LOCAL RESILIENCE: LIVING WITH RISK IN VULNERABLE INTERNALLY DISPLACED COMMUNITIES IN TIMOR-LESTE

January 2009

Jaya Earnest and Patricia Faulkner
LOCAL RESILIENCE: LIVING WITH RISK IN VULNERABLE INTERNALLY DISPLACED COMMUNITIES IN TIMOR-LESTE

Jaya Earnest and Patricia Faulkner

For further information, please contact:

Dr Jaya Earnest  J.Earnest@curtin.edu.au
Mrs. Patricia Faulkner  patfaulkner@iinet.net.au

Centre for International Health
Curtin University of Technology
GPO Box U1987, Perth  6854
Western Australia
Telephone:  +61 8 9266 4151
Facsimile:  +61 8 9266 2608

Please cite as


Copyright © 2009, Centre for International Health, Curtin University of Technology. All rights reserved
Executive summary

The eruption of violence in April 2006 in Timor-Leste was accompanied by widespread looting and burning with destruction of the environment, infrastructure, property and the means of livelihood for a significant section of the population, with over 15% fleeing their homes. In May 2008, two years after the conflict, there were still an estimated 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) within the capital Dili and scattered throughout the country. As a result there were severe stressors on both the displaced and host populations and their local environments with attendant environmental health problems.

This qualitative case study explored the influences on the capacity of internally displaced communities in Timor-Leste to recover from and adapt to living with risk in the aftermath of the civil and political conflict in 2006-07. Drawing on a framework of vulnerability and resilience, from a humanitarian and social change perspective, semi-structured and key informant interviews, focus group discussions and transect walks were undertaken in Dili and Baucau within both IDP and host communities. Additional key informant interviews and documentary data were obtained from Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and humanitarian agency personnel.

Analysis of the data identified eight major themes and revealed that the communities have concerns regarding governance, lack of demonstrable progress in development, education, youth and future peace and stability in the country. The research also revealed that though the East Timorese have demonstrated remarkable resilience in the past, the prolonged nature of the current displacement has placed many stresses on the community including financial and emotional.

Recommendations arising from the research are outlined under three general themes, governance, the community and youth, housing and the environment. Whilst ideally individuals and the community would have the ability and resolve to initiate processes to address some of these issues at the local and individual level, it is recognised that past and present events have left little facility to do so, and as such it will take time to build up the required capacity. The recommendations therefore reflect those measures that the researchers felt the government should address in order to create an environment that promotes the capacity of both individuals and communities to instigate solutions to reduce their vulnerabilities and foster resilience through their own initiatives.
The government needs to attend to community concerns whilst involving stakeholders in the process. This includes strengthening the institutions of governance and addressing the lack of expertise within the public sector which is hindering the delivery of its provisioned programmes. There is an urgent need to address the issue of land tenure so that returning IDPs have certainty regarding home ownership and issues of compensation can be resolved. Rather than build more transitional camps, resettlement of IDPs should be integrated into the development of new sucos in Dili with sustainable low cost housing which addresses the current housing shortage and fulfils the long term projections of future growth in urban centres.

Much of the violence during the crises and in East Timorese society in general is related to the youth gangs and other disaffected youth. There is a pressing need for realistic targeted education programmes for the youth that involve them in the processes and develop a practical and holistic approach to employment that, along with other concerns, fosters respect for agriculture whilst improving the practices in this sector.

The government also needs to address the issue of justice within East Timorese society. The perpetrators of serious crimes during the pre and post independence periods have not been prosecuted. This both negates the injustices suffered by many in the community and engenders a perception that acts of arson and other criminal behaviour can be undertaken with impunity and are an acceptable avenue for venting frustration and settling disputes.

Several environmental issues require immediate attention, including the development of a feasible low cost alternative to the use of firewood as a fuel source. This should be done in conjunction with the implementation of large scale reforestation and sustainable agricultural practice education programmes to address the issues of water quality, land degradation, forest depletion and soil erosion.

Overall this study revealed that repeated episodes of conflict have placed many stressors on the East Timorese which have threatened their well-being and livelihoods. Though they have demonstrated remarkable resilience, these recurring events have rendered them vulnerable and this resilience has been eroded. Strategies need to be put in place to assist the community to reduce their vulnerability and restore their diminished resilience.
Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to acknowledge the Centre for Advanced Studies in Australia, Asia and the Pacific (CASAAP), Curtin University, for providing the funding for this project.

We would also like to thank Luiz Vieira, chief of mission International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Dili, for facilitating access to his staff and thereby to the IDP camps; in particular Nuno Nunes, Manuel Pereira and Luis Pinto for their help in organising transport and access to the IDP community.

We are very grateful to all the IOM field staff for their time, logistical support, font of information, tolerance and for giving us access to not only established camps but also to those camps that were being dismantled; this was an extremely busy and stressful time for them with heightened tensions due to the camp closures and they were unfailingly helpful in response to all our requests.

