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community policing practices
in Timor-Leste

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INTRODUCTION

Produced in partnership between The Asia Foundation and *Fundasaun Mahein*¹, the following study seeks to boost the profile of community policing in Timor-Leste through the analysis of three distinct examples of local leadership of innovative community-policing approaches. By investigating the impact of such initiatives at both the community and institutional levels, the paper highlights community-policing techniques already being used by police commanders across the country, and analyzes the effectiveness and relevance of those approaches to Timor-Leste. The study not only reveals how widespread such practices are within the national police force, the PNTL, but also identifies a nascent model of community policing and the factors that are contributing to its spread within the PNTL.

For the purposes of this body of research, *community policing* is defined as activities that make progress towards at least one of the following three broad goals:

(1) Building effective partnerships with communities – This includes activities that allow police to engage with stakeholders in the community and to improve relationships, understanding, and coordination of approaches and activities.

(2) Taking a problem-solving orientation to local safety and security challenges – These activities focus police resources on the specific causes of crime and insecurity within a target area. Instead of exclusively reacting to crimes with a uniform set of procedures, police work with communities to find creative and often unique solutions to remove the underlying causes and enabling factors of crime.

(3) Developing police structures that allow for decentralized decision-making and acknowledge police officers' deep understanding of local communities and contexts – Activities with this goal create procedures or structures that encourage police officers to listen and respond to community needs and priorities. They do this by providing individual police officers or units with access to communities and the operational flexibility to make decisions on their own and to adjust activities based on local needs and priorities.

Following this definition of community policing, the study identifies three locally led examples of community-policing practices within the PNTL: volunteer security networks in the district of Liquiçá; Marine Police Units in the coastal regions of Dili, Ataúro, Atabae, and Com; and Community Police Councils in the districts of Bobonaro and Aileu.

Although the PNTL itself was born out of foreign advice from the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), the PNTL Community Police Commander, Boavida Ribeiro, is a firm believer that “community policing is not a foreign concept.”² He claims that, while the PNTL may have used “foreign models ... as a reference, Timor-Leste has drawn on foreign models to inspire its own organic activities.”³ It is this adaptation of international strategies to the Timorese context that defines community policing in Timor-Leste today and is investigated in the case studies that follow.

1 Founded in 2009, *Fundasaun Mahein* is the only Timorese civil society organization mandated to provide monitoring, research and reporting on the Timor-Leste security sector. *Fundasaun Mahein*'s mission is to assist in increasing the legitimacy and capacity of the Timorese security sector through citizen participation in the development of relevant legislation, policies and procedures.

2 Interview with PNTL Community Police Commander, Boavida Ribeiro, November 25, 2013.

3 Ibid.

A BACKGROUND TO COMMUNITY POLICING IN TIMOR-LESTE

The PNTL (Polícia Nasionál de Timor-Leste; National Police of Timor-Leste) is one of the world's youngest police services. It was established with the support of the UNTAET in March 2000 and consisted mostly of new recruits with no prior policing experience. Until May 20, 2004, this fledgling police service was under the executive authority of UNTAET and its successor, the UN peacekeeping mission known as the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET). In its initial years, the PNTL recruited and trained enough officers to lay the foundations for a police service, but it did not develop a strong overall institution with effective strategic planning, management, and administrative systems.

Although the 2004 PNTL Organic Decree-Law does not explicitly mention community policing, it does charge a Community Protection Unit with “keep[ing] public peace and order in collaboration with the community structures and the local population.”⁴ With the beginning of UNMIT in 2006, a Community Policing Unit was established in the United Nations Police (UNPOL) headquarters, and 738 international community police officers (out of 1,227) were dispatched throughout all districts of Timor-Leste.⁵ In 2006 an amendment to the 2004 law was passed, along with a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that created the National Office of Community Policing and the district-level structure of the PNTL.⁶

Political crisis in 2006 brought to light the institutional fragilities of both the police and the army, the F-FDTL (FALINTIL–Forsas Defeza de Timor-Leste; FALINITIL Defense Force of Timor-Leste), which had been created in 2001 from a combination of former FALINTIL (Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste; The Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor, was established in 1975 as the military wing of the political party FRETILIN) fighters and new recruits. Contentious but comprehensive accounts of the crisis are readily available, as is literature analyzing the key events and political maneuvers that resulted in the breakdown of the security sector.⁷ One interpretation of the events of 2006 is that personal animosities and political manipulation played out through informal networks in and around both the police and military institutions, and ultimately these informal networks proved to be much stronger than the legal and institutional structures in place. These pressures on the country's nascent institutions—and the failure to address them—took by far the greatest toll on the Dili police, which collapsed almost completely.

