were USD $3,000 or higher. For example, the Australia based Lolo Liman ba Fuan Timor Labor

Group (LFFT), a group of Timorese seasonal workers, raised USD $39,210. This response is a stark contrast to the findings from Askland (2009) who found that during the 2006 political crisis, some of the Timorese diaspora community were disappointed and embarrassed by the crisis and lost motivation to continue fundraising. There was no communal response, and Melbourne-based activities were organised by non-Timorese activists (Askland, 2009).

Whilst fundraising and donations activities was swift, diaspora organisations relied on contacts that their family and friends had in Timor-Leste, with some organisations making new contacts, to send funds to and distribute in-kind goods. The diaspora organisations were not engaged at national level humanitarian response, but they were able to coordinate assistance at the local village level despite lack of coordination between diaspora organisations and with the humanitarian system in Timor-Leste. One of the challenges that was identified were the:

> … delays in sending in-kind support to Timor-Leste; lack of funding to support ambitions; limited capacity which resulted in them having to delay planned activities in their countries of residence in order to fundraise for the humanitarian response; concerns in relation to finding trustworthy and reliable partners in Timor-Leste; exchange rate losses impacting the value of funds raised; and customs charges for the import of in-kind items.[21] (DEMAC, 2021, p. 14)

Ninnes' (2011) work in researching friendship groups between Australia (some led by local councils) and villages in Timor-Leste, can provide guidance to Timorese diaspora on getting involved in grassroots peacebuilding and development. However, many of these groups are in local government areas that do not have a large Timorese diaspora community.

[21] The same issues occurred during the 2006 crisis when I was working with the Government of Timor-Leste but as the diaspora were not as involved in the humanitarian efforts in 2006 and 2007 they may have not known of these problems when sending funds and materials in 2021.

Wigglesworth (2020) writes about the work of the Friends of Suai on its twentieth anniversary in 2019. The group included Timorese Balthasar Kehi, which was established by the City of Port Phillip.

Close's (2016) research employs an indigenous lens that looks at the application of indigenous peacebuilding and knowledge in post-conflict Timor-Leste. Close (2016) uses a listening methodology that is respectful of people's voices and opinions. Close focuses on three themes: culture, power, and relationship. These three themes are used to develop guiding principles to achieve indigenous self-determined development along with indigenous peacebuilding practice. Close suggests that the elite decision makers, some of whom are from the diaspora, have a limited understanding of indigenous knowledge and conflict resolution systems. She further discusses three power divisions between elite leaders and citizens in Timor-Leste, elites and international practitioners, and citizens and international practitioners.

Close (2016) points out that East Timorese elites were co-opted into the current development system and liberal peacebuilding model. Consequently, these elites perpetuate neo-colonialism through policies of welfare colonialism that, in turn, perpetuates structural and cultural violence, thus continuing the colonial history of dependency (Close, 2016). Brown and Gusmão (2009) agree with Close and argue that:

> Like many post-colonial states, East Timor is characterized by what could be understood as political (and economic) hybridity. Political hybridity is the co-existence of introduced Western (generally liberal institutional) models of governance and local governance practices, rooted in place and culture, and enjoying widespread social legitimacy. (Brown & Gusmão, 2009, p. 62)

Brown and Gusmão (2009) also state that:

> To seek to build peace is to engage with people's sense of history, identity, and community—with a shared sense of how to approach the past and future, and what stands as the context for inclusive participation. (Brown & Gusmão, 2009, p. 68)

Leach is a prolific writer on Timor-Leste, with publications of note are *Nation-Building and National Identity in Timor-Leste* (Leach, 2017); *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Timor-Leste* (McWilliams & Leach, 2019) and *East Timor: beyond independence* (Kingsbury & Leach, 2007) which includes discussion on diaspora, mostly 'elite' diaspora, in nation-building and development in Timor-Leste.

2.4 Timorese Researchers

Publications by Timorese academics and researchers are increasing, particularly as some universities in Timor-Leste have introduced the policy that all lecturers must hold a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). Some academics have written theses and published academic literature, including books and journal articles. The Timor-Leste Studies Association[22] also fosters local Timorese researchers' professional development through regular conferences and fora. The following research literature are of relevance to my research focus.

Freitas has written two theses, *The Development of a Model of Public Management for East Timor: A Framework for Local Governance* (2002) for a PhD and *Devising a Strategic Plan for the Development of East Timor: A Framework for the Future* (1999). The latter thesis provides a summary and insight into the previously mentioned Melbourne conference in April 1999 (see Section 1.6), which was organised to prepare for an autonomous period before independence and the development of a strategic plan. A total of 85 Timorese attended the conference from Timor-Leste and from several diaspora communities. During the conference, Portuguese was identified as the official language,

[22] For more information, see https://tlstudies.org.

along with proposals for a literacy program and Tetum Standard Orthography. These proposals were later achieved, and the first edition of the orthography was published in 2002.

The Melbourne conference facilitated discussion on key points, including customary law and the need for a truth and reconciliation commission, which was later achieved and is now known as the CAVR. The legal and judicial system, which included peace and reconciliation, appears to have been discussed at length with 11 goals (see Freitas, 1999, pp. 70–73). However, the environment and infrastructure group listed 14 goals, the most goals listed by all the sector groups. It is unclear if this conference and its outcomes had any influence on Timor-Leste's subsequent development plans, as there is no mention of this conference in the 2002 National Development Plan, but this event was important because it highlighted the diaspora's involvement in planning, development, and peacebuilding.

Noronha (2015) conducted research for a PhD thesis on Timor-Leste's two strategic development plans. He refers to Freitas' research in 1999 and writes that the strategic plan framework developed in Melbourne was irrelevant to the context of Timor-Leste because "[t]here was huge destruction in 1999 and this plan was inapplicable." (Noronha, 2015, p. 84). Noronha continues that the plan did not have a great deal of participation of East Timorese people and was developed in Australia.

Aside from this, Noronha mentions the diaspora and their work in the diplomatic front, led by Ramos Horta and Alkatiri, but also adds that there were East Timorese people in the diaspora were holding campaigns and protests to highlight the human rights abuses committed by Indonesia (Noronha, 2015, p. 26)

Noronha (2015) looks at the process in the development of the strategic development plans, noting that the second plan for 2011 - 2030 was developed by an Indonesian consultancy with public consultation process held after the draft plan was prepared. Noronha

(2015) compares the processes of the three plans, including the "Melbourne plan" but later focussing on the two plans developed after independence.

Francisco Guterres (2006) examines the role of Timorese elites in development and found that it is not unusual for resistance leaders to dominate political life in new and emerging states. In his study, Guterres (2006) defines elites as diaspora and those who were educated or living in Indonesia. By analysing the cohesive and disunified relations, and history of elites in Timor-Leste, Australia, Portugal, Mozambique, and Indonesia, Guterres found various 'fault lines.' These fault lines are described as younger and older generations, diaspora and homegrown geographic locations, and new kinds of organisational bases (e.g., political parties, state bureaucracy, security forces, business, the Catholic Church, and civil society).

This research was published before the 2006 political crisis, and Guterres notes that Timorese elites are more likely to have minor skirmishes rather than all-out warring. In his study, Guterres (2006) identifies three competitions between elites: ideology, power, and strategy. Guterres discusses the lack of a role for elites in popular consultation negotiations because key leaders, including resistance leader Xanana Gusmão and leader in exile José Ramos Horta, were overseas and could not join referendum campaigns. The research shows the complexity, corruption, and nepotism between elites, and how elites are privy to positions of power and influence.

Braz is "a Timoroan (person from Timor-Leste) researcher who grew up in the Diaspora" (2014, p. 26), who wrote a PhD thesis about Timorese history and nationalism. While his research does not include Timorese from the diaspora, he does present arguments about the nation-state of Timor-Leste and the *Timoroan* (Timorese person) identity (Braz, 2014). Like Leach (2008, 2012, 2019) and Leach et al. (2013), Braz (2014) references the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) National Identity Questionnaire, and the

Constitution of Timor-Leste (2014). In addition, Braz (2014) applied qualitative methods to interview mostly younger people, such as university students and employed professionals. This research presents strong arguments about the existence of the nation-state of Timor and builds an understanding of how Timorese diaspora may have felt on arrival in countries such as Australia once they left their motherland. Key findings from this research indicate that the *Timoroan* is influenced by Timorese tradition and customs and "more aware of being a self-collective or a having self-in-relation-to-others than as a self-individual" (Braz, 2014, p. 130). Braz outlines that "the socialisation processes in Timor-Leste occur at different stages" (2014, p. 131), with the state at the top and parents at the foundation, which contrasts with Western socialisation that positions government and education systems as the foundation. A Timorese person learns how to be Timorese from their parents and extended family, whereas in Western societies, formal education systems play a larger part in shaping their identity (Braz, 2014). By drawing from the findings presented by Braz, it is possible that Timorese diaspora do not have this experience because they adapted to Western socialisation through work and education.

Soares' (2003) thesis looks at nationalism in transition in the period from 1999 to 2002 by using the metaphor of a tree trunk to represent notions of *nacionalismo* and strength. This tree metaphor positions the roots as representing history and origin, and the branch ends representing the future and the fruits of independence. Written while the UN was still administering Timor-Leste, Soares describes the diaspora as the Western-educated elite. Furthermore, Soares (2003) excludes those that lived in Indonesia, and argues that the line between old and new generations is drawn between 1974 and 1975. The diaspora, according to his analysis, are elites of the old generation who speak English and Portuguese. Soares (2003) divides the diaspora who returned to Timor-Leste into two groups: politicians or political activists, and those who are not politically active but have returned to start a

business. Since the findings are divided into binary categories, the research describes the diaspora as a homogenous group compared to the local Timorese. Soares adds in the footnotes that some returned diaspora worked voluntarily or accepted local salaries. Using the binary approach, Soares continues to demonstrate the divisions and conflicts but does not describe any complexities.

Justino Guterres (1992), a member of the Timorese diaspora in Melbourne, wrote his honours thesis in 1992 after the Dili Massacre. Guterres discusses the disunity of the diaspora at the time, saying "although united on the international diplomatic front the diaspora community suffers from internal conflicts, a legacy of the 1974–75 politicisation process which culminated in the Civil War." (Guterres, 1992, p. 4). The author presents evidence, noting that:

> The UDT shared with Indonesia a perception that FRETILIN was pro-communist. This was based on the existence of seven Marxist-Leninist students, who had returned from Lisbon at the beginning of the politicisation process, in FRETILIN's Central Committee and on FRETILIN's programs for co-operatives and for agrarian reform. (Guterres, 1992, p. 19)

Guterres (1992) identifies division within the diaspora in three themes:

> Firstly, animosities resulting from the 1975 civil war. Secondly internal divisions within the two political parties FRETILIN and UDT (APODETI does not exist outside East Timor). Thirdly the emergence of trans party individuals [not belonging to a political party] who I call independent nationalists. (Guterres, 1992, p. 64)

Guterres defines these independent nationalists "are generally young educated Timorese who do not want to be restricted by party rules" (Guterres, 1992, p. 71). Guterres

urged for immediate reconciliation amongst the diaspora, to be mediated by a Timorese leader such as Bishop Belo who was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Cabral (2002), in his PhD thesis, writes about self-determination during his time as a political activist in his youth, when he joined FALINTIL in the jungle, and when he worked in the clandestine network and with diaspora in Portugal. Cabral presents an "East-Timorese contribution to writing on the national liberation struggle in our own country" (2002, p. 5). He collected data from various sources, including his experience and participation in all three of FRETILIN's conferences in Portugal (April 1994), Australia (August 1998), and Timor-Leste (May 2000). In this research, Cabral discusses the *assimilados* (the assimilated), those who had "a command of Portuguese, proof of financial self-sufficiency, 'appropriate conduct' and no record of having objected to military service" (Cabral, 2022, pp. 65–66). The political parties UDT and FRETILIN founders were *assimilados*, but FRETILIN had support from the rural population while UDT supporters were mostly urban elite. Some of these *assimilados* became leaders in exile during the Indonesian occupation, which influenced diaspora political activities (Walsh, 2001).

Chapter 13 of *Buibere: Hamriik Ukun Rasik An* (Timorese Women: Stand up for Independence) discusses the role of women in the diaspora (OPMT, 2020). This role includes Timorese and non-Timorese from "Portugal, Mozambique, Australia, Brazil, Angola, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Macau, UK, Canada, USA, Japan, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Vanuatu, Netherlands, Germany, France and others" (OPMT, 2020, p. 400). This research particularly focuses on activities in Sydney as there were difficulties in recruiting stakeholders from other areas of Australia. The chapter lists girls and women who had worked in political parties and community organisations, performed in cultural activities, worked in radio and newsletters to

disseminate information from Timor, attended international conferences[23], and participated in protest rallies. This information provides a comprehensive historical background to the nation-state of Timor-Leste from the perspective of diaspora. Despite a lack of women-only organisations, the Timorese women in the Australian diaspora were influential in gaining support and solidarity from around the world through support and focus on the plight of Timorese women during the Indonesian occupation. These women continue to advocate for gender equality and women's emancipation in Timor-Leste today.

There are also collections of Timorese diaspora oral histories such as *From Timor-Leste to Australia: Seven Families, Three Generations Tell Their Stories*, edited by Jan Tresize (2018) and *Step by Step: Women of East Timor, Stories of Resistance and Survival*, edited by Jude Conway (2010). Conway includes stories from four Timorese women from the Darwin diaspora. These books also provide some historical background and demonstrate diversity within the Timorese diaspora. Other books written by Timorese diaspora include José Ramos Horta (2018) and Constâncio Pinto (1997). However, they are not relevant to this study as they were not based in Australia.

Da Silva (2011) looks at the influence of FRETILIN's theory of popular education and the persistence of this theory in maintaining the struggle for self-determination for an independent Timor-Leste. The author also includes research on the Timorese students in Portugal and their influences from other political movements such as in Mozambique. These included movements such as organising youth and agricultural cooperatives, that were discussed amongst the students at the local meeting place, *Casa dos Timores* (Timorese People's House) and later implemented in Timor in 1974.

[23] Three Timorese women from the Australian diaspora attended the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women in Nairobi in 1985 (OPMT, 2020).

2.5 Research on Timorese Diaspora in Australia

There is a body of research focused on Timorese diaspora living in Australia (Askland 2005, 2007, 2014; Crockford, 2003, 2009; Morlanes 1991; Pidoto, 2015; Thatcher 1992; Wise 2002). Askland (2007) and Crockford (2003, 2009) have conducted research in Australia and Timor-Leste focusing on diaspora youth in the post-independence era. Morlanes (1991) and Thatcher (1992) focus their research on the diaspora in Darwin and Melbourne respectively, and the struggle for liberation from Indonesian occupation. Wise (2001, 2002, 2003, 2006) conducted longitudinal research on Timorese diaspora in Sydney during pre- and post-independence periods. Askland (2009, 2014) conducted additional research with the Timorese diaspora community in Melbourne during the 2006 political crisis. Other work includes Goodman's (2000) analysis of politics in Timorese diaspora communities and Walsh's (2001) work on Timorese political parties and groupings in Australia. Of these researchers, Askland (2009) and Wise (2006) have researched the return of diaspora.

Anderson discusses nationalism and states that nation is defined as "an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson, 2016, p. 6). These communities are imagined because they may never meet each other, "yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 2016, p. 6), Wise (2001) also discusses the concept of an imagined community in the context of Timorese diaspora living in Australia, away from their homeland.

Crockford's study (2003) focuses on the youth who left Timor-Leste in the 1990s and arrived in Australia during the implementation of harsh policies towards asylum seekers. Crockford describes Timorese diaspora as exiles and focuses her study on the youth, known as the *Gerasaun Foun* (new generation). Some research participants identified as part of the youth clandestine network and one of the fronts mentioned in the Timor-Leste Constitution.

In her research, Crockford (2003, p. 283) focuses on identity, trauma, and memory, and discusses the differences between the "Lusophone oriented generation (the educated elite and youth cohort of 1975)" and the 1990s Timorese youth. Crockford found that these youth were not as willing to return to an independent Timor-Leste until they had finished their education and gained some life and work experience, even though they had families back home. The research does not include youth who were children when they arrived in 1975 with their families. However, the research brings insight into some of the reasons why diaspora youth are not as willing to live and work in Timor-Leste, such as competition for jobs, identity, belonging and citizenship (although those interviewed in the study were all granted Australian permanent residency) and expectations from their families and communities.

Timorese interviewed by Close (2016) describe diaspora elite as outsiders, because they have lived out of the country for too long. On a similar note, Crockford (2003) found that local Timorese perceived diaspora who left Timor-Leste in the 1970s did not suffer and could not understand what the Indonesian occupation was like, placing them at the lower end of the suffering hierarchy. These views were also held by diaspora who fled Timor-Leste in the 1990s, during highly violent conflicts.

Kammen (2003) discusses the history of Timor-Leste through the binary lens of mater-slave, traitor-nationalist and opportunist-oppressed. The notion of the elite in different periods of Timor's history and discussions amongst university students of who is an opportunist (Kammen, 2003, p. 84):

> One student explained that opportunists are "people who didn't participate in the struggle [for independence] but immediately enjoy independence." He was quickly shouted down by a flurry of voices. "No," one student explained, "people who participated in the struggle are also opportunists-after winning [independence] they have received positions and want to force their will on others.

Askland (2009, 2014), in her research on diaspora in the Melbourne community during the 2006 political crisis in Timor-Leste, focuses on the concepts of reciprocity and survivor guilt. Furthermore, Askland explores how diaspora commitments to looking after their family are motivators for maintaining ties to Timor-Leste.

Askland (2009) writes about three types of Timorese diaspora returnees:

> … (a) those who returned to work for the UN or international NGOs and who attained a 'high-flyer' lifestyle and removed themselves from the local Timorese; (b) those who returned for well-paid jobs within the UN, the donor communities or the public service, but who chose to live amongst the local population and become part of their everyday world; and, (c) the 'everyday individuals' who returned to East Timor and who live and work in local neighbourhoods, surviving on local salaries or volunteering for community organisations. (Askland, 2009, p. 118)

Askland found that "people (returning) from the diaspora were often seen as arrogant and opportunistic, returning for the good jobs, the status, and the high salary." (Askland, 2009, p. 117). She also draws on the work of Wise (2006) on East Timorese long-distance nationalism. Subsequently, Askland found that Timorese diaspora struggled with nationalism and finding their place in an independent Timor-Leste after years of long-distance nationalism in exile during the Indonesian occupation. Askland found that:

> They form part of a process of othering by which the exiles negotiate their identities and their boundaries of belonging. Faced with the (perceived) categorisation of themselves as outsiders, traitors, foreigners, 'Westerners,' opportunists and 'non-Timorese,' the exiles move the borders of their self definition, increasingly placing themselves in opposition to their former (imagined) community of belonging. (Askland, 2009, pp. 190–191)

The research centres around ‘circulating stories’ where:

> East Timorese exiles draw on the experience of friends and family who have returned to East Timor in order to make sense of their personal and social experience of independence and renegotiate their position in relation to independent East Timor. (Askland, 2014, p. 2)

These stories included experiences and perceptions, such as experiencing change in returning to a fictional nation, a nation from the past that no longer exists but exists in diasporas’ minds. Furthermore, the stories included rejection of diaspora by local Timorese, and exclusion from gaining work in Timor-Leste because of political differences. These ‘circulating stories’ of the diaspora’s experiences in Timor-Leste contributed to their experiences during the 2006 crisis in Timor-Leste, rather than seeking information from traditional sources such as news, email groups, and close connections in Timor-Leste (Askland, 2014, p. 7). These findings explain why Timorese diaspora did not actively assist in 2006 compared to the flood events of 2021.

The events of 2006 were also discussed in Costa-Pinto (2012) as research was conducted in that time period. One informant returned to Timor-Leste to support her family during the crisis. Return is also discussed including the perception that Timorese from the diaspora are opportunists who come to Timor-Leste for jobs and go back to Australia when there is trouble and those that “‘teach’ their family members and other Timorese new skills, could potentially be accused of neo-colonialism.” (Costa-Pinto, 2012, p. 289–290)

Hajek and Goglia (2020) write about multilingualism in the Timorese diaspora living in Australia as well as language policy in Timor-Leste. The results from the data collected indicates a decline in the use of the Portuguese language. They also note the influence of people from other Portuguese-speaking nations, mostly from Portugal, and their long-term

support since the 1970s and 1980s. Gonçalves (2020) also writes about the influence of support from Portuguese speaking countries in Africa, later members of the *Comunidade Países Lingua Português* (CPLP), and that Timorese diaspora living in Africa were one of the first to return after the 1999 referendum. Costa-Pinto (2012) points out that "the prominent use of Portuguese and lack of Indonesian among the diasporic community is important in terms of how the diaspora is viewed when they return to East Timor to work." (Costa-Pinto, 2012, p. 291). The research described by Costa-Pinto (2012) relates to "the gendered diaspora specifically focuses on the women of the Timorese diaspora" (MF & MNEC, 2022, p. 10) in the Engagement Policy. The research does not necessarily provide any recommendations on gender and peacebuilding and development but does point out that women in the Timorese diaspora have less opportunities to return to Timor-Leste, and some felt that Timor was too sexist, or didn't want to face judgements from their husband's family.

Research regarding Timor-Leste's OTWs such as Soares (2015) and Rose (2022) provides insights relevant to the 2022 Engagement Policy and Mobilization Strategy for Timor-Leste. Another author of note on OTWs is Ann Wigglesworth. A paper presented on research of the Timorese diaspora in the UK by Wigglesworth and Boxer (2017) is referenced in the Engagement Policy. Wigglesworth (2010) researched civil society and development in Timor-Leste for a PhD, that includes student activists from *gerasaun foun,* most of whom were students in Indonesia.

While research on OTWs and Timorese that were in the Indonesian diaspora is not directly relevant as it does not meet the definition of diaspora in this study, it may provide insight into youth, peacebuilding and development in the triple nexus. Due to the limitation of this thesis, I will not be able to do this.

2.6 Key Themes

Much of the research mentioned in this chapter has focused on diaspora in Australia, Timor-Leste, and diaspora who have returned to work in Timor-Leste. Although some research used quantitative methods such as surveys (e.g., ISSP National Identity Questionnaire), many studies used qualitative ethnographic methods, including interviews, listening, and observation. Further, many of these studies analysed or identified themes, discourses, and key words. For example, both Ninnes (2011) and Close (2016) analysed the themes of culture, power and relationships.

One common theme uncovered by the research literature includes the perception of elite diaspora in Timor-Leste and among the Timorese diaspora community (Askland, 2014). This theme is particularly evident for diaspora who returned to occupy seats in the Government of Timor-Leste and were thus seen as opportunists. The research literature discusses themes of nationalism, identity, belonging, culture, and trauma (Askland, 2009; Brown & Gusmão, 2009; Wise, 2006) along with suffering (Close, 2016; Crockford, 2003) and recognition (Cauchi, 2018).

Disunity was another common theme that highlighted how divisions resurfaced after independence and the 2006 crisis between the elites, including those leaders who were in exile (Askland, 2009, 2014; Close, 2016). In contrast, the diaspora communities did come together to assist in times of natural disasters. These divisions, including human rights abuses committed in the period between 1974 and 1999, have not been fully addressed or resolved (CAVR, 2005a).

2.7 Push and Pull Factors to Return

Timorese identity played a part in diaspora's return. Those of Chinese heritage maintained their identity within Timor-Leste and continued after their arrival in Australia.

Some identified as East Timorese/indigenous Timorese, some as Portuguese/Portuguese-Timorese and some as Chinese/Chinese-Timorese (Wise, 2006). These distinctions between identity, the feeling of Timorese-ness (Crockford, 2007), and associations with being *Timoroan* (Braz, 2014) may have influenced each diaspora's decision to return. Wise (2006) found that those who identified as indigenous Timorese and Portuguese Timorese from the Sydney diaspora were more likely to return to Timor-Leste than the Chinese Timorese.

Trauma is another push or pull factor in influencing a diaspora person's decision of whether or not to return to Timor-Leste. Wise (2006, p. 121) points out that trauma had an "affective pull toward the East Timor homeland," in which members of diaspora performed traumatic events, sang songs, and witnessed distressing photos of torture that "created a kind of embodied connection with the political struggle." These experiences thus influenced some diasporas' decisions on whether or not they wanted to return. Some diaspora chose to forget and move forward with their lives in their new country (OPMT, 2020).

Combined with fractures in the community along political affiliations, some diaspora did not participate in activism as they still feared retaliation towards family in Timor or the risk of upsetting Australian authorities (OPMT, 2020). This may be a push factor in that Timorese were not prepared to take the risk again after taking risks to get to Australia.

Wise (2006) noted that many Timorese living in Australia had lower socio-economic backgrounds and made sacrifices for political activism work. These findings also correlate with findings from the "Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia" Report (FADTRC, 2021). This may be another push factor into staying in Australia as they had no financial means to travel to Timor-Leste.

The rhetoric during resistance times was for diaspora to return, as shown through the cultural activities by the diaspora and the conferences held in the lead up to the referendum. However, only a small percentage of the diaspora returned (Askland, 2014) to take up jobs

(Wise, 2006) and many Timorese organisations in Australia closed in 1999 or their activities, such as radio programs, became less regular, as those leaders had returned (Wise, 2006, p.87). Without the continuation of these activities, there is less of a pull for diaspora to return.