Thanks are also due to the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) for providing access to the transitional camps and to the many key informants for their insights and assistance in setting up interviews, group discussions and translations.

Thanks also go to Margie Beck in Baucau for her hospitality and for her help in arranging interviews with host families and providing her own insights. We would also like to thank the staff of the Instituto Católico Para Formação de Professores Baucau for giving of their time and invaluable perceptions of being host families.

Finally we would like to thank the East Timorese community for their participation in this research project and for their courtesy, warmth and patience.
## List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADF</td>
<td>Australian Defence Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASAAP</td>
<td>Centre for Advanced Studies in Australia, Asia and the Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-FDTL</td>
<td>East Timor Defence Force (Falintil-Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRW</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICG</td>
<td>International Crisis Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organisation for Migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Government Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC</td>
<td>Norwegian Refugee Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNTL</td>
<td>National Police of East Timor (Policia National de Timor-Leste)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCHR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive summary</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Abbreviations</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A political and historical background to Timor-Leste</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health indicators in Timor-Leste</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The framework underpinning the study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The concept of Vulnerability</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The concept of Resilience</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims and objectives of the study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The research process</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A case study approach</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant data collection</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of emerging themes</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Governance</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Personal vulnerability</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Problems associated with displacement and living within camps</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4: Support mechanisms, coping and resilience</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5: Effects on themselves, family, professional life and colleagues</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6: Problems associated with returning home</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 7: Gender roles and norms</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 8: Concerns about the future</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impacts on the Environment</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The IDP Camps</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A legacy of destruction</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impacts on the Natural environment</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance, the community and youth</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land tenure and housing</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Environment</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Figures

Figure 1: Schematic representation of the disaster resilience of place (DROP) model ...5
Figure 2: Jardim camp near the Parliament in Dili after a heavy downpour ...............16
Figure 3: Becora Markets transitional camp .............................................................17
Figure 4: The charred remains of the Customs building central Dili .........................17
Figure 5: The burnt UNICEF sponsored community child care centre in Baucau....18
Figure 6: A dry riverbed, fallow land and denuded hills on the road to Baucau........19
Figure 7: Soil erosion between Dili and Baucau .....................................................19

List of Tables

Table 1: Theme contextualisation within DROP categories ..................................8
Introduction
This paper reports results of a study undertaken in Timor-Leste in mid-2008. Drawing on a framework of vulnerability and resilience, the adaptive capacity in vulnerable communities in Timor-Leste living with recurring political instability and displacement was explored. It is increasingly recognised that there is a growing need for a multidisciplinary approach to study vulnerability and resilience that involves all stakeholders including the communities themselves (Bogardi, 2004; Thomalla, Downing, Spanger-Siegfried, Han, & Rockström, 2006; Vogel, Moser, Kaspersion & Dabelko, 2007). Traditionally different disciplines have conducted research into vulnerability, resilience and severe events from global change, disaster-risk management or humanitarian perspectives. All approaches, however, recognise that vulnerability, resilience and adaptation are inextricably entwined and affect a community’s ability to withstand and live with the risk of a severe event. The concept of vulnerability and resilience from humanitarian and social change perspectives has been used in this study. The report commences with an overview of the political and historical background and the health indicators in Timor-Leste. The concepts of vulnerability and resilience and the definitions and frameworks underpinning the study are then introduced, followed by the research design and methodology and the themes generated from the analysis. The paper concludes with recommendations and implications from the analysis.

Background
A political and historical background to Timor-Leste
The years of Timorese resistance to Indonesian occupation culminated in a referendum and subsequent vote for independence in 1999. The celebrations that accompanied the declaration of the referendum ballot on September 4, 1999 in Timor-Leste were short lived as pro-Indonesian militias, aided by the Indonesian army, went on the rampage, employing a scorched earth policy, destroying infrastructure and carrying out systematic human rights abuses including assault, murder, torture, rape, sexual abuse and mass forced deportations (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2006). It is estimated that nearly 2,000 people were killed, 200,000 fled to the mountains and a further 250,000 were forcibly deported to camps in West Timor (Devereux, 2000; HRW, 2006; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2004). Dili, the capital city and
other towns had been razed; there was no water, electricity or phone system and over 90% of health and educational infrastructure in East Timor had been destroyed (UNHCR, 2004).

By December 2002, there were again riots in Dili with buildings being burned including the home of then Prime Minister Alkatiri. The crisis in 2006 arose from earlier rumblings of unrest in the army which escalated into armed conflict between the East Timorese army and police forces and sparked underlying tensions in government, precipitating a political crisis. However, much of the accompanying violence, arson and looting was perpetrated by gangs of disaffected youths (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2006). This unrest resulted in the deaths of 38 people and displacement of 150,000-178,000 people (International Displacement Monitoring Centre [IDMC], 2008; IOM, 2008). Fifty-three camps housing around 70,000 people were established by UNHCR and IOM around Dili, with further camps in Baucau, but at least 100,000 people were scattered throughout East Timor staying with friends and relatives (IDMC, 2008; United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [UNHCHR], 2006). In early 2008, on February 11, two simultaneous attacks were carried out by rebels on President Ramos-Horta and Prime Minister Gusmão. In the attacks President Ramos-Horta was seriously wounded and subsequently airlifted by the Australia Defence Forces (ADF) to Darwin. Nearly two years after the initial crisis in 2006, the IDMC reported in April 2008 that there were still some 100,000 IDPs in East Timor; 30,000 living camps in Dili and 70,000 scattered with host families throughout the districts (IDMC, 2008).