The initiation of community policing as an operational strategy stems from the wake of the 2006 crisis and the resultant mass concentration of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Dili. The PNTL and the Australian-led International Stabilization Force were concerned with the agitated and aggressive approach the PNTL took when working in the IDP camps. Thus, community police training was initially organized by the PNTL and the Australian Federal Police to reduce the potential for violent confrontations between police and citizens, and between citizens themselves.

The development of the PNTL since 2006, led largely by the international community, has taken place around three main strands of activity: building institutional structures, vetting potential officers and leaders, and developing individual capacity through training and mentoring. Academics and commentators have found it easier to identify shortcomings than clear accomplishments in these three areas.⁸ While institutional structures have certainly been developed, they remain somewhat hollow as the police service does not consistently apply the processes and procedures that actually determine how the institution works. This weakness has been further

4 Article 15 (b), PNTL Organic Decree-Law No. 8/2004.

5 UNMIT, “UN Police,” <http://unmit.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12058&language=en-US>, accessed April 4, 2013.

6 “I saw no change from before the 2009 Law and after. The Community Police Unit continued to function in the exact same way. The only difference is that we moved our office into theirs once the law passed.” – Interview with former UNPOL Community Police Unit advisor on April 3, 2013.

7 See *Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste* (Geneva, October 2, 2006); or International Crisis Group, “Resolving Timor-Leste's Crisis,” Asia Report No.120 (October 10, 2006).

8 See, for example, Gordon Peake, “A Lot of Talk but Not a Lot of Action: The Difficulty of Implementing SSR in Timor-Leste,” in Hans Born and Albrecht Schnabel (Eds.), *Security Sector Reform in Challenging Environments* (Munster: LIT, 2009), 213-238; or Bu Wilson and Nelson De Sousa C. Belo, “The UNPOL to PNTL ‘handover’ 2009: what exactly is being handed over?” Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum (Dili, October 2009).

compounded by community reluctance to engage with the police service about matters of collective security as well as individual crimes. In The Asia Foundation's 2013 *Community-Police Perceptions Survey*, members of the general public who had experienced a crime were almost equally likely to seek assistance from the PNTL (39 percent) as from *suku* or *aldeia*⁹ chiefs (37 percent).¹⁰ Interestingly, however, respondents who had experienced land disputes overwhelmingly preferred to approach *suku* and *aldeia* chiefs (62 percent) before contacting the police.¹¹ These results indicate that, although the preference gap has narrowed between traditional leaders and the PNTL as primary security providers, the resolution of certain community crimes still requires customary justice mechanisms and, thus, stronger relationships between community leaders and the PNTL.

Since April 2009, The Asia Foundation has been working with the PNTL on a pilot project to demonstrate specific community-policing practices in Timor-Leste. The PNTL has subsequently included aspects of the project, chiefly the Community Police Councils, in its national strategy. The Foundation's project has assisted the PNTL in creating the first sustained community-policing practice in Timor-Leste since the enactment of the 2009 PNTL Organic Law, which calls for community policing to be mainstreamed throughout the institution.

In addition to the efforts of The Asia Foundation, several international actors have provided training and international study tours for PNTL officers on topics relating to community policing. In addition, mentoring by individual UNPOL officers has exposed many within the PNTL to other community-oriented approaches to their policing duties. Despite all of these capacity-building efforts, the extent of their impact on policing activities on the ground is unclear. At the time of writing, despite a lack of one clear set of community policing activities being applied institution-wide with clear support from the central command, there is also evidence that many district commanders and other officers are implementing their own isolated community-policing initiatives.

Documenting and sharing these local attempts to employ community policing is an important exercise. Community policing is still perceived by many as a foreign policing model, irrelevant to the security challenges faced in Timor-Leste. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the prevalence, success, and impacts of community-policing initiatives on the PNTL and communities can help improve security sector reform in Timor-Leste.

9 A *suku* is a village-sized urban or rural administrative unit; an *aldeia* is a neighborhood administrative unit.

10 Todd Wassel and Gobie Rajalingam, *A Survey of Community-Police Perceptions: Timor-Leste in 2013* (Dili: The Asia Foundation, 2014).