For some diaspora, language was a pull factor as it is an international development language. The chances of employment increased if they could also speak Portuguese and even more so Bahasa Indonesia. During the struggle against the Indonesian occupation, Portuguese was used for communication by the resistance in Timor and the Timorese diaspora, to communicate with Portugal and because Tetum was not widely used at the time (Hajek & Goglia, 2019). Leach adds that Portuguese "as an official language also acknowledged the critical diplomatic support of Lusophone countries during the occupation" (Leach, 2008, pp. 413–414).

Recognition is also a pull factor. The role of the diaspora in Timor-Leste gaining its independence "was recognised by Timor-Leste's political leaders, and many of its key members returned to Timor-Leste during and after 1999 to help build the new nation" (CAVR, 2005b, para. 411). Leach (2008, p. 409) argues that this recognition dynamic may have created political divisions between diaspora and local leaders, and has contributed to a "growing gap between elite and popular values." In their analysis of the 2006 crisis, Castro and Trindade (2007, p. 14) found that their interview participants felt that "the nation-state seems to benefit only the political elites, which in turn come mainly from the eastern region that claimed to have fought more in the resistance and from the returned Timorese diaspora."

The diaspora's 'circulating stories,' a term developed by Askland (2014, 2009, p. 7) to describe the "narrative activity within the diaspora through which personal accounts of change, sacrifice and return were told and retold" acted as both a push, for those that could not get work and came back to Australia, and a pull factor, for those with deep connections in Timor-Leste.

Returning diaspora from other nations such as South Sudan also faced some pushback in political life, as found by Cauchi (2018, p. 12):

> … negative social media activity, combined with the return of some [diaspora] to take part in hostilities … [and] consider[ed] the diaspora as a potential threat and competition in the job market.

2.8 Summary

This literature review reveals limited research into diaspora and their role in peacebuilding in Timor-Leste, compared to those in prominent positions, such as the elite (negative peace) and those working in Dili. The research presented here aims to contribute new knowledge by focusing on diaspora contributing to local peacebuilding initiatives in a post-conflict country. Furthermore, the research aims to explore co-operation programs (e.g., Australian Volunteers Program, other volunteer programs, and friendship groups) and linkages between local Timorese NGOs and university students.

Timorese in the diaspora have contributed, and can contribute, to peacebuilding and development (positive peace). The Engagement Policy and Engagement Action Plan is to begin its implementation in 2023, with both this policy and the achievement of SDGs targets to be reviewed in 2030. This thesis presents the voices of diaspora as a contribution to this national plan and the development of Timor-Leste. The next chapter discusses the methodology utilised in shaping this study.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This qualitative, applied research project utilised interviews to gather data to answer the main research question: **What roles do Timorese diaspora communities in Australia play in conflict transformation processes and development in post-independent Timor-Leste?** I have compiled responses from participants into recommendations for future collaboration and suggestions for diaspora who wish to work in the development of Timor-Leste (Chapter 6).

As I have Timorese heritage, autoethnography (Bell et al., 2019) and indigenous methodology (Archibald et al., 2019) provide the base of the research framework. Autoethnography, as defined by Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 733), is "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (see also Bell et al., 2019). This methodology allows me to bring the personal and lived experiences of myself, my family, and those I have interviewed. Furthermore, autoethnography "as a method is both process and product" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 273) and this approach is reflected in the process undertaken through this study. Similarly, indigenous methodology and the story work method allow explorative research as an insider. This methodology and method resonates with my own experiences as a member of the diaspora, and my understanding of how diaspora experienced displacement and dispossession but continued their culture as they knew it outside their homeland. Timorese are also excellent storytellers and sometimes pass down their storytelling expertise as a tradition.

Archibald et al. (2019, p. 1) developed an "indigenous theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical framework comprising seven principles: respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy." I upheld these principles by continually

referring back to them and reflecting on them throughout the study. I also used a non-interrogative and conversational interview style by allowing participants to tell their stories while also sharing my stories.

As a member of mixed heritage diaspora, I move between and within the insider-outsider epistemology. However, for this research, I adopted an insider approach.

The autoethnographic and indigenous methodologies align with the do-no-harm peacebuilding methods (Anderson, 1999). Anderson argues that local connectors are necessary for peacebuilding, and I aim to explore this philosophy in the study.

Ethics approval for this study was applied for to the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of New England and approval (No. HE18-311) was granted on 24 September 2019. The Information Sheet for Participants (Appendix A) and Consent Form (Appendix B) were submitted with the Ethics application.

3.2 Qualitative Methods

A qualitative approach was utilised using in-depth interviewing to collect primary data, combined with collecting secondary data through literature and archival research. Some of the secondary data includes edited collections of stories and oral histories, and personal historical accounts of diaspora journeys to Australia. As I analysed stories within these published works, the story work method was used to provide a framework to the research.

3.2.1 Story Work Method

I was inspired by the work of Sara Florence Davidson, an indigenous researcher from British Columbia, Canada, who used the story of the *k'aad 'aww* shark song and dance and the story of the *Haida* (dogfish mother) as an ethical guide when working with indigenous high school students. Like Davidson (2019), I reflected on each of the story work method

principles and how they related to her research, the research participants, and the chosen traditional songs and dances (see below).

Similarly, I used a popular song, *Mai Fali Eh*[24], in the interview questions to capture what that song means to Timorese participants. Interviewees were asked about their interpretation of the song (e.g., "Is it only about a mother calling her children to come home before sunset?"). This song is perceived by the Timorese as a metaphor of the motherland, Timor-Leste, calling back her people. The song also featured at The Boîte concert[25] in Melbourne 2012 with Ego Lemos, a prominent Timorese musician, leading as the music director. *Mai Fali Eh* was the title of the concert series as it conveys a message of nationalism.

Davidson (2019) added relational accountability and ensuring authenticity to Archibald's (2008) seven principles. As Davidson has done, I will outline how each indigenous framework principle guides my research.

3.2.2 Respect

The principle of respect refers to respect for cultural knowledge embedded in the stories and respect for the people who owned or shared stories (Archibald, 2008). While undertaking this research, I respected each participant's story and views as a piece of themselves. I did not expect that all participants would know the song, so I respected the cultural knowledge that they shared with me such as other songs or poems that are meaningful to them.

[24] To read the *Mai Fali Eh* lyrics in Tetum and English, see https://www.mamalisa.com/?t=es&p=4327.

[25] As mentioned in the List of Translations, Boîte is Victoria's multicultural music organisation that runs festivals, events, radio programs, and release music and publications. To see the concert, titled *Mai Fali Eh* – Songs of Timor-Leste, featuring the song used in the study, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtmRNhce7lA.

3.2.3 Responsibility

I take responsibility for any mistakes contained in how I re-tell their stories (Wright, 2016). Culture changes over time and Australian diaspora may recognise their culture from the time when they and their families left Timor-Leste, and when new families bring cultural knowledge to Australia. Timor-Leste itself is made up of many different languages and cultural practices. I am aware of this and take responsibility as an insider researcher from the Timorese diaspora from the region of Basartete. For example, some interviewees had ancestry from more than one region, yet they were not asked to state their ancestry regions.

3.2.4 Reverence

I give reverence to those who tell their stories. Reverence could mean participating in rituals or creating a space for the research to take place. For me, this principle particularly applied when I worked with elders, when I was on campus to interview a student, and how I respected members of the diaspora community and Timorese officials I worked with. It was difficult to practice reverence remotely, so I was open to having more conversations, I negotiated times to hold interviews, and I always asked for permission to record participants.

3.2.5 Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a concept that is reflective of Timorese culture. In Tetum there is no word for thank you, and gratitude is shown through the exchange of gifts and favours. Another aspect of this principle is sharing stories with others (Davidson, 2019). As previously discussed (Section 3.1), I was also willing to share my story with participants. I had planned to share my research results with participants, including how I wrote their stories and thoughts into this study. Furthermore, I planned to develop short digital stories. These plans sit outside the scope of this study but provide opportunities for future research.

3.2.6 Holism

Holism can refer to one's family, community, band, and nation (Archibald, 2008). I considered holism as I interviewed participants from a variety of backgrounds and communities with complex extended family and social connections.

3.2.7 Interrelatedness

Interrelatedness refers to the connections between the story, storytelling, and listener (Archibald, 2008). I know or have met most of the participants in my study, but I do not know their stories. I became a listener with a connection to the storyteller and their story. I used the *dada lia* conversation style by drawing out stories whenever the participant was willing to share them. Timorese are natural storytellers and have a strong oral tradition.

3.2.8 Synergy

I adopt a position that synergy can exist between Western methodologies and indigenous story work (Davidson, 2019). My study aims to provide guidelines that will lead to synergy through understanding each other, finding a pathway to healing, and moving forward together. In line with this principle, I reviewed CAVR's work concerning Timorese diaspora and the recommendations presented in the *Chega!* Report in Chapter 5.

3.2.9 Accountability

Relational accountability is the overall concept for the ethical framework and a guide to maintaining respectful relationships (Davidson, 2019). I did not push people for interviews and maintained relationships after the interviews were conducted. I contacted participants who have published or are written about in published works for permission to use and verify their stories.

3.2.10 Authenticity

Davidson (2019) ensured authenticity by seeking feedback from participants. Due to time constraints, I could not do this, but I informed participants that they could ask for an interview transcript.

As noted previously, I know many of the interview participants, which aligns with the indigenous methodology that values relationships. Consequently, there is a risk that the data may be skewed towards representing diaspora as positive contributors to post-conflict peacebuilding in Timor-Leste. To counter this, I also researched the negative impacts diaspora may have had on peacebuilding. My research looks at political activism and participants' involvement in, or part of, the struggle for self-determination and independence. Specifically, my research focuses on diaspora who left Timor-Leste prior to 1998 and returned to work or volunteer in Timor-Leste at any time from 1999.

3.3 Interview Participants

In-depth interviews were conducted with two cohorts: 16 Timorese from the Australian diaspora communities that worked and/or volunteered in Timor-Leste; and eight Timorese who spent time in Australia as students after independence.

In total I contacted 32 diaspora by text message, email, LinkedIn and Facebook. Ten did not respond, one replied yes but did not respond after asking for a suitable time to conduct a Zoom interview, another replied yes but did not attend after three Zoom invitations were sent, one declined a face-to-face interview and then did not respond to questions when sent by email as requested, and three declined to be interviewed as they did not feel that they had contributed to peacebuilding in Timor-Leste. It was found afterwards that two people had changed phone numbers or email addresses but it was then too late to interview them.

Diaspora participants included three family members, in addition to two Timorese that I knew from my time as an activist and cultural dance performer in Sydney and three participants whom I met when I worked in Timor-Leste during the political crisis and humanitarian assistance coordination in 2006 to 2007. It was difficult to get interviews with Timorese that had worked and lived in Timor-Leste, so some participants suggested that I interview another two people that had worked on projects with them. I also approached two diaspora that were still active in the community, particularly during the humanitarian response to the floods in Dili. Others I identified from their "famousness" within the community. Of those interviewed, five of the sixteen were living in Timor-Leste; eleven were living in Australia.

The small sample size of sixteen diaspora does not represent the diversity of the communities, which is a constraint but as detailed above, getting interviews was difficult as the social opportunities were not available due to COVID restrictions. The lockdowns also took away the opportunities to go to community gatherings to meet people, in addition to not being able to travel and conduct face to face interviews. In Timorese society, building relationships is important so having had a relationship with some of the participants helped due to time constraints when conducting fieldwork. I also feel that return is a sensitive topic, so being familiar with the participants also helped in that regard. One participant commented that my thesis topic was controversial, thus confirming my initial thoughts on the advantages of approaching people I had met.

Participants, total of 16, from Timorese diaspora answered a set of questions (see Appendix C) during a recorded interview, conducted via Zoom or over the phone as these interviews were conducted during the COVID lockdown period. Only one face-to-face interview was conducted in January 2020, which was prior to COVID-19 restrictions that came into effect in March 2020. The interview was recorded on my mobile phone but it was

of poor quality so I referred to the notes that I had taken during the interview. An information sheet (see Appendix A) was provided in the preferred language, along with a consent form (see Appendix B) and list of questions (see Appendix C) if requested.

Interviews with diaspora participants ranged from 20 minutes to 2.5 hours. Questions were asked to ascertain each participant's view on their contribution to peacebuilding and development in Timor-Leste and also to reflect on their experiences when returning to their country of birth. Questions about their activities in Australia were asked to ascertain if there was a link between political activism and social connection with return. Some interviews caused me some sadness and I was able to discuss those feelings with other family members and fellow students.

A key question that was asked of the participants was about medals. The GoTL first awarded medals to Timorese diaspora in 2009, in recognition of their contribution to the independence of Timor-Leste. One diaspora and one development worker participant received a medal and were not directly asked why they were nominated for a medal or whether they deserved one; rather, it was left to the interview participant to tell their story. In Timorese culture, it is customary to show respect to elders and build relationships with them. Conducting remote interviews with respected elders was difficult and interviews online or over the phone were not possible.

Of the students from Timor-Leste, I had already met five of them; three from when I was working and doing volunteer work in Timor-Leste, and two from when they were students in Australia. One student I met when I started researching, one student I had met once in Timor-Leste briefly during a meeting and one student was recruited by another student. Two other students were contacted by email, of which one I had not met before, but they did not respond to an interview request.

The students were asked a different set of questions focused on their views on diasporas' roles in post-conflict peacebuilding (see Appendix C). In addition, these participants were asked about their views on diaspora receiving medals for their contribution to Timor's independence. Most interviews were about half an hour in length, with one going for about an hour. Timorese students who studied in Australia after independence were invited to participate because they may have interacted with Timorese diaspora during their studies, and because their ages represented a diverse point of view.

An additional six interviews were held with development workers, activists, and researchers who worked with diaspora communities or for peacebuilding projects in Timor-Leste. Of the participants, five I knew personally and the other participant I approached during a fundraising event. One interview did not end well as I did not ask questions about their research and a transcript was requested. One of the participants in the development worker cohort is a Timorese national. They were asked similar questions to the students (see Appendix C) but not about the song Mai Fali Eh for those who are not Timorese. Most interviews were about half an hour in length with one going for about an hour. These participants are henceforth referred to as development workers, or development worker participants.

Knowing quite a few of the interview participants may have swayed them to feel like they need to give expected answers. I felt that having that familiarity helped interview participants to feel more at ease. Generally, the interviews were kept in a conversational style. As interviews were held over Zoom and WhatsApp, participants were reminded to turn off their cameras if they wished to.

Overall, there were 30 participants involved in this study, 22 of which are identified as diaspora according to the Engagement Policy.[26] The Policy identifies people of Timorese ancestry as well as non-Timorese who have an interest in the development of Timor-Leste as part of the diaspora but it does not include Timorese citizens that are in Australia as international students.

3.4 Limitations and Challenges

Initially, I proposed interviewing five medal recipients from the Timorese diaspora in Australia, but I was only able to interview one recipient. One other medal recipient was invited to participate in an interview but did not respond. I felt that it was important to interview medal recipients to analyse the perception that diaspora were part of the "recognition dynamic" (Leach, 2008, p. 409) and whether this recognition influenced diaspora's status and gaining high-level positions.

I had also originally planned to run focus group discussions with local university students in Timor-Leste, and interviews with officials in Timor-Leste. However, the onset of COVID-19 and difficulty with lockdowns, internet connectivity, and access required my adaptation and management of data gathering methods. During interview with four participants in Timor-Leste there were connection problems. Consequently, I conducted interviews over WhatsApp and recorded on Zoom due to difficulties with internet connectivity. Regardless, two of those interviews had multiple interruptions.

There was some difficulty in recruiting interview participants, potentially as I used the play on the word 'opportunist' in the thesis title. For example, one participant stated jokingly that my research topic is controversial. Also, some participants experienced confrontations in

[26] University students from Timor-Leste that come to study in Australia are not included as diaspora in the Engagement Policy even though some self-identified as diaspora, and some diaspora and development workers saw them as part of the diaspora.

Timor-Leste that they did not want to discuss, and I did not push them for information. Guest et al. (2006) argue that thematic saturation can be achieved with 12 or more participants. Other authors (Hagaman and Wutich, 2017) argue that researchers can achieve saturation between 20 to 40 participants. I have interviewed 16 diaspora participants, and 30 participants in total. Therefore, despite recruitment challenges, I have gathered data from an ideal number of participants to reach data saturation. From the number of interview participants I was able to gather enough information about diaspora contribution and identify possible collaborations between the diaspora, Timorese students and development workers.

Despite my initial interest in interviewing 'high-flyer' types, none of the participants self-identified with this term (Askland, 2014). Both the terms 'opportunist' and 'high-flyer' are considered somewhat of an insult in Timor-Leste, as it implies self rather than being part of the collective, which is customary in Timorese culture. Other researchers have identified persons by name, but I have chosen to let participants self-identify or describe their experiences with labels.

Another obstacle presented by COVID-19 was not being able to conduct archival research, due to lockdowns and travel restrictions. However, during my data collection, many archives had digitised their material and I was able to access this data online.

One of my initial research objectives was to develop a model of indigenous research methods with other researchers. However, time limitations restricted the scope of my research, and I chose to leave this objective for future research. There are opportunities for other Timorese researchers to consider developing research methods and presenting findings that are more accessible to the general public in Timor-Leste.

3.5 Data Analysis and Themes

Interviews and literature were analysed and brought together to draw out common themes using reflexive thematic analysis. Photographs support the research and consent was sought from those who are in the photographs presented in this thesis.

As previously discussed, I am part of diaspora through family connections, and I know many of the research participants. Consequently, the themes were already preconceived. As Braun and Clarke (2021, p. 591) write, "themes do not passively emerge from data" and that there is a natural generation of (initial) themes. These authors write that qualitative data analysis in reflexive thematic analysis is about telling stories, an approach that I have taken through the story work method. As such, the data analysis provided (initial) three themes:

- discussion on nationalism and identity through participants' interpretation of the song *Mai Fali Eh*, and other songs, to describe the wider concepts of return (to the motherland) and (trans)nationalism;
- diaspora and their work in peacebuilding, including the triple nexus, and the push and pull factors to "returning" to Timor-Leste; and
- perceptions, expectations, aspirations, and future opportunities.

3.6 Participant Codes

Those from the Timorese diaspora in Australia are identified by the code prefix D followed by gender and age, (e.g., DM50). Similarly, those from the Timorese student cohort are identified by the code prefix S, gender and then age; and development workers are identified by code prefix W, gender and then age. For those who did not wish to specify their age, a + was added to indicate approximate age.

3.7 Summary

The methodology for this research utilises concepts of autoethnography and the indigenous method of story work. This is achieved by sharing stories between the interviewer and interviewee, and asking Timorese participants about a popular song to capture thoughts about return and cultural identity. The following chapter discusses the findings from the interviews conducted for this thesis.

Chapter 4. Timorese Diaspora in Australia: What They did and can do for Timor-Leste

4.1 Introduction

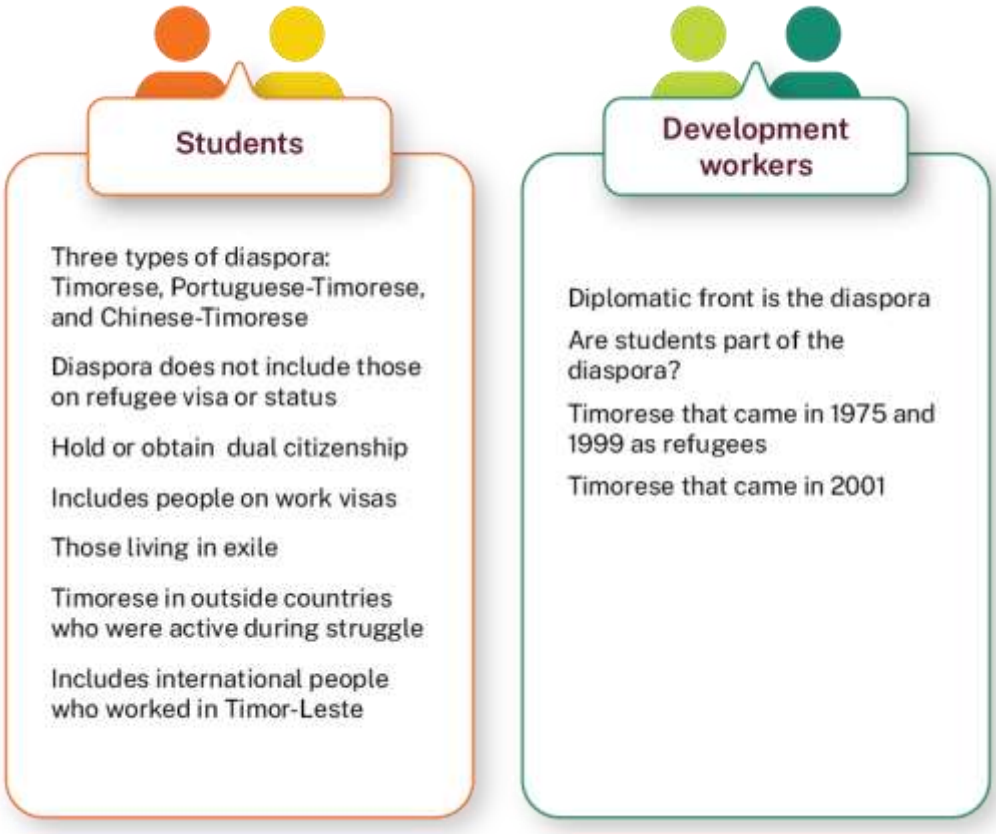
This chapter discusses the findings from the interviews and is divided into the three themes of nationalism (Section 4.3), peacebuilding and development (Section 4.4), and opportunities (Section 4.5). The chapter presents the individual stories as part of a collective identity of *Timoroan* (Timorese person, see Braz, 2014), or Timoreseness (Crockford, 2007), and an analysis of their motivations to return and contribute to Timor-Leste's development.

4.2 Who are the Diaspora?

During their interviews, the students and development workers were asked to describe diaspora. While this study focuses on the Timorese who left Timor-Leste prior to independence, some students and development workers had a broader definition of who a member of the diaspora is. The definitions were varied, given this research was carried out some time after independence, rather than during the struggle for self-determination. Figure 4.1 below summarises the different responses from students and development workers when they were asked the question: Who are the diaspora?

Figure 4.1

Student and Development Worker Definitions of Diaspora



Some participants included Timorese who have studied overseas, and international development workers who were working in Timor-Leste or with other countries in conflict. Not all responses included activism or work for Timor-Leste as a characteristic of the diaspora. One development worker (WM70+) stated that the first Timorese diaspora were the three that were sent by FRETILIN to get external support prior to the civil conflict. One diaspora participant (DF67) refers to this group as part of the diplomatic front, comprising of five people: Mari Alkatiri, Abilio Araujo, Jose Ramos Horta (the three persons that left Timor-Leste after the declaration of independence in 1975), Roque Rodrigues, and Jose Luis Guterres. She suggests that everyone else who participated in the struggle for independence of Timor-Leste should be referred to as the external front or diaspora rather than the

diplomatic front, as this entails using persuasion. However, most described diaspora as those who left Timor-Leste due to conflict. One student (SM35+) explained that diaspora, by his understanding of the definition, in general, does not include any refugees and asylum seekers who cannot return to their motherland. Two participants (SM53 and WM42) did discuss the issue of East Timorese who are still living in West Timor and Indonesia who want to return but are fearful of the reception in Timor-Leste. Some of these Timorese have taken up Indonesian citizenship, at times under coercion.

Participants' responses more or less align with the definition presented in the Engagement Policy, but it is not clear if students fit into that definition.

4.3 Return, Nationalism, and Cultural Identity

What emerged from these discussions were views on nationalism and culture in relation to the return of diaspora. These views are outlined below.

4.3.1 Mai Fali Eh

The diaspora and the students were asked about a popular song, *Mai Fali Eh*. The Dili All-Stars recorded their own version of the song and, as mentioned previously, this version was prioritised in The Boîte concert. Growing up in the diaspora, we were often told by community leaders, Timorese leaders, and visiting Timorese from the resistance to prepare to return to a free and independent nation and to contribute. This may be why some say *Mai Fali Eh* is about returning to the motherland, belonging, and being Timorese. There were varied reactions to the song, which was chosen for interview participants to reflect on its meaning of return. Additional songs were also highlighted so participants could relate to the concept of return and nationalism. Wise (2006, p. 192) notes that diaspora related to songs, particularly those sung in Tetum, as "a mixture of strong nationalist sentiment (and) nostalgic

longing for the landscape of East Timor." Participant responses to *Mai Fali Eh* are illustrated in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2

Different Participant Responses to the Meaning of the Mai Fali Eh Song

Note. This figure has been created using a word cloud generator. Participants mentioned the words *motherland* and *sadness* once; *longing (saudades)* and *leadership* twice; *come home*, and *nationalism and belonging* three times; *contribute* four times; and *return* nine times.

Some stated that the song had a deep meaning, particularly for Timorese students and the younger generation of the diaspora. Three diaspora and one student stated the song may not be genuinely Timorese, with one saying that the song was associated with Indonesian integration, as a well-known integration leader, Chico Lopes, sang this song in Portugal.

Those who did not know the song (3 participants), felt that the song had no meaning for them, or questioned the origins of the song (4 participants) so were asked to nominate other songs. The nominated songs included *Maubere Timor* (Humble man of Timor), written by Xanana and Berliku, and the song *Maubere Buibere* (Timorese man Timorese woman) as it is inclusive and was popular after the referendum. Three songs, *Kolele Mai, Patria Patria* (Homeland Homeland, the national anthem), and *Foho Ramelau* with lyrics from the poetry

of Borja da Costa (1976),[27] were also selected as songs that had more meaning to some diaspora. One diaspora participant mentioned the song *My Island Home* by the Warumpi Band, and also recorded by Christine Anu, that had meaning for them. Two participants felt that there were no songs about returning to Timor.

