

A Timeline of Women's Contributions to Timor-Leste: 1974-2020



Timor-Leste's recent history is full of stories of women who have made a significant contribution to building the nation. Women played various roles during the struggle for independence and participated in politics and state-building soon after independence.

Across generations, Timorese women have broken barriers for advancing a society where all people, women and men, can equally enjoy their rights and contribute to a sustainable and inclusive Timor-Leste. In commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and International Women's Day, UN Women launched a timeline featuring a snapshot of the many roles and contributions that women have made in shaping Timor-Leste from 1974-2020.

Developed through a collaboration between Timor-Leste's Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion, Centro Nacional Chega! and UN Women, with the generous financial support of the Government of Japan, we hope it inspires more stories to be captured and shared for generations to come. To see the full version online, please click [here](#).

2020 GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT CALENDAR

This Calendar highlights key commemorative dates related to gender equality and women's empowerment in Timor-Leste to help gender equality advocates and organizations to plan and coordinate efforts in 2020.

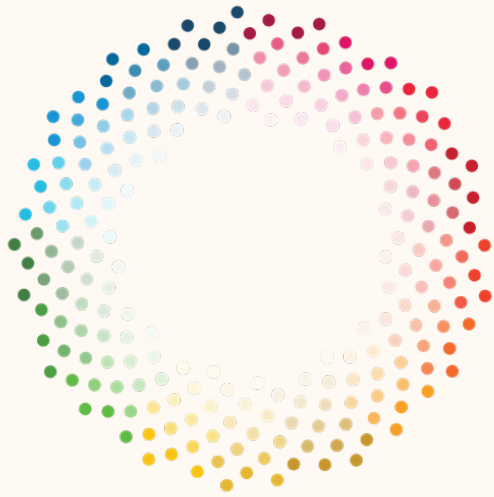
GENERATION EQUALITY EVENTS CALENDAR 2020

June		July		August	
1 Jun	Int. Children's Day	2 Jul	UN Women Turns 10	12 Aug	Int. Youth Day
16 Jun	Int. Domestic Workers' Day	7-10 Jul	Generation Equality Forum (Paris, France)	19 Aug	World Humanitarian Days
19 Jun	Int. Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict	*	Pride Month in TL		
TBC	Gender Equality Coordination Group				
September		October		November	
15 Sep	UN General Assembly	11 Oct	Int. Day of Girl Child	3 Nov	Nat. Women's Day
30 Sep	Int. Day of Peace	15 Oct	Int. Day of Rural Women	12 Nov	Nat. Youth Day
21 Sep	World Tourism Day	24 Oct	UN Day	19 Nov	Women's Entrepreneurship Day
27 Sep	Gender Equality	31 Oct	Anniv. of UNSCR 1325	25 Nov	Int. Day to Eliminate VAWG & 16 Days Campaigning
TBC	Coordination Group			19 Nov	
December					
1 Dec	World AIDS Day				
1-10 Dec	16 Days Campaign Continued				
3 Dec	Int. Day of Persons with Disabilities				
10 Dec	Int. Human Rights Day				
18 Dec	Int. Migrants				

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Spotlight Initiative

To eliminate violence against women and girls

TIMOR-LESTE LAUNCHES EUROPEAN UNION AND UNITED NATIONS SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE

In 2017, the European Union and United Nations co-created the Global Spotlight Initiative, which is an unprecedented partnership to accelerate efforts to end violence against women and girls, as part of the global vision to reach Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality and its target on the ending violence against women and girls by 2030.

Across the world, the widespread challenge of violence against women and girls remains one of the most pervasive violations of women's human rights and an obstacle to advancing gender equality. In support of Timor-Leste's ongoing efforts to prevent violence against women and girls before it begins and ensuring multi-sectoral responses to support survivors of domestic violence and violence perpetrated by intimate partners, the EU, in partnership with the UN in Timor-Leste, developed the Spotlight Initiative together with the Government of Timor-Leste, under the leadership of the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion and diverse civil society partners.