11 Ibid.



CASE STUDY I: VOLUNTEER SECURITY NETWORKS IN THE DISTRICT OF LIQUIÇÁ

Overview

Community-based Suku Volunteer Security (SVS; *Seguransa Voluntáriu Suku*) was initiated in the district of Liquiçá to counter community instabilities that arose from youth involvement in martial arts gangs (MAGs). High incidence rates of assault and domestic violence—compounded by the PNTL's inability to monitor instances of imminent distress—led PNTL Liquiçá District Commander, Natercia Martins, to establish a network of volunteers to serve as informal security providers. By incorporating youth and veterans of the resistance into a collective security organization, the SVS–PNTL partnership has enabled the monitoring of MAG activities; improved PNTL responsiveness to incidents of domestic violence; controlled potential instabilities during the country's 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections; and raised awareness of the concept of local-level ownership of community security.

Background

Suku Volunteer Security was developed in Timor-Leste following a 2011 comparative study between the PNTL and the Japanese *kōban* police system. In April 2004, to meet conflicting community demands to strengthen police patrols while keeping police posts (*kōban*) consistently occupied, the National Police Agency of Japan enlisted 3,000 retired police officers to provide support to the official police force.¹² Although unable to engage in the arrest of suspects and other law enforcement activities, retired officers performed nonenforcement duties, such as consulting citizens, giving directions, and handling lost or found property, in collaboration with official police posts.¹³

Drawing inspiration from the *kōban* model of utilizing veterans as informal security providers, while identifying that a large proportion of crime in Liquiçá arose from youth involvement in MAGs, Liquiçá PNTL District Commander Natercia Martins made the decision to establish a community-monitoring network of youth representatives, with oversight from local veterans.

In the district of Liquiçá, SVS is comprised of individuals from a variety of community groups, including MAGs,¹⁴ women's groups, youth groups,¹⁵ the general public, and *suku* councils. Approximately 5 members from each of the 23 *sukus* make up the 130 SVS members in Liquiçá district. Although there are currently only three female members of the group, Natercia Martins plans to incorporate the two female representatives from each *suku* council into the SVS, such that female representation nears 50%.¹⁶

By incorporating representatives of the full spectrum of the community, SVS achieves three important functions: it encourages community participation in the collection of security-related information; it provides support to the PNTL's activities in the district of Liquiçá; and it emphasizes the importance of local ownership of community security. Built on the foundations of dialogue, participation, and collaboration, SVS has not only allowed for community problems to be rapidly identified, but has improved community-police collaboration and, subsequently, local-level security.

Organizational Structure and Objectives

SVS is governed by a five-point mission¹⁷ that aims to:

1. Assist in the creation of partnerships between the PNTL and communities;
2. Ensure that community members feel they are a part of the *suku*;
3. Encourage community ownership over community-policing activities;
4. Facilitate consensus among communities to take a level of responsibility for their own security; and
5. Model democratic values by respecting each community member of the *suku*.

Activities

Activity #1: The role of female SVS members in domestic-violence prevention

In 2010, Timor-Leste promulgated the Law Against Domestic Violence (LADV), which changed the status of domestic violence from a "simple offense against physical integrity" to a public crime when committed in a family context. While the prosecution of domestic violence under the pre-existing Penal Code (Decree-Law No. 19/2009) required a complaint from the victim, the LADV places responsibility on the state to pursue criminal proceedings in cases of violence committed in a family setting.

12 National Police Agency of Japan, "Japanese Community Policing," <https://www.npa.go.jp/english/seisaku1/JapaneseCommunityPolice.pdf>, accessed on December 12, 2013.

13 Ibid.

14 Individuals from MAGs have been incorporated into the volunteer security network only in Suku Lisadila (Maubara, Liquiçá district).

15 To prevent youth from misusing their SVS status, individuals incorporated into the network are identified by *suku* and *aldeia* chiefs and involved in an induction process that informs them of the SVS mission statement.

16 Interview with Liquiçá PNTL District Commander, Natercia Martins, September 16, 2013

17 PNTL and New Zealand Police, "Mata Dalan Siguransa Voluntariu Suku: Dezemvolve Parseria ho Komunidade," (PNTL, 2012).

Given Timor-Leste's high rates of domestic violence,¹⁸ PNTL Liquiçá District Commander, Natercia Martins, made the investigation of domestic violence at the community level a district priority under the mandate of the LADV.