I became familiar with *Mai Fali Eh* as a resistance song when socialising with the cohort of Timorese who came to Australia as asylum seekers in the 1990s. Therefore, the result that not all diaspora saw the song as meaningful or of Timorese origin was somewhat expected from the diaspora, but not the students. Some students took some time to reflect on the song's meaning and had to sing or say the lyrics out loud, which also helped to put the interviewee at ease.

While interview participants did not specifically say that the songs influenced their return to Timor, they did say that they represented a sense of Timorese belonging and identity. No participants named the songs mentioned by Wise (2006), but they did name other songs. Also, DF46 mentioned the influence of being part of a choir singing the song *Kolele Mai*[28] (What is the Reason?) even though it was just for a few days. As Joliffe (1978) wrote, quoting the poet, "These poems are not the property of any one person. Inspired by Borja, they are the songs of the East Timorese, to be used and propagated as a weapon of their struggle" (Borja da Costa, 1976, p. 18).

4.3.2 Diaspora Receiving Medals

I undertook this research after noticing that the GoTL had awarded people of non-Timorese heritage medals before Timorese diaspora, for their contribution to the self-determination of Timor-Leste. My interest in the awarding of medals began when I worked in

[27] Francisco Borja da Costa is a Timorese poet, part of the student group in Portugal in the 1970s, who returned to Timor in 1974 and was later killed on 7 December 1975 in Dili.

[28] This song was later recorded by the Australian band Midnight Oil, together with the Timorese Xanana choir (Sydney), in 1993, as a B side to their single My Country https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ia1jy-XgYTA.

Timor-Leste and started research on a different thesis topic, focused on the reintegration of Timorese guerrilla fighters and the role of memorialisation in peacebuilding, including awards such as medals and pensions. The GoTL had begun with awarding medals to combatants for national liberation in 2006. The GoTL later promulgated the Decree Law Nº 20/2009 for the Order of Timor-Leste, awarding medals of:

> … a more general and broader nature, with prestige and dignity, which shall serve as a means to illustrate Timor-Leste's recognition of those, nationals or foreigners, who in their professional or social lives, or even through any act of heroism or altruism, have made a significant contribution to Timor-Leste, the Timorese or Mankind. (Ministry of Justice, 2009)

During interviews, Timorese students were asked how they felt about diaspora being awarded medals for recognition of their political activism and contribution to Timor-Leste's gained independence. All the students agreed that diaspora contributed to Timor-Leste's independence and that some deserved to receive recognition with medals and have their stories known. Of those interviewed, one had worked on a book about women's contribution to Timor-Leste's independence, and another student had volunteered at Clearing House for Archival Records on Timor Inc (CHART) in Melbourne, digitising documents for their online archive. Another student spoke about a medal awarding ceremony that he attended in Melbourne for Berta Santos and Salustiano Freitas, before he passed away:

> I think … to give them recognition, because the struggle was not at that time, it was not their duty, it was [their] sacrifice … like being awarded medals is something good … When I was in Australia, some people got recognition and received medals from our government of Timor-Leste and I think recognition like this is good to valorise people's situations. For me giving medals is not a problem … [other] recognition, I

> think, such as giving money is not good. Giving medals, [a] letter of recognition, is not a problem. (SM35+)

My interviews with Timorese scholarship students who had studied in Australia revealed that most were unaware of the political activism during the Indonesian occupation. Most participants thought that no Timorese from the diaspora had been awarded medals from the Timorese government. One of the student participants had attended a ceremony, as described by Teresa Santos in Tresize (2018, p. 99):

> In 2017, Berta [Santos] received the *Ordem de Timor-Leste* (Order of Timor-Leste) in recognition of her contribution to the people of our country. Taur Matan Ruak, President of Timor-Leste, was in Melbourne to present the medal, I attended the special ceremony and had the honour of receiving the medal on behalf of my amazing mother.

Some spoke about other forms of recognition, such as storytelling:

> I think the information about diaspora work and their contribution should be, I would say shared or spread widely in the community in Timor. Especially my generation … those who didn't vote in 1999, especially those who were still too young to vote in 1999. I think we need to know more about their contribution. (SF30)

Diaspora participants were not asked specifically about the awarding of medals. Of the diaspora interviewed, one had received a medal, one had been advised to put in a form to receive a medal but chose not to, and another had a relative who had received a medal. Three had received medals from other nations and organisations.

One student participant questioned if a Timorese from the Darwin diaspora community was awarded a medal:

> I was so happy to see Timorese return, come and work … I don't know if [she] received any recognition? I haven't checked with her. But she worked and I know some others who worked. (SM53)

Leach (2008, p. 409) discusses the "'recognition dynamic" and debates among Timorese over who did what for the independence of Timor-Leste and the preferences made between the different fronts of the resistance. Conflicts remain between Timorese involved in the resistance, and the medals can be seen as divisive or unfair. This is the case amongst the diaspora, as one diaspora participant stated that the diaspora from Sydney received more medals than those from Melbourne.

4.3.3 Cultural Identity

Some diaspora have worked in cultural activities, preservation, and promotion, with some saying that culture is not as important in Timor-Leste. Ego Lemos, the musical director for The Boîte concert and a student at the time, is a Timorese singer who writes songs with traditional melodies that differ from Timor's more electronic popular music. As DM55 told me, "In Timor, I don't see him [Ego Lemos] doing stuff in Timor because he's bigger outside the modern Timor." During COVID-19 however, traditional songs were popular and recorded by Timorese musicians, including with Ego Lemos, on YouTube[29].

Students mentioned being impressed that Timorese culture was still kept alive in the diaspora community even though they were so far away, as described by SM35+:

> You can see in the community there (Melbourne) that everyone wants to, even though they are far away, keep the culture of Timor; wearing *tais*, having ceremonies. This is outstanding, for me to see Timorese doing this. We also see in social media, diaspora

[29] See https://www.youtube.com/@DACMusic for more information.

> in UK, everywhere, they also promote Timorese culture in doing their events, that is something impressive. They also sing Timorese songs. I think that this is something that contributes to preserving our culture. In the spectrum, the impact is big because we have a name abroad, they show (culture), can say global impact. The knowledge of culture can be better. They do it better than in Timor itself where the conditions and economy is not that good, so we can't promote. Sometimes we can do it through diaspora's coverage [that] is wider. (SM35+)

On the other hand, participant SM53 spoke about diaspora needing a deeper knowledge of Timorese culture:

> … in the mountains, the elders and their traditions, building *uma lisan*, building our culture; this is a way to build peace in the community. Over seven or eight generations we come back (to the mountains), we know each other, this is good! … How can Timorese diaspora come back and see that this is indigenous; [some might see it's] not a good tradition, some are insensitive. [They] need to see it as something good, to build peace, because this is our community's life. When diaspora come here, I sometimes am scared that they bring modern thinking. Diaspora need to adapt and adjust to our places in the community, to the way of life of Timorese people, to making their (diaspora) lives meaningful.

These interviews show that there is an opportunity for involving students and seasonal workers (OTWs) in diaspora engagement when they return to Timor-Leste. This is because they have contact with these communities in Australia and Timor. There is also scope for other communities in the diaspora to build networks with Timorese students and seasonal workers OTWs in other states, such as the Melbourne East Timor Activity Centre (METAC), as discussed in Section 4.4.2.

4.3.4 Nationalism

Participant DF67, who was educated during the Portuguese period, talked about the beginning of identifying as a Timorese nation:

> We didn't have this concept of belonging to a group with [our] own identity because my studies were done during the Portuguese time, colonial time, so we were educated to think as Portuguese, not with our own identity. But in Timor we had a teacher that brought a cultural group from Baucau to Dili, mix with us students. And he taught us songs in many languages to avoid the authorities to be suspicious of him, that he was trying to put in our mind that we had our own identity, our culture.

Some participants spoke about nationalism and how much it is part of life in Timor-Leste, while it may not be the case in Australia. Participant WF69 said:

> A lot of the music or public imagery is about nationhood in a way that you don't see here in Australia. In East Timor, an assumption is that everyone is nationalistic. There is a lot of rhetoric. If you ask a school child what do you want to do and the answer is, "I want to develop my nation." And you hear women saying it all the time, you know women's organisations, we're here to develop a new nation. I suppose some of that is grounded in real values and some of that is rhetoric, people get taught to say it … for some people it may remain a priority and they want to go back and make it a better place and for others it may be a little removed. From an outsider's perspective you might wish that they (diaspora) kept that bit of nationalism. (WF69)

Timorese students also echoed this kind of sentiment. For example:

> I think there is a feeling that we are independent already. The diaspora community are saying that the struggle is over. But I think that the struggle now is that we must

> continue to ensure the independence that we got is addressing the needs that our people deserve; to have lives with dignity, equal access to basic needs like education, health, clean water, electricity so we can lift people over the poverty line. I think we need this. I am not saying that it is just for the diaspora but we need to consolidate ideas together with those that live in the country and with the diaspora communities to understand how our independence will progress. (SF30)

Some diaspora who are still living in Timor:

> … wish that more people would come back … it's definitely difficult but what's the purpose of having all those demonstrations, all those parties about "free East Timor," and then Timor's independent and you don't want to come and help rebuild? (DM30+)

Participant DM44 also spoke about the different types of diaspora and returned diaspora:

> There are people who have very little connection to the country. They only know the country as where their parents came from or where they were born but they don't have any more attachment to the country except you know that it's their country of origin and there are people who think that they love this country and this is where they should be. And those people, many have now returned to Timor and they have lived here, have formed families here. I don't see any intention of them returning to Australia anytime soon. And there [are] also those people who have very little connection to the country. You know when you talk to them about Timor, it's just another country in South East Asia. And there are also those people in the middle. I feel like I am one of those people in the middle. I feel like this place is home but Australia is also home. (DM44)

4.4 Diaspora and Peacebuilding

Originally, I had not intended to collect histories of participants' journeys to Australia, but many participants thought it was important. The rationale of asking participants about their journey and time spent in Australia was to see if there was a link between political activism and return. As noted by Cauchi (2018), the "role of diaspora in regime change … are considered legitimate armed struggles, such as in the independence of East Timor"[30]. Arrey and de la Rosa (2021) also argue that advocacy and awareness-raising are part of multi-track diplomacy and peacebuilding.

4.4.1 The Journey to Australia

Six diaspora participants had arrived in Australia in 1975 directly from Timor-Leste. Two participants had travelled to Portugal before 1975 to study, because there were no tertiary education institutes in Portuguese Timor. These two participants then arrived in Australia sometime after 1975. The other eight diaspora participants left Timor after 1975 and arrived in Australia from another country, sometimes after living in two other countries. The graph below in Table 4.1 summarises Timorese diaspora participants' movements.

Table 4.1

Movement of Participants after Leaving Timor-Leste

Left Timor-Leste (year)	Arrived in Australia (year)	State or territory of longest residence	First time returning to Timor-Leste	Number of nations enroute before settlement in Australia	Number of states & territories lived in
1969	1979	NSW	2002	1	3
1975[b]	1975	WA	2000	0	1
1975[a]	1975	NT	2000	0	2

[30] See footnote 1, section 1 (Cauchi, 2018).

1975[a]	1981	VIC	1990s	2	1
1975[a]	1992	VIC	1999 pre-referendum	1	1
1990	1984	VIC	2004	2	1
1975[a]	1992	NT	2005	1	3
1989	1993	VIC	Late 1999	1	1
1975[b]	1975	NSW	1999 pre-referendum	0	2
1975[a]	1985	VIC	Late 1999	1	2
1983	1975	NSW	Late 1999	0	1
1975[a]	1985	VIC	Late 1999	1	1
1982	1992	VIC	2002	2	1
1973	1984	NSW	2000	2	1
1975[a]	1975	WA	October 1999	0	1
1975[a]	1975	NSW	1989	0	4

Note. Those that arrived in 1975 who lived in two or more states and territories, first in NT and then the chosen state of residence. Participant journeys who stayed in the state or territory they arrived in are marked in the 'Number of states' column as 1.

[a] These participants left before the full-scale Indonesian invasion (7 December 1975)

[b] These participants left after the full-scale Indonesian invasion (7 December 1975)

Each diaspora participant had different experiences, with some arriving on cargo ships in 1975 during the coup. As with any escape from conflict, this journey was fraught with trauma. DF58 left during the civil conflict:

> There was a list. From memory … it was FRETILIN people who were roll calling, and that was in the afternoon. People were queuing up to go on the boat … a cargo ship called Macdili … it didn't berth at the *ponte cais* (pier), it was in the middle of the ocean, so we had to get on to the barge in order to get on to that big ship. (DF58)

DF58 described not being allowed to board the ship and running along the beach while it was shelled, then seeking shelter for the night with her family. The day after, DF58 was able to board the ship and landed in Darwin.

It is estimated that, of the 272 passengers who boarded the Macdili, 249 were Portuguese working for the administration in Timor and members of the Portuguese army. The Macdili returned a second time and took 700 people (Wise, 2006). Figure 4.3 depicts one of the boat's first voyages to Australia.

Figure 4.3

Refugees from East Timor Arrive in Darwin

Note. From [Australian Information Service]. (1975). International relations – The scene on deck as 272 East Timor refugees (mainly Portuguese) arrive in Darwin aboard the ship MACDILI – NT, 1975. (Series A6180, Control symbol 18/8/75/23), National Archives of Australia, Australia. https://www.naa.gov.au/learn/learning-resources/learning-resource-themes/society-and-culture/migration-and-multiculturalism/refugees-east-timor-arrive-darwin.

Others, such as DM58, left Timor in 1975 on a Norwegian cargo ship. DM58 said, "I think we were the first boatload of refugees on the Lloyd Bakke … there were a few hundred people that went on the ship, we had 400 people." Other published stories show that there was discrimination regarding who was allowed to leave. In a book of oral histories, one

storyteller notes, “Portuguese soldiers who were with us at the wharf, took responsibility for selecting who should board the small boat to be taken to the [Norwegian cargo] ship. However, those with darker skins were not selected” (Tresize, 2018, p. 179). Only after their relatives could vouch for them was the storyteller and their family allowed to board.

When arriving in Darwin, families that had managed to leave Timor were provided with temporary accommodation. This temporary arrangement accommodated most who were expecting to go back after the civil conflict was over. As DM58, who left Timor-Leste due to violent inter-familial political conflict, further described, “I don’t think we had an intention to leave … just go to a safe place, somewhere [to stay while waiting] to return.”

At the time, Darwin was still rebuilding after the devastation of Cyclone Tracy in December 1974, as recalled by DF60:

> Cyclone Tracy devastated, destroyed most of Darwin so there was no accommodation. So, it was very hard for the government to accommodate the people there, and particularly the number of us that arrived, I think we were about one thousand.

Due to the civil conflict in Portuguese Timor, and the Indonesian invasion on 7 December 1975, the Australian Government granted Timorese in Australia refugee status. These families, such as DM58, DF60, and DF58’s families, were invited to settle in Australia and were asked to choose where they would like to live, as detailed by DM58, “all of us ended up in Darwin and it was split, you know Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, and some people decided to stay in Darwin.”

For those participants who did not come directly to Australia, most did not describe their escape out of Timor, nor were they asked to, but did state which countries they went to before coming to Australia. Two participants had travelled to West Timor before moving to Portugal and then Australia, while five had travelled to Portugal from Timor and then to

Australia. Some participants left on humanitarian visas or were sponsored by relatives in Australia, but they had to spend time in Indonesia or Portugal before settling in Australia.

4.4.2 Making Communities

Having settled in Australia, many diaspora participants decided to work since most of them could not return to Timor-Leste during the Indonesian occupation. Some other participants sought news about other family members and some visited Timor, sometimes under heavy surveillance from the Indonesian military. Four diaspora participants had travelled to Timor during the Indonesian occupation. Two had left Timor in 1975 and the other two had left in the 1980s. DM50 remembered:

> What made me sort of really getting involved with Timor was in 1990 when I went to Timor just to visit, go back to see my family in Timor … So I came back and I think I was shocked to see what was going on in Timor, and that's what drives me to get involved whatever way I can.

There appears to be some correlation between participants' recalled experiences of Timor and their interaction with the new Timorese community and solidarity networks. This correlation may have influenced participant decisions to support the self-determination of Timor-Leste.

Many participants spoke about their connections with the new Timorese community in Australia, as was the case with DM47:

> So, when I arrived in Australia in '85, we went to Sydney. But we were only there for six months or something and then an uncle of mine, he came over, he said that "you guys need to pack your bags and go to Melbourne" … I remember growing up in Melbourne especially around our community. It was always through a lot of activism;

> through a lot of the stuff that we did was just through music and art, like going to protests, making up banners … I was always involved in music, always around [another Timorese] family.

By forming community groups, Timorese were able to come together to share stories and experiences. These communities were mostly social, such as sports clubs and parties with music provided by Timorese musicians. One participant (DM75) noted that political activities such as protests were discouraged by the Australian Government, and some Timorese and community groups were closely monitored (Boughton, Durnan & da Silva, 2015) since it was around the time of the White Australia policy and fear of communism in Asia. During this time, in 1976, any Timorese who identified as a FRETILIN party member were not allowed in Australia (OPMT, 2020).

Participant DM75 also noted that the celebration of Timorese culture was a way to show that the Timorese are a nation of people with their own identity and that Timor-Leste was not part of Indonesia. During this tense time in the 1970s and 1980s, Timorese diaspora had to assimilate while also supporting their homeland's self-determination. In Sydney's and Melbourne's Timorese diaspora community, most were affiliated with the UDT party or with party members (Guterres, 2006; OPMT, 2020). Those aligned with other parties such as FRETILIN, became more active in the community in the 1980s with arrivals from the second wave, holding separate events. Sometimes old political fractures came to a head, as evidenced by some participants who stated they did not want to participate in activism and diaspora community events because of the politics.

However, some from the younger generation had not become politically active until they started working with solidarity networks. This was discussed by DF50, who said:

> … as a child, I didn't realise that I was actually born in another country. Like I said, I left when I was three. My parents never really talked about the problems and the issues in East Timor. I think, as I grew, probably would be in my teenage years we were involved in the Timorese community, but not so much in like a political … I didn't know about the war situation until there was this … the gentleman's passed away … he was quite a well-known figure here who was helping a lot of things about East Timor … he gave us information. There was a group of young East Timorese, including my sister, not so much my other siblings, but my sister and I wanted to help, wanted to understand that we were born in another country.

This participant's experience of not knowing their cultural roots could have been due to the trauma experienced by DF50's parents and the Australian Government encouraged refugees and new migrants to assimilate into society.

Some participants spoke about struggling with identity and moving around Australia until they made connections. For example, DM43 described, "I moved from Northern Territory (NT) then to Queensland and then to Victoria because I had no community that I could identify with." While struggling with identity is not a unique experience for diaspora, it should be noted that Timorese were identified as Portuguese citizens in 1975. Those of mixed Portuguese heritage were favoured when boarding cargo ships. Timor-Leste was not a nation, it was an imagined nation (Braz, 2014; Wise, 2006).

Some were active through other community activities such as music, cultural dances, and sport. As noted by DM47, in Melbourne "our community is sport or music and us, I, was involved in the [soccer] club."

Also mentioned by DF46, in Darwin, "There was *Tia* (Auntie) Veronica and we used to have our dancing with special events like conference openings and stuff. We would do that and we would go to the protests together."

In a sense, the Timorese community in Australia became the participants' extended family. Some were not comfortable with screaming at protests and contributed in other ways, such as DM50, who said:

> I did more drawing, a lot of drawings. I managed to do a little, not the best book, but a children's activity book that's sort of the characters that based on the group that I was involved with … cultural dances but at the same time we had theatre going, contemporary dance in fact all these all combined together so it was a good thing that I got involved … the cultural side of things and I think that's what I could contribute to Timor.

The common thread with all diaspora participants was their recognition of their Timorese cultural identity while living outside of Timor, combined with feelings of obligation to contribute to peace and development in Timor-Leste. This thread is a key finding, indicating diasporas' desire to play a positive role in peacebuilding and development in Timor-Leste. Such positive roles would have caused some participants to develop or build upon their feelings of cultural identity as diaspora. This finding will be discussed below.

In the 1980s and 1990s, some participants were involved in the setup and/or activities of organisations, mostly comprised of volunteers in Australia pre- and post-independence; such as the East Timor Cultural Centre (ETCC), the Timor Australia Council (TAC), East Timor Relief Association (ETRA) in Sydney, and Timorese Association Victoria (TAV) in Melbourne. These organisations operated during the Indonesian occupation, advocating for the people of Timor-Leste's right to self-determination, smuggling out information and sharing with media, getting foreign journalists into Timor-Leste, lobbying for international support at the UN and from the Australian government, networking and sharing information with the Timorese diaspora community through events, radio and newsletters.

There were also Chinese Timorese associations, but none of the participants were part of those organisations.

Community radio was a popular form of communication, with some diaspora participants taking their skills in community radio to work in Timor-Leste and in Australia during the pre-referendum and post-independence peacebuilding periods:

> I went back to Timor in July (1999), if I'm not mistaken, had to come and raise some money, I went back to Timor in July I started I started in the dissemination of information. Including working in the radio RTK every night to go and do interviews and broadcast. That was a CNRT radio broadcaster. (DF58)

Five participants were active in community radio in Australia delivering programs that mostly reported news from Timor in Tetum, Portuguese, and Hakka (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4

East Timorese Community Radio in Melbourne, 1988

Note. From Bird, R. (ca. 1988). *Ana Guterres running the radio program 'Hanoin Timor Loro Sae' for the East Timorese community in Fitzroy, 1988.* Origins, Museums Victoria. Used with permission. https://origins.museumsvictoria.com.au/countries/east-timor#&gid=null&pid=1.

Some diaspora worked directly with Timorese political parties, such as DM51, who noted, "I realised there was a bit of identity crisis in our community, especially people around my age and so I decided to join the FRETILIN committee back in 1978 when I was still in high school." DF76 was also active within a Timorese political party and told me:

> OPMT (women's organisation *Organização Popular Mulheres Timor-Leste*) was set up in 1975 but I lived overseas so we didn't really work as OPMT overseas. We contributed to FRETILIN as an organisation that fought for independence … So I started working for OPMT since 2000 when I came back to live here in 2004 (in Timor-Leste) but I started to get involved with OPMT in the Conference in 2000 when FRETILIN organised the first conference to reorganise OPMT. So, I've been involved with them for almost twenty-one years. But before that we managed, the FRETILIN women, to get financial support to OPMT from local council and we received $40,000 in 1999 because it was hard to get financial support for OPMT because it's part of FRETILIN, it was considered a political party.

Other organisations, particularly in Melbourne, were established after Timor-Leste's independence. One such organisation was the East Timor Students Association (ETSA), established in 2002 for Timorese students studying in Australia who are scholarship recipients. Another organisation is METAC, established in 2007 to assist Timorese people who were living in Melbourne while seeking asylum, and as a gathering place for Timorese who did not return to Timor. DM45 pointed out that METAC is also a meeting place for non-Timorese to gather and talk to Timorese diaspora and students:

> It grew up into a space where Timorese get together but also non-Timorese that are interested in Timor also come to mingle and mix with Timorese. The concept is around food … usually we provide Timorese food and then we have speakers who

> share about their experiences in Timor. A lot of non-Timorese that have come back from Timor also have that longing to remain connected to Timor so METAC offers that opportunity.

This example of having a meeting place in the community, such as METAC, demonstrates that diaspora connections outside of Timor-Leste are still needed after independence, to give opportunities for Timorese, academics, and friends to meet. Community connections can also be influential and encourage contribution to the development in Timor-Leste.

There were also a number of friendship groups established across Australia, which were established by the then Ambassador Abel Guterres, a Timorese diaspora from the Melbourne community, after being approached by the Yarra, Darebin, and Port Phillip councils. Guterres wanted to focus on friendship rather than sister-city relationship (Ninnes, 2011). As described by DM43, as political activism declined, the diaspora in some communities kept their connections:

> A lot of people had gone back to Timor in ’99 but there was still a big community here and all the friendship groups were getting established. There was a good vibe you know here in Melbourne. Cos, I think Melbourne has got the most sort of friendships groups out of Australia and they are very active you know with the East Timorese community.

Other activities, such as the Timor Sea Justice Campaign and the Witness K trial, have brought Timorese diaspora together. These activities were primarily led by the solidarity network, as described by WF70, “I got involved with … the Timor Sea Justice Campaign. I think I met you there.”

Social groups, such as the soccer clubs and Timorese church groups, continue giving Timorese diaspora the opportunity to gather and keep in touch with news in Timor, especially during official visits. An example of this is when the Timorese government sent election officials to Sydney, they met with the community at a funeral gathering in St. Elias Catholic Church in Ashcroft, as organisations like ETCC and ETRA had already closed down since the leaders had returned to Timor-Leste and there was no longer a social meeting place. As noted by DM45:

> … the Timorese community is quite dispersed as well and I guess [the] Timorese community is established. They all have their own jobs, even amongst the Timorese community we don't see each other too often. Only if there's a, we might see each other at a funeral, or … if there is a party somewhere we might all go.

While political activism for the self-determination of Timor has ended, there are still opportunities for Timorese diaspora to contribute to the development of Timor-Leste. There is also scope for a more coordinated mechanism, discussed in Chapter 6.