The Spotlight Initiative in Timor-Leste is implemented by five UN Agencies (UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and ILO) in partnership with a variety of public institutions and civil society partners under leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator with UN Women responsible for technical coherence of the programme. The programme will be implemented from 2020-2022, with an initial commitment of USD \$13 million. The Timor-Leste Spotlight national Programme launch took place on 5th March 2020 and was attended by UN Women's Regional Director Mohammad Naciri on his first visit to Timor-Leste. [Read more about the launch here](#) and [watch the video here](#).



State Secretary of Equality and Inclusion (H.E. Maria José da Fonseca Monteiro de Jesus), Ambassador of European Union (H.E. Andrew Jacobs), UN Resident Coordinator (Mr. Roy Trivedy) with all the UN agencies' head of office launching the Spotlight Initiative in Timor-Leste. Photo: UN Timor-Leste

SAFE BAUCAU AND SAFE MARKET TASK FORCE PAVES WAY FOR A GENERATION EQUALITY AND SAFER BAUCAU FOR ALL

The Baucau Municipal Authority (BMA) launched a Safe Baucau and Safe Markets Technical Working Group (TWG) in commemoration of International Women's Day (IWD) in Baucau.

The TWG is composed of voluntary members from local government, veterans, the Baucau Women's Association, private sector, organizations of persons with disabilities, church and youth groups, with participation of the State Secretary for Equality and Inclusion and head of the National Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality.

The TWG was formed to create a safer market space for women vendors, who represent the majority of vendors in the marketplaces.



Launching of the Safe Baucau Market's taskforce. Photo: Isaac_TOMAK

A safer market environment enhances women's economic opportunities, empowering them to contribute to their own and their family's well-being. The TWG will support local authorities with technical advice and promote the needs of vendors and communities in the markets. The TWG launch comes one year after President of BMA, Mr. Antonio A. Guterres, joined other stakeholders in signing a Safe City and Safe Market commitment in collaboration with UN Women and the nutrition-sensitive agriculture programme TOMAK.

President Guterres acknowledged the need to take action, noting, "sexual harassment is a form of violence in public places which is considered a universal issue for women and girls in Timor-Leste. Due to this issue, we requested TOMAK and UN Women's support, and municipal authorities are ready to take part and respond to these acts of violence if they continue in our municipality. It's all of our responsibility to prevent it, in order to see in our society that both men and women are safe being in public spaces."

The UN Women and TOMAK partnership was initiated through a joint "Gender Marketplace Assessment" conducted in 2018 in two markets in Baucau (Venilale and Kota Lama). The Assessment highlighted that vendors have limited access to social [read more here](#).

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF TIMOR LOROSA'E (UNTL) AND UN WOMEN SET THE STANDARD IN THE SAFE CAMPUS INITIATIVE

UNTL Rector Dr. Francisco M. Martins: "Zero Tolerance for Sexual Violence on Campus"



Photo with Dr. Francisco, Mr. Naciri, President of Rede Feto, UN Women and UNTL staffs. Photo: Helio Miguel_UN Women

Sexual harassment in public spaces is high globally, including in Timor-Leste. [A UN Women study on the safe city](#) conducted between 2017-2018 in the capital Dili, highlighted that no women (including university students) feel safe in public spaces, including campus environments.

Taking a step forward to end this form of violence against women and endorse gender equality on university campuses, UN Women has partnerships with universities in various countries to support Safe Campus initiatives.

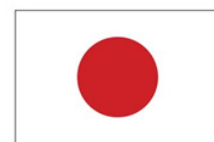
Recognizing the importance of this partnership, UN Women Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Mohammad Naciri, noted, "Universities are important spaces of learning and shaping societies- they are spaces where critical thinking and inquiry take place. Universities create an environment where students and teachers come together to pose questions and explore the world around us, learning from the past and using research and data to find solutions to problems we need to solve for our future."

Building on previous advocacy and recommendations from students, professors and (vice) rectors at the UNTL on the need to address sexual violence at the university, UN Women and UNTL signed a Memorandum of Understanding to launch the Safe Campus initiative.

"The initiative aims to prevent all types of violence against women in and around UNTL campuses, in order to create a safe and healthy environment for work and study. This aims at raising awareness and educating lecturers, administrative staff and students, and by doing so preventing all forms of violence on our campus. We are hoping this initiative will set a good example for [read more here](#).

