

**Engaging East Timorese men
in the process of establishing gender equality**

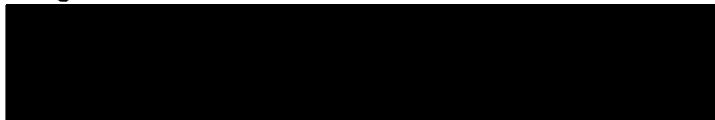
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I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

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Abstract

The equality of women and men is a prerequisite for peace. Social development interventions over recent decades have sought to achieve equality primarily by educating and liberating women from the shackles of customs and paradigms that serve to maintain gender inequality. It is increasingly recognized that due attention must be given to men's essential role in the process, to men's education and liberation. In East Timor the latter process has begun, albeit on a small scale. This study looks at ways to further advance this process.

Three and a half years in East Timor provided the opportunity to engage in applied research using the methodology of ethnography. I gathered data using three main techniques: semi-structured interviews with more gender-equitable men, and with women and men occupied with the engagement of East Timorese men in gender equality; observation and direct participation within a wide range of settings from informal encounters on local beaches to high-level meetings with the president and government ministers; and analysis of pertinent primary and secondary documents. I identified that a number of interventions are being applied to the issue of engaging East Timorese men in gender equality, including use of: workshops and trainings; the performing arts; campaigns and the mass media; role-modeling; and the techniques of popular education, with varying levels of success. I found that the Association of Men Against Violence and its members are key players in the advancement of this process, and that they work closely with feminist organizations within East Timor.

While I drew on much secular theory and practice in the course of this study, my personal beliefs and practices are guided by the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. The Bahá'í teachings include much that is relevant to this study and thus I have drawn on and presented Bahá'í perspectives and approaches to such things as equality and men's role in its establishment; social and economic development; and the culture of contest, and have drawn on Bahá'í principles in the discussion of results; and subsequently in drawing my conclusions.

By exploring the implications of interventions implemented in other parts of the world, and of theory pertaining to social development; masculinities; and a culture of contest, I identified that interventions in East Timor to engage men in gender equality would be strengthened by giving due consideration to the following: developing participants' ability to communicate; providing opportunity for and developing the capacity of participants to critically reflect on their environment; addressing participants as whole human beings and members of one human race; and actively engaging participants in the development and ownership of knowledge.

I concluded that three areas requiring immediate attention include the development of evaluation tools and processes, and the systematic documentation and sharing of learning, as well as research into masculinities in an East Timorese context.

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I dedicate this work to four precious handmaidens of Bahá'u'lláh with abiding love:

To my sister Penny of whose strength, courage, detachment and commitment to truth and justice I live in constant awe.

To Elizabeth my biological and spiritual mother, example, guide, refuge and fount of love.

To my daughters Elizabeth and Skye-Marie, my joy, my jewels, my precious trusts from God. May this work contribute in its tiny way to a better world for them, and for those who may follow them.

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Noble have I created thee,
yet thou hast abased thyself.
Rise then unto that for which
thou wast created.

Bahá'u'lláh

Gender equality without men and boys is in
fact like a skeleton without a spine.

Mebrak Tareke