Commander Martins ensures that the prevention and resolution of domestic violence remain on the agenda at the community level requiring police officers to attend community discussions in the subdistricts of Bazartete, Maubara, and Liquiçá Vila. The dissemination of information about identifying and preventing domestic violence, and participating in information-sharing activities between community leaders and the PNTL are also high priorities for Commander Martins.¹⁹

Commander Martins also highlights the gender dimension of community-security frameworks for violence prevention: She encourages women to participate in the SVS network and to attend women's empowerment training in Dili. Through this work, in collaboration with the State Secretary for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI; Secretaria de Estado para a Promoção da Igualdade), Commander Martins has enabled women to better understand domestic violence and to seek assistance through informal and formal security providers.

Activity #2: Missed-call incident notification

In The Asia Foundation's 2013 *Community-Police Perceptions Survey*, police officers were asked to identify the three most serious challenges facing the PNTL in the areas in which they work. Nearly all surveyed officers (92 percent) said they lack necessary equipment; a similar proportion (90 percent) felt the PNTL is understaffed; and more than half (51 percent) pointed to insufficient funding to investigate cases and undertake other core functions.²⁰

Commander Martins points to similar financial and equipment deficiencies that have impeded the effectiveness of her unit in the district of Liquiçá. For example, the Liquiçá PNTL lacks caller-display technology that can identify incoming telephone numbers on the national emergency services hotline, 112. The inability to trace telephone numbers has rendered the PNTL unable to discern between prank calls by local youths and emergency calls, often resulting in real emergency situations being overlooked. To counter resulting community distrust in the emergency-call system, Liquiçá PNTL has instead disseminated an alternative cellular phone number through which community members can directly contact the police. The screen of the cellular phone displays incoming caller numbers, thereby enabling officers to distinguish between prank and real emergency calls and to respond to "missed calls" from individuals without sufficient *pulsa* (phone credit) to pay for a call themselves.

A more sustainable, institution-driven solution would be to introduce landline telephones that feature caller display throughout the PNTL's district offices. However, until such a solution is implemented, the creative response of Liquiçá PNTL not only decreases costs to the community and an under-resourced police service, but also allows the PNTL to more effectively monitor emergency calls, track incidents of crime, and respond to community security concerns.

Activity #3: Suku Volunteer Security and Suku Police Posts

On February 18, 2009, the PNTL Organic Decree-Law No. 9/2009 was passed by Parliament, repealing the previous Organic Decree-Law No. 8/2004. Article 37 (4) of the new law states that all PNTL substations are to establish one Suku Police Posts in each of the 442 *sukus* of Timor-Leste (PPS; Postu Polísia Suku). With the concepts of PPS and SVS both having been appropriated from the Japanese *kōban* system of community poling, the manner in which the two activities complement each other is evident in Liquiçá district. With greater local knowledge of community fragilities than district-level officers, PPS officers collaborate with community leaders and veterans to better select and guide the Suku Volunteer Security members.

By ensuring cooperation between PPS officers and the SVS, quarterly meetings between district prosecutors from

¹⁸ Timor-Leste Ministry of Finance, National Statistics Directorate, *Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Survey 2009-2010* (2010). The survey found that one in three women surveyed experienced physical violence often or sometimes in the 12 months preceding the survey and that "among ever-married women who have ever experienced physical violence, 74 percent reported that a current husband or partner committed the physical violence against them."

¹⁹ See note 15.

²⁰ See note 9.

Dili, the PNTL Liquiçá District Commander, and PPS officers ensure that individual criminal cases are resolved using formal justice procedures.

The presence of *suku* police officers is an indication of the evolution of community policing in Timor-Leste. Alluding to incidents of domestic violence, Martins describes this evolution as beginning with the Timorese concept of *nahe biti boot* (literally meaning to “spread out the big mat”), whereby disputes are first addressed through dialogue between the involved parties, families, and community leaders.²¹ Following this, the final resolution traditionally takes the form of a *tara bandu*.²² Today, with involvement from community members and *suku* police officers, community policing has changed this process: decisions reached through community dialogue are now monitored by SVS members and enforced by *suku* police officers.

Challenges

A lack of support from government institutions, political leaders, and PNTL Headquarters has not permitted the SVS to receive sufficient training, legal recognition, nor financial support.

Consequently, SVS members need training on conflict cycles and the tipping points of violent conflict in order to effectively mediate community conflicts until PNTL officers arrive. In addition, the provision of uniforms and ID cards would formally recognize SVS members’ status, thereby protecting their personal security during SVS interventions.

