

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

CHAPTER ONE Introduction

1.1 The question

This study explores what has been, is being and could be done to engage East Timorese men and boys as active and willing participants in the process of establishing and maintaining equality between women and men. The primary purpose of the study is to identify what practical approaches to this issue have proven successful in East Timor, and could thus be built upon, and what approaches have proven successful in parts of the world other than East Timor and could potentially be of value in an East Timorese context. Directly linked with the above purpose is the exploration of theoretical considerations underlying both the problem of men's limited involvement in the process of establishing equality, and the proposed solutions to that problem.

Originally the objective of this study was to implement some approaches to engaging men and boys in equality issues in East Timor and evaluate the effectiveness of those approaches. In the preliminary research however I came to realize two things. One is that the process of engaging East Timorese men in gender equality is already underway. The other was that as a white western woman it would not be appropriate for me to be engaging directly in interventions with East Timorese boys and men on the topic of gender equality. Thus, the focus of the study changed and, in a sense, expanded. The goal became to gather information about what has been done and is being done in East Timor and, having given systematic and comprehensive consideration to likeminded initiatives worldwide and relevant theoretical perspectives explore and make recommendations as to how this process can best be advanced. Thus the overarching question posed by this study is: How can the process of engaging East Timorese men as active and willing agents in the establishment of equality best be advanced?

In order to answer that question I have asked:

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?

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?

1.2 Significance and limitations of the study

An article by Nikki van der Gaag in the November 2004 issue of *The New Internationalist* listed some of the achievements of the global women's movement stating that

Today, more [women] are working, more girls are being educated, women are living longer and having fewer children, there are more females in business and in politics. The laws on personal relationships have improved: there is legislation against domestic violence, in some countries there are more liberal marriage laws, and in others, same-sex relationships are now recognized in law. In six African countries, female genital cutting has been outlawed.

And just as importantly, women around the world now know they have rights. Some 6,000 attended the first UN women's conference in Mexico in 1975; 20 years later 30,000 went to Beijing. And these were only a fraction of the women who had been organizing...

Women have achieved so much.¹

She then goes on to note, however, that the "brutal facts remain"²:

¹ Nikki van der Gaag, 'What women have gained in the fight for equality with men- and what they are in danger of losing', *The New Internationalist*, November 2004, p. 10

² *Ibid.* p. 10

The vast majority of the world's women still have very little power, at work, in their relationship at home, or in the wider world...

Worldwide, 70 per cent of those living in poverty are women, as are two-thirds of illiterate adults. One in four women is beaten by her husband or partner. Every day, 1,300 still die unnecessarily in childbirth or during pregnancy.

In addition, the article notes that many of the rights already won are in danger of being "slowly, silently and inexorably clawed back."

Nikki van der Gaag presents a range of reasons for the limited and insecure advances in the process of establishing equality. But it is in her final paragraphs that she mentions what I believe to be the key when she says

...we are at a turning point. Either the steady drip drip of the rightwing, anti-woman agenda continues, or both women and men take cognizance of what is happening to women around the world, and ensure that all women, everywhere have a better future. Which will make the future better for men too. Such a future is possible. But it will take courageous people to achieve it.³

Moving from inequality between women and men to equality is a process the cornerstone of which is not transformative changes in women alone, but rather transformative changes in the relationship between women and men. So long as only one party to that relationship is engaged in transformation it is doomed to failure. Hence efforts to advance equality must consider men not as difficulties to be feared, fought or ignored, but rather as crucial, potentially powerfully, positive players in the process.

Furthermore, recent events in East Timor, occurring during the final stages of this work, proclaim unequivocally the need for a study such as this. A country recently celebrating its emergence from an unjust and brutally violent 25-year occupation, finds itself on the brink of civil war. Men who until recently banded together to defend their nation, now

³ *Ibid.* p.12

seek to destroy each other's property, violate each other's families, and take each other's lives.

Despite the scant attention paid to the fact, it is of the utmost significance, that *male* members of the communities are engaging in this violence and in the destabilisation of the newest nation on earth. In our efforts to curb and prevent this destruction serious attention must increasingly be given to the ways East Timorese men define themselves as men, to the ways in which they engage with women, and with gender equality.

The truth of the statement contained in *The Promise of World Peace* is now widely recognised:

The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavour will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge.⁴

In order to achieve peace within East Timor, we must achieve 'full equality between the sexes'. In order to achieve full equality between the sexes men must be involved as active and willing participants in a long, challenging and complex process. In order for men to involve themselves in this process, approaches must be developed which successfully engage them in gender equality and related issues. It is the objective of this study to make a contribution to the process of the development of approaches which successfully engage East Timorese men in gender equality and related issues.

This study is necessarily only a small contribution to a large and lengthy process, a process which is well underway and which will possibly continue for centuries to come.

⁴ The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, 1985 in Bahá'í Topics an information resource. <http://info.Bahá'í.org/article-1-7-2-1.html>, accessed September 28 2006

It cannot consider all relevant theoretical angles nor all potentially relevant practical interventions applied worldwide, or even within the bounds of East Timor. It can seek merely to identify some of the current key ideas and practices and use them to explore possible avenues for building on such ideas and practices.

1.3 Chapter Summaries

The thesis is divided into eleven chapters. In this, the first chapter I introduce the primary and secondary questions to which I have sought answers in the course of this study and provide a summary of each chapter of the thesis. I explain why this study is important and relevant as well as touch upon its limitations. In this opening chapter I also explore the meaning of the word ‘equality’ and define it for the purposes of my research.

Chapter two describes my research journey and explains which methodology I adopted, how I made methodology-related choices and how I implemented them. I briefly explain why I engaged in qualitative and applied research, before going on to present the strengths and weaknesses of ethnography, explain how the assumptions on which ethnography is based suited the goals of my research, and justify my decision not to engage in participatory action research. I describe in detail the various aspects of the processes of conducting semi-structured interviews; observation and direct participation; and document analysis. In conclusion I provide an overview of the process by which I analysed the data.

‘Institutional Support: Global’ is the title of the third chapter. This chapter provides a backdrop to the specific matter of engaging East Timorese men in the process of gender equality. The first half of the chapter provides the Bahá’í perspective on the issue which is important both because the secondary research questions seek Bahá’í perspectives on the issues addressed in this study, and because the Bahá’í Faith offers a global vision, respectful of but not limited by aspects of individual cultures or traditions that may hinder the advancement of humanity.⁵ The second half of the chapter delineates the evolving understanding of, and increasing interest and energy directed toward, the engagement of

⁵ Advancement in this context does not mean merely movement toward technological and economic prosperity but rather true and holistic progress in all areas of life including spiritual and social.

men in equality on the part of the United Nations and related international institutions and processes. Thus this chapter describes the (rapidly developing) global milieu in which the engagement of East Timorese men in equality is located.

Chapter four titled 'Institutional Support: East Timor', explores the current state of affairs on a national level with regard to equality between women and men, and with regard to formal support for the process of engaging men in gender equality. National documents such as East Timor's constitution are considered in light of these issues. A description of women's participation in political bodies and procedures as well as women's status in organizations of civil society is provided. This chapter also looks at the impact of (in)equalities in connection with education and health, violence, paid work, the fight for independence and its aftermath. The final section outlines the meager direct political and institutional support within East Timor for men's engagement in gender equality.

Chapters five through seven explore important theoretical considerations which must inform and underpin practical interventions. The first of these chapters presents an innovative and original understanding of and approach to social and economic development. The chapter begins by redefining development and then goes on to explore Bahá'í approaches to it. It offers an understanding of why so many social and economic development efforts, costing billions of dollars worldwide have failed to substantially and positively impact on the lives they were designed to improve.

Chapter six, the second of the theoretical chapters, explores masculinities. The challenge of defining masculinity/ies is discussed and a working definition for the purposes of this study is proposed. The multiplicity of masculinities is explored as well as the dangers of relativism posed to feminist discourse and action by embracing diverse 'versions' of masculinity. It is acknowledged that in some cultures or locations masculinity may be a concept completely lacking in meaning. Chapter six also considers the 'crisis of masculinities' which is impacting on men in various parts of the world. Causes of and responses to this 'crisis' are explored, as are potential solutions. In this chapter attention is given to the relationship between masculinities and gender-based violence with a

consideration of men's violence against women as an expression of impermissible emotions and of over-compliance with society's norms for males. The final section of the chapter explores the sometimes surprising relationship between sport and the consolidation or subversion of hegemonic masculinities.

Chapter seven – 'Theory underpinning practice: A culture of contest' – continues to explore theoretical considerations with less focus on the individual and more attention to the way culture and society as a whole can impede men's ability to recognize gender inequality or to engage in the active promotion of gender equality. Drawing on Dr Michael Karlberg's framework for understanding culture and cultural forces, this chapter offers a broad definition of culture. It then goes on to look at naturalization: the way we can internalize the values of our culture so completely that we fail to recognize both the influences upon us and that the values we hold are not the only options available. This chapter also provides some terminology for thinking and talking about culture which has practical use in work with men and gender equality as it provides a vocabulary which can be used for discussions of 'invisible' forces.

Chapter seven also offers a new paradigm for understanding 'power' and its various manifestations. A consideration of normative adversarialism follows which looks at the ways many societies – and key parts of East Timorese society - are understood as inherently and inevitably conflictual. This leads to a challenge to the assumption that normative adversarialism is inevitable due to human beings' intrinsically selfish and aggressive nature. This chapter has particular importance to the matter at hand because gender inequality and men's failure to engage with it, in East Timor, is often defended on the basis of 'culture'. Thus efforts to promote change in this area will need to include an analysis of East Timorese culture that is meaningful to the people of the land and that will assist in transforming sexist and destructive behaviours.

Chapters eight and nine explore practical interventions on global and national levels respectively. Chapter eight, titled 'Practical interventions: global', presents some of the knowledge of effective practical interventions acquired over recent decades in diverse

parts of the world. Chapter nine – ‘Practical interventions: East Timor (Data analysis)’ - presents the fruit of my fieldwork in East Timor. It begins by presenting information about ways in which individual East Timorese men have come to value gender equality. The remainder of the chapter presents a range of approaches and interventions that have been applied in East Timor and pertain – directly or indirectly – to the engagement of men in gender equality. These approaches and interventions have met with varying degrees of success. Their strengths and weaknesses are explained in this chapter.

Chapter ten discusses 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 crosscut the various interventions.

Chapter eleven presents my conclusions and 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?”

1.4 Definition of equality

Defining equality is like defining peace. In the midst of violent conflict, the end to that conflict is often termed peace. This state of non-conflict, however, while being a prerequisite in any definition of peace, really represents just the simplest end of a spectrum of definitions of peace, or the very beginning of a process that has as its goal the achievement of much more complex and lasting manifestations of peace. In this way as we advance along the road from violent conflict to a truly united and prosperous society, our understanding of what peace entails and how it can be achieved, develops.

Writing of the implementation of the principle of equality, Bahá’í scholars, Janet and Peter Khan, state

as we move toward the horizon, the horizon moves ahead, and the landscape changes. As time goes by in the journey toward the future, the understanding of the principle of equality, and consequently the way

in which it is practiced, will most likely change. Increased understanding allows [people] to reach enhanced levels of personal transformation and to plan new activities that enable all members of the community to implement the principle of equality more fully on a societal level.⁶

And so, given the complexity of the principle of equality and its application, and the fact that the meaning of equality is something that unfolds as we as individuals and societies, progress in our efforts to manifest it, it would seem that equality is not something that can be defined in a succinct phrase or statement.⁷ Indeed efforts to reduce the definition of equality to single, limited concepts has been a ‘major obstacle to acceptance of the equality of women and men.’ According to Janet and Peter Khan, the failure to define equality in ways that embrace the complexity of the principle has led to the ‘expression of conflicting and hotly contested views, a retreat into sexual stereotypes and the projection of [people’s] worst fears onto the situation.’⁸

From this perspective definitions that try to reduce equality to a single phrase can result in misunderstandings. However these definitions are the tools that many people and groups use to attain a level of common understanding and to define common goals. For this reason a small selection of such definitions is provided below.

The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines equality as the “condition of having equal rank, power, excellence, etc, with others”.⁹ The Gender Glossary of the World Food Program defines gender equality¹⁰ as “an equal sharing of power between women and men, in their equal access to education, health, administrative and managerial positions, equal pay for work of equal value and equal seats in parliament, among others.”¹¹

⁶ Janet Khan and Peter Khan, *Advancement of women: A Bahá’í Perspective*, Wilmette, Illinois, 1998, p.51

⁷ *Ibid.* p.37

⁸ *Ibid.* p.19

⁹ Lesley Brown (ed.) *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford, 1993, p. 841

¹⁰ Throughout this study the terms ‘gender equality’, ‘equality between the sexes’, ‘equality between women and men’ will be used interchangeably.

¹¹ World Food Program, *Gender Glossary*, Rome, (year of publication not written on book), p.31

In the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) equality is defined by a lack of discrimination against women, which is described as the elimination of all distinctions, exclusions or restrictions, that have the intent or effect of denying women's human rights in any field of public or private life.¹² Articles 2-4 of CEDAW also provide a positive definition of equality stating that equality between women and men means that women enjoy the same opportunity, access to opportunity and results as men in all aspects of life.¹³

The Office of Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women defines equality between women and men as

...equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men.¹⁴

For the purposes of this study, approaches that attempt to engage boys and men in the achievement of equality using such definitions of equality as those quoted above have certainly been considered valid and valuable. However, for the purposes of making recommendations for future work in this area in East Timor, I have drawn on a more comprehensive definition of equality. This definition is drawn largely from various primary and secondary writings of the Bahá'í Faith.¹⁵

¹² Division for the Advancement of Women, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) , Article 1, United Nations Department of Public Information, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/history.htm>, accessed 28 September 2006

¹³ *Ibid.* Article 2-4

¹⁴ Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Gender Mainstreaming: Concepts and Definitions, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>, accessed on September 28 2006

¹⁵ The Bahá'í Faith is the youngest of the world's independent religions. It is based on the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892), Who is regarded by Bahá'ís as the most recent in a line of Messengers of God that includes Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, and Muhammad. Bahá'u'lláh taught that there is only one God and one human family, that all religions represent progressive stages in the revelation of God's Will, and that humanity is reaching its long-awaited stage of maturity, when a peaceful and just world order can finally be realized.

From a Bahá'í perspective, equality is a universal spiritual principle the observation of which by all human beings is essential for the prosperity of each individual and society, and for humanity as a whole. This principle, like all of the doctrines, laws, admonitions, and ordinances promulgated by Bahá'u'lláh¹⁶ is part of a program to create unity and solidarity among all the peoples of the world.¹⁷ Thus, equality according to this definition is not something for which unity can be sacrificed. Its cause and its effect are unity.

Understandings of equality that focus on equal rights and responsibilities between women and men have an important place in the Bahá'í definition of equality, as the latter comprises three dimensions: spiritual; psychological, intellectual and moral; and social, economic and legal.¹⁸ However the Bahá'í definition also acknowledges the limitations of this focus and it has been argued that our understanding of equality must now move beyond that of “formal legal equality, emphasizing equal rights and equal treatment”¹⁹ because in spite of the “passage of laws aimed at protecting the rights of women, great injustices and disparity persist...[I]ndividuals can always find alternative means to undermine the laws in their pursuit of domination and oppression over women.”²⁰ We must go beyond the notion of equal opportunity to create societies which, among other things, “systematically and institutionally value both motherhood and the participation of women in public affairs, societies which embody and express both the feminine ‘ethic of care’ and the masculine ‘ethic of rights,’ which strive both to preserve relationships and to promote justice.”²¹

16 Bahá'u'lláh announced in 1863 that He is God's Messenger for this age. His teachings and sacred writings are the basis of the Bahá'í Faith.

