

## **CHAPTER NINE Practical Interventions: East Timor (Data Analysis)**

### **9.1 Introduction**

An overview of the historical and cultural situation of East Timor with regard to equality and men's engagement with equality, based on a review of pertinent literature, was given in chapter four above. In this chapter I will present the results of my field work. Drawing on what I have learned through semi-structured interviews, observation and participation, and primary and secondary documents I present an overview of practical interventions that have contributed or sought to contribute to the engagement of East Timorese men in gender equality. I consider the strengths and weaknesses of these interventions and where necessary I seek to provide a richer understanding of a given intervention or its impact, through reference to the cultural, historical and social context in which it is implemented.

### **9.2 Individual men engaging independently of intervention**

...[W]e need to develop ways of encouraging resistance. One way of doing this is to study the experiences of men who do resist, for such men demonstrate that they have not accommodated to the dominant discourse and have refused the positionings placed upon them, and this refusal constitutes an important element of human agency.<sup>548</sup>

While the culture of East Timor is strongly patriarchal, oppressive to women and promotes relatively rigid and distinct gender roles, it is not monolithic, unchanging or completely closed to negotiation and modification. The dominant or hegemonic masculinity of East Timor emphasizes physical strength, bravado, dominance over women, gambling, promiscuity and drinking, and many men aspire to these qualities and activities. However there are courageous individuals who have, apparently independently of any particular intervention, come to recognize the deficiency and injustice of these values and have chosen to actively challenge this version of masculinity. A challenge which manifests itself in the words, deeds and life choices of these critical thinkers. An

---

<sup>548</sup> Bob Pease, *Recreating Men: Postmodern Masculinity Politics*, Great Britain, 2000, p.36

exploration of the ways some of these men have come to hold more gender-equitable attitudes and make more gender-equitable choices, revealed diverse influences. However a common element was also revealed.

For one man who, together with his three brothers, was raised single-handedly by his widowed mother, gender inequality was something he accepted as natural and right throughout his adolescence and early adulthood. Through the hard work of his mother he was provided the means to study law abroad, at an Indonesian university. It was not until he completed his studies, returned to Timor and began working at a leading national feminist non-governmental organization that he began to question the gender status quo. The years he spent as legal advisor at that NGO transformed his understanding of the 'right place' for women and he became a keen supporter and promoter of women's legal and human rights. This process also impacted on his appreciation of his mother, her great capacity and achievements. "Sometimes," he commented, reflecting on his mother's life work, "women are more capable than men."

The combination of working for an extended period in a feminist environment and reflecting on the new ideas he was exposed to there, had a significant impact on his understanding of gender relations.

Ricardo<sup>549</sup>, one of the most active and dynamic of the pro-feminist<sup>550</sup> East Timorese men also referred to reflection as an important part of the process by which he came to be active in the promotion of gender equality. This reflection began at an early age:

When I was still small I saw that my father chose my sisters' husbands for them and I also saw that their husbands could beat my sisters<sup>551</sup>. I didn't like that. I saw that my brother-in-law could beat my sister, then make everything "okay" again by giving a tais<sup>552</sup> or a pig. Then beat her

---

<sup>549</sup> Not his real name

<sup>550</sup> These men are not necessarily familiar with the term pro-feminist and may not refer to themselves in this way. Pro-feminist is a term referring to one who supports the views and goals of feminism and is used in many parts of the world when referring to men so as to avoid or resolve the problem of whether or not men can be 'feminists'.

<sup>551</sup> The words 'father' and 'sisters' in Tetum are sometimes used as terms that include biological father and uncles, and biological sisters and female cousins, although there are Tetum words that specifically mean uncle and female cousin.

<sup>552</sup> Tais is the traditional woven cloth made by the people of East Timor.

again...This meant that human dignity was equal to material goods. I didn't agree.

Ricardo was one of three children – two sons and a daughter. He recalled the fact that the daughter -his sister- was married off and was denied an education while the sons were educated. Reflection on these differences in the way boy-children and girl-children were raised in his family played an important role in his development into a more gender-equitable man.

There were, however, other influences. One of these was the religious teachings in which he was educated from a young age, and another, the traditional teachings of his culture:

When I was ten years old I started to learn about religious dogma. I learnt about love, respect, not being angry. That might have influenced me. Also our cultural teachings. I learnt that if you hurt someone, for example if you hurt a woman, then others can cast a spell on you and make you sick or make you die. From these teachings I understood that we should do only good to people.

These ideas were held and practiced to various degrees throughout primary and secondary school. It was in university, however, that they were consolidated by the development of alliances with like-minded people and through exposure to discussions about the issue of gender equality in the constitution. Ricardo facilitated a group with about 100 participants called Student Movement for Democracy:

We started to talk about culture. The women said: Too much *barlaki*<sup>553</sup> creates problems. The men said: We agree, it's difficult for us. Women and men agreed that there is a need for change. We prepared a statement and gave it to Sergio De Mello<sup>554</sup> about culture and discrimination and how it needs to change.

Ricardo's awareness, knowledge, and skills in the area of gender equity were further developed when he started to work for Oxfam Australia in 2001. It was while working

---

<sup>553</sup> *Barlaki* means bride-price or dowry and is widely practiced in parts of East Timor, providing a 'supporting context' for men's violence against women in the home, and placing huge financial and social strains on families.

<sup>554</sup> Sergio de Mello served as the United Nations Transitional Administrator in East Timor from November 1999 until May 2002.

there that he participated in a formal intervention targeting East Timorese men, run by pro-feminists from Nicaragua which resulted in the founding of the Men Against Violence Association of which Ricardo is a key and founding member. It was through this intervention that Ricardo came to understand gender inequality as a global problem, rather than a Timorese problem.

Ricardo's critical reflection –beginning at such an early age - on the injustices of gender inequality, is extremely unusual. Many men who can, for example, articulate with great passion and insight the nature and significance of the injustices committed by the Indonesian government and military against the East Timorese people, are completely blind to the many parallels between the Indonesian-East Timorese relations of the occupation, and current gender relations in East Timor.

Eduardo's<sup>555</sup> experience provides another example of the impact of reflection on the development of gender-equitable attitudes in unsupportive environments. Eduardo grew up in a family and cultural milieu where discrimination and violence against women were the norm. Instead of accepting what he learnt Eduardo sought explanation and change:

I wanted to find out why? Why do we have these problems in Timor?

...

I looked at the Timorese culture that oppresses women and I recognized that we are all human beings, that there are no differences in terms of our capacity for work.

For Eduardo, the media and organizations of civil society were important sources of information about gender relations and provided support for his developing ideas:

I learned from national and international NGOs, and the newspapers, of the difference between biological and socially constructed differences. I agree that that's really true and that we need to change our mentality passed down from our ancestors.

---

<sup>555</sup> Not his real name.

Individual men who attained an unusual level of awareness of and discontent with gender inequalities were influenced by a wide variety of factors including interaction with feminist organizations and people; religious teachings; traditional teachings; media and others. However, a great number of East Timorese men were exposed to similar influences without becoming pro-feminist or more gender-equitable in their attitudes, choices and actions. The critical and common factor that distinguished more gender-equitable men from others was a capacity for and tendency toward independent thinking, critical evaluation, and reflection on what they experienced in their homes and communities. Importantly, the attitudes and behaviours of these men indicate that reform of the gender status quo is possible.

## **9.3 Formal Interventions**

### **9.3.1 Categories of intervention**

Formal interventions through which East Timorese men might be exposed to issues related to gender equality can be divided into four categories. In the first category are interventions that specifically target men as men. Such interventions are prepared with careful consideration of men's perspectives and likely points of resistance on the issues addressed. An example of this might be a carefully designed workshop about domestic violence aiming to educate and engage village chiefs in their legal roles and obligations.

In the second category of interventions are those which are not specifically tailored to a male audience (that is, 'gender neutral') but which are attended predominantly by male participants. An intervention on domestic violence or CEDAW run at the police academy might fall into this category.

The third category of intervention includes those prepared in a 'gender-neutral' way for mixed audiences and attended by mixed audiences. These include general trainings on gender issues or related laws, run in rural communities or in government ministries.

The fourth category of intervention includes those which are developed primarily for women, but which may be attended by a few men. A workshop targeting women-focused NGOs, promoting awareness of illegal trafficking in women and children for the purpose of prostitution, would fall into this category.

### **9.3.2 Approaches**

Based on the data gathered I have identified five primary approaches to educating and engaging men in gender equality and related issues in East Timor: workshops and trainings to convey specific information or develop specific (gender-related) skills; the use of popular education to convey knowledge, and transform attitudes and behaviours; the use of the performing arts to engage emotion and stimulate thought and discussion; campaigns targeting entire populations with key messages through the mass media such as newspaper articles, radio plays, television presentations; the utilization of influential male local or national leaders to educate and influence other men and role-modelling. In addition to these approaches the establishment and development of a pro-feminist all-male organization plays a crucial role in educating and engaging men in gender equality.

#### *Workshops and trainings*

Formal workshops and trainings ranging in duration from several hours to several days or even weeks are one of the most common approaches utilised to convey information, develop understandings, influence attitudes, increase skills, and promote change. Such workshops and trainings are used to address a diverse range of issues and subject areas including issues related to gender equality. Gender focused workshops and trainings have been used extensively in the major cities as well as in rural centres and more remote locations.

There is no doubt that progress in the area of gender equality has been made through formal workshops and trainings, particularly in terms of increased awareness, knowledge and action of a small percentage of women nationwide. However in terms of engaging men such an approach has not generated obvious significant progress. Some of the

reasons for this perceived lack of success relate to the approach overall, while others are specific to the use of this approach to engage men in gender equality.

Various representatives of organizations of civil society, governmental departments and United Nations agencies have referred to the ‘workshop burnout’ experienced by many East Timorese nationals. ‘Capacity building’ which often takes the form of workshops and trainings has, for some, become ‘a dirty word’ as East Timorese staff in NGOs, government and the UN have been inundated with quick fix intensive trainings in a range of areas. This problem is greatest in Dili and urban centers. Communities in rural areas are less likely to be inundated with, and more likely to welcome the opportunity to engage in, formal trainings. However, it is rural communities who are more likely to be negatively affected by the problem of inappropriate training materials discussed below.

Many of the trainings run in East Timor have been produced by non East Timorese, in countries other than East Timor, and in languages other than Tetum or Indonesian<sup>556</sup>. They are thus often culturally and conceptually inappropriate or irrelevant for East Timorese participants, which irrelevance in turn significantly limits the impact of the training.

Problems can also arise however when workshops and trainings are prepared and facilitated by East Timorese nationals. One expert in the fields of training and of gender bemoaned the lack of understanding among leaders and staff in NGOs, government departments and UN agencies regarding the education, experience and expertise required to become an effective trainer:

People know and accept that you can’t just become a doctor by attending a three day course and then walk into a hospital and start operating. But they think that you can attend a three day training for trainers on gender equality and then go out into the communities and be effective ...Badly run trainings on gender equality lead by unskilled, ignorant and ineffective trainers actually cause harm. It’s not just that

---

<sup>556</sup> The national language of choice for conversation for many East Timorese is Tetum while the language of choice for reading and writing for a vast majority of educated East Timorese people is Indonesian.

they don't help. They are actually harmful. One, because they bore people and turn them off. And two, because villagers will go through a poorly run two day training on gender equality, learn nothing substantial and then think they've 'done' gender and now they're experts in the field. So when a really effective and potentially transforming workshop or training is offered they don't attend because they figure they know it all already.

In terms of the engagement of men in gender equality a problem to date with workshops and trainings has been that very few gender focused workshops fall into the first category described in 'categories of intervention' above. They are very rarely prepared with due attention to the specific requirements and likely points of resistance of East Timorese male audience members. It is often assumed that providing information about gender equality, or about national and international laws will be enough to influence men's thoughts, words and actions, or that workshops prepared in 'gender neutral' or 'gender blind' ways will be meaningful and effective for male audiences. These assumptions have not been borne out by experience.

There has been little systematic evaluation of either the effectiveness of formal workshops and trainings generally or their effectiveness with regard to the specific issue of engaging men in gender equality. Evaluation is often limited to a survey of participants' opinions immediately following a workshop. However, the experience and observation of Deborah Katzman, one of the key players in this field over almost ten years, lead her to believe that an increase in the effectiveness of formal workshops and trainings in engaging East Timorese men in gender equality will be achieved when the quantity of gender-focused trainings is reduced and the quality increased.

### *Popular education*

The primary approach used by the Association of Men Against Violence in its work with men in rural communities is one that draws strongly on the theory of Paulo Freire and the method of Popular Education. The theories and methodologies of Paulo Freire and Popular Education were first introduced into East Timor in the early 1970s when Vicente



‘Sahe’ Reis met Freire in Portugal and then returned to East Timor, introducing the term and ideas into grassroots movements of Reis’ homeland. Throughout the twenty-five years of brutal Indonesian occupation, however, East Timor’s experimentation with Popular Education was systematically sabotaged and destroyed.