In cases of gender-based violence, the inclusion of women as security volunteers has the potential to improve communication between victims and community leaders, and to increase the PNTL’s awareness of community realities. A decision to incorporate two female representatives from each *suku* into the SVS network would potentially challenge pre-existing community hierarchies, thereby improving formal and informal responses to gender-based violence.

Finally, while the cellular phone solution has proven to be an effective interim response to community requests for assistance, the strategy would potentially be ineffective in situations of widespread emergency, when it is likely district police would be inundated with calls. As identified by both PNTL and community members²³, the PNTL as an institution must allocate greater equipment and human resources to the community level in order to improve security in the areas in which police officers work.

Concluding Remarks

Despite lacking financial and resource support from PNTL Headquarters, the PNTL benefits from the active participation of an engaged community—including elders, youth, veterans, and women’s groups—that is interested in taking community ownership of conflict prevention. Such ownership forms the foundations of Suku Police Posts and future community-monitoring programs.

With the PNTL’s 2014–2018 Strategic Plan built on the foundations of community policing, the SVS initiative will play a key role in informing communities of how police can resolve problems, while informing the police of the security needs of communities.²⁴ Although future funding for the SVS initiative remains uncertain, the importance of the intervention for both community security and community–police relationships will no doubt be widely recognized in the years to come.

21 See note 15.

22 *Tara bandu* is a traditional Timorese custom that enforces peace and reconciliation through the power of public agreement.

23 The Asia Foundation’s 2013 *Community Police Perception Survey* found that 57% of interviewed PNTL officers believe there are serious inadequacies in staffing levels and communications equipment within the PNTL. 55% of general public respondents and 68% of community leaders believed that a lack of equipment and staff was the principal challenge facing police in their community.

24 See note 1.



CASE STUDY II: MARINE POLICE UNITS ENGAGING COASTAL COMMUNITIES

Overview

The PNTL's Marine Police Unit (UPM; Unidade Polícia Marítima) is responsible for addressing national- and community-level issues relating to marine security. The success of UPM interventions has only been possible by ensuring that the unit's policing strategies are derived from the input of citizens, community leaders, local fisherman, and sellers and consumers at traditional seafood markets. The ability to engage with coastal communities has been achieved by ensuring UPM visibility through the regular patrol of maritime market environments and dissemination of individual security and community security information to fishing communities. Despite this approach, challenges continue to stem from the UPM's limited collaboration and communication with other operational agencies and marine-related ministries. These challenges highlight the need for a peak maritime body to coordinate and cooperate with relevant agencies, thus ensuring improvements in the effectiveness of the UPM and the penetrative reach of its community-policing activities.

Background

Following Timor-Leste's independence, marine-security issues were handled by the Maritime Security Unit (Unidade Seguransa Marítima), an institution that existed under UNPOL and originally consisted of just 12 PNTL officers. By 2006, the force had grown to 53 PNTL officers and was continuing under the auspices of UNPOL, with limited official recognition from PNTL Headquarters in Dili. In 2010, the unit dissolved its affiliation with UNPOL, and Lino Saldanha was appointed Commander of the Marine Police Unit (UPM) under the PNTL.

Unlike other district-specific units within the PNTL, the UPM traverses the coastal communities of Dili and Ataúro in Dili district, Atabae in Bobonaro district, Com in Lautém district, and the coastal areas in between. Further to contributing to fish markets, the sea surrounding Timor-Leste serves as a conduit for tourism: a weekly ferry service transports visitors—as well as clothing, wood, and fuel—from Dili to Ataúro Island.

Despite the absence of a collective understanding of preventative and community-based policing within the PNTL at the time²⁵ the UPM nonetheless developed its inaugural strategic model towards a vision that by 2030 it would exist as a “modern and moral police force that works with communities to understand and establish maritime security.”²⁶

Organizational Structure and Objectives

Although UPM activities vary depending on the contextual security environment of each community it works in, the unit remains governed by a three-pillared model that aims to:

1. Disseminate information relating to marine security and environmental protection;
2. Build relationships with communities to ensure conflict prevention; and
3. Uphold peace, justice, and security in maritime communities.

The 100 officers of the UPM in 2013 were assigned to posts in Atabae, Dili and Ataúro. They divide their activities between marine and shoreline environments, collaborating with community leaders, citizens, and government institutions to ensure effective service provision between the two.