17 Loni Bramson Lerche, 'An Element of Divine Justice: The Bahá'í Principle of the Equality of Women and Men' in *Toward the Most Great Justice: Elements of Justice in the New World Order*, ed. Charles O. Lerche, London, 1996, p.75

18 Ibid. p.76

19 Martha Schweitz, 'Bahá'í Law and Principle: Creating Legal and Institutional Structures for Gender Equality' in *The Greatness Which Might Be Theirs*, ed. Bahá'í International Community, Beijing, 1995, chapter five. Also available at <http://www.Bahá'í.org/article-1-7-6-13.html>, accessed October 2 2006

20 Mahmoudi, Hoda, 'Shifting the Balance: The responsibility of men in establishing the equality of women' in *Toward the Most Great Justice: Elements of Justice in the New World Order*, ed. Charles O. Lerche, London, 1996, p.124

21 Schweitz, Institutional Structures, unpaginated.

That is, we must define equality in terms beyond the rhetoric of rights and laws and strive for “the coming together of the minds and hearts of men and women in devotion to the common good, a willingness not only to cooperate, but even more, to sacrifice selfish interests for the happiness of others.”²²

In one sense the injustices girls and women face in the home, in education, in the workplace, in the political arena, and so on, are symptoms of an illness – inequality. If we only address the symptoms we are not necessarily addressing the illness and even if we eliminate the symptoms entirely, new ones will surely appear. For this reason definitions of equality must address values and attitudes. From a Bahá'í perspective, instead of personal power or rank, the highest station for the individual to strive for in life is service to others. Indeed, the very purpose of life is spiritual transformation of the individual and society by internalising spiritual values, such as selfless service and manifesting them in our social interactions.

The values and attitudes essential to equality between women and men have their foundation in the recognition of the oneness of humanity. In the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá equality is achieved when we come to “regard humanity as a single individual and one’s own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest.”²³

I believe that it is towards this understanding of equality that efforts to engage men and boys should ultimately be directed. This study seeks to identify ways in which work to engage men and boys in gender equality can advance the journey from our current position of extreme gender inequality to a society where each one of us truly regards humanity as ‘a single individual and one’s own self as a member of that corporeal form’.

²² Lerche, Principle of Equality, p. 84

²³ Mahmoudi, Responsibility of Men, p.114 citing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, Wilmette, 1990, p.39

CHAPTER TWO Methodology

2.1 Introduction

I arrived in East Timor to live in 2002, just in time to have my life and the life of my youngest daughter seriously threatened by the riots of 4 December. By the time I began my doctorate in August 2003 I had been living there for eight months and was gaining fluency in the most-widely spoken national language – Tetum.

From the outset I was committed to engaging in post-graduate study centred on some aspect of Timorese society related to the well-being and advancement of women. However I was initially undecided about the specific focus of my research. Thus I needed to engage in a process that would lead to the identification of that more specific focus. In the initial stages of this process I drew deeply on the guidance contained in the teachings of my religion as well as seeking the counsel of its institutions. Bahá'u'lláh states that “[k]nowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone.” He clarifies however that “[t]he knowledge of such sciences ... should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words.”²⁴ “The learned of the day,” Bahá'u'lláh stated in the 1880s, “must direct the people to acquire those branches of knowledge which are of use, that both the learned themselves and the generality of mankind may derive benefits therefrom. Such academic pursuits as begin and end in words alone have never been and will never be of any worth.”²⁵

With these counsels in mind, as well as a multitude of teachings about the importance of service to humanity,²⁶ humility²⁷ and other spiritual qualities, I decided to approach

²⁴ Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette, 1988, p. 51

²⁵ *Ibid.* p.169

²⁶ For example: “*My highest wish and desire is that ye who are my children may be educated according to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and may receive a Bahá'í training; that ye may each become a lighted candle in the world of humanity, may be devoted to the service of all mankind, may give up your rest and comfort, so that ye may become the cause of the tranquillity of the world of creation.*” ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*,

various 'women-focused' organizations in Dili to see if there was any - area of study that would be particularly useful to their work.²⁸ Although the people with whom I met gave generously of their time, and were extremely courteous none of them identified to me particular areas of their work that they felt might benefit from research. One organization representative did express enthusiasm when I suggested that I was considering exploring resilience amongst Timorese women²⁹. With hindsight I have a much greater appreciation of how overburdened with responsibilities these people are and how I would have been perceived as a short-term visitor seeking their help, rather than offering to be of service.

I communicated by email with a representative of the appointed arm of the Bahá'í administration – Counsellor Stephen Hall – and with the (elected) supreme governing body, the Universal House of Justice. The latter encouraged my engagement in post-graduate studies in the area of gender equality/advancement of women. The former encouraged me to explore the application of Bahá'í teachings or principles to the broader community.

One of the fundamental principles and goals of the Bahá'í Faith is the equality of women and men. In order to achieve this, the Bahá'í writings teach, it is essential that men participate actively and equally in the processes of establishing equality, and that women and men work together, recognizing that gender-equality is an important social issue impacting the whole of humanity. As I was reading a collection of articles titled *The Greatness Which Might Be Theirs* I learned of a highly successful and very inspiring

Southampton, Great Britain, 1978 p. 141 ; "You must in this instance (that is, service to humanity) sacrifice your lives, and in sacrificing your lives celebrate happiness and beatitude." 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, New York, 1980, V.1, p. 44; "Service to humanity is service to God." 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, Wilmette, 1982 p. 8.

²⁷ For example: "Act ye in such wise, showing forth pure and goodly deeds, and modesty and humility..." 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 203

²⁸ This included such organizations as Fokupers (the leading national women's NGO); Oxfam Australia; UNIFEM; UNESCO; Catholic Relief Services. Because at this time I had not been living in East Timor very long and was not yet working outside the home, my Tetum language skills were still poor and I had not established strong relationships with many local women's organizations.

²⁹ I was considering exploring reasons underlying the diverse responses to the trauma and suffering of Timorese women from 1974-1999. I was interested to better understand why some women seemed to be psychologically and emotionally destroyed by their experiences while others responded by becoming stronger and more powerful, and/or leaders in organizations and movements promoting advancement, equality, justice, compassion, hope, and so on.

UNIFEM funded, Bahá'í implemented project that promoted the cooperation of women and men to achieve greater equality. It was then that I made an unambiguous and firm decision to focus my research on men and gender equality.

Despite my growing awareness of the amazingly well-organized, strong and vocal 'women's movement' in East Timor, I was initially unaware of the existence of the pro-feminist Association of Men Against Violence (Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violensia – AMKV) and of various individuals and organizations seeking to engage men in various issues related to gender equality. It was exciting, then, to gradually become aware of these organizations and individuals and to gradually increase my knowledge of their work and interaction with them throughout the period of my study.

Around the same time as I started my study (August 2003) I began working at the Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation, known widely by the acronym from the Portuguese – CAVR. In mid 2004 I began work at UNIFEM East Timor. I continued to work for both of these organizations until October 2005. My work in these two organizations played a crucial role in the advancement of my study. It was through this work that I came to master written and spoken Tetum³⁰, made widespread and deep connections with a huge variety of individuals and organizations in Dili and rural East Timor, including, most importantly, key players in the area of women's advancement and gender equality. My connection to these respected institutions both of which were focused on service to and the advancement of the East Timorese people facilitated the development of trust, and of relationships, many of which, with time, became close personal bonds. These personal and professional relationships, developed over a period of years, were fundamental to the ethnographic approach I adopted in my study, as discussed below.

2.2 Qualitative Research

Until the 1970s the phrase 'qualitative research' was used only in reference to anthropological or sociological research. In the social sciences the terms such as

³⁰ Tetum is one of the national and official languages of East Timor. The other is Portuguese.

ethnography, fieldwork, participant observation and Chicago school (sociology) approach were used. Now the term 'qualitative research' is widely used with reference to research of diverse disciplines and ethnography is one methodology within the paradigm of qualitative research.

A qualitative approach to data (or 'empirical material'³¹) collection and analysis was the obvious choice for my study. (Some of the reasons and underlying principles are presented below in the discussion of the use of ethnography.) Qualitative research is based on the assumptions that reality is socially constructed; variables are complex, interwoven and difficult to measure; and that the emic viewpoint is valuable, all of which are in alignment with my own assumptions. Quantitative research on the other hand assumes that social reality is objective, that variables can be identified and measured and that the etic perspective is of most value. My purpose – in line with the purpose of qualitative research- was to gain contextualised knowledge, to interpret and to understand actors' perspectives. This differs from quantitative approaches that seek generalizable information, predictability and causal explanations.

Qualitative research ends with theory and hypotheses, whereas quantitative begins with these. Again the former fits with the goals and process of my study, rather than the latter. Qualitative research generally, and my research specifically seeks/sought to discover what might emerge, whereas quantitative research involves manipulation and control. Qualitative research is inductive; searches for patterns; seeks pluralism and complexity and is descriptive, while quantitative is deductive; seeks consensus; reduces data to numerical indices and uses abstract language to describe results. Quantitative researchers seek detachment, impartiality and objective portrayal while I, like many qualitative researchers, sought personal involvement and empathic understanding.³²

³¹ Myers, M. D. 'Qualitative Research in Information Systems', *MIS Quarterly* 21:2, June, 1997, pp. 241-242, MISQ Discovery, archival version, June 1997, http://www.misq.org/discovery/MISQD_isworld/, accessed September 29 2006

³² C. Glesne and A. Peshkin *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman, 1992, available from: <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/siegle/research/Qualitative/qualquan.htm>, accessed September 29 2006

2.3 Applied Research

Applied research is defined variously as “the type of research which is conducted to solve practical problems”³³; “[t]he systematic, intensive study directed toward the practical application of knowledge and problem solving”³⁴; “any research which is used to answer a specific question, ... solve a specific, pragmatic problem, or to gain better understanding”³⁵. Applied research does not seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge. The goal of the applied scientist is “to improve the human condition”³⁶.

And so I came to engage in research categorized as ‘applied research’. The specific way in which I hoped to improve the human condition was by contributing to the process of engaging East Timorese men as active and willing participants in the establishment of equality. That is, by contributing to social development in East Timor. My research methodologies then, would need to allow me the opportunity to gain a deep understanding of the status quo – with regard to equality and to men’s engagement with it – which required in turn an appreciation of the immediate and more distant history of the tiny half-island nation. I would need to learn what East Timorese and non-Timorese men and women were currently doing in East Timor to advance this process, what were the successes already achieved, what were the lessons learned, and the challenges identified.³⁷ I would also need to explore the same with regard to practical interventions in other parts of the world.³⁸

33 Alleydog.com: The psychology student’s best friend, Available from:

<http://www.alleydog.com/glossary/definition.cfm?term=Applied%20Research>, accessed September 29 2006

34Glossary, UNLV website, available from: www.unlv.edu/depts/cas/glossary.htm, accessed September 29 2006

35 Glossary, available from: www.dmdsurveys.com/dmd_site3/terminology_pages/terminology_a.html, accessed September 29 2006

36 Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory’s Ethical Legal and Social Issues in Science Project ‘Basic versus applied research’, Available from: <http://www.lbl.gov/Education/ELSI/research-main.html>, accessed September 29 2006

³⁷ See Chapter Eight: Data Analysis – practical interventions for the engagement of men in Gender Equality within East Timor

³⁸ See Chapter Seven: Practical interventions worldwide

While applied research seeks to contribute to action and to application of knowledge, this does not preclude the consideration of theoretical aspects of an issue. Indeed a careful exploration of pertinent theory would be essential to the success of my study and to the goal of contributing to the process of engaging men in equality. I would need to look at theoretical understandings of masculinities, as well as specific aspects of cultures and their role in shaping the way human beings define themselves and interact with one another. Theoretical underpinnings to approaches to social (and economic) development would also need to be explored.³⁹ It would also be important to be able to place the process of engaging East Timorese men in the context of international institutional attention to the issue of engaging men in equality.⁴⁰

Theoretical considerations, then, were to play an important role and occupy one of the central places in my research but only inasmuch as they made a direct contribution to the solution of the practical problem: The objective was not ‘merely’ to contribute to the development of theory, but to draw on theory already articulated⁴¹ and combine it with knowledge of local and global practice in order to contribute to the advancement of that practice.⁴²

2.4 Ethnography

When used as a method, ethnography typically refers to fieldwork ... conducted by a single investigator who 'lives with and lives like' those who are studied, usually for a year or more.⁴³

³⁹ See Chapter Nine: Bahá'í Approaches to Social and Economic Development

⁴⁰ See Chapter Three: Evolving international and institutional support for men's involvement in the process of establishing equality

⁴¹ See Chapters Five: Global Theoretical Perspectives – Masculinities and Chapter Six: Global Theoretical Perspectives – A Culture of Contest

⁴² See Chapter Ten: Conclusions

⁴³ J. Van Maanen, 'Ethnography' in *The Social Science Encyclopedia* (eds) A. Kuper and J. Kuper, London, 1996, p. 263

Ethnography is a social science research method. It relies heavily on up-close, personal experience and possible participation, not just observation... The ethnographic focal point may include ...intensive language and culture learning, intensive study of a single field or domain, and a blend of historical, observational, and interview methods. Typical ethnographic research employs three kinds of data collection: interviews, observation, and documents.⁴⁴

Ethnographic methods allow the researcher close and personal contact with the community of interest. They can allow access to grassroots level insights and experiences as well as to official policy and policy-makers. Ethnography allows the researcher to study people's behaviour in everyday contexts; to gather data from a range of sources; and to take a systematic yet sometimes unstructured approach to gathering data. In many ways ethnography is an approach to gathering and interpreting information similar to the sort of approach that we use in daily life to understand and interpret our environment.⁴⁵ According to Myers and Young, ethnographic research, is "one of the most in-depth research methods possible. Because the researcher is there for a reasonable amount of time - and sees what people are doing as well as what they say they are doing - an ethnographer obtains a deep understanding of the people, the organization, and the broader context within which they work."⁴⁶

As I had the privilege of permanently residing, working and raising my children in East Timor from December 2002 until April 2006 I was in the ideal situation to engage in ethnographic research. This approach suited well the goals of my study: Any contribution to the process of engaging men in equality in East Timor would require a deep

44 Michael Genzuk, *A synthesis of ethnographic research*, Center for multilingual, multicultural research, University of Southern California, 1999 http://www-rcf.usc.edu/~genzuk/Ethnographic_Research.html, accessed September 29 2006

45 *Ibid*

46 Michael D. Myers and Leslie W. Young, 'Hidden Agendas, Power, and Managerial Assumptions in Information Systems Development: An Ethnographic Study' in *Information Technology & People*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 224-240, <http://www.qual.auckland.ac.nz/ethrefs.htm#Myers,%20Michael%20D.%201999>, accessed September 29 2006

understanding of the women and men of East Timor, their cultures and ways of relating, and their ways of making sense of their world in general, as well as specific knowledge about the engagement of men in equality and lessons learned from those processes.

From 8 August 2003, when I began my study, until 21 April 2006 when I left East Timor to access resources unavailable in-country and to complete the writing of my thesis, I employed the three kinds of data collection mentioned above. That is, I engaged in participant observation - “an omnibus field strategy [which] ...simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, [and] direct participation”.⁴⁷ The details of the utilization of each of these will be discussed under their respective sub-headings below.

The combination of these data sources allowed me to develop “an insider’s view” of what was happening in the field of my enquiry and in the broader communities. At the same time the differences that inexorably distinguished me from the Timorese people⁴⁸ ensured that I could see familiar interactions as “anthropologically strange” or with what Michael Genzuk refers to as “the Martian perspective”. The capacity that ethnographic research has for simultaneously providing the researcher with an “insider” and “outsider” view can be regarded as one of its strengths. This proved essential for my study: I was able to gain a reasonably deep understanding of, and appreciation for, East Timorese men’s relationships to equality of the sexes and the historical-cultural bases of those relationships. And at the same time I could put those relationships in a global context and could question and challenge things that true ‘insiders’ might regard as essential, permanent, inevitable.

The relevance of ethnographic research to my study is further revealed in three methodological principles which underlie this method. These principles are summarized by Genzuk under the following headings: Naturalism; understanding; and discovery.

⁴⁷ Genzuk, Synthesis.

⁴⁸ These are discussed more fully below when I consider separately and in detail each of the methodologies employed.

Naturalism is the view that “the aim of social research is to capture the character of naturally occurring human behaviour, and that this can only be achieved by first-hand contact with it, not by inferences from what people do in artificial settings like experiments or from what they say in interviews about what they do elsewhere.” It was important for me to carry out aspects of my research in ‘natural’ settings – settings that “exist independently of the research process, rather than in those set up specifically for the purposes of research”.⁴⁹

Central to ‘understanding’ is the argument that “human actions differ from the behaviour of physical objects, and even from that of other animals: They do not consist simply of fixed responses or even of learned responses to stimuli, but involve interpretation of stimuli and the construction of responses.” As a researcher it was important for me to understand the culture of East Timorese boys and men before I could produce valid explanations for their behaviour or suggest ways of encouraging more gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours. For this reason observation and unstructured interviewing were highly valuable to achieving the goals of the study.