In recent years, most particularly since an important gathering in January 2002 which saw representatives of some twenty organizations come together, activists from pre-Indonesian occupation have joined together with younger activists to revive and develop Popular Education in East Timor.<sup>557</sup>

According to Freire, social change begins with individuals reflecting on their values.<sup>558</sup> This reflection leads to conscientizacao or the formation of critical consciousness which is necessary (but not sufficient) for people to question the nature of their historical and social situation. This in turn can lead to a critical appraisal of the status quo and a rejection of the expressions of oppression within a society.<sup>559</sup>

In Paulo Freire’s writing and methodology, local experiences are related to universal themes such as the relationships between individual consciousness and the social world, authority and freedom, and oppression and social change. The ‘teacher’ is not assumed to hold all the knowledge which is to be conveyed to the ‘ignorant student’. Rather, the departure point of any educational process, according to Freire, is the world of the learner. Freire linked progressive adult education with the tradition of community

---

<sup>557</sup> La’o Hamutuk, The East Timor Institute for Reconstruction Monitoring and Analysis, ‘Reviving and Reinventing Popular Education’, *The La’o Hamutuk Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 2-3: April 2002

<sup>558</sup> Peter Reardon, ‘Conservative thinkers need not apply!’, 2006, About.com, available from: [http://adulthood.about.com/cs/learningtheory/a/pop\\_education.htm](http://adulthood.about.com/cs/learningtheory/a/pop_education.htm), accessed October 7 2006

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*

organization for social change. He encouraged dialogue among fields of inquiry, talking simultaneously about reason, knowledge, love and hope.<sup>560</sup>

In an article about popular education, its history and current place in East Timor which was included in the April 2002 edition of its bulletin, the independent East Timorese organization *La'o Hamutuk*<sup>561</sup> provided the following description of popular education:

Popular education is more than simple methods of teaching and learning – it depends on a political analysis of power and a commitment to equality and democratic process. It is a collective process that seeks to give voice to those who have been silenced, to empower those who have been disempowered, and to bring about liberation, on both personal and societal levels. Liberation grows out of social awareness, community organizing, creative action, self-reliance, the use of local resources and culture, and a persistent commitment to human dignity. Popular education starts from the real-life experiences of people in grassroots communities, and openly examines issues of inequality, injustice and oppression. "To read the world" means to see and understand our world, our society, our history, relationships to others, and ourselves. Reading the world requires what Freire refers to as "conscientização" or a deepening awareness of power and oppression, and the explicit naming of who has power and who does not. Too often, the world is defined by those with power for the purpose of maintaining the present social order. Popular education methods push us to critically examine what we are told is "the way things are," including questioning socialized ideas about gender, race, class, age, sexuality, and beauty. We consider from whose perspective information comes, and start to build new sources of information, from the perspective of the poorest and most oppressed communities.

Conventional education distinguishes distinct roles of teacher and student: teachers teach and students learn. Conventional models generally view teachers as all-knowing and the students as empty minds which the teacher fills with information and ideas. In this view, there is a flow of information in one direction only, from the expert (teacher) to

---

<sup>560</sup> Daniel Schugurensky, 'Selected Moments of the 20th Century', Department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counselling Psychology, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT), 2002, available from: [http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~daniel\\_sch/assignment1/1968pedofopp.html](http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~daniel_sch/assignment1/1968pedofopp.html), accessed October 9 2006

<sup>561</sup> *La'o Hamutuk* is an independent organization and works to facilitate effective East Timorese participation in the reconstruction and development of the country. Finally, *La'o Hamutuk* is a resource center, providing literature on development models, experiences, and practices, as well as facilitating solidarity links between East Timorese groups and groups abroad with the aim of creating alternative development models.

the non-expert (student). In contrast, popular education views everyone as both teacher and student. It recognizes that everyone has knowledge and that no one has absolute knowledge. By pulling together everyone's knowledge, each person's "expertise", we are collectively smarter, richer, and able to see a much more real, complete world. We also are able to practice a democratic and liberating process of communal learning from which everyone benefits.

Popular education is about action toward making our world better. Too often, formal conventional education is limited to a schoolroom where textbooks and lectures are the methods, and tests show the end result. In popular education, life itself is the classroom and making our collective lives better is the ultimate aim. Popular education addresses the most pressing aspects of our lives: economics, health, education, culture, religion, and the day-to-day relationships between people. It is practiced through literacy classes, women's centers, crèches, cooperatives, community radio, cultural groups, and the development of natural health remedies and community gardens. Action, however, must always be balanced with reflection and continuing analysis of the work we do. Through both personal and communal reflection on our work, we are able to improve strategies and move ourselves closer to our broader goals.

The overriding goal of popular education is liberation or social transformation. Popular educators commit themselves to the elimination of oppression in forms such as economic exploitation, patriarchy and racism, and to the creation of a world that is more just, equitable and humane. Popular education is necessarily a collective process. Each practical action is part of a broader popular movement towards a more just and liberating world.<sup>562</sup>

Popular Education is extremely suitable to achieving the goals of the Association of Men Against Violence' work with men and gender equality. Their primary interventions comprise weekend discussion forums in communities and high schools with a focus on domestic violence, and on the way traditions and customs influence conceptions of gender. Mario de Araujo describes the process:

---

<sup>562</sup> La'o Hamutuk, The East Timor Institute for Reconstruction Monitoring and Analysis, 'Reviving and Reinventing Popular Education', *The La'o Hamutuk Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 2-3: April 2002

We use common situations that would be familiar to the participants, and we talk about our own personal experiences of change. We always promote examples of practical and realistic behaviour-change, so that on leaving the forums participants have the knowledge to make immediate change in their own lives.

There are often heated debates during the discussions, but there is also a lot of humour and goodwill as participants reflect on the origins of their traditions, beliefs, and behaviour around gender differences.

In a discussion in a village on the topic of housework, one man remarked, 'Some of the things you've talked about, I have done ever since I got married. For instance, when my wife gave birth, I washed and cooked and even bathed her. That's nothing out of the ordinary for me – because we have to understand the circumstances our wives are in.' When a man like this comes forward – and inevitably they do in each discussion – we use his story to disprove the theory that tradition dictates our actions, and encourage participants to see that they have the power to control their own behaviour. We take the analysis further by asking the man who has stood up whether he would be willing to support his girl children to be educated and his wife to have a voice in village decision making. Most importantly we ask him, 'Are you willing to eliminate the use of violence in your household and your village?' <sup>563</sup>

Importantly, in order for this approach to bear fruit, representatives of the organization return repeatedly to the same communities, to gradually build on understandings and to foster change. <sup>564</sup>

While comprehensive evaluations of interventions drawing on this approach have not been designed or conducted in East Timor, anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that communities and male-dominated audiences often engage quickly and fully with gender-related issues when they are presented using Popular Education approaches. The Association of Men Against Violence' representative in the eastern most district of the half-island has proven so successful that the district administrator <sup>565</sup> has requested that he

---

<sup>563</sup> Mario de Araujo, 'Liberation for everyone, not just men': A case study of the Men's Association Against Violence (AMKV) in East Timor, in in *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Sandy Ruxton (ed.), Great Britain, 2004

<sup>564</sup> Interview with Olivio da Costa

<sup>565</sup> There are thirteen districts or states in East Timor each of which is governed by District Administrator. The rough equivalent in Australia would be the state premier.

facilitate his activities in every school and community in the district – an immense undertaking. Mario de Araujo acknowledges that “the Association’s experiences with these activities are varied, but generally communities are enthusiastic, even though participants are asked to reflect critically upon and to challenge themselves and their society.”<sup>566</sup>

*Performing arts: dance, theatre, song*

Dance has traditionally played a central role in the culture of East Timor, and the ritual and celebratory dances of the East Timorese people continue to be performed and conveyed to upcoming generations. Dance is also a leisure activity popular with young people and at parties – most particularly Portuguese-style dancing in couples. However dance as a medium for communicating social messages is a new phenomenon in East Timor and in terms of using dance to arouse emotions and convey information about gender equality and related issues, *Kuda Talin* is unique.

As mentioned in chapter two above, *Kuda Talin* is a dance and drama group comprising 14 young male and female adults whose task is to educate communities and to promote gender equality and CEDAW<sup>567</sup>. It is valuable to consider the impact of *Kuda Talin* on two distinct groups of men. The first group comprises the six to nine young men who were practicing and performing members of the group at any one time. Through their involvement in this group – which started as a UNIFEM-funded project of approximately nine months duration – these men were educated in the articles and overall message of CEDAW, and in its most immediate implications for the people of East Timor.

While these men came to speak knowledgeably about CEDAW and its contents, quoting article numbers and linking them with articles in East Timor’s constitution, many of the men were at the very beginning stages of their learning about the issues. The messages

---

<sup>566</sup> Mario de Araujo, ‘Liberation for everyone’, p. 144

<sup>567</sup> CEDAW - the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women - establishes a minimum set of standards for combating discrimination against women. It is the most comprehensive international agreement on women’s basic rights and has been ratified by 182 nations. CEDAW has become an important tool for partnerships among nations to end human rights abuses and promote the health and well-being of girls.

which they could articulate to audiences and express through dance had not been internalised. Thus even as they travelled the length and breadth of the country promoting gender equality, the young males in *Kuda Talin* dominated leadership positions, decision-making, and discussions within the group, assigning domestic tasks such as hand washing the uniforms to the young women.

Mario Araujo, a leading pro-feminist East Timorese man argues vehemently that any efforts to engage East Timorese men in equality by men who do not *practice what they preach* are doomed not only to failure but to contribute negatively to the overall process. “There can be no place for hypocrisy,” he states forcefully. “In the Association of Men Against Violence [for example] we discuss our challenges, we support each other, but if a man is finding it too difficult to give up his oppressive behaviours in his home, we have to ask him to leave the association. Our credibility, and thus our influence and power to promote change is at stake. Each one of us working in the communities to promote gender equality must live it in his own life and relationships.”

In a group such as *Kuda Talin*, genuine concern about the advancement of gender equality may not be the primary motivation for members’ involvement and this can affect both the members themselves and the impact of the group on communities and audiences. However the processes of developing *Kuda Talin* and of supporting their performances provided opportunity for the facilitators to bring attention to the inconsistencies between some members’ words and their actions and encourage reconciliation between the two, which in itself proved to be an important part of the learning process.

Despite the limitations to the level of internalisation and transformation of the male members of *Kuda Talin* it is clearly of benefit for these young people to be exposed to CEDAW and to be involved in educating others about it. The increase in awareness of the issues on the part of these young men may make them more susceptible to consolidating messages along the same lines to which they may be exposed over the coming years.

The second group of boys and men affected by *Kuda Talin* was significantly larger and comprised the thousands of East Timorese males who attended *Kuda Talin's* performances throughout twelve of the thirteen districts of East Timor. The responses of the audiences were at first disconcerting, most particularly to the most graphic and confronting dance, on the theme of domestic violence. This dance depicted a man isolating his female partner from her friends and family and then violently assaulting her with ever increasing brutality until in the final moments of the dance, he takes her life. Typical audience responses included hilarity and laughter as well as cheers as the man was depicted beating his partner to death.

There are however two important considerations in connection with these responses. The first is that many male audience members - including those whose responses had involved laughter and apparent amusement - reported feeling deeply moved and inspired by the dances. The second consideration- directly linked to the first – pertains to an appreciation of normal responses to shock, discomfort, embarrassment and distress within the culture of East Timor.

Throughout our years in East Timor my family and I were repeatedly surprised – sometimes offended – by responses to a variety of situations. For example in one instance in Dili a young woman who was knocked off her motor scooter and was physically relatively unhurt but suffering from shock limped to the side of the road where she stood shaking and vomiting. Witnesses to the accident and to the young woman's response, laughed, joked and teased the woman as they stood and stared or drove slowly past. Similarly my children found that on many occasions when a child would be hurt in the course of play, other children in the group would laugh and tease the child, whereas my children's response was to comfort and support the injured playmate.

It appears that the initial response to misfortune and suffering is typically to make light of it, and to respond to it with humour. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to explore this matter in depth it is conceivable that this kind of response may be a coping mechanism developed over the 25 years of occupation by the Indonesian military where

brutality and subsequent suffering was commonplace and where it was often not psychologically or physically safe to express support or sympathy for the sufferer.

Taking into consideration this cultural context then, the audience responses to *Kuda Talin*'s anti-domestic violence and other dances are more understandable, less distressing and do not necessarily represent a failure to reach men with gender-equality related messages. However, such audience responses may still diminish the impact of the dances and negatively effect boys' and men's susceptibility to the group's challenge to common gender-related practices and attitudes. For this reason it was suggested that when using dance to convey information about, and to challenge gender-related norms and behaviours, dances should depict the solution or ideal rather than or as well as the problem or current situation.

A systematic evaluation of this approach to engaging boys and men in gender equality has not so far been conducted. Evaluation of interventions generally is an area that would benefit from much attention, research and development and could be the focus of my own or others' future study and work.

Theatre is an art form that has been widely used to convey social messages in East Timor. This has ranged from the use of simple skits in local communities to well-organised productions with substantial financial backing reaching audiences nationwide. *Bibi Bulak*<sup>568</sup> is one of the leading Timorese groups to promote gender equality through drama. *Bibi Bulak* was established in August 2000 and registered as a local NGO in November 2000. *Bibi Bulak* initially comprised a group of international artists who volunteered to perform in East Timor. Founding member Yohan York then developed the capacity of local young people and *Bibi Bulak* has grown to become a group of East Timorese performing artists which has made a significant contribution to education of

---

<sup>568</sup> *Bibi Bulak* translates as Crazy Goat



men (as well as women, children and communities generally) on gender-related issues, particularly in the area of domestic violence.<sup>569</sup>

In a country where illiteracy is high – particularly in remote rural areas – and where a majority of people have neither the time for nor the interest in lengthy theoretical presentations and discussion, entertainment is perhaps one of the most effective means of communication. Theater groups such as *Bibi Bulak* and *Kuda Talin* who travel to rural communities to present messages of gender equality through drama are generally well-received and provide opportunity for audiences to gain factual knowledge but also to engage emotionally with the issues.