The UPM strengthens community relationships by serving as a conduit for enforcing government protocols in coastal communities. In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Environment, the UPM disseminates information to coastal communities to prevent avoidable damage to the country's natural marine resources. Additionally, in partnership with international maritime organizations, the UPM has provided operational training for fishermen, challenged historical norms by enforcing new regulations (developed through focus-group discussions) on the size of fishing nets, and identified safe boat-mooring locations for assisted loading and unloading. The UPM also works closely with the Department of Civil Protection, displaying crocodile warning signs along the coast for swimmers and fishermen.

Activities

In collaboration with the Dili PNTL's Community Policing Unit, the UPM conducts information sessions for community members about how to perform surf lifesaving, provide emergency first aid, and contact emergency services to ensure that victims of coastal and maritime accidents are rapidly treated.

The UPM also disseminates safety information to ferrying vessels and small boats operating between Dili and the nearby island of Ataúro. In addition, the UPM closely observes shoreside markets in Dili and Ataúro to prevent conflict during transactions between the two communities. Recognizing that Ataúro's youth groups predominantly reside on the island's foreshore, the UPM has also held public information sessions involving youth actors to introduce the role of the unit and advise individuals to contact the UPM in emergency or conflict situations.

25 Written correspondence with UNMIT Maritime Police Adviser Mark Korstan, March 20, 2014.

26 Interview with PNTL Marine Police Commander, Lino Saldhana, August 6, 2013.

Activity #1: Maritime markets of Timor-Leste

Fish caught in the Wetar Strait between Dili and Ataúro are reportedly sold in a number of shore-side markets in Timor-Leste that receive daily transactions of over US\$1,000.²⁷ Transactions typically undergo a three-part process, commencing with the selling of fish from fishermen to *tenkulaks*,²⁸ who then sell the produce to street vendors, who ultimately sell the fish to consumers. Compounded by the transient nature of maritime market populations, the potential for conflict exists at each interaction and monetary transaction. The influx of individuals from Indonesia and various ethnicities from the districts of Timor-Leste creates a fluid environment with a propensity for disputes, which can escalate to physical injury. Acknowledging this, the UPM ensures its visibility by maintaining a regular presence in maritime market environments.

Beyond the district of Dili, the PNTL's UPM conducts similar activities in the districts of Lautém and Viqueque. To prevent wayward boats intruding into Indonesian waters, the UPM works with Indonesian authorities to issue a border pass for seafarers travelling in regional waters.

By collaborating with subdistrict PNTL services and *suku* chiefs to encourage community ownership of local security, the UPM post in Betano disseminates information to fishing communities on individual safety and community security when participating in sailing, fishing, and other marine-based commercial activities.

Communities' exposure to the UPM has improved due to the unit's appearance on independent radio talk shows with Haburas Foundation in February 2012 and with The Asia Foundation in 2013. By disseminating information through media outlets at the national level while working at both the institutional and community levels, the UPM ensures that all individuals in coastal areas have the information to understand and practice marine safety and security.

Challenges

Through its foundational pillars and activities, the UPM promotes the notion that community policing is the responsibility of all divisions of the PNTL, not just the Community Police Unit. However, the UPM's existence as a division of the PNTL—and not as a subdivision of the Community Policing Unit—has resulted in limited funding for its own community-policing activities.

Given the cross-cutting nature of the UPM, maintaining communication between each of its input organizations is imperative to the unit's ability to respond rapidly to emergency situations and uphold maritime security. Although the UPM has successfully built effective partnerships with communities, there remains a need for greater collaboration with customs and immigration officials, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Environment, and the Indonesian government. The UPM has expressed interest in developing an overarching National Maritime Association (NMA) that would coordinate the functions of various maritime bodies and be built on the three pillars of "communication, cooperation and coordination."²⁹ Through these pillars, the UPM believes that multiple inputs would allow for a holistic understanding of threats to maritime security; facilitate cooperation with, and the strengthening of, other national and international maritime-related agencies; and provide opportunities for conducting joint operations that involve coastal communities.