4.4.3 Political Activism

Most of the diaspora participants referred to political activism and cultural activities when asked how they had contributed to peacebuilding and development in Timor-Leste. Some diaspora stated that they wanted to "go back to our history" (DF60) and "start from the beginning" (DF67). Many participants spoke about the importance of solidarity networks, conferences, community organisations, and events.

Political activism increased after the 1991 Dili Massacre, and more solidarity connections and networks were established (Wise, 2006), such as with the Josephite sisters. For example, *Tia* Veronica from the Darwin community wove a traditional *tais* with names of victims woven into the fabric. This collection of *tais*, along with an *uma lulik* traditional

sacred house built by *Tio* Antonio (Tia Veronica's husband) and lead *katupa* (rice packages made from woven leaves) sculptures made by Albertina Viegas from the Sydney community, toured around Sydney and Canberra (von Sturmer, 2021).

Through this exhibition and other events, such as yearly protests, many Timorese Australians became united in their action, sometimes at an interstate, national, and international level. As recounted by DM47:

> I remember in early 90s, our former ambassador Abel … he once had a van or a bus, and we all got on the bus and we drove to Canberra … just scream and shout, play music in the front and a lot of people were in their cars … and we just drove up to Canberra! During that time we did so much … I think we were doing three to four days a week.

The figures below show the East Timor Embassy and an installation of white crosses outside the Indonesian embassy in Canberra, where communities from Sydney and Melbourne would meet for protests.

Figure 4.5

The East Timor Embassy

Note. From Suai Media Space. (2007). *Timorese 'Embassy' Canberra, Dec. 1991*. www.suaimediaspace.org/history.

Figure 4.6

An Installation of White Crosses

Note. From De Almeida family photo collection. (1992). *Installation of White Crosses.* Copy in possession of Ursula De Almeida.

4.4.4 Preparation for Popular Consultation 1998–1999

After President Habibie announced the possibility of autonomy in 1998, tripartite talks between Indonesia, Portugal, and the UN began. Talks in January 1999 later turned to the possibility of independence through a popular consultation. The diaspora and their networks prepared for autonomy (or independence), holding large international gatherings such as the FRETILIN conference held in Sydney in 1998 (Walsh, 2001) and conferences were held in Peniche, Portugal (Durand, 2016) and at Monash University in Melbourne in 1998 (Freitas, 1999). Of the 16 diaspora and development worker participants interviewed, five attended the conference in Melbourne, including DF60 who recalls, "We already have in place and even ourselves in the diaspora, we are already building a nation. We were already prepared for our nation, remember the conference that we had in Melbourne."

Preparations were also being made in Indonesia when Timorese resistance leader Xanana Gusmão was under house arrest, as described by DF58:

> I went to participate in the preparation for the referendum in Jakarta. Xanana called us there, so we went when he was under house arrest, [in a] place called Salemba. So, we all went, people like Ramos Horta. A lot of Timorese in the resistance from the diaspora went. Mainly the ones who are like you could say active in the leadership role. So, I was one of the lucky few. So we went to Jakarta, we met with Xanana for the first time and there he started the strategy.

SM55 also spoke about the lead up to the 1999 popular consultation and working with Timorese from the Melbourne diaspora when he was studying in Indonesia:

> I met Emilia Pires but when she came to help me in Jakarta to help refugees, João Gonçalves and Vicky Tchong also and an international Michael. In 1999, they came from Australia to help with the refugees.

It was also during 1998 that the Timorese community became more united, as noted by WM70+:

> [Disunity] was a much bigger problem in the Timorese diaspora and of course in the political wing of the Timorese diaspora … all the divisions that had plagued the resistance in East Timor and the resistance internationally could not be transferred to independent East Timor, post-independence, basically ruin the chance of self-government and independence … so presenting a united front in 1998 and a principled front was really, really important but it took a long time to get there.

One student noted that he sees division in the Melbourne community, between Portuguese-Timorese, Timorese and Chinese-Timorese (SM38).

A surprising result of the discussions with these participants was the importance of one song during the popular consultation, as told by DM47:

> I don't know if you know the story of the [song[31]] *Liberdade*? It was because the Indonesian Government were not allowing people in Timor, they weren't allowed to play songs, you know songs of independence. The government was taking away all the guitars and people were just not allowed to play any kind of music there. And so it was up to us, "Hey, let's record this song." So, I think what happened is after the recording we did on the tape, there was just blank tape, so there wasn't any kind of variety or anything. And then we managed to make 500 and we gave them to the

[31] To watch the *Liberdade* music clip, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=_5CzzKfbsVoTube.

> Melbourne university students. A few of them were going up to Timor … they smuggled the 500 tapes into Timor and just gave them all out so everyone and anyone, in Dili, up in the mountains; and apparently people played that song 24 hours and it became like an anthem.

4.4.5 Returning to Timor-Leste

The participants included those who worked in community organisations in Australia, established NGOs in Timor-Leste, worked in Timor-Leste such as with the UN, International non-government organisations (INGOs), and GoTL, and travelled back and forth to do work. Those who travelled for work were involved in photography, film and television, sport, youth work, music concerts, music recordings, and working with political parties. Examples of participants' work and activism are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Examples of Participant Work and Activism in Australia and Timor-Leste

Work in Australia	Activism	Work in Timor-Leste
Factory and labour work, later established own business	Established student meeting place in Portugal in 1970s and then community organisation in 1981 in NSW, invited to organise youth in Melbourne, volunteered with Timorese refugees in 1999	Established training centre for adults, taught maths to adults, worked on renewable energy projects
Nurse	Activism during university with solidarity network, volunteered with Timorese refugees in 1999	Health programs in rural districts
Social worker	Political activism, cultural dances	Volunteer in agriculture project talking to farmers, personal assistant of chief executive officer in local women's NGO
Creative	Creative arts (art, theatre) projects, fundraising, support for Timorese youth projects	Videography and documentary development
Student	Involved with ETSA in 2002	Communications, research, monitoring and evaluation
Community development with migrants	Attended rallies, fundraising	Community development, infrastructure projects, project finance and administration, operations

Photographer	More involved post-independence with community organisations	Photography projects
Radio, media, teaching Tetum	Campaigned for Timor's self-determination, community radio	Translator, communications and media, worked on establishment of an INGO, supporting local health NGOs
Government	Campaigned for Timor's self-determination, speaking tours, conferences, community radio, Timorese organisation, preparing for referendum	Media and communications, finance, veterans programs, working with the *Chega* Memory Institute
Musician	Music, community soccer, The Boîte concert	Music projects with youth and veterans
Librarian	Advocacy, conferences	Child protection (e.g., education, school breakfasts and nutrition, radio)
Manufacturing	Music, political activism	Music production, organising concerts, youth and politics
Musician, teacher, performances	Teaching music to youth, performing	Participated in festivals, cultural preservation
Post office, agriculture	Community radio, women's group	Education programs, office administration, media and communications
Lab technician	Community radio	Health volunteer, project finance and operations
Retail, translation work, teaching Tetum, human resource development (people and culture)	Political activism, cultural dances	Translation and interpreting, teaching Tetum and English to military, film project

Two of the sixteen diaspora participants worked and lived outside of Dili. As detailed in the table above, diaspora worked in a variety of sectors, most notably in training, education, research and monitoring and evaluation, all much needed and shareable skills.

Of the 16 diaspora interviewed, two had tertiary qualifications from outside of Australia and eight completed tertiary education in Australia. This aligns with the perception that the returning Timorese diaspora are educated. But not all Timorese in Australia obtained tertiary education, which was a surprise to the Timorese university students:

> We had a meeting in Darwin [in 1998] with the Timorese community. We told them anyone with skills and knowledge to go back and return. Don't stay in Australia, go back to Timor! Because we have no people. Those of us that studied [in Indonesia], we didn't finish because we were protesting, taking part in the struggle. I was furious with those who didn't get an education when I went there in 1998. Why not? Sooner or later, we need people when Timor gets its independence to go and work. (SM53)

Three of the participants went to Timor-Leste just before the referendum. Their situation is noteworthy because the popular consultation was held in August 1999. Subsequently, these three diaspora had to return to Australia to vote where they registered.[32] Not many Timorese travelled from Australia to Timor before the referendum because they did not want to miss the opportunity to vote. This was also a very tense and dangerous time to be in Timor-Leste (see Appendix D).

After the results of the referendum were announced, there was a mass displacement of people to West Timor, and some evacuated to Australia (UN, 2000). Some Timorese Australians volunteered or were employed by immigration and health services to assist those who stayed in these tent cities around the country (Crockford, 2007). DM76 worked with

[32] I recall attending a briefing at the UN office in Sydney where the representative explicitly stated this.

some of these people who were staying on the East Hills Army Base in Sydney, to set up a training organisation after they returned to Timor. In 2002, DM76 visited those who had returned to Timor-Leste. This trip was the first time DM75 travelled to Timor-Leste since leaving for tertiary study in 1969.

Some participants had very personal reasons to visit, but later returned to work or live in Timor-Leste, such as DM30+, who explained:

> … one of the biggest drivers for me coming was … knowing that my dad died for his country and wanting to come back and see why he died for this country. So what was so good about it? A combination of things.

After independence, some participants worked with humanitarian organisations or with community organisations in Timor-Leste. Some of the diaspora participants travelled to Timor with no plans to look for work but plans to travel and see family, accompany their partner, attend a conference, or volunteer. This was the case for DM45, who noted:

> There was a weekend conference at the Ministry of Education and then I ended up staying longer in Timor. I somehow spoke to someone … and ended up getting a job with them.

For many diaspora, particularly those who were politically active or had relatives in the resistance, this was the first time they could return to Timor-Leste (CAVR, 2005b). Travelling to Timor-Leste and seeing the state that Timor was in may have influenced these diasporas' motivations to help.

Participants were not asked how they acquired their employment or volunteering opportunities but sometimes the information was provided. Some participants provided anecdotal evidence that Timorese diaspora located in Australia were intent on assisting with rebuilding Timor-Leste, rather than intentionally looking for work or lacking the ambition to

further their careers working for large organisations in the international development sector. This finding is not supported in the literature, as most paint the picture of returning diaspora as the elite (Askland, 2009, 2014; Wise, 2006).

Two participants noted that many from the Timorese Australian diaspora worked in Timor-Leste during the period from 2000 to 2005 as volunteers under the AVI's program. Consequently, the Timorese diaspora who returned to work in Timor-Leste, such as those under AVI, were not all employed in high-prestige and high-paying jobs. Two of the diaspora participants worked as AVIs, in 2005 and 2011. One was placed within GoTL and the other worked in the rural districts. One participant mentioned that diaspora should not take jobs that could be done by local Timorese and returning students (WF70).

4.4.6 What Does Peacebuilding and Development Look Like in Timor-Leste?

> When I returned, unconsciously, you know I think every Timorese that went there after the referendum would perhaps say that they participated in the peacebuilding and nation building, some in one way or the other, you know whether directly or indirectly. If you work[ed] in Timor in those days from '99 onwards, you would participate in the peacebuilding and then nation-building. — DF58

When asked about peacebuilding, participant responses were varied, particularly when discussing post-independence peacebuilding and development. There were different interpretations of peace and development and how these concepts relate to Timor-Leste. Most diaspora and some development workers included past political activism as part of their contribution to peacebuilding. The students and development workers (total 3) involved with Timor after independence, spoke about diaspora contribution to present-day Timor-Leste, such as advocacy, setting up NGOs like Timor Aid and businesses and providing

employment to local Timorese, development of sport, humanitarian support and partnerships with the organisations that the diaspora were working in.

Although most diaspora participants spoke about their direct work through employment, some spoke about their unpaid work unrelated to their direct line of work. Furthermore, some participants spoke of their support of other 'passion' projects outside of their usual work, such as providing scholarships and support to Timorese youth to further their education (DM75, DM58), working with veterans in Timor and in Australia through projects such as Timor Awakening (DF58), supporting Timor Maubere music project (DF58, DM47 and DM51), working on a book that discusses women's contribution to Timor-Leste's independence (DF67, SF34), and sport (DM50, DM58, SF35+).

When discussing what peace looks like, some participants cited their work in development as well as interests in line with the SDGs such as children's rights to education (DF60), equal access to basic services (DF67, SF30), poverty reduction (DM40+, SF30), nutrition and food security (DM40+, DF67), and gender equality (DF67, SF39, WF70+, WF69). For example, DM40+ spoke about nutrition in Timor-Leste:

> … women here tend to have a big decision more in nutrition and what families eat and so forth, but also just as important is the development and nutrition of women and children in Timor's human development, human capital.

While DF67 spoke about wider equality issues:

> Women are not treated as equal as men. They don't have the same opportunities and there's an elite that have, are getting richer and richer while the majority is staying poor or (becoming) poorer also can say, because the gap is widening, so this is a main worry … Some that have money can pay for private (health) or go overseas but majority can't have this. So we don't really live in peace in Timor. We have to fight

> for equality. When the people, when everyone, has access to education, to health, to justice, and food, especially food, because if you don't eat you don't have health and can't have health so you can't study, you can't do anything. So, it's very important that we change policies and then everyone has equal access to basic needs. (DF67)

4.4.7 Peacebuilding in and From Australia

Some diaspora could not work in Timor-Leste for extended periods and travelled back and forth on short projects and assignments. Others fundraised in Australia and worked with solidarity networks and friendship groups. Afterwards, there were few opportunities for Timorese in Australia to meet and talk about developing Timor, including in friendship groups:

> I guess the friendship group really never connected to the Timorese community here as well. I think very superficially I guess. I know they are connected really well with the Timorese students studying in Melbourne. (DM45)

As noted in the findings, Timorese move around frequently and thus can spend only limited time with friendship groups. For example, groups such as Friends of Same had a Timorese member who later moved away, and Friends of Baucau had a Timorese coordinator who was unable to commit longer than one year. Friends of Ermera and Friends of Aileu had some Timorese student members but again they can only commit so much time according to their study schedules and terms of their scholarship. One Timorese helped to establish the Friends of Ainaro when he was a student in Ballarat (personal communication, 7 December, 2022). Solidarity groups like Blue Mountains East Timor Sisters had a Timorese member because she was unable to return to her home in Melbourne, due to COVID-19 lockdowns. Other friendship groups and solidarity groups, such as Australian East Timor Association (AETA), connected with Timorese diaspora through catering, speaking appointments, and

entertainment. Two of the diaspora participants worked directly with Australian friendship groups, one while in Victoria and the other in Timor-Leste.

Other activities held after Timor-Leste gained independence were based around the celebration and preservation of culture. Diaspora in Melbourne continued to hold solo exhibitions and take part in larger events (DM43). Some diaspora worked on film, such as the films *Balibo* and *A Guerra da Beatriz* (Beatriz's War). Similarly, diaspora worked on television projects such as the mini-series *Answered by Fire*, theatre productions such as the play *Greater Sunrise* at Belvoir St Theatre, and music productions. Some participants had not reflected on the work they did and had not realised how much they had achieved (DF47).

Participants who left Timor as young infants were more likely to return to discover their cultural heritage. The current generation of Timorese-Australian youth are now showing interest in travelling to Timor-Leste and continuing their inherited culture by learning drumming, dancing, and the Tetum language (DM55). This was also a phenomenon for some youth in the 1980s and 1990s, who arrived in Australia when they were infants (e.g., DF46).

When talking about his first time back in Timor, DM43 said:

> I first went in 2005, when I decided to do a project about East Timor was um, in a way was to, I suppose, it sounds very cliché, but to like to find myself, you know just, that's when I went first back to Timor. I think the people that I met there and, oh they just really touched me you know. So, after that experience, I realised that I'm East Timorese, I was born in East Timor and I was really clear of who I was, and who I am now. So, when one would say "Where are you from?" I would say, "I am East Timorese." It's very clear to me now.

Such activities include The Boîte's concert and project. This concert involved a collaboration with Ego Lemos, a Timorese musician who was in Melbourne on a university

scholarship, a choir from Timor-Leste *Koro Loriko*, the Melbourne Millennial Chorus, a multicultural and multi-generational choir including Timorese diaspora in Melbourne, and Timorese musicians and singers. The concert was held in 2012, along with stories, photo exhibition, and cultural dance performances as part of the wider project (The Boîte, 2012).

Another project, led by two Timorese diaspora, is described by DM43:

> We wanted to sort of talk to people about, basically tell their story of Timor, through food and the memories that they have from Timor and how food sort of brought the families together. So, like do they still cook the recipes here and when they cook, what experience do they get from that? So, we interviewed and photographed a lot of people.

Despite these cultural and community activities, diaspora participants did not mention participating in Timor's political processes from Australia such as voting in the Timorese presidential and parliamentary elections. Some diaspora participants were active in Timor-Leste with political parties and political groups (DF67), working on political reform (DM51), contributing to social change, and reflecting on the need for change in political leadership (DM55).

Timorese diaspora in Australia can register to vote, with polling centres in Darwin, Sydney and Melbourne and in other places around the world. WM70+ considers voting in Timor-Leste elections as:

> … a recognition of Timor that they're still, even though they may be Aussies, they're still part of the Timorese family and have a contribution to make and their opinions matter.

Elections are run by electoral officials who must travel from Timor-Leste to register voters. Timorese people in Australia had to register some time before the voting, and travel

into the city centre to register and vote, requiring an investment of time to gather documents and request leave as elections were always held on a weekday. In Timor-Leste people are given a few days off to allow time for travel to their home districts to cast their vote. During the 2022 Presidential election, electoral commission officials from Timor did not come to Australia to register voters due to COVID-19 restrictions (CNE, 2022), so those who had moved interstate, came to Australia to study or work, were unable to register (personal communication, 19 March, 2022). Only those who had registered in the previous election and had electoral cards with addresses in that state were able to vote (personal communication, 19 March, 2022).

Participant DM51 stated that he is "involved in trying to reform the parties because I see the people who've been there for 20 years" and was involved in providing finance to the previous political campaign. He stated that there are too many layers of Government in Timor-Leste, "we have like 43 ministers, Australia only has 20" and highlighted a need to have younger people involved in politics.

Those who did vote in Melbourne were greeted by Timorese students working during the election. The Ambassador at the time was present at the first round of the 2022 presidential election on 19 March 2022. In the second round of the presidential election on 19 April 2022, 315 out of 1,487 registered voters lodged votes in three polling centres. Numbers may have been low as electoral officials could not travel to Australia to register voters, thereby excluding Timorese in Australia on work and student visas. In comparison, 677 out of 2,203 registered voters lodged votes in the UK, and 623 of 1,290 registered voters lodged votes in North Ireland. These voters were mostly Timorese, who travelled to these countries for work after receiving Portuguese passports when Timor-Leste gained independence.

In Timor-Leste, elections are seen as an important way of contributing to development as Timorese people had never voted before under colonisation and occupation until the 1999 popular consultation.

All of the students and development worker participants had engaged with Timorese diaspora in Australia through community organisations, events, political activism, friendship groups, and relationships with Timorese diplomats Abel Guterres and Luciano Valentim da Conceição, who are from the diaspora communities of Melbourne and the UK. These two diplomats assisted a friendship group to get funds raised from Australia, to assist flood victims in rural Timor-Leste. The diplomats did so by advocating for the local bank branch to obtain a signature from a heavily pregnant woman so that the money could be ordered and released from the central bank in Dili. Without these diplomatic connections, the money would not have been able to reach rural areas to aid the humanitarian response.

Diaspora in Australia did not participate directly in the post-conflict truth-seeking process, so there was a missed opportunity of not holding hearings outside of Timor-Leste, even though:

> … people inside CAVR, we very insistent that there be a public hearing at which diaspora Timorese would testify, basically alert Timorese who stayed in East Timor, to the worth, to the work they'd done and contribution that they made; to offset this idea that somehow those people were all opportunists who had a holiday for 25 years in Australia, or Portugal, or wherever they were internationally and then come back and take all the plum jobs, and left them to a sideline, even though they'd felt they won the war at home. (DM70+)

To summarise, diaspora contributed to Timor-Leste's development by engaging and collaborating with Timorese students and development workers, both in Australia and in Timor-Leste.

4.5 Perceptions, Expectations, Aspirations, and Opportunities

This section looks at diaspora experiences and interactions when working in Timor-Leste. In addition, this section discusses recommendations that students and development workers may have for diaspora returning to live and work in Timor-Leste. Four students and three development workers from a total of 14 interview participants had worked directly with Timorese diaspora in Timor-Leste, regardless of whether they were from the Australian cohort or elsewhere.

One development worker stated, "I have only worked with Timorese diaspora from Australia" (DW42) and added that he had not worked with any Portugal, Mozambique, or Angola diaspora. This could be because diaspora from these countries were of the pre-1975 Lusophone generation and already had social connections in Timor-Leste.

4.5.1 Experiencing Return

Most of the diaspora cohort stated that they were welcomed when they went back to Timor-Leste, particularly if they were working on a volunteer basis or had arrived not long after the referendum, as DM45 mentioned:

> The reception that I got in '99 I guess was very good. Because Timor was just coming out of the ballot, everyone was finally free and happy even though there was a lot of destruction around the place. You could still see burnt houses, there was still militia activity in Timor but there was a sense of being liberated. Any Timorese that was coming back was welcomed as relatives, as friends, as Timorese from the diaspora coming back home. So, it was quite a good atmosphere. I think that changed a little

> bit with the role of the UN in Timor. Because then I think it started creating divisions between Timorese society. Okay the ones that work for international agencies make more money and the Timorese who make still very little money. And the opportunities weren't the same for every Timorese.

It cannot be denied that the adoption of Portuguese as one of the official languages presented opportunities to diaspora, but as DF67 points out:

> I think, because they knew that I participated in the struggle I didn't feel discriminated and then my first years of work … was in [a] Portuguese [language] project, so it means that I didn't get a job that [someone from] another generation [would] get. When people come from overseas and they're working in a job that others can also get it can have a bit of conflict in there … maybe I just felt that, [I] felt needed.

While interview participants were not asked about language, those who went to work in Timor were able to speak either Tetum or Portuguese or both, and some spoke Bahasa Indonesia. This led to work in translating, interpreting, and teaching Tetum and Portuguese, for four of the interview participants. One participant spoke about the vicarious trauma she experienced when translating:

> I worked as a translator and interpreter, and I was assigned to the missing persons program for translating testimonies of people whose family members or friends had disappeared from '76 all the way to the current time so that was a really emotional and challenging job. (DF47)

Employing Timorese diaspora as translators allowed for a somewhat objective staff cohort who could start in a relatively short amount of time. However, despite knowing

Tetum, the returning diaspora were seen as outsiders, particularly after the arrival of the UN administration. But this is changing, as noted by interview participants DM45, DM40+, and DM44.

Language has long been a widely discussed topic in Timor-Leste as it reflects different generations and the resistance; creating some inter-generational conflicts (Leach, 2009). As DM45 explains, "I mean if we have good English in Timor you are more likely to get a better range of opportunities, including job opportunities than if you don't speak English. So that's always been a source of [tension]."

During their interview, one development worker stated:

> I would strongly, from my own experience, emphasise the importance of knowing Tetum. I bitterly regret that I didn't take the time to learn Tetum. Or that when I worked for the UN during my first year in East Timor, they didn't insist or mandate that I spend the first six months doing intensive Tetum. (DM70+)

Some diaspora were unable to reconcile with the guilt of "the inequalities and uneven playing field" and returned to Australia, as told by DF47, who had travelled regularly to Timor prior to independence.

This participant's family was well-known in her neighbourhood:

> I think that the more often I went there, the more I realised that I had a lot more privilege than people there and so while for the first 10 or 15 years I felt true acceptance. I think the older I got and you know, in the later years, I probably realised that I was probably only accepted by my immediate family networks and probably not by society.

Another participant (DF46) told of her return to Timor-Leste being unintentional; she accompanied her partner while he worked. However, after her house burnt down in the 2006

political crisis, she suffered further trauma and sought refuge for the second time in her life. To date, she does not feel the urge to go back. There are also suspicions of corruption and nepotism amongst other Timorese diaspora, as noted by DM47, "Everybody thinks that we are related, but we're not." Some participants spoke about corruption, with one suggesting that Timorese diaspora come and help at the Anti-Corruption Commission as they are under-resourced. But some are happy to work within their capacity, or in line with their passions or interests, for example:

> I took it on board as a hobby of mine, because all the work, I was unpaid … there was no money or anything. But I thought, if I'm going to do this project I can't rely on getting paid because I think this kind of story, it's too important, so people need to hear the story. So, I've done it all, all the work I've done … it's just because I believe in the project. (DM47)

Those participants who travelled to Timor during the Indonesian occupation seemed to have a better reception, and even more so if they left Timor-Leste after 1975, as they had language skills in Bahasa Indonesia and had experienced some suffering (Crockford, 2003; Wise, 2006). This perception of diaspora suffering less still permeates as explained by DF67:

> I can see in people's comments (about me) "*ema husi liur nee*" [these people from the outside] means that we didn't do much, they are the ones who suffer. I get really upset. I said [to the local], "you know, we could have had a good life overseas. We picked to do something for Timor to becoming independent. This is because we loved Timor, we felt Timorese, because you didn't have any other choice, you had to fight for your survival. We did that, we had choices."

As some participants mentioned, men often had an easier transition back into the community than the younger women, and some women experienced comments from family

and colleagues about their personal lives. Timor-Leste is a patriarchal society, and while some progress has been made, work is still needed to achieve gender equality.