The messages conveyed by these theatrical presentations have not always been well received and in some instances men in local communities have threatened members of these theatre groups with violence in response to the messages of gender equality promoted through their work. This reaction may speak of the power and influence these presentations have or are perceived to have on communities and members thereof, which confirms the decision to use theatre to convey social messages. However, such reaction also demands reflection on the details of the process.

Some audience members found offensive the suggestion that women's status should be improved or that violence against women in the home should be curbed. These men also objected to the fact that the young performers were traveling in mixed groups (males and females together). It appears that for these men too much of what they considered right and correct was being challenged at one time. The importance of gradual change and a careful, gentle approach to challenging community traditions and norms is thus apparent.

In August 2005 Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA organised a week long retreat called *Loke Kurtina ba Teatru Iha East Timor*<sup>570</sup> which was attended by fifty-five East Timorese theatre artists, aged sixteen to twenty-five, as well as five professional Australian theatre

---

<sup>569</sup> For more information about Bibi Bulak see their website, available from: [http://www.artemoris.minihub.org/bibi\\_bulak.htm](http://www.artemoris.minihub.org/bibi_bulak.htm), accessed October 9 2006

<sup>570</sup> 'Opening the Curtains to Theatre in East Timor'

artists and other local theatre tutors. This meeting provided opportunity to review the use of theatre within East Timor to date, to share skills and to develop strategies for the future.<sup>571</sup>

Throughout the struggle for independence song was used to unite East Timorese people in their fight; to express anger, grief, and hope; and to articulate goals and visions. The tradition of the use of song to inform, engage, educate and connect communities continues. Music – including forms that are newly emerging in East Timor such as hip-hop, reggae, ska and rock<sup>572</sup> - is being used to communicate important gender-related (and many other) messages to large audiences nationwide.

One example of the use of this approach is a controversial song<sup>573</sup> promoting condom use to prevent HIV/AIDS.<sup>574</sup> The lyrics centre on a young East Timorese man who is infected with the virus in a tattoo parlour. This man then infects a prostitute who in turn infects the man's uncle. The uncle returns to his village and dies of AIDS. The song ends with the funeral of the young man who also succumbs to AIDS.<sup>575</sup>

In terms of reaching men with gender-equality messages through music, one of the current expressions of inequality which could be converted to a strength or resource in this context, is that a vast majority of bands and band-members are men and performances are male-dominated events. Music that promotes gender-equality

---

571 Workers online, 'Postcard from East Timor', 2005, available from: [http://workers.labor.net.au/features/200513/d\\_review\\_postcard.html](http://workers.labor.net.au/features/200513/d_review_postcard.html), accessed October 9 2006

572 Sonny Inbaraj, 'Hip-hop and rock for condoms challenge church', Health-East Timor, Inter Press Service news agency, 2004, available from: <http://www.ipsnews.net/interna.asp?idnews=24483>, accessed October 9 2006

573 As East Timor is dominated by the Catholic Church, there has been much objection to efforts promoting use of contraception of any kind.

574 Sonny Inbaraj, 'Hip-hop'.

575 This song is not particularly feminist or directly supportive of men's engagement with equality inasmuch as the presumed suffering and death of the prostitute herself is of little concern. However, more responsible attitudes on the part of men to sex and condom use will necessarily have a positive impact on women's health. Importantly this is an example of the way song – written and performed by East Timorese artists - is being used in East Timor to promote social change.

performed by admired male musicians to male-dominated audiences has great potential to gradually yet powerfully impact on young males.

Music is an effective medium for the delivery of social messages because it is easily spread. Informal sing-alongs with guitar are a common form of relaxation and entertainment for young people. Popular songs are spread from one friend to another during such sessions, which can last for many hours at a time. Such a past time is not dependent on the presence of electricity (which is unreliable in some parts of the country and entirely unavailable in the rest) nor does it require travel or other resources. Unlike dance or theater it does not require organization or commitment to a process or a group. Thus when catchy melodies with lyrics that promote gender equality become popular they can reach large numbers of young people in the psychologically safe space of their own homes or places of recreation. This in turn can contribute to reflection on gender-related issues, which, as shown above, has proven to be an important part of the process of transformation to more gender-equitable men.

#### *Campaigns, and the Media*

Campaigns on various gender-related themes have been funded and conducted by numerous national and international organizations within East Timor, most particularly since its liberation from Indonesia's occupation in 1999. Campaigns have been conducted targeting men and women in rural and urban areas of the country, promoting women's involvement in politics, girls access to education, accessing ante-natal care, freedom from sexual violence and violence in the home, knowledge of legal rights and services for women, and so on.

These campaigns have used public rallies, radio, television, newspaper, stickers, posters, clothing, conferences as well as approaches mentioned above such as the performing arts, workshops, and trainings, to achieve their end of informing and inspiring individuals and communities to change.

The impact on communities generally, and the specific impact on boys and men of such campaigns is difficult to measure systematically and conclusively. However there are tangible indications of success. For example in 2003 the East Timorese government passed an electoral law providing two seats on each village council specifically for women and enabling women to stand for any other position, including that of village chief.<sup>576</sup>

Significantly, in the elections for village chief of 2004-2005, six women were elected by the men and women of their communities to occupy this challenging and prestigious position. Although women had never been allowed to occupy such positions in the history of the country, as a result of widespread campaigns around this issue, enough men (and women) voted for women to result in victory in six cases in the very first election after the establishment of the legislation.

While campaigns may not lead to instantaneous and dramatic change in men's attitudes and behaviours, attention brought to gender-related issues through campaigns targeting large portions of the population, can begin to erode false assumptions about inappropriate and un/healthy modes of relating and behaving and are an important part of a multi-faceted approach to engaging men in equality.

### *Modelling*

Many key players in the field of education for gender-equality have identified the important role that individual male leaders can play as models and promoters of change in gender relations. Male leaders, in this context, can mean men in formally elected or appointed positions of power such as President Xanana Gusmao, well-known men in organizations of civil society, or men who have come to be recognised as leaders in their community, region or nation due to their initiative and charisma.

---

<sup>576</sup> Sherrill Whittington, 'Women and decision-making in post-conflict transitions Case Studies from East Timor and the Solomon Islands', Gender Governance and Peacebuilding, 2003, available from: <http://72.14.235.104/search?q=cache:BDnrtulr6-sJ:www.capwip.org/paperscongress/womenpostconflictwhittington.ppt+women+village+chief+east+timor&hl=en&gl=au&ct=clnk&cd=5>, accessed October 9 2006

Emma Conlan, who has been living for five years in East Timor and currently works with Oxfam Australia articulated the realization that Oxfam came to when trying to identify how to begin engaging men in gender equality: “In other countries the primary methods are workshops and peer education but here its all based on ego...individuals who are loved, admired, respected make changes and then encourage similar changes in other men through charisma and example.”

And so it was when, in 2003, trainers came from Nicaragua and Oxfam selected a group of men to participate in their workshop they selected men who were “influential, cool, natural leaders, with the hope that they would influence other men.”

Caroline Meenagh who worked with communities throughout the country on gender-related issues felt that a key way to reach men was through a “strong and highly respected male figure at the local level, who resides permanently in their location – a kind of Xanana-like figure at the hamlet or village level, who can influence the men through example and guidance.” “Even the most respected women in the village”, she argued, “will be listened to and then ignored.”

Laine Berman who implemented a UNIFEM project to educate village chiefs about the domestic violence law similarly argued that

it is important to recognize that a few trainings and posters is not enough. For a community to change, there needs to be clear and visible action from a wide range of people who endorse the new value, who publicly pronounce their support for gender equity, and demonstrate as role models a different way of behaving in their everyday activities.<sup>577</sup>

---

<sup>577</sup> Laine Berman, ‘Domestic Violence in East Timor: excerpts from a report on gender-based violence and its prevention’ East Timor, 2006, available from: <http://www.geocities.com/laineberman/DomViol06.htm>, accessed October 9 2006.

In order for modelling to be effective it is important that these male leaders take a firm stance on gender equality, and then, commit to applying principles of equality in their own lives. The former can be challenging and there are leaders in the community who take a clear and deliberate stance against equality – such as male parliamentarians who defend their ‘right’ to beat their wives within parliamentary debate on domestic violence laws. However, the greatest challenge appears to be finding local or national leaders who truly implement gender equality in their personal and professional lives. As one man stated:

I noticed that a lot of people were talking about gender equality. [An NGO] ran debates about gender equality. I also saw that a lot of people –East Timorese and internationals – did a lot of talking but not much practice. For example [two East Timorese male leaders in the field of human rights] started learning about gender equality in 1997 in their organizations. But they didn’t implement a gender balance in the organizations. They only had male staff. They don’t practice gender equality. There is no gender balance. A lot of internationals talk about gender equality ... There was a lot of research and lofty talk – but little practical change or influence. Just talk.

One example of modelling is found in the participation of President Xanana Gusmao in public theatrical performances, poster campaigns, lectures and other activities directly promoting such things as breast-feeding and violence-free families. Similarly the participation of East Timorese men in a march to protest the rape of a woman by a group of police officers in Dili in June 2004 “sent a powerful signal to other men”<sup>578</sup>. For one community leader who works to engage men in gender equality the primary sites of modelling are his home, the homes of his family, friends and fellow community members and his workplace. He describes the changes he has made in order that his own life is consistent with what he is promoting in communities:

My love and respect for my wife, mother-in-law, and children increased. I decided never again to hit members of my family. I never

---

<sup>578</sup> Irena Cristalis and Catherine Scott, ‘Chapter Ten: Women beyond independence: the challenges ahead’, in *Independent Women*, Progressio, 2006, available from: <http://www.ciir.org/Templates/AssociatesInternal.asp?NodeID=92050>, accessed October 9 2006

have. I teach my girls and boys to play football. Neighbours ask why teach girls? I say girls need to develop these skills and boys need to help in the house. I contradict others' ideas in words and practice. Timorese think men should eat more than women. I argue that women in good health can better serve. Then I practice that in my life. I take my girls and boys to school. I give money equally to my girls as my boys. When my brother in law comes over and leaves my sister at home, I challenge that. When he says she had to stay to take care of the baby, I challenge his excuses.

I also show by example – I cook in front of people and now my brother-in-law cooks with me. The neighbours say to their husbands: You should learn from Mario.

When my daughters marry I will not ask for or accept *barlaki*. Why exploit each other? With my cousins and their spouses I do socialisation. Especially about contraception. At first it was a taboo topic. No-one spoke about it.

Also we have traditions when people die that we have to give money to the men in the family etc. People say it's sacred. I don't accept it. I say thank you, I accept this money and have taken the *lulik*<sup>579</sup>. Now I give back the cash. That's how I implement it.

I have done presentations in all 13 districts with *xefe de suku*<sup>580</sup>, youth, *lia na'in*<sup>581</sup>. Everyone agrees with me. I talk about the domestic violence law – everyone accepts it. When I speak, ... I speak simply based in experience. Everyone agrees. Then I implement my words as an individual. I speak about domestic violence. When I analyse the four types of domestic violence I give concrete examples from real life. For example when I talk about economic abuse I ask: Do you have girls and boys?

Do you love them?

How will you divide your inheritance? Why will you give more to boys? What will be the impact on your girls? How will they live?

I say with no schooling and no land etc – the girls will suffer. The brothers should share equally with the sisters. I come from a family with a lot of coffee. We divided the land equally amongst all the children.

A member of the Association of Men Against Violence similarly described his implementation of equality and modelling with his own siblings.

---

<sup>579</sup> *Lulik* roughly translates to sacredness or magic power.

<sup>580</sup> *Xefe de suku* – village chiefs

<sup>581</sup> *Lia na'in* – 'holders of culture' or cultural/spiritual leaders

At home I implement equality with my interactions with my sisters, mother. I do all kinds of work. We need to change ourselves, our families, our friends. I talk to the Head of the Village and promise that when I marry I will treat my wife with respect and not use violence. I tell them, if I use violence, you can all come and tell me off

I live with 12 younger siblings – 3 girls and 9 of us boys. Each week we have a family meeting to discuss how we can better support each other. We distribute the work evenly among ourselves. (We are all students.) The heavier work – like washing clothes - I ask the boys to do. They all accept this. We can't just have theory. That won't produce change. We need to implement equality in our own daily lives. We need to start with changes in our selves and homes.

One woman who had been involved in facilitating many workshops and formal meetings on CEDAW and gender equality argued, based on her observations of discussions within the workshops, that many of the inter-gender problems were rooted in basic communication problems. She suggested that alternative models of male-female communication would be an important part of the solution. “No-one has taught the men how to communicate,” she said. “No-one has modelled good listening or basic respect.”

