

# WHAT HOLDS US TOGETHER

A POPULATION-BASED STUDY  
ABOUT RESILIENCE FOR PEACE  
IN TIMOR-LESTE

MARCH 2016

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How We Are Held Together:  
A Population-based Study  
about Resilience for Peace  
in Timor-Leste

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# 1. ABOUT THE STUDY

*...sometimes something happens to our neighbors and even if we're not family, when there are hard times, we always help each other. This is how we are held together.*

Focus group participant,  
Ermera District, 18 July 2014

## 1.1. Introduction

In Timor-Leste, conflicts, divides and mistrust among citizens and authorities continue to undermine the building of a lasting peace. While attention has been given to the sources of fragility and obstacles to peace, there is a need to better understand, assess and ultimately leverage the positive assets and attributes of individuals, communities, and institutions in the country. This report contributes to this understanding of what makes Timorese able to anticipate risk, resolve conflicts collaboratively, and respond creatively to crisis – what we call *resilience for peace*.

The report presents the results of a nationwide survey conducted in July 2015 as the quantitative component of a mixed method participatory action research designed to understand the complex linkages between resilience and peacebuilding. The research, implemented in partnership with Interpeace and the Centre of Studies for Peace and Development (CEPAD)<sup>1</sup>, is part of a broader program, the Frameworks

for Assessing Resilience (FAR) which seeks to develop a framework to assess resilience in relation to conflict and peacebuilding.

The survey was designed to provide detailed information about the factors and capacities for resilience that exist among the Timorese population with a focus on key elements of resilience identified during the consultation phase of the project: culture, religion, leadership, law and security.<sup>2</sup> The survey further explored general factors of resilience including key domains of social cohesion.

Structured interviews were conducted with a random sample of 2,975 adult residents in all 13 districts of Timor-Leste. The sample was designed to provide results that are representative of the view of the adult population at the district level.

## **1.2. Background - Transitioning from Occupation**

Four hundred years of Portuguese colonial presence in Timor-Leste shaped the country's cultural and historical context. It also resulted in weak institutions, undermining Timor-Leste's efforts at gaining independence in 1975. By then, Portugal had largely lost interest in maintaining Portuguese Timor as a colony, and Portugal's own transition toward democracy created an opportunity for Timor's independence.

The move toward independence, however, was not unanimously supported. In November 1975, the unilateral declaration of independence by a newly established political party, the Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor (FRETILIN), was quickly followed by a separate call by four other Timorese political party to integrate Timor with neighboring Indonesia. In the month that followed, FRETIN's attempt at gaining international support failed and Indonesia invaded. Dili, the main city of Timor-Leste and current capital quickly fell. Meanwhile, the situation was poorly understood by many world powers,<sup>3</sup> and the left-leaning FRETILIN was not viewed positively by

neighboring Australia and the United States which saw Indonesia as an ally in the region.<sup>4</sup>

The Indonesian invasion resulted in a four-year war for the control of Timor, ultimately resulting in Indonesia's victory in March 1979, when the last holdout in the west of the country, fell. By then, the war may have made as many as 200,000 deaths.<sup>5</sup> Internationally, the situation remained confusing. Portugal had not officially relinquished its authority as administering power of Timor,<sup>6</sup> and the United Nations did not recognize the authority of the Regional Popular Assembly established by the Indonesia government in Timor. The United Nations also did not recognize the claim supported by Indonesia that, by the act of the assembly, the people of East Timor had exercised their right to self-determination and had become independent of Portugal through integration with Indonesia.

Despite this lack of recognition, Indonesia remained the de-facto occupying power. Civilians underwent merciless assaults and random cruelties inflicted on them by the Indonesian military, especially if they were suspected to be political adversaries of the occupation.<sup>7</sup> The United Nations was unable to access the territory in order to assess the situation, foreign aid was blocked, and international media and diplomats were heavily controlled on the occasions they were granted access to the area.<sup>8</sup> In effect, Timor was cut-off from the rest of the world,

Many East Timorese in exile worked vigorously with international civil society to bring attention to the plight of the East Timorese people, but their struggle went largely ignored.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile in Timor-Leste, a guerilla movement had emerged, despite the Indonesian military territorial reach into all villages. This militarization of the society curtailed the rights of Timorese citizens on many dimensions, from the political to civil to the economic, social and cultural.<sup>10</sup>

Within a few years Indonesia began making claims that they had 'normalized' the area of East Timor and partially lifted the ban on

accessing the region. This was seen an opportunity for many Timorese to once again begin organizing a resistance movement, as more foreigners were granted access to the territory and more young people attended university. Eventually demonstrations against the occupation became more frequent, and in response the Indonesian military took swift action to suppress the movement.

This response dramatically culminated in 1991 with the Santa Cruz Massacre of young people in Dili by the Indonesian security forces took place. Unlike previous slaughters, this one was filmed by a foreign journalist, and pictures of the carnage reached the outside world. This had a profound effect on efforts to seek a solution to “the question of East Timor.”<sup>11</sup> Increased media coverage and mounting international pressure to end the abuses led to a referendum in which seventy-eight percent of Timorese voted for independence.<sup>12</sup>

The vote, however, resulted in even more violence and revealed deep political divides as some Timorese political groups sided with Indonesia and fought alongside its army.<sup>13</sup> Much of the violence was politically motivated to prevent the people of East Timor from freely participating in voting for transitional authority in East Timor.<sup>14</sup>

A vote, however ultimately took place, and on 30 August 1999, nearly 80 percent of the East Timorese population voted to emancipate from the Indonesian administration after 24 years of occupation. Anticipating this outcome, the Indonesian government once again unleashed its army and Timorese militias in successive campaigns of murder, arson, and forced expulsion of East Timorese civilians.<sup>15</sup> A 2000 United Nations Report found that the Indonesian army and Timorese militias had systematically committed gross violations of fundamental human rights including mass murder, torture, assault, forced disappearance, mass forcible deportations, the destruction of property, and rape and other sexual violence against women and children.<sup>16</sup>

Ultimately, International peacekeeping troops were called in to quell the violence, and the United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor was given official control. The Serious Crimes Unit was established in 1999 to address crimes that took place from January 1 to October 25, 1999.<sup>17</sup> Indonesia promised to prosecute specific individuals responsible for the violence in East Timor,<sup>18</sup> likely in an effort to avoid the creation of an ad hoc international tribunal.<sup>19</sup> Instead, the Indonesia government created the Ad Hoc Human Rights Court on East Timor in Jakarta to prosecute members of the Indonesian military and police, government officials, and Timorese militia leaders for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights committed in East Timor and Indonesia.<sup>20</sup> The Ad Hoc Court, however, was meant to fail. The lack of will to establish coherent and credible accounts of violence in East Timor meant that officers went unpunished.<sup>21</sup> Instead, military leaders involved in the violence in East Timor were painted as national heroes for their role in fighting for their country.<sup>22</sup> In December 2001, then Indonesian president Sukarnoputri stated, "Armed with the soldiers' oath and existing laws, carry out your duties and responsibilities in the best possible manner without having to worry about human rights abuses".<sup>23</sup>

Following the 1999 events, a transition period began, bringing back party politics for the first time since the occupation began in 1975, while political leaders regained political prominence in the new East Timor environment.<sup>24</sup> During this time, UN Offices in Timor-Leste were mandated to support critical state institutions including Timorese police and border control, provide human rights training and monitor progress.<sup>25</sup> Each passing year UN missions received less and less civilian staff and military personnel in preparation for an increasingly autonomous national government.<sup>26</sup>

In 2005 Indonesia's president visited East Timor for the first time since their independence, marking the signing of a momentous border agreement between the two nations. By June 2005, all remaining Australian peacekeepers had left East Timor, and two months later a truth commission was instituted for the purpose of looking into the

violence surrounding Timor's 1999 independence.<sup>27</sup> In January 2006, East Timor and Australia signed a deal to divide billions of dollars of expected revenue from oil and gas deposits in the Timor Sea.<sup>28</sup>

Peace was short lived however, in March 2006 the event known as the 2006 East Timorese crisis began when members of the military began a conflict over alleged discrimination within their ranks.<sup>29</sup> The conflict grew into much wider factional violence between the east and west areas of East Timor, and eventually over 150,000 people were forced to take refuge in provisional camps.<sup>30</sup> The crisis, which included an attempted coup in the capital of Dili, prompted a military intervention by several other countries as well as the resignation of Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri. Another UN Peacekeeping mission was set up known as the UN Integrated Mission in East Timor or UNMIT. According to UNMIT, much of the violence during this period had been exacerbated by poverty and high rates of unemployment.<sup>31</sup>

Periodic violence continued over the coming months and years. In 2007 the former interior minister Rogerio Lobato was put on trial for arming civilians during the 2006 crisis. Later that year Xanana Gusmao was elected prime minister. Although many people had seen Guasmao as a unifying figure after East Timor's independence, violence broke out after his election, and claims of fraud would soon follow during his tenure as PM.<sup>32</sup> In 2008 rebel soldiers shot President Jose Ramos-Horta in the stomach. Although the renegade group later surrendered to the police, its members alleged their actions were due in part to sentiments of distrust felt by many in East Timor due to allegations of corruption and nepotism among East Timorese politicians.<sup>33</sup> In 2009, President Ramos-Horta dismissed an Amnesty International report that alleged the government had failed to deliver justice to citizens who suffered in the 1999 violence. He did however acknowledge East Timor's failure to address poverty.<sup>34</sup>

By February 2010, East Timor's first anti-corruption commissioner, Aderito Soares, was sworn in to investigate repeated accusations of corruption against officials [16]. In 2012, the UN ended its peacekeeping mission in

East Timor and hundreds of Australian soldiers were almost simultaneously pulled out of East Timor. By December 2014, ties with Australia became strained after East Timor accused Australian intelligence officers of secretly bugging their cabinet meetings to gain an advantage on the 2004 oil and gas negotiations.<sup>35</sup>

In 2015 PM Xanana Gusmao submitted a letter of resignation to East Timor's Congress following allegations of corruption and nepotism. Although, he himself insisted his resignation would enable a new generation of East Timorese politicians to step into leadership positions.<sup>36</sup> His resignation made way for Freitline's Rui to Araujo who took steps in 2015 to form a coalition government with the National Congress in an effort to ease political tensions and promote East Timorese stability.<sup>37</sup>

Deep divisions and unresolved issues, dating back to the period before and during the struggle for independence continue to undermine Timor-Leste's difficult transition toward a lasting peace.<sup>38</sup> Among the most challenging are the remaining divide and mistrust between citizens, their authorities and elected representatives; the disenfranchised youth and high youth unemployment; land disputes; and high levels of domestic violence.