**Health indicators in Timor-Leste**

The legacy inherited by this new nation ensured that it is also one of the world’s most impoverished. Ranked 150 out of 177 in the 2007 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index, it is the poorest country in the Asia Pacific region; 41% of Timorese live below the poverty line of less than US$0.55 per day (UNDP, 2008). Unemployment is high, particularly amongst the youth, with even higher rates amongst rural youth (World Bank, 2007). Health indicators in the country are extremely poor with life expectancy estimates ranging from 59.7 years in 2005 (UNDP, 2008) to 66 years in 2006 (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2008). In 2005 the infant mortality rate was estimated at 47 per 1000 live births, the under five mortality rate was 44 per 1000 live births and the maternal mortality ratio 380 per
It is estimated that only 61% of women had access to antenatal care, 90% of women had their babies in the home and only 18% of births were attended by skilled birth attendants. Immunisation rates are low; only 5% of children are fully immunised and over half of children under 2 years have never been immunised (WHO, 2006). The main causes of death in children under five are malaria, dengue fever, acute respiratory infections and diarrhoeal diseases. Overall, only 50% of the population have access to safe drinking water, 40% to adequate sanitation and 25% to electricity, with the proportions lower in rural compared to urban areas (UNDP, 2008).

The framework underpinning the study

The concept of Vulnerability

The term “vulnerability” is now used pervasively in research literature and the media. Adger (2006) argues that the concept of vulnerability is a powerful analytical tool that illustrates the states of susceptibility to harm, powerlessness and marginality of both physical and social systems. He describes vulnerability as "The state of susceptibility to harm from exposure to stresses associated with environmental and social change and from the absence of capacity to adapt" (p. 268).

The vulnerability of an individual or community is therefore determined by their pre-existing circumstances and not by any future stresses that they may be exposed to. It is this approach that we adopt where the emphasis is on the social construction of vulnerability. Here individuals or community are placed at the centre of the definition and vulnerability is defined in terms of their ability to respond to a stressor or crisis (Adger, 2006; Cannon, 2006; Cutter et al. 2008).

Kelly and Adger (2000) contend that vulnerability is also related to well-being, livelihoods and access to resources and proposed the following definition: “The state of individuals, groups or communities in terms of their ability to cope with and adapt to any external stress placed on their livelihoods and well-being and is determined by the availability of resources and by the entitlement of individuals and groups to call on these resources” (p. 325). Thus, in these definitions, vulnerability is related to underlying social, economic, political and security factors which may be local, national or global and which are often beyond the control of the individual or community.
The concept of Resilience
As with vulnerability, resilience has been studied in many differing disciplines, resulting in widespread use and many different definitions. The Oxford Dictionary Online (2009) defines the term resilience as “Ability to recoil or spring back into shape after bending, stretching, or being compressed”. Or, of a person, resilience is defined as “Ability to withstand or recover from difficult conditions”.

Many early studies were in the fields of psychology, where there was a growing interest in the concept of resilience. The concept in this context was described by Rutter in 1985 (cited in Earvolino-Ramirez, 2007) as “The ability to bounce back or cope successfully despite substantial adversity” (p. 93). A later definition by Luthar and Cicchetti (2000) describes resilience as “A dynamic process wherein individuals display positive adaptation despite experiences of significant adversity or trauma” (p. 858).

On an individual level resilience, therefore, implies positive adaptation in face of significant adversity. According to Waller (2001), research in this field has centred on individuals and families, and the identification of risk and protective factors and possible interventions that may foster resilience. Risk or protective factors may be biological, psychological, social, spiritual or environmental and occur within the individual, family, community or within larger social and environmental systems. She also argues that resilience should incorporate social factors and a perspective that recognises the interrelatedness and interdependency of individuals and social systems. All these elements interact on the ability of vulnerable communities to cope with a severe event and attendant risks and, as each community, and sections within those communities, will have different experiences, it is necessary to research many different scenarios in order to compare and contrast those experiences.

Cutter et al (2008) have recently proposed a quantifiable model, which they have named the ‘Disaster Resilience of Place Model’ (DROP), shown below in figure 1. The model describes the influences on community resilience and purports to depict the overlapping relationship between resilience and vulnerability. The proposed model could be adapted to both man-made and natural disasters.
Figure 1: Schematic representation of the disaster resilience of place (DROP) model (Cutter et al, 2008)

The model demonstrates the dynamic nature of resilience, which is dependent on inherent pre-event characteristics as well as exogenous factors, on the severity of the disaster, and on the time between hazard and disaster events. This framework has been used to underpin the study, inform the analysis and draw conclusions.

