

# Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

Country Mapping of Known Context,  
Legislation, Reporting and Referral  
Pathways — Timor-Leste

An initiative  
of ACFID's  
Safeguarding  
Community of  
Practice



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These resources were last reviewed and verified in August 2020. They will be reviewed and updated periodically by the ACFID Safeguarding Community of Practice. Any feedback to improve the quality of these resources can be sent to [learning@acfid.asn.au](mailto:learning@acfid.asn.au)

# Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) – Timor Leste

This document has been prepared to assist your organisation to better understand a) the general Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) context b) relevant PSEA legislation and c) available reporting and referral pathways for SEA in a particular country. **This document is not intended to be a definitive analysis of a country’s PSEA system and should not be read as such. The information may have been updated at the source since its publication and the reader should follow links provided to fact check before they quote or share this information. It is recommended that you test contact details provided prior to sharing these referral pathways.**

Your organisation must refer to and follow your PSEA Policy when responding to SEA. If a victim/survivor of SEA is under the age of 18 years, consult your organisation’s Child Protection Policy.

## OVERVIEW OF PSEA ISSUES

Demographics	<p>Timor-Leste is located in the eastern half of the island of Timor, north of the Timor Sea and Australia. Tetun is the most widely used language, followed by Bahasa Indonesia, then Portuguese and English. Timor-Leste has a total population of 1.3 million, with approximately one third residing in urban areas and cities such as the capital, Dili. <sup>1</sup></p> <p>Total expenditure on health is 1.5% of GDP, equating to \$102 per capita. Probability of dying under five years is 46 per 1,000 live births; probability of dying between 15-60 years is 176 (males) and 122 (females) per 1,000; and overall life expectancy at birth for 67 for men, and 70 for women.</p> <p>While poverty levels remain high, with gross national income per capita at \$6,410 in 2013, progress has been made in improving living standards. The proportion of Timorese living in poverty declined from 50% in 2007 to an estimated 42% in 2014. Investments in human capital are directly linked to Timor-Leste’s future growth, productivity, and competitiveness. In 2017, the Human Capital Index for Timor-Leste stood at 0.43, as compared to the East Asia and the Pacific’s regional average of 0.61. A healthier and more skilled workforce is necessary to better meet the future labour demands across the economy and increase earnings.<sup>2</sup></p>
Disability	<p>In 2015, just over 38,000 people identified as having a disability which comprised 53% male and 47% female which represents 3.4% of the male population and 3.1% of the female population.<sup>3</sup></p> <p>Global statistics indicate children living with disability are four times more likely to experience violence, and those with mental or intellectual impairments are closer to five times more likely to experience sexual violence.<sup>4</sup> It is important to recognise that emergency contexts such as COVID-19 heighten pre-existing vulnerabilities, and therefore these figures are expected to be much higher.</p>
Education <sup>5</sup>	<p>Males attend every level of education at higher rates than females. Only 20% of preschool-aged children are enrolled in school, more than a quarter (26.0%) of the population aged six years and over have never attended school, 70% of grade one students don’t meet basic learning outcomes, and nearly 37% of rural youth (15-24) are illiterate, compared to just 6% in urban areas.</p>

1 WHO, 2020. [Countries: Timor-Leste](#)  
2 World Bank, 2020. [The World Bank in Timor-Leste](#)  
3 General Directorate of Statistics and UNFPA, 2018. [Timor-Leste Population and Housing Census 2015](#)  
4 WHO, 2020. [Disabilities and Rehabilitation: Violence Against Adults and Children with Disability](#)  
5 UNICEF, 2020. [Quality Education: Realising Rights to Quality Education for all Children](#)

The Gender Parity Index varies between different levels of education. It is close to parity for secondary (0.98), pre-secondary (1.03) and primary education (0.95), strongly in favour of girls for pre-primary education (1.70) and strongly in favour of men for tertiary education (0.80). Some factors that may impact girl’s participation include only 44% of schools have functioning toilets and 60% have drinking water.