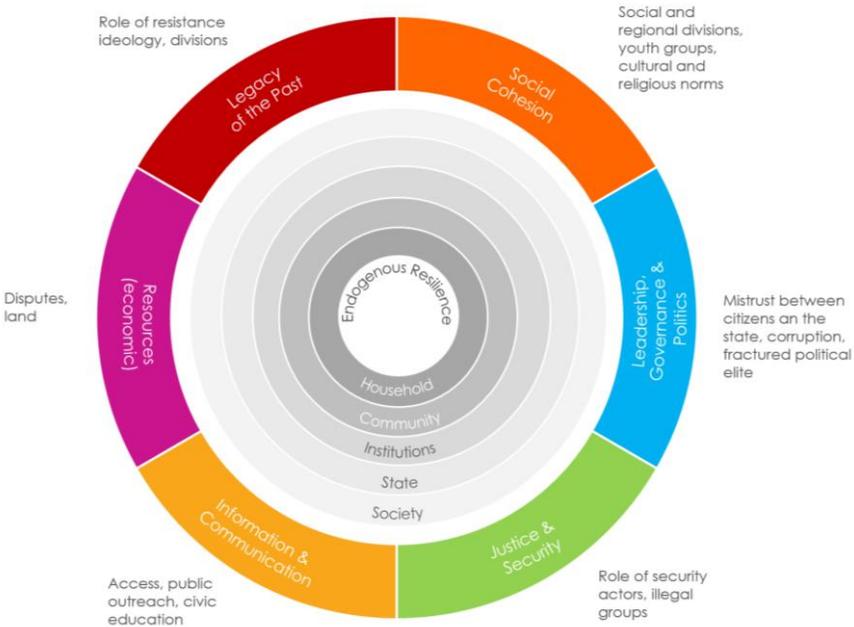
### **1.3. Framework for Analysis**

This research was conducted against the backdrop of transition from a struggle for liberation to a functioning independent state wrestling with emerging social, political and economic fractures in the post-liberation society. It sought to examine the particular manifestations of resilience for peace in this context. Acknowledging the highly contextual nature of resilience for peace, it is possible to position and articulate the places, forms and manifestations of resilience within a framework developed by the authors in relation to six peace dimensions: (1) social cohesion, (2) leadership, good governance and inclusive politics, (3) access to resources and opportunities, (4) the legacies of past conflict,

(5) societal information and communication networks, and (6) Justice and safety.

The specific manifestations of resilience and their relative importance is highly contextual. In Timor-Leste, the process of defining specific measures and assessment objectives was informed by an in-depth nationwide consultation through focus groups and interviews and expert working groups. Four key elements of resilience were identified; culture, religion, leadership and law and security. Timorese consider these as having the greatest impact on their resilience, noting that these elements are in themselves neutral and can be used both to leverage positive capacities for peacebuilding or can be utilized in ways that undermine peace.<sup>39</sup> The four elements were examine din relations to the dimensions outlined in the framework. The following figure presents the overall framework and general emphasis of the research in Timor-Leste.

Figure 1: Analytical Framework



This report follows the logic of the framework proposed above. Social Cohesion and the elements of solidarity, unity and identity and community engagement are examined first. The relation to information and communication is then examined, followed by the results on leadership and the role and perception of state actors and more broadly politics. The following chapter focuses on law and security. Finally, the implication of the data for resilience are examined, leading to general conclusions.

## **1.4. Methods**

### **1.4.1. Survey Design and Sampling**

The selection of respondents for the survey was based on a multi-stage random geographic cluster sampling of populated centers within all the districts of Timor-Leste. In each district, a total of 9 sucos, the administrative units corresponding to 'villages' were randomly selected proportionately to the population size using the 2010 census data on all sucos. In each selected suco, two aldeias, the administrative level below sucos corresponding to 'communities', were randomly selected from a list of all aldeias. For the capital district Dili, the number of sampled sucos was increased to 15 and two aldeias per suco. In total, 246 aldeias were selected. The interview teams aimed to conduct 12 interviews in each aldeia, for a total target of 216 interviews per district (360 in Dili), or 2,952 total interviews nationwide. In the end, a total of 2,975 interviews were conducted.

After reaching the assigned locations, interviewers used a random geographic method to select a dwelling. Interviewers identified the center of the assigned location and randomly selected a direction. In that direction, interviewers selected every other dwelling. In each unit, interviewers randomly selected one adult in the household, (defined as a group of people normally sleeping under the same roof and eating together) to be interviewed from a list of eligible respondents. Three attempts were made to contact a household or individual before



Response options based on pilot interviews were provided to the interviewer for coding but never read to study participants, with the exception of questions employing a scaling format (e.g., the Likert scale). An open-ended field was always available for interviewers to record complete responses. These answers were coded for analysis.

Once complete, the questionnaire was programmed into Android Nexus 7 Tablets running KoBoToolbox, our custom data collection package. The use of the tablets allowed interviewers to enter the data directly as the interview was conducted. Built-in verification systems reduced the risk of skipping questions or entering erroneous values, resulting in data of high quality.

### 1.4.3. Data Collection and Analysis

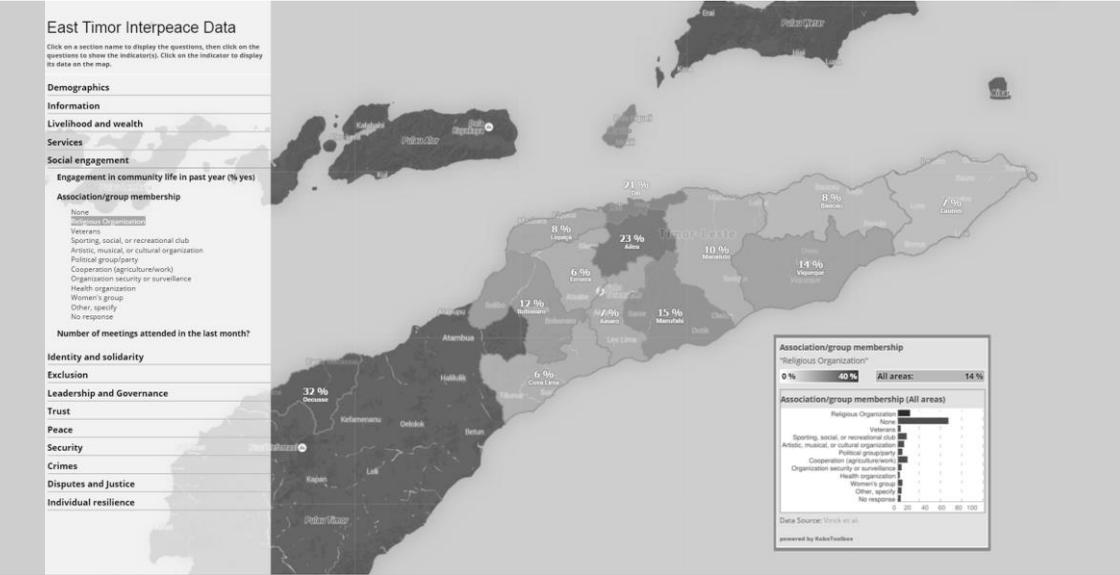
The data were collected between June 26<sup>th</sup> and July 24<sup>th</sup> 2015, by 6 teams comprised of 6 men and women each. The teams were deployed across the country, following the research plan and random selection of 246 aldeia. The teams conducted interviews under the guidance of one team leader in each team and three field coordinators. The interviewers were selected and trained in close collaboration with CEPAD. Prior to collecting data the interviewers participated in a weeklong training that covered interview techniques, the content of the questionnaire, the use of tablets to collect digital data, troubleshooting, and methods for solving technical problems. The training included multiple mock interviews and one pilot day in Dili.

The research protocol required each team to collect data in two aldeia per day. Interviews were conducted one-on-one, anonymously, and in confidential settings. When possible, data were synchronized with a central computer, enabling lead researchers to check data for completion, consistency, and outliers. Wherever possible, the lead researchers and supervisors discussed any issues that arose with the team prior to the next data collection. Once the data collection was completed the database was imported into Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22 for data analysis. The results presented

here are adjusted for the complex sample design and weighted to correct known disproportionate stratification of the sample and unequal probability of selection down to the household level.

After analysis, all of the results were imported online in an interactive map platform at [www.peacebuildingdata.org](http://www.peacebuildingdata.org) to enable users to browse detailed results at the regional level. This report and the map can be read together: the report highlights key results, while the map provides a more comprehensive overview of the survey responses.

Figure 3: Interactive Map - [www.peacebuildingdata.org](http://www.peacebuildingdata.org)



The research was reviewed by an ad-hoc committee in Timor-Leste and by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at Partners Healthcare in Boston, Massachusetts. It received an equivalent ministerial authorization in Timor-Leste. Permissions to operate were also obtained at the district level and from local authorities at survey sites. The interviewers obtained oral informed consent from each selected

participant; neither monetary nor material incentives were offered for participation.