WOMEN, PEACE & SECURITY

The following two pages are dedicated to activities under the “**Enhancing women’s meaningful Leadership and Participation in State Building and Development in Timor-Leste,**” project which is generously funded by the Government of Japan



From
the People of Japan

WOMEN MEDIATORS BREAKING STEREOTYPES AND WORKING TO BRING PEACE IN TIMOR-LESTE



Mediators, Evelina and Joaquina (2nd and 3rd from left) have resolved 25 community conflicts
Photo: Emily Hungerford _ UN Women

In the past, women in Timor-Leste have had limited opportunities to be involved in conflict resolution due to customary practices that limited women’s roles in leading such processes.

In advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Timor-Leste, the Ministry of Interior (responsible for internal security) is supporting women to lead as professional conflict mediators in their communities.

Since 2016, the Ministry’s National Directorate for Community Conflict Prevention (DNPCC) has been working to strengthen its gender responsive mediation practices, as part of the National Action Plan 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. This has focused on recruiting and encouraging more women to train in conflict mediation.

Since July 2019, DNPCC deployed 18 female mediators (out of a

total of 39) over Timor-Leste’s 13 municipalities, importantly reaching parity between female and male mediators. Joaquina Soares, 47, and Evelina da Costa Guterres, 45, were some of the first women to work in the DNPCC as mediators.

Over the course of the past 3 years, they have managed to resolve 25 civil disputes which could otherwise have led to violence and crime. Recently, they played a key role in calming an incendiary situation in the village of Leorema, as a group of young men visited an opposing group in a neighboring village and killed 2 men, burnt down 13 houses and destroyed 7 motorbikes.

In Timor-Leste, these incidents are associated with martial-arts group conflicts and contribute to tension and cycles of inter-community violence. While the police continued its investigation of the crime and as perpetrators were awaiting formal prosecution in prison, tension remained between the community member of the two villages.

When internal conflict divides communities and risks sparking new violence, DNPCC works in collaboration with the police to support community based approaches to peacebuilding, which involves encouraging community leaders to sit together, find solutions and de-escalate the conflict.

In September 2019, DNPCC mediators Joaquina Soares and Evelina da Costa Guterres helped to organize a gathering with over 1,000 participants as one of the final steps which followed months of work with community members to find a peaceful agreement between the two communities in Leorema.

The community dialogue, which continued over 5 hours, aimed to allow people to express their feelings openly and resulted in community decision to sign an agreement in the future to maintain peace.

In 2020, Soares and da Costa Guterres reflected on the dialogue in Leorema. “It usually takes 1 or 2 visits from the mediators to get people to agree with a meeting like this” says Soares. “But for this case, it took 5 visits to the villages, and many follow-up phone calls - because people died and many houses were burnt to the ground.” Soares then spoke about how female mediators differ from male mediators.

“We approach with tenderness. We encourage dialogue at meetings and speak calmly. We continue analyzing the conflict with the community until we know the root cause of the problem and follow-up with many phone calls – to make sure tensions still don’t exist which they don’t thanks to the dialogue last year.”

It was noticeable that many women in the crowd were not speaking up. This is not surprising given that women are not often supported to take leading roles in conflict resolution.

When asked how they address this, Da Costa Guterres raised an important point: “We approach the women in the village experiencing conflict, and it is easier for them to be open with us [because we are women]. Some women just don’t have the courage yet to speak up and we can act on their behalf until they do come forward. When women are in the field, we make wide connections within the community and they are proud of us when we do help solve the conflict.



Joaquina Soares and Evelina da Costa Guterres, female conflict mediators working in the community. Photo by DNPCC, 2017.

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY, ADVOCACY AND HEALING TOGETHER FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

Olinda Alves da Silva, 44 is part of a community of women who are pioneering a better way to provide care and support healing for women survivors of the past conflict in Timor-Leste (1975-1999), while working to prevent further violence against women.

“Life was very hard during the occupation. At seven years old, I was separated from my parents and put into an orphanage.

In 1980, my father, a resistance fighter, was killed, and then my mother also died as a result of the physical and sexual abuse she received from the Indonesian military. I want everyone to know what happened to my parents and to other Timorese people, so that violence doesn't happen again.