The third principle of ethnographic research identified above is that of ‘discovery’. That is the research process is conceived as “inductive or discovery-based; rather than as being limited to the testing of explicit hypotheses.” By approaching my study of East Timorese men and equality without a clearly defined set of hypotheses I reduced the risk of being “blinded by assumptions” which would necessarily have formed part of my hypotheses. In ethnographic research theoretical ideas and frameworks for action are developed over the course of the research and serve as a “valuable outcome” rather than being articulated prior to the research beginning.

[T]he ethnographic researcher strives to avoid theoretical preconceptions and instead to induce theory from the perspectives of the members of the culture and from observation. The researcher may

⁴⁹ Genzuk, Synthesis.

seek validation of induced theories by going back to members of the culture for their reaction.⁵⁰

2.4.1 Weaknesses of ethnography

Ethnography as a methodology is not without its shortcomings and my specific relationship with East Timor and her people necessarily entails limitations. Some of these have particular relevance to the process of conducting semi-structured interviews and interpreting the data collected by this means.

As a young white Australian woman my access to Timorese participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences was most certainly limited in important ways. Firstly, despite a certain level of fluency in Tetum there are always subtle barriers between a native speaker of a language and someone for whom the language has been learned in adulthood.

Secondly a long history of oppression by 'foreigners' has left its legacy in a certain (often subconscious?) caution on the part of the East Timorese people when speaking to non-East Timorese. This can manifest itself in limiting or modifying what is said; outwardly agreeing with a comment or remark despite inwardly disagreeing; smiling or laughing when hurt, angry, shocked or upset; trying to anticipate what the listener 'wants to hear' so as to say the 'right thing'; and so on.

Thirdly Timorese society is very hierarchical and one's (perceived) place in the hierarchy impacts significantly on how one interacts with others. Thus, if I am perceived to occupy a 'higher position' in the hierarchy I am even more likely to be confronted with the behaviours mentioned above. My colour, nationality, level of education, fluency in English, and presumed financial status can all lead to being assigned such a 'position'.

⁵⁰Garson, G., 'Ethnography' as part of Syllabus for PA 765:Quantitative Research in Public Administration, NCSU, <http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/PA765/ethno.htm>, accessed September 29 2006

Even after three years of immersion in the language and culture of East Timor, I must question my ability to register, appreciate and understand the many subtle and varied ways in which the people of East Timor communicate, interact and conduct their lives. My cultural, personal, religious and other biases, assumptions and values can all serve to impact on, and hinder the accuracy and usefulness of my conclusions.

2.4.2 Why not Participatory Action Research

Given the objectives of this study and the processes by which it was conducted, it could be suggested that Participatory Action Research (PAR) is or should be the chosen methodology. There are important differences, however, between Participatory Action Research and the way this study was conducted.

Participatory Action Research is

research which involves all relevant parties in actively examining together current action (which they experience as problematic) in order to change and improve it. They do this by critically reflecting on the historical, political, cultural, economic, geographic and other contexts which make sense of it. ... Participatory action research is ...action which is researched, changed and re-researched, within the research process by participants. ...[I]t aims to be active co-research, by and for those to be helped. ...[I]t [cannot] be used by one group of people to get another group of people to do what is thought best for them - whether that is to implement a central policy or an organisational or service change. Instead it tries to be a genuinely democratic or non-coercive process whereby those to be helped, determine the purposes and outcomes of their own inquiry.⁵¹

In Participatory Action Research, the research is designed to address specific issues identified by the local people. That is, the research is carried out by and for the people affected by the issues. The engagement of East Timorese men in gender equality is not a conscious, pressing concern of much of the East Timorese population. Rather, this focus reflects what *I* perceive to be an issue fundamental to the advancement of East Timorese

51 Yolanda Wadsworth, 'What is Participatory Action Research?' Action Research International, Paper 2, 1998, available from: <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/ari/p-ywadsworth98.html>, accessed October 12 2006

society (and many humanitarian workers among the international community also share these views from across the globe). Furthermore, while this research was conducted *for* the people affected by the problem, it was not conducted *by* the people. Participatory Action Research “creates knowledge that is useful to, understood and ‘owned’ by the people from whom it is derived. While this information, in itself, may assist people to further their individual and aggregate agendas, the principle aim of Participatory Action Research is to impart technical, analytical and socio-organizational skills enabling non-professionals to determine and meet their own research needs.”⁵² As a result of undertaking this study – most particularly as a result of conducting research into Bahá’í approaches to Social and Economic Development (chapter five), I have come to appreciate the great value of such an approach to research. However, this awareness was not present at the outset of the study and thus I selected a methodology that, while suitable in many ways to my goals, may not have significantly contributed to the ‘formation of historical and collective subjects who participate fully in the definition and fulfilment of their needs and longings, as equals in the global society.”⁵³

Participatory Action Research involves repeated cycles of discussion, action, and reflection: “Participants in Action Research projects continuously reflect on their learning from the actions and proceed to initiate new actions on the spot.” While the goal of this study is to contribute to an ongoing process of development in the area of engaging East Timorese men in gender equality, this project is necessarily of finite duration - limited to the time allowed for the researching and writing of the thesis. While it may contribute to the future establishment of cycles of PAR, it is not in and of itself part of an ongoing series of cycles.

2.5 Semi-structured interviews

In terms of ‘data’ collection I engaged in three processes as mentioned above: interviews; document analysis and participant-observation. There are various categories and

⁵² Charles Ehrhart, ‘Participatory Action Research’, presented in the HakiKazi Colloquium on “Popularising Policy and Influencing Change Through Action Research, Advocacy and Creative Communication”, available from: <http://www.hakikazi.org/papers01/CE01.pdf#search=%22Charles%20Ehrhart%20%22>, accessed October 12 2006
⁵³ *Ibid.*

approaches to interviewing, each of which is appropriate for the achievement of a specific goal. From these I opted to employ semi-structured interviews.

Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a fairly open framework which allow for focused, conversational, two-way communication. ...Relevant topics ... are initially identified and the possible relationship between these topics and [related] issues ...become the basis for more specific questions which do not need to be prepared in advance.... The majority of questions are created during the interview, allowing both the interviewer and the person being interviewed the flexibility to probe for details or discuss issues.⁵⁴

This approach allowed for the depth and flexibility which I required for this part of my fieldwork. The interviews had a very specific goal – to learn about the process of engaging East Timorese men in equality from the perspective of those involved directly in this development. The strict limitation pertained primarily to the participant selection. Once the participants had been identified and agreed to participate it was important that they would have enough time and enough freedom to speak in depth of their experiences and opinions. Semi-structured interviews allowed for this.

2.5.1 Participants

The interviews were conducted at the end of my fieldwork, by which time I had been living in East Timor for nearly three years. To varying degrees, I knew first hand many of the gender equity and human rights people and organizations. Due to the smallness of Dili⁵⁵ and the country as a whole⁵⁶ it is very easy to network and to quickly establish close personal connections with leaders in the women's movement and in the broader community.

Thus I drew on my network of personal and professional relationships to establish a list of about fifteen individuals and representatives of organizations who could offer insight into ways of engaging East Timorese men in gender equality. Some of these were simply

54D'Arcy Davis Case, *The community's toolbox: The idea, methods and tools for participatory assessment, monitoring and evaluation in community forestry*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, 1990, Available from:

http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/docrep/x5307e/x5307e08.htm, accessed September 29 2006

⁵⁵ Population approximately 100 000

⁵⁶ Population just under one million

men in the community whom I recognized as having gender-equitable attitudes. Others were engaged as part of their formal and/or paid work in men and gender equality related issues. To each of these I either hand-delivered an introductory letter in Tetum and English, or sent the same by email. Although culturally it is appropriate and necessary to initiate contact through such a formal letter and invitation to participate, I did not expect to receive many replies to this initial letter. Thus in most cases I followed the letters with a telephone call to make specific arrangements regarding time and place.

In some cases the recipient of the letter would refer me to more appropriate representatives of their organization, rather than participate in the interview themselves. For example the director of Yayasan HAK – a leading national human rights NGO – directed me to a co-worker who had been directly engaged in the gender-related activities of that NGO. And in some cases recipients of the letter felt that they (or their organization) would have little to offer on the topic and suggested other organizations. Most often the suggestion was to meet with representatives of the Association of Men Against Violence (AMKV).

Eventually a total of eight persons participated in a semi-structured interview including individual “gender-equitable” Timorese men; Timorese men and women engaged in men and gender equality issues as part of their work;⁵⁷ and expatriate women engaged in men and gender equality issues as part of their work.

2.5.2 The interview process

The interviews were conducted over a 45-90 minute period. The participants identified the time and place for their interview. Most interviews were conducted in the interviewee’s place of work. One was conducted in my place of residence.

⁵⁷ Men and women whose work included a focus on gender-equality work primarily targeting women do not qualify for this category.

The interviews were semi-structured and a copy of the prepared questions is available in Annex 1. Interviews with 'individual gender-equitable men' tended to follow the prepared questions more closely than interviews with men and women representing organizations. This may be due to cultural factors. Boastfulness and self-promotion tend to be discouraged in Timorese society. Individuals, talking about their own experiences, transformation, and insights, may have felt uncomfortable elaborating beyond the response to the specific question. Those representing organizations may have felt less inhibited and freer to talk in greater depth and more broadly about the work of their organization and about their own personal experiences in the context of that work.

In interviews with representatives of organizations the prepared questions were usually partially or completely disregarded as participants chose the direction of the conversation. In these cases I would have referred to the questions if the information and anecdotes being shared were digressing or irrelevant, but this seldom proved necessary.

Other researchers have expressed discomfort and frustration with the use of recording devices during interviews. At the beginning of my research I had access to a poor quality recording device. Interviews were often conducted in noisy environments (passing cars, overhead fans, other staff etc) and I was thus highly anxious about the quality of the recording. I subsequently took copious notes and after a few interviews stopped recording entirely. This however was not my preference. I felt the note-taking inhibited my ability to show respect to the participant, to make eye-contact and to register and respond to their body language. Coming from a psychology-counseling background it was very important to me to show to the participant through my facial expression and body language that I was very interested in what they were saying and keen to hear more. It could be argued that taking copious notes conveys interest but for me it felt discourteous and served to be distracting. For this reason I eventually invested in a high quality recording device. While transcription is a much more onerous task than writing up notes, I consider it worth the while.

2.5.3 Anxieties

The process of planning, preparing for and carrying out the interviews was a very lengthy one indeed. While there are some objective reasons for delays – including ethics committee processes, developing linguistic abilities, and multiple responsibilities in my daily life, the primary obstacle was most certainly an ever-increasing fear and anxiety.

As a long-term resident in East Timor and member of the Dili community I became increasingly aware of the research-fatigue experienced by many - from community leaders to grassroots people. Hundreds, if not thousands of well-meaning researchers have visited East Timor since 1999 for various lengths of time, asking similar – often deeply personal – questions of the same community leaders, organization staff members, grassroots groups and individuals. I had been an ‘insider’ for several years in organizations frequently ‘targeted’ by researchers and I was well aware of the burden in terms of time and emotional energy borne by participants. Moreover, most often there was no *readily apparent* benefit to the participants or even to their community or nation.

Thus I experienced at times debilitating anxiety about further burdening friends, colleagues and strangers by asking them to participate in yet another research project. As soon, however, as I began in earnest to book and conduct the interviews, my anxieties were largely alleviated. People responded to my request for their time with generosity and enthusiasm. For many, talking about their journey to becoming a ‘more gender-equitable man’, or talking about their professional engagement with the issue of men and gender equality, was apparently a source of pride and pleasure. Encouraged by these responses, the process of inviting potential interviewees to participate became increasingly stress-free.

2.5.4 Researcher-participant relationship

The limitations of the relationship between myself and East Timorese participants are outlined above as part of the discussion of the weaknesses of ethnography as a methodology and of myself as ethnographer in the specific context of East Timor.

In addition to these limitations, however, there were factors which enhanced my ability to develop a rapport and engage well with many of the East Timorese participants. The fact that I had lived in East Timor for more than three years and speak the local language was significant. Many of the participants were people who know me and are aware to varying degrees of my love, admiration for and commitment to East Timor and her people. This relationship with the country and people is further consolidated or indicated by the fact that I had settled there with my husband and daughters all of whom speak the language and all of whom actively engage with the local community. Additionally, in the hierarchical Timorese society my relative youthfulness and gender could lower my perceived 'status' and thus increase my access to less guarded and more honest communication.

With regard to the relationship between myself and the Australian and American participants, I am unable to identify any barriers between us that might have hindered the data gathering process. Many of us have worked together in various capacities. We have important things in common including being committed to advancing gender equality in culturally sensitive ways; being expatriates with Western upbringings and educations; being a minority within the dominant culture; and so on. As far as I can discern, with each one of the Australian and American participants, I enjoy a high level of mutual respect, admiration and affectionate regard.

2.6 Observation and direct participation

Proponents of observation and direct participation as a method of gathering data argue that it allows a deeper understanding of a given situation/community than many other methods, it relies on first-hand information, produces data with a high face validity, and is a method that is relatively simple and inexpensive. Opponents argue that it is a technique that threatens the objectivity of the researcher, lends itself to unsystematic data gathering, relies on subjective measurement and is vulnerable to observer effects. In a study such as mine the advantages are of greater significance than the disadvantages. In

response to the issue of objectivity I argue that allegedly neutral instruments such as survey questionnaires can in fact create far greater bias inasmuch as they may impose the researcher's perception of reality on participants whose conception may be vastly different.⁵⁸

Over the three years of the study my observation of and direct participation in the lives of the East Timorese people and communities took many and varied forms.

2.6.1 Paid work

For over two years I worked with the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation (CAVR)⁵⁹. Initially I served as advisor to the head of the division for reception (of returning refugees) and victim support. When the fieldwork was complete I contributed to the writing and preparation of the final reports, working with Tetum and English texts. The CAVR recorded statements from over 8,000 survivors of human rights violations as well as a number of perpetrators of such violations. The division for reception and victim support was involved in supporting refugees returning from West Timor and other locations. The division provided Healing Workshops for groups of

58 G. Garson, *Ethnography*, Syllabus for PA 765: Quantitative Research in Public Administration, NCSU, Available from: <http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/PA765/ethno.htm>, Accessed September 29 2006

59 The Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation is known widely by its Portuguese acronym, the CAVR. This commission was in operation from 2002 until 2005 with the following mandate: **Purpose:** The Commission is an independent statutory authority that will inquire into human rights violations committed on all sides, between April 1974 and October 1999, and facilitate community reconciliation with justice for those who committed less serious offenses. The Commission will not give amnesty. **Structure:** The Commission will be headed by 7 National Commissioners. In addition to a national office, the Commission is expected to have up to 6 regional offices, headed by 25-30 Regional Commissioners. Commission offices will be staffed by East Timorese, and supported by a small number of international technical experts. **Functions:** The Commission has three main functions: 1. Truth Seeking: The Commission will seek the truth regarding human rights violations in East Timor within the context of the political conflicts between 25 April 1974 and 25 October 1999. The Commission will establish a truth-telling mechanism for victims and perpetrators to describe, acknowledge, and record human rights abuses of the past. 2. Community Reconciliation: The Commission will facilitate community reconciliation by dealing with past cases of lesser crimes such as looting, burning and minor assault. In each case, a panel comprised of a Regional Commissioner and local community leaders will mediate between victims and perpetrators to reach agreement on an act of reconciliation to be carried out by the perpetrator. 3. Recommendations to Government: The Commission will report on its findings and make recommendations to the government for further action on reconciliation and the promotion of human rights. Reference CAVR website, available from: <http://www.easttimor-reconciliation.org/>, accessed October 2 2006

survivors as well as supporting survivors who participated in any of the CAVR processes such as speaking at the CAVR public hearings and participating in the CAVR community reconciliation processes. My work included traveling to remote rural regions as well as working closely with national Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) within the capital.

From my years at the CAVR I gained an intimate understanding of the recent history of East Timor as experienced by the protagonists themselves. I gained an appreciation of the societal structures that impact on relationships between women and men, between men and other men, and between adults and children. This understanding was a result of both interactions with significant segments of the general population through my work, and as a result of engaging with these structures in the workplace. Similarly I observed first hand the relationships between urban-dwellers and rural-dwellers, between the educated and the uneducated and so on. I was also exposed to traditional belief systems, community rituals and procedures.