#### 1.4.4. Limitations

The present study was developed and implemented carefully to ensure that the results would accurately represent the views and opinions of the adult population in Timor-Leste during the period of data collection (June/July 2015). Limitations to the study include aspects generally associated with survey research with regards to non-response, representativeness, and inaccurate recalls.

Some selected aldeia could not be reached, and some households and individuals could not be interviewed. It is uncertain how responses from individuals who could not be interviewed would have differed from those of the sampled individuals. However, the sampling approach was designed to reduce any potential for selection biases with additional replacement selections, and the non-response rate is minimal.

Results represent the population 18 years of age or above in Timor-Leste at the time of the survey. They may not represent opinions elsewhere or at other times. Opinions may change over time. However, many indicators are relatively stable and the survey provides a valid snapshot of perceptions and opinions at the time of the survey.

The study relies on self-reported data. A number of factors may have affected the quality and validity of the data collected. These factors include inaccurate recall of past events, misunderstanding of the questions or concepts, reactivity to the interviewer due to the sensitive nature of the questions, and intentional misreporting (e.g., for socially unacceptable answers). We minimized such risks through careful development of the questionnaire to make the questions sufficiently clear and to reduce potential bias.

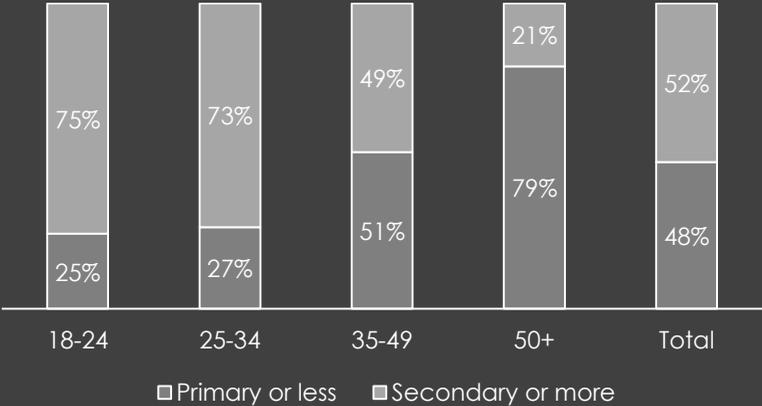
## 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The survey included interviews with a total of 2,975 individuals above the age of 18. A total of 1,487 interviews were conducted with women (50%), and 1,488 with men (50%). After weighting, the mean age of respondents was 39.4 years. Most respondents were between the ages of 35 and 49 (39%) followed by 25-34 (28%), those aged 50 or more (22%), and those aged 18 to 24 (11%). This is consistent with the census in terms of relative importance of the various age groups, although the 35-49 are slightly over-represented. Most respondents described themselves as married or in a marital relationship (79%), or single, never married (16%). The average household size was 6.5., 42% of the respondents were the head of their household. Regarding religion, almost all respondents described themselves as Catholic (99%). Half of the participants reported farming as the primary livelihood of their household, 13% indicated revenues from small business, 7% sell or barter their produce.

With regard to education, about half of the respondents (48%) had primary education or less: 18% had no formal education, 17% had incomplete primary education and 13% completed primary education but had no secondary education. The other half of the respondents (52%) had at least some secondary education, including 11% with tertiary level education (university). Educational achievements among youth are higher compared to older groups, likely as a result of efforts to increase primary school enrollment. Among youth between 18 and 24 years old, just 25% had only primary education or less, compared to 27% of those aged 25-34, 51% of those aged 35-49 years old, and 79% of the adults above the age of 50. Despite this progress, challenges remain: 11% of the youth 18 to 24 years old had not completed primary school education.

Gender inequalities in education persist: Overall, 53% of the women had no formal education compared to 42% of the men. Among those 18 to 24 years old, the percentages were respectively 27% and 21%. Geographically, respondents in Dili were the least likely to have no formal education (21%) compared to all the other regions. The percentage was above 50% in Cova Lima (60%), Ermera (73%), and Liquiçá (70%).

Figure 4: Education level by age group (% of respondents)



Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

Respondents were categorized in four quartiles groups based on the ownership of selected non-productive assets such as a car, motorcycle or motor scooter, MP3 player/radio /cassette player, mobile phone, television, DVD, refrigerator, computer, or washing machine: 88% of the participant pool owned a mobile phone, 50% owned a television, 57% owned a radio, and 40% owned a motorcycle. The quartiles correspond to four groups ranging from those with few assets (lowest quartile), to those with the highest asset ownership (highest quartile). The asset quartiles are strongly correlated with the reported income, suggesting that it is a valid proxy-measure of wealth or overall

economic status. More than one in three respondents belonged to the poorest asset quartile in Baucau (46%), Ermera (37%). Older respondents were more frequently among the poorest asset quartile (50%) compared to younger ones (18% among those 18 to 24 years old).

## 3. SOCIAL COHESION

Social cohesion can be defined as “the willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other in order to survive and prosper”<sup>40</sup>; or that which binds together larger social units. Social cohesion – although not identified as such – was central in the discussion around resilience in relation to adversity, coping with violence and peacebuilding in Timor-Leste. These discussions revolved around the concepts of solidarity, trust, unity, and social engagement, and the strong role that culture plays in shaping these elements of resilience.

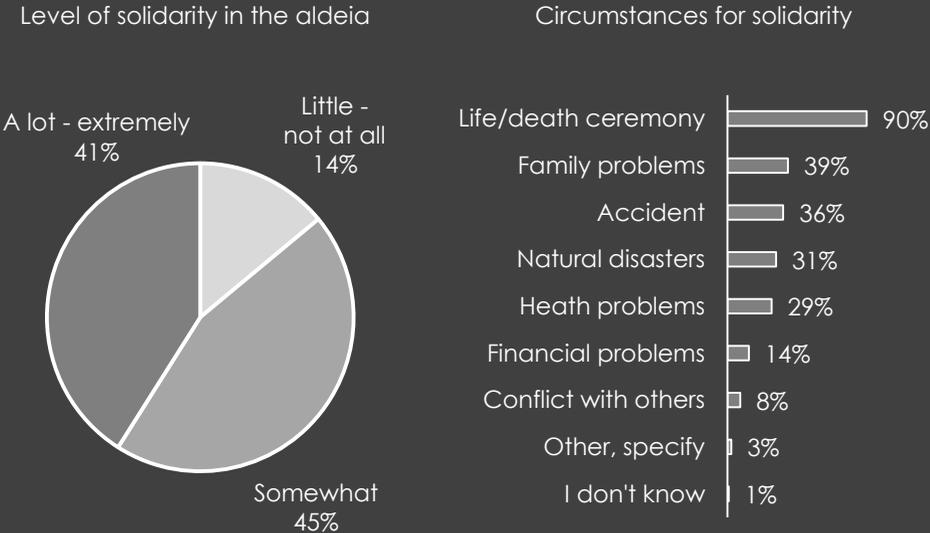
### 3.1. Solidarity

Solidarity, in the sense of helping each other, showing concern, and in relation with national unity, was seen as a strong factor for resilience for peace during the FAR consultation phase. It is a factor reinforced or undermined by other elements such as culture, religion, leadership, security and law. The majority of the survey respondents felt that solidarity means supporting and helping each other among relatives (74%) and non-relatives (65%). For about half the respondents (47%) violence would prevail without such forms of solidarity. Despite its importance, solidarity is not necessarily present at all times: Just 41% felt that solidarity is present ‘a lot’ or ‘extremely’ in their aldeia – it was significantly higher in Baucau (70%) which may be explained by the strength of traditions there. Indeed, when asked under what circumstances solidarity is shown, the most common response was lia mate, lia moris (90%) or traditions of life and death which include marriages, funerals, burials and other important cultural ceremonies.

Other circumstances under which solidarity is shown include family problems (39%), accidents (36%), natural disasters (31%) and health problems (29%) among others. In most cases solidarity is shown through

providing services, assistance (47%), pooling resources together (44%), providing attention (39%) or money and goods (39%), and sharing food (35%).

Figure 5: Level and circumstances for solidarity



Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

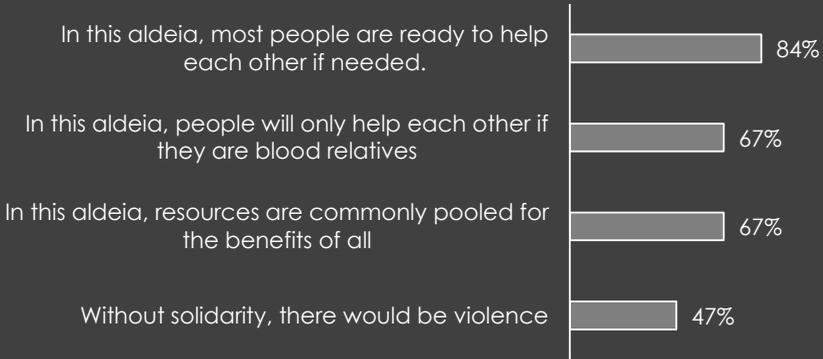
Although just 41% felt that solidarity is present 'a lot' or 'extremely' in their aldeia, a majority said that people in the aldeia are ready to help each other if needed (84%) and often pool resources together (67%), suggesting strong potential for community support. However, many said people would only help each other among relatives (67%). More generally, few respondents indicated having provided help to neighbors (25%), or having been asked for help (26%) or advice (18%) by friends or neighbors in the year prior to the survey.

The results, when analyzed more closely, suggest a complex interplay of solidarity and support reciprocity among Timorese. Solidarity is

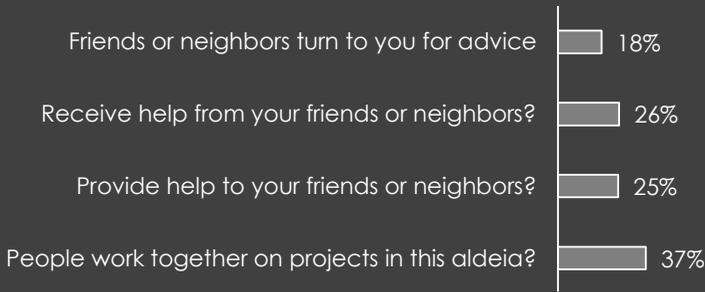
strongest as it is expressed through ceremonies and cultural obligations, but day to day support also exists independently of rituals.