*Establishment of all-male pro-feminist NGO specifically dedicated to eliminating gender-based inequality and violence: The Association of Men Against Violence (AMKV)*

The vision of the Association of Men Against Violence is “to build a democratic, independent, and just society, free from violence and discrimination. It aims to raise the awareness of men and women about gender-based violence, and to eradicate such violence from all levels of society.”<sup>582</sup> In this vision it is not unique. Its distinction lies in the fact that it is an all-male pro-feminist East Timorese organization that actively and directly seeks to engage East Timorese men in gender equality and related issues.

The Association of Men Against Violence is an organization that draws on all the approaches discussed above in order to penetrate society with its message of eliminating

---

<sup>582</sup> Mario de Araujo Mario de Araujo, ‘Liberation for everyone, not just men’: A case study of the Men’s Association Against Violence (AMKV) in East Timor, in in *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Sandy Ruxton (ed.), Great Britain, 2004, p.142



male violence against women; to provoke and promote real and lasting change in boys and men.

The Association was founded in response to an international exchange on gender-based violence which challenged 38 male East Timorese participants to confront and reflect on gender, violence, masculinity, and relationships with women in the family, both from a personal and societal perspective. The exchange took place in March and April of 2002 and was organised by a national and international NGO<sup>583</sup>. Representatives of Puntos dos Encuentros, a men's group from Nicaragua that promotes the elimination of violence in post-conflict *machismo* cultures facilitated the training. Twenty participants in this training then went on to establish the Association.

The initial response from East Timorese men to the establishment of the Association of Men Against Violence was negative:

Two days after Asosiaun Mane Kontra Violensia (Men's Association Against Violence – AMKV) was established, we held a press conference. TV reporters covered the event, and news of the press conference was broadcast on East Timor TV. The next day, we received congratulations from women's organizations – but from men we received insults. One said, 'You in the AMKV are all a bunch of queers,' another said, 'What a strange world this is where instead of supporting each other, men are defending women's rights.'<sup>584</sup>

AMKV has also faced opposition or resistance from men when they have initiated their activities in rural communities. They have experienced ridicule, 'accusations' of homosexuality, and criticism from colleagues and friends who believe that limited energy and resources should be used to tackle "more pressing developmental issues such as poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, and economic empowerment."

---

<sup>583</sup> La'o hamutuk and Oxfam Community Aid Abroad

<sup>584</sup> Mario de Araujo, 'Liberation for everyone, not just men': A case study of the Men's Association Against Violence (AMKV) in East Timor, in in *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Sandy Ruxton (ed.), Great Britain, 2004, p.140

However key national male figures - including the president, some members of parliament, some members of the police, and departmental ministers – as well as a slowly growing number of men at the community level are responsive and recognize the value of AMKV.

The response to AMKV from feminist and human rights NGOs has been entirely positive:

‘Having men involved in gender is a relief,’ one women activist remarked. ‘If in all our districts men did what you are doing, then East Timor would be a peaceful society. We wholeheartedly support this initiative and you must go into the remote areas to share your experiences with the men there.’<sup>585</sup>

This response has lead to a close co-operation and opportunities for collaboration with women’s groups and with government departments that are promoting gender equality and has prevented competition over funds and resources.

Some of the activities of the AMKV are mentioned above in discussions about various approaches used to engage men in equality in East Timor. ADMV’s activities include the facilitation of community-based education and discussion forums; advocacy; network building among community groups, national non-government organizations, and the government; involvement in the drafting of legislation on domestic violence; and monitoring of cases of gender-based violence in the criminal courts.<sup>586</sup>

#### **9.4 Key emerging ideas**

The obstacles to engaging East Timorese men in gender equality are complex and multi-faceted. However, a constantly recurring theme that emerged in the course of this research was the important role that East Timorese cultural traditions, as well as (mis)perceptions/ (mis)application of aspects of these traditions, play in limiting men’s

---

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.* p.142

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.* p.142

ability to engage with gender equality. Any efforts to engage East Timorese men, which seek to effect real and lasting change, must address actual or perceived incompatibilities between East Timorese cultural traditions and gender equality.

Similarly, efforts to eliminate the obstacles to men's engagement in gender equality will involve a complex of multi-faceted approaches. Again, however, a recurring theme that emerged through this research was the fundamental role of education – formal and non-formal, of children and of adults – to effect change. Additionally, it is apparent that for those engaging in efforts to educate East Timorese men on gender-equality related issues an important consideration will be the clear translatability of educational messages into daily action. Lofty ideals, knowledge of international laws, information about gender relations in other parts of the world, feminist theory and so on, must serve (at most) as a backdrop to interventions which engage with the realities of men's daily lives and offer clear, realistic and achievable alternative ways of being.

Further, experience has proven the importance of engaging emotions, and of linking the issues with human rights and the East Timorese constitution. It has also been found that isolating the issue of gender-equality can limit the impact of interventions. Linking gender-equality related issues to those such as the use of violence for conflict resolution more generally can be helpful, as can combining them with other initiatives such as income-generation programmes.

## **CHAPTER TEN Discussion**

### **10.1 Introduction**

In chapter eight above I presented the results of my fieldwork in East Timor. In this chapter I explore the implications of these findings in light of the literature pertaining to theories of social development, masculinities, and a culture of contest, as well as practical work worldwide that has been carried out to engage men in gender equality. In section one I discuss each of the interventions presented in chapter eight. In section two I discuss a number of issues that cross cut the various interventions.

### **Section One**

#### **10.2 Workshops and trainings**

With regard to workshops and trainings my findings reveal that there are two important issues which must receive due attention: workshops must be culturally and linguistically appropriate for the participants; and it is better to have no intervention than to offer trainings using insubstantial materials conducted by inadequately trained facilitators.

With respect to the former, S.J. Cummings and colleagues, in their analysis of formal gender training in diverse cultures, found that the use of foreign gender frameworks to which participants and/or the trainers themselves cannot relate was problematic.<sup>587</sup> In part to avoid the limitations imposed by the use of culturally and linguistically unsuitable materials, Gary Barker and his colleagues (in South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and North America), worked closely with the boys and men they were trying to influence, to develop materials that were relevant and meaningful to participants. Thus men, who were themselves members of the target population of the program, helped to “define project objectives, test and develop materials, and offer ongoing advice on how to reach other young men with messages about gender equality.”<sup>588</sup>

---

<sup>587</sup> S.J.R. Cummings, H. van Dam, and M. Valk (eds.), *Gender Training The Source Book: Critical Reviews and Annotated Bibliographies Series*, The Netherlands, 1998, p.22

<sup>588</sup> Gary Barker, Marcos Nascimento, Marcio Segundo, and Julie Perwitz, ‘How do we know if men have changed? Promoting and measuring attitude change with young men: lessons from Program H in Latin America’, in *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Sandy Ruxton (ed.), Great Britain, 2004, p.147

This issue is directly linked to the redefinition of social development offered in chapter five and to the principles that flow from that new definition. Development, according to the model presented, is not “ a package to be delivered to the ‘underdeveloped’ by the ‘developed countries’ and their collaborators in the modern sectors of the Third World.”<sup>589</sup> Development is an organic process in which “the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material”,<sup>590</sup> where the participants themselves contribute to the generation, application and distribution of knowledge.<sup>591</sup>

With respect to the importance of high quality workshops when working in the area of men and gender equality the findings of my study – that poor quality workshops are not only not helpful but actually harmful – is supported by work in other parts of the world. Maree Keating who has worked in various parts of the world including Africa, Asia and Australia, has found that “it is critical to discuss and make visible power and equality issues in gender workshops, even when ... working with predominantly male groups, and the terrain seems difficult.”<sup>592</sup> Inexperienced facilitators or those who lack the knowledge, skills or confidence to address the more sensitive and difficult issues may choose to avoid them. Maree Keating found that when this choice is made

opportunities are missed that could help participants develop the tools to discuss gender equality beyond the workshop. Furthermore women in the group may be left frustrated at the lack of progress, and men may remain secure in their view that changing gender relations is either unnecessary or unachievable.<sup>593</sup>

---

<sup>589</sup> Farzam Arbab, ‘Rural University: Learning about Education and Development’, International Development Research Center, Library, 1997, available from: <http://archive.idrc.ca/library/document/059403/>, accessed October 10 2006

<sup>590</sup> Bahá’í International Community, ‘Valuing Spirituality in Development: Initial Considerations Regarding the Creation of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development’, A concept paper presented to the World Faiths and Development Dialogue, hosted by the President of the World Bank and the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace, London, England 18-19 February 1998, available from: <http://info.Bahá’í.org/article-1-8-1-5.html>, accessed October 10, 2006.

<sup>591</sup> Farzam Arbab, ‘FUNDAEC: Fundacion para la Aplicacion y Ensehanza de las Ciencias’, Noble Creation Website, 1996, available from: <http://www.bcca.org/services/lists/noble-creation/fundaec1.html>, accessed October 10 2006

<sup>592</sup> Maree Keating, ‘The things they don’t tell you’, p.50.

<sup>593</sup> Sandy Ruxton, ‘Introduction’ in *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Sandy Ruxton (ed.), Oxfam, Great Britain, 2004, p. 12

### 10.3 Use of the arts

My research revealed that the arts are already being used to good effect to engage East Timorese men in gender equality and have much potential for further use and development. As discussed extensively in chapter eight, this finding is strongly supported by research and practice around the world: The arts have been widely used all over the world to engage men in gender equality. Boys and men who do not have the interest or opportunity to be involved in more formal approaches (such as workshops, trainings, discussion groups) can be positively influenced through the very same media that help to generate sexism – traditional song, dance, theatre, soap operas, televised debates, documentaries, movies, radio shows, cartoons, books and comics, photography, exhibitions, and others.

In the Caribbean, performing arts programs have used music and theatre in public places and in schools to promote gender equity, responsible sexuality and parenting, and prevent child abuse and incest. In Jamaica a long-running television program called *Man Talk* used a ‘bar-type setting’ to debate cultural definitions of manhood and fatherhood.<sup>594</sup> In Brazil, a television campaign has been used to reach adolescent fathers with information about roles and responsibilities.<sup>595</sup> Films that build awareness about gender relations and promote responsible attitudes toward women and toward sexual relations are a key feature of a project called “Let’s Talk Men” which targets men in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan.<sup>596</sup> Similarly, in Scandinavia a film called *Brev till män* (A letter to men) targets men with gender equality messages. In the United States, NOMAS (National Organization for Men Against Sexism) has produced a ten part series on Men and Masculinity in which the host engages in ‘illuminating discussions’ about ‘male socialization, sex role identity, the prevalence and prevention of male violence, competition and hierarchies, male-female relations, privilege and prejudice, homophobia,

---

<sup>594</sup> Janet Brown, ‘Fatherwork’, p.124

<sup>595</sup> United Nations Population Fund, Chapter 4: Men, Reproductive Rights and Gender Equality, available from: <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2000/english/ch04.html>, accessed October 6 2006.

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*

parenting, men in prisons, the intersection of race, class, and gender, [and] internalized oppression'.<sup>597</sup>

*Tough Guise*, an educational video about masculine identities geared toward American high school and college students, is one of more than twenty Media Education Foundation documentary videos that raise gender equality related issues in innovative and thought provoking ways. *Tough Guise* uses racially diverse subject matter and examples to 'enlighten and provoke students ...to evaluate their ...participation in the culture of contemporary masculinity'.<sup>598</sup>

A cartoon video developed in workshop processes with young men in diverse settings in Latin America and the Caribbean, is used as a tool to stimulate and contextualise discussions with young men about the ways in which they were socialised as men and the ways in which they can challenge the negative aspects of that socialisation.<sup>599</sup>

Photography has also been used to engage men in gender equality. One project provided community members with Polaroid instant cameras. Community members (project participants) were then encouraged to take photos of men and women in their communities at various points throughout the day. The photos were used to highlight the differences in the burdens borne by women and by men in the community in terms of daily labour and responsibilities.<sup>600</sup> Another South African based project, *The Fatherhood Project*, uses photos taken by professional photographers, students and children to present images of fatherhood accompanied by words of children talking about fathers, and of

---

<sup>597</sup>The National Organization for Men Against Sexism(NOMAS), available from: <http://www.nomas.org/resources.html>, accessed October 7 2006

<sup>598</sup> See <http://www.uua.org/re/faithworks/fall03/curriculumandlearningresourcesd.html>

<sup>599</sup> Gary Barker, Marcos Nascimento, Marcio Segundo, and Julie Perwitz, 'How do we know if men have changed? Promoting and measuring attitude change with young men: lessons from Program H in Latin America', in *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Sandy Ruxton (ed.), Great Britain, 2004, p. 152

<sup>600</sup> Bahá'í Topics, an information source, 'UNIFEM/Bahá'í Project Raises Community Consciousness', 1993, available from: <http://info.Bahá'í.org/article-1-7-6-14.html>, accessed October 7

men talking about the way they see themselves. Some of these words and images were then used as part of a traveling photographic exhibition.<sup>601</sup>

A particularly efficacious and cost effective use of the arts to engage men in gender equality and related issues has been the use of radio and television melodramas. In Ethiopia, after two and a half years of national broadcasts, one half of the country's adult population were regular listeners to the radio melodrama *Yeken Kignit*. Research indicated that the melodrama had influenced married couples' communications about family planning resulting in a 157 per cent increase in demand for contraception. Similarly in Tanzania *Twende na Wakati* – the story of a womanizing truck driver and his family – became the most popular radio show in the country after six months on air. Eighty-two per cent of listeners linked their reduction of risky sexual behaviours to the impact of the radio show. Condom distribution increased by 153 per cent and health clinics reported that 41 per cent of new contraceptive users were influenced by the series.<sup>602</sup>

*Twende na Wakati* was one of many 'entertainment-education' projects supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The Population Media Center (PMC) is an organization which was established in response to the overwhelming success of the UNFPA projects. PMC works to effect positive social change through broadcast media around the world and is currently working with UNFPA on broadcast projects in Ethiopia, the Philippines and Rwanda.<sup>603</sup>

The serials used in these projects are written locally and tailored to specific cultural and social realities. Despite the diversity of character and story line, the creation of the radio dramas follows a carefully researched formula. Each drama must be 'entertaining and

---

<sup>601</sup> Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa, *The Fatherhood Project*, South Africa, 2005, available from: <http://www.hsra.ac.za/fatherhood/introduction/introduction.html>, accessed October 7 2006

<sup>602</sup> Population Media Center, 'Soap Operas for Social Change to Prevent HIV/AIDS: A Training Guide for Journalists and Media Personnel', UNFPA, 2005, available from: <http://www.unfpa.org/publications/detail.cfm?ID=271&filterListType>, accessed October 7 2006

<sup>603</sup> *Ibid.*



intense'. According to the founder of PMC it is the "emotional bonding between the audience and the character that makes the method effective...Engaging emotions, through sound effects and heightened drama, is a powerful way to influence behaviours, such as those surrounding intimate relationships, that are not necessarily guided by reason. Moreover, the emotion sears the social messages into the memory of listeners."<sup>604</sup>

To maximize on this the plots unfold gradually and social content on subjects that may be considered taboo is not introduced until several months after a show begins. This provides time for the audience to 'get to know' the characters and become gripped by the drama of their lives. Each story line has a negative character who makes bad choices and suffers the consequences; a positive role model; and a transitional character who faces suffering and doubt but who learns to make good choices, take greater control over her/his life and enjoys the positive effects of these choices.