Women’s Leadership	<p>Suco councils’ function as the most important and relevant governance unit to local people, having developed from a traditional and more or less autonomous sphere of spiritual and cultural organization. Female representation on Suco Councils is relatively high (a quota system exists to promote women’s participation), however only 5% of Suco Council Chiefs are women.<sup>6</sup> A recent amendment to the electoral law states that 33% of the political parties’ lists must be women candidates, resulting in 38% of seats in the National Parliament being women, the highest rate in the Asia Pacific region.</p>
Gender and Sexuality	<p>Timor-Leste ranks 111 out of 187 countries in the Gender Inequality Index. Women have long experienced discrimination in health, education, employment and access to justice, with the prevalence and severity of SGBV considered to be a key inhibitor of development.<sup>7</sup> Rural women and girls face particularly a strong patriarchal culture which translates to widespread inequality and discrimination.<sup>8</sup></p> <p>Sex work is legal, but soliciting and third party involvement for profit is prohibited. Timor-Leste is both a source country and destination for women and child victims of sex trafficking. While consensual same-sex activity is legal, same-sex couples and households are not eligible for the same legal protections.</p> <p>In times of emergency, potential impacts on women include an increase in SGBV; unpaid workload as primary caregivers; food insecurity due to reduced livelihoods and gender norms in which men and children eat first; reduced access to maternal, reproductive and sexual health services; lower levels of education, employment, and economic security makes women and girls more vulnerable to financial shocks; WASH facilities are not gender or disability-inclusive; prevention and response strategies are not gender-sensitive.</p>
Indonesian Occupation <sup>9</sup>	<p>Timor-Leste declared itself independent from Portugal in 1975 but was invaded by neighbouring Indonesia nine days later - which left most of the population displaced and 70% of infrastructure decimated. In 1999, 78% of people voted for independence from Indonesia which came into effect in 2002. Whilst women occupied every position during the resistance struggle – as diplomatic lobbyists; carrying weapons in the jungle; and as spies and couriers and saboteurs, they have received very little recognition for their efforts post-independence.</p>
Labour	<p>80% of women are not paid for their work, compared to 33% of men. The country’s strong patriarchal culture and customary laws reinforce strict gender roles, denying women their voice in decision making and making them more vulnerable to alarming rates of violence. Labour force participation for women is lowest in Dili, where close to two thirds (65%) of women aged 15 and above are outside of the labour force. Women occupy less than 23% of management and decision-making positions, which has declined from 35% in 2010.<sup>10</sup> The income inequality is 31.6, which when considering 42% of the population live below the national poverty line, places women and girls at higher risk.</p>
Poverty <sup>11</sup>	<p>Timor-Leste remains one of the poorest countries in the South East Asian region, and two thirds of Timorese live on less than USD\$2 a day. It ranks 134 out of 187 countries and territories on the Human Development Index.</p>

6 WorldOMeter, 2020. [Timor-Leste Demographics](#)  
7 Department of Pacific Affairs, 2018. [Timor-Leste and the Empowerment of Women: Access to Justice and the Future for Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Survivors](#)  
8 IWDA, 2020. [Timor-Leste](#)  
9 IWDA, 2019. [Independent but Not Yet Free: The Evolving Work of Timorese Women](#)  
10 WorldOMeter, 2020. [Timor-Leste Demographics](#)  
11 UN Women, 2003. [CEDAW in Action: Timor-Leste](#)

Violence

59% of women in Timor-Leste over the age of 15 have experienced physical and/or sexual partner violence in their lifetime and 47% have experienced it in the last 12 months.<sup>12</sup> For married women, their current partner was the perpetrator in 74% of cases. 86% of women and 81% of men thought that domestic violence was in some circumstances justifiable.<sup>13</sup>

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and domestic violence are critical issues for women in post-conflict Timor-Leste. Domestic violence is the most reported case to the Vulnerable Persons Unit of the National Police, a unit set up with assistance from the UN specifically for vulnerable people including women, children and the elderly.