Figure 6: Perception and frequency of support

Perception of support



Frequency of support



Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

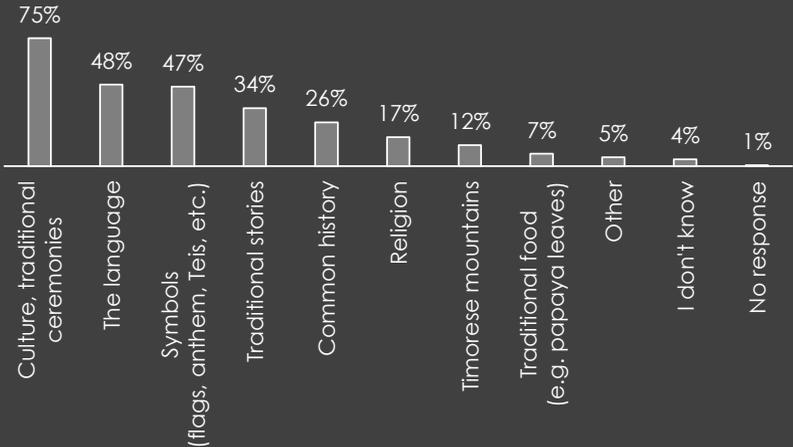
Looking at the dynamics at the district levels suggest that in districts (Baucau, Lautem) where cultural obligations are the strongest according to the survey, and arguably the most expensive, solidarity is strong, but day-to-day support is less frequently available. Inversely, the other districts with less pressure and costs relating to rituals appear to have more frequent day-to-day support. Relatedly, respondents in Baucau and Lautem were less likely than others to agree that people

should be treated the same whether or not they can contribute in traditional ceremonies (% who agree: Lautem 57%, Baucau 65%, nationally 76%).

### 3.2. Unity and identity

The data on solidarity highlight the important role that culture and unity play in social interactions and support. Unity itself was as a factor of resilience identified during the consultation and explored further in the survey. The linkage between culture and identity was clearly established by respondents: culture and traditional ceremonies were identified most frequently (75%) among the factors that define the Timorese identity. Other factors include language (also a cultural factor), symbols such as the flag (47%), traditional stories (37%), and a sense of common history (26%) which may relate in part to the struggle for independence.

Figure 7: Factors of Timorese identity



Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

More directly, almost all respondents (96%) agreed that *uma lulik* (sacred house) and *uma lisan* (traditional house) – the houses representing family and clan groups and enabling the protection by ancestors – are important to remind people they belong together. About the same percentage (93%) agreed that *fetosan umane* - the traditional dowry system which ties family groups together through marriage and governs social relations<sup>41</sup> – and other cultural practices are essential to keep people together. This is consistent with the qualitative findings suggesting that traditional systems, ceremonies and rituals create solidarity amongst family members and communities. However, as noted above, while traditional customs and ritual form the basis of social relations and contribute to trust between Timorese, they can also contribute to the exclusion of some groups if they are unwilling or unable to participate in such arrangements. Thus, as some examples given during the consultations demonstrate,

Furthermore, the consultations suggest that the adaption and transformation of cultural practices is necessary in order to ensure that they continue to promote solidarity and good social relations. Respondents see traditions as 'not static', and most respondents agreed that traditions must evolve to reflect changes in society (73%) – that perspective was least frequent in Baucau (61%) and Lautém (63%).

One challenge is the cost associated with ceremonies, with about half the respondents judging them too expensive (45%). The qualitative research showed that cultural obligations as governed by *fetosan umane* for example can put pressure on household's limited resources (financial and other) beyond their capacity, which can in turn undermine economic inclusion and opportunity.

The Church also contributes to unity, with 92% noting that church leaders are a source of inspiration for others. The consultation showed that the Catholic Church was seen as being able to protect and inspire people during the period of foreign occupation, thereby building solidarity for a common cause.

More generally, the sense that unity exists in Timor may be related to the overall good relations that prevail between people. Most respondents judged positively their relations with their family (90% good –very good, their relations with neighbors (83%), and their relations with the community in general (75%). This may also explain the day-to-day support available to Timorese. There are, however, a number of factors of exclusion. Political affiliation is seen as the most divisive element among Timorese (see section on politics). Importantly, as many as 70% of the people perceive that they are treated poorly by others 'often' or 'all the time'.

Respondents, however, generally reported a sense of equality: A majority agreed that everyone has access to health services (94%) and education services (93%), and considering a range of possibilities, few respondents reported the existence of gender-based discrimination: 88% agree that men and women have equal access to land, 93% believe that women and men have equal access to justice, and 90% believe that women and men have equal access to public administration services. The only inequality factor with which respondents frequently agreed concerns difference between urban and rural areas. This does not mean that there are no inequalities present. The results may reflect the fact that in principles inequalities do not exist (e.g. everyone has the same right to access justice), but the reality may be different. Furthermore, some forms of inequalities may be seen as normal or acceptable (e.g. gender based structural inequalities) and so are not reported here.

### **3.3. Community engagement**

Indicators of social cohesion relating to resilience include the participation of respondents in groups and associations, and their engagement in community activities. This helps community-based safety nets and creates solidarity. Membership in groups and associations is relatively frequent: 41% of the respondents were members of a group or association, most frequently religious (14%) or

agricultural associations (11%), and sport clubs (10%). Respondents indicated high levels of community engagement. More than half (54%) participated in community meetings in the year prior to the survey. About the same percentage participated in the construction of public infrastructure, such as a schools (52%) during that period, and slightly fewer participated in cultural and/or sporting events (49%). Fewer but nevertheless a large percentage participated in neighborhood patrol (31%) and community events to improve security (30%), and other volunteer work (27%).

Figure 8: Community engagement (% of respondents)

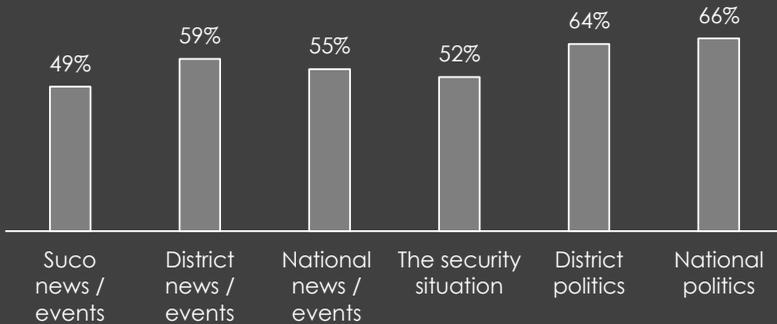


Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

## 4. INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

Effective information flows and communication through media and other means promote trust and social cohesion among people and between people and institutions. Inversely, weakness in information systems undermine the ability to resist, recover or adapt in the face of adversity. About half or more of the respondents described being little or not all informed about news and events in their village (49%), district (59%) or nation (55%), and about the security situation in general (52%), district politics (64%) and national politics (66%). Respondents in Baucau, Ainaro and Lautem districts reported least frequently being informed about national politics.

Figure 9: Self-reported level of information (% little – not at all)



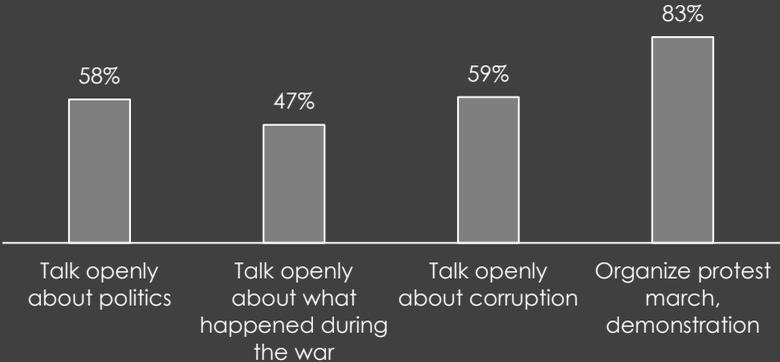
Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

Despite relatively low self-reported levels of information, most respondents have access to a formal source of information, frequently the television (38%) and radio (30%). Television was most frequently the main source of information in Dili (72%). Some respondents primarily relied on Aldeia and Suco leaders as their main sources of information

(13%), most frequently in Baucau (30%) and Manatuto (25%). Finally, some (14%) relied most frequently on friends and family, most frequently in Oecussi (33%) and Baucau (29%).

The lack of trust in information sources and/or lack of interest may undermine how informed the population reports to be. Only 36% of respondents reported that they trust the media a lot or extremely. More generally, many Timorese do not feel free to speak openly about key issues: 58% feel that they are not able to speak openly about politics, 59% about corruption and 47% about what happened during the war. In addition, 83% feel that they are not free to organize a protest or demonstration. This may not necessarily imply that Timorese would feel unsafe talking about sensitive topics or organizing protests. Level of comfort, societal pressure and cultural values may also play a role.

