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PROJECT BRIEF

Connect with Respect

School-based prevention of violence against women and girls



Background

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the most prevalent violation of human rights worldwide. In Timor-Leste, at least one in three women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence during her lifetime. Research shows that exposure to violence is high among 15-19 year olds, indicating that the experience of violence in relationships often starts early in women's lives.

Many policies and programmes to address VAWG focus on responding to violence and mitigating its impacts after it has occurred. There is a need for more attention, energy and funding to be focused on preventing violence from occurring in the first place, through **primary prevention**.

A growing body of evidence demonstrates it is possible to prevent VAWG. The focus of prevention is to address root causes: the broader social factors and harmful social norms that contribute to and perpetuate VAWG.

Prevention is the most cost-effective strategy for addressing VAWG. The savings that prevention generates across the healthcare system, police force, judiciary and welfare services can far outweigh the funds spent on prevention efforts. Prevention also results in a more productive private sector; reducing costs associated with repeated staff absenteeism following incidents of violence, higher staff turnover, impaired work performance, recruitment and re-training.

Project in Brief

Official Title: School-based prevention of violence against women and girls

Timeframe: 2018-2020

National Partner: Ministry of Education

Areas of Impact: Schools and communities in Dili

Funding Sources: UN Women, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Australia and Republic of Korea

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As part of prevention, **education** is critical in laying down the foundations for gender equality, non-violence and healthy relationships. Education is crucial to promoting equality in decision-making at all levels, and changing attitudes and behaviors related to gender roles. However, widespread VAWG in and around schools seriously undermines the achievement of high quality, equitable education for all children. Safe and inclusive schools which teach students to be respectful of each other are key to changing not only the education system, but the whole of society to be free from VAWG.

“It’s not really safe [near secondary school in Dili] because there are a lot of groups of young men hanging out, sitting on walls of the houses facing the street, and this is where a lot of women report catcalling.”

- Female scoping study participant, November 2017, UN Women Timor-Leste, *Scoping Study for Safe Cities* (2018)

“We never tell anyone because we are scared that when it comes to exams we won’t do well and they will give us bad grades ... When [the teachers] have that kind of attitude towards us, it makes us feel scared and we don’t want to come to school.”

- Female pre-secondary students in Viqueque, 21 May 2015, quoted in UNICEF Timor-Leste,

The Project

Connect with Respect is a **curriculum tool to assist teachers** across the Asia-Pacific region. It is based on evidence around violence prevention, changing gender norms and school-based interventions in the region and beyond. UN Women is working in partnership with the Timor-Leste Ministry of Education and three selected schools in Dili to adapt the **Connect with Respect Toolkit** for extra-curricular educational programming in the Timorese context, complementing the existing curriculum. The project will focus on developing skills and networks to change harmful social norms, through arts and educational programmes, engaging male and female students, their teachers, parents and the wider community.

Strategy for Change

The project aims to empower teachers and school communities to prevent, address and respond effectively to Gender Discrimination and VAWG. The project will work with:

- **LEARNERS:** To build equitable attitudes and behaviors among students. Students will model non-discriminatory and non-violent attitudes and behaviors.
- **TEACHERS:** To create safe learning environments. Schools will be provided evidence-informed extra-curricular activities to address VAWG as well as effective violence-response mechanisms.
- **PARENTS:** To develop family and community understanding and to promote action.
- **LEADERS:** To create an enabling policy environment. Clear guidelines will be put in place to address VAWG in schools and schools will be supported by a national framework.



CONNECT WITH RESPECT:

Preventing gender-based violence in schools

Classroom Programme for Students in Early Secondary School (ages 11-14)

Connect with Respect is a research-informed education programme to prevent VAWG. It is a tool for schools and teachers to talk about respect for women, healthy and respectful relationships, and prevent violence against women from a young age. The programme aims to develop student skills and attitudes central to respectful gender relationships, and strengthen student ability to recognize and respond to VAWG. *Connect with Respect* provides lesson plans, guidance notes, curriculum resources and learning activities, such as role plays and group tasks, that promote respectful relationships and gender equality among students ages 11-14 years old.

How it Works:

3 Pre-Secondary Schools in Dili

90 Students from Grades 5-7 (including Student Councils)

18 Weekly Sessions

36 Hours of Extra-Curricular Activities

90 Parents

12 Monthly Sessions with Parents

Measuring Change

Strengthening Facilitation Skills

Developing Materials for Wider Roll-Out