Methods

Aims and objectives of the study
The main aim of this study was to identify the influences on the capacity of vulnerable and displaced communities in Timor-Leste, to recover from and adapt to the risk of recurrence of a severe event; in this case the political and civil conflict of April, 2006. This study thus explored the factors affecting the ability of communities in Timor-Leste, to recover from and adapt to a series of severe events caused by political conflict. The aim was achieved through the following objectives:

- To examine the broad socio-political contexts influencing the distribution of social capacity and resilience factors within East Timorese communities, especially the displaced;
- To document the East Timorese community members’ views of their own and their community vulnerabilities and capacity to withstand or recover from possible adverse events.
The research process
The study was conducted over a two week period in May and June 2008. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were undertaken in the capital Dili and in Baucau, the second largest centre in Timor-Leste, located in the Eastern districts. In order to obtain as broad a picture as possible of the setting, interviews and discussions were held with, and documentary data obtained from, key informants connected to NGOs and humanitarian agencies and with expatriates working for the government or the various United Nations (UN) agencies active in Timor-Leste. Transect walks and photographs were taken of the IDP and transitional camps and of the environment in rural areas and the urban settings of Dili and Baucau. Two trips outside of Dili were undertaken; one east to Baucau, one west through rural areas near the border with West Timor and into the coffee growing highlands.

A case study approach
A case study is an empirical qualitative approach that allows the researcher to investigate the phenomena of interest within the real-life context using multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2003). They are particularly useful in studies that involve broad complex questions in complex settings as they have the capacity to be richly descriptive in their exploration of complex behaviours, attitudes and interactions (Keen & Packwood, 1995; Pope & Mays, 1995). In the context of Timor-Leste, this study was an enquiry into a post-conflict transitional society that is struggling with multiple social, political, economic and educational constraints. The case study approach has the capacity to generate exploratory, descriptive and explanatory data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006) and was therefore considered the most appropriate methodology to employ in this context. This study was an exploratory, descriptive cross-sectional case study of IDP and host communities in Timor-Leste. The case study approach was used to explore the complexities and challenges facing these communities in their capacity to respond and adapt to the devastation caused in the aftermath of the conflict in 2006.

Participant data collection
Opportunistic, snowballing and purposive sampling was employed using established contacts within the communities. Participants were recruited via the various contacts that the first author had established on previous research visits to East Timor. They included IDPs who had been or were still living in the camps, those who had hosted and were continuing to host IDPs and various key informants from the community,
international humanitarian and UN agencies and NGOs working in the field. IOM, the international organisation which provides services to many of the camps, assisted in gaining access to the IDP communities. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to explore the complexities of the adaptive processes and capacities within the communities at both sites.

The data collection methods placed the focus on the participants’ own perceptions and interpretations and facilitated exploration of the complexities and meanings of the participants’ experiences and views in more natural and informal settings (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Pope & Mays, 1995). In addition, the methods used do not discriminate against illiterate and vulnerable participants, an important consideration in the context of East Timor and the high adult illiteracy (Kitzinger, 1995).

In all 19 key informant interviews and three FGDs were conducted. The three focus groups were conducted with IDPs who were all still displaced and from three disparate settings; one in an IDP camp, another with hospital workers and a third with youth. Thus participants had varying ages and backgrounds, giving a broad picture of the phenomena of interest in the study and assisting in establishing the credibility of the data (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). A trained local research assistant who had worked in similar scenarios with the first author in previous research projects undertaken in East Timor assisted with the translation of the youth FGD. The other two FGDs were conducted with the assistance of multilingual expatriates, who had been in East Timor for a considerable period, and were fluent in English, Tetum and Bahasa. In each case the person was someone known to the participants and with whom they felt comfortable.

Data analysis
The data analysis explored the social, cultural and human contexts of the participants’ lives, the sense of community cohesion and vulnerabilities experienced in the aftermath of the conflict, adaptive and resilience capacities and their anxieties about the future. Preliminary data analysis took place concomitant with data collection allowing for questions to be refined and new avenues of inquiry to develop. The data was compiled from the transcription of the interviews and focus groups, field observations and the researcher’s reflective journal and memos written in the field and was analysed using the framework approach as described by Pope, Ziebland and Mays (2000).
The transcript was then annotated with codes and, as the themes emerged, a table was developed that contained the main themes and contextualised and categorised within Cutter et al’s (2006) DROP framework. To facilitate interpretation of the findings, the chart was then used to define the concepts appearing in the analysis and to clarify any associations between them (Pope, Ziebland & Mays 2000). This allowed for within-methods triangulation and cross-validation of the data, thereby reducing the possibility of bias and increasing the richness and rigor of the data obtained (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). This study received Ethical approval from Curtin University Ethics Committee, HREC Number CIH-11-2007.