Figure 10: Ability to talk or organize with fear (% little – not at all able)

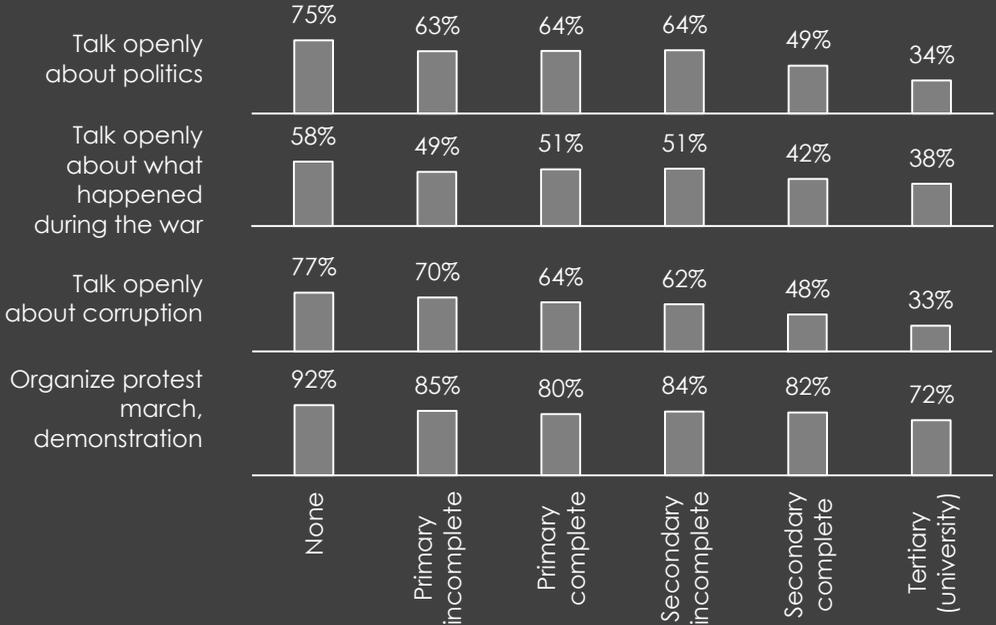


Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

Importantly, the ability to talk or organize was strongly related to education levels and level of information. For example, just 33% of the most educated respondents felt little or not all able to talk about corruption, compared to 77% of the least educated. And among those who reported being little informed about politics, 61% felt little or not all

able to talk about corruption without fear, compared to just 14% among those well informed about politics.

Figure 11: Ability to talk or organize with fear by education level (% little – not at all able)

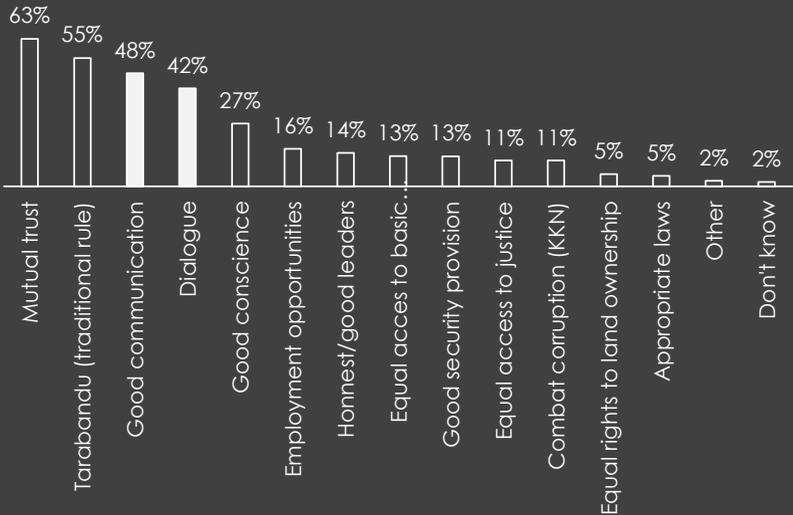


Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

Together these results suggest flows of information and education are important factor in enabling people to engage in political discussions and actions. Further highlighting the importance of education and information flows (dialogue), many respondents identified dialogue (42%) and good communication (48%) as two useful ways to prevent violence from arising in the future, highlighting the perceived value of a collective approach to decision-making and problem solving. These two tools were also commonly identified as actions the government can take to prevent violence (promoting dialogue 50%, good

communication 51%). This data shows that the Timorese population in general feels uninformed, mistrusts the media and does not feel free to speak opening about political issues. However information flows and dialogue are valued as instruments for peace and security. This provides a good basis for promoting dialogue and good communication as key tools to prevent future violence, as respondents suggested.

Figure 12: Propositions to prevent future violence (% of respondent)



Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

## 5. LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE & POLITICS

The consultations in Timor-Leste showed that, for Timorese, resilience is strengthened where there is trust between people and their leaders. This requires leaders to show understanding and responsiveness to the needs of people. Only under these conditions are leaders and institutions – especially political leaders and state institutions – seen as legitimate and contributing to resilience in relation to violence and peacebuilding. This population-based analysis on leadership, governance and politics revolves around three major dimensions: (1) leadership and the role and perception of state actors, (2) political participation and civic engagement, and (3) politics.

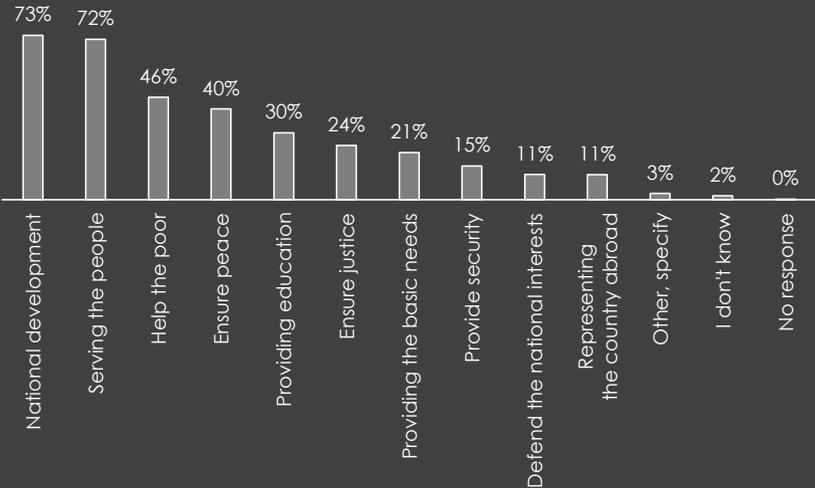
### 5.1. Leadership and the role and perception of state actors

Views on leadership in Timor-Leste are complex. On one hand many leaders are recognized as a unifying symbol for their role in the fight for the country's independence, on the other hand, leaders are frequently seen as concentrating too much power and lacking accountability. The consultation suggests that leaders who are also former heroes of the Resistance have both the ability to bring people together but also to create divisions which undermine solidarity and can ultimately lead to conflict. A number of crises in the post-Independence period, the most serious taking place in 2006 are seen by many to have been caused by political disputes between former Resistance figures.<sup>42</sup> Alleged abuses of power, corruption and self-interested behavior further undermine solidarity and create divisions.

Three primary characteristics of good leadership which stood out among respondents were: Intelligence (73%), honesty (70%), and being

hard working (62%). Fewer respondents valued being well known (31%) or being Catholic (16%). Recognizing that leadership exists outside of state institutions, this survey nevertheless focused on state actors as political processes driven by national and local leaders are an important feature of resilience in relation to violence and peacebuilding. To provide context to this analysis, the survey first explored what, if anything, respondents see as the main roles of the government.

Figure 13: Roles of the government (% of respondents)

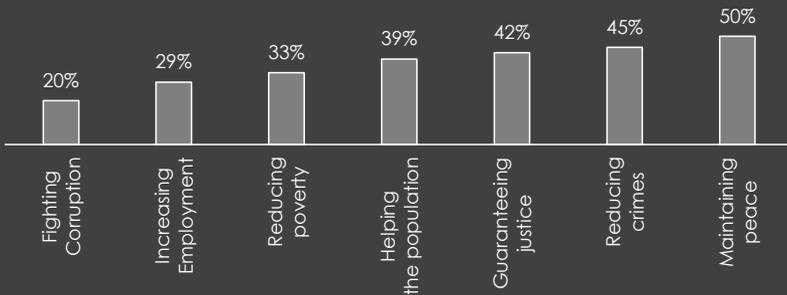


Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

A majority of respondents identified two main roles for the government: national development (73%) and serving the people (72%); another 46% felt their main role was to help the poor, 40% indicated ensuring peace and 30% to provide education. Importantly these broad roles highlight social dimensions serving the populations and specifically the poor.

Unfortunately, these are dimensions for which respondents frequently rate poorly the performance of the government. When asked about various possible goals, less than one in three respondents felt that the government was good or very good at fighting corruption (20%), increasing employment (29%), or reducing poverty (33%). A slightly higher percentage – but less than half the population, ranked positively performances in terms of helping the population (39%), guaranteeing justice (42%), or reducing crimes (45%).

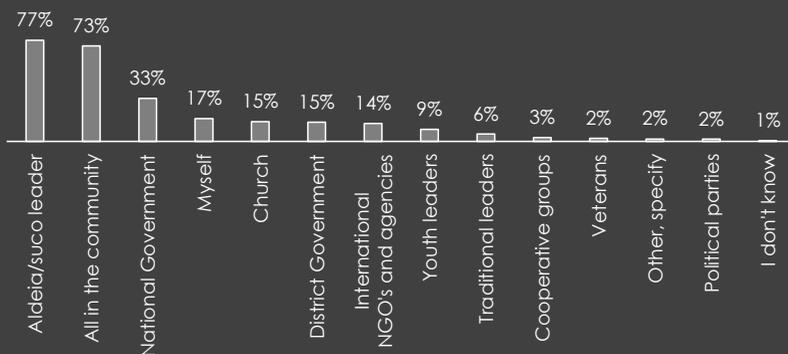
Figure 14: Performance of the government (% of respondents)



Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

More generally, few respondents felt positive about their access to services and economic opportunities: just 33% ranked positively their opportunities to find work, 53% were positive about their access to healthcare, and 67% were positive about their access to education. The perception that the government does little to improve services and overall life in the community contributes to undermining trust in the state. Only local leaders were frequently seen as working to improve life in the community.