Some members of the diaspora were given labels by the local Timorese after returning to Timor-Leste to work, adding to the perception that diaspora are mostly *mestiço* (mixed heritage), such as "the white Timorese" or "*malae*" (foreigner). Other participants said they were referred to as "double passports." As explained in Section 4.4.1, diaspora who were able to board the cargo ships were mostly of mixed heritage.

Encouragingly, DM30+ said:

> I think that (reception of diaspora) changed a lot, as people has become more attuned, more educated, more politically savvy and mature … it also depends [on] political positions during that time as well.

Some participants spoke about projects they had been working on voluntarily but could not continue due to limited interest, human resources, and funding. For example, DM50 mentioned the Timor Cup, which was a soccer competition between teams in Australia and Timor-Leste where "the organisers decided to give it, hand over to [the Government of] Timor and then it just disappeared." Others spoke about difficulty with getting project ideas off the ground in Timor-Leste, such as:

> I had an idea with them to organise the Dili international music festival and I put together this proposal and ideas that I took to Timor (in 2020) … I spoke to a lot of people, but it's really hard, like every time you talk to someone, they always make your idea seem like it's too hard. (DM47)

However, DM30+ pointed out that for programs to succeed, someone needs to be positioned in Timor-Leste:

> You definitely need competent people here on the ground to assist those people, because it's very difficult to work with government if you're overseas. Especially internet, emails, they usually don't respond to emails. And it usually requires a phone call, a WhatsApp message or a knock on their door to be able to … it's impossible.

When Timorese students and development workers were asked what they would like to see diaspora doing in Timor-Leste, the most frequent responses included capacity building, rural development, financial support of projects, and job creation. One student (SM38) shared the example of a peanut butter and jam enterprise that employs Timorese and buys Timorese produce. These findings will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

The new diaspora were also discussed by participants, including those in the UK, now one of the largest groups of Timorese diaspora comprising those who left Timor during the Indonesian occupation and after independence[33].

Some of the students saw themselves as diaspora because they were returning to Timor-Leste after their studies. But there is a "misconception that doors open for [students] after working and studying in Australia as not all students have been able to get jobs when they returned, and that [they] have to work hard to re-establish themselves" (WM69).

Australia also hosts a number of OTWs from Timor-Leste, some on short-term contracts and some on multi-year contracts such as those in Warrnambool. From this group, as told by DM45:

> … there's quite a few going back and setting up businesses, so they learn and get the skills in Australia. They save quite a bit of money. Some have set up farms in Aileu, farms in the municipalities where they used the skills that they learnt in Australia.

[33] Timorese who travelled to the UK and Europe obtained Portuguese passports, so they are not considered OTWs.

Some participants also pointed out the OTWs are sending back remittances to their home villages and neighbourhoods in Timor-Leste. These OTWs contribute to peace and stability by keeping young people from engaging in conflicts. Such efforts to occupy young people include direct employment and providing financial assistance for youth to run community activities or set up small businesses.

Participants who provide scholarships in Timor-Leste discussed the difficulty of graduates getting jobs. As informed by WF70, “Our (high school) scholarship students have been to university (in Timor-Leste) and hardly any of them have been able to get jobs.” WF70 identified one student who eventually travelled to Israel to continue their study, as she could not get a job with a degree from the National University of Timor-Lorosa’e (UNTL). Those who can get into universities in Australia have better prospects, as informed by DM40+:

> A lot of the scholarship students that are coming back are working in a lot of the DFAT [Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade] programs. And there’s a push to recruit mostly a lot of DFAT-funded scholarship recipients who have come back from Australia.

As stated by WM70+, “a lot of Timorese would like to come to Australia, very few actually get to do it.” One participant who had gone back to Timor-Leste after graduating in 2021 from university in Melbourne was working on short contracts and only recently was able to secure a job.

So, from these findings, it can be deduced that there is a need for more collaboration between diaspora and stakeholders in Timor-Leste. This need may be met by implementing a coordination mechanism, and there is scope to explore this once the Engagement Action Plan for diaspora engagement comes into effect.

4.6 Push and Pull Factors and Timor's Peacebuilding and Development

From the interviews conducted with the 16 diaspora of personal, and family, accounts and interviews comprising observations from students and development workers, there were factors on why and for how long diaspora participated in Timor-Leste's local peacebuilding and development.

The action of leaving, when they left and who was left behind may have played a role in their wish to return. Most wanted to assist with the reconstruction and development in Timor-Leste. Some had familial obligations in Australia and could only go for short periods of time. Working in humanitarian response provided opportunities for diaspora to engage in local peacebuilding and development, such as the response to 2021 floods.

As described in the extant literature, trauma acted as both a pull, particularly during the humanitarian phase after the 1999 popular consultation, and a push factor such as during the 2006 political crisis.

As shown in previous chapters, fundraising has been consistent during the period of political activism and to development, through different organisations, including friendship groups. However, fundraising for 2006 involved Timorese students, so these is a case for international students to be included in the diaspora engagement policy as they also have the ability to move between insider-outsider positionality in Australia. An example of this work is described by SM55:

> I was studying in Melbourne (in 2006). We established Friends of Vemasse and Friends of [inaudible] and then with them we did fundraising. I also went to Ballarat for Friends of Ainaro and do some fundraising. I went to speak. Then also with Friends of Baucau, Friends of Aileu with Chris Adams on weekends. I took a guitar and played for them. I don't know how to play, I do it when there are activities, I facilitate to raise the mood and spirits … Some Timorese were involved in the Friends

> of Baucau (and) Aileu but I forgot their names. But most were Australians. They did people to people work. I admire their dedication, passion for Timorese people.

Other factors such as inclusion of being part of the early planning stages acted as a pull and exclusion such as diaspora not being engaged for the development of Timor-Leste acted as a pull factor. With support from external networks such as friendships groups and long-running support and solidarity groups, Timorese diaspora are somewhat able to engage in Timor-Leste's development and peacebuilding, as well as humanitarian assistance. Below are some case studies which illustrate these points.

4.7 Case Studies

The following case studies look at how diaspora are collaborating on the localisation of SDGs and contributing to the triple nexus of humanitarian-development-peace in Timor-Leste.

4.7.1 Fundraising

After the flooding caused by Cyclone Seroja in Easter 2021 (Section 1.1), Timorese from all over Australia raised funds and sent goods intended for flood survivors. Due to the success of the fundraiser concert in Melbourne, a fund was established to support different groups in Timor. The objective was to sustain the fund and involve more groups from the diaspora community to raise funds, as DM50 describes:

> … this is a fund, so it will be like an ongoing fund … It started, the group itself like it's made up of different people, different age groups … there are different organisations that these younger generations have come up … so we've got the *Timor Oan'S*, which is the [youth] dance [and] culture performance [group] … and people that ran Tais Cup [inter-state soccer tournament] … we know that there will be [a]

> need for us to have more of these functions. There'll be more incidents like this [in Timor] all the time so we opened a public account for this.

Funds raised from the community in Melbourne have been allocated to a grants-style pool for youth organisation applications. As explained by DM50:

> … we have actually the first organisation and have said that we are giving them $10,000 already and two others with a bit smaller amount. We're constantly looking for different organisations. We don't just work with one particular one. (DM50)

This activity can be considered to be contributing to SDG1 and SDG17. There is no SDG for youth and young people. There may be other SDG contribution, depending on the nature of the grant activity.

4.7.2 An Example of a Collaborative Approach to a Storytelling Project

As noted by Durand (2016), on the first processes after independence was to explore Timor-Leste's history. However, women were often left out of the narrative. The book *Buibere: Hamriik Ukun Rasik An* (OPMT, 2020) was written over a period of 10 years, in line with the *Constitution of the Republic of Timor-Leste*, article 11 (República Democrática de Timor-Leste, 2002) on the valorisation of the Resistance and recommendation 4.1.1 from the *Chega!* Report. This recommendation proposed that:

> The diverse contributions of women involved in the Resistance—internally and in the diaspora—be more fully recognised and that additional ways of documenting and disseminating their contribution be developed, including for teaching in the schools. (CAVR, 2005a, p. 169)

Twenty Timorese youth worked on this book project, interviewing participants and researching documents. The project also involved additional collaborators including 14 writers, seven coordinators, and six editors including Timorese youth, ex-clandestine, students, and Timorese diaspora.

One researcher (SF34) commented on her experience interviewing Timorese from the diaspora:

> I admire them a lot for what they did even though they were in someone else's country. Their experience was sad because sometimes they have nowhere to stay or to live. They had to beg to get help, to get support. Their work, a lot of people in Timor don't know, they think that life overseas is fancy and good, there is everything. But it was not like that! Sometimes in Timor, to ask for things we feel bad. To beg is when we really want it. I admire all their work that they did but what we really feel sorry for them because in Timor they are not considered for it. We think of those that were in the jungle, in the clandestine, they have a big value for their involvement in the struggle. We only think that the struggle was those in the clandestine, in the armed front, but the diaspora didn't. We couldn't get independence (without diaspora). For me, their role was important. They had to organise people, convince United Nations to support us, so we can pick our own option in the 1999 (popular consultation). For me, their role is very important because when we make demands from the Indonesian Government, we can't live in our land (Timor). If we didn't give information to our people living overseas, how did we get the support, get the solidarity, so that we can achieve independence? For me, all in the struggle were important; in the armed front, the clandestine and the diaspora. The three had to be carried out together for us to get independence.

One of the writers (DF67) noted that:

> … this book is written by, very important to highlight, was written by a collective not by one person only. It's important for people to know that we can do things together and then came out to be better in terms of content. My contribution for peace will be writing. Making people feel proud of themselves and then they can do things.

To date, this team are setting up reading groups with youth, are in discussion with the Ministry of Education to include the book in the curriculum, and are working to translate the book in Portuguese and English. To summarise, this book project is an example of collaborative work that included youth, people from the clandestine network, diaspora, and Timorese women.

While the book was a way of documenting diaspora women's contribution to the triple-nexus, the project itself was a contribution to Timor-Leste's development and to SDG4, SDG5, SDG8, SDG11, SDG 16 and SDG17.

4.7.3 METAC – Post-Independence Space for Connection

METAC was set up by the community in Melbourne after Timor-Leste gained independence. "METAC is a good model," as stated by DM45, adding that:

> … it was established more than 10 years ago now as an opportunity for Timorese to come together and just be Timorese in their own space. There were Timorese who for whatever reasons couldn't go back, they still wanted to do something, especially young Timorese, younger Timorese, so they set up Melbourne East Timor Activity Centre to keep that engagement of Timor going. It grew up into a space where Timorese get together but also non-Timorese that are interested in Timor also come to mingle and mix with Timorese. The concept is around food, [on]the first Friday of the

> month … usually we provide Timorese food and then we have speakers who share about their experiences in Timor. A lot of non-Timorese that have come back from Timor also have that longing to remain connected to Timor, so METAC offers that opportunity. The Timorese students that are here still attend METAC. It's just an opportunity for them to connect and stay connected with Timorese culture. So, it's been going for 12 years or so and it's been funded for the past five to 10 years by the City of Yarra, funded the welcome dinners, under an annual grant that they give.

As DM50 highlights, METAC grew through the implementation of programs supporting Timorese asylum seekers who arrived in the 1990s. METAC facilitated activities for asylum seekers who were always stressed and to keep them preoccupied (DM50).

DM43 confirms that:

> … whenever they [diaspora] came to Melbourne [after working in Timor] and stuff, they would go to METAC and share their experience. The people there would tell, you know, Melbourne, would tell the [Timorese] students about METAC, so whenever students came, METAC was the point of contact with the East Timorese Community here. So, I felt that it was great for the students to come knowing that they had a centre where they could come to and meet you know, the other Timorese in diaspora and Australians who are very much involved in East Timor.

METAC often hosts fundraisers and promotes Timorese culture, more or less on a monthly basis. METAC can be considered to be contributing to SDG11 and SDG17.

4.7.4 Friendship Groups

Several friendship groups were established in partnership with local councils (Ninnes, 2011). Some diaspora members currently work with and support different friendship groups,

both from Australia and in Timor-Leste, while some diaspora attend friendship group events, provide catering, and take part in cultural performances. Timorese students are particularly active with the friendship groups, continuing these links after the students go back to Timor. Some have formed partnerships with local organisations in Timor-Leste and provide regular funding, providing scholarships, funded small projects in local development. Some diaspora were active in friendship groups such as Balthasar Kehi in Friends of Suai, along with some students who helped to establish some friendship groups.

4.8 Summary

While political activism may have influenced Timorese Australians to work in post-conflict Timor-Leste, other factors also influenced their decisions to work or volunteer there. My initial presupposition was that political activism was the biggest pull factor. However, this was not necessarily the case for all Timorese Australians, as some had found work in Timor-Leste because of their field of expertise (e.g., the creative arts industry), or they wanted to help or explore their culture, heritage, and identity.

The use of a song for conducting research provided further in-depth findings. I assumed that most participants would have an interpretation, whether positive or negative, of *Mai Fali Eh* or any other song. Regardless, this song generated further discussion, and some impromptu singing, on the concept of return to Timor-Leste, the motherland.

While there was some tension between returning diaspora, particularly the ‘elite' and local Timorese, diaspora participants mentioned that these tensions have decreased. This could be due to the UN’s reduced presence and more Timorese travelling abroad to work and study. From the data gathered during interviews, some crossover and opportunities for collaboration were identified. These findings are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5. Becoming Timor-Leste

5.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the field research with other research literature regarding diaspora and their contribution to the nation-state building, peacebuilding, and development in Timor-Leste. The chapter also considers the findings and literature, divided into the three themes identified by reflexive thematic analysis, which are: nationalism and Timorese identity; return, peacebuilding and development; and opportunities. The themes are presented alongside the current policies and development frameworks in Timor-Leste, and analysed by the 17 SDGs and the humanitarian-development-peace triple nexus.

5.2 Nationalism and Timorese Identity

This research has revealed issues regarding the effects of colonisation and political division during decolonisation. Furthermore, the research has revealed issues regarding nation building outside Timor-Leste, experiencing occupation from a distance, lived and vicarious trauma, and being part of the resistance as the common thread of a Timorese cultural identity. Diaspora participation in different forms of activism and post-conflict peacebuilding was also discussed with interview participants, as was the exclusion of diaspora participation from outside Timor-Leste, such as from the truth seeking and reconciliation processes.

The nation of Timor-Leste has taken many forms. In his thesis on national identity in Timor-Leste, Braz (2014, p. 42) argues that:

> Timor-Leste is an imagined nation, in as much as it is a colonial and postcolonial nation. It is also a United Nations and international community rebuilt nation. It is

> also a contemporary modern as well as an ethnic nation … [It was this] imagination of the *Timoroan* that fuelled the ardent desire to be a fully-fledged Nation-State.

While Timor-Leste experienced a long period of colonisation by Portugal and occupation by Indonesia, the imagined nation of *Timoroan* (Braz, 2014) was already conceptualised, which likely occurred when borders were established between Portuguese and Dutch colonisers on the island of Timor. The in-country colonial administration of Portuguese Timor did not really begin until the end of the Manufahi War in 1912, after a gradual increase in power from the 1860s (Braz, 2014).

Identifying as Timorese was suppressed by the Portuguese administration by banning the use of speaking the mother tongue in schools and churches. However, discussions regarding what it meant to be a *Timoroan* and part of a nation were still fostered during this time.

Timorese diaspora in Australia were divided by political, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds (Thatcher, 1992). This division was particularly apparent among those who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s (Wise, 2006). Braz (2014) argues that those who left Timor before or during the invasion in 1975 had left before the country had the opportunity to become a self-governing nation, a nation-state. The eventual nation-state had been under Portuguese rule, so in the case of the diaspora, they had lived as Portuguese subjects, as had all their ancestors before them for as long as five centuries. While some diaspora may have identified as a *Timoroan*, they were officially Portuguese citizens and were treated as such when arriving in Australia. Braz (2014, p. 45) poses the question, "How could the *Timoroan* claim a national identity that did not formally exist and had been denied existence for close to 500 years?"

Unity in Timorese diaspora, in addition to unity in Timor, was an important factor for the UN's credibility in the lead up to the referendum:

> The most important contribution to the diplomacy of the Resistance came from the inside when the Resistance was reconstructed as an all-inclusive movement based on nationalism, not party-affiliation or political ideology, committed to pluralist democracy and human rights … it swelled the ranks of the Resistance inside and outside Timor-Leste, including among the diaspora. (CAVR, 2005b, para. 427)

This raises the questions regarding whether unity in the diaspora communities is important now that Timor-Leste is independent. Or is the feeling of being Timorese enough to encourage diaspora to contribute to development in Timor-Leste? Furthermore, are diaspora continuing to live in the imagined nation of Timor? Braz (2014, p. 17) argues that:

> There is no doubt Timor-Leste needs a cohesive and uniting national identity in order to overcome divisions (including ethnic) that are the source of much anxiety in the country and to be able to operate as a pluralistic democratic nation. Such a nation must be able to embrace and accommodate political and ethnic differences while at the same time being capable of working toward common goals.

In Leach's (2014) longitudinal study, Timorese students surveyed in 2012 preferred to maintain distinct languages, custom, and traditions (62.4%) rather than adapting and blending into one society (37.6%). This preference is somewhat in line with Braz (2014, p. 133, emphasis in original), who writes that "Timoroan has been a ***heterogeneous group operating as a homogeneous group*** for at least 300 years." While both Portugal and Indonesia attempted to unify and create a nation by enforcing use of their language and learning their culture, the Timorese continued to uphold their own unique culture and identities.

5.2.1 Timorese Nation-State Building in Australia

Interviews with participants indicated some levels of trauma, with some families unable to talk about past events in Timor. Similar stories were found in other publications of Timorese living in Australia (Conway, 2010; Tresize, 2018).

By applying a human rights lens, the *Chega!* Report states that "all East Timorese people have been touched and victimised by the conflict in one way or another the conflict affected every Timorese" (CAVR, 2005a, p. 200). Young and Park (2009, p. 351) argue that diaspora are victims and that:

> … states in transition should consider the composition of their diasporas with an eye toward evaluating whether they have the right to know the fate of family members, the right to know the circumstances, causes and conditions surrounding violations of human rights, and the right to reparation.

Trauma in the refugee diaspora community comes in many forms, as demonstrated above. This trauma can be direct (e.g., experiences of displacement, flight, loss, and guilt) or indirect (e.g., experienced vicariously through new arrivals or by receiving news such as the Dili Massacre (see Wise, 2006). Crockford (2007) states that the refugee diaspora who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s suffered less trauma than those who stayed in Timor and those who sought asylum in Australia in the 1990s. Close (2016) and Crockford (2007) argue that these refugee diaspora are at the bottom of the hierarchy of suffering based on their time of experiencing the Indonesian occupation.

The current Engagement Policy (MF & MNEC, 2022) states that some Timorese diaspora can be considered vulnerable. This vulnerability is particularly relevant for those diaspora or irregular migrants suffering hardship, such as victims of human trafficking (MF & MNEC, 2022).

Wise (2006, p.92) writes that Timorese refugees, from all waves that came to live in Sydney, had difficulties settling compared to communities from Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and some of the Balkan communities. These refugees saw themselves as temporary exiles rather than refugees or migrants, and consequently did not address their psychosocial needs or trauma experiences (Tang, 1999, as cited in Wise, 2006).

Some Timorese, including those in the Timorese diaspora in Australia, left Timor with one parent (Conway, 2010), with relatives from extended family (Tresize, 2018) or as unaccompanied minors (OPMT, 2020; Conway, 2010). CAVR recognises that:

> The rights of children were violated during the years of conflict. Children saw or experienced traumatic violence, died from starvation, were displaced from their homes, orphaned, separated from their parents, and were disadvantaged through lack of access to health, educational and other services. (CAVR, 2005a, pp. 13–14)

While diaspora may be at the bottom of the hierarchy of suffering, some may be vulnerable and direct or indirect victims of conflict. Many Timorese refugees lost some of their family members and relatives during the conflict and would not have been able to attend burials or participate in mourning rituals in Timor-Leste. They could only add their loved ones' names to praying for the deceased in masses held in Australia.

As noted by some interview participants, Australia's family reunion programs in the 1980s allowed Timorese in Portugal and Timor to join families established in Australia. During this time, political activism increased with the injection of new Timorese diaspora. Political activism started to increase in the 1980s and 1990s, due to a combination of major events in Timor (e.g., the Dili Massacre) and more information about the human rights abuses. The Timorese diaspora "formed alliances with civil society groups and supported each

other through joint protests, lobbying, information dissemination, fund-raising, and cultural, religious and political activities" (CAVR, 2005b, para. 418).

The *Chega!* Report recognises that the diaspora in Australia, Portugal, and Macau also established political organisations, hosted meetings, and contributed to community radio programmes and newsletters in English, Tetum, Hakka, and Portuguese languages. This recognition supports the research findings.

As further reinforced by CAVR (2005b, para. 416):

> The building of these communities [in the diaspora] was itself a defiant act of East Timorese self-determination in an alien environment, and gave birth to a new resource that added significantly to Timor-Leste's diplomatic capacity and outreach.

5.2.2 Nationalism in an Independent Timor-Leste

Most of the Timorese university students in Leach's longitudinal study (2019) agreed with the statement that to be truly Timorese was to be born in Timor-Leste (86%). In addition, most of these participants found having citizenship (82%), and living most of one's life in Timor-Leste (51.5%) to be very important for identifying as Timorese (Leach, 2019). Furthermore, students rated respect for the law as very important (92.5%) and feeling of being Timorese as very important (88.5%) in the 2012 survey (Leach et al., 2012). As noted in the findings (Leach et al., 2012, p. 12), "East Timorese nationalism lie less in the capacity of the state, and more in wider popular affiliations to society, culture, and independence."

Much has been done in Timor-Leste to develop national pride and nationalism. At times, these efforts have become rhetoric (WF69), particularly in state-building, such as voting in elections, increasing dialogue between Timorese citizens and all levels of Government, and other means of democratic participation.

While diaspora nationalism was fostered in some way through resistance and activism, the rhetoric of being Timorese was diminished with the decrease in regular political activism. While the younger generation of Timorese diaspora are making efforts to revitalise the community, the Timorese Government, aside from the ambassador and consuls, is not engaging much with the diaspora community on development in Timor-Leste, as seen during the lead up to the 2022 Presidential elections in Timor-Leste. This lack of engagement may leave diaspora with feelings of not being involved in the development of Timor-Leste.

5.2.3 Language and Nation-State Building

Hajek and Goglia (2019, p. 265) write that Timor-Leste "has always been linguistically diverse—with at least 19 additional local Austronesian and non-Austronesian languages traditionally spoken" (Hajek 2000, 2002). Three different language policy settings, Portuguese, Bahasa Indonesia, and English, resulted from Timor's complex colonial and post-colonial history. As previously discussed, the Portuguese banned the use of local languages in educational settings such as colonially established schools to "detach students from indigenous cultures, language and social values" (Braz, 2014, p. 50).

Tetum began spreading during the decolonisation period in Portuguese times and the Indonesian occupation, with the "Church and Tetum becoming interlinked symbols of East Timorese identity and resistance to 'Indonesianisation'" (Hajek & Goglia, 2019, p. 265). At this time, the Josephite sisters worked with Timorese diaspora in Sydney to write and publish books in Tetum following a request for assistance from Bishop Belo (Wise, 2006). The Mary MacKillop Institute for East Timorese Studies was established in 1994 (Wise, 2006) and continued the sisters' work after independence with an office in Timor-Leste.[34]

[34] For more information, see https://www.marymackilloptoday.org.au/what-we-do/where-we-work/timor-leste/.

In Leach's (2019) longitudinal study, most participants agreed that speaking Tetum was very important to being Timorese (83%). From 2002 to 2017, there was a 24% to 54% increase in participant opinions regarding the importance of knowing Portuguese for Timorese-ness (Leach, 2019). This increased interest in Portuguese is reflected in student's increase in Portuguese fluency at a moderate level from 25% in 2002, to 76% in 2017 (Leach, 2019). A contributing factor could be that students graduate from primary and high schools that taught Portuguese. Another contributing factor could be the incentive to study law at the University of Timor-Leste. This law degree is delivered entirely in Portuguese in partnership with universities in Portugal, and the number of students enrolling has increased steadily since the degree was first offered (Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e [UNTL], 2022). An additional factor is being able to get a Portuguese passport and go to work in Europe.

Leach's study (2019) shows an increase in participants fluently speaking English, and a decrease in participants speaking Bahasa Indonesia.

In Hajek and Goglia's (2019) research, most participants identified Tetum as the language that described, rather than ascribed, their identity. Hajek and Goglia (2019, p. 276) also highlight research by Goglia and Afonso (2012) that found "Tetum best represents East Timorese identity in Portugal, although their participants were all fluent in Portuguese." This relationship with language and Timorese identity is also evident in Australia, with several participants going to Tetum classes, teaching Tetum, and working with the younger generation who express wanting to learn Tetum. These findings indicate:

> … the rise of a common East Timorese national identity most strongly associated with Tetum in East Timor and in the diaspora and the fact that for East Timorese traditionally divided amongst different local languages Tetum also functions as a lingua franca in East Timor and overseas. (Hajek & Goglia, 2019, p. 279)

Smaller organisations such as AVI ensured that all volunteers undertook some Tetum language training as a group at a language institute, as well as providing an extra budget for private tutorship. This was evident when the AVI-trained development workers greeted me in Tetum during their interview.