Additionally while working at the CAVR I was immersed in written and spoken Tetum to such an extent that when the CAVR's mandate ended I was able to support myself and family as a Tetum-English translator and interpreter. The importance of my work at the CAVR with regard to the participant observation aspect of my study cannot be overestimated. I have only touched on a fraction of the ways it increased my knowledge of the men, women, cultures, history and languages of East Timor.

Another highly significant opportunity for me in terms of learning about the people of East Timor, and particularly about gender relations, associated issues, and the engagement of men therein, was my employment for twelve months by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)⁶⁰. As with work at the CAVR this

⁶⁰ The United Nations Development fund for Women (UNIFEM) is the specialised fund at the United Nations with the objective of providing financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies that promote women's human rights, political participation, and economic security. UNIFEM East Timor, under the leadership of its dedicated and passionately committed East Timorese program manager Milena Pires, works very closely with the women- and human rights-focused organizations of civil society and with the government Office for the Promotion of Equality.

employment involved working closely with grassroots people, local and national leaders, and organizations of civil society. It involved travel to rural areas as well as participation in high-level meetings, including those with the President Xanana Gusmao, government Ministers and Vice-Ministers.

Of particular relevance to my study were two aspects of my work with UNIFEM. The first was my role as designer and project manager for a project the fruit of which was *Kuda Talin*.⁶¹ *Kuda Talin* is a dance and drama group comprising 14 young male and female adults whose task is to educate communities about and to promote gender equality and CEDAW⁶² through the performing arts. The process of establishing, training, traveling with and supporting the initial performances of *Kuda Talin* proved to be an experience both challenging and rewarding beyond measure. Pertinently it provided me with invaluable insights into the process of engaging young East Timorese men in gender equality, both through my close interaction with the members of *Kuda Talin*, their peers and families, and through observation of male audience members' responses to *Kuda Talin*'s powerful and highly emotive portrayal of gender related issues through dance. As *Kuda Talin* performed before a wide variety of audiences including school children, grassroots communities, large crowds of young urban uneducated and unemployed males, and leaders of human rights focused NGOs, I was able to observe responses from diverse populations.

A second highly relevant aspect of my work at UNIFEM was my involvement (either as facilitator or interpreter) in a series of workshops on CEDAW. While these workshops were prepared in a 'gender neutral' way, the audiences were all 50-95% male. These workshops were offered in rural regions of East Timor, as well as within Dili in such places as government ministries and the police academy. Some lasted only a few hours and others were several days in duration.

61 Kuda Talin translates as Horse's Reins

62 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.

Also connected with my work at UNIFEM was my exposure to workshops and trainings run by others, which had as their explicit goal the education of men and women about gender equality. One such workshop funded by an NGO focused on media training sought to familiarize young radio journalists with CEDAW and gender-equitable journalism. At this workshop I was privileged to witness some of the most capable and effective Timorese, and Tetum-speaking expatriate gender-trainers, in action, clearly impacting the hearts and minds of the predominantly male participants.

During the period of my employment with the CAVR and UNIFEM⁶³ the Second National Timorese Women's Congress was held. I was employed as a consultant by Rede Feto⁶⁴ to prepare base documents for this congress. These documents were based on documentation from the First National Timorese Women's Congress four years earlier, as well as the several Regional⁶⁵ Women's Congresses held in the months preceding the National Congress. I was also privileged to attend this Congress as an observer.

From October 2005 until April 2006 I worked as a freelance consultant and freelance translator/interpreter. This work gave me access to a wide variety of people, communities, institutions and organizations with whom I may not otherwise have had close contact. This work was highly varied and included translating for and interpreting at a high-level day-long seminar focused on women in politics; conducting a formal evaluation of a program that engaged children in an orphanage to teach other children in rural and urban Timor about human rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; interpreting for trainings conducted by DIMA for Timorese immigration intelligence officers for a period of over four weeks; among many others. During this period I was also invited to participate in a group established to provide support and guidance to a UNFPA- funded project focused on working with male prisoners – perpetrators of domestic violence.

⁶³ There were some months where I was working part time for both organizations simultaneously.

⁶⁴ Rede Feto, which translates Women's Network, is an umbrella organization that links and coordinates women- and gender-focused non-governmental organizations in East Timor.

⁶⁵ Regional in this context means regions of East Timor, not the region of South-East Asia.

2.6.2 Significant Meetings and Events

Apart from the National Women's Congress mentioned above I had the valuable opportunity of attending numerous seminars, formal discussions, conferences, workshops, trainings and other meetings many of which were gender focused. I witnessed and/or participated in the preparation of all of the CAVR thematic national public hearings, the theme of one of which was Women in Conflict. I attended commemorations of massacres and other tragedies from East Timor's recent history as well as concerts celebrating peace, community sports competitions and many others.

2.6.3 Local Media

As I had access to very little written material in Tetum when we arrived, an important part of my language development was through study of the local newspapers. Over time I came to access other local media sources, such as radio news and popular programs, including talk-back radio in Tetum; television news and popular recreational shows⁶⁶; magazines/bulletins produced by national and international NGOs, and articles published on websites.

2.6.4 Personal Relationships

Without doubt the single most important source of learning was personal relationships with the individuals and communities with whom I interacted on a daily and informal basis. With many of these generous and loving souls I formed bonds that will surely continue into the distant future. These interactions on a close and personal level were valuable in terms of deepening my appreciation of the cultures of East Timor, and also in ways very specifically related to the topic of this thesis.

When we arrived in East Timor we shared a property with two East Timorese households. Through interaction with these families as well as with neighbours, friends, co-workers,

⁶⁶ Many television programs watched in Timor come from Indonesia, such as soap-operas, game shows etc. The vast majority of Timorese people speak the Indonesian language and enjoy these programmes. I was unable to understand the language but was able to see the kinds of images portrayed through them.

and so on, I was able to observe the way masculinities are constructed and performed in their diversity and uniformity.

Many of my neighbours and friends were perpetrators and/or victims and/or witnesses to violence against women including sexual violence. I was able to witness first hand the way individuals and communities dealt with such violations both by being present before, during or after violence took place on countless occasions, and by noting responses to my suggestions, comments and efforts to intervene⁶⁷.

I was involved with supporting a rural friend who had been raped near her village home. This process involved learning about the traditional justice system, supporting her through the processes of the formal justice system, as well as meeting with her mother and father and other relatives in the village to discuss the emotional, psychological, physical and legal implications of such a serious violation.

On many occasions I talked with individual or small groups of male friends and acquaintances, speaking directly about issues of gender inequality, their manifestations in the daily lives of these friends, and the similarities between Timorese men's oppression of women and Indonesian oppression of East Timor. I was able to observe a diverse range of responses to such conversations both in terms of immediate reaction and in terms of longer-term impact. Through other intimate conversations I was able to learn much of import pertaining to inter-male (non-sexual) relationships, the pressures men face to defend their 'honour' through violence and similar matters.

During my time in East Timor I travelled to most of the thirteen rural districts at least once. To one of the villages two hours south of Dili I travelled weekly throughout a twelve month period and monthly for an extended period after that, in order to visit close Timorese friends in that village and to participate in teaching a class for children. In

⁶⁷ In one situation my effort to intervene involved confronting the perpetrator at the time of the violence and obliging him to leave the property where the victim (and I) resided. At another time my effort to intervene focused on offering logistical and emotional support to a neighbour should she decide to flee her batterer.

terms of this study these trips were valuable in various ways, not the least of which was in the travel itself. The journey, while taking two hours, was only 50km: 50km of rough road winding up and down the mountains. The public transport consisted of open-backed trucks – Angunas – into which dozens of variously smoking and vomiting⁶⁸ people were crammed along with long-suffering livestock and bags of produce. It was interesting to observe the dynamics among the travellers which were clearly influenced by such things as gender, age, and in my case, “race”.

Apart from these relationships our children brought us into close and daily contact with local children and with Timorese teachers at their school; my husband developed a rapport with a group of young male break-dancers who came to our home each week over an extended period; we taught English for free as a service to the community; and spent many hours chatting and playing with friends and strangers on local beaches. I was invited to attend births, christenings, weddings, and funerals. We lived next door to a major convent and around the corner from one of the main Catholic churches of Dili both of which exposed us to East Timorese Catholic rituals, celebrations, and overall church-related culture.

The many and varied personal relationships that were formed, their circumstances and the impact they had cannot all be mentioned here, but all without exception contributed directly or indirectly to my understanding of the people among whom I dwelt and informed my search for ways in which to effectively engage East Timorese men in gender equality.

2.7 Document analysis

2.7.1 Primary Sources

Primary sources are those that provide original, un-interpreted information. They consist of words, images, or objects created by persons directly involved in an activity or event

⁶⁸ Motion sicknesses appeared to be very common among the East Timorese travellers, and the road could not have been more winding.

or speaking directly for a group.⁶⁹ Whether or not an item is regarded as a primary or secondary source depends in part on the focus of the given research. For example, as Jill Yelman explains, Shakespeare's play *Richard III* would be a primary document in a study of Shakespeare and a secondary document in a study of Richard III.⁷⁰

In conducting my study I drew on a range of primary sources including published documents, unpublished documents, and visual documents.⁷¹ These included a number of films: Punitive Damages; Viva!; a film about a community reconciliation process in the district of Oecussi; the film version of the CAVR report; file footage from various CAVR processes; film shot by renowned British investigative journalist and pro-Timor activist Max Stahl; among others. I also viewed hundreds of photos in private collections, public museums and in the files and exhibition of the CAVR.

In terms of written primary sources I accessed various 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 divers occasions in a wide variety of settings; historical and popular Timorese songs; and activity reports from the Association of Men Against Violence.

2.7.2 Secondary Sources

Secondary sources are those that provide interpretation, analysis or summaries of information. They provide commentary on or analysis of events, ideas or primary sources.⁷² The secondary sources upon which I drew included books, journals and

⁶⁹University of Washington Information Literacy Learning 2001-2004, Research 101, available at <http://www.lib.washington.edu/uwill/research101/basic03.htm>, accessed September 29 2006

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹Library of Congress, Learning Page, available at: <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/psources/types.html> accessed September 29 2006

⁷² University of Washington, Research 101

articles on websites. These have served as secondary sources of information across the four areas pertinent to this study, providing access to:

- Detailed information about practical interventions around the world and their impact
- Theories being developed in various parts of the world pertaining to various aspects of men and equality
- Documents produced by international institutions reflecting changing attitudes of the international community to the issue at hand
- Theoretical and practical knowledge pertaining to innovative approaches to social development

Access to books and journals was limited by my geographical location. There is no comprehensive library in East Timor, although there are a few very small collections of books made available to the public. (For example the Alola Foundation's Women's Resource Centre; the Xanana Gusmao Reading Room; the World Bank Internet room.)

Theoretically I could access the UNE library through the postal service but unreliability of the postal service combined with exorbitant rates for postage effectively closed that avenue. Until October 2005 I had, once again in theory only, lunchtime, evening and weekend access to free Internet through my places of work. Problems with distribution of office keys, as well as motherhood and other responsibilities served to limit this access. After October 2005 my primary source of new material was visitors to East Timor who agreed to bring books purchased on my behalf by my mother and sister in Sydney.

However, through a combination of accessing the literature that is available in Timor, regular workplace internet access followed by irregular and expensive internet access, occasional trips to Sydney, financial support from the university and logistical support from family members in Australia I managed to avail myself of a substantial amount of relevant literature pertaining to the theoretical and practical aspects of work with men and gender equality.

2.8 Processing the fieldwork data

In ethnography, data analysis most usually takes place throughout the project. That is to say, what we learn from the data we gather during one visit to the field helps us learn what to watch for, notice, or ask during the next visit. As fieldwork progresses, we are constantly refining our ideas of what might be happening at the site. At this level, data analysis is ongoing and helps fieldwork gain momentum towards useful information.

However, there eventually comes a point when we turn our attention more fully to working with the data we have gathered already, often after leaving or limiting visits to the fieldsite. What does our data mean? What have we learned? What can we say regarding our guiding question, or others that we may know how to ask now based on the research? In short, how might we best analyze the data we have gathered?⁷³

There is no single correct way to approach analysis of ethnographic data. However, some argue that all qualitative analysis involves:

- *comprehending* the phenomenon under study
- *synthesising* a portrait of the phenomenon that accounts for relations and linkages within its aspects
- *theorising* about how and why these relations appear as they do, and
- *recontextualising*, or putting the new knowledge about phenomena and relations back into the context of how others have articulated the evolving knowledge.⁷⁴

Indeed these four stages are reflected in the process of data analysis in which I engaged. The specific steps I took included:

⁷³University of Pennsylvania. Public Interest Anthropology. Available at:
<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/anthro/CPIA/METHODS/Data.html>, accessed September 29 2006

⁷⁴ Sally Thorne, 'Data analysis in qualitative research', Evidence-Based Nursing 3:68-70. 2000, Available from
<http://ebn.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/3/3/68>, accessed September 29 2006

1. Reading through the field notes, notes on and transcripts of interviews and other material several times in order to become very familiar with the information gathered.
2. Marking the data and taking notes on patterns, connections, similarities and differences in the data.
3. Triangulating among the various forms of data to see if several sources supported similar conclusions.
4. Drawing some tentative conclusions and considering whether the original questions driving the research could be answered from what had been learned.⁷⁵

The fruit of this process is presented in chapter nine below.

⁷⁵University of Pennsylvania, Public Interest Anthropology

CHAPTER THREE Institutional support: global

3.1 A Bahá'í perspective

The concept that men have as great a responsibility to work for equality as women, and stand to benefit from its achievement is not new. The importance of men's involvement in the process of achieving and maintaining equality between the sexes has been recognized in the writings of the Bahá'í Faith since its inception, and continues to be emphasized by Bahá'í institutions and individuals in theory and practice to this day.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Son of the Founder-Prophet of the Bahá'í Faith⁷⁶, addressing an audience in Paris in 1911 appealed to the men to recognize that the struggle for equality was one that should be embraced equally by all when he pointed out that "When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them [women] to struggle for their rights! One of the principles then of Bahá'u'lláh is the equality of sex."⁷⁷

'Abdu'l-Bahá, born in the mid nineteenth century in Persia, also argued that men's contributions to equality should in no wise be seen as a great sacrifice and something they make to the detriment of their own well-being and happiness. He stated, "As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibility, so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs."⁷⁸ He further argued that the happiness of humanity will only be realized "when men and women coordinate and advance equally, for each is the complement and helpmeet of the other."⁷⁹ And again: "The world of humanity possesses two wings: man and woman. If one wing remains incapable and defective, it will restrict the power of the other, and full flight will be impossible."⁸⁰

⁷⁶ In His Book of Laws and in other places the Founder-Prophet Bahá'u'lláh appointed His Son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá to be the Leader of the worldwide Bahá'í community after Bahá'u'lláh's passing.

⁷⁷ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, London, 1995, p.163

⁷⁸ Bahá'í International Community (ed.), *The Greatness Which Might Be Theirs*, Beijing, 1995, back cover

⁷⁹ Ibid. p.14

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 62

It has been suggested that the statements and analogy above convey a heterosexist view of the world and humanity. It is outside the scope of this thesis to address those suggestions. Rather, the focus in this context is on the emphasis ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, writing in the 19th and early 20th century places on men’s responsibility in the process of establishing equality between women and men, and on the benefits to men of that equality.

Similar references can be found throughout the twentieth century in Bahá’í primary and secondary sources. In 1988 the statement of the Bahá’í International Community⁸¹ to the 32nd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women addressing the need to change attitudes that reinforce acceptance of inequality stated that “a primary target for communication related to development projects for women may well be men.”⁸² Most recently at the 48th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2004 the Bahá’í International Community supported the theme of the session, by sponsoring a workshop on “The Role of Men in Overcoming Challenges to the Advancement of Women” Additionally in its statement to the Commission the Bahá’í International Community stressed the importance of involving men in the process of women's advancement.

The full development of men and boys is inextricably linked to the advancement of women. A society characterized by gender equality serves the interests of both sexes. It enables men and women to develop in a more balanced and multifaceted way and to discard the rigid role stereotypes so crucial to shifting family dynamics, and to accord women full access to the world of work.

Enduring change comes through cooperative activity of men and women rather than through confrontation. Hence, we call upon all members of society to encourage and support women to develop their

⁸¹ The Bahá’í International Community is an international non-governmental organization which encompasses and represents the worldwide membership of the Bahá’í Faith.