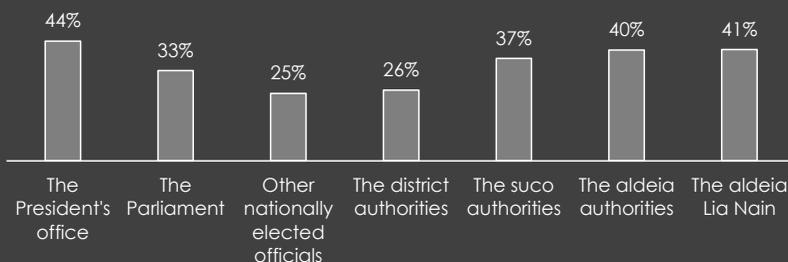
Figure 15: Work to improve life in the community (% of respondents)



Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

Beyond the poor perception of the performance of the state, the actors themselves are often perceived negatively: Just 26% of respondents see district authorities as acting 'a lot or extremely' in their best interest, compared to 33% for the parliament, and 44% for the president's office, similar to suco and aldeia level authorities.

Figure 16: Acting in your best interest (% a lot – extremely)



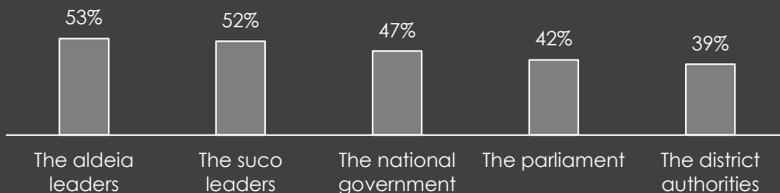
Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

These results are consistent with the low level of trust in state actors, with just 39% of the respondents reporting to trust district authorities 'a lot or extremely', less than the national government (47%), suco leaders

(52%), and aldeia leader (53%). These results are significantly lower than the level of trust shown in other institutions such as the armed forces (65%), the church (64%), the police (62%), or schools (62%).

Most respondents believed the best way of increasing trust in government institutions was through the improvement in service delivery, including better education (56%) and health care (53%). About the same percentage also mentioned reducing corruption, highlighting the importance of this problem.

Figure 17: Self-reported trust level in government actors  
(% a lot – extremely)



Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

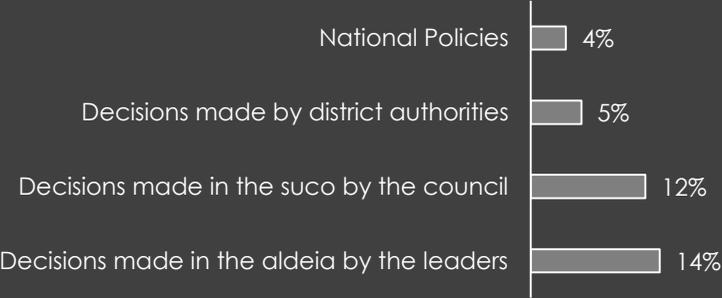
## 5.2. Political participation and civic engagement

Arguably, the low level of trust and negative perception of trust actors is fueled by a limited engagement and sense of control over political decisions. Just one in five respondent had contacts with a government authority for any reason in the year prior to the survey, and few respondents reported having at least some level of control over decisions made at various levels of government, especially national policies (4%).

The low level of information and lack of ability to talk openly about politics may undermine the sense of control over decisions and politics. None of this, however, hinders the respondents' participation in electoral processes: Almost all participated in the last elections of suco

leaders (93%) and previous national elections (94%); an even higher percentage (99%) plans to participate in the next national elections.

Figure 18: Perceived level of influence (% a lot – extreme)



Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

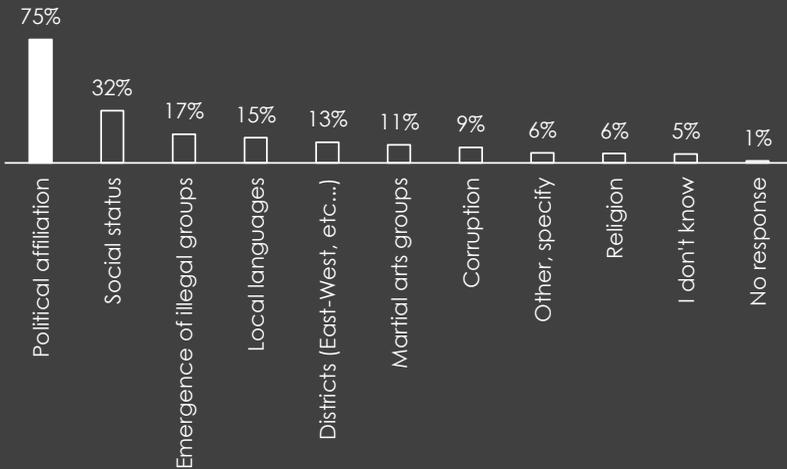
### 5.3. Politics

Regardless of the perception and level of engagement in politics, resilience in relation to violence and peacebuilding must be viewed in relation to prevailing policy-making institutions and political activities. This is especially true in Timor where politics and political affiliations were seen as the most divisive factor among Timorese: 75% identified political affiliation among the main issues that divide Timorese, far more than any other factor including social status (32%) or the emergence of government-declared illegal groups which include armed and unarmed groups and associations (17%).

The finding that political affiliation is a divisive issue is consistent with how little informed respondents were about politics, and how much respondents did not feel free to talk about politics (see information section). It may further explain why respondents do not feel empowered in political decision-making processes. A majority of

respondents (84%), however, agreed that having politicians with diverging opinions is good for the nation.

Figure 19: What divides Timorese (% of respondents)

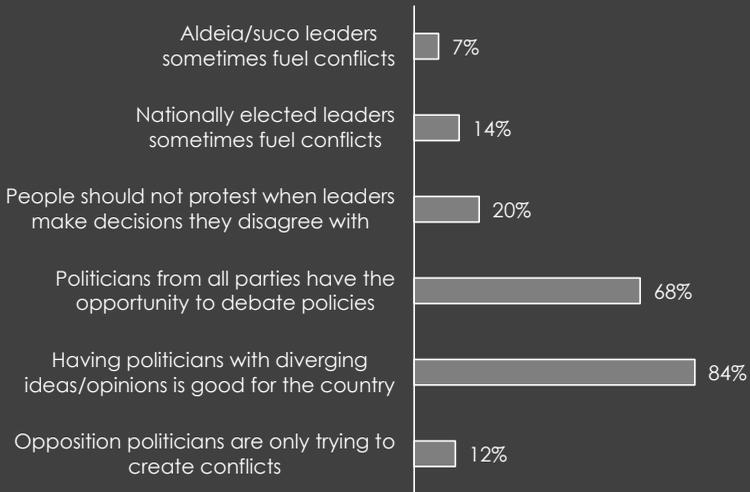


*Timor-Leste, data from July 2015*

Although political affiliation is a divisive issue and respondents often do not feel free to talk openly about politics, few view politicians as directly fueling conflicts: just 7% agreed with the proposition that aldeia leaders sometimes fuel conflict, 14% agreed that nationally elected leaders fuel conflict, and just 12% agreed that opposition politicians try to create conflicts.

Furthermore, even though people often did not feel free to organize protests, few (20%) agreed that people should not protest when they disagree with decisions made by leaders.

Figure 20: Leadership and conflicts (% agree - strongly agree)



Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

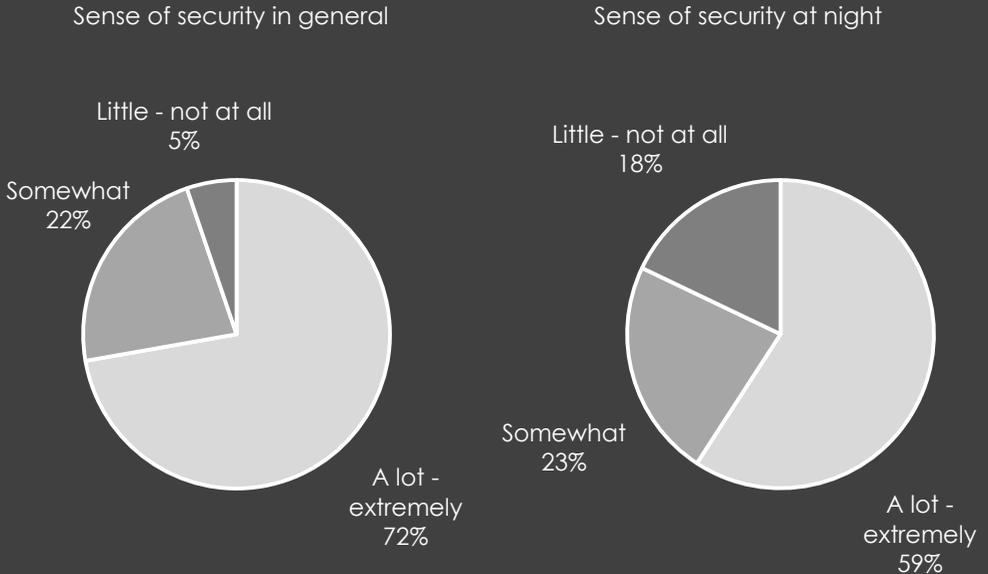
## 6. LAW AND SECURITY

The consultation phase of this research highlighted the belief in law and security as sources of social cohesion and resilience for peace – this is achieved when the rule of law prevails, especially in the form of equality before the law, and when law and security forces work toward the non-violent resolution of conflicts, particularly in conjunction with traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. The survey examined the existing security conditions and perception of security actors along with the proposed means for improving security. Law on the other hand was primarily explored through dispute resolution mechanisms.