A successful National Maritime Association would ideally receive input from customs and immigration, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Environment, the Navy, and the UPM. The current lack of legislation supporting the creation of such a unifying maritime body—and the resultant lack of input from the sector—has consistently constrained the activities of the UPM, which argues that the

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ A *tenkulak* is traditionally a veteran of the resistance who has regional control over the trade of fish in select maritime communities. The dynamics of maritime markets in Timor-Leste are such that fishermen cannot sell their fish directly to street-side sellers, but must instead negotiate with affiliated or regional *tenkulaks*, who often provide fisherman with boats, nets, and other similar resources. It is reported that, in instances where fishermen sell their catch to *tenkulaks*, the subsequent mark-up to street-side sellers is often in excess of 1,000 percent.

²⁹ See note 24.

functioning of the maritime sector as a whole is compromised by various organizations' pursuit of their own self-interests. The UPM's sustainability as a security provider in the current environment is therefore dependent not on collaboration between various interest groups, but on proactive personalities within the UPM.

Given the breadth of its activities and presence in multiple districts across the country, the UPM needs to increase its number of service personnel so as to have a greater programmatic penetration and community-level presence. In order for the UPM to establish 12 subunits across 36 posts (as proposed in its 2013–2030 strategy) it is required to successfully increase its force from 100 officers in 2013 to 500 officers in 2030.

Future activities proposed by the UPM include raising awareness about environmental laws, extending surf lifesaving training to a greater number of maritime communities, conducting bicycle patrols along coastal regions, and holding information sessions at elementary schools to discuss environmental mismanagement under a lens of better preservation practices. Through these proposed activities, the UPM will engrain its role at the community level and serve as a community security provider in marine areas of Timor-Leste.

Concluding Remarks

The UPM believes that community policing is the responsibility of every PNTL unit and that the PNTL (and UPM) requires diverse community inputs in order to be an effective security force in Timor-Leste. Cohesion between the various personalities, visions, strategies, and commitments within Ministries and security actors responsible for Timor-Leste's marine sector, is pivotal to the establishment of community-based maritime security. Overall, adequate monitoring, evaluation, learning and collaboration—as well as a unifying maritime body—are needed to ensure the longevity and sustainability of the UPM.



CASE STUDY III: COMMUNITY POLICE COUNCILS IN THE DISTRICTS OF BOBONARO & AILEU

Overview

Community Police Councils (KPK; Konsellu Polísia Komunitária) in the districts of Bobonaro and Aileu allow communities and police to engage with one another through regular dialogues held at the village (or *suku*) level. These forums provide citizens with an opportunity to voice their concerns regarding community security and to take ownership of proposed joint-action interventions. Despite the effectiveness of the KPKs, research has found that the establishment of KPKs remains inherently driven by the interests of individual PNTL district commanders.³⁰ It also depends on capacity development by non-governmental organizations, and requires financial assistance decided on by policymakers within the Timor-Leste government. By leveraging each of these relationships, the PNTL has succeeded in institutionalizing a grassroots intervention in community-policing, which is the cornerstone for the organization's 2014–2018 Strategic Plan.

Background

Following a study tour to Bangladesh in 2009, then-PNTL Community Police Commander, João Belo dos Reis, decided that community members and PNTL officers sitting on the same council to address collective security challenges would be a fitting model for Timor-Leste. Given the country's limited financial and logistical resources, Belo believed that—with community acceptance and support—the model of Community Police Councils (KPKs) could successfully prevent crime and resolve conflicts in Timor-Leste. After discussing the initiative with then-Country Representative of The Asia Foundation, Silas Everett, Belo and the Foundation established pilot KPKs from 2009 – 2010 in the selected *sukus* of Becora, Bidau Santana and Camea in Dili district; and Wailili, Samalari and Trilolo in Baucau district.³¹

After implementation of the pilot program, Commander Belo presented the findings from his study tour of Bangladesh and the results of the pilot KPKs. Following traction within PNTL-Headquarters, the decision was made to expand KPKs to all thirteen districts of Timor-Leste. Ten *sukus* in the districts of Bobonaro, Baucau, Aileu and Manatuto were selected by the PNTL on the basis of geography, reported levels of crime, and the visibility of police to the local communities. With assistance from independent actors including The Asia Foundation and the New Zealand Police, the PNTL identified the challenges regarding the strength of community-police relationships in these selected areas as being: levels of violent crime, levels of non-violent crime, local leadership, and willingness of the PNTL to visit on a regular basis.

Aileu District Commander Ludgerio Picancio Lay, then replicated the initiative of João Belo in Bobonaro and began to co-locate police officers in some of the selected target *sukus*, thus adding the PNTL's own initiative onto the KPK system.

