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PEACE ON A PLATE: AID, REINTEGRATION AND THE
THESIS OF LIBERAL PEACE
TIMOR LESTE, 1999-2004

A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AT MASSEY
UNIVERSITY, PALMERSTON NORTH, NEW ZEALAND.

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2005

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the impacts of aid agencies on the reintegration of repatriated refugees to Timor Leste. Scholars and aid practitioners involved in post-conflict peace building suggest that refugee reintegration is vital to the achievement of durable peace. They claim that reintegration will best occur through the reversal of structural inequalities and the adoption of a representative democratic structure and a market economy. Many of the relief and development activities aid organisations instigate are intended to contribute towards these ends. They are thus claimed to build a facilitating environment for returnee reintegration.

The research is based upon the interviews of ninety-seven groups of returnees, stayees and community leaders and a number of aid agencies, which operated programmes between 1999 and 2004 in Timor Leste. The research concludes that aid agencies played a positive role in refugee reintegration however the non-aid aspects of people's lives were of greater significance to the success of their overall reintegration. The short time spans that most aid agencies operated in and their failure to develop close working relationships in the communities they operated in, prevented them from significantly contributing to deeper level social, political and economic change that may have contributed to the state of liberal peace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to a number of people who have helped me to produce this thesis. My gratitude must first go to all the people, both Timorese and foreign, who took the time to talk to me in Timor Leste about a period that has been both physically and emotionally challenging. Special thanks to Vicente Burgess Maia, Louisa, Rosemary and Ocky. Without your help, generosity and patience, the interviews would not have been possible. Thanks to Susanna Barnes and Isabel Gueterres who welcomed me to Dili and provided guidance and respite. My gratitude also goes out to Ida Pinto who laboured to teach me the twenty Tetum words I could manage when I arrived in Dili and Mr. Helda da Costa, without whose assistance I may never have got to Timor. My thanks also extend to NZAID and Massey University for their respective grants and scholarships.

Thanks also to all the people who've taken on the challenge of trying to make sense of the various stages of that illusive first draft. Thanks to my supervisors John Overton and Donovan Storey, and to the whanau for the diversions and support they provided.

My final thanks and thoughts go to the Karenni refugees of Kayah State, Burma who live in exile in Thailand, as it is the years spent living and working with them, that inspired my original interest in refugee issues.

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