

Ending Violence Against Women and Children in Timor-Leste

By supporting frontline service delivery, social norms change, and research, the Nabilan program works with government, civil society, and communities to end the devastating and preventable problem of violence against women and children in Timor-Leste.



THE NABILAN PROGRAM

Timor-Leste has some of the highest rates of violence against women in the world. In their lifetimes, most women in Timor-Leste experience some form of physical, sexual, emotional, or economic violence by an intimate partner. Women's experiences of intimate partner violence can be frequent and severe, and women rarely leave these violent relationships. Violence against children is also high, with more than three-quarters of women and men reporting experiencing physical and/or sexual abuse during childhood. This violence is a pervasive problem in Timor-Leste that prevents women and children from enjoying their human rights and freedoms, and greatly impacts on their ability to fully participate in the development of the country.

With the goal of ending violence against women in Timor-Leste, the Nabilan program was created as an eight-year partnership between the governments of Australia and Timor-Leste. Nabilan is implemented by The Asia Foundation in collaboration with Timor-Leste's Ministry for Social Solidarity and Inclusion and Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion. *Nabilan* means "bright" in Tetum and represents the end goal of this program.

Under the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence, the Government of Timor-Leste has taken primary responsibility for preventing violence against women and children, and ensuring that victims have access to essential support services. Nabilan contributes towards these goals through evidenced-based prevention initiatives and supporting essential services partners through funding, technical assistance, research, and training.

The Nabilan program works on the premise that violence against women and children is preventable. Nabilan is grounded in the fundamental principles of the rights of women and children and the overwhelming benefits of gender equality. The program works collaboratively with individuals, communities, civil society, and the government toward long-term change, through three main pillars: service delivery, social norms change, and research.

SUPPORTING FRONTLINE SERVICES

The Nabilan program is dedicated to ensuring women and children who experience violence can access quality and inclusive services. During the first phase of the program, from 2014-2018, partners provided over 31,857 unique services to women and children victims

of violence. This included referrals, legal assistance, medical forensic examination, temporary and long-term shelter, counseling, life-skills training, and reintegration support.

Nabilan provides a number of training and professional development opportunities for organizations providing frontline services for victims in Timor-Leste. To support the development of a skilled workforce of social service professionals, a specialized Certificate III in Social Services course was designed. Offered annually since 2017, in collaboration with a vocational training provider, Industry Safety Assessment and Training, the course is the first of its kind in Timor-Leste. Students complete 100 hours of training on topics such as gender equality, LGBTI rights, legal frameworks, disability issues, counselling, case management, and self-care. As of 2019, 62 students have graduated from the course, equipped with the knowledge and practical skills to provide high-quality care for all clients in a range of key sectors which support women and children.

SOCIAL NORMS CHANGE

Preventing violence against women and children means working with communities to change attitudes and behaviors. Drawing from international best practice, the Nabilan program is adapting the community-based prevention methodology SASA!, originally developed by Raising Voices in Uganda. Nabilan's version for Timor-Leste is called KOKOSA!, short for *Komesa Konxiénsia Suporta Asaun* (Start Awareness Support Action). KOKOSA! takes a benefits-based approach to violence prevention. Rather than assigning blame or employing negative messages, KOKOSA! encourages community members to think about the positive effects of balancing power in relationships between women and men. Using simple, fun, dialogue-based techniques, KOKOSA! works with community members to define problems and identify solutions. Nabilan is working with 23 community mobilizers in Letefoho, Manufahi to run KOKOSA! activities with their neighbors and through existing community groups and networks.

In addition to directly supporting community

mobilization, Nabilan also provides technical assistance and prevention training to partner organizations working in all development sectors. One initiative is the Change Ambassadors Network, launched in 2018, comprising of representatives from implementing partner organizations of the Australian Aid program in Timor-Leste. The members meet regularly to develop the skills and mutual support required to influence change in their organizations and integrate quality violence prevention approaches into their own work.

RESEARCH

The Nabilan program is informed by the Nabilan Baseline Study, the first quantitative study in Timor-Leste analyzing both women's experiences of violence and men's perpetration of violence against women. Conducted in 2015, the women's survey used the World Health Organisation Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women methodology and the men's survey used the United Nations Multi-Country Study on Men and Violence methodology. The Nabilan Baseline Study found that three in five women aged 15-49 who have ever been in a relationship, have experienced some form of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence by a male partner in their lifetime, and 47 percent within 12 months prior to the interview. More than half of ever-partnered women have experienced emotional violence in their lifetime. 72 percent of women and 77 percent of men surveyed had experienced at least one form of physical and/or sexual abuse as a child. 86 percent of women who were victims of violence did not seek assistance from any formal agencies, services, or other authorities, with most women saying this was due to stigma, shame, or the normalization of violence. The Nabilan Baseline Study shows gender inequality and violence against women and children in Timor-Leste is entrenched and inter-generational. Research demonstrates serious impacts on the well-being of both women and men, requiring all partners to work together to end this cycle of violence.

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through a network of offices in 18 Asian countries and in Washington, DC. Working with public and private partners, the Foundation receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.



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