It is important to note that Portuguese was an elite language (Leach, 2008). Indeed, only "0.25% of the pre-1976 East Timorese population, had acquired high levels of proficiency in Portuguese through education and could speak it fluently" (Goglia & Afonso 2012; Hajek & Goglia, 2019, p. 265). Leach points out that "this group was instrumental in the rise of East Timorese nationalism in the 1960s and early 70s" (Leach, 2008, p. 413).

The topic of Timor-Leste's official language is still widely debated. This study does not aim to contribute extensively to this debate. However, the research findings demonstrate the influence of language in peacebuilding and development, and the roles that diaspora play when navigating changes in the development and policy landscape.

5.2.4 Cultural Songs, Symbols, Cultural Identity

Using the song *Mai Fali Eh* to discuss themes of nationalism and Timorese-ness with participants was an experimental approach. Other researchers note the role of resistance songs in diaspora during the struggle for independence, with some of these songs referring to return. Wise (2006, p. 67, p. 102) describes three songs including *Kadalak Suli Mutu (o hele o)*[35] (Small Streams) which is a call for Timorese to unite; *Kalan Kalan* (Every Night), a song about missing Timor, and *Mai Fali Eh/Timor Loro sa'e* (Come Back/East Timor).

In Leach's longitudinal study (2019) with university students in Timor-Leste, 70% were consistently proud of Timor's distinct culture over years 2002, 2007, and 2017.

[35] This song was also recited as poem.

Additionally, the findings from Leach's study (2019) indicate that participants view respecting tradition and *adat* (tradition, culture) as an important facet of being Timorese.

5.3 Diaspora Activism, Return, Peacebuilding, and Development

5.3.1 Political Activism and Recognition of the Diaspora

While the CAVR did not interview Timorese diaspora living outside of Timor-Leste, it was able to include information on their activism, recognising the role of the diaspora and their sacrifice. As written in The *Chega!* Report:

> Much of the work of those in the solidarity movement was done in the face of hostility by their governments and others with power. Even in wealthy countries, most solidarity organisations and individuals struggled with limited funds and resources in what was considered by many to be a fringe issue. The bulk of the work was done by individuals who gave up their evenings and weekends, or their full-time jobs, in order to focus on the cause of Timor-Leste. It was a process of struggle, but also of sharing and learning, of reaching out to East Timorese people inside Timor-Leste and in the diaspora, and of building partnerships and friendships between different national and cross-national groups. (CAVR, 2005b, para. 524)

Findings from the *Chega!* Report demonstrate that the diaspora did what they could for the self-determination of Timor-Leste, where:

> … some learned trade and business skills and took courses at post-secondary level and university to equip themselves to serve Timor-Leste after independence. Abel Guterres told the Commission: Some people gave one percent, some ten percent, twenty, thirty, forty to a hundred percent of their life to work for Timor-Leste.

> Everybody did something. It might have been only really small things, but they did something. (Abel Guterres testimony in CAVR, 2005b, para. 419)

The Chega! Report details community organisations set up by Timorese diaspora, as does work by OPMT (2020) focusing on the Sydney community. Organisations such as Sydney-based ETRA and the Melbourne-based East Timor Human Rights Centre (ETHRC), were "effective organisations to provide direct humanitarian, advocacy, human rights and other support to Timor-Leste" (CAVR, 2005b, para. 420).

5.3.2 Music, Art, Culture, and Sport in Political Activism and Peacebuilding

An unexpected finding was the use of music, arts, and sport as an effective form of resistance and nation-state building, such as the song *Liberdade* by the Dili All-Stars, which became the unofficial anthem during the preparation for the referendum. Merchandise such as t-shirts and CDs, and events such as concerts, theatre pieces, and exhibitions (CAVR, 2005b) drew attention to Timor's struggle, particularly after the 1992 Santa Cruz massacre in Dili.

The *Tuba Rai Metin* (Feet Firmly Gripping the Earth) project (see Crockford, 2007; von Sturmer, 2021) toured Canberra, at the School of Arts, and Sydney, notably at the Museum of Contemporary Art and Customs House; both prominent locations on Sydney's famous harbour. Also, the project toured at the Casula Powerhouse[36] in south-west Sydney. As a multi-piece installation, the exhibition featured an eight-metre-high *uma lulik* (sacred house) built in Darwin by *Tio* Antonio Maia and transported during the exhibition. The exhibition also included *tais* (traditional ceremonial cloth) with the names of Dili Massacre victims woven into it by *Tia* Veronica Pereira Maia, who is Tio Antonio's wife (von Sturmer, 2021). Furthermore, the exhibition featured *katupa* (woven rice parcel) and lead *soldado*

[36] I recall watching the street theatre in Casula Powerhouse, with youth marching down the ramps as Indonesian soldiers, a visual and powerful memory.

(soldier) sculptures made by Albertina Viegas, a diaspora artist who was based in Sydney at the time (Crockford, 2007; von Sturmer, 2021). These sculptures were made to Albertina's height (von Sturmer, 2021). The photo below shows me and other dancers in front of the *uma lulik* when it was on exhibition at the School of Arts in Canberra.

Figure 5.1

Dancers in Front of Uma Lulik

Note. This performance was part of the *Tuba Rai Metin* exhibition, School of Arts, ANU, Canberra, 1997. From Anonymous. (1997). *Dancers in front of uma lulik, as part of the Tuba Rai Metin exhibition, School of Arts, ANU, Canberra, 1997*. Copy in possession of Ursula De Almeida.

These kinds of activities were also opportunities for networking in Australia after Timor-Leste gained its independence. Such connection opportunities benefitted Timorese Australians, visiting Timorese, Australians, organisations from Timor-Leste and Australia, and at times, governments, such as The Boîte's concert in Melbourne (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2

Koro Loriku (Lorikeet Choir) from Timor-Leste

Note. This performance was part of The Boîte concert, Melbourne, 2012. From Afflick, R. (2012). *Choir inspires young nation through song*. The Courier. https://www.thecourier.com.au/story/259513/choir-inspires-young-nation-through-song.

Similarly, CAVR recognised "the power of sport, music, drama and other arts in Timor-Leste are harnessed as tools to promote peace, non-violence and the building of positive values and community relations, especially among youth" (CAVR, 2005c, Recommendation 3.4.7).

5.3.3 Diaspora and Truth Telling

The CAVR comprised seven national commissioners: Aniceto Guterres Lopes (chair), Father Jovito de Araújo (deputy chair), Jacinto Alves (truth-seeking), Olandina Caeiro (treasurer), Isabel Guterres (reception/victim support), José Estêvão Soares (truth-seeking), and Reverend Agustinho de Vasconcelos (reconciliation) (see La'o Hamutuk, 2003, pp. 3–4). Isabel Guterres lived in Australia for 15 years after spending time in refugee camps and exile

in Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand, before finally returning to Timor-Leste in November 1999 (CathNews, 2009; Eureka Street, 2009). Other commissioners had also lived outside of Timor-Leste, and one participant (DM70+) mentioned how Chair Aniceto Guterres could adapt his legal education in Indonesia to benefit Timor-Leste's struggle by setting up a local human rights NGO Yayasan Hak.

The CAVR considered holding public hearings overseas, not with diaspora, but with policy-makers and experts from the UN and proposed countries (USA, Australia, Portugal, and Indonesia) to give testimony about their government's role in human rights violations in Timor. The proposal was cancelled due to limited financial and human resources (La'o Hamutuk, 2003).

There was already evidence of divisions within the diaspora communities, such as in Melbourne, where violent incidents and calls for reconciliation occurred between Timorese with different political affiliations (Guterres, 1992). Timorese Australians who had returned to Timor-Leste were able to take part in the truth-telling process, namely during the self-determination hearings (DM70+).

During the CAVR process, only those in Dili were able to provide testimonies. Some publications represent Timorese diasporas' stories regarding these violations such as Rei (2008) and Pinto and Jardine (1997) from the *Gerasaun Foun* but as shown above, not much is known about these stories inside Timor-Leste.

In 2009, following on from experiences of the CAVR and Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Liberia became the first country to involve diaspora in its truth commission as key witnesses, alleged perpetrators, and other conflict actors. The diaspora were primarily from the US, as well as in Europe and West Africa, and they participated amidst "widespread belief that the [Liberian] diaspora had played a critical role in fomenting and funding the conflict" (Young & Park, 2009, p. 344). These kinds of beliefs

can create mistrust within diaspora communities, as explained by João Carrascalão after joining the Timorese diaspora in Sydney:

> I was very much involved with the Resistance outside. At the beginning a lot of people didn't believe that I was not pro-integrationist. Because my brother was the Governor and UDT was suffering the effects of the original propaganda saying that UDT wanted integration … So it was not very easy, many people didn't believe. Probably even my colleagues from the leadership of the Resistance didn't believe that I had never sided with the Indonesians. (CAVR, 2004b, para. 388)

The Advocates worked with the LTRC and documented violations related to flight, refugee life, and immigration of those in the Liberian diaspora. The Advocates thought that this documentation could be an important part of a truth commission process (Young & Park, 2009).

One advantage of engaging diaspora in the Liberian commission included the possibility of additional resources for reparations and development from diaspora. The report (Young & Park, 2009) recommended that Liberians in the diaspora each contribute USD $1 a month to the Reparations Trust Fund, and that:

> … diaspora engagement provided opportunities for dialogue on other issues, including the ongoing effects of trauma and conflict within diaspora communities, the relationship and networks between Liberian communities around the world, refugee and immigration policy breakdowns, and how reconciliation could proceed in a diaspora setting. (Young & Park, 2009, p. 358)

CAVR recommends that reparations are provided for the most vulnerable: victims of torture, people with mental and physical disabilities, victims of sexual violence, widows and single mothers, children affected by the conflict, and communities with high numbers of

vulnerable people who suffered effects from human rights abuses between 24 April 1974 and 25 October 1999. If diaspora could contribute to a reparations fund, this could be a pathway to reconciliation.

5.3.4 Democratic Processes and Diaspora Participation

Some diaspora participants were active with political parties and political groups (DF67), working on political reform (DM51), contributing to social change, and reflecting on the need for change in political leadership (DM55). This sentiment is reflected in Leach's (2019) research across three surveys 2001, 2006 and 2017 with university students in Timor-Leste. Leach's survey results showed a decrease of 15% from 2002 (51%) to 2007 (36%) and then an increase (59%) in 2017 regarding respondents being very proud of democracy in Timor-Leste. Survey participants' level of pride in democracy reflects the political situation after the first election in 2002 and the political crisis and mass internal displacement of people in 2006. By 2017, the percentage of students who were not proud had decreased substantially.

Democracy and development usually entail elections, widely supported by the UNDP and other international agencies working in Timor-Leste after 1999. Richmond (2011, p. 123) describes a hybrid system in Timor-Leste where there "is an interaction between aspects of the customary, and aspects of the modern secular democracy, so aspired to in the independence struggle, and by internationals alike." Muižarājs (2019, p. 67) states that after the referendum, Timor-Leste had "democratic legitimacy" with a "strong democratic undercurrent," which is "evident in the persistently high voter participation rates."

The 1999 referendum had a strong turnout in Australia, with diaspora very much involved in the process. For example, "Nancy de Almeida, as a 'Justice of Peace' made a big contribution to increase the number of voters" in Sydney (OPMT, 2020, p. 126). By having a Timorese assist those without documents verifying their Timorese nationality, was a huge benefit.

In Leach's study (2017), the percentage of university students who agreed with statements regarding fairness and equal treatment of all groups in society fell from 67.5% in 2002 to 45.5% in 2017. These findings reflected my research, as participants discussed the widening gap, inequality in access to basic needs and services, and ongoing poverty in Timor-Leste. Leach notes that "perceptions of poor or even declining state effectiveness have been reinforced by political crises and civil conflicts in Timor-Leste" (Leach et al., 2012, p. 1) and that:

> … numerous crises of governance, with declining economic performance, levels of service delivery and a consequent decline in popular legitimacy. This decline in legitimacy has sometimes been reflected in voter turnout. (Leach et al., 2012, p. 4)

Askland's research with the Timorese diaspora in Melbourne reflects disappointment with democracy and the appointed leaders after the 2006 political crisis:

> Despite ongoing pride in their ancestral culture, the exiles expressed frustration, disappointment, anger, disillusionment and sadness when speaking about the political crisis, the situation of the East-Timorese people and the future of their home country. They were concerned about the lack of development within various governmental sectors, including education, sanitation and water, health and infrastructure, unemployment, community animosities and violence. Rather than improving the East-Timorese people's lives, independence was seen to have brought increased poverty and struggle. (Askland, 2014, p. 7)

Muižarājs (20192019, p. 67–68) points out that:

> The nascent political elite mostly consists of the 1975 generation of resistance leaders, who share long historic ties and established themselves during the short decolonization period … Alkatiri and Horta are part of a sizable cadre of exiled political elites who returned to Timor-Leste after the referendum. Their membership in the Timorese diaspora has, at times, undermined their legitimacy in parts of the society and has sparked tensions with elite who remained in East Timor during the occupation.

Young and Park (2009, p. 357) write that "because of their economic power, diasporas also wield significant political power. Once immigrants leave their country of origin, they rarely sever all ties to home."

Corruption was identified as a concern from the interview data (Section 4.5.1). This theme was supported by Muižarājs (2019, p. 69), who claims that corruption "undermines the legitimacy of the state." Young and Park (2009, p. 357) also outline "concerns about corruption and governance issues that would hinder efforts at diaspora involvement in rebuilding." Askland (2018, p. 13) writes about the disappointment that Timorese diaspora felt towards the "political elite and what they perceived as an emerging culture of nepotism and corruption." Those that Askland (2009) interviewed stated that they had experienced corruption when applying for work or volunteering with the GoTL, stating that they were turned away based on their politics as UDT supporters. Muižarājs (2019, p. 69) argues that:

> … many former resistance leaders without educational qualifications transitioned into leadership roles in the public administration, where corrupt patronage networks, particularly in public procurement, have become increasingly common. Several high-profile corruption cases, such as the conviction of the minister of justice in 2012,

show that political leaders are not immune to prosecution, but such cases usually have strong political undertones.

5.4 Timorese Diaspora and the SDGs

As noted in Section 2.2, the Engagement Policy and Engagement Action Plan identify SDG1, SDG3, SDG4, SDG5, SDG8, SDG10, SDG11, SDG13, SDG16, and SDG17 as goals that would be enhanced by diaspora engagement (MF & MNEC, 2022). Another policy influence that diaspora can contribute to is the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*[37], specifically Objective 19:

> We commit to empower migrants and diasporas to catalyse their development contributions, and to harness the benefits of migration as a source of sustainable development, reaffirming that migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance for the sustainable development of countries of origin, transit and destination. (UN, 2018, p. 28)

It can be argued that the participants have contributed to most of the 17 SDGs in Timor-Leste. Figure 5.3 summarises the diaspora, student, and development worker (including diaspora network) participants' contributions.

[37] *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* is the first intergovernmental agreement, prepared under the auspices of the UN, to cover all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. It was adopted at an intergovernmental conference on migration in Marrakesh, Morocco on 10 December 2018.

Figure 5.3

SDGs and Interview Participants' Contribution

It can be assumed that all participants have contributed to SDG1 and MDG1 (No Poverty) since most projects and programs would have been focused on this principal development goal as it is also a major goal of the GoTL's strategic plan. However, the SDG 2022 dashboard shows that several major challenges remain in Timor-Leste.

It must be noted that, due to COVID-19, globally, some SDG targets have stagnated or reversed. The 2021 SDG report shows the:

> … global extreme poverty rate rose for the first time in over 20 years, 119 to 124 million people were pushed back into extreme poverty in 2020, and an additional 101 million children have fallen below the minimum reading proficiency level.[38]

Some progress has been made on SDG2 (Zero Hunger), but there are major challenges in achieving nutrition and stunting of children targets. During the 2021 floods diaspora communities sent food and money. Two participants are working in food security and nutrition.

As noted in the 2019 SDG review, which Timor-Leste volunteered to take part in:

> Tackling high rates of child malnutrition and food insecurity … require sustained investment. While the number of stunted children (low height for age) is declining, it's still very high. Accelerating improvements in nutrition will make a huge difference to child learning outcomes and productivity. (UN, 2019, Point 7)

SDG3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) indicators show that there are major challenges in maternal and neonatal mortality rates, and tuberculosis rates. Some progress has been made to decrease the infant (aged under 5 years) mortality rate. Other major challenges

[38] For more information, see https://sdg.iisd.org/news/sdgs-report-2021-covid-19-lead-to-first-rise-in-extreme-poverty-in-a-generation/.

remain on life expectancy at birth, births attended by skilled health personnel, and universal health coverage. The only indicator that shows achievement and being on track is the number of new HIV infections.

Literacy and participation rates in pre-primary organised learning are still challenging in Timor (SDG4, Quality Education). Progress is being made towards an acceptable primary enrolment rate, while the secondary completion rate is on track. Some participants spoke about their work in providing scholarships to secondary school students. Many of these participants were female development workers (DM58, WF70+, WF69, and WF70).

Many of the participants spoke about gender equality and women's rights, but the SDG indicator dashboard (Sachs et al, 2022) shows that the SDG5 (Gender Equality) indicator for female-to-male labour is on track. However, the ratio of female-to-male mean years of education received remains a major challenge. As shown in SDG4 above, diaspora and solidarity networks are contributing to girl's education. Encouragingly, according to the Voluntary National Review (VNR), Timor has made "progress in women's representation in the National Parliament and in decision-making positions related to peace and security" (United Nations, 2019, VNR, Point 8). Some participants spoke about women's conferences and continued work with women's groups.

While none of the participants were working directly on SDG6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), the GoTL's current Engagement Policy and Engagement Action Plan does not focus on this SDG as a basic right and standard of living:

> … improving access to clean water and sanitation are vital and require sustained investment … Progress in improving water and sanitation, a key driver to malnutrition, has been made, however more needs to be done to sustain and scale up these efforts. (United Nations, 2019, VNR, Point 7)

While SDG7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) is not identified as a goal for diaspora to contribute to, one diaspora participant had previously worked directly in this field and another diaspora participant had connections to someone working in this field. Friendship groups, such as Friends of Kangaroo Valley and Blue Mountains East Timor Friendship Group, also had connections that previously assisted with raising funds for solar energy projects. There are major challenges to providing access to clean fuels and technology for cooking, but progress is being made in providing access to electricity (Sachs et al, 2021). Additionally:

> … as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), climate-proofing investments and promoting climate adaptation are crucial for environmental sustainability and resilience. [Timor-Leste] believes global action to combat climate change is required, supporting the leadership shown by SIDS in renewable energy. (Government of Timor-Leste, 2019, p. 12)

During research conducted on the localisation of the SDGs (Jain et al., 2021), five organisations nominated SDG7 as a goal for commitment. However, there is no commitment from the GoTL. One research participant (Jain et al., 2021, p. 236) said, "The government's noncommitment to alternative energy doesn't help in changing public perceptions." Electricity remains expensive, and cooking with firewood from forests is still practised. For this reason, DM75 took on projects at home while trying to influence those in government to take up alternative energy again. Unfortunately, DM75's efforts have been unsuccessful.

While SDG9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) is not a priority for diaspora engagement, participants were actively working on this goal, particularly in media, communications, and research. The *Sustainable Development – Report 2022* (Sachs et al, 2021) states that major challenges are being faced by Timor-Leste's population using the

internet. Participants mentioned their ability to access the internet for USD $1 a day in Timor-Leste, but internet access seems to be out of reach for the local population. This restricted access is also reflected in the major challenge for mobile broadband subscriptions.

The number of academic articles published by Timorese authors was stagnating. Timorese student participants advised that they had not published their research from their studies in Australia, with the exception of one student who wrote and published two journal articles. Work is continuing in the development of the research sector, such as the conferences run by the Timor-Leste Studies Association[39] every two years in UNTL.

According to the *Sustainable Development Report 2022*, Timor-Leste was on track to reducing inequality with a Gini coefficient rating of 28.9% in 2014 but there was insufficient information in 2021 to show if any further progress was being made. The Gini coefficient "measures the extent to which the distribution of income among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution" (Sachs et al., 2022, p. 68) and is thus an indicator of SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities). Progress in the Palma ratio, "the share of all income received by the 10% people with highest disposable income divided by the share of all income received by the 40% people with the lowest disposable income" (Sachs et al., 2022, p. 68) is stagnating. The interview participants and literature (Barbara et al., 2015) indicate otherwise, as there is a growing gap between the rich and poor and an emerging middle class in Timor-Leste.

SDG11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) indicators show stagnation and major challenges in the three indicators listed. For example, Hosraghar (2017, p. 12), argues that culture should be the centre of development and that:

[39] See https://tlstudies.org/ for more information.

> Cultural heritage—both tangible and intangible—and creativity are resources that needs to be protected and carefully managed. They can serve both as drivers for achieving the SDGs as well as enablers, when culture-forward solutions can ensure the success of interventions to achieve the SDGs.

Many of the participants spoke about culture and the arts, as discussed in the previous chapter. Furthermore, the participants mentioned a need for culture in peacebuilding and development. There are also opportunities for cultural tourism, generating jobs in creative arts, and trade of goods (Hosraghar, 2017).

SDG12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) indicators for Timor-Leste show that progress is on track for municipal solid waste and electronic waste. None of the participants were actively working toward this development goal.

Climate action indicators in SDG13 show that carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions from fossil fuel combustion and cement production are on track. There were no data available for CO_2 emissions embodied in imports or fossil fuel exports. While there is no date on these indicators, the 2019 review states that:

> Timor-Leste is saving the proceeds of its natural oil and gas resources for future generations through its sovereign wealth Petroleum Fund … Ensuring future withdrawals are used to invest strategically in the drivers of growth – such as human capital and economic diversification – will help reduce dependence on oil. (United Nations, 2019, VNR Point 9)

Work on SDG14 (Life Below Water) is progressing with three indicators on track but one with major challenges in protecting marine sites important to biodiversity. This SDG is not earmarked as a priority area for diaspora. Similarly, SDG15 (Life on Land) is not a priority SDG for the diaspora, even though indicators show major challenges and stagnation.

SDG16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) was advocated by Timor-Leste as a stand alone goal on peace, justice, and strong institutions (United Nations, 2019, VNR, Point 2). Immediate priorities identified were reconciliation and inclusion, within Timor-Leste and with Indonesia (United Nations, 2019, VNR, Point 3). But high levels of gender-based violence persist and the review states that improving access to justice and access to land will increase progress on all SDGs (United Nations, 2019, VNR, Point 8). The indicator for the Corruption Perceptions Index shows significant challenges remain while progress is on track.

The last goal, SDG17 (Partnerships), is perhaps the most relevant for diaspora. SDG17 indicators show progress is on track. Timor-Leste's Engagement Policy aims to harness revenue from diaspora to contribute to development projects.

Challenges for localisation of the SDGs (Jain et al., 2021) include the lack of legal framework and security, particularly for female staff. Another state-based challenge is the "inappropriate or lack of government support for the implementation of SDGs" (Jain et al., 2021, p. 239), and a lack of state-based funding. There is also a limited skilled workforce, a lack of community support (particularly in rural areas), difficulty accessing finance and loans, and gender inequality. Potentially, the Engagement Action Plan can assist in resolving some of these challenges.

The Engagement Policy will begin implementation in 2023 up to 2027. A review and extension to 2030 will follow this implementation, in line with the SDGs timeframe. There are opportunities for diaspora to engage in the Engagement Policy's implementation, but as pointed out previously, diaspora are mobile and dispersed. Therefore, representation of views is vital to the success of the Engagement Policy and Engagement Action Plan.

5.4.1 Transnationalism

Many of the participants spoke about diaspora having dual nationalities and passports. Further, participants mentioned the way they can move between countries and between work

with internationals, other diaspora, locals, and in their communities—their insider/outsider identities (Cauchi, 2018). As Cauchi (2018, p. 7) writes:

> Diaspora peacebuilders are doing something no-one else can do. As neither wholly international nor wholly local actors they operate between, and within, both contexts, utilizing their unique perspectives, resources, skills, and lived experiences. This hybrid nature of diaspora intervention is arguably the most valuable tool they possess for influencing peace.

Askland (2014) writes about three types of Timorese diaspora returnees: the 'high-flyer,' those that worked in well-paid jobs, and the 'everyday individuals' as described in Chapter 2. No participants spoke about the 'high-flyer' type, but they did refer to 'big people.' These discussions generally referred to those in the middle class, not elite diaspora specifically, but about the widening gap between the elite and the poor. As the UN presence has decreased, this could be why there was no mention of the 'high-flyer' types.

Most diaspora participants fell into jobs, rather than actively seeking a career in the UN or international NGOs. Perhaps this has now decreased with the Timorisation campaign, where "Timorese staff are becoming prominent in international agencies as compared to the situation a few years ago … and are generally critical of the liberal/neoliberal project" (Richmond, 2011, p. 119). The UN now operates on this neoliberal model.

