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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

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Alicia Kotsapas 2011

Abstract

While the majority of studies concerning education in Timor Leste have focused on formal schooling, this thesis seeks to explore the contribution of nonformal 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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List of Acronyms

APODETI – Associação Popular Democratica Timorense¹

ASDT – Associacao Social-Democrata Timorense²

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

GFFTL – Grupo Feto Foinsa'e Timor Lorosa'e³

GNP - Gross National Profit

FALINTIL - Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste⁴

FOKUPERS – Forum Komunikasi Untuk Perempuan Loro Sae⁵

FRETILIN – Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente⁶

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 Timorense⁷

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 Timorense⁸

UN – United Nations

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

UNIFEM –United Nations Development Fund for Women

UNMISET - United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor

UNMIT – United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste

UNOTIL - United Nations Office in East Timor

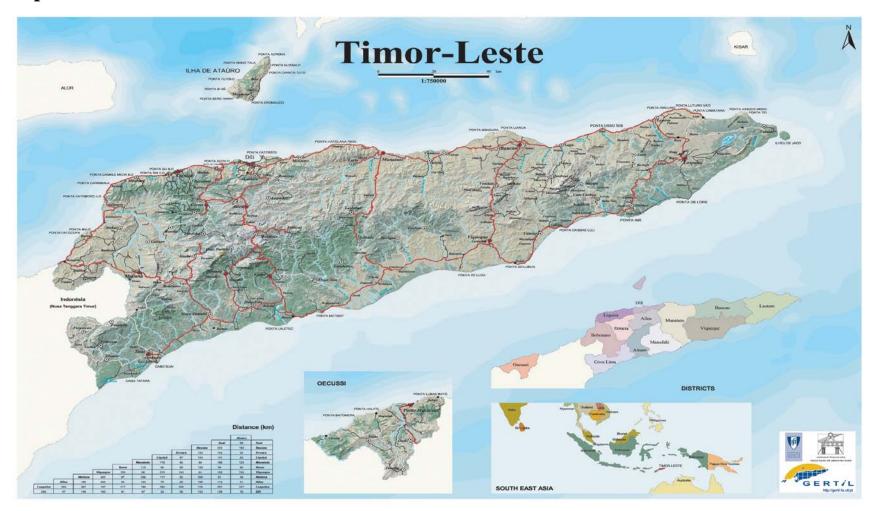
UNTAET - United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

WID - Women in Development

⁸ English Translation: Timorese Democratic Union

Map of Timor Leste



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