Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
Adult Literacy and Women’s Empowerment: Exploring the contribution of a non-formal adult literacy programme to women’s empowerment in Aileu, Timor Leste

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Development Studies at Massey University, Manawatu, New Zealand.

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Abstract

While the majority of studies concerning education in Timor Leste have focused on formal schooling, this thesis seeks to explore the contribution of non-formal adult literacy programmes (NFALP) to rural women’s empowerment in Aileu, Timor Leste by examining the challenges that rural women face in their daily lives, whether their participation in the NFALP and literacy acquisition has assisted them with overcoming these challenges and brought benefits to their lives, and if this has led to their empowerment. The study adopts a gender perspective and focuses on the individual voices of rural adult women in considering how NFALPs are impacting on rural women’s lives, and provides a space for their voice, one which has been marginalised in the literature so far, to be heard. The study examines three important empowerment frameworks presented by Rowlands (1995), Kabeer (1999) and Stromquist (1993) which are relevant to research concerning women and education. The study employs a qualitative feminist methodology in seeking an in-depth understanding of the reality and lived experience of rural women participating in the programme through semi-structured interviews with literacy programme participants and key informants during a period of fieldwork in Timor Leste.

The research findings reveal that the motivation behind women’s participation in a NFALP is directly related to addressing their practical gender needs, rather than their strategic gender needs, which revolve around reproductive tasks and unpaid productive work. The study found that NFALP offers rural women who missed out on formal schooling another opportunity to achieve an education, however, yet the heavy burden of women’s traditional reproductive roles severely restricts their ability to regularly attend NFALP. Finally, the research found that rural women did experience empowerment through their participation in the NFALP, the most common empowerment dimension experienced being the personal (Rowlands, 1995) or psychological dimension (Stromquist, 1993) of empowerment.
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Viva Timor Leste!
## Table of Contents

Abstract ..................................................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................................. iii
Table of Contents ................................................................................................................................... iv
List of Tables .......................................................................................................................................... vii
List of Acronyms ................................................................................................................................... viii
Map of Timor Leste ................................................................................................................................ 10

### Chapter One: Introduction to the Research
- Background and Rationale to this Research ...................................................................................... 1
- Aim of Thesis and Research Questions .................................................................................................. 6
- Chapter Outline ........................................................................................................................................ 8

### Chapter Two: Theoretical Approaches to Women, Gender and Development
- Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 13
- Traditional Approaches to Women, Development and Education ....................................................... 14
  - Influence of the Colonial Era on Women, Development and Education ............................................ 14
  - Influence of the Modernisation Paradigm on Women, Development and Education ..................... 15
- United Nations Decade for Women (1976-85) and its Impact on Women’s Participation in Education .......................................................... 19
- Women in Development (WID) and Education .................................................................................... 21
- Gender and Development (GAD) and Education .................................................................................. 29
- Chapter Summary ..................................................................................................................................... 34

### Chapter Three: Adult Literacy and Women’s Empowerment
- Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 36
- The Role of Adult Literacy in the Empowerment of Women ............................................................... 36
- An Empowerment Approach to Women, Development and Literacy .................................................. 41
  - Empowerment as Power and Process ................................................................................................. 43
  - Personal, Close Relationships and Collective Empowerment ........................................................... 48
  - Resources, Agency and Achievements ............................................................................................... 49
  - Cognitive, Psychological, Political and Economic Empowerment .................................................. 52
- Chapter Summary ..................................................................................................................................... 54

### Chapter Four: The Timor Leste Context and the Aileu Resource and Training Centre
- Introduction ............................................................................................................................................... 56
- Timor Leste Socio-Economic Context .................................................................................................... 57
- The Role of Women in Timor Leste Society ........................................................................................... 60
  - Women’s Traditional Roles .................................................................................................................. 60
  - Marriage and Family ............................................................................................................................. 61
  - Women’s Rights and Gender Equality ................................................................................................ 62
- Timor Leste Historical Context .............................................................................................................. 64
  - Portuguese Rule 1500s - 1974 ............................................................................................................... 64
  - The Carnation Revolution and Civil War 1974 -1975 ...................................................................... 66
  - Indonesian Occupation 1975-1999 ...................................................................................................... 67
  - Fall of Suharto and the 1999 Referendum ........................................................................................... 69
  - INTERFET, UNTAET and Post-Conflict Reconstruction 1999-2002 ............................................. 70
  - Independence 2002 ............................................................................................................................. 71
- Women and Education in Timor Leste .................................................................................................. 72
  - Women and Education During the Portuguese Colonial Administration ......................................... 72
Women and Education During the Indonesian Occupation .............................................. 74
Women and Education During Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development .......... 75
The Aileu Resource and Training Centre’s Non-formal Adult Literacy Programme .......... 79
Overview of Aileu and ARTC ......................................................................................... 79
Community Needs ........................................................................................................... 82
Facilitators and Coordinators ......................................................................................... 84
Adult Literacy Programmes 2007-2010 ........................................................................ 85
Chapter Summary ............................................................................................................ 86