Sexual and domestic violence was a major concern raised at the first National Women’s Conference in 2000. Since then, efforts have been made through legislation and public awareness to combat the structural gender inequalities underlying the disproportionately high level of violence against women and children. A 2009 report prepared by 87 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on the real life of women in Timor-Leste identified a lack of access to justice for women, a situation compounded by impunity for perpetrators of violence against women. The problem was deemed to be endemic because of the failure to promote human rights and equal recognition and representation for women.<sup>14</sup>

RELEVANT PSEA LEGISLATION

International Instruments	Timor-Leste has ratified the <b>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</b> (CEDAW), described as an international bill of rights for women; the <b>Convention on Rights of the Child</b> (CRC) which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children; and <b>United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals</b> to address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.
Legislative Frameworks	<p>Section 30 of the <b>Constitution</b> (2002)<sup>15</sup> provides for violence against women, in recognising that everyone has the right to personal freedom, security and integrity; and no one shall be subjected to torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.</p> <p>The age of consent is 14 years. However, the <b>Penal Code</b> (2009)<sup>16</sup> makes sexual conduct by an adult with anyone under 17 a crime if the adult “takes advantage of the inexperience” of the younger person and increases penalties when such conduct involves victims younger than 14. The Penal Code makes both child prostitution and child pornography crimes. It defines child for purposes of those provisions as a minor younger than 17.<sup>17</sup></p> <p>The <b>Law on Domestic Violence</b> (2010)<sup>18</sup> recognises domestic violence as a complex social problem and establishes the legal regime applicable to prevention of domestic violence and protection and assistance to its victims. This Law recognises and reflects the principles of human rights enshrined in ratified international instruments, including the CRC. Pursuant to the Constitution, measures ensure respect for human rights, the wholeness of families, and acknowledges that families have a special duty to protect and defend groups that are particularly vulnerable, such as women and children.</p> <p>Government Resolution No. 27/2011 on <b>Gender Working Groups</b> provides a legislative framework for intersectoral cooperation and coordination mechanism to ensure gender issues are given attention in every government Ministry and agency by developing a gender strategy and/or incorporating gender issues in work plans.<sup>19</sup></p>

12 IWDA, 2020. [Timor-Leste](#)

13 Department of Pacific Affairs, 2018. [Timor-Leste and the Empowerment of Women: Access to Justice and the Future for Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Survivors](#)

14 Department of Pacific Affairs, 2018. [Timor-Leste and the Empowerment of Women: Access to Justice and the Future for Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Survivors](#)

15 [Constitution](#) (2002)

16 [Penal Code](#) (2009)

17 US Department of State, 2019. [Timor-Leste 2019: Human Rights Report](#)

18 [Law on Domestic Violence](#) (2010)

19 Government of Timor-Leste, 2011. [Gender Responsive Budgeting: Timor-Leste](#)

Agencies and Mechanisms	<p>The <b>National Action Plan on Gender Based Violence</b> (2017-2021) extends the government’s commitment to ending GBV in Timor-Leste, based on a multi-sector implementation and has been developed in accordance with the national laws and international commitments of CEDAW, ICCPR, ICSER, and CRC.</p> <p><b>Program of the Eighth Constitutional Government</b> (2.3.2 Women) (2018)<sup>20</sup> recognises women and men have the same rights and obligations in all aspects of family, cultural, social, economic and political life. The Program sets out a plan to ensure those rights are realised, and for Timorese women to contribute better and more to society and the country’s growth.</p> <p>The <b>National Strategic Development Plan</b> (2011-2030)<sup>21</sup> places emphasis on maximizing the potential of human and social capital. Equality between men and women in all areas is recognized as key to national development.</p> <p><b>National Family Planning Policy</b> (2004)<sup>22</sup> recognises family planning as an important development effort that can help bring about improvements in society, and that everyone has the right to health and medical care, and the duty to protect and promote them.</p>
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REPORTING AND REFERRAL PATHWAYS FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OR ABUSE.

Service Name	Description	Coverage	Contact
Law Enforcement Agencies (to report cases to)			
Police		National	<b>Emergency 112</b> T 7749 0497
Vulnerable Persons Unit, Police	Investigates crimes against women and children	National	T 7724 3340  District contact numbers can be confirmed via this number, as they change often
Statutory Protection Agencies/Unit (to report abuse to)			
	Child protection within Ministry Solidarity Social and Inclusion (MSSI)	National	T 331 0541  E <a href="mailto:info@mss.gov.tl">info@mss.gov.tl</a> or <a href="mailto:unidade@mss.gov.tl">unidade@mss.gov.tl</a>
Local Health and Medical Services (to refer cases to)			
Ambulance			T 331 1044
Guido Valadares National Hospital	Formerly Dili National Hospital, this is now the national hospital		T 331 1000 T 331 1008  Estr. de Bidau, Díli, Timor-Leste
Oecusse Referral Hospital	Hospital	Oecusse	T 253 0027
Ministry of Health and UNICEF Hotline	Mental health and psychosocial support hotline	National	T 12123