In the conflicting choices faced by these characters, listeners see their own lives unfolding. They learn vicariously...by seeing positive steps rewarded and bad actions punished. This often leads to a growing sense of self-efficacy – the idea that ...destiny relies on more than twists of fate.<sup>605</sup>

The power of this artform to influence men toward more gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours is well understood through reference to the concepts of social discourse, and hegemonic masculinity. Social discourses, as discussed in chapter seven above, are created through combining a number of discursive constructs. Discursive constructs, in turn, are socially constructed ways of thinking, talking and relating to a given phenomenon, such as 'human nature' or 'society'. A discourse then is a highly complex system of representation which provides ways of thinking, talking and acting in relation to an entire class of phenomena.<sup>606</sup> (For example the dominant Western approach to medicine with its focus on disease and illness is one discourse on medicine.) With respect to this discussion the important aspect of social discourses is that they

---

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>606</sup> Michael Karlberg, *Culture of Contest*, p.12

influence what is generally 'sayable' or 'thinkable' in relation to a given class of phenomena in any given cultural and historical context.

They embody canons of 'knowledge' and they define authoritative producers of this knowledge, that in turn constitute culturally and historically specific beliefs or 'truths' about these phenomena. They define their 'subjects' – the people that act within them or that they act upon – in such a manner that these subjects can be seen to, even start to, personify or conform to their internal logic. And finally, they generate social structures that organize and regulate collective practice in a manner that is consistent with their internal logic.<sup>607</sup>

In addition to influencing what *can* be thought and said, and what *does* constitute truth, social discourses

simultaneously influence what is not sayable or not thinkable in a given cultural context, what does not constitute authoritative knowledge or truth, who is not an authoritative producer of such knowledge or truth, how subjects should not act, and what institutional configurations are not present.<sup>608</sup>

The hegemonic masculinity in any given culture is a discourse on manhood. In order for it to continue undisturbed it must make itself more-or-less invisible,<sup>609</sup> so as to appear natural and inevitable<sup>610</sup>. Even those privileged by the dominance must be at least partially blind to its arbitrariness for "if ideology were really self-evident, it would be easily resisted by those who, though privileged by it, reject its inequities, as well as by those who suffer its oppression."<sup>611</sup> Hegemonic masculinities then, like men's collective interests and their disproportionate power and influence "are not maintained through active and self-conscious male conspiracies...Instead, the processes by which [some] men maintain their dominance are much more complex, indirect and subtle...

---

<sup>607</sup> *Ibid.* p.14

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.* p.14

<sup>609</sup> David Buchbinder, *Performance Anxieties: Re-producing masculinities*, Allen and Unwin, 1998

pp. 3-4

<sup>610</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid.*

[Hegemonic masculinity] does not declare its own partiality. ...Instead it presents itself as *the way of seeing the world; as entirely natural, normal and straightforward.*<sup>612</sup>

The power of the radio melodrama to create social change is linked to its ability to challenge discourses pertaining to male-female relationships, marriage, men and sexuality and so on. Because the melodramas challenge these discourses indirectly, gradually, and through the engagement of emotions, they do not meet with the resistance that more direct, sudden, or cerebral approaches generate. Even as they suggest new discourses, the melodramas are not perceived to be undermining the ‘canons of ‘knowledge’’ or ‘authoritative producers of this knowledge’ that constitute ‘culturally and historically specific beliefs or ‘truths’ about these phenomena.’<sup>613</sup> While offering another way of ‘seeing the world’ they do not appear to be attacking what is – prior to the melodrama – seen to entirely natural, normal and straightforward.

#### 10.4 Modelling

The findings of my fieldwork revealed that modelling as an approach to promoting social change has great potential in East Timor due to the hierarchical structure of its society and to the powerful influence of family and community over individuals and their choices.<sup>614</sup> It was also found that this approach has, to date, been limited by the lack of genuinely gender-equitable East Timorese men who are willing to take on the role of leadership in their localities or regions.

In other parts of the world role-modelling has been used to good effect, most particularly in cultures and target populations where other approaches would be met with much resistance. For example, high profile male athletes, due to their popularity and status have proven to be a valuable resource in terms of reaching populations of men with gender equality related messages. In South Africa the non-profit organization Targeted AIDS Interventions (TAI) trained soccer players from eight soccer teams identified by the

---

<sup>612</sup> Nigel Edley and Margaret Wetherell, ‘Masculinity, power and identity’ in *Understanding Masculinities*, ed. Máirtín Mac an Ghaill, , Buckingham, 1996, p. 108

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.* p.14

<sup>614</sup> As compared to more individualistic societies such as those found in Australia.

South African Football Association, on issues such as sexuality, puberty, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, and communication skills. The players then became peer educators and partners in the process, reaching packed stadiums with their messages.<sup>615</sup>

In Uganda, UNFPA projects that aim to involve men in promoting gender equality and women's reproductive health, have developed partnerships with elders, kings, bishops and imams, as these men represent the leaders of opinion in Ugandan culture.<sup>616</sup> Similarly in Yemen, a conservative Moslem country, where gender equality is a particularly sensitive issue, fostering partnerships with influential men and male-dominated organizations has proven both essential and highly rewarding. For example in one part of Yemen three women-led Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) formed an advocacy group whose membership consisted of men who were highly regarded in their respective areas of work. These influential community leaders included policemen, judges, lawyers and academics and all had a commitment to gender equality and human rights.<sup>617</sup> Also in Yemen, the Women's National Committee (WNC) has engaged the highest religious institute in the country, the Ministry of Endowment, in raising awareness of gender equality issues which has agreed to use the mosques to reach Moslem men with messages prepared by the WNC pertaining to violence and women's rights.<sup>618</sup>

In many parts of the world traditional leaders<sup>619</sup> serve as important partners in the process of engaging men in gender equality issues. These leaders include village chiefs, traditional spiritual leaders, and representatives of the traditional justice systems. In Mali, traditional leaders backed projects that aimed to engage men in matters of family

---

<sup>615</sup> Gaetane le Grange, 'Taking the bull...', p. 106

<sup>616</sup> United Nations Population Fund, 'Involving Men in Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Reproductive Health', UNFPA website, available from: <http://www.unfpa.org/gender/men.htm>, accessed October 6 2006

<sup>617</sup> Magda Mohammed Elsanousi, 'Strategies and approaches', p. 169

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.* p.172

<sup>619</sup> United Nations Population Fund, Chapter 4: Men, Reproductive Rights and Gender Equality, available from: <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2000/english/ch04.html>, accessed October 6 2006.

planning and reproductive health. As a result, men's interest in the health of mothers and children increased and they embraced methods of child spacing that promote the well-being of mothers and children.<sup>620</sup>

### 10.5 Pro-feminist men's organizations

The founding of the Association of Men Against Violence (AMKV) in East Timor was initially received by men with ridicule, and by feminists with joy. With the passage of time it has attracted greater respect from an ever-widening circle of men, women and organisations, and continues to collaborate and cooperate with national and international feminist organizations to build a democratic, independent, and just society, free from violence and discrimination; raise awareness about gender-based violence; and eradicate such violence from all levels of society.<sup>621</sup>

The AMKV has its rough parallels in other countries. Within the United States of America a number of such organizations form networks (or some would argue, a movement) of pro-feminist men. In places such as the USA such pro-feminist organizations/networks have tended toward a different approach to that of AKMV. Michael Kimmel describes the process in which such organizations are engaged as “an organized and self-conscious exploration of men's lives and masculinities”<sup>622</sup> with a focus on therapy, personal growth and healing. But the focus is shifting as “more and more men realize that personal growth and the reconstruction of individual masculinities are useless without an accompanying shift in the social relations, institutions and ideologies which support or marginalize different ways of being men.”<sup>623</sup>

---

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>621</sup> Mario de Araujo Mario de Araujo, 'Liberation for everyone, not just men': A case study of the Men's Association Against Violence (AMKV) in East Timor, in in *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Sandy Ruxton (ed.), Great Britain, 2004, p.142

<sup>622</sup> Michael Flood, Presentation to the Relating to Men Forum, hosted by the Australian Association of Social Workers (WA) and Relationships Australia (WA), Perth, 27-28 November 1998, unpaginated, available from: <http://www.xyonline.net/relate.shtml>, accessed October 7 2006

<sup>623</sup> *Ibid.*

## 10.6 Campaigns and the media

Campaigns and the mass media have been used to engage men in gender equality and related issues within East Timor. Such an approach has also been used worldwide. In the context of gender equality and the engagement of men therein it is valuable to consider the ways in which campaigns and use of the mass media to promote changes in gender relations can simultaneously serve and undermine the purpose.

In Zimbabwe one campaign aiming to raise awareness of men's responsibility for family planning used slogans such as "You are in control!" A similar initiative in Mexico challenges men to engage in family planning by asking: "Are you really so macho? So plan your family!"<sup>624</sup> Campaigns with slogans such as these, promote changes in men's behaviour which are often linked to greater equality and may well benefit women and men, but do so by drawing on and reinforcing patriarchal values, thus limiting their capacity to transform men, empower women and promote equality.

Furthermore there are campaigns and uses of the mass media that do not appear to undermine the purpose of men's transformation and the advancement of gender equality, but may in fact do so by reinforcing and contributing to a culture of contest and protest. That is, they may contribute to a society where social institutions and practices are competitive and conflictual, and desire for change is expressed through "protests, demonstrations, strikes and other oppositional strategies..."<sup>625</sup>

In such a culture of competition where individuals and groups perceive themselves and others as either winners or losers in the battle for power and resources complexity, mutuality, cooperation and collaboration are disregarded or sacrificed. Men's fears that the progress of women necessarily means the regress of men are seemingly justified and their willingness to engage in processes that explore or promote equality is reduced. This 'normative adversarialism' - "the assumption that contests are normal and necessary

---

<sup>624</sup> Benno de Keijzer, 'Masculinities: resistance and change' in *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Sandy Ruxton (ed.), Great Britain, 2004, p.42

<sup>625</sup> Dr Karlburg bases his analysis on and draws his examples from western-liberal societies. However, I believe that much of his analysis has applicability in other societies, including East Timor.

models of social organization”<sup>626</sup> - contributes to a social climate wherein those who have power and resources seek to preserve these rather than share them justly and fairly. It puts the onus on the less powerful, or the oppressed, to rally and demand change, rather than encouraging the more powerful, or oppressor, to identify and respond responsibly to their own experience of undue privilege. It limits the possibilities for humble, peaceful, honest communication between the less powerful and the more powerful, and instead creates barriers to open and productive dialogue.