**Discussion of emerging themes**

The analysis revealed eight major themes; these are detailed with appropriate respondent quotes in the ensuing sections. The themes have been contextualised within the disaster resilience of place (DROP) categories from Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Theme contextualisation within DROP categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Themes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 1: Governance
Several authors have stressed the role of governance and violent conflict in determining both vulnerability and resilience to severe events (Adger, 2000; Barnett, 2006). One of the overriding themes that emerged from the research was the sense that participants held the government and politicians responsible for the crises. Timorese participants revealed that the political situation was outside their personal control and arose from a government whose politicians were more intent on political manoeuvring than on strengthening fragile civic institutions and addressing the country’s many problems, and in doing so they had precipitated the crises. They also believed that the government failed to act decisively once the crises had developed.

It was a big destruction in 2006; very sad. First it was a political decision with big consequences to all communities. Male 43 Lecturer, IDP host

There was consensus amongst all informants that though the government had good programmes in place, it lacked the expertise with which to execute them and that this issue needed to be urgently addressed.

This government is good but it is a failure; must resolve problems of IDPs, petitioners and improve the development of the population. We still have a problem; the government has good programmes but do not have enough qualified people to implement them...Must concentrate on development NOT political manoeuvring. Male youth

Theme 2: Personal vulnerability
It was evident that all the Timorese participants had felt personally vulnerable during the crisis. They indicated that they had left their homes in the crisis of 2006 because they felt frightened and threatened by the growing tensions between the army and police, the flare up of hostility between “Easterners” and “Westerners” (a largely artificial division between those from the Eastern and Western parts of Timor-Leste) and by gangs of youths stoning and burning property. The underlying inherent tension between Easterners and Westerners is sometimes the cause of ethnic tension in the country.

Non-Timorese key informants working for NGOs and who had lived in Timor-Leste for an extended period considered the reaction of the populace to flee and to remain in the camps an overreaction to what, in global terms, was a relatively low level
of violence. They believed that this was probably due to the recent past history in East Timor and possible unresolved trauma associated with these events.

*The actual violence in 06/07 was very minor. Only 38 people were killed but the people are very skittish... this is probably the result of the previous 24 years’*

Female expatriate humanitarian agency worker

Both Cannon (2006) and Cutter et al (2008) identify well-being, including physical and mental health and security, as being a component of vulnerability and resilience.

**Theme 3: Problems associated with displacement and living within camps**

Participants reported that they had fled their homes with just the clothes they wore and/or only the barest of essentials. None of the participants had returned to their original residences and most had lost everything. At the beginning of the crisis many of the participants were going between Dili and the districts and in all did several trips as and when the violence flared up. Participants reported that there was an initial period of about one month when the ongoing violence prevented any services reaching the IDPs which caused great hardship for refugees and for host families. In addition the violence in 2006 in Dili and 2007 in Baucau curtailed other outlets for food in that there were no markets so that people were unable to buy provisions.

*There was no water, no sleeping mats; we slept on ground. To begin with there was no food; only got food after one month.* Male 25, Youth FGD participant

Those participants living in the camps found the conditions very stressful and disrupting to normal activities of daily living. The camps were very crowded, and either very dusty in the dry season or prone to flooding in the wet. Many camps had no access to electricity. There were communal ablution and sanitation facilities with the limited privacy while washing and bathing especially affecting women. Participants reported that during the initial phase of the crisis there was both violence and barricades outside the camps, making it difficult and frightening to leave the camp confines. Gangs would come daily and throw stones at the camps and the fighting outside the camps continued up to December 2006.

*It was very frightening with gangs of youths with Samurai swords and catapults with stones...it was very bad during the rains with flooding in the camps...there was no food at first; eventually the government gave rice, oil, beans after 1 month.* Male 22 youth FGD participant
Conditions for host families and IDPs in the districts were particularly stressful in the initial phase of the crisis. There is no running water available in Baucau, and the food supply which comes from Dili had been cut off. Participants therefore had to spend considerable time daily collecting water from the spring in the Old Town in addition to going to the villages and mountains to forage for food and firewood to cook on.

*Food and water were very difficult. We had to hire or find a car and take 10-20 jerry cans into town to get water...the same for wood for fuel.* Male 39 Lecturer, IDP host

Host families had extra family members staying with them for a considerable period of time and all still had extra people in their households some two years after the initial crisis. Participants, and in particular expatriate informants, stressed that as the camps became established not all those in the camps were or are true refugees. There is an element of rural/urban migration or those registering, particularly students and single women with children, so that they can receive services.

*Many people came into the camps not because of the crisis of 06 but for the food distribution. They put up a tent and live elsewhere...the camp manager will register them... no capacity for verification.* Female 27 expatriate humanitarian agency worker

**Theme 4: Support mechanisms, coping and resilience**

Several authors have suggested that the strength of social support networks are an indicator of community resilience (Cutter et al, 2008; Paton & Johnston, 2001). This was evidenced in the discussions when participants reported that that their principal support systems were those related to family, community and their interconnected social networks. Family obligations are compelling and override all other considerations.