### 6.1. Security

The first element of security in the survey sought to examine current perceptions of security conditions at the time of the survey. Overall, a majority of respondents considered themselves generally safe or very safe in their aldeia (72%), while 59% felt generally safe or very safe walking at night in their aldeia. Respondents felt least frequently safe in Dili. The causes of insecurity were multiple and included most frequently the presence of illegal groups (35%), the presence of people under the influence of drugs or alcohol (23%), thieves (18%), youth gangs (17%) and martial arts groups (13%). Of concern is the fact that three of the five main sources result from organized groups (illegal, martial arts, and youth). The causes of insecurity, however, varied greatly across districts. Illegal groups were especially frequently mentioned in Baucau (76%) and Lautém (55%), while youth groups and martial art groups were most frequently mentioned as sources of insecurity in Dili (35% and 26%, respectively). The results must be considered in the context of on-going police-military operations against illegal groups in the East of the country at the time of the survey.

Figure 21: Sense of security (% of respondents)



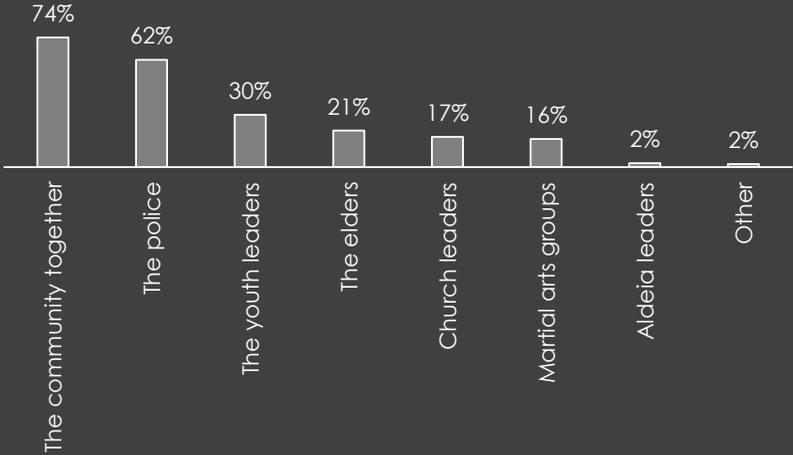
Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

The relative sense of security may be explained by the low incidence of crimes experienced by respondents. In the year prior to the survey, just 5% had experienced some form of unlawful occupation of their land, 4% had experienced theft or burglary, and reports of physical attacks, bribes or kidnapping were rare (1-2%) – domestic violence was not specifically explored although it is a well-documented issue in Timor-Leste.

Respondents most frequently noted that the community itself ensures security in their aldeia. This may be related to the solidarity and support reciprocity outlined under social cohesion data. The police, however, was also frequently mentioned (62%), especially in the districts of Baucau (79%) and Lautem (83%) where joint police-military operations were on-going at the time of the survey. The importance of the

community and formal security actors such as the police in ensuring security was further confirmed when asked what needed to be done to improve security – The three most common answers were to build trust within the community (78%), to develop community security network (48%), and to bring more police (40%).

Figure 22: Actors ensuring security in the aldeia (% of respondents)

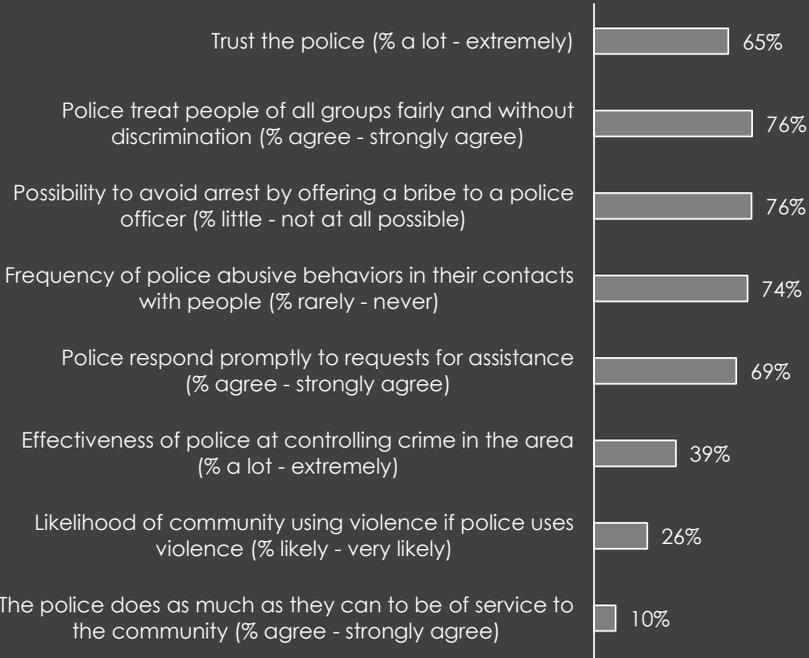


Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

More specific questions were asked about the police, confirming the overall positive perception: The police was one of the most trusted actors in Timor-Leste, with 65% indicating that they trust the police ‘a lot’ or ‘extremely’, more than any government actor. Trust levels may not reflect how often the population seeks assistance from the police. Respondents were nevertheless in majority positive about the police treating people of all groups fairly and without discrimination (76%), not treating people abusively (74% said the police were never / rarely abusive in their contacts with people), and responding promptly to requests for assistance (69%). However, not all was positive: a majority (76%) said it was possible to avoid arrest by bribing the police, just 39% said the police were ‘a lot’ or ‘extremely’ effective at controlling crimes

in the area, and even fewer (10%) perceived the police as doing everything they can to be of service to the community. These results may appear to be contradictory: an overall positive perception of the police but nevertheless a generally negative rating of their performance as a security actor. It is likely that beside community-based or traditional mechanisms whose importance was highlighted, the police is the only formal security actor that reaches the local level in a visible way. This means that in times of need or insecurity, they are the institution the population will look to. While perceived as somewhat ineffective it nevertheless provide a level of protection and services that no other actor provides.

Figure 23: Perception of security actors

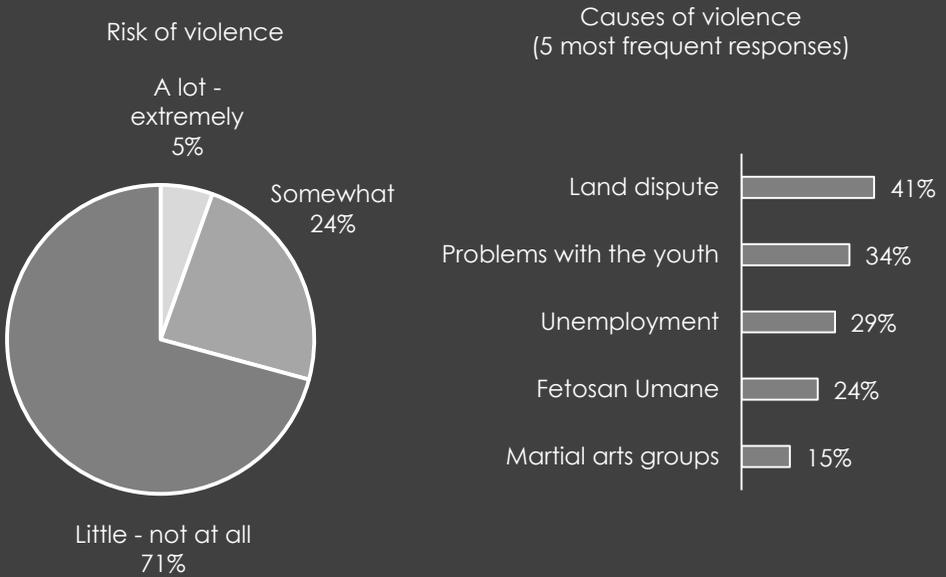


Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

## 6.2. Violence

Insecurity and sources of insecurity may differ from what causes violence. Most respondents reported a low risk of violence in their community, with 71% judging there was little to no risk of violence in their community. When such a risk exists, it is most frequently associated with land disputes (41%), problems with the youths (34%), unemployment (29%), Fetosan Umane (24%), and Martial arts groups (15%). Causes of past violence are about the same, with the addition of political events (14%).

Figure 24: Risk and causes of violence (% respondents)



Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

Exposures to violent traumatic events have long-term implications for resilience and peacebuilding. The survey showed that many respondents were affected by violence, mainly being scared of (43%) and witness to violence (35%). A small percentage was injured (9%) or

displaced (8%). Importantly, when past violence occurred, the police and military (59%), suco leaders (57%) and Lia Nain (46%) were the most frequently mentioned actors who took action in response to the violence. In fact calling the police was the most frequent action undertaken by respondents when confronted with violence in the past 12 months. These responses may explain the high level of trust in the police and in local levels of government discussed above.

### **6.3. Justice and conflict resolution**

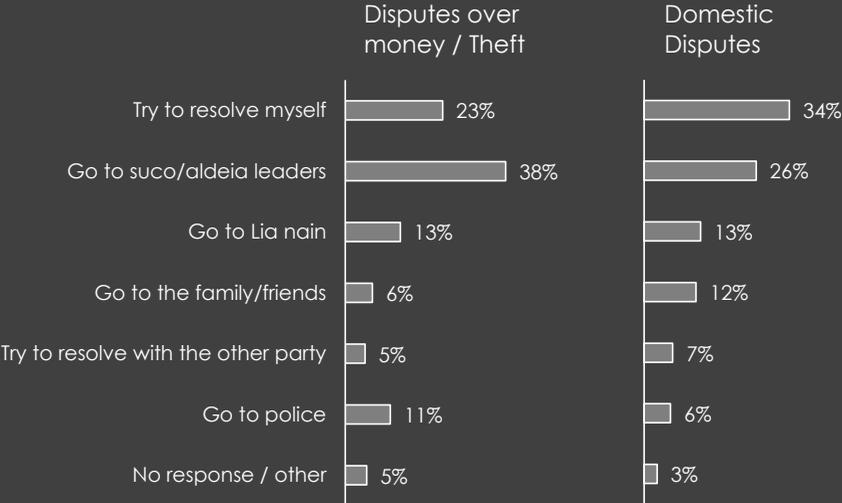
Disputes are a normal outcome of social interactions, but in the context of resilience in relation to violence and peacebuilding, the population's choice of dispute resolution method can indicate levels of confidence in various institutions and the existence of multiple reinforcing mechanisms. Sources of disputes are somewhat different to the main sources of insecurity and threats – they were identified by respondents as being most frequently related to domestic disputes (40%), land (38%), youth violence (28%), water (17%), Fetosan Umane (13%), and martial arts groups (11%). Few respondents (3%) reported experience of such disputes themselves, however.