In light of this some of the principles identified through an analysis of practice worldwide increase in importance. That is, campaigns should use the language of responsibility, not blame, and should avoid negative generalizations and stereotypes.<sup>627</sup>

They should avoid repeated presentation of men or certain groups of men as ‘the problem’, or ‘high risk’.<sup>628</sup> As Michael Kaufman points out:

Generalized blame reduces sexism to individual relationships and individual identity rather than understanding patriarchy and sexism as also being systemic and institutional. Nor is blame pedagogically useful. Language that leaves men feeling responsible for things they haven’t done or for things they were taught to do, or feeling guilty for the sins of other men, will alienate most men and boys and promote backlash.<sup>629</sup>

In order to reach men, messages must be presented positively. They must be empowering, not overly critical or dictatorial.<sup>630</sup> Many successful approaches have appealed to the values the abuse of which is ultimately being challenged, such as strength, courage, leadership and protection.<sup>631</sup> Some examples of this come from the worldwide White Ribbon campaign which reaches out to boys and men with the message “You have the

---

<sup>626</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36

<sup>627</sup> Michael Kaufman, ‘Transforming our interventions’, p. 25

<sup>628</sup> United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Report on the online Discussion on The Role of Men and Boys in Equality, 30 June to 25 July 2003. p. 11, available from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/men-boys2003/online.html>, accessed October 6 2006

<sup>629</sup> Michael Kaufman, ‘Transforming our interventions’, p. 25

<sup>630</sup> Gaetane le Grange, ‘Taking the bull...’ p. 111

<sup>631</sup> Bertil Lindblad, in United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Report of Expert Group Meeting, Brazil 12 January, 2004, p.9, available from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/men-boys2003/index.html>, accessed October 6 2006

power to end violence against women in your community”<sup>632</sup>; and the Strength Campaign run by the US organization “Men Can Stop Rape” whose mottos always start with: “My strength is not for hurting so when she said no, I stopped; so when I wanted to and she didn’t, we didn’t; so when she wanted me to stop, I stopped; so when I wasn’t sure how she felt, I asked.”<sup>633</sup> As another example, interventions in some Islamic countries have appealed to men’s traditional role of family protector to promote equality and to end domestic violence.<sup>634</sup>

## Section Two

### 10.7 Addressing the whole person: responding to religious and traditional beliefs

The findings of this study indicate the importance of approaching interventions to engage men in gender equality with an appreciation of participants as ‘whole human beings’. Efforts to educate village chiefs about domestic violence, or villagers about CEDAW, for example, which compartmentalise this knowledge do not provide means by which this knowledge can be integrated into participants’ usual ways of thinking and being. This issue is directly linked to the use of materials (and facilitators) from outside East Timor, which reflect the biases and assumptions of their countries of origin. These assumptions are often fundamentally different to those which underlie East Timorese society. This difference is summed up in the observation that

Throughout that part of the world where the vast majority of the earth's population live, facile announcements that "God is Dead" [have] passed largely unnoticed. The experience of the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific [have] long confirmed them in the view not only that human nature is deeply influenced by spiritual forces, but that

---

<sup>632</sup> Michael Kaufman, ‘Transforming our interventions’, p. 24

<sup>633</sup> Benno de Keijzer, ‘Masculinities’, p.48

<sup>634</sup> Magda Mohammed Elsanousi, ‘Strategies and approaches to enhance the role of men and boys in gender equality: a case study from Yemen’, in *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Sandy Ruxton (ed.), Great Britain, 2004.



its very identity is spiritual. Consequently, religion [continues], as [has] always been the case, to function as the ultimate authority in life.<sup>635</sup>

It is clear that both the teachings of the Catholic Church and traditional Timorese beliefs passed orally from one generation to the next, play an important role in the development of the Timorese people's schema for interpretation of their social environment, and are central in Timorese culture and society.

Those who either do not want change to the gender status quo or do not believe change is achievable often argue that gender equality can never be attained in East Timor because it is not in keeping with Timorese traditions and/or the doctrine of the church. This argument indicates a belief in either the sacred and/or impervious nature of the (patriarchal) Timorese culture, traditions and religious teachings. The frequency and intensity of conviction with which such beliefs are held makes them an important consideration for those working in the area of men and equality. Indeed a failure, by those engaged in social (and economic) development, to give due attention and respect to the spiritual beliefs of the participants constitutes not only an arrogance, but a blindness to both important challenges which must be addressed, and to an important resource for the process of development.

One of the leading pro-feminist men in East Timor, and participants in this study – Mr. Mario de Araujo – cited his education in religious doctrine and traditional beliefs as an important factor in his commitment to justice and equality. From this education Mr Araujo internalised these values and others such as love, respect and control of anger, which contributed to his determination to work for gender equality. This potential impact of spiritual and cultural teachings have two implications: Interventions to engage men in gender equality can draw on religious doctrine and traditional beliefs to support change toward a more just society, and church and traditional leaders can actively link desired values with the creation of equality for all.

---

<sup>635</sup> The Universal House of Justice, *One Common Faith*, Bahá'í World Center, Haifa, 2005, para 4.

Some of the traditional beliefs and religious doctrine of East Timor, however, do not support gender justice, nor do they encourage men to work for greater gender equality. Yet, when such traditional beliefs are not feared nor avoided, they can provide opportunity for fruitful discussion the end result of which is the development of individuals' capacity to critically reflect on their choices and their environment; and movement toward a more just society.

For example, the payment of *barlaki* or bride-price is common practice in East Timor. It often involves the transfer of much wealth from the groom's family to the bride's family. The payment of *barlaki* then becomes a supporting context for violence against women in the home. The violence is 'justified' by the fact that the husband 'bought' his wife (at great expense) and she is now his, to do with as he pleases. However, open discussion of the issue can lead to recognition of the ways in which *barlaki* impoverishes and unduly burdens families, affecting both women and men as well as boys and girls. For example the conviction that failure to pay *barlaki* will bring curses upon the family can lead to the expenditure of money that would otherwise have supported the education of children, or provided opportunity for agricultural or other development.

A discussion on the topic of *barlaki* among a mixed group of Timorese students led to the conclusion that *barlaki* is a tradition that is destructive to the wellbeing of Timorese communities and a request to the administration to outlaw it. However, discussions around key traditional beliefs need not lead to such extreme conclusions in order to contribute to equality and men's engagement with it. Firstly, the process itself, as mentioned above, when well facilitated, can be valuable inasmuch as it encourages critical thinking and exchange of contrasting ideas, both of which are crucial to the establishment of equality and to men's engagement in that process. Secondly, a discussion on the issue of *barlaki*, for example, can bring attention to the ways in which, over time, beliefs and practices, which initially served an extremely positive purpose, have been corrupted. It has been suggested that the original intention of the practice of *barlaki* was to pay homage to the family of the bride, acknowledge the value of the woman marrying, and to unite the two families through the sharing of material wealth.

Increased awareness of the way ‘good practices’ have been changed to such an extent as to be destructive to families and communities, is an important part of the process of creating positive organic change while respecting traditional beliefs and values.

The approach to social development discussed in chapter five is highly relevant to this issue for two key reasons. This approach to development gives due weight to the moral, ethical or spiritual dimension of the human being, regarding development as ‘an organic process in which "the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material"<sup>636</sup>, as well as recognising the need and inevitability of change in all cultures, but argues that cultures must evolve organically and in ways which enhance the quality of life rather than in ways that result in a sense of loss, alienation, disunity and other problems.

In response to the latter the abovementioned approach to social development promotes ‘selective’ preservation of culture, gradually discarding traditions that are not in keeping with principles that contribute to the wellbeing of humanity, through a measured, respectful process of change.

An application of mathematical principles to this matter suggests that there is an optimum degree of change that does not disrupt the stabilizing influence of culture. By avoiding rigid preservation of tradition for tradition’s sake, or the domination of diverse cultures by a single culture, interventions for social development can contribute to self-directed cultural evolution based on healthy positive inter-cultural exchanges and interactions.

The process of denaturalization is once again relevant to this matter as it is through naturalization that socially created practices and understandings come to appear natural, inevitable and therefore impossible to change, and through denaturalization that the historical specificity of our cultural environment becomes apparent, providing

---

<sup>636</sup>Bahá’í International Community, ‘Valuing Spirituality in Development: Initial Considerations Regarding the Creation of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development’, A concept paper presented to the World Faiths and Development Dialogue, hosted by the President of the World Bank and the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace, London, England 18-19 February 1998, available from: <http://info.Bahá’í.org/article-1-8-1-5.html>, accessed October 10, 2006.

opportunity to 'step outside of it' and make conscious choices about how traditions and religious teachings are understood and applied.

## 10.8 Development of communication skills

This study found that the poor communication skills among the vast majority of Timorese men serve as both cause and effect of gender inequality and are directly linked with gender-based violence and the breakdown of personal and inter-gender community relationships. As Mario de Araujo found: '...[M]any participants don't know what alternatives there are to using violence.'<sup>637</sup> Similarly Caroline Meenagh stressed the relationship between gender inequality and the fact that '[n]o-one has taught the men how to communicate. No-one has modelled good listening or basic respect.'<sup>638</sup>

The culture of contest with its normative adversarialism described in chapter seven provides a context and partial explanation for this. As Sally Miller Gearheart says, "The assumption is and has been through the centuries that the concern of rhetoric is persuasion" and the role of the "speaker/conqueror" is one of "conquest/conversion."<sup>639</sup> What is required is a more dialogical model of communication, and the adoption of an explicitly non-adversarial framework in which all participants

contribute to the thinking about an issue so that everyone involved gains a greater understanding of the issue in its subtlety, richness and complexity...an understanding that engenders appreciation, value and a sense of equality...Absent are efforts to dominate others because the goal is the understanding and appreciation of another's perspective rather than the denigration of it simply because it is different...[participants] enter the interaction with a goal not of converting others to their positions but of sharing what they know, extending one another's ideas, thinking critically about all the ideas offered and coming to an understanding of the subject and of one another...they ask questions and make comments designed not to show the stupidity or error of the perspective presented or to establish

---

<sup>637</sup> Mario de Araujo, 'Liberation for everyone, not just men', in *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Sandy Ruxton (ed.), Great Britain, 2004, p.145

<sup>638</sup> Caroline Meenagh of UNIFEM in interview for this study.

<sup>639</sup> Sally Miller Gearhart, 'The Womanization of Rhetoric' in *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, vol. 2, pp195-201, 1992, p.195 and p. 201

themselves as more powerful or expert than the [other]. Instead, their equations and suggestions are aimed at leaning more about each [other's] ideas, understanding them more thoroughly, nurturing them and offering additional ways of thinking about the subject for everyone involved in the interaction.<sup>640</sup>

A model for such communication – consultation - was presented in chapter five above, where it was described as both ‘a set of spiritual qualities, attitudes, abilities, and skills, as well as rules and procedures, that allow for the frank and sincere expression of every opinion and for joint exploration of possibilities in order to reach consensus and a common decision,’<sup>641</sup> and ‘group action-reflection; [an] exploration of reality, experimentation, deliberation on concrete directions of activity as well as the principles and concepts that must guide it; [a] raising [of] the level of awareness, community self-diagnosis and self-education.’<sup>642</sup>

The highly successful UNIFEM-funded project initiated in Malaysia, Bolivia and Cameroon, illustrated the importance, and power of beginning an intervention with attention to communication skills. In each country, the project began with training sessions to help local volunteers build on their own experiences in community building. The first part of this involved study of the principles of consultation in order to help “teach respect for the opinions of others”.<sup>643</sup>

The development in Timorese men of the skills of consultation would contribute, in a variety of ways, to their engagement with gender equality, and interventions may well have deeper and more lasting effects if due regard were regularly given to this foundation block for transformation. Sally Miller Gearhart, quoted above, describes the shift from an

---

<sup>640</sup> Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin, ‘Beyond persuasion: A proposal for an invitational rhetoric’, *Communication Monographs*, vol 62, pp2-18, March, 1995, pp5-6,8

<sup>641</sup> Farzam Arbab, ‘The Process of Social Transformation’, in *The Bahá’í Faith and Marxism: Proceedings Of A Conference Held January 1986*, Association for Bahá’í Studies (ed.), Ottawa, 1987, pp9-20

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>643</sup> Bahá’í Topics, an information source. ‘UNIFEM/Bahá’í Project Raises Community Consciousness’, 1993, Available from: <http://info.Bahá’í.org/article-1-7-6-14.html>. Accessed October 7 2006.

adversarial and aggressive model of communication to a consultative model as the 'womanization of rhetoric' as she argues that this model derives from a feminist interest 'in atmosphere, in listening, in receiving, in a collective rather than in a competitive mode.'<sup>644</sup> This adds weight to the suggestion that 'exposure to feminism in action' might be an important approach to engaging East Timorese men in gender equality.

## **10.9 Development of capacity for reflection**

One of the significant findings that emerged from my fieldwork was that the critical and common factor distinguishing more gender-equitable men from others is a capacity for and tendency toward independent thinking, critical evaluation, and reflection on experiences in their homes and communities.

And yet the cultivation of these habits and capacities receive little direct or overt attention in interventions targeting East Timorese men in gender equality. It may be assumed that the provision of new information, or exposure to new ideas may of its own accord stimulate reflection and culminate in change. However, another finding of this study has been that 'providing information about gender equality, or about national and international laws' is not sufficient to 'influence men's thoughts, words and actions'.

The finding that critical reflection is an essential factor in East Timorese men's active engagement with equality, is reinforced by similar findings in other countries. For some interventions stimulating reflection is the sole objective. For example, in schools in Brazil fathers, mothers and children were divided into separate groups and asked to draw life-size pictures of a father with children. The drawings, which were then displayed in a huge exhibition, served as an expression of men's relationships and provided stimulus for reflection.<sup>645</sup>

The discussion, in chapter seven, of a culture of contest, revealed that one of the ways in which culturally and socially constructed understandings of the appropriate relationship

---

<sup>644</sup> Sally Miller Gearhart, 'The Womanization of Rhetoric' in *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, vol. 2, pp195-201, 1992, p. 201

<sup>645</sup> Benno de Keijzer, 'Masculinities', p. 42

between groups of people – whether it be between various groups of men, or between men and women – are maintained is through the process of naturalization whereby alternative ways of being are rendered invisible:

It is often difficult to step outside of a discursive universe that you have been born and raised in. It is difficult to imagine what the world might look like outside it. Moreover it can be difficult even to recognize that you are living in a cultural and historically specific discursive formation at all.<sup>646</sup>

The first step in the reformation of cultural practices then, is the process of “denaturalization” whereby the cultural contingency of such practices are demonstrated and the biological determination of their existence is challenged. This allows recognition of the historical specificity of our cultural environment and to step outside of it, “*if only in our imaginations at first.*”<sup>647</sup> Reflection is the corner stone of the process of denaturalization as it is through reflection that individuals can begin to mentally ‘step outside of’ their usual discursive universe and to make conscious choices about accepting or rejecting aspects thereof.