⁸² Bahá’í International Community, Statement to the 32nd Commission on the Status of Women, cited in ‘By involving men in women's problems and using traditional media to communicate the results, grassroots changes are effected’, Bahá’í Topics an information resource, available from <http://info.Bahá’í.org/article-1-7-6-14.html>, accessed October 2 2006

full potential and to strive for their equality and human rights and we recognize that much more can be accomplished in the long run if men and women work together.⁸³

3.2 The United Nations and intergovernmental processes

The Charter of the United Nations, signed in June 1946 states in its preamble that “the peoples of the United Nations” are determined to “reaffirm faith...in the equal rights of men and women...”⁸⁴. Article 1 of this charter states that one of its purposes is to promote and encourage “respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to ...sex...”⁸⁵ It was not however until the 1970s that the United Nations gave more serious attention to the matter of equality between the sexes. The first UN World Conference on Women was held in Mexico in 1975. By the end of 1979 the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) had been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Throughout the eighties and nineties a range of conferences, conventions, Security Council resolutions brought attention to the issue of equality in various ways including through three more world conferences on women in Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995).

At these meetings and in the documents that resulted from them there were occasional brief references to men’s specific role in the process of establishing equality. It was only in the mid-1990s however that references to the essential role of men in the process began to make regular appearances at meetings and in documents of the United Nations and intergovernmental processes.

⁸³ Bahá’í International Community, ‘The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality’, Written Statement Prepared for the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women at its 48th Session Item 3a of the Provisional Agenda, New York, 2004, available from: <http://statements.Bahá’í.org/04-0312.htm>, accessed October 25 2006

⁸⁴ United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, available from <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/chapter1.htm>, accessed October 2 2006.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

The preamble to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women states that the “upbringing of children requires a sharing of responsibility between men and women” and acknowledges the need for “change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family”⁸⁶ in order to achieve full equality. Article five calls for the modification of the

social and cultural patterns of conduct of men..., with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.^{87 88}

Six years later the report of the world conference to review and appraise the achievements of the United Nations Decade For Women: Equality, Development And Peace coming out of Nairobi, Kenya in 1985 touches upon the fact that changes in women’s roles and the relationships between women and men “may present new challenges requiring new perspectives, strategies and measures.” It also calls for the building of “alliances and solidarity groups across sexual lines in an attempt to overcome structural obstacles to the advancement of women.”⁸⁹

Significant changes in the quantity and quality of references to this issue began to appear around the mid nineties. The Program of Action coming out of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Egypt, dedicates a section of its chapter on Gender Equality, Equity and Empowerment of Women to ‘Male responsibilities and participation’. The ‘Basis for action’ states:

Changes in both men’s and women’s knowledge, attitudes and behaviour are necessary conditions for achieving the harmonious

⁸⁶Division for the Advancement of Women, Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), preamble, available from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>, accessed October 2 2006.

⁸⁷ It also calls on women to make the same modifications

⁸⁸ Division for the Advancement of Women, CEDAW, article 5.

⁸⁹ United Nations. ‘Report of the world conference to review and appraise the achievements of the United Nations decade for women: equality, development and peace Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985’, Nairobi, 1985, available from: <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/3822b5e39951876a85256b6e0058a478/7b02825848cc2afa85256dcd007534d2!OpenDocument>, accessed on October 2 2006

partnership of men and women. Men play a key role in bringing about gender equality...It is essential to improve communication between men and women ...and the understanding of their joint responsibilities, so that men and women are equal partners in public and private life.⁹⁰

The 'Objective' following on from this is presented as being "to promote gender equality in all spheres of life, including family and community life, and to encourage and enable men to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behaviour and their social and family roles."⁹¹

The actions proposed in this document include targeting boys, adolescents, and adult men and promoting equal participation of women and men in all family, reproductive health and household, financial and other responsibilities, through "information, education, communication, employment legislation and ...fostering and economically enabling environment, such as family leave for men and women."⁹²

One year later at the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) Copenhagen Denmark Chapter One of its Program of Action states that

The obstacles that have limited the access of women to decision-making, education, health-care services and productive employment must be eliminated and an equitable partnership between men and women established, involving men's full responsibility in family life.⁹³

⁹⁰ United Nations Department of Public Information, 'International Conference on Population and Development 5-13 September 1994 Cairo, Egypt, Program for Action, Chapter IV Gender Equality, Equity and Empowerment of Women, B. Male responsibilities and participation, Basis for Action 4.24, available from: <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/populatin/icpd.htm#chapter4>, accessed October 2 2006.

⁹¹ United Nations Department of Public Information, 'International Conference on Population and Development 5-13 September 1994 Cairo, Egypt, Program for Action, Chapter IV Gender Equality, Equity and Empowerment of Women, B. Male responsibilities and participation, Objective 4.25, available from: <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/populatin/icpd.htm#chapter4>, accessed October 2 2006.

⁹² United Nations Department of Public Information, 'International Conference on Population and Development 5-13 September 1994 Cairo, Egypt, Program for Action, Chapter IV Gender Equality, Equity and Empowerment of Women, B. Male responsibilities and participation, Actions, available from: <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/populatin/icpd.htm#chapter4>, accessed October 2 2006

⁹³ United Nations / Division for Social Policy and Development, 'World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, Denmark, 6-12 March 1995 Program of Action of the World Summit for Social Development chapter 1 point 7, available from: <http://www.visionoffice.com/socdev/wssdpa-0.htm>, accessed October 2 2006

Later in the same document the need to “enhance harmonious and mutually beneficial partnerships between women and men in sharing family and employment responsibilities” is described as an “urgent need, in the overall context of promoting sustained economic growth and sustainable development...”⁹⁴

It was the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women however, held in the same year as the WSSD, that really emphasized the indispensability of men’s engagement in the process in order to establish full equality. In addition to mentioning the matters raised at other international events and in previous documents, the Beijing Declaration articulates unambiguously the need to “[e]ncourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality.”⁹⁵ The Platform for Action emphasizes that “women share common concerns that can be addressed only by working together and in partnership with men towards the common goal of gender equality around the world....”⁹⁶ Further in the Platform for Action it is written that

Experience in a number of countries shows that women and men can be mobilized to overcome violence in all its forms and that effective public measures can be taken to address both causes and the consequences of violence. Men’s groups mobilizing against gender violence are necessary allies for change.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ United Nations / Division for Social Policy and Development, ‘World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, Denmark, 6-12 March 1995 Program of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, Chapter 3. point 47, available from: <http://www.visionoffice.com/socdev/wssdpa-0.htm>, accessed October 2 2006

⁹⁵ United Nations, Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women 4-15 September 1995 Beijing, China, Beijing Declaration point 25, available from: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N96/273/01/PDF/N9627301.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed October 3 2006.

⁹⁶ United Nations, Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women 4-15 September 1995 Beijing, China, Fourth World Conference on Women 4-15 September 1995 Beijing, China. Platform for Action, Mission Statement point 3, available from: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N96/273/01/PDF/N9627301.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed October 3 2006.

⁹⁷ United Nations, Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women 4-15 September 1995 Beijing, China, Platform for Action, Critical Areas of Concern; Strategic Objectives and Actions; D. Violence Against Women point 120, available from: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N96/273/01/PDF/N9627301.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed October 3 2006.

By 2000 the Political Declaration from the twenty-third United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) special session, “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” was emphasizing that “men must involve themselves and take joint responsibility with women for the promotion of gender equality”⁹⁸. By this time enough awareness and activity had been generated around the issue of men’s involvement in establishing equality for a number of achievements to be celebrated within the same document, including: “research into and specialized studies on gender roles are increasing, in particular on men’s and boy’s roles”⁹⁹; “There is increased awareness of the positive effect of ...paternity leave.”¹⁰⁰

With reference to the actions and initiatives to overcome the current challenges affecting the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action the political declaration from the 23rd Session of the UNGA states that “Men and boys should also be actively involved and encouraged in all efforts to achieve the goals of the Platform for Action and its implementation.”¹⁰¹

Throughout this period attention was increasingly given, at the highest level, to the necessity of men’s involvement¹⁰², culminating in March 2004 when the 48th session of

⁹⁸ United Nations, Twenty Third UNGA Special Session “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty first century” 5-9 June 2000, Political Declaration, point 6, available from: <http://www.aworc.org/bpfa/res/bpfa-tool.htm> , accessed October 3 2006.

⁹⁹ United Nations, Twenty Third UNGA Special Session “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty first century” 5-9 June 2000, Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, D. Violence Against Women, point 13, available from: <http://www.aworc.org/bpfa/res/bpfa-tool.htm> , accessed October 3 2006.

¹⁰⁰ United Nations, Twenty Third UNGA Special Session “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty first century” 5-9 June 2000, Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, F. Women and the Economy, point 20, available from: <http://www.aworc.org/bpfa/res/bpfa-tool.htm> , accessed October 3 2006.

¹⁰¹ United Nations, Twenty Third UNGA Special Session “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty first century” 5-9 June 2000, IV Actions and initiatives to overcome obstacles and to achieve the full and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, point 58, available from: <http://www.aworc.org/bpfa/res/bpfa-tool.htm> , accessed October 3 2006.

¹⁰² References appear in reports and statements coming out of, inter alia, the following meetings: Commission on the Status of Women 40-46, 1996-2002; United Nations General Assembly Special Session ICPD +5, 1999; Commission for Social Development Sessions 35-38:1997-2000; United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children 2002.

the United Nations commission on the status of women addressed as one of its two main themes: The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality.

This meeting, the documents that came out of it, combined with the online discussion¹⁰³ and expert group meeting¹⁰⁴ that preceded it brought this issue to the forefront of global dialogue on gender issues and the advancement of women.

¹⁰³ United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Online Discussion on The Role of Men and Boys in Equality, 30 June to 25 July 2003, available from: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/men-boys2003/online.html>, accessed October 6 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Connell, Report of Expert Group Meeting on “The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality” 21 to 24 October 2003 Brasilia, Brazil, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), Available from: <http://www.ashanet.org/focusgroups/sanctuary/articles/Connell-bp.pdf#search=%22report%20Online%20Discussion%20men%20and%20boys%20organized%20by%20the%20Division%20for%20the%20Advancement%20of%20Women%22>, accessed October 2 2006

CHAPTER FOUR Institutional support: East Timor

4.1 Equality between women and men in East Timor

“Feto hakat badak. Mane hakat naruk.” This popular Timorese saying translates as “Women take small steps. Men take large steps.” It reflects the roles and status assigned to women and men respectively, and to the attitudes, cultural practices and stereotypes which prevail.¹⁰⁵ Despite the 16 recognized languages and diversity of cultures among the different communities on the small half island of East Timor, patriarchy is a foundation common to them all. As Marito de Araujo of Asosiasaun Mane Kontra Violensia (Association for Men Against Violence) writes:

Men have complete control and dominate all aspects of social, economic, and political life. Men are the unchallenged decision makers in affairs relating to tradition, law and custom. This unchecked power results in men having the freedom to do whatever they want. At its most extreme, this power extends to having control over the life and death of a woman.¹⁰⁶

4.1.1 The Constitution and the Government’s commitment to equality

After four hundred years of Portuguese colonization and twenty-five years of brutal oppression and occupation by Indonesia, the government and people of the newly independent East Timor are, at least in theory, firmly committed to raising a nation on a foundation of respect for the human rights of all its citizens.

¹⁰⁵ Milena Pires. ‘An Overview of Women’s Human Rights in East Timor pertaining to CEDAW’, unpublished paper, UNIFEM, East Timor, 2004, p.3

¹⁰⁶ Marito Araujo, ‘Liberation for Everyone, not just men’: A case study of the Association of Men Against Violence (AMKV), paper distributed at the Second East Timorese Women’s Congress, July 2004 p.2

Thus the constitution of East Timor promises to 'create, promote and guarantee the effective equality of opportunities between women and men'¹⁰⁷ It states that '[a]ll citizens are equal before the law, shall exercise the same rights and shall be subject to the same duties' and promises that '[n]o one shall be discriminated against on grounds of...gender.'¹⁰⁸ Specifically women are guaranteed the 'same rights and duties' as men 'in all areas of family political, economic, social and cultural life'¹⁰⁹.

Women of East Timor are likewise promised that they shall enjoy the right to choose their spouse and enjoy protection and relevant benefits during and after pregnancy.¹¹⁰ In addition they are guaranteed the right to work, choose their profession¹¹¹ and to participate directly and actively in the political life of the nation.¹¹²

Additionally the government of East Timor has taken the following steps toward equality between women and men: It has ratified the United Nations Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and will submit its first status report by the end of 2006. It has established an Office for the Promotion of Equality (OPE) whose director reports directly to the Prime Minister. It is developing many national policies and laws in consultation with gender advocates. This includes groundbreaking domestic violence legislation, labour and family laws. The government has also developed a National Development Plan, which explicitly links gender mainstreaming to the reduction of poverty.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ Constitution of East Timor, section 6, Objectives of the State, available from: <http://www.etan.org/etanpdf/pdf2/constfnen.pdf#search=%22constitution%20of%20East%20Timor%22>, accessed on October 2 2006.

¹⁰⁸ Constituent Assembly of East Timor, *Constitution of East Timor*, section 16, Universality and Equality, available from: <http://www.etan.org/etanpdf/pdf2/constfnen.pdf#search=%22constitution%20of%20East%20Timor%22>, accessed on October 2 2006.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, section 17

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, section 39

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, section 50

¹¹² *Ibid.*, section 63

¹¹³ Prime Minister and Cabinet of the Government of East Timor, The National Development Plan, 2004, p.8, available from: <http://www.pm.gov.tp/ndp.htm>, accessed October 4 2006.

4.1.2 Women's participation, and gender issues, in state organs

At the time of writing there are three female ministers out of a total of fourteen and four deputy ministers out of a total of thirteen. However none of the nine secretaries of state are women.¹¹⁴ Of the thirteen district administrators nationwide, only one is a woman and of the thirteen deputy district administrators, six are women. Of the sixty-four sub-district administrators, one is a woman.

New electoral laws¹¹⁵ for village level elections state that women are eligible to be elected to the positions of village chief and hamlet chief. A village council is composed of the village chief, the chiefs of all the hamlets that make up that village (all of whom can be women or men) as well as at least two adult women from the village, one female youth, one male youth and an elder (who can be male or female). In the first elections held since these laws were passed, in 2005, 76 women ran for village chief and seven were elected (out of a total of 442 village chiefs nationwide). One hundred and sixty five women ran for hamlet chief, which resulted in twenty seven of the 2,228 hamlets in East Timor being headed by women.¹¹⁶

Gender Focal Points (GFPs) have been appointed within all the government ministries to integrate gender issues into their work. However, these gender focal points often lack authority to implement real change. Gender Focal Points all have other work within the ministries and so they often also lack time to really focus on this responsibility.¹¹⁷

There are 88 national members of parliament, 23 of whom (26%) are women. A United Nations Development Program (UNDP) report states that the number of women members

¹¹⁴ Organigram distributed by the Government of East Timor effective July 28 2005, UNIFEM files

¹¹⁵ Government of the Democratic Republic of East Timor Government, Decree-Law NR. 5/2004 14 April 2004 On Community Authorities. Section 5: Composition of a suco council, p.3, available from <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/KESTA/message/5214>, accessed October 4 2006

¹¹⁶ Personal conversation with Dianne Arboleda, Project Coordinator, PERWL (Program to Enhance Rural Women's Leadership), UNIFEM, East Timor.