I got involved with a local NGO called Asosiasaun Chega! ba Ita (Enough violence for us) in 2018 – 2019 as part of a project supported by UN Women. I am their focal point and organize for women survivors in my village to attend their workshops, which provide a safe space to share past experiences during the conflict.

One of the main challenges now for women survivors is that they still face multiple inequalities such as lack of employment, housing, recognition for their efforts during the conflict, and opportunities to move forward.

This work connected me with different partners; I gained different skills and confidence which I am now using to negotiate for further recognition and assistance for these women in the community.

Women who are survivors are still suffering and need help to seek reparation, to improve existing inequalities and access to basic services. They need someone to advocate for them to achieve these things and this is one of the main reasons I do this work. We help each other out.

When a survivor or a member of her family dies, and they cannot afford a coffin, I help them to find the funds. We organize walks in our city and talk to students, so that our story of the past is not lost.”



Olinda Alves da Silva, 44, grew up during the Indonesian Occupation of Timor-Leste from 1975-1999 and now works closely with survivors. Photo: Emily Hungerford_UN Women

PROMISING PRACTICE FOR PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

In February 2020, UN Women convened a Prevention Collaborative, a global network of prevention practitioners, to deepen understanding of promising programmes on prevention of gender-based violence before it begins and developing parenting education that can reduce violence against women and promote gender equality. The workshops which attended by 18 participants from UN sister agencies, government institutions and Civil Society Organizations were convened with the generous support of the Governments of Australia and the Republic of Korea as part of UN Women's efforts to advance whole-school approaches to prevention. See recent briefs by the Prevention Collaborative [here](#).



A group photo with the participants after the training. Photo: Helio Miguel_UN Women



REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC HEARS FROM TIMOR-LESTE CIVIL SOCIETY GENDER ADVOCATES

Recognizing the critical role played by civil society groups in realizing the vision of gender equality under the 2030 Agenda, the UN Women Timor-Leste Country Office organized a breakfast dialogue with Timor-Leste civil society gender equality advocates.

The consultation over Beijing +25, UNSCR +20 and UN Women's present and future in Timor-Leste aimed to share thoughts on priorities for gender equality and women's empowerment as the UN Women Country Office plans for its next five-year Plan.

As shared by Mohammad Naciri, "CSOs are one of our most important partners. It's so assuring to see women and men come together to fight for women's rights. Globally, we need everyone to be united and to look at where we stand in relation to generation equality. As we still have a lot more to achieve, Generation Equality is a movement in the making to close the gaps we have not yet met to reach the vision of the SDGs."

"CSOs are one of our most important partners. It's so assuring to see women and men come together to fight for women's rights. Globally, we need everyone to be united and to look at where we stand in relation to generation equality" said Mohammad Naciri



Group photo between CSO reference group with UN Women Regional Director for Asia and Pacific Mr. Mohammad Naciri at UN Compound. Photo: Helio Miguel_UN Women



UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

ILO | OHCHR | UNDESA | UNDP | UNESCO | UNFPA | UNICEF | UN WOMEN | WHO

I AM GENERATION EQUALITY: NORBERTA VICENTE SOARES DA CRUZ, DISABILITY RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Billions of people across the world stand on the right side of history every day. They speak up, take a stand, mobilize, and take big and small actions to advance women's rights. This is Generation Equality

"I am Generation Equality because..."

I advocate to end gender-based violence against persons with disabilities. It is our right to live free of violence. I fought for my rights and those of others with disabilities, to be accepted into a university when I was rejected because of my physical condition, even though I had passed the entrance exams. I took seven years to earn my degree in Biology, as I had a club foot surgery during that time.

When I was emerging from anesthesia after the surgery, I was sexually harassed in the hospital by a male staff member. I couldn't protect myself and just cried. Gender-based violence has been an urgent issue for women and people with disabilities that no one speaks about. After my recovery, I promised myself that I wouldn't let the abuse happen to other people.