The primary forum for the support and encouragement of such reflection has proven to be men-only discussion groups, and universally, these groups have shown to be one of the most important tools contributing to real and lasting change.

Men-only discussion groups provide a platform for men to express themselves<sup>648</sup> and create space for men to become “comfortable and non-defensive in talking about subjects that would place them ‘under fire’ in many mixed groups.”<sup>649</sup> They provide opportunities to talk informally about families, upbringings, and influences, which serve to break down barriers and lead to meaningful and honest sharing.<sup>650</sup> They provide the development of supportive and non-competitive environments, which allow men to begin to shift their

---

<sup>646</sup> Michael Karlberg, *Culture of Contest*, p.21

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.* p.22 (emphasis added by ML)

<sup>648</sup> Gaetane Le Grange, ‘Taking the bull...’, p. 111

<sup>649</sup> Janet Brown, ‘Fatherwork’, p. 126

<sup>650</sup> Maree Keating, ‘The things they don’t tell you’, p.53

relationships with other men, and challenge patriarchy. Men-only group discussions provide a forum for men, in the company of other men, to express their dissatisfaction and concern about the roles and expectations they face as men.<sup>651</sup> In the absence of women they feel freer to explore more fully their personal perspectives issues such as relationships, children, and the media, which influence their understanding and commitment to gender equality.<sup>652</sup>

For example Salud y Género working with men as fathers, has found that some of the most “intense and interesting workshop experiences” have arisen when time and openness have allowed male workshop participants opportunity to discuss their childhood and the way that has impacted on their understanding of fatherhood. Similarly male Oxfam staff “strongly recommended” that opportunity be provided for regular informal and open dialogues on gender issues, with a particular focus on the way gender issues pertain to their personal and family lives. Such dialogues provide opportunity for male staff to “challenge [them]selves in supportive environments”.<sup>653</sup>

The results of my fieldwork, then, reveal the importance, as discussed above, of encouraging reflection among men regarding gender relations, and work worldwide has shown that one of the most powerful tools for promoting reflection is the use of men-only discussion groups. In the context of East Timor – one of the poorest countries in the world – the appeal of men-only discussion groups is increased by virtue of the fact that such groups can be established and maintained at little or no cost, and can be equally accessible to boys and men in both urban and rural settings.

One limiting factor with regard to this approach is linked to the importance of quality facilitators to the effectiveness of the discussion groups. Work in other parts of the world has shown that despite their often unstructured and informal nature, quality facilitation is

---

<sup>651</sup> Manisha Mehta, Dean Peacock, and Lisette Bernal, ‘Men as Partners: lessons learned from engaging men in clinics and communities’, in *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Sandy Ruxton (ed.), Great Britain, 2004, p. 95

<sup>652</sup> Michael Kaufman, ‘Transforming our interventions’. p.15

<sup>653</sup> Michael Kaufman, ‘Transforming our interventions’, p. 26



important for these groups. The facilitator must present the topic for discussion in a meaningful way as well as maintain a “safe” environment throughout the discussion<sup>654</sup>. The shortage of East Timorese men who possess the skills to ensure quality facilitation means that time, energy, and possibly funding would be required in order to promote this approach to engaging men in gender equality in East Timor.

### **10.10 Development of alternative masculinities**

The importance of identifying current masculinities and assisting men to construct and adopt alternative masculinities, is revealed through work worldwide and within East Timor. Bob Pease argues that “[e]stablishing a theoretical basis for discerning ... different masculinities and their different implications for the oppression of women allows for a more realistic base for the political strategy of recreating men.”<sup>655</sup>

Comprehensive research has not yet been undertaken which provides authoritative definitions or descriptions of East Timorese masculinities. The findings of this study provide some glimpses of the hegemonic masculinity in East Timor through mirthful audience responses to *Kuda Talin*’s graphic portrayal of a man beating his wife to death; critical and occasionally violent responses to Bibi Bulak’s anti-domestic violence theatre; and unsympathetic responses to the establishment of AKMV. The recent outbreak of violent conflict among men in East Timor also provides information in this regard. However the systematic study of East Timorese masculinities remains an area requiring much attention.

The study of masculinities has been foundational with respect to much of the progress made in other parts of the world with regard to engaging men in gender equality. An understanding of the way many American men have contradictory experiences of power and the ways in which this contributes to a ‘crisis of masculinity’, for example, has

---

<sup>654</sup> Maree Keating, ‘The things they don’t tell you’, p.56

<sup>655</sup> Bob Pease, *Recreating Men: Postmodern Masculinity Politic*, Great Britain, 2000, p.39

guided the practice of pro-feminist men seeking to engage others in the promotion of gender equality.

As one scholar and activist in this area writes:

On the one hand, it is widely acknowledged that men dominate most forms of organizational, institutional and social power, thus constituting men's gender power. On the other hand many men experience feelings of personal disempowerment. While for some men this may be a reflection of their position in class or race hierarchies, for others it is a recognition that their social or institutionalized power may not always correlate with their experience as individual men and their *feelings* of powerfulness.<sup>656</sup>

Similarly feminist Susan Faludi spent many weeks as an observer in a group for male perpetrators of domestic violence. The group facilitators were striving to get the men to recognize themselves as dominators and to take ownership of their violence. She writes however that there "was something almost absurd about these men struggling, week after week, to recognize themselves as dominators when they were so clearly dominated, done in by the world." One of the participants, an unemployed engineer, told the counsellors: "'That 'wheel' [the Power and Control Wheel] is misnamed...It should be called the Powerlessness and Out-of-Control Wheel.'" <sup>657</sup>

And so there is conflict between the power that men-as-a-group, or male-dominated institutions have and the powerlessness that individual men feel in their daily lives. Complaints that men just 'don't want to give up the reins of power' would seem to have little applicability to the situations of most men, who individually feel "not the reins of power in their hands but its bit in their mouths."<sup>658</sup>

---

<sup>656</sup> Bob Pease, *Recreating Men* p 9

<sup>657</sup> Susan Faludi, *Stiffed*, pp. 8-9

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.* p.41

These contradictory experiences of power have contributed to a 'crisis of masculinity' - a widespread confusion over the meaning of manhood.<sup>659</sup>

This confusion and the impact of the 'crisis' is not limited to the United States. Research and practice in South America, Japan, the Middle East, and Southern Africa, have revealed the same relationship among men's contradictory experiences of power, the 'crisis' of masculinities, and men's violence against women, other men, and themselves. The universality of these findings suggests that work with East Timorese men would be strengthened by sustained and intensive attention to the development and maintenance of masculinities within East Timor.

One of the causes and effects of the crisis of masculinities, which has particular significance in an East Timorese context is that of shame which Dr James Gilligan regards as "the primary or ultimate cause of all violence". The purpose of violence, he argues, is "to diminish the intensity of shame and replace it as far as possible with its opposite, pride, thus preventing the individual from being overwhelmed by the feeling of shame." According to Gilligan, sources of male shame often include downward social mobility, unemployment, dependency and "the suspicion that the world discredits your claim to manhood, finds it useless, even risible." Violence in this context is "a reaction to being caught out, exposed as weak and insufficient."<sup>660</sup> Michael Kaufman concurs:

The personal insecurities conferred by a failure to make the masculine grade, or simply the threat of failure, is enough to propel many men, particularly when they are young, into a vortex of fear, isolation, anger, self-punishment, self-hatred and aggression. Within such an emotional state, violence becomes a *compensatory mechanism*.<sup>661</sup>

Given the high level of violence in East Timorese society (manifest both in the current high-profile violent conflict and in the resolution of various interpersonal conflicts through recourse to violence) and the impoverished state of the nation, this analysis of the relationship among masculinities, shame and violence is of particular interest for those seeking to engage East Timorese men in gender equality.

---

<sup>659</sup> Michael Kimmel, 'Introduction' in *The Politics of Manhood: Profeminist Men Respond to the Mythopoetic Men's Movement (and Mythopoetic Leaders Answer)*, Michael Kimmel (ed.), Philadelphia, 1995, p.16

<sup>660</sup> James Gilligan, *Violence*, New York, 1996, p.64

<sup>661</sup> Michael Kaufman, *The White Ribbon Campaign*, p.39 (emphasis in original)

By giving due regard to exploring, articulating, acknowledging and challenging current masculinities and masculine ideals within East Timor, the way will be opened for men to identify the ways these ideals impact negatively on themselves, their families and communities, and subsequently alternative, more positive, masculine identities will be able to emerge organically from within them.

### **10.11 Participatory Development**

Participation by grassroots peoples in development projects aimed at improving their situation, is important and is increasingly recognized as such by development practitioners and agencies worldwide. The meaning of participation however is open to a variety of interpretations.

On many occasions in the course of conducting my fieldwork I helped facilitate or interpret for workshops and trainings attended by unwilling male participants. These men were often obliged to attend gender-related workshops as part of another training (for example police cadets training at the Police Academy) or because their superiors had instructed them to (for example staff at the Ministry of Transport). Not only did their lack of desire to attend impact on their own learning, it often impacted on the rest of the participants and the overall effectiveness of the trainings.

The experience from interventions worldwide has been that men who participate in interventions as an obligation, or because they are required to by another person or institution, are more likely to drop out and less likely to benefit from the intervention.<sup>662</sup> It is then, a basic requirement that men involved in interventions desire to participate.

However, the active and willing engagement by East Timorese men in interventions prepared by others does not constitute 'participatory development'. Even projects that seek participants' involvement in the detection of needs and the formulation of plans; contribution in labour and kind; and feedback on aspects of the interventions, do not

---

<sup>662</sup> Benno de Keijzer, 'Masculinities: resistance and change' in *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Sandy Ruxton (ed.), Great Britain, 2004, p. 38

necessarily constitute true participatory development. Participation must be examined 'within the context of the institutional capacities of a people and the organization of their common learning...'.<sup>663</sup>

How could a rural people claim to be in charge of their own development if they had no access to knowledge so easily available to other sectors, if they did not learn systematically from their own experiences, and if they did not participate in the generation, as well as the application, of knowledge accumulated at a global level?... People require more than skills to share in development; manuals that transfer know-how ...are based on the assumption that decisions relating to rural development will always be made outside the region.<sup>664</sup>

Thus access to knowledge and participation in its generation is one of the most important elements of the process of development. In East Timor, participatory approaches to social development, particularly in the area of men and gender equality, are yet to be instigated. There are some examples from other parts of the world that can guide the development of this approach to promoting gender-related social change.

Among projects implemented by the Bahá'í community in various countries are good examples of projects that generated community ownership and effected lasting change in gender relations at the community level. One set of such projects sought to involve villagers in analysis of their own problems. Participants in the projects were trained in the use of analytic tools such as focus groups and community surveys, as well as in consultation. The analysis was then given direction "by stressing the importance of a positive moral principle, ... the equality of women and men." The community members themselves then promoted change and consolidated community ownership by communicating the results of the analysis through the non-threatening media of traditional theatre, song, and dance.<sup>665</sup>

---

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>664</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>665</sup> Bahá'í Topics, an information source, 'UNIFEM/Bahá'í Project Raises Community Consciousness', 1993, available from: <http://info.Bahá'í.org/article-1-7-6-14.html>, accessed October 7

Approaches which are truly participatory, where East Timorese men are engaged in the generation and sharing of knowledge and skills to further the process of the advancement of gender equality, through efficient and locally developed institutional processes, will require significant changes to the current quick-fix and product-focused donor-driven approaches to social development in East Timor.

## **Chapter ELEVEN: Conclusion**

### **11.1 Introduction**

This study has sought an answer to the question: How can the process of engaging East Timorese men as active and willing agents in the establishment of equality best be advanced? To guide me to an answer to this question I sought answers to two secondary questions. Namely: What knowledge and experience has been gained both globally and nationally, and in terms of both practice and theory, with regards to engaging men as active and willing participants in the process of establishing equality? And, what do the Bahá'í Teachings have to contribute to an understanding of gender equality and men's participation in achieving it, and to effective interventions for social development?

The processes by which I sought this information were various. I perused a wide array of literature both secular and Bahá'í, feminist and non-feminist, published and unpublished, in English and in Tetum, in order to locate the issue of engaging East Timorese men in gender equality within its national and international context. Through this means I also sought to gain a deep understanding of Bahá'í approaches to social and economic development, and analyses of theory pertaining to masculinities and to the culture of contest in which men's identities are formed. I drew on a variety of development-focused literature as well as personal correspondence with individuals in the field in order to learn what practical interventions were being implemented worldwide and what level of success they were enjoying.