¹¹⁷ Shanti Dairam, Draft of Report of CEDAW SEA Program Inception Mission to East Timor, unpublished, located in UNIFEM East Timor files 2004, p.8

of parliament presents “important opportunities for ensuring gender issues are prominently and coherently addressed in parliamentary work.” The same document reports that: “public focus group surveys indicate that the majority of women in East Timor believe their interests are better represented in government policy-making as a result of the high number of female MPs”¹¹⁸. However there is not clear evidence of the female MPs collaborating as women in their parliamentary work.¹¹⁹

Within the formal justice system there are currently fourteen judges, five of which are women; thirteen prosecutors, three of which are women; and eleven public defenders, six of which are women.¹²⁰ The justice system is, at this early stage of nation building, largely dysfunctional and has proven to be of particularly poor service to women. There are systemic problems requiring attention, which are confounded by inexperience and gendered bias in interpretation and application of the law.¹²¹

Women often lack familiarity with the justice system and the confidence to use it. At this point the drafted domestic violence laws have still not been passed. Even when dealing with matters as serious as domestic violence, child abuse and rape, women are often directed to the traditional justice system. While women tend to have greater familiarity and a higher level of comfort with the traditional justice system, it also often fails women because traditional dispute resolution mechanisms are based on patriarchal values, which often give men all decision making power, and render women voiceless.¹²²

118 UNDP. East Timor Program Package Document: Strengthening Parliamentary Democracy in East Timor, East Timor, 2003, Annex p.8

119 Personal Conversation with Milena Pires, former member of parliament and current program coordinator for UNIFEM East Timor

120 Milena Pires, ‘An Overview of Women’s Human Rights in East Timor pertaining to CEDAW’, unpublished paper, UNIFEM, East Timor, 2004, p.5

121 Milena Pires, ‘An Overview of Women’s Human Rights in East Timor pertaining to CEDAW’, unpublished paper, UNIFEM, East Timor, 2004, p.3

122 Shanti Dairiam, Draft Report, p. 21

The formalization of the traditional justice system is currently being considered and it will be important that significant modifications are made in order to ensure it becomes a gender just system.¹²³

4.1.3 Civil Society

During the occupation of East Timor by Indonesia the Roman Catholic Church became a refuge and rallying point for many Timorese people and the number of East Timorese formally identifying as Catholic increased significantly between 1975 and 1999.

Although the power of the church has somewhat declined since independence, it is still a very powerful and very political institution in East Timor. According to a gender assessment conducted by USAID in 2004, the church tends to take “conservative positions on social and gender issues, including domestic violence and women’s rights and roles, and these viewpoints influence national policy choices.”¹²⁴

Rede Feto (Women’s Network) is a network with a membership of nearly two-dozen Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) whose focus is women. However, of these, between five and ten are active member organizations. Additionally there are NGOs who do not qualify as members of the network but who address gender issues as one of several priorities or mainstream gender in sectoral activities.¹²⁵

In June 2000, the First East Timorese Women’s Congress was attended by 400 delegates from all 13 districts of East Timor and a Platform of Action for the Advancement of the Women of Timor Lorosae was developed¹²⁶. Four years later Rede Feto hosted the Second East Timorese Women’s Congress, which was preceded by four regional women’s congresses in rural areas of the country. At these congresses the priorities identified for women included: participation in decision making; legal systems and justice; reparations of female victims of Indonesian rule; education; literacy; health;

¹²³ Milena Pires, Overview, p.4

¹²⁴ Nancy Diamond, *Gender Assessment for USAID/East Timor Country Strategy Plan FY 2004-2009*, USAID, East Timor, 2004, p.4, available from http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/pubs/ga_easttimor.pdf, accessed October 4 2006.

¹²⁵ Shanti Dairiam, Report, p.11.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 25

protection of vulnerable groups; and a bottom up approach to economic growth.¹²⁷ The first congress also sought the development of an inclusive constitution. This goal had been achieved by the time of the second congress.

4.1.4 Education and Health

The likelihood of being literate or having had access to formal education depends on one's age and sex. Only 15% of women aged 45–54 years are literate, as compared to nearly 40% of men in the same age group. However 80% of women aged 15-24 (and 89% of men of the same age) are literate. The national average then in terms of literacy is around 55% for women and 65% for men. Similar discrepancies are found between age and sex groups with regard to access to formal schooling.¹²⁸ At the level of primary school girls constitute about 50% of the students. This drops to 25% at university level.¹²⁹

More than thirty per cent of women aged 20-34 years are bearing one child per year, producing a total fertility rate of 7.4. This means that the average East Timorese woman bears more than seven children in her lifetime.¹³⁰

4.1.5 Gender Based Violence

There is a very high rate of violence committed by men against women in the home, throughout East Timor. This violence and other forms of sexual violence are received by the community with a high level of tolerance. Indeed, the CEDAW inception mission report states that many consider a certain level of violence as normal within families and schools and regard men's violence against their family members as a form of 'education' or 'discipline'.¹³¹ One study revealed that 43% of Timorese women had experienced at least one incident of violence at the hands of their intimate partner, within the previous

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* p.25

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* p.7

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* p.5

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* p.6

¹³¹ *Ibid.* p.5

twelve months.¹³² Despite the fact that “domestic violence” is greatly underreported, police figures suggest that up to half of all reported incidents pertain to violence in the home.¹³³

It is believed that the Timorese system of bride price provides a ‘supporting context’ for domestic violence as according to this system the groom’s family can be expected to give a significant amount of money, livestock and goods to the bride’s family which can result in the groom and his family perceiving themselves to be the ‘owners’ of the woman they have ‘bought’.¹³⁴

Other forms of gender-based violence and related issues including ‘rape, sexual assault, forced marriage, and inadequate care and investigation upon reporting’¹³⁵ are serious problems for women in East Timor and are reportedly increasing. Additionally, according to one report, ‘[g]irls are often encouraged or forced to marry and/or bear children while still physically and emotionally immature.’¹³⁶

4.1.6 Work

In the formal sector East Timorese women are greatly underrepresented. They dominate in the unregulated and unprotected informal sector.¹³⁷ Within the home women and girls shoulder a vast majority of the burden of work and are responsible for chores which often involve heavy physical labour: drawing well water or carting water from remote taps; washing clothes and dishes by hand; collecting firewood and cooking over open fires; as well as childcare and other housework. Even when the women are employed and the

¹³² Marito Araujo, ‘Liberation for Everyone, not just men’: A case study of the Association of Men Against Violence (AMKV), paper distributed at the Second East Timorese Women’s Congress, July 2004, p.1

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Nancy Diamond, *Gender Assessment for USAID/East Timor Country Strategy Plan FY 2004-2009*, USAID, East Timor, 2004, p.4, available from http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/pubs/ga_easttimor.pdf, accessed October 4 2006

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* p5

¹³⁶ Milena Pires, ‘An Overview of Women’s Human Rights in East Timor pertaining to CEDAW’, unpublished paper, UNIFEM, East Timor, 2004, p.7

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* p.6

men of the household are not employed it is common for women to continue to be responsible for these tasks.¹³⁸

In rural areas women's load often also includes tending the crops and the livestock upon which the family depends for survival. A rural woman's working day may begin before 5am and end after 10pm. Both male and female participants in one study acknowledged that women have a far greater workload than men both inside and outside the home. However this was regarded by the men as unproblematic and reasonable.¹³⁹

4.1.7 Contribution to and impact of fight for independence

Women contributed to the fight for independence on all three fronts: the diplomatic front, within the clandestine movement, and as members of the armed forces. To date their contribution has been largely downplayed or disregarded and their status as veterans has not been recognized in the same way their male counterparts' status has been.¹⁴⁰ A legal definition of veteran is currently being developed which will theoretically provide for the inclusion of women veterans on the same basis as men and the granting of equal status.

Women suffered greatly during the twenty-five years of conflict in East Timor. Rape was among the many human rights violations women experienced. This was used as a weapon of war resulting in ongoing suffering in the form of psychological and physical trauma, and stigmatisation of rape victims and the children born of the rapes. Additionally thousands of women were left widows due to the murder or disappearance of the partners. Women's demands for punishment of the perpetrators of these crimes have been largely unmet.

The women of East Timor struggle under patriarchy in every regard. Apart from the issues mentioned above women must fight for many basic human rights including property ownership and custody of their children, and against common violations of their

138 *Ibid.* p.6

139 Shanti Dairiam, Draft of Report of CEDAW SEA Program Inception Mission to East Timor, unpublished, located in UNIFEM East Timor files 2004, p.5

140 Milena Pires, Overview, p.3

rights by men such as abandonment and polygamy.¹⁴¹ Within this context rural women are particularly disadvantaged due to having access to even less information, resources, education and employment than their urban sisters.¹⁴² Equality is a distant goal that can only be achieved by the combined efforts of all members of the community: women and men, girls and boys.

4.2 Political and institutional support for the engagement of men in gender equality in East Timor

The Constitution of East Timor commits to providing equality between women and men but makes no specific reference to men's role in that process.

In April 2003 the government of East Timor acceded to CEDAW without reservations. Thus at the governmental level there is an obligation to promote the involvement of men in the process of establishing equality at least to the extent articulated in this convention.¹⁴³

The National Development Plan of East Timor¹⁴⁴ makes many references to women, gender, equality of the sexes, and gender mainstreaming and in the context of its primary goal of poverty reduction it acknowledges that: "gender inequality is the surest way to transmit poverty to future generations of men and women."¹⁴⁵ The primary focus in terms

¹⁴¹ Shanti Dairiam, Draft Report, p.21

¹⁴² Milena Pires, Overview, p.6

¹⁴³ For example in the preamble and Article 5.

¹⁴⁴ The National Development Plan (NDP), formulated before independence provides a 5-year development framework and strategy. The NDP's main objectives are poverty reduction and promotion of economic growth that is equitable and sustainable, and improves the health, education and well-being of every Timorese. Key development indicators in the NDP explicitly draw on the global Millenium Development Goals.

¹⁴⁵ Prime Minister and Cabinet of the Government of East Timor, The National Development Plan, 2004, Part I, 3.11, available from: <http://www.pm.gov.tp/ndp.htm>, accessed October 4 2006.

of addressing inequality is the transformation and empowerment of women themselves. However there are two passing references to the power and responsibility of men in achieving gender-equality related goals:

The ingrained orientation of men towards the traditional roles of women in East Timorese society needs to be changed through education and sensitization.¹⁴⁶

Civic and political leaders and opinion makers can set role model examples in their personal behaviour, promoting gender equity.¹⁴⁷

The document *East Timor 2020 – Our Nation, Our Future*¹⁴⁸ contains extensive reference to the need for empowerment of women and equality between the sexes. However, it makes but one reference to men's role in achieving those goals. The wording of that reference is particularly significant.

Under the topic of 'Empowering Women', the section titled 'What people say they can do' includes four items. The three pertaining to required changes in, or actions by women are stated as 'we can': "We can build the capacity of women"; "We can work every day making tais"; "We can send our daughters to school". The one reference to men is expressed: "Men should respect their wives and other women"¹⁴⁹, belying a lack of confidence in men's willingness or ability to put this into action.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Part I, 3.7

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Part I, 3.11

¹⁴⁸ In East Timor immediately following the achievement of independence a National Vision for the year 2020 was formulated and a National Development Plan for the next five years drafted. *East Timor 2020 – Our Nation, Our Future* represents a popular expression of this vision. The aspirations of the people were gathered through a countrywide consultation process, involving 980 community consultations within the 498 villages reaching 38,293 East Timorese men, women and children. Contributions were also made by village heads, hamlet heads, teachers and health personnel, civil society groups, including NGOs and religious organizations, government officials, academics and members of political parties. The document addresses a variety of topics and under each topic it considers: Our vision; Our Goals; Challenges we face; What people say they can do; What people say civil society can do; What people say the government should do; What the government plans to do over the next five years etc.

¹⁴⁹ (Emphasis added) Planning Commission, *East Timor 2020- Our Nation, Our Future*, 2005, p. 35, available from: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEASTTIMOR/Resources/Our+Nation+Vision.pdf>, accessed October 6 2006

The Second National East Timorese Women's Congress was held in July 2004. It was attended by 224 delegates of whom 24 (10%) were men¹⁵⁰. A man was elected to occupy one of three elected positions of the Congress.¹⁵¹ One of the nineteen presentations made at the Congress was by a man representing the Association for Men Against Violence. He spoke on 'The role of men and boys in preventing gender-based violence'.

During the congress seven workshops were conducted, one goal of which was to formulate a plan of action for the next four years based on the seven priority issues identified at the regional congresses preceding the national congress. For each of these issues specific problems or needs were identified. Only one need in one area made specific reference to men as potential partners in tackling the issues raised. Addressing the issue of women and health one of the needs articulated is: "The impact of prostitution¹⁵² and polygamy on the spread of STDs and HIV/AIDS need to be understood by men and women."

The Platform for Action 2004-2008 that came out of the congress listed twenty-three 'strategic objectives' or goals. Of those twenty-three only one mentions men in their capacity as potential partners for change. The third of three strategic objectives in the area of health is to "increase women and men's understanding of gender at all levels of society."¹⁵³

An analysis of achievements since the First National East Timorese Women's Congress (2000), mentioned positive changes in general awareness and in laws pertaining to domestic violence but noted the continued prevalence of the problem. It was concluded that "[m]en's mentalities are seen as more difficult to change."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Rede Feto, *Final Report: Second National East Timorese Women's Congress, 27-31 July 2004*, East Timor, 2004, p.8

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.* p.9

¹⁵² *Ibid.* p.14

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* p.19

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 26

CHAPTER FIVE Theory underpinning practice: Bahá'í Approaches to Social and Economic Development

5.1 Introduction

The primary focus of this study is the practical application of learning, and the chief objective is to contribute to action, not just the generation of ideas or theory. However a careful consideration of theoretical perspectives on areas relevant to engaging men in gender equality is essential.

As this research has been defined above as action research, I believe it is - valuable to consider not only the theoretical and practical knowledge that has been garnered in East Timor and globally pertinent to the immediate issue of men and gender equality, but also to explore innovative approaches to social and economic development. The application of the learning from this study, which is presented in this thesis, should ultimately result in such innovative development. Much valuable theoretical and practical knowledge in many areas has not resulted in significant social and economic development for the primary reason that the 'vehicle' or approach to development is fundamentally flawed.¹⁵⁵ Space does not permit a critical analysis of various approaches to social and economic development. Instead I have chosen to focus on one general, innovative, and highly fruitful approach to development, which is being applied and developed in diverse locations around the world.¹⁵⁶ Namely, I explore approaches to social and economic development that are guided by and draw extensively on the Bahá'í Teachings.

¹⁵⁵ Improving Human Condition: Will We Reach the Goals we Set for Ourselves?, Ambassador William H. Luers, Global Health Link magazine, Issue 131, available from: <http://www.unausa.org/site/pp.asp?c=fvKRI8MPJpF&b=401517>, accessed December 10 2006

¹⁵⁶ There are over 1300 Bahá'í social and economic development projects being conducted in over 100 countries throughout the world. Source Overview of Bahá'í Social and Economic Development, Holly Hansen, available from: <http://info.bahai.org/article-1-8-1-6.html>, accessed December 10 2006

5.2 Redefining Development

Social and Economic Development (SED) is enshrined in the Writings of the Founder-Prophet of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh, and Bahá'ís have been engaged in this work in various forms since the late nineteenth century. However, it was not until 1983 that the worldwide Bahá'í community was encouraged by its international governing body –the Universal House of Justice – to engage in Social and Economic Development in a systematic and widespread way, and the Office for Social and Economic Development was established at the Bahá'í world center in Haifa, Israel.

This encouragement took the form of a letter to the Bahá'ís of the world, “a call to action” which summoned all, “whether adult or youth, veteran or newly-enrolled [in the Bahá'í community]” to “step forth to take their places in the arena of service where their talents and skills, their specialized training, their material resources, their offers of time and energy and, above all, their dedication to Bahá'í principles, can be put to work in improving the lot of man.”¹⁵⁷ The fact that the vast majority of recipients of this letter reside in so-called developing countries is indicative of the unique definition and approach to development work promoted by the Bahá'í community.

Development 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.”¹⁵⁸ Indeed, from a Bahá'í perspective “highly industrialized and technology oriented cultures have as many challenges as the so-called ...lesser developed countries.”¹⁵⁹ Rather development is a “manifestation of faith in action,”¹⁶⁰ the application of the teachings and principles of the Faith in service to humanity “to uplift

¹⁵⁷The Universal House of Justice, ‘Letter to the Bahá'ís of the World, October 20, 1983’, in *A Wider Horizon Selected Messages of the Universal House of Justice 1983-1992*, pp6-10, available from: <http://Bahá'í-library.com/published.uhj/wider.horizon/1.html#p1b>, accessed October 10 2006

¹⁵⁸Farzam 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
¹⁵⁹Gregory Kagira-Watson and Dwight Allen, ‘Increasing Perceptions of Bahá'í Models of Development’, Bahá'í Conference on Social & Economic Development, 2003, available from: <http://www.rabbanitrust.org/papers2003.htm>, accessed October 10 2006

¹⁶⁰The Universal House of Justice, ‘Letter to the Bahá'ís of the World, October 20, 1983’.

the human condition”.¹⁶¹ The Universal House of Justice defined Bahá’í social and economic development work as “learning to apply the Teachings to achieve progress”.¹⁶²

This definition then raises two questions: What are the Bahá’í Teachings? And what is progress? The Bahá’í Teachings will be referred to throughout this chapter. Indeed they will be drawn upon in order to redefine the concept ‘progress’.

