



Secretaria de Estado da
Formação Profissional e Emprego

Women In Self Employment

Project Title	: Women in Self Employment (WISE)
Total Budget	: US\$ 539.000 (Funded by UNDP - Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery)
Duration	: 6 Months (March - August 2008)
Project executors	: ILO and UNDP
Targeted area	: Three districts in Timor-Leste (Baucau, Viqueque and Lautem)
Total beneficiaries	: 500 women affected by the crisis and their families for an estimated total of 2,500 beneficiaries.

Background



More than two years after the beginning of the conflict, the return and resettlement of the IDPs continue to be a major challenge hampering the economic recovery and social stabilisation of Timor-Leste. In order to facilitate the process towards a durable solution of the crisis, developing the livelihood of vulnerable members in the host communities is an urgent and critical priority.

Accordingly, there is an urgent need for quick impact recovery activities in the areas of return and livelihoods diversification for the most vulnerable in host communities in the three eastern district of the country is a priority in order to avoid uneven treatment of returnees and hosting local communities and eventually facilitate the development of a durable solution for the crisis. Healing the wounds of this crisis will be, unquestionably, a substantial challenge and women usually managing dual responsibilities at home and at work are definitively the most exposed to socio-economic setbacks of the current changing environment.

Women have traditionally played an important economic role in Timor-Leste and their contribution to production is greater than indicated in official statistics, which often reflect only their primary occupation. Timorese women are less informed

than men, have fewer literacy skills, work harder and longer, have minimal access to resources and are less travelled than men. Moreover, women's lack of status, low self-esteem, and lack of literacy skills, financial collateral and mobility are major factors against women starting and maintaining a business. Therefore, the reality of 'women's work' in Timor-Leste should not be dismissed as outmoded and outdated, but - in the light of the current situation - should be seen as a vehicle that can socially empower women's entrepreneurs.

ILO and UNDP global experience shows that often in a post-crisis context, women are the most resilient and will seek to restart income generation as soon as possible. At the same time women often face more barriers to access entrepreneurship development services and opportunities. Turning 'women's work' into 'women's business' is consequently paramount to promote a sustainable reintegration of vulnerable Timorese women affected by the crisis and, at the same time, ease the burden caused by the flow of returnees on the host families. However, unless a holistic approach is taken and powerful vested interests challenged, the majority of Timorese women affected by the recent conflict, will continue to be consigned to low income and low profit income-generating activities.

While there are no easy and prescriptive solutions to empowering women economically, rapid market-driven skills and general business management training programmes, combined with access to micro-finance services, has proven to be able to sharpen women's business abilities, helping them to develop a competitive edge in starting their own businesses, placing them in a more socially advantageous position and thereby alleviating the burden caused by the crisis.

The WISE Project seeks to develop a lasting capacity of local Business Development Services (BDS) Providers, Vocational Training Centres and Micro Finance Institutions to foster self-employment through technical support of women's potential entrepreneurs in the three eastern districts of Timor-Leste, with the aim of ease the pressure of the displaced people on host communities.

Objective

The WISE Project will contribute to ease the burden of returnees on the host communities' economy through the creation of self-employment opportunities for women potential entrepreneurs in Baucau, Viqueque and Lautem Districts.

Strategy

The WISE Project will be executed by ILO, in close collaboration with the Division of Employment and the Division of Vocational Training of the Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment, which will be the Project main counterpart. UNDP and ILO have been supporting these Divisions of the SSVTE in the implementation of several projects. On top of them, a vocational training and employment creation programme, STAGE will represent the foundation of the overall WISE Project strategy and, at the same time, the main component of its sustainability.

The implementation strategy defined for the WISE Project is based on a close articulation and cooperation that the ILO and UNDP already maintain with the Division of Employment and the Division of Vocational Training of the Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment, in order to ensure Government ownership, while developing the Project activities.

The WISE international and national expertise will work “directly” with the Division of Employment and the Division of Vocational Training officials, constituting an enlarged stronger “one-team” and representing a continued institution building resource for the Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment.

ILO Jakarta Office will provide technical backstopping to the Project. UNDP will channel donor funding and be ultimately accountable for the monitoring of the Project activities.

The sustainability of the WISE Project will be ensured by the follow-up that the UNDP / ILO STAGE Programme will provide to all the beneficiaries in order to further support the newly-established enterprises.

Beneficiaries

Ultimate beneficiaries

The project promotes point 3 of UNDP's Eight-Point Agenda for

Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in Crisis Prevention and Recovery. It will build women's skills and confidence and support women's representation in the economic sphere. It is expected that 500 Timorese women affected by the crisis and their families, an estimated total of 2,500 beneficiaries, will receive direct assistance from the activities of the WISE Project in the districts of Baucau, Viqueque and Lautem, thereby assisting the efforts to lessen the demographic pressure on Dili.

Immediate beneficiaries

Immediate beneficiaries will be private and public institutions/organisations directly involved in the implementation of the activities and that will have access to the advisory and guidance services provided by the WISE Project.

Division of Employment and the Division of Vocational Training of the Secretary of State for Vocational Training and Employment,



Instituto de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Empresarial of the Ministry of Economy and Development, Local administrations in Baucau, Viqueque and Lautem districts, including District, Sub-district, Suco, Aldeia representatives, Micro-Finance Institutions, members of the Association of Microfinance Institutions in Timor-Leste (AMFITIL), Vocational Training Centres, Women associations, Trainers, managers and technicians of the above-mentioned institutions.



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