In order to gain a deeper knowledge of the socio-historical and cultural environment in which East Timorese men are being socialised and making choices, I resided in East Timor for nearly four years, and engaged in ethnographic research. To achieve the aforementioned goal as well as to learn as much as possible about formal and informal, deliberate and accidental processes by which some East Timorese men acquire more gender-equitable attitudes, I utilised three primary techniques: semi-structured interviews; participant observation; and document analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual “gender-equitable” Timorese men; Timorese men and women engaged in men and gender equality issues as part of their work; and expatriate women engaged in men and gender equality issues as part of their work. The participant observation was multi-faceted and included engagement in relevant paid work; attendance at various conferences, congresses, seminars and other meetings and significant events; access to local media; and development of personal relationships. Documents analysed included both primary and secondary documents in the form of reports produced by UN agencies, the World Bank and other international organizations; unpublished CAVR files and published documents including the formal and popular versions of the final report; bulletins, newsletters, magazines and public reports from national and international non-governmental organizations; local newspapers in Tetum and the weekly English-language newspaper; transcripts of speeches made on diverse occasions in a wide variety of settings; historical and popular Timorese songs; activity reports from the Association of Men Against Violence; books; journals; and articles on websites.

As a result of the fieldwork I was able to identify the primary interventions used in East Timor to engage men in gender equality, and to explore some of their respective strengths and weaknesses. As a result of the literature-based research I was able to combine knowledge of practical interventions in East Timor with practical and theoretical knowledge from other parts of the world, both of which were essential in order to contribute to the advancement how the process underway could be further advanced from its current position.

## **11.2 Development of current interventions**

As social development is necessarily an organic and evolutionary process an important part of advancing the process of engaging East Timorese men as active and willing agents in the establishment of equality will involve building on approaches and processes



already underway in East Timor. These include workshops and trainings; use of the arts; role modelling; the establishment of pro-feminist men organizations and networks; campaigns and the mass media.

In order to better serve the goal of engaging East Timorese men in gender equality workshops and trainings the core group of highly skilled Timorese gender trainers and Tetum-speaking acculturised ex-patriate gender trainers will need to expand. High-quality gender-training materials developed within East Timor for use with East Timorese boys and men will need to be increased and more widely distributed. Greater understanding will need to be generated regarding the lengthy process involved in becoming a good workshop facilitator and the number of poor quality trainings will need to be curbed.

The use of the arts should be broadened and deepened resulting in an increase in the use of dance, drama, and music to promote men's engagement in gender equality, and an increase in the forms of art utilized to this end. The art forms can include soap operas, televised debates, documentaries, movies, radio shows, cartoons, books and comics, and photography. Particular attention should be given to the use of radio melodramas as wind-up radios are available for areas without electricity and this medium is accessible to non-literate populations.

Messages promoted through the use of the arts should be positive and solution focused in order to minimize the risk of inappropriate audience responses reinforcing the negative message. They should give due respect to community elders and traditional understandings of gender relations, and where these beliefs are initially an impediment to change, seek gradual and organic change.

As individuals at the local, district, regional and national level who have the qualities and commitment to become positive role models to other boys and men emerge, their power to influence others should be capitalized on. At the same time leaders in the communities at the various levels can be recipients of particular attention and education in order to develop their understanding of and appreciation for the value of gender equality.

Pro-feminist male organizations should be generated at the various levels of East Timorese community, or alternatively the Association of Men Against Violence can expand to serve as a mother organization and coordinate an increased number of regional, district and local branches. These organizations, or the branches of AMKV should work together as a network to coordinate efforts and share knowledge and skills. Campaigns and the use of the mass media to reach large populations with key messages should continue. Greater attention should be given to ensuring messages are presented positively and in ways that engage men as partners, rather than in ways that alienate them as perpetrators of gender-based discrimination and violence.

### **11.3 New Framework for Interventions**

While each of the interventions referred to above can contribute to positive change, the engagement of East Timorese men in gender equality, would benefit from the implementation of a more holistic approach to social development than is currently being applied. The implications of this include approaching participants as spiritual beings who are guided by their religious and traditional teachings, rather than as primarily material beings guided by the materialistic values of the West. Interventions that truly value the whole human being and his belief system will neither ignore nor suppress the important issues that arise for East Timorese men as they grapple with greater gender equality in the context of such a belief system.

A more holistic approach to the engagement of East Timorese men in gender equality will involve recognition of the fact that a fundamental building block of all human relations is communication. Subsequently attention will be paid to the ways in which men communicate with other men, with women, and with children, and efforts to improve these interactions will be central to work that is seeking to promote gender equality. Specifically the art of consultation will be offered as a model and a tool to facilitate communication within families, communities, and at the national level.

Due attention will need to be given to the capacity of boys and men for critical reflection. The primary tool to develop this capacity could be the establishment of well-facilitated men-only discussion groups throughout East Timor which would provide East Timorese men the opportunity to discuss aspects of their masculinity and culture which might otherwise remain unaddressed.

In order for efforts to engage East Timorese men in gender equality to create lasting change and to be sustainable there will need to be a significant change in the way participatory development is understood. East Timorese men should not be mere recipients of the opinions and knowledge of others. Rather they must participate in the generation, documentation and distribution of knowledge about gender equality. Interventions should not teach specific messages so much as engage participants in an educational process some of the results of which are an ability to use the tools of analysis, principle identification, and application of learning.

## **11.4 Gaps**

In order for these processes to move forward there are many areas that will need further attention from future researchers and development practitioners. There is a great need for in depth research on East Timorese masculinities for an understanding of how masculinities are constructed within a given culture is foundational to working toward change.<sup>666</sup> It will be important that East Timorese men are actively involved in such research, rather than being passive recipients of information gathered and interpreted by an outsider.

Future research could seek to identify hegemonic masculinities within East Timor; variations across generations; variations between rural and urban dwelling men; variations among regions of the country and so on.

---

<sup>666</sup>Benno De Keijzer, 'Masculinities: resistance and change' in *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Sandy Ruxton (ed.), United Kingdom, p.29

This new theory could then contribute to efforts to build on strengths within current masculinities and to develop them toward, healthier, more gender-equitable masculinities. Pro-feminist scholars in other parts of the world have suggested a number of alternative masculinities that could be cultivated and promoted, including pro-feminist masculinities, and liberated masculinities. I suggest that an interesting direction for further exploration would be the cultivation of service-oriented masculinities.

One example of a service-oriented masculinity, which could serve as a model for adaptation within East Timor is that of the Black South African surf lifesavers serving at the Thekwini Surf Lifesaving Club, for whom lifesaving is at once a sport, a community service, and an occupation. For these young men surf-lifesaving provides its own rites of passage – tests at different levels, seasonal work and entry into full-time employment.<sup>667</sup> It creates the possibility for men to “explore a sense of masculine dignity and autonomy” through service and provides an escape from the tough, divisive, misogynistic masculinities that dominate their hometowns.

Asked to identify values important to them, African surf-lifesavers articulated that men should be patient, forbearing, long-suffering, genuine, sincere and proud. He should trust himself, be self-confident, and be able to take care of himself and his body.<sup>668</sup> This compares favourably with traditionally hegemonic South African masculinities, which emphasize violence, heterosexual activity and dominance over all women and some men.<sup>669</sup> This service-oriented masculinity would also compare favourably with the dominant masculinities of East Timor.

One aspect of engaging men in gender equality that urgently requires attention, both within East Timor and worldwide, is the development and application of tools for systematic evaluation of interventions and development processes. These tools are crucial to ensure the constant advancement of the process of engaging men in gender equality.

---

<sup>667</sup> Crispin Hemson, ‘*Ukubekhezela or Ukuzithemba: African Lifesavers in Durban*’ in *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, Robert Morrell (ed.), South Africa, 2001, p.57

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid.* p.64

<sup>669</sup> Robert Morrell, *The Times of Change*, p. 22

The development of tools and processes for systematic evaluation could be linked to specific interventions or approaches, or could serve as the means for systematic measuring of change, unbound to any particular intervention.

Systematic evaluation necessitates the articulation of clear objectives and goals. These goals need not be numerical. They can be qualitative yet clearly defined– such as the kind of goals one might develop when implementing an intervention guided by the principle of true participatory development articulated above.

The systematization of evaluation in this area would allow for the systematization of learning nationwide. It would facilitate replication of successful aspects of interventions while providing for the modification of aspects requiring change. In line with the practical and theoretical issues presented in this study it would be particularly timely for the development of tools and processes of evaluation that are guided by and based on spiritual indicators.

Two well-researched approaches to evaluation developed outside of East Timor include Oxfam's approach to evaluation, and the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) scale, initially developed in Latin America.

The Oxfam impact assessment includes self-assessment by frontline staff, peer review, and formal evaluations. Project impact is judged against five criteria: “ impact on the lives of poor women, men, and children; ...degree of their involvement; changes in policies, practices, ideas and beliefs...; contribution of the project towards enhanced gender equity; and its likely sustainability.”<sup>670</sup>

Four indicators are used to assess progress toward gender equity: “more equal

---

<sup>670</sup> James Lang, 'Gender Is Everyone's Business'.

participation in decision making processes; more equal access to and control over resources; reduction in gender stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes towards women and girls; and [a reduction] in gender-related violence.

Other identified indicators that could be used to measure change, included an increase in men's ownership of unpaid work; an increase in women's decision making and leadership; a decrease in male violence; equal pay for the same work; and equal treatment of daughters and sons.<sup>671</sup>

The Gender Equitable Men (GEM) scale was developed from baseline research carried out within the target populations. As a result of this research, four characteristics of 'more gender-equitable young men' were identified. These characteristics were observed in some young men in the target communities and came to serve as the benchmark to ensure that the evaluation model was "grounded in the real life behaviours and attitudes of young men, and not in an idealised or theoretical idea of ...gender equitable behaviours and attitudes...". Additionally, in identifying desired outcomes the creators of the GEM scale drew on: ongoing discussions with a group of young men who served as peer promoters and advisors; conversations with women in the communities; and international human rights and women's rights declarations and conventions.

As a result, Program H sought to encourage young men to: "seek relationships with women based on equality and intimacy rather than sexual conquest"; "seek to be involved fathers... meaning ... take both financial and at least some care giving responsibility for their children"; "assume some responsibility for reproductive health and disease prevention issues"; and "oppose violence against women".

These four desired outcomes were used to develop indicators in the form of a scale of attitude questions.<sup>672</sup> Thus the GEM Scale came to consist of 35 questions related to:

---

<sup>671</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>672</sup> This scale was one part of the evaluation which also included interviews and discussions with group facilitators, young male participants, girlfriends of the male participants, public health staff and other professionals working with the youth.

“gender roles in the home and child care-giving”; “gender roles in sexual relationships”; “shared responsibility for reproductive health and disease prevention”; “intimate partner violence”; and “homosexuality and close relationships with other men”.

The Oxfam approach to evaluation and the GEM scale may serve as models for the development of East Timor specific evaluations or an entirely new model could be developed within an East Timorese context.

One of the advantages of the development of more systematic means of evaluating approaches to engaging men in gender equality is that it would encourage better documentation of work in this area and facilitate the exchange of information among various individuals, groups and agencies occupied with this aspect of development. The systematic documentation and exchange of information is an important area requiring further development. Within East Timor there are several models in place for such sharing, which could be adopted by those working to engage men in gender equality. Within the last six years two national women’s congresses have been held, the second of which (in 2004) was preceded by a series of regional congresses in rural parts of East Timor. The 2004 national congress was attended by 20 delegates from each of the 13 districts of East Timor. As a result of these congresses many valuable opportunities arose. The voices of rural and isolated women were heard at the regional and national level; rural and isolated women were exposed to information, ideas, and to the visible existence of a national sisterhood; women from diverse groups and regions were able to exchange ideas and experiences, to identify priorities for further action, and to make united commitments to common goals.

This model for the sharing of information, experiences, ideas, and for the establishment of goals and priorities at the regional and national levels could be applied to the issue of the engagement of men in gender equality. Necessarily on a smaller scale in the immediate term, men and women involved in engaging men in gender equality could gather at regular intervals to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and skills, to coordinate work and to establish common goals and priorities. In line with the principles identified

in this study it is highly important that such exchanges not be commandeered by expatriate development workers in East Timor, as has been the tendency in many conferences on various themes held in Dili. International development workers and other non East Timorese who might attend such gatherings should be present as 'learners' rather than as 'experts'.

Another model for the systematic exchange of learning about the engagement of men in gender equality is that of Rede Feto. Rede Feto – or Women's Network – is an umbrella organization that serves to link women- and gender-focused organizations within East Timor. The Association of Men Against Violence could potentially evolve to function as a kind of hub for a network of individuals and organizations occupied with men and gender equality. (These could include some of the organizations who are already members of Rede Feto.) This central agency – whether AKMV or a new separate agency could coordinate the systematisation of resources, referrals, materials for education, conferences, congresses, seminars and so on. An area that is directly linked to the issue of systematic exchange of information and learning and one that requires much attention, is systematic documentation of learning.

## **11.5 Conclusion**

The process of engaging East Timorese men in gender equality is at its beginning stages. However structures and processes are underway to advance this process. Current structures and processes must be built upon. Additionally the vision of those engaged with this work must be expanded so that interventions become more holistic and contribute to lasting and sustainable change. Further research to develop a more solid theory base, as well as more systematic documentation, evaluation and sharing of knowledge and experience will also be crucial to the advancement of the process of engaging East Timorese men in gender equality.