*It’s part of our culture; must help each other in the family.* Male 43 Lecturer, IDP host

Participants also gained strength from a sense of community in that they were all in the same circumstances and they supported each other in managing their environment.

*We worked as a group to collect firewood from the mountains and to collect water, going back to the villages to get food from the plots...bananas, potatoes cassava etc. There was no rice or oil in Baucau; it all comes from Dili.* Male 39 Lecturer, IDP host
Participants reported several sources of emotional support. Those participants who had been able to continue working stated that going into work had given them the strength to continue, especially seeing people who were worse off than themselves. One participant reported that she found the strength and courage to go on from her children and the fact that they had all survived. Several others also commented that it was enough that they had all survived.

My motivation is my children. It gives me the courage to go on...a lot of people who lose family members...; it is enough that all have survived. I am working hard to replace bad memories with good ones. Female hospital health worker

**Theme 5: Effects on themselves, family, professional life and colleagues**

Participants reported that it was very stressful both living in the camps or playing host to displaced family members. Participants also noted that this caused financial as well as emotional strain as they were unable to attend work during the height of the crises in 2006/7 due to closure of their workplace or as a result of being prevented from reaching it due to the violence and barricades. They reported that their families had been split up during the height of the crisis with children sent to relatives to escape the violence, or husbands and wives going to different locations. Several participants were still separated from their family. Participants commented that the lack of privacy had resulted in tensions between husband and wife and marital problems.

I was very torn; part of family is here, some are in Metinaro. The split in the family is very difficult and I am very preoccupied at times. Male hospital health worker

Participants reported that the ongoing situation still engenders fear and that they do not feel safe to return to their former residences. The violence has severely restricted the ability of people to move after dark. It is still insecure at night and the lack of any form of public transport after dark curtails the activities of East Timorese, very few of whom have vehicles; this affects both their working and social lives as they are not able to undertake jobs or activities that entail them having to walk home after dark. The youth in particular commented that they are not able to lead a normal life.

I feel unhappy that I can’t go out, live a normal life. Male Youth

Most participants, other than the hospital workers, had been unable to work for a considerable period following the initial crisis in 2006, fearing further outbreaks of violence due to the uncertainty surrounding the ongoing situation with the petitioners.
Not only did this cause financial hardship, but also made it difficult to focus when they did return. Some reported East/West tensions were evident in the workplace, though others such as the hospital staff commented that this was not the case in their setting. One respondent reported that she had found it difficult to work with colleagues and students who had been involved in the stone throwing and burning.

*I want to teach but the psychological impact of teaching kids who burnt the houses.... I am not comfortable.*  Female 34 University Lecturer

**Theme 6: Problems associated with returning home**

Most respondents had not returned home because their house had been damaged, either burnt or looted. They did not think that the security situation was stable enough to start rebuilding their houses and were also awaiting government compensation. Key informants reported that the Indonesians destroyed all records of land sales and property transactions, making it difficult to establish ownership of property. Many people now displaced had previously occupied houses vacated by departing Indonesians post 1999. These were therefore recognised by the community as not being legally theirs and once the IDPs left those properties they were subsequently occupied by others.

*The government has not resolved the issue with land....no rights to own land in the city, can use the land only.... In Baucau most of land is already owned and have to buy; villages own their land.*  East Timorese male Masters Student

Some communities do not want the refugees back and returning IDPs are very fearful of returning to areas where they, or their property, have been attacked. This has complicated the resettlement process. In addition there was general consensus that the government is rushing the resettlement process. The IDP community complained of lack of consultation prior to the process. Key informants from the humanitarian agencies involved felt that the government should construct permanent housing for those who have nowhere to go, rather than place them in transitional camps, which is merely prolonging the problem.

**Theme 7: Gender roles and norms**

Several authors have argued that gender and attendant inequality of access to entitlements and resources are important variables of vulnerability (Adger, 2006; Wisner, Blaikie, Cannon, & Davis, 2004). Traditional East Timorese society in most parts of the country is patriarchal, with women regarded as subordinate to men. Women have no property entitlements in their own right; property is held as tenants in common
only for as long as the woman remains with her husband. Some women in the camps are rural women with children who no longer have a partner, are struggling to survive in the districts and have come into the camps to access services; others have lost their partners subsequent to moving into the camp and now have nowhere to go. This is creating problems in the resettlement process.

Some women came down from the districts; single women with 6 kids, no food, no job... they come into the camps and the camp managers register them; they can’t go back to their husband’s family; they are very vulnerable. Female 27 expatriate humanitarian agency worker.

Participants noted that it was very difficult for women in the community, particularly single women with children, during both periods of violence as there was no work and no markets and therefore a reduction in avenues to earn any income. Women participants in Metinaro, the most isolated of the IDP camps complained that their isolation continued to make it very hard for them to access services, alternative sources of food over and above the rations, or to be able to earn an income.