20 Government of Timor-Leste, 2018. [Program of the Eighth Constitutional Government](#)

21 Government of Timor-Leste, 2011. [Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030](#)

22 Ministry of Health, 2004. [National Family Planning Policy](#)

Support Agencies (to refer cases to)

Uma Mahon	Safe place for victim of Domestic Violence or sexual harassment	FOKUPERS Dili FFCJ Dili	T 332 1534 or 7847 2598 T 7796 9826
Psychosocial Recovery & Development in East Timor (PRADET)	Provision of safe rooms for treatment and emergency security for abuse victims; counselling, and forensic examination	Dili Oecusse Suai	T 7725 4579 T 7779 5882 or 7779 9072 T 77972081
Casa Vida	Protection and safe house for girls	Dili – 24 hours	T 7735 234
East Timorese Women’s Communication Forum (FOKUPERS)	Provide shelter for adult/child victims of abuse. Aso provide counselling and accompaniment in police stations.	Dili HQ	T 332 1534
Office of the Provedor for Human Rights and Justice (PDHJ)	Complaints of human rights infringement against state authorities	Dili HQ	T 333 1184 or 333 1071 <a href="#">Online Complaints Form</a>

Key Advocacy Services, Networks, and Agencies

ALFELA	Legal Support	Dili	T 3310 282
Australian Federal Police and Embassy or Consular (if any person involved is an Australian National)			
Australian Federal Police Report child offences committed by Australians	To Australia In Australia	T (+61) 2 6131 3000 T 1800 813 784	
Australian Embassy, Dili	Consular Assistance	Dili	T 332 2111

ADDITIONAL LIST OF AGENCIES AND CONTACT NUMBERS

Policia Nasionál Unidade VPU National Police		Ministério da Solidariedade Sosiál no Inkluzan (MSSI) Ministry of Solidarity and Social Inclusion (MSSI)	
Nasionál	7749 0497	Nasionál	3310 501 - 3310 2019
Dili	7734 1607	CSMM Dili	7727 1715
Aileu	7595 2885	CSMM Aileu	7867 6494
Ainaro	7595 3420	CSMM Ainaro	7805 9869
Bacau	7712 7186	Bacau	7732 7456
Bobonaro	7749 0507	Bobonaro	7743 1723
Covalima	7595 5663	Covalima	7726 9604
Ermera	7669 9276	Ermera	7823 2260
Lautem	7726 1849	Lautem	7732 6469
Liquica	7595 9357	Liquica	7818 6632
Manatuto	7749 0516	Manatuto	7731 9125
Manufahi	7566 7893	Manufahi	7761 4542
Oecusse	7596 0966	Oecusse	7732 0593 - 7610 9934
Viqueque	7736 7056	Viqueque	7804 7358

Ume Mahon Safe place for victims of domestic violence or sexual harassment	
FOKUPERS Dili	332 1534 - 7847 2598
FFCJ Dili	7796 9826
Casa Vida	7735 2345
FOKUPERS Suai	7803 6085
FOKUPERS Maliana	7746 3907
Uma Mahon Salele	7798 1319 - 7537 2549
Uma Mahon Lospalos	7747 4055
Uma Pas Viqueque	7735 2424
Uma Pas Manufahi	7705 8045 - 7794 8711
Forum Peduli Wanita Oecusse	7600 7693

Asisténsia Legál ba Feto no Labarik ALFeLa ALFELA (NAtonala NGO) for Justice	
Dili	3310 282 - 7743 2177 7743 2103 - 7743 2140
Baucau	7743 2132 - 7743 2134
Suai	7743 2154 - 7743 2156
Oecusse	7743 2128





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**Authors:** ACFID


**Cover photo and design:**

Kate Bensen

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 <https://acfid.asn.au>

 [main@acfid.asn.au](mailto:main@acfid.asn.au)

 +61 2 6285 1816

 [twitter.com/ACFID](https://twitter.com/ACFID)

 [www.facebook.com/ACFID](https://www.facebook.com/ACFID)

 ACFID, 14 Napier Close, Deakin, ACT 2600