One area in which diaspora can possibly work between insider/outsider hybrid modalities is working with locals and internationals in integrating local knowledge and systems into development programs. This view is also supported by participant SM53 where he speaks about diaspora needing to engage with their culture, their *uma lisan* and local ways of resolving conflicts. Richmond writes, with reference to Timorese researcher Trindade (Richmond, 2011, p. 120):

> … a set of localised, customary approaches for conflict resolution, with a practical aspect recognisable even within the statebuilding context, but which also offer a cultural, spiritual, social, and environmental dimension … It is here that 'local ownership' has been experienced, rather than in the formal liberal peacebuilding process, which is associated with colonialism (Trindade 2007: 14). It is widely thought that informal approaches to peacebuilding need to be applied before the formal approach is used. (Trindade 2007: 27)

There is now a movement of localisation of development and of the SDGs as discussed by Jain et al. (2021). Of all the least developed countries, Timor-Leste and South Sudan performed the worst in the MDGs (Cuencia-Garcia et al., 2019) but considering that the MDGs were introduced in 2000, this is perhaps not such a surprising result. However, the result does mean that much work remains to be done for Timor-Leste to move towards achieving the SDGs (Cuencia-Garcia et al., 2019). Jain et al. (2021, p. 231) argue that the achievement of the SDGs requires "bottom-up engagement and support from grassroots stakeholders" and requires four steps: (i) awareness raising, (ii) advocacy, (iii) local implementation and (iv) monitoring and evaluation.

It should be noted that the VNR only reflects local communities' high participation – via stakeholder organisations – in bottom-up programs, that non-elite diaspora engages with. As Jain et al. (2021, p. 232) mention this contrasts with the top-down neoliberal government-driven *2011-2030 Strategic Development Plan* (SDP) based on 'big development' sustained by oil and gas extraction. This major dilemma between two development policies in operation in Timor-Leste. There are opportunities for diaspora engagement with stakeholder organisations at a local level, in line with the SDGs.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has detailed how diaspora contributed, and can contribute, to peacebuilding and development in Timor-Leste. The chapter also discussed how identity as part of the Timor nation-state influenced diasporas' decisions to return. Finally, the chapter explored how collaboration, partnerships, and real engagement with all stakeholders can contribute to the implementation of future programs that meet the challenges of achieving SDGs. By combining qualitative data gathered from interviews and literature, and analysis using the frameworks from triple nexus (Howe, 2019) and localisation of SDGs (Jain et al., 2021), there were limitations that prevent adequate evaluation of the contribution of Timorese diaspora to peacebuilding in Timor-Leste.

The following recommendations chapter will look at ways diaspora can contribute to the development of Timor-Leste, both inside and outside the nation.

Chapter 6. Into the Future

6.1 Introduction

This thesis presented applied research, rather than pure research, and as such the third research objective was to present recommendations. Based on the findings and discussion presented in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively, the following recommendations are suggestions for future research and collaboration between the diaspora, students, and development workers. The Engagement Policy, Mobilization Strategy, and Engagement Action Plan will provide a base for future projects once implementation begins. Timorese diaspora in Australia can also influence any future diaspora policy development in Australia, along with the diplomatic representatives and the GoTL.

6.2 Recommendations for Other Research and Projects

The book *Decolonising Methodologies* (Smith, 1999) lists research methods for indigenous researchers and 25 research projects that were being conducted by indigenous researchers at the time. The DAA's report, *Long-Distance Peacebuilding: The Experiences of the South Sudanese and Sri Lankan Diasporas in Australia* (Cauchi, 2018), lists recommendations to the Australian Government, international NGOs, diaspora, the wider peacebuilding community, and researchers. In line with these approaches, this research also proposes future research projects with guidelines for Timorese diaspora and opportunities for collaboration.

There were some limitations in this research, particularly due to COVID-19 restrictions. As noted in the methodology, Timorese are more comfortable with face-to-face meetings, and sometimes, they require a few visits before beginning the interview. Many items of data were gathered from 30 participants in the limited length of time, providing detailed insights into participant views. Although this qualitative research gathered in-depth

data, the sample size cannot represent the views of all Timorese diaspora, students, or development workers and their communities.

As detailed in the literature review, little research has addressed Timorese diaspora and their contribution to Timor-Leste after independence. More research has focused on their status as part of the elite. There is also limited research literature published by researchers identifying as Timorese diaspora in Australia, presenting insights into their community's work in the struggle for self-determination. Additionally, some Timorese diaspora may have received medals from Timor-Leste for their contribution to independence, but their stories are not widely known. This research undoubtedly focuses on a long time, spanning more than 20 years of political activism and 20 years of post-conflict peacebuilding and development work. However, there is scope to research similar topics relating to peacebuilding and development in different time periods. Organisations have now established archives in Melbourne (CHART, AETA), Sydney (ETRA), and other private archives in addition to new online archives such as East Timor & Indonesia Action Network (ETAN) and Centro de Intervenção Para o Desenvolvimento Amílcar Cabral (CIDAC). Access to these archives, and new research publications contributing to this area of research, facilitate opportunities to represent Timorese diaspora further.

Following on from these texts and the findings described in this thesis, some suggestions for future research and programs are:

- facilitate multi-sited peacebuilding in Timor-Leste that includes diaspora communities and their networks,
- advance reconciliation in the diaspora, and
- research and develop guidelines for any diaspora who are dealing with trauma and guilt while working in Timor-Leste or after returning to Australia.

6.3 Guidelines Suggestions

During interviews, participants from the Timorese students and development workers cohort were asked to identify areas where they would like to work with diaspora.

The table below summarises the suggestions and which SDGs they relate to.

Table 6.1

Recommendations Discussed by Student and Development Worker Participants

Recommendations from Timorese students	Recommendations from development workers
Arts and culture (SDG11)	
Cultural preservation in the home and in Australia diaspora communities	Support the creative arts sector in Timor-Leste (e.g., Arte Moris)
Connections (SDG17)	
Diaspora share their stories	Speak Tetum for casual conversations, sharing jokes and stories
Diaspora think of self as part of Timorese collective, not individual like in Western culture	Contribute to rural development in home (or ancestral) *suku* [village]
Involve ETSA representatives in funds distribution	Assist with connecting to Australian networks
Work with ETSA when any officials are visiting, can link to universities	Receive officials from Timor-Leste
	Assist with cultural awareness building, it is easier for Timorese locals to be themselves with Timorese diaspora
Collaboration (SDG17)	
Fundraising in alignment with the GoTL's objectives and programs	Mediate between internationals and Timorese
Better internet connection allowing for communication between Timor-Leste and Australia	Develop partnerships and networks
	Volunteer in Timor-Leste
	Work with other nations' diaspora on political activism
Development (SDG1, SDG2, SDG3, SDG8, SDG9)	

Recommendations from Timorese students	Recommendations from development workers
Work in districts/rural areas	Contribute to rural development and work in the districts
Develop private businesses	Economic development for business and peacebuilding (e.g., Timor Plaza)
Recruit Timorese in organisations/workplaces	Assist competition with cheap imports
Set up local businesses and source local produce/products	Job creation for youth
Capacity building	Nutrition and promotion of local foods and produce
Mentoring	Investment
Act as liaison for friendship groups to assist in communications	Provide expertise (e.g., technology)
Time management training	Assist with health (e.g., setting up clinics)
Adopt models of successful projects	Develop local tourism businesses and assist with their promotion
Support recognition of well-run projects and provide funding	Support Timorese health NGOs (e.g., Maluk Timor)
Develop further human resources	Contribute through organisations in Australia (e.g., East Timor Hearts Fund)
Improve GoTL programs	
Contribute to ecotourism (e.g., Tourism for All project)	
Additional training and sharing experiences	
Work together on poverty reduction in Timor-Leste	
Conflict resolution and peacebuilding (SDG11, SDG16)	
Youth and peacebuilding, fund local peacebuilding projects (e.g., Bairru Pite youth)	Work with disaffected youth
Learn about *uma lisan* and local peacebuilding	
Promote peace messaging in social media	

6.4 Future Programs and Ideas

Timorese diaspora also spoke about some projects they worked on or would like to implement in the future. Table 6.2 summarises participant recommendations and opportunities for collaboration in and from Australia and their corresponding SDG.

Table 6.2

Participant Recommendations and Opportunities for Future Collaboration

Recommendations for future collaboration from diaspora participants	Recommendations from Timorese students	Recommendations from development workers
Arts and Culture (SDG11)		
Creative arts, publications, and exhibitions Cultural preservation Music festivals Cultural competitions Sports	Cultural preservation in the home and for Australia diaspora	Support for the creative arts sector in Timor-Leste (e.g., Arte Moris)
Connections (SDG17)		
Adopt good models like METAC in Melbourne for other diaspora communities Friendship groups and their links with ETSA Support young Timorese diaspora who have inventive ways of fundraising Position someone ‘on ground’ in Timor, to knock on doors and get responses	Share stories and encourage Timorese collective identity Work with ETSA to coordinate visits to universities Involve ETSA representatives in funds distribution	Receive officials from Timor-Leste, have casual conversations, share jokes and stories in Tetum, connect to Australian networks Contribute to rural development in home *suku* [village], build cultural awareness Be aware that it is easier for Timorese locals to be themselves with Timorese diaspora
Collaboration (SDG17)		
Cultural collaboration with CPLP	Better internet connection allowing for increased	Mediate between internationals and Timorese,

Recommendations for future collaboration from diaspora participants	Recommendations from Timorese students	Recommendations from development workers
Recognise Timorese diaspora contributions (e.g., like new exhibit in Australian War Museum)	collaboration between Timor-Leste and Australia	encourage partnerships and networks
Development (SDG1, SDG2, SDG3, SDG4, SDG8, SDG9)		
Political reform Work with youth voters Increase youth employment Provide a literacy program Capitalise on remittances from OTWs as an opportunity for funding Improve access to health and training	Recruit young Timorese Improve GoTL programs, reduce poverty Work in districts/rural areas, enhance tourism develop and support local businesses Act as liaison for friendship groups to assist in communications Private business development	Job creation for youth Support competition with cheap imports Rural development work for diaspora in the districts, assist local (in districts) tourism business establishment and promotion Invest and provide expertise (e.g., technology) Economic development for business and peacebuilding (e.g., Timor Plaza) Assist with health (e.g., setting up clinics, nutrition, and promotion of local foods and produce), enhance health organisations in Australia (e.g., East Timor Hearts Fund) and in Timor-Leste (e.g., Maluk Timor)
Conflict resolution and peacebuilding (SDG11, SDG16)		
Youth work	Youth and peacebuilding (e.g., Bairru Pite, peace messaging) Learn about *uma lisan* and local peacebuilding	Work with disaffected youth

6.5 Other Areas for Future Work

During the interviews, some participants mentioned peace and reconciliation with Timorese living in Indonesia. This is outside the scope of this research, but it was mentioned as a priority by the GoTL (United Nations, 2019).

Following on from the information gathered, some recommended future programs include:

- peace messaging that is inclusive for all Timorese
- multi-sited programs in sports, arts and culture
- multi-sited peacebuilding between youth in Timor-Leste and diaspora
- recording the stories of the diaspora, particularly of the elders in the community, in an accessible format such as digital stories and audio clips
- a travelling exhibition of the *Chega!* Report to diaspora communities
- ensure the Resistance Museum provides more information displays about diaspora political activism, perhaps in coordination with the Australian War Memorial that will be building an exhibition in the new wing, giving recognition to political activism of Timorese in Australia and the peacekeeping
- support education programs for the book *Buibere Hamriik Ukun Rasik An* inside and outside of Timor-Leste
- Work with the Timor-Leste Government to reactivate the Timor Cup, a soccer tournament between teams from Timor-Leste and Australia
- ensure intercommunity committees, (e.g., diaspora, students, and friendship groups) decide on funds distribution
- Engage with diaspora communities during the election period, such as previous sessions at the Ashcroft church hall, to increase voting in Australia

- develop programs or opportunities for diaspora to work through trauma and guilt in Timor-Leste and when returning to Australia
- ensure universities in Timor-Leste, and countries where diaspora students live, continue to host diaspora-related conferences and exchanges.

6.6 Implications

The localisation of SDGs and humanitarian-development-peacebuilding triple-nexus can contribute to sustainable development and positive peace when adjusted to align with the context of Timor-Leste and the strategic development plan 2011-2030 and SDG roadmap. The Timorese diaspora can have a role in Timor-Leste's sustainable development by their ability to move between local and international actors and networks not only in Australia, but also in Portugal, UK and Mozambique, for example, where there are Timorese diaspora communities and ties through kinship and culture. Timor-Leste has been active with other fragile states through the g7+ and with other small island nations (SIDS). In this respect, Timorese and the Timorese diaspora can provide examples to other nations in advocacy and peacebuilding; and can also provide guidance to UN agencies and INGOs such as lessons learned and lived experience.

While there is a perception that diaspora can predominate in positions of leadership and power, there are opportunities for Timorese diaspora to engage in grassroots work such as working together with established organisations, e.g., AVI and friendship groups; provide funding to partner local organisations; and working alongside Timorese through mentoring and training while increasing their knowledge of Timorese culture and customs.

Timor-Leste has developed its first diaspora engagement policy and Australia will possibly consider its next steps after reviewing the *Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia* report (FADTRC, 2021), thus highlighting opportunities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation and opportunities for diaspora to contribute to their communities in

both countries. There is also scope for including diaspora youth in sustainable development such as through cultural tourism and engagement with youth organisations in Timor-Leste.

All these activities and actions can have global implications through international Timorese diaspora networks and other international networks such as CPLP.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

7.1 Problem

Research literature presents a perception that Timorese from the Australian diaspora are opportunists with high-paying jobs, who have not and do not contribute to the post-conflict development of Timor-Leste outside of their work. This research positions such a perception as a myth and sought to dispel this myth by exploring the positive contributions made by Timorese diaspora. Furthermore, the research considers future opportunities for diaspora, now that Timor-Leste has been independent for 20 years. Previous research has focused on where diaspora worked, their 'elite' status and their roles in creating conflict, rather than what they do, have been doing, and where they have contributed.

The main research question in this study was: **What roles did Timorese diaspora communities in Australia play in conflict transformation processes in post-independent Timor-Leste?** By exploring who constitutes the Timorese diaspora, including their perceptions, influences, expectations, and challenges, the research aims to encourage Timorese diaspora to work in and for the development of their motherland —one of the poorest and least-developed countries in the world. The research considered diasporas' individual and community contributions, such as fundraising and political activism.

7.2 What was Done

This research applied autoethnography methodology, indigenous methodology, and story-work methods. Interviews were conducted with 30 participants, including 16 members of the Timorese diaspora in Australia, eight Timorese students that were studying or had studied in Australian universities, and six development workers. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, I could not conduct fieldwork in Timor-Leste to collect data from students

enrolled in Timor-Leste universities and members of the government. However, the merged data collected from interviews, and the review of research literature provided rich insights.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face and online, and the data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, to support my insider research position and acquaintance with most of the interview participants. This research aimed to use indigenous methodology as outlined by Smith (1999) and Davidson (2019) through a story-work method. Although this method was challenging online, it provided an insider's perspective and facilitated a more conversational interviewing style that accommodated Timorese relationships with storytelling.

7.3 Key Findings

In summary, this research provides anecdotal evidence of the following:

- There is a correlation between political activism and returning to Timor-Leste to work on short- and long-term projects, but this does not apply to all diaspora participants.
- Cultural identity is important for all diaspora participants and influenced their decision to return.
- Some Timorese students did not know about diasporas' political activism before travelling to Australia for study, and all student participants felt that key diaspora members should be awarded recognition for their political activism activities.
- Diaspora participants who returned to Timor-Leste for work or volunteer work were not actively seeking employment or high-paying careers in international development. All diaspora participants want to help with peacebuilding and the development of their homeland.

- All student and development worker participants had engaged with Timorese diaspora in Australia, and some in Timor-Leste, demonstrating that Timorese diaspora have networks and connections in both countries.
- The diaspora community are not a homogenous group, and there was some disunity before 1998. There has been some disunity since the 1999 referendum was announced, many key diaspora leaders returned to Timor-Leste, and Timorese community organisations were closed.
- External organisations created tension between returning diaspora and local Timorese during the reconstruction phase in Timor-Leste and during the UNTAET administration.

These findings are similar to research conducted by other researchers, and diaspora organisations that made submissions to the *Issues facing diaspora communities in Australia* report (FADTRC, 2021). New findings include the influence of music and creative arts for Timorese diaspora and Timor-Leste locals. Further new findings include insights into how diaspora have been, and are, engaging in side projects outside their everyday work, such as awarding scholarships and working with veterans, youth groups, and sports organisations.

7.4 Research Questions and Sub-Questions

7.4.1 What Roles do Timorese Diaspora Communities in Australia Play in Conflict Transformation Processes and Development in Post-Independent Timor-Leste?

The research findings indicate that Timorese diaspora have contributed through political activism, particularly during significant events such as the Dili Massacre, by garnering support and expanding solidarity networks. The diaspora were also key in presenting a united front in 1998 to show credibility and influence the UN to administer a popular consultation in 1999. The diaspora voted in the referendum, but some diaspora also

participated in preparation for the referendum with campaigns that distributed information and used music as a communicative platform. Some diaspora participated in conferences and contributed to a strategic plan. After independence, Timorese diaspora worked in translating sensitive documentation, information dissemination, nation-state building, and post-conflict recovery. As previously mentioned, an unexpected finding was that diaspora Timorese have been working on side projects outside their everyday work.

7.4.2 How are the Diaspora From Australia Who Came to Work or Volunteer in Timor-Leste Perceived?

Some diaspora participants spoke about comments that were made about their ethnicity, physical appearance, and dual citizenship (Section 4.5.1). While diaspora were welcomed in 1999, grievances arose after the UN administration and arrival of international development organisations in Timor-Leste. Now that Timorese locals are gaining access to education and taking up roles in international organisations, acceptance of diaspora is increasing. Literature also shows that Timorese in the diaspora had negative views of the returning elite diaspora (Askland, 2005; Crockford, 2007).

7.4.3 What is Influencing or Dissuading Diaspora From Australia to Work or Volunteer in Timor-Leste After Independence?

As stated by some participants, not many Timorese diaspora return to Timor-Leste, even for a visit (WF70+). This could be due to trauma, feeling the need to embrace the future, or family and social commitments such as caring for young children, grandchildren, and ageing parents. The diaspora and development worker participants indicated that diaspora who did return to Timor-Leste often returned as volunteers and were influenced by national and cultural identity and the desire to help. Some of these diaspora have decided to return to Australia after working in Timor-Leste. This return to Australia was influenced by guilt,

witnessing inequality, discrimination based on gender, discrimination against diaspora, motivations to take up other work, or to gain some 'refuge' and respite.

Existing research found that other diaspora went back for personal reasons, such as to reunite with family (Wise, 2006). Much of the reviewed research literature focuses on the 'elite' diaspora and the 'rooted' diaspora, without considering what work they did after independence in Timor-Leste.

7.4.4 What Expectations and Hopes do Timorese Who Studied in Australia and Development Workers Have of Diaspora Communities in the Development of Timor-Leste?

As previously mentioned, most of the student participants did not know of the diasporas' political activism. Most were impressed with the work done by the diaspora and the solidarity networks, and all students felt that it was acceptable for diaspora to receive recognition and medals. However, these students felt it was not necessary to provide diaspora with financial awards like pensions. Most student and development worker participants spoke about diaspora being highly skilled and well connected. Several ideas and recommendations for the furthered development of Timor-Leste were provided in Chapter 6. These recommendations were presented (Table 6.1) and then linked with potential future opportunities for collaboration (Table 6.2).

7.4.5 Are There any Obstacles for Timorese Diaspora to Work in the Development of Timor-Leste?

Previous research has noted how Timorese peoples' discrimination towards diaspora, based on political affiliations, prevented diaspora from working and volunteering in Timor-Leste. There is also some research showing that some diaspora experienced difficulties getting registered as Timorese citizens in Timor-Leste. While Timorese diaspora can register to vote and obtain an electoral card, registrations are low and dependent on election officials

registering diaspora before every election. This process was disrupted in the 2022 presidential election. Timorese diaspora could vote if they were registered in an Australian state, but they could not register new young voters, those who had moved states, or those who travelled from Timor-Leste to study or work in Australia. Timorese diaspora as well as Timorese in general are a mobile population.

7.4.6 How Can Timorese in the Diaspora Contribute to Working Towards the Achievement of the SDGs?

There are opportunities for Timorese diaspora to contribute to Timor-Leste's development, such as small projects and short-term contracts, and working with partners. Recommendations for collaboration as well as future research are presented in Chapter 6.

7.5 A Way Forward

The Engagement Policy, developed by the GoTL and implemented by IOM, UNDP and WHO, was launched in June 2022. This policy and the Engagement Action Plan identified priority SDGs, and the research findings indicate that diaspora have already contributed to these goals through their work and passion projects. This research provides in-depth evidence that will contribute to the future implementation of this policy, to ensure the meaningful engagement of Timorese diaspora.

Discouragingly, work on victims of modern slavery is stagnating. This raises the question: Could diaspora assist with modern slavery if it is occurring in their country of residence?

7.6 Summary and Concluding Remarks

By adopting suggestions from the interview participants and the research literature, the research presents ideas for moving forward to build mutual understanding, trust, and respect. As a Timorese researcher, I wish to acknowledge, encourage, and contribute to the research conducted by seasoned and new Timorese researchers. Coordination can be an arduous task, but it is important to ensure that there is a diversity of research participation in Timor-Leste's future. By building on and making new connections, finding commonalities, and working in collaboration, all can contribute to peacebuilding and development in Timor-Leste.

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Appendix A

Information Sheet for Interview Participants

une University of New England

School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences,
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
Phone 0404 951 095
udealmei@myune.edu.au
www.une.edu.au

INFORMATION SHEET
for
INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

I wish to invite you to participate in my research project, described below.

My name is Ursula De Almeida and I am conducting this research as part of my Masters in the School of Humanities at the University of New England. My supervisors are Professor Helen Ware and Dr Johanna Garnett.

Research Project	**Peacebuilding and the Timorese Diaspora: Opportunity or Opportunism?**
Aim of the Research	The research aims to explore opportunities for the Timorese diaspora to participate in peacebuilding and post-conflict development. My thesis will include a set of guidelines and recommendations.
Interview	I would like to conduct a face-to-face interview with you via Zoom, Skype or other conferencing platform, telephone or email. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. With your permission, I will make an audio or audio-visual recording of the interview to ensure that I accurately recall the information you provide. Following the interview, a transcript will be provided to you if you wish to receive one. You must be over 18 years old, have no sign of mental illness or memory loss.
Confidentiality	Any personal details gathered in the course of the study will be made public, unless you would like the information to remain confidential. Additional research will be gathered at archives and ASIO, which will be de-identified if requested. No individual will be identified by name in any publication of the results unless they give their consent to be identified. This consent, if given can be withdrawn at any time before submission of the research. If you would like to remain anonymous, your name will be replaced by a pseudonym; this will ensure anonymity. If you decide to remain anonymous, I would like to quote some of your responses and any identifiable information will not be published such as age, gender, place of birth, etc.
Participation is Voluntary	Please understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary and I respect your right to stop participating in the study at any time without consequence and without needing to provide an explanation.
Questions	Interview questions will focus on Timorese diaspora communities in Australia and its involvement and/or opportunities in peacebuilding and post-conflict development in Timor-Leste. I will provide a copy of the questions before the scheduled interview if requested. You can choose not to answer any of the interview questions or stop the interview at any time.
Use of Information	I will use information from the interview as part of my Masters thesis, which I expect to complete in December 2021. Information from the interview may also be used in academic journal articles and conference presentations before and after this date. At all times, if you do not give consent to be identified, I will de-identify the data.
Upsetting Issues	It is unlikely that the interview will raise personal or upsetting issues but if it does you may wish to contact PRADET in Timor-Leste, Manuel dos Santos +670 332 1562 or Lifeline in Australia on 13 11 14 (if calling from Timor-Leste, contact the Consular Emergency Centre on +61 2 6261 3305 to be transferred directly to Lifeline).

Storage of Information	I will keep all hardcopy notes and recordings of the interviews in a locked cabinet in my office at the University of New England's School of Humanities or at my residence in a locked cabinet. Any electronic data will be kept on cloud.une.edu.au, UNE's centrally managed cloud server and managed by the research team. It will also be kept on a password protected computer in the same location. Only the research team will have access to the data.
Disposal of Information	All the data collected in this research will be kept for a minimum of five years after successful submission of my thesis, after which it will be disposed of by deleting relevant computer files, and destroying or shredding hardcopy materials.
Approval	This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No HE18-311 Valid to 24/09/2021).
Researchers Contact Details	Feel free to contact me with any questions about this research by email at udealmei@myune.edu.au or by phone on +61 404951095. You may also contact my supervisors. My Principal supervisor's name is Dr Johanna Garnett and she can be contacted by email at jgarnet4@une.edu.au or by phone on 0402 427 365. My co-supervisor's name is Prof Helen Ware and she can be contacted by email at hware@une.edu.au or by phone on +61 2 6773 2442.
Complaints	Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact: Ms Mery Estela Laot Administrator National Institute of Health Dili, Timor-Leste Email: elaot2014@gmail.com Thank you for considering this request and I look forward to further contact with you. Kind regards,  Ursula De Almeida

Appendix B

Consent Form for Participants

CONSENT FORM for PARTICIPANTS

Research Project: Peacebuilding and the East Timorese diaspora: Opportunity or Opportunism?

I, ..., have read the information contained in the Information Sheet for Participants and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.	Yes/No
I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time.	Yes/No
I agree that research data gathered for the study may be quoted and published	Yes/No
I agree for research to be conducted at archives and at ASIO	Yes/No
I agree to be identified in this research.	Yes/No
I agree to having my interview audio recorded and transcribed.	Yes/No
I would like to receive a copy of the transcription of the interview.	Yes/No
I am older than18 years of age.	Yes/No

....
Participant Date

....
Ursula De Almeida Date

Appendix C

Interview Questions for Participants

Interview Questions for Timorese Diaspora

1. When did you leave Timor-Leste? For what reason?

T – Hodi bainhira ka sa tinan maka ita sai husi Timor-Leste? Ho razaun saida?