There are big problems for women regarding food; not enough oil, rice, soap; no money to buy; to live is a big pressure... no money to buy essentials. Female IDP camp FGD participant

Theme 8: Concerns about the future
Participants feared for the future for themselves and their children and felt that the community must reject violence, unite and create a peaceful stable environment so that development can proceed. Participants felt that education, for both youth and parents, was the stepping stone for future development. Youth participants noted that since the crisis the scholarships and technical courses for youth training had folded and therefore very few youth are being trained at present. Participants felt that much of the violence was perpetrated by youth who are frustrated by the lack of employment opportunities. All participants commented that there was reluctance particularly amongst the youth to work in the traditional farm sector or manual employment.

Participants felt that in addition to other training programmes, the government needs to establish programmes in agriculture and provide incentives for the youth to return to the villages. Several participants emphasised that the solution to East Timor’s problems must come from the East Timorese themselves. They perceived that there is a lack of community spirit to work together to solve problems and a dependency
mentality is developing with an attitude that it is the responsibility of the government to resolve any problems that arise in the community. They considered that the community needs to start thinking of solutions for themselves rather than waiting for the government or outside agencies to sort it out. They observed that whilst East Timor still needs the support and guidance of the international community, it must start to solve its own problems in the community.

Priority number one, need thinking carefully to develop from ourselves, not just wait for the government.... development is government plus community. Male 39 Lecturer, IDP Host

Several participants noted that the government must start acting in the short-term rather than constantly planning for the long-term. The community needs to see results happening on the ground rather than always the promise of future action.

Impacts on the Environment

The IDP Camps

During the 2006 crisis people fled to places that they perceived offered a measure of protection, regardless of their suitability. Thus camps were established spontaneously at such disparate places as churches, school and hospital grounds, the central municipal gardens (Jardim), or near F-FDTL, PTNL or ADF bases. The camps were very diverse in nature and size, with some, particularly Airport and Jardim, being highly politicised and difficult to police, with outbreaks of violence occurring within, as well as outside, the camp. The location of many of the camps restricted access to community facilities and amenities and created strains on existing infrastructure and degradation of the local environment. One camp, Metinaro, at 23 kilometres from Dili was the most isolated of the camps and in an inhospitable location, adding to the hardships of its (reputed) 9,000 occupants. This isolation had direct impact on the local environment with all the surrounding hills being denuded of trees as a consequence of the collection of firewood both for use as fuel and sale as a source of income.
The IDP camps were the highly visible manifestation of the displacement crisis. However, throughout the crisis and the continuing displacement over the following two years, the majority of the IDPs were in fact staying with relatives and host families, either in Dili or scattered throughout the districts. At the height of the crisis there was a mass exodus of Easterners to Baucau and the eastern districts where a significant proportion were staying with family members or friends. These extra household members have continued to place a significant burden on their host environment, stressing not only their human hosts, but the already scarce household resources. The households hosting family members have had negligible support other than the initial assistance offered in the immediate aftermath of the crisis (Morgan, 2007). In addition, the establishment of transitional camps places strains on adjacent community facilities and infrastructure and in some cases has also restricted access to community amenities.
Figure 3: Becora Markets transitional camp. As a result of this camp the general public has lost access to these markets and a community amenity

A legacy of destruction
Figures four and five document evidence of the damage to the built environment in East Timor and reveal some of the considerable damage to both. The legacy of the damage to the built environment was evident throughout the areas visited by the researchers, not only in Dili and Baucau, but also in the districts.

Figure 4: The charred remains of the Customs building central Dili

The burnt out buildings and power poles stripped of their electric cables are a stark reminder of the overwhelming destruction of infrastructure that accompanied the post-
referendum violence in 1999. Similar to the examples illustrated in the photographs, there was also considerable evidence of the more recent damage associated with the arson attacks that have occurred since independence.

![Burnt UNICEF sponsored community child care centre in Baucau](image)

Figure 5: The burnt UNICEF sponsored community child care centre in Baucau

These burnt out buildings, many in the centre of Dili and in the New Town in Baucau, in conjunction with the lack of any visible maintenance of basic infrastructure such as roads or footpaths, create a depressing atmosphere of neglect. The failure to restore some of the buildings is in part related to the lack of certainty over land tenure and property law and in part to the possibility of further attacks due to the uncertain security situation. To see facilities being destroyed with impunity only engenders discouragement and despair in the wider community and significantly erodes hard won gains in improving well-being and resilience.