Chapter Five: Methodology ............................................................................................ 88
Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 88
Research Methodology ..................................................................................................... 89
Feminist Insights ............................................................................................................... 89
Research Questions .......................................................................................................... 91
Selection of Research Site and Insider/Outsider Issues ..................................................... 92
Positionality and Reflexivity ............................................................................................. 93
Planning for Fieldwork ..................................................................................................... 95
Negotiating Access to Research Participants ................................................................... 95
Conflict of Interest ............................................................................................................ 96
Ethical Issues .................................................................................................................... 96
Risk of Harm to Researcher .............................................................................................. 98
Fieldwork and Primary Data Collection Methods .............................................................. 98
Research Assistant/Translator ......................................................................................... 99
Village Visits ..................................................................................................................... 101
Research Participants ....................................................................................................... 101
Focus Group Discussions ............................................................................................... 102
Secondary Data Collection Methods ............................................................................... 106
Data Analysis ................................................................................................................... 107
Research Limitations and Data Validity ......................................................................... 108
Chapter Summary ............................................................................................................ 109

Chapter Six: Women’s Experiences of Rural Life Within an Adult Literacy Programme in Aileu .............................................................................................................. 110
Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 110
Rural Women’s Daily Experiences ................................................................................... 111
Women’s Gendered Roles ................................................................................................. 111
Decision Making ............................................................................................................... 115
Lack of Money .................................................................................................................. 119
Lack of Transportation ..................................................................................................... 120
Early Marriage and Large Families ................................................................................ 122
Illness ................................................................................................................................. 124
Reflections on Findings ..................................................................................................... 125
Responding to Rural Women’s Needs and Interests ......................................................... 127
Educating and Caring for Family Members ..................................................................... 128
Accessing Opportunities ................................................................................................. 130
Reducing Vulnerability ..................................................................................................... 131
Accessing and Understanding Important Information .................................................... 132
Targeted Programme Support ......................................................................................... 133
Reflections on Findings ..................................................................................................... 135

Chapter Seven: Adult Literacy and the Empowerment of Women in Aileu .............................................................................................................. 137
Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 137
Rural Women’s Experiences of Empowerment ................................................................. 137
List of Tables

Table 1: Feminist Empowerment Frameworks ................................................. 48
Table 2: Interview Participant Characteristics ............................................. 103
List of Acronyms

APODETI – Associação Popular Democrata Timorense
ASDT – Associacao Social-Democrata Timorense
CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
DAWN – Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
EFA – Education For All
GAD – Gender and Development
GAU – Gender Affairs Unit
GNP – Gross National Product
GDP – Gross Domestic Profit
GFTTL – Grupo Feto Foinsa’e Timor Lorosae
GNP – Gross National Profit
FALINTIL – Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste
FOKUPERS – Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Loro Sae
FREITILIN – Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente
INTERFET – International Force for East Timor
KI – Key Informant
LPP – Literacy Programme Participant
MDG – Millennium Development Goal
MFAT – New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
NGO – Non-governmental Organisaiton
NLS – New Literacy Studies
NZAID – New Zealand Agency for International Development
NZAP – New Zealand Aid Programme
OPMT – Organização Popular da Mulher Timorense
RLA – Real Literacies Approach
SAP – Structural Adjustment Programme

1 English Translation: Timorese Popular Democratic Association
2 English Translation: Timorese Social Democratic Association
3 English Translation: East Timor Young Women’s Group
4 English Translation: The Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor
5 English Translation: Communication Forum for Women from the East
6 English Translation: Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor
7 English Translation: Popular Organization of East Timorese Women
TLSLS – Timor Leste Survey of Living Standards
UDT – União Democrática Timorense
UN – United Nations
UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIFEM – United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMISSET – United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor
UNMIT – United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
UNOTIL – United Nations Office in East Timor
UNTAET – United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
WID – Women in Development

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8 English Translation: Timorese Democratic Union
Map of Timor Leste

http://navigatedili.com/East%20Timor%20Images/Timor-Leste.jpg