Believe in yourself as a change maker

I started volunteering with an organization for persons with disabilities, called Raes Loves Timorese, to lead research about the life experiences of women and girls with disabilities. It was my first time meeting a group of people with disabilities. I was in tears because I used to think that I was alone living with this condition.

The majority of the people whom we interviewed revealed that they had experienced discrimination from their family and community. They encouraged me to advocate even more for our voices to be heard and our rights to be respected, and I believe that I can bring change.

Then I joined Community Based Rehabilitation Network Timor-Leste (CBRN) the organization for persons with disabilities in 2018. Since then I've been advocating for extending health, rehabilitation, education and other services to people with disabilities.

Using adult learning techniques, and with the help of UN Women and UN Human Rights Advisor's Unit, we have created a training module on preventing and responding to gender-based violence against women and girls with disabilities. We have already trained 11 people as facilitators to roll out the training, and six of them have a disability.

I've been co-facilitated the training and use the resource to raise awareness and shift service providers' attitudes. People with disabilities must have the same freedoms and opportunities as everyone else. Last year, I met my professor who rejected me during the entrance interview to the university. I brought her back a surprise. I proved to her what I am capable of!

Our ability doesn't always come through physical strength, but from our thoughts and willingness to challenge the difficulties we face. Gender-based violence shouldn't only be women's concern, men are part of the solution to build equal opportunity for all. Furthermore, we have young people these days who play such a crucial role in shaping our community and building a world that is more equal. Young people have to be brave and speak up against all the unjust practices in our society.

Norberta Vicente Soares da Cruz is the interim director at CBRN, a leading organization in Timor-Leste advocating to extend health, rehabilitation, education and other services to people with disabilities. She is also a volunteer member of the Civil Society National Reference Group in Timor-Leste and provides information, analysis and lessons learned to feed into programming and advocacy efforts of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.



Norberta da Cruz is an advocate for the rights of people with disabilities affected by gender-based violence in Timor-Leste. Photo: UN Women/Helio Miguel

Three things you can do to become part of Generation Equality, according to Norberta da Cruz:

- **Understand about primary prevention and ask for support**
- **Always speak up against GBV.**
- **Raise awareness for local authorities to consider GBV that happens in a family is not a family problem.**

NEW RESOURCES ON GENDER EQUALITY

Gender Equality Resources:



CSW64 / BEIJING+25 (2020): : BEIJING +25 AGREEMENT COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Following the UN Secretary-General's recommendation to Member States to amend the format of the 64th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in light of the current concerns regarding coronavirus disease (COVID-19), an informal meeting took place on 2 March 2020. [Read more](#)

COVID-19 and Gender Resources:



COVID-19: WOMEN FRONT AND CENTRE STATEMENT BY PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA, UN UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL AND UN WOMEN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

One thing is clear about the COVID-19 pandemic, as stock markets tumble, schools and universities close, people stockpile supplies and home becomes a different and crowded space: this is not just a health issue. It is a profound shock to our societies and economies, exposing the deficiencies of public and private arrangements that currently function only if women play multiple and underpaid roles. [Read more](#)

In Focus: Gender equality matters in COVID-19 response



IN FOCUS: GENDER EQUALITY MATTERS IN COVID-19 RESPONSE:

This page highlights various articles and resources to understand the connections between gender inequality and COVID-19 and provides Governments, organizations and individuals tools such as checklists and guidance to support and contribute to gender-responsive COVID-19 responses. [See here.](#)



IN BRIEF: WOMEN'S NEEDS AND GENDER EQUALITY IN TIMOR-LESTE'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

Women and girls' immediate and long-term needs must be addressed and integrated into Timor-Leste's COVID-19 response, in order to ensure both women's access to services and human rights, and to enable women to contribute to shaping the response. Based on lessons learned from previous outbreaks, this brief outlines gender issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic and response in Timor-Leste, and puts forward key questions to be considered by COVID-19 decision makers in Timor-Leste. [Read here.](#)



ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

At the time of crisis, women and girls are often being more vulnerable to various form condition, violence and discrimination. However, interventions to all the responses to the crisis also often left them behind as gender dimensions is not recognized. It is critical to ensure that service and support are always available and accessible for the them to help avoid them from double burden and safe their lives from the crisis. [Read here.](#)