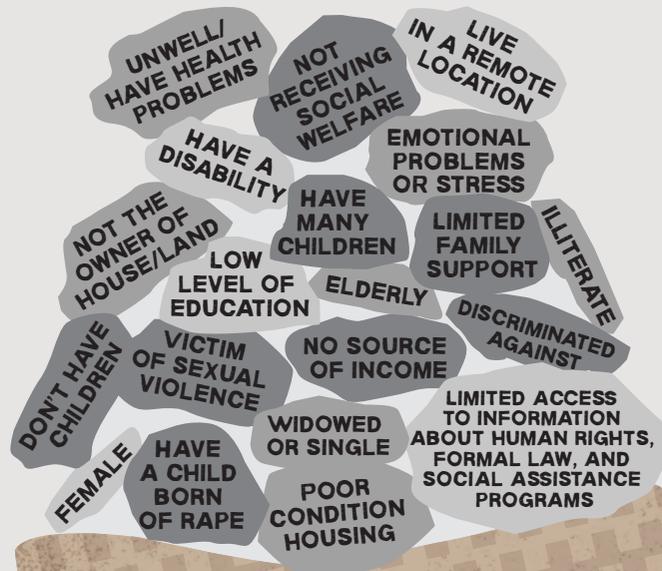


# IMPROVING THE LIVES OF WOMEN SURVIVORS IN TIMOR-LESTE



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Chega! Ba Ita

## Participatory Action Research (PAR)

with 77 women from three municipalities in Timor-Leste, Baucau, Covalima and Oecusse, shows that women survivors of human rights abuses from the past conflict (1975-1999) and from domestic violence and abandonment in recent years continue the struggle to move from agony to dignity. Many have limited access to social assistance, information, and their rights, which restricts their ability to meet their needs and escape conditions of economic vulnerability and social disadvantage.



### THE PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH SHOWS...

The majority of the female survivors who participated in this research sustain themselves and seek to earn a living through agricultural activities (raising animals, farming, etc.). Many survivors are living in poverty and have few opportunities to increase their ability to generate income. Vulnerable women survivors struggle to support the education of their children, with the result that economic disadvantage is being passed on intergenerationally.

### ACBIT'S RECOMMENDATIONS...

- **Give opportunities** for training, materials, funds, and mentoring for women survivors who would like to improve their capacity for income generation.
- **Create scholarships** specifically for the children of female victims, to help them to overcome the economic disadvantage and other factors of vulnerability that their mothers have faced.

### THE PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH SHOWS...



**One quarter of all participants** (n: 25/77) had not yet accessed any social support from the government or civil society in the years since Timor-Leste's independence.



**Many women survivors were not aware of and/or not accessing social assistance programs** that they are entitled to as East Timorese citizens, for example the Aged Pension (Terseira Idade) is available to those aged 60 years and above, but only 12 of the 30 female survivors aged over 60 were receiving this assistance.



Some women who received social assistance from the government were still unable to meet their needs and live with dignity. These included:

- Single women survivors with many school-aged children.
- Elderly women survivors with no other income.
- Recipients of one-off veteran's pensions (4a7), which did not provide long-term assistance.
- Women survivors who were the beneficiaries of social assistance programs (e.g. Aged Pension, Martyr's pensions) but who did not personally receive the benefits, as families did not prioritize the women's needs and used the money for other purposes.

### ACBIT'S RECOMMENDATIONS...



**Increase social awareness and registration** for social assistance programs, with particular efforts to reach vulnerable women survivors with low literacy and/or living in isolated areas.



**Make revisions** (and if needed, additions) to existing social assistance programs, to ensure that vulnerable female survivors can access sufficient support to live with dignity and social inclusion.



**Continue discussions** about how vulnerability is defined, to consider the interaction of multiple factors and how an individual's vulnerability is affected by her family and community.



**Facilitate discussions** with families and local leaders to encourage them to guarantee that female survivors who are beneficiaries of social assistance receive the benefits of that assistance.