As a general approach to dispute resolution, the survey explored how two possible sources of disputes are typically resolved: domestic disputes, and disputes over money / payments. In both cases the most common responses were about resolving the dispute by him/her-self and going to suco or aldeia leaders. Domestic disputes tended more frequently to be resolved by the respondents themselves. Formal actors such as the police were rarely involved as a first solution.

These results may also be seen in light of the restorative approach to disputes that prevails in Timor-Leste – most respondents felt that when disputes occur, the best course of action is to offer mutual apology (45%), committing through culture not to do it again (43%), giving warnings to the parties (35%), punishing the other (24%), forgiving (22%) and compensating the offended party (19%). In other words fewer

mentioned punitive elements (punishing, compensating) than restorative aspects entailing the restoration of relations between the parties (forgiveness...). The results may reflect the belief that most disputes can be resolved through dialogue (84% agree) and/or the limited understanding of formal justice mechanisms – just 19% said they understood formal justice ‘well’ or ‘very well’.

Figure 25: Actors contacted to resolve dispute (% respondents)

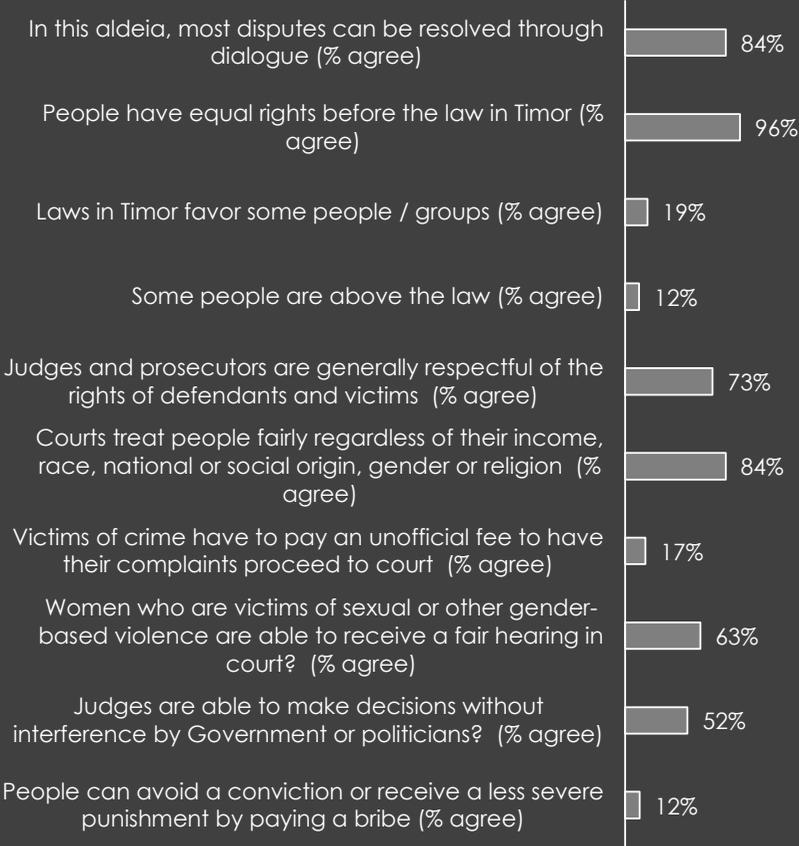


Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

Although it may not be used for many disputes and isn't well understood, respondents trust the justice system. A majority believe that equal rights exist before the law, and a majority believe that courts treat people fairly (84%) and that judges and prosecutors are respectful of the rights of defendants (73%). Courts performed better than the police in terms of perception of corruption – just 12% believed it is possible to avoid or reduce a sentence by paying a bribe. About half the respondents (52%) believed that judges can make decisions without interference by government officials. The perception of justice being politicized may have been reinforced by the 2014 parliamentary

decision to terminate contracts with international judges and prosecutors, and other international staff on whom the legal system largely depended. Together these results highlight an overall positive perception of justice actors, but a role which is also perceived as relatively limited in resolving many conflicts, and perceived as potentially subject to political pressure.

Figure 26: Perception of justice actors



Timor-Leste, data from July 2015

## 7. CONCLUSIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR RESILIENCE

### 7.1. Linking individual resilience with community and institutions' attributes

The survey was designed to collect data on various dimensions and factors of resilience identified through consultations with community representatives and key informants. However, the survey also included measures of individual capacities for resilience using two self-reported indicators of resiliency: a 10-item Resilience Scale (RS) and the Rosenberg (R) self-esteem scale.

Our resilience scale included 10 questions utilizing a 4-point Likert scale to measure an individual's capacity to overcome adversity, with higher scores reflecting greater resiliency. The Rosenberg (R) self-esteem scale is also a 10 item, 4 point Likert scale to measure global self-worth, with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem. Together, these scales offer a narrow but nevertheless useful perspective on resilience based on mental health and individuals' self-reported capacity to overcome adversity.

On the RS scale, many respondents self-reported being able to adapt to change (80%) or deal unplanned events (73%). The largest proportion thought of themselves as strong persons (85%), and felt they could achieve their goals (87%). On the R scale, respondents most frequently agreed with propositions about their having good qualities (94%) although most also wished they could have more respect for themselves (95%) and would be able to do things as well as others (93%).

Bivariate analyses of the survey results show that individual level measures of resilience were found to be associated with key macro-

level factors of resilience identified in the consultation and explored in the survey, including (1) level of information, (2) community engagement, (3) solidarity and support, (4) trust, and (5) sense of security. This strengthens the findings and the relevance of the factors and variables explored in this study.

**7.2. Whose resilience?**

The analysis of the factors of resilience explored in this survey in relation with key demographic characteristics yield further important results when considering whom, if anyone, may be more or less resilient in relation to violence and peacebuilding. Overall, poorer, less educated and women respondents are less informed and have less access to social support from both their leaders and among the community. This translates for example in having a lower sense of control over their lives, and arguably lower levels of resilience.

Figure 26: Demographic characteristics and factors of resilience



Low education v. high	↓	Information
	↓	Free to talk about politic
	↓	Perception of services
	↓	Community engagement
	↓	Engagement with the state
	↓	Perception of solidarity
Low asset wealth v. high	↓	Information
	↓	Free to talk about politic
	↓	Perception of services
	↓	Community engagement
	↓	Engagement with the state
	↓	Perception of solidarity

### 7.3. General implications

Together, the results detailed in this report generated a number of new insights into the complex notion of resilience in the context of violence and peacebuilding in Timor-Leste.

Solidarity is an important aspect of resilience, strongly related to cultural practices and events in Timor-Leste. However solidarity in the context of such ceremonies may be seen as independent and possibly undermining day-to-day support between people. However, culture also plays an important role in shaping identity and a sense of unity. This in turn is likely associated with strong bonds within the population and low level of exclusion – except as it directly relates to the exclusion of people unable or unwilling to fulfill their cultural obligations.

Flows of information are also important for resilience, but many respondents report being 'little' to 'not at all informed' on key issues relating to politics and security. This combined with a perceived inability to talk openly about politics and other topics may undermine

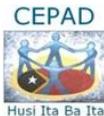
the overall relation between people and the state. Specifically, it may further affect how people perceive the state's performances and overall functioning – Few showed trust in the state and many judged poorly its performances. This may also be the result and driver of low engagement and influence on politics. Importantly, political affiliations divide Timorese.

Not all state actors, however, are judged poorly. Perception about the police and about justice actors are generally positive, even though their performances in actually delivering security, justice and other services are judged more negatively. This may reflect the fact that despite ineffectiveness, they are the institutions that are visible to people and that people rely on.

This report presents the results of a nationwide survey conducted in Timor-Leste in July 2015 among 2,975 randomly selected adults, as part of a mixed method research to develop a framework for assessing resilience for peace.

Timor-Leste is transitioning from a struggle for liberation to a functioning independent state wrestling with social, political and economic fractures. This survey examines the positive assets and attributes that underpin individuals, communities, and institutions' resilience for peace

*The information provided and views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of Harvard University, InterPeace or the supporting agencies*



With support from:



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- 1 The Centre of Studies for Peace and Development (CEPAD) is a Timorese NGO that uses collaborative research and interactive dialogue to advance the understanding of conflict-related issues and the major challenges to the consolidation of democracy in Timor-Leste. <http://cepad-timorleste.org/>
  - 2 For a detailed overview of the qualitative research component of the FAR program, see CEPAD (2015) 'Understanding Resilience from a Local Perspective; Timor-Leste Country Note', Dili.
  - 3 Miller, J. (2001). East Timor Action Network Urges New Indonesian President to Show Support for East Timor; Available from: <http://www.etan.org/news/2001a/07megaw.htm>.
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two family groups, the fetosan being the husband's family as wife receiver and the umane being the wife's family as the wife giver. This conceptualization of marriage is derived from the strong patriarchal culture which exists in Timor-Leste and which is also increasingly contested

- <sup>42</sup> In April 2006, Timor-Leste faced a major political-military crisis which resulted in 38 homicides and displaced 150,000 Timorese, predominantly in Dili. The crisis was provoked through the actions of 600 soldiers within the F-FDTL (Falintil – Defence Forces of Timor-Leste) who staged an attack on the Government Palace and widespread violence, looting and burning ensued. Violence was thereafter instigated over almost 2 years by various actors down to the neighborhood level and included assassination attempts on President Jose Ramos Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão. The displacement of 150,000 people in Dili took two years to resolve. This was the most serious conflict seen in the post-Independence period.