Firstly, progress, from a Bahá’í perspective is not measured in terms of level of industrialization, or the extent to which a community or nation engages in the lifestyle, values, cultural patterns and aspirations of industrialized nations. These patterns of modernization which promote the domination of material ambitions over spiritual goals and result in the accelerated disintegration of rural life and the misery of city slums are regarded not only as an unattainable goal for a vast majority of the world’s peoples, but also as the fruit of bankrupt social ideologies and ultimately undesirable.¹⁶³

Nor, however, does the Bahá’í concept of progress and development romanticize traditional societies or defend the unchanged preservation of subsistence and peasant economies. Rather, progress constitutes the development of a “scientifically and technologically modern society [whose]... educational, economic, administrative, political, and cultural structures [are based] on the concept of the integral nature of [human beings] rather than... mere material needs.”¹⁶⁴ Bahá’í development then, while recognising the importance of economic prosperity, gives due weight to the moral, ethical or spiritual dimension of the human being. Additionally, Bahá’í development does not merely entail finding new solutions to old problems. It demands revaluation of the problem. Global prosperity cannot be achieved, writes Holly Hanson, because current understandings of global issues are fundamentally flawed.

¹⁶¹ Duncan and Cindy Hanks, ‘Bahá’í social and economic development projects’, Bahá’í Development Seminar For The Americas: Common Elements Among Bahá’í Social And Economic Development Projects, 1999, available from: <http://www.rabbanitrust.org/papers1999/commonelementsamongdevelopmentprojects.doc>, accessed October 11 2006

¹⁶² The Universal House of Justice, ‘Bahá’í Social And Economic Development: Prospects for the Future: Prospects for the Future’, *Noble Creation Website*, 1993, available from: <http://www.bcca.org/services/lists/noble-creation/guidesed.html>, accessed October 10 2006

¹⁶³ Farzam Arbab, ‘Rural University: Learning about Education and Development’

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Our capacity to overcome global inequality is impeded by the perception that areas of extreme and increasing poverty are the problem. Actually, both areas of extreme wealth and areas of extreme poverty are the problem. The divisions and inequalities which characterize our world are part of its structure. It is divided and unequal because it evolved in a way that empowered some parts of the planet at the expense of other parts of the planet. The weakness and lack of resources in some regions is not an unfortunate oversight which can be fixed by a transfer of tools, or funds, or knowledge that will cause them to catch up with the regions that have the most resources. The resource-rich regions are what they are because the resource-poor regions are what they are. They have made each other. The connections are profound and structural. The parts of the world are a system, together.^{165 166}

Bahá'u'lláh likens the world to a human body “which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies.”¹⁶⁷ Holly Hanson elaborates on this analogy:

If we regard the world as a human body, we can see how problems of our world are about the whole structure, the whole system, not just part of it. If one part of a body shows a symptom of illness, the whole body is ill. A person does not have measles only where the spots are. A person does not have the flu only in the joints that hurt. The whole body has the illness. So when the world is sick, the whole world has the sickness. If part of the world is not prospering, then all the parts of the world have a problem.

A human body that begins to concentrate all its growth in one area will become deformed. If most of the nutrients and oxygen are flowing to a small part of the body, and the rest of the body gets less nutrients and oxygen as a result, which part of the body will be healthy? The part with too many resources will be sick: swollen, misshapen, cancerous. The parts of the body that are deprived of resources are also sick: they will be stunted and weak. If this condition continues for a long time, none of the parts will work properly. The structure of the body will

¹⁶⁵ Holly Hanson, ‘Global Dilemmas, Local Responses: Creating Patterns of Action that Make the World Different’, Bahá’í Library Online, 2002, available from: http://Bahá'í-library.com/?file=hanson_global_dilemmas, accessed October 10 2006.

¹⁶⁶ Holly Hanson, ‘Global Dilemmas, Local Responses: Creating Patterns of Action that Make the World Different’, Bahá’í Library Online, 2002, available from: http://Bahá'í-library.com/?file=hanson_global_dilemmas, accessed October 10 2006.

¹⁶⁷ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, United States.

change. Some muscles and bones will atrophy, others will become exaggerated and the structure will become distorted.¹⁶⁸

The recovery of this sick body, says Bahá'u'lláh, "dependeth upon the harmonizing of all of its component elements."¹⁶⁹ Bahá'í development then, takes as its starting point the recognition that the problem is systemic, and not the 'lack of development' in the global South, and that the solution must pay due attention to the non-material aspects of the human being and of human societies. It is 'learning to apply the Teachings to achieve progress',¹⁷⁰ with the purpose of 'laying foundations for a new social order that can cultivate the limitless potentialities latent in human consciousness.'^{171,172}

In the words of the Bahá'í International Community:

Development, ...is an organic process in which "the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material"¹ [and] the seemingly antithetical processes of individual progress and social advancement, of globalization and decentralization, and of promoting universal standards and fostering cultural diversity, be harmonized. In our increasingly interdependent world, development efforts must be guided by a vision of the type of world community we wish to create and be animated by a set of universal values. Just institutions, from the local to the planetary level, and systems of governance in which people can assume responsibility for the institutions and processes that affect their lives, are also essential.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Holly Hanson, 'Global Dilemmas, Local Responses: Creating Patterns of Action that Make the World Different'.

¹⁶⁹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, United States, 1988, p. 55

¹⁷⁰ The Universal House of Justice, 'Bahá'í Social And Economic Development: Prospects for the Future: Prospects for the Future', *Noble Creation Website*, 1993, available from: <http://www.bcca.org/services/lists/noble-creation/guides.html>, accessed October 10 2006, p. 3

¹⁷¹ Bahá'í International Community, *Prosperity of Humankind*, Bahá'í International Community Statement Library, first distributed at the United Nations World Summit on Social Development, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1995, p. 13, available from: <http://www.bic-un.Bahá'í.org/95-0303.htm>, accessed October 10 2006.

¹⁷² Paul Lample, 'Centers of Learning for Social and Economic Development', 1995, Bahá'í-education.org, available from: http://Bahá'í-education.org/materials/essays/Lample_centers.htm, accessed October 11 2006.

¹⁷³ 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.

Aspects of the way in which Bahá'í social development strives to 'harmonize the component parts' will be discussed below. They include founding and evaluating all development efforts on spiritual principles; ensuring a truly participatory approach; engaging communities in alternative methods of decision-making; achieving integration of the material and spiritual, South and North, diverse areas of intervention, and various levels of intervention; and valuing diversity of culture even while promoting change.

The Bahá'í definition of social and economic development has implications for the development of interventions aimed at promoting gender equality and engaging East Timorese boys and men in the process. Firstly it must be recognized that the gender relations of the global North do not necessarily serve as the model to which East Timorese boys and men should aspire. Secondly it is clear that the goal of gender equality is not for women to 'catch up' to men, while men remain unchanged. Rather men and women need to transform and the relationship between them needs to transform also. Development and progress is not women driving tractors or becoming presidents. Progress is represented by a re-evaluation of all our learned values. The importance of women serving as national presidents lies not so much in that women in power will make great changes, or that individual women will have power, but rather it is valuable because it contributes to the process of rethinking our values and beliefs: if women can be presidents, men can be parents, if women can be educated and articulate, men can engage with their own and others' emotions, and can communicate effectively and so on.

5.3 Spiritual Principles¹⁷⁴ in Bahá'í Social and Economic Development

One of the distinguishing features of Bahá'í Social and Economic Development is the centrality of spiritual principles in all theory and practice. The oneness of humanity is the

¹⁷⁴ Spiritual principles, the Bahá'í Writings state, are those essential truths given to mankind by that ultimate reality, that unknowable essence of essences called God. The religions brought to mankind by a succession of spiritual luminaries have been the primary link between humanity and that ultimate reality, and have galvanized and refined mankind's capacity to love, to comprehend reality and to achieve social progress.

operating principle and ultimate goal of the Bahá'í Faith and all its endeavours, including development work. The importance of and need to actively cultivate virtue, or spiritual qualities, in all protagonists of Bahá'í Social and Economic Development – including the individual, community and institutions of society - is also emphasised throughout primary and secondary Bahá'í sources. Spiritual principles and systems of spiritual principles form the foundation of all interventions, inspiring and guiding concrete practical measures. Directly linked with this and with the increasing appreciation by international development agencies of the need to consider spirituality as an aspect of development interventions, the Bahá'í community has made a contribution to the process of identifying spiritually-based indicators for use by Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í 'practitioners'. In this section three of the abovementioned applications of spiritual principles will be discussed in greater depth.

More than one hundred years ago Bahá'u'lláh declared that the “earth is but one country and mankind its citizens”¹⁷⁵. The Bahá'í Writings also state that “the happiness of mankind lieth in the unity and harmony of the human race and that spiritual and material developments are conditioned upon love and amity towards all men.”¹⁷⁶ Today, this principle of the oneness of humanity and the inter-dependence of all peoples and nations on the planet guides Bahá'í development work, which transcends all national and cultural boundaries. Development is seen within the context of an emerging global civilization.¹⁷⁷

The implications of this oneness are vast. From individuals it requires the elimination of all forms of prejudice. It demands a “fundamental change in the manner in which people relate to each other, and the eradication of those age-old practices which deny the intrinsic human right of every individual to be treated with consideration and respect.”¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 250

¹⁷⁶ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Great Britain, p. 286

¹⁷⁷ Gregory Watson, 'Culture & Development: A Survey of the Bahá'í Experience', presented at a conference for the UN's World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-97), UN Headquarters, New York, 1991, available from: http://www.homestead.com/watsongregory/files/un_talk.html, accessed October 12 2006

¹⁷⁸ National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom, *Notes for Guidance for Local Spiritual Assemblies*, London, 1993, p.59

From the nations of the world it calls for " a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity. . ." ¹⁷⁹ For "[u]nity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving towards a climax. A world, growing to maturity, must abandon this fetish, recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of life." ¹⁸⁰

The implications of not recognizing and acting in accordance with this principle are also vast, for a sustainable global society can only be erected upon the foundation of genuine unity, harmony and understanding among the people of the world. "So long as disunity, antagonism, and provincialism characterize the social, political, and economic relations within and among nations, sustainable development will remain an unachievable goal." ¹⁸¹

A failure to embrace this principle will deprive the members of the human race of the "ethical and motivational imperative... to assume responsibility for the fate of the planet." And without this touching of the human spirit "the peoples of the world are unlikely to become active, constructive participants in the global process of sustainable development. The enormous financial, technical, human, and moral resources necessary

¹⁷⁹ Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette, 1982, pp. 41-42

¹⁸⁰ The Universal House of Justice (ed.), *The Compilation of Compilations vol II*, Victoria, 1991, p. 184

¹⁸¹ National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 'Unity And Consultation - Foundations Of Sustainable Development: A statement', 1994, available from: <http://www.ibiblio.org/Bahá'í/Texts/English/Foundations-of-Sustainable-Development.html>, accessed October 11 2006

for creating a sustainable society will only be released when this ethic of our fundamental oneness is fully embraced.”¹⁸² For it is

[o]nly through the dawning consciousness that they constitute a single people will the inhabitants of the planet be enabled to turn away from the patterns of conflict that have dominated social organization in the past and begin to learn the ways of collaboration and conciliation. "The well-being of mankind," Bahá'u'lláh writes, "its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established."¹⁸³

While the oneness of humanity is the pivotal principle on which Bahá'í projects around the world are based, the application of other universal principles is also essential for the achievement of true progress. Such principles and qualities as unity, integrity, cooperation, trustworthiness, and truthfulness, can serve as a basis upon which communities can make meaningful strides towards self-reliance.¹⁸⁴ From a Bahá'í perspective these qualities, rather than a set of inflexible rules, may be regarded as the “invisible infrastructure for development.”¹⁸⁵

These principles have not been established through “inductive insights catalogued from successful projects.”¹⁸⁶ Rather they are drawn from the Bahá'í Writings and have not changed in over a century of development efforts. As Gregory Kagira-Watson writes:

In Bahá'í SED we seem to have the advantage of starting with spiritual principles applicable to development [articulated in the Teachings] ...

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Bahá'í International Community, *Prosperity of Humankind*, Bahá'í International Community Statement Library, first distributed at the United Nations World Summit on Social Development, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1995, available from: <http://www.bic-un.Bahá'í.org/95-0303.htm>, accessed October 10 2006.

¹⁸⁴ Bahá'í International Community, 'Review and Appraisal of the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace in Africa', Statement to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Arusha, Tanzania, 8-12 October 1984, available from: <http://statements.Bahá'í.org/pdf/84-0366.pdf#search=%22BIC%20October%201984%2C%20Tanzania%22>, accessed October 12 2006

¹⁸⁵ Hanson, Holly, 'Overview of Bahá'í social and economic development', Bahá'í Topics: An information source, 1992, available from: <http://info.Bahá'í.org/article-1-8-1-6.html>, accessed October 10 2006

¹⁸⁶ Greg Kagira-Watson, 'Increasing Perceptions of Bahá'í Models of Development', Bahá'í Conference on Social & Economic Development, 2003, available from: http://www.rabbanitrust.org/Bahá'í_sed_conference.htm, accessed on October 10 2006.

instead of having to do a lot of experimenting to figure them out. Most science requires a lot of observation and experimentation in order to figure out the principles or laws that govern a domain, ... We have the advantage of being able to begin deductively rather than inductively.¹⁸⁷

With this 'infrastructure' in place then, Bahá'í Social and Economic Development works deductively to discover how these principles may apply in various cultural contexts and what can/cannot be transferred from one culture to another.

One principle on which the Bahá'ís draw to plan and guide their development work is the principle of unity. The establishment and maintenance of unity is an essential part of all Bahá'í endeavours. This unity is not however "a childish, romantic idea of brotherhood." As Dr Farzam Arbab explains:

It is a unity that understands self-interest and conflict but strives to transcend them; it is a unity that must be constantly defended, especially during this period of human history when the most noticeable effects of the disintegrating forces attacking the villages are disunity and division - into sects, political factions, and conflicting groups of every nature - divisions that weaken the community and open the doors to exploitation and oppression. Moreover, it is well understood that the maintenance of unity, even in its simplest form, which involves settling small differences among the inhabitants, points to the principle that the basis of the desired unity is justice.¹⁸⁸

Another spiritual principle is that of love. In connection with this Holly Hanson explores 'Abdu'l-Bahá's¹⁸⁹ statement that the love of God is "the true foundation of all economics."¹⁹⁰ She suggests it may be hard to comprehend this idea due to the prevailing ideas of economic activity as efficient selfishness. Yet, the error of the latter and truth of the former is not difficult to appreciate.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ 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

¹⁸⁹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the Son of the Founder-Prophet of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'u'lláh appointed 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the leader of the Bahá'í Community and He served in this capacity from 1892 to His passing in 1921.

¹⁹⁰ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, Wilmette, 1982, p. 239

We love God, therefore we love God's people. Every economic activity we engage in, when we are producing things, adding value to things, or exchanging things, creates opportunities to express love, concern, and respect for other people. The more this happens, the more vital the connections will be, and also, the more prosperous.

The opposite is also true. Economic activity which ... expresses self-interest rather than concern for others, is not only not productive, it is utterly, essentially destructive. Over the long term, self-interested economic activity creates differences that engender hatred and social disorder. If the essence of economics is love, but we behave as though the essence of economics is selfishness, people are hurt, the social order breaks down, and divisions emerge. ... Patterns of economic activity without love are the basis of many, many arenas of conflict in the present, which seem to have origins in differences of ethnicity, religion, or nationality.¹⁹¹

5.4 A system of principles

The spiritual principles that are the basis and guide for Bahá'í Social and Economic Development are intricately linked one to the other – as suggested in the example above where unity proved to be dependent on justice. In isolation these principles are inadequate to carry out the development process. It is when these principles are combined to form a system that they can come to serve as a development model.¹⁹²

As Greg Kagira-Watson states: “In development work we are concerned ... with the sphere of human sociological experience--the development of cultures and societies. Just as one can invent or infer a cosmology to explain the physics of the universe, we can posit broad perspectives which can help explain the nature of human systems, such as the evolution or development of societies—not just in the past, but alive and real today, in a world of ever-changing demands...”