**Impacts on the Natural environment**

Figures six and seven also document some of the environmental degradation that is evident in East Timor. In part this degradation was directly related to the location of the IDP camps such as in the totally denuded hillsides behind the Mettinaro camp, and in part to agricultural and other practices and the management of the difficult climatic conditions.
Some of the environmental issues that were witnessed included denuded hillsides, soil erosion and landslides, burning of grasslands to encourage new growth, dry river courses and extensive areas of already desiccated land at the beginning of the dry season.
Discussion

**Governance, the community and youth**

At the time that this research was undertaken, the government was implementing its closure of the IDP camps and initiating its resettlement project. The government, NGOs and United Nations and humanitarian agencies involved needed to address community concerns whilst involving community stakeholders in the process of resettlement. The government should continue to widely publicise its national recovery strategy and increase the support for reintegration of IDPs into the receiving communities. The needs and role of the districts and rural communities in these crises should not be overlooked.

Much of the violence during the crises and in East Timorese society in general is related to the youth gangs and other disaffected youth. There is a pressing need for a combination of immediate short-term measures coupled with long-term programmes such as targeted education and training programmes that realistically address youth aspirations and future long-term employment requirements for East Timor. Whilst it is recognised that the government and international agencies are beginning to address this issue, the researchers would affirm that this is an issue that requires urgent action if outbreaks of violence are not to continue to be an ongoing feature of East Timorese society.

There is a perception in the community that those who have committed serious crimes, and particularly those involving violence against women, have not been pursued. This belittles the experiences of those who suffered these crimes and festers resentment and unresolved trauma in the community. Similarly a failure to prosecute those believed to be responsible for arson attacks and acts of violence engenders a belief in the community that they can commit such actions with impunity and promotes a culture that sees violent confrontation as an acceptable means of resolving disputes.

**Land tenure and housing**

The process of addressing the issue of a functioning land tenure and property law system needs to be expedited. The uncertainties over ownership of property need to be resolved so that people can return to their homes where appropriate and the renovation and rebuilding of damaged buildings and infrastructure commenced. Similarly the issue of compensation for those whose property was occupied by IDPs for this extended period needs some attention. The issue of land tenure is also tied in with the necessity of addressing the issue of housing requirements for present and future growth projections.
in Dili and other regional centres with long-term, sustainable solutions. Rather than building more transitional camps, low cost affordable permanent solutions that address some of current housing shortfall should be considered, such as in the housing constructed in the wake of the 2006 Boxing Day Tsunami in Aceh.

**The Environment**
The pervasive use of firewood as an alternative cheap fuel source has resulted in widespread clearing of trees in rural areas and threatens the already depleted forest cover. There needs to be a focus on an urgent development of a feasible low cost alternative to the use of firewood as a fuel source. There are clearly many environmental issues in East Timor that need addressing urgently to avoid further soil degradation and erosion and to help prepare the community for the potential predicted effects of climate change and associated displacement. This should be done in conjunction with the implementation of large scale reforestation and sustainable agricultural practice education programmes to address the issues of water quality, land degradation, forest depletion and soil erosion.

**Conclusion**
The main aim of this study was to identify the influences on the capacity of vulnerable and displaced communities in Timor-Leste to recover from and adapt to the risk of recurrence of a severe event; in this case the political and civil conflict of 2006. The study thus documented the factors affecting the ability of communities in Timor-Leste to recover from and adapt to a series of severe events caused by political conflict. The broader socio-political contexts influencing the distribution of social capacity and resilience factors within East Timorese communities, especially the displaced, were explored and East Timorese views of their own vulnerabilities and capacity to recover from adverse events were documented.

The resilience and diversity of livelihoods within a community are major determinants of the vulnerability of that community. Socio-economic factors determine the level of vulnerability and its ability to withstand recurrent stresses. Community resilience to further stresses on livelihoods was therefore already diminished, resulting in a population very vulnerable to the effects of the crises. Using Cutter et al’s (2008) DROP framework, eight major themes emerged from the analysis and provided insights into IDP and community perspectives on the background to the crises of 2006 and 2007,
their sources of vulnerability and resilience and their solutions to some of the perceived problems in East Timor and their fears for the future.

The research also revealed that the prolonged nature of the displacement has placed many stresses on the community including financial and emotional. These issues have rendered them vulnerable and reduced their resilience to any further severe events, natural or manmade. Participants voiced their concerns over questions of governance, particularly related to security, land tenure and the compensation and resettlement process. In addition, education and training and the problem of unemployed youth and a loss of social cohesion in this cohort were areas of major concern that needed immediate addressing. Family ties, social networks and a sense of community were seen as providing personal and community strength, as did the support proffered by NGOs and humanitarian and international agencies, including international defence forces.

The East Timorese have demonstrated remarkable resilience in the face of a recent violent and volatile history. However issues of governance, unresolved trauma and lack of sustainable livelihoods have rendered the community vulnerable to outbreaks of further violence and to destruction of the natural and built environment. Participants identified four key areas of need which are echoed in the words of one of the respondents

‘Need four factors for the violence of 2006 not to be repeated; Peace, education, economy and health…
four very important factors and need all to be there otherwise we will have more of the same’ Female Hospital health worker

These words poignantly capture the essence of what the people of East Timor, so urgently need for a brighter future for themselves and their children.
References
Retrieved October 20, 2008, from http://www.internal-