P - Quando é que saiu de Timor-Leste? E porque?

2. How have you participated in peacebuilding and development in Timor-Leste?

T – Oinsá ita partisipa iha harii paz no desenvolvimentu iha Timor-Leste?

P - Como é que você participou no processo de construção da paz e do desenvolvimento em Timor-Leste?

3. Did you go back to Timor-Leste after you left? How were you received?

T – Ita konsege fila fali ba Timor-Leste? Oinsá komunidade simu ita?

P – Você voltou para Timor-Leste depois de ter saído? Como foi recebido pela comunidade?

4. What were you doing until 1999?

T – Saida maka ita halo molok tinan 1999?

P - O que esteve a fazer até 1999?

5. Do you know the song *Mai Fali Eh*? What does it mean to you?

T – Ita hatene muzika hananu *Mai Fali Eh*? Hananu ne'e signifika saida ba ita?

P - Conhece a música *Mai Fali Eh*? O que é que a música para você?

Questions for Interview with Timorese students

1. Who do you think is the diaspora?

Tuir ita nia hanoin, sé maka diaspora (frente diplomática)?

2. In your opinion, how does the Timorese communities who live overseas contribute to peacebuilding in Timor-Leste? Did you meet any? Have you worked with them in Timor-Leste?

Tuir ita nia opinaun, oinsá konunidade Timor-oan iha rai liur kontribui ba harii paz iha Timor-Leste? Ita konhese Timor-oan ruma husi komunidade iha rai liur bainhira estuda iha Australia? Ita servisu hamutuk ho Timor-oan husi diaspora iha Timor-Leste?

3. How do you feel about those from diaspora being recognised for their contribution to peacebuilding, e.g. being awarded medals

Ita nia hanoin kona ba diaspora hetan rekoñesimentu ba sira nia parte iha harii paz ne'e oinsá? Ezemplu hanesan simu medalla husi Timor, ita nia hanoin kona ba ne'e nusá?

4. What is your opinion about the diaspora going to live and work in Timor-Leste? What would you like to see them doing?

Saida mak ita nia opinaun kona ba diáspora ka Timor-oan husi rai liur fila fali ba servisu no hela iha Timor? Saida maka ita hakarak haree sira halo iha Timor?

5. What meaning does the song *Mai Fali Eh* have for you?

Musika hananu "*Mai Fali Eh*" signifika saida ba ita?

Questions for Interview with workers from peacebuilding and development sector in Timor-Leste

1. How did you get involved with Timor-Leste? When was that?

2. Who do you think is the diaspora? Have you worked with them in Australia?

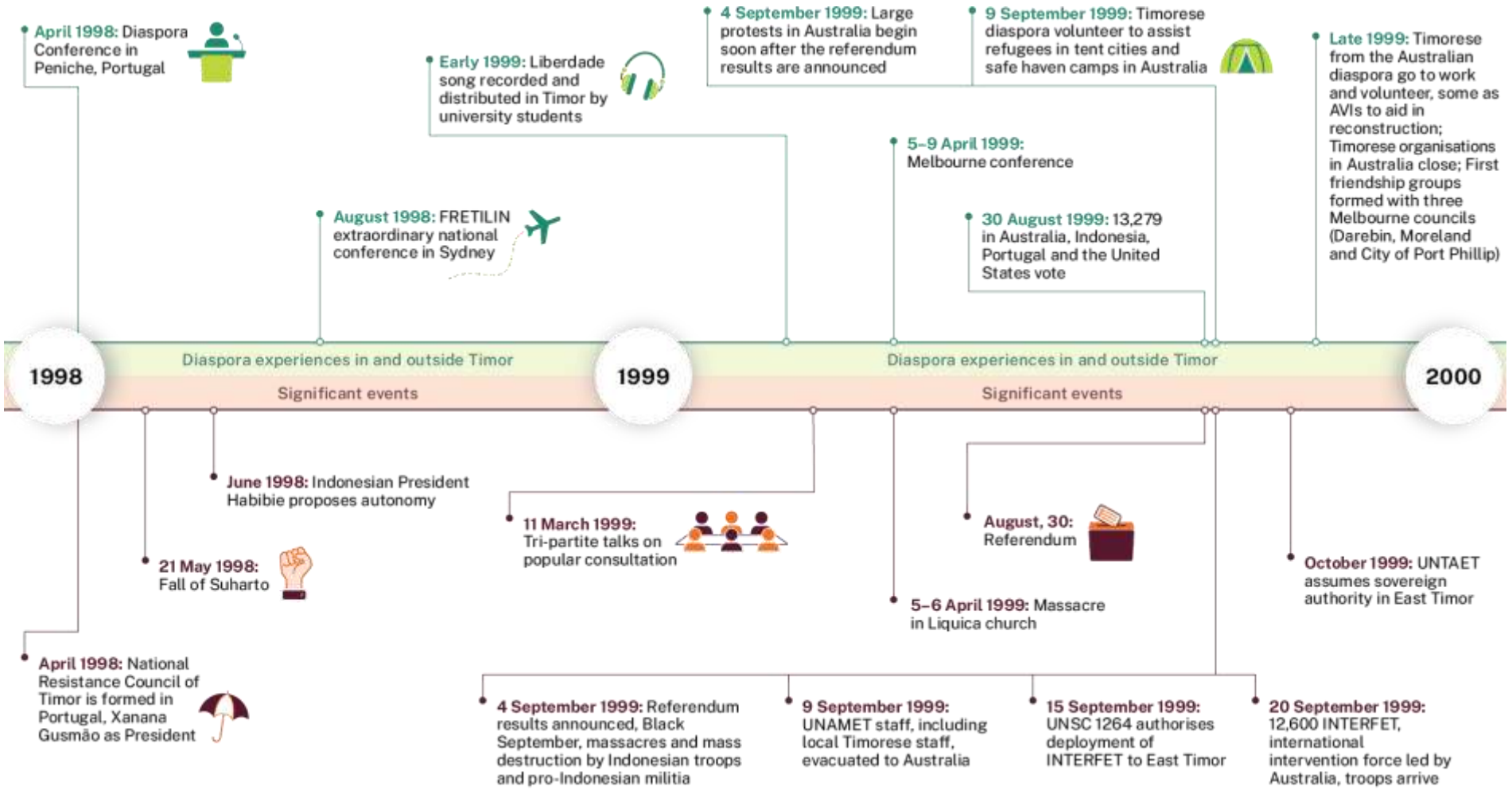
3. In your opinion, how does the Timorese diaspora contribute to peacebuilding in Timor-Leste? Have you worked with them when you were in Timor-Leste?

4. What is your opinion about the diaspora going to live and work in their home countries?

5. What would you or the communities you work with like to see them doing?

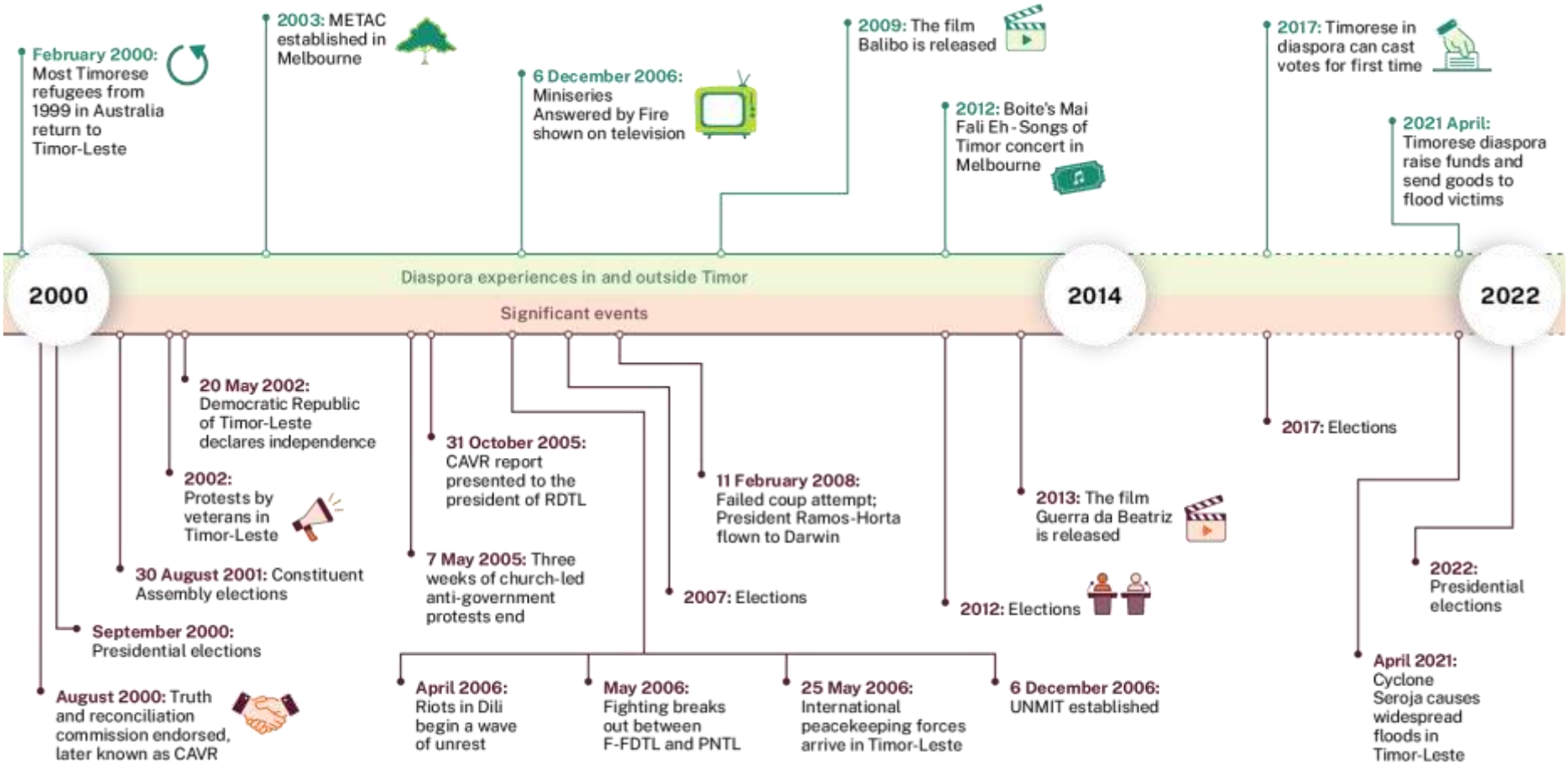
Appendix D

Corresponding Diaspora Experiences and Significant Events Between 1998 and 2000



Appendix E

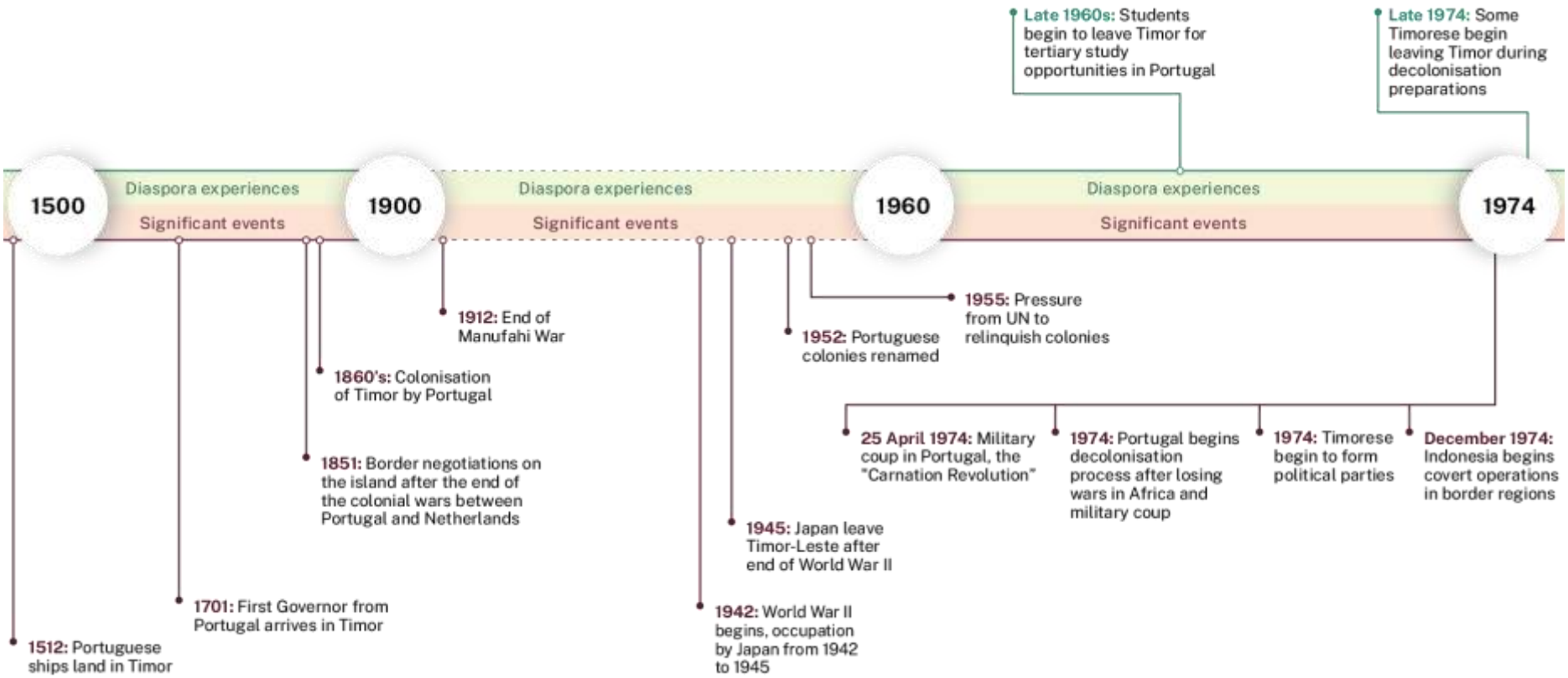
Corresponding Diaspora Experiences and Significant Events Between 2000 and 2022



Note. Time is not consistently represented between 2014 and 2022.

Appendix F

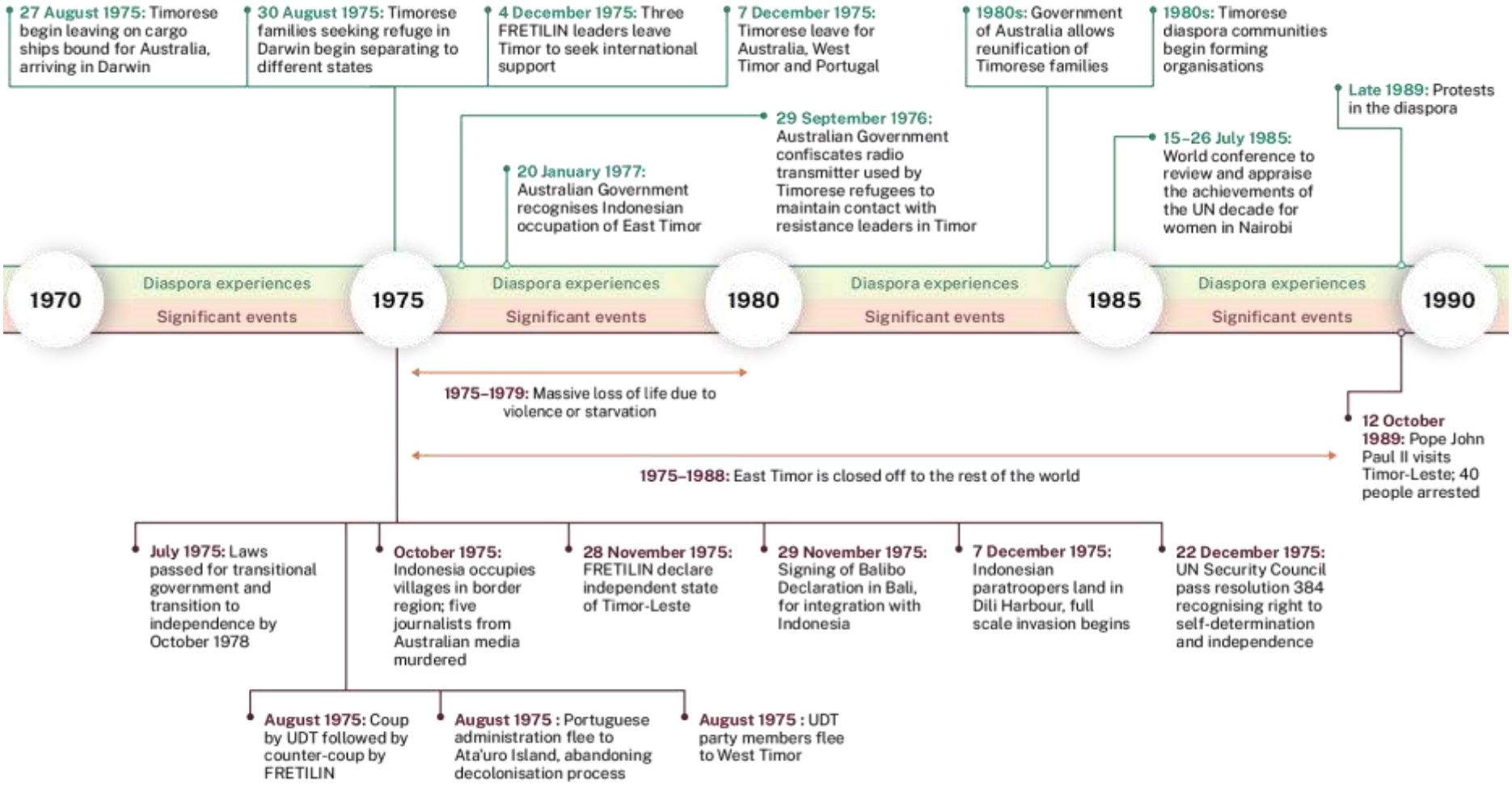
Corresponding Diaspora Experiences and Significant Events in and Outside Timor (1512–1974)

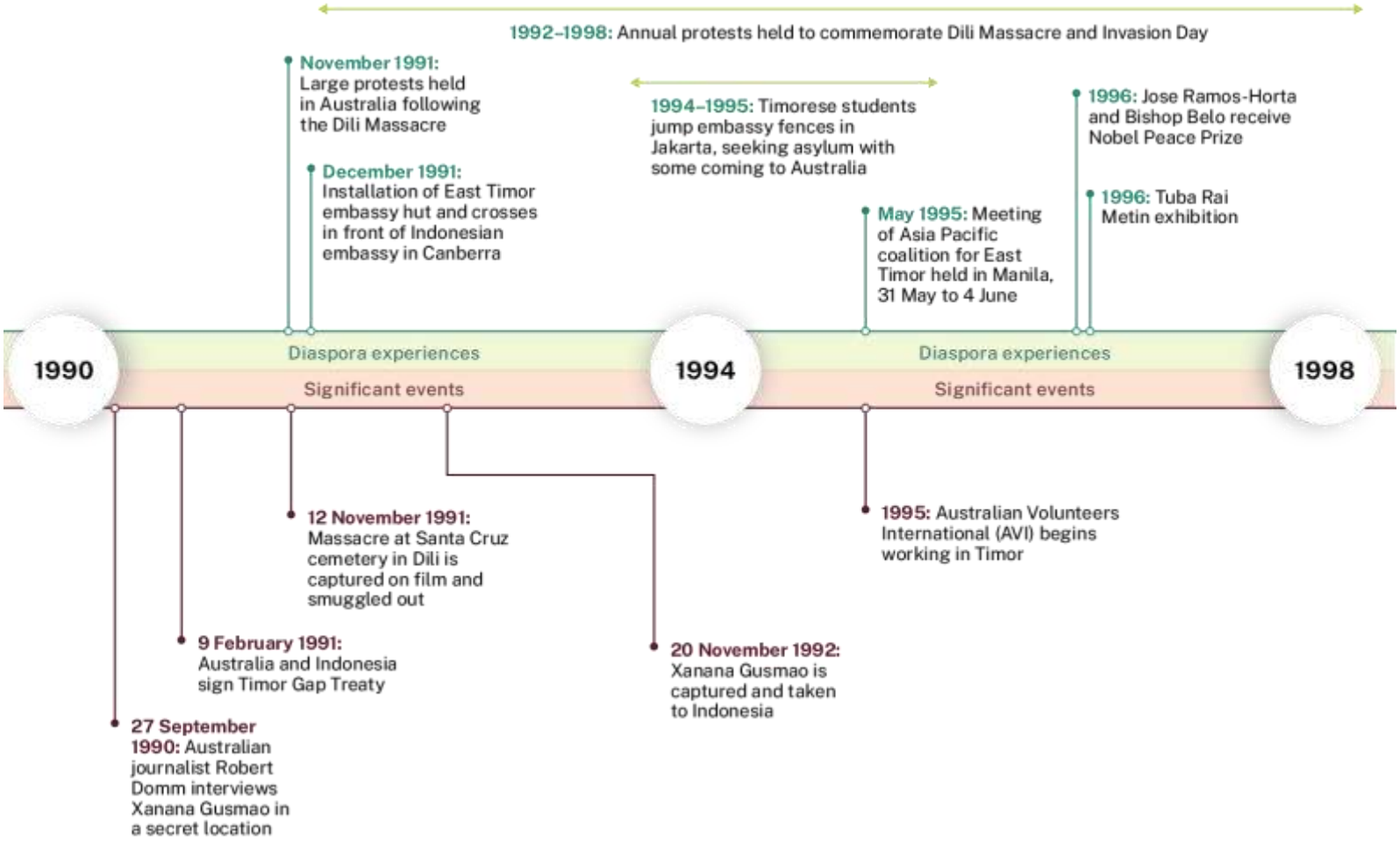


Note. The time between 1500 and 1900 is presented on a 100-year scale. Time between 1900 and 1960 is presented on a 10-year scale. Time between 1960 and 1974 is presented on a 2-year scale.

Appendix G

Corresponding Diaspora Experiences and Significant Events in and Outside Timor (1975–1998)




1992–1998: Annual protests held to commemorate Dili Massacre and Invasion Day
November 1991: Large protests held in Australia following the Dili Massacre
December 1991: Installation of East Timor embassy hut and crosses in front of Indonesian embassy in Canberra
1994–1995: Timorese students jump embassy fences in Jakarta, seeking asylum with some coming to Australia
May 1995: Meeting of Asia Pacific coalition for East Timor held in Manila, 31 May to 4 June
1996: Jose Ramos-Horta and Bishop Belo receive Nobel Peace Prize
1996: Tuba Rai Metin exhibition
1990
1994
1998
Diaspora experiences
Significant events
Diaspora experiences
Significant events
12 November 1991: Massacre at Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili is captured on film and smuggled out
9 February 1991: Australia and Indonesia sign Timor Gap Treaty
27 September 1990: Australian journalist Robert Domm interviews Xanana Gusmao in a secret location
20 November 1992: Xanana Gusmao is captured and taken to Indonesia
1995: Australian Volunteers International (AVI) begins working in Timor

Appendix H

Letter of Invitation

School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences,
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
Phone 0404 951 095
udealmei@myune.edu.au
www.une.edu.au

[date]

Dear [participant],

My name is Ursula De Almeida and I am conducting research as part of my Masters in Philosophy from the School of Humanities at the University of New England. My supervisors are Dr Johanna Garnett and Professor Helen Ware.

I wish to invite you to participate in my research project **Peacebuilding and the Timorese Diaspora: Opportunity or Opportunism?** The research aims to explore opportunities for the Timorese diaspora to participate in peacebuilding and post-conflict development. The study will include a comparison with the experience of diaspora from Vietnam and South Sudan. My thesis will include a set of guidelines and recommendations.

Could you please allow me to interview you for about 30 minutes to talk about your experience in peacebuilding and diaspora? An information sheet and a consent form for you to sign and return will be provided prior to the interview.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards,

Ursula De Almeida

une
University of
New England

School of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences,
University of New England
Armidale NSW 2351
Australia
Phone 0404 951 095
udealmei@myune.edu.au
www.une.edu.au

[data]

Bodik ba [partisipante],

Ha'u, Ursula De Almeida, hala'o hela peskiza nu'udar parte Mestradu Filózofia husi Eskola Umanidades iha University of New England. Ha'u nia orientadór sira maka Doutora Johanna Garnett no Professora Helen Ware.

Nu'udar peskizadora, ha'u konvida Erkulanu mai partisipa iha ha'u nia projeitu peskiza **"Harii paz no diaspora Timor oan: oportunidade ka oportunismu?"** Peskiza ne'e nia alvu mak atu esplora oportunidade ba diaspora Timor oan hodi partisipa iha prosesu harii paz no desenvolvimentu. Ha'u nia tese/skripsi sei inklui matadalan no rekomendasaun ruma.

Hau husu Ita bele fó tempu hodi partisipa iha entrevista ho ha'u liu husi Zoom ba minutu 30? Ita sei dada lia kona-ba Erkulanu nia esperiensia ho harii paz no interasaun ruma ho komunidade diaspora Timor oan. Hau sei manda informasaun kona-ba projeitu peskiza no mos dokumentu konsentu ba hala'o entrevista ne'e. Favor assina dokumentu konsentu se bele karik.

Hein katak Erkulanu diak hela no sei hein ita nia resposta.

Kumprimentus,

Ursula De Almeida