¹⁹¹ Holly Hanson, 'The World We Want Overcoming Barriers to Systematic Action', Orlando Bahá'í Development Conference, Florida, 2001, available from: <http://Bahá'í-library.org/conferences/world.hanson.html>, accessed October 10 2006

¹⁹² Greg Kagira-Watson, 'Increasing Perceptions of Bahá'í Models of Development'.

In combination principles can condition each other, leading to the attainment of a level of generalizability transcending any specific case or context. Additionally, the failure to appreciate the value of a relevant principle, or the accidental failure to apply it to a given intervention, inevitably results in some level of failure in that intervention. For example efforts to improve education that ignore the principle of equality of the sexes cannot achieve the success that might otherwise have been possible.¹⁹³

This requirement for success can become quite complex when, for example a given intervention requires consideration of a dozen or more vital principles. However it is a crucial aspect of successful development work from a Bahá'í perspective, for while some principles may apply more than others in a given circumstance, “[e]very principle has a certain valence or weight to bear upon a matter”.¹⁹⁴ Additionally, the truth is often found in opposing principles and Bahá'í development challenges practitioners to reconcile, for example, the principles of “mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion, and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candor, and courage on the other,”¹⁹⁵ to name but a few.

5.5 Spiritual indicators for evaluation

Agreed upon indicators of progress, (along with clear goals, meaningful policies and standards and identified programs), are critical to the achievement of a peaceful and prosperous future for the whole of humanity. They provide governments, multilateral organizations, the private sector, organizations of civil society, and individuals with a clear understanding of the goal towards which they are working as well as the means to chart and correct the course to that goal.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ Shoghi Effendi, *Lights of Guidance*, New Delhi, 1994, p. 34

¹⁹⁶ Bahá'í International Community, (1998). ‘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, England, February 1998. Available from: <http://info.Bahá'í.org/article-1-8-1-5.html>. Accessed October 10, 2006.

An indicator can be defined as “a quantitative, qualitative or descriptive measure that, when periodically... monitored”¹⁹⁷ can show the quality, direction, pace and results of change.”¹⁹⁸ Indicators can be assembled in various ways and are usually not meaningful sources of information in isolation or in the absence of a specific temporal context. The primary purpose of indicators is to measure progress or extent of change. However indicators also help to shape the way we perceive reality, can help forge a common understanding of development; provide information about and draw attention to important issues; create public awareness; and trigger shifts in resource allocation. Thus they can play an important role not only in monitoring progress but also in creating progress.¹⁹⁹

Many efforts are now being made to generate indicators that reflect not only changes in GDPs and economics, but also changes in “human capital, social capital, culture, social integration and community well-being”.²⁰⁰ As important as these efforts are, the Bahá’í International Community notes, they are “only the preliminary steps in the process of charting a new direction for the human family.”²⁰¹ These efforts must be ‘greatly expanded’ and ‘new approaches to conceptualising and measuring both the tangible and the intangible aspects of development’ must be explored and developed. “Notions of what constitute efficacious measures of development need to be closely examined to determine the extent to which they take into account that which is central to human purpose and

¹⁹⁷ Background Report #3, The Intergovernmental Seminar on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management, Helsinki, Finland, August 19 - 22, 1996, p.17, available from: <http://www.metla.fi/info/vlib/Forestry/Category/Events/>, accessed October 10 2006

¹⁹⁸ Bahá’í International Community, ‘Valuing Spirituality in Development’.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Refer to UNDP’s annual *Human Development Reports* as well as global action plans from major UN conferences of the 1990s including the 1990 World Summit for Children (the *World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children* and the *Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990's*); the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* and *Agenda 21*); the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights (the *Vienna Declaration and Program of Action*); the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (the *Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*); the 1995 World Summit for Social Development (the *Copenhagen Declaration and Program of Action*); the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (the *Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action*); and the 1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements - Habitat II (the *Istanbul Declaration* and the *Habitat Agenda*).

²⁰¹ 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

motivation.”²⁰² One possible new approach is the development of spiritually based indicators.

As a contribution to the process of the development of spiritually based indicators, in 1998 the Bahá’í International Community submitted a concept paper to the World Faiths and Development Dialogue, hosted by the President of the World Bank and the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace, London.²⁰³

In this paper titled *Initial Considerations Regarding the Creation of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development* the Bahá’í International Community explained spiritually based indicators in the following way:

Spiritually based indicators assess development progress as a function of the application of spiritual principles. These indicators are based on universal principles which are essential to the development of the human spirit and, therefore, to individual and collective progress. These measures emerge from a vision of development in which material progress serves as a vehicle for spiritual and cultural advancement.

Spiritually based indicators help to establish, clarify and prioritize goals, policies and programs. At the heart of their conceptualization is the understanding that human nature is fundamentally spiritual and that spiritual principles, which resonate with the human soul, provide an enormous motivational power for sacrifice and change. ...

The components of a spiritually based indicator include a vision of a peaceful and united future; the selected principle(s) crucial to the realization of that future; the policy area addressed by the principle(s); and the goal toward which the measure assesses progress. The indicator is quantitatively or qualitatively measurable and verifiable, and it is adaptable within a wide diversity of contexts without violating the integrity of the principle(s) involved.²⁰⁴

The writers then select a sample of five spiritual principles (unity in diversity; equity and justice; equality of the sexes; trustworthiness and moral leadership; and independent investigation of truth) and five priority policy areas (economic development; education;

²⁰² Bahá’í International Community, ‘Valuing Spirituality in Development’.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Bahá’í International Community, ‘Valuing Spirituality in Development’.

environmental stewardship; meeting basic needs in food, nutrition, health and shelter; and governance and participation) and offer examples of how spiritually based indicators can be developed. The following is just one example.

The first example of a spiritually based indicator explores the application of the principle of unity in diversity to educational policy. Beginning with a vision of development that accepts both the possibility and the necessity of a united and peaceful world, *unity in diversity* is identified as a spiritual principle essential to the realization of that future. A policy area is then chosen: in this case, *education*. By considering the principle of unity in diversity in education, numerous possibilities for policies, goals and programs emerge, several of which might be pursued. In this exercise, however, consideration will be limited to just one goal: *to foster in students a global consciousness* - a consciousness inherent in the principle of unity in diversity.

An educational program to promote such a consciousness might include, but not be limited to, cultivating an appreciation for the richness and importance of the world's diverse cultural, religious and social systems, and nurturing the feeling of belonging to and responsibility toward the world community. It might also include study of the significant contributions that the nations of the world are making to humanity's collective progress through participation in such international fora as the United Nations, through such agreements as the numerous human rights treaties and UN global action plans, and through such international initiatives as the World Heritage Sites.

To assess progress toward this goal, one might measure the percentage of time - both in-class and in after school programs - dedicated to subject matter or activities which foster global consciousness. Another measure might be a content analysis of textbooks to determine the percentage of space dedicated to the same. Still another measure might be the prevalence of such subject matters in the curricula of teacher training institutes. Yet another might involve the attitudes and knowledge of students (and teachers) related to these matters, as gauged by surveys. This exercise could be taken further: several of these measures might be combined into a composite index, or they might be assembled as a set of indicators related to the goal of fostering a global consciousness in students.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

From this summary and example, and from the discussions in the preceding sections it is possible to gain an appreciation of the way the Bahá'í community draws on spiritual principle in all stages of its development work from conception and planning, to implementation and evaluation.

5.6 Participatory Development

The importance of participation by grassroots peoples in development projects aimed at improving their situation is increasingly recognized by development practitioners and agencies worldwide. The meaning of participation however is open to a variety of interpretations and is used 'more than often' to refer to the involvement of villagers in plans already designed by others. That is, so-called participatory projects are frequently concerned with development "for and not by the people".²⁰⁶ 'Participatory' development projects may engage villagers in the detection of needs and the formulation of plans, may seek their contribution in labour and kind, and may request their feedback on aspects of the interventions. From a Bahá'í perspective, however, participation is examined 'within the context of the institutional capacities of a people and the organization of their common learning...'.²⁰⁷

Participation must involve the development of human resources and sustainability, as well the establishment of institutions and organizations that truly belonging to the people. But perhaps the most important aspect of participation is the people's generation and organization of their own knowledge. Drawing on his experience with Fundacion para la Aplicacion y Ensehanza de las Ciencias (FUNDAEC) in Columbia Dr Farzam Arbab asks:

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

²⁰⁶ 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

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

require more than skills to share in development; manuals that transfer know-how - how to apply fertilizers or how to give an injection - are based on the assumption that decisions relating to rural development will always be made outside the region.²⁰⁸

Thus access to knowledge and participation in its generation is one of the most important elements of the process of development, and the lack of such access is a condition that opens doors to oppression.²⁰⁹

The emphasis on people's participation manifesting itself in the establishment of their own institutions and in the generation and organization of knowledge is an important aspect of sustainability. Many development projects in which villagers have 'actively participated' and which have achieved a level of success have, upon termination 'left rural populations with rapidly deteriorating conditions' due to a lack of structures to provide and sustain the actions.²¹⁰

But sustainability is not limited to such organization. Sustainability is a dynamic process that requires consideration both of our present balance between parts of society and between society and nature, and of the future potential to maintain that balance. Sustainability is an expression of justice. It represents solidarity within and between generations. It condemns present actions that place a burden on or reduce the possibilities available to future generations. It requires a long-term view and an integrated perspective of the whole human and natural system.²¹¹

If, as Arthur Dahl says, "[a] sustainable community must be characterized by its sense of solidarity, ensuring that everyone has a place with dignity and self-respect"²¹² then 'participation' in development work must come to mean much more than just the implementation of projects planned, funded and directed from outside the community.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ Arthur I. Dahl, 'Spiritual dimensions of sustainable development', Workshop on Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, Bucharest, Romania, 22-23 March 1996, available from <http://www.bcca.org/ief/ddahl96a.htm>, accessed October 10 2006

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

This understanding of participation and sustainability is so fundamental to Bahá'í Social and Economic Development that Bahá'í communities who have been offered funds to initiate projects have, on occasion, refused to accept them due to an absence of community support and commitment with which to sustain the project once external funding is terminated. This in fact reflects a policy of the national and international institutions that coordinate Bahá'í development activities worldwide.²¹³

5.7 Decision Making

In order to ensure the disinterested application of spiritual principles to all parts of the development process, comprehensive and universal participation, and sustainability, new modalities of decision-making are required. Adversarial approaches to decision-making having proven inadequate to the enormous challenges and complexities of sustainable development. Political paralysis cripples even the most democratic of systems as parties or groups compete with opponents for power, abandoning the true short- and long-term interests of the people they purport to serve, and caring little for truth, justice, cooperation or even courtesy.²¹⁴ There is clearly a need for decision-making processes that avoid the replication of attitudes, procedures, ideals, and mechanisms that, 'even when hidden under the name of democracy, finally lead to the consolidation of the power of some people over others.'²¹⁵

The decision-making process applied universally in Bahá'í families, communities, institutions and development work is known as the 'art of consultation'. On one level, Bahá'í consultation is '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

²¹³ Hanson, Holly, 'Overview of Bahá'í social and economic development', Bahá'í Topics: An information source, 1992, available from: <http://info.Bahá'í.org/article-1-8-1-6.html>, accessed October 10 2006

²¹⁴ National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, 'Unity And Consultation - Foundations Of Sustainable Development: A statement', 1994, available from: <http://www.ibiblio.org/Bahá'í/Texts/English/Foundations-of-Sustainable-Development.html>, accessed October 11 2006

²¹⁵ Farzam Arbab, 'FUNDAEC: Fundacion para la Aplicacion y Ensenanza de las Ciencias', Noble Creation Website, 1996, available from: <http://www.bcca.org/services/lists/noble-creation/fundaec1.html>, accessed October 10 2006

decision.’²¹⁶ Participants in the process of consultation are not divided into opposing groups based on their opinions. Rather each individual contributes her/his idea to the group’s exploration of and search for truth.

On a more profound level, the Bahá’í consultation process serves as ‘the very backbone of any Bahá’í methodology of community action. It is group action-reflection; it is exploration of reality, experimentation, deliberation on concrete directions of activity as well as the principles and concepts that must guide it; it is raising the level of awareness, community self-diagnosis and self-education.’²¹⁷

This form of decision-making provides no forum for a "minority" report or "position of the opposition". Rather, decisions are made unanimously or by majority vote and full support is given to such decisions. If the decision is erroneous this will become clear in the implementation and a new decision can be made. But this unified support of the majority decision ensures that ‘if a decision or a project fails, the problem lies in the idea itself, and not in the lack of support from the community or the obstinate actions of opponents.’²¹⁸

More than a century of experience in this form of decision-making has proven its potential for empowering women and minorities; conceiving and implementing creative solutions to difficult problems; improving communication between wives and husbands thus strengthening the family unit; promoting personal growth and collective solidarity. Thus these consultative principles have been an integral component of Bahá’í social and

²¹⁶ 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

²¹⁷ Farzam Arbab, The Process of Social Transformation, available from: <http://bahai-library.org/books/marxism/marxism4.arbab.html>, accessed December 10 2006

²¹⁸ National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States, ‘Unity And Consultation - Foundations Of Sustainable Development: A statement’, 1994, available from: <http://www.ibiblio.org/Bahá’í/Texts/English/Foundations-of-Sustainable-Development.html>, accessed October 11 2006

economic development activities throughout the world. From a Bahá'í perspective the process of decision-making is as important as the achievements.

Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.²¹⁹

5.8 Culture and Change

In the UNESCO Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies culture is defined 'in its widest sense' as:

...the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs; ... it ... gives man the ability to reflect upon himself... makes us specifically human, rational beings, endowed with a critical judgement and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that we discern values and make choices. It is through culture that man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognizes his incompleteness, questions his own achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings and creates works through which he transcends his limitations."²²⁰

UNESCO has also bemoaned the threat to the cultural life of the peoples of the world, expressing concern about the "worldwide influence of a certain number of cultural

²¹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh, in *Consultation: A Compilation*, Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (ed.), United States, 1987, p.3

²²⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) , 'Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies', World Conference on Cultural Policies, Mexico City, 26 July - 6 August 1982, available from: http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12762&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html, accessed October 10 2006.

models, the effects of advertising and the media, the standardization of tastes and life-styles induced by standardized production methods, the erosion of certain traditional values and the difficulty of identifying new ones".²²¹

This definition may conform in a general sense with Bahá'í understandings of culture and UNESCO's concern about the domination and destruction of diverse cultures is certainly a common concern. For the Bahá'ís 'unity in diversity' is the goal, and not uniformity.²²²

At the same time the Bahá'í teachings recognise the need and inevitability of change in all cultures. Cultures must evolve, but they should do so in ways that enhance - quality of life rather than in ways that result in a sense of loss, alienation and other problems. And so, Bahá'ís promote 'selective' preservation of culture, discarding traditions that are not in keeping with principles that contribute to the wellbeing of humanity.²²³

Applying principles identified by mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead to the issue of culture and development, Greg Watson suggests there is an optimum degree of change that does not disrupt the stabilizing influence of culture. Thus, in order to preserve identities 'cultures must become "managing directors of their own evolution"'.²²⁴ Thus, rather than a rigid insistence on clinging to tradition for tradition's sake, or the domination of diverse cultures by a single culture, the goal of Bahá'í development is to contribute to self-directed cultural evolution of diverse peoples based on healthy positive inter-cultural exchanges and interactions.

Instead of being divided by fear and prejudice, each group must come to appreciate their own differences as part of that wonderful unity in diversity that is the human race. Each should maintain and develop their

²²¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *A Practical Guide to the World Decade for Cultural Development*, 1987, available from: <http://www.unesco.org/>, accessed October 10 2006

²²² Greg Kagira-Watson, 'Increasing Perceptions of Bahá'í Models of Development', Bahá'í Conference on Social & Economic Development, 2003, available from: http://www.rabbanitrust.org/Bahá'í_sed_conference.htm, accessed on October 10 2006.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Gregory Watson, 'Culture & Development: A Survey of the Bahá'í Experience', presented at a conference for the UN's World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-97), UN Headquarters, New York, 1991, available from: http://www.homestead.com/watsongregory/files/un_talk.html, accessed October 12 2006

own cultural richness as a contribution to that larger whole that will be the future sustainable society.²²⁵

²²⁵ Arthur I. Dahl, 'Spiritual dimensions of sustainable development', Workshop on Sustainable Development and International Cooperation, Bucharest, Romania, 22-23 March 1996, available from <http://www.bcca.org/ief/ddahl96a.htm>, accessed October 10 2006