Commander Belo has identified the greater relevance of KPKs beyond the PNTL's institutional community-policing program: he describes the model as an “opportunity for communities to take ownership of their security, and recognize [that there exist methods to circumvent] the PNTL's lack of resources to conduct all forms of crime prevention activities.”³² In acknowledging the PNTL's lack of both funding and capacity to participate in the full gamut of community-security activities, Belo identifies the collective problem-solving that KPKs facilitate as a proven way of supporting community security.

Organizational Structure and Objectives

Although each KPK is unique to the *suku* in which it operates, the overarching objectives of KPKs are to:

1. Facilitate community-police dialogues that teach communities the mandate of the police and resolve any community-police relationship issues;
2. Conduct joint problem solving trainings to identify security issues, their root causes, prioritize them and then develop joint solutions;
3. Encourage regular meetings to update on the security situation and list any issues they have resolved over the month; and
4. Disseminate information on security grant activities to tackle significant and long running security challenges that require greater resources than the PNTL or Community have in that *suku*

System design for community-led security

Security monitoring by both the PNTL and community members of the KPK is conducted through *suku* visits as well as meetings, during which communities discuss crime-prevention activities they would like to get involved in. KPK members distribute their phone numbers to community members and have the opportunity to meet *suku* and *aldeia* chiefs.

30 That being said, KPKs have become a regular practice in 8 of the 13 districts of Timor-Leste, with Baucau and Bobonaro remaining as the only districts not fully adhering to the community-policing practice.

31 The Asia Foundation, 'Conflict Mitigation Through Community-Oriented Policing,' USAID Fourth Quarterly Report (22 February 2010)

32 Interview with PNTL Director of Administration and Planning, João Belo dos Reis, November 13, 2013. Mr. Belo is the former PNTL Community Police Commander.

Although every KPK is unique and addresses contextual challenges specific to the local community, the most common issues discussed at KPK meetings are political interference in community affairs, economic challenges, land disputes, youth unrest, organized crime, and domestic violence. In Bobonaro, the issues identified were associated with the placement of land boundaries (in neighboring rice fields), the prevalence of domestic violence, and perceptions of insecurity as a result of the activities of martial arts gangs (MAGs).

In situations where issues are unresolvable within the community, KPK members draw on their relationships with the PNTL to enable access to public ministries and to get formal guidance to reach fair decisions.

Crime prevention

Crime prevention requires the KPK to engage with both formal and informal security providers. In Bobonaro, KPK members take a keen interest in holding discussions with MAGs, and KPKs in the district of Aileu are successfully forging strong connections with MAG leaders. KPK members also work closely with the State Secretary for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI) by creating locally relevant campaigns that target domestic violence and publicize its legal status as a public crime.

Maintenance of peace and security

With the PNTL having established their role as facilitators of the KPKs, discussions with various community-security providers at the *suku* and district levels allow for community participation in the maintenance of peace and security, as prioritized by community indicators towards improved security, as identified by each KPK.

Activities

Given the limited access that rural communities have to formal justice mechanisms in Timor-Leste, collaborative action by the PNTL and community actors enables communities to use alternative justice mechanisms. This is particularly relevant in the districts of Bobonaro and Aileu, which have neither tribunals nor district attorneys to assist in the formal mediation of community conflicts.³³

Together with PNTL officers, Community Police Councils (KPKs) include veteran resistance fighters, youth, women's groups, and MAGs. Through collective problem-solving, KPKs aim to develop security-model frameworks between communities and the PNTL, not to only allow for rapid identification of issues, but also to enable the holistic resolution of security challenges within communities.

Beyond their community mediatory role, KPKs also serve as a conduit for information from communities to the government. Issues voiced by communities at KPK meetings are often raised in *suku* councils and ultimately presented to the national government. Beyond serving as a forum for debate, KPKs provide policymakers with input from the local level, permitting communities to have a role in chosen security interventions by the PNTL.

Although PNTL officers identify a lack of necessary equipment and understaffing as being their two most serious challenges,³⁴ the existence of KPKs has alleviated institutional challenges by encouraging greater cooperation with communities and thus rapid response to needs.

Despite limited access to formal justice mechanisms, KPKs in Bobonaro and Aileu have enabled communities to monitor and take ownership of their security, undertake crime-prevention interventions, and better complement traditional mediation with PNTL community-policing strategies.

By engaging with the customary laws of local communities, the PNTL has been able to forge stronger connections with traditional leaders, while utilizing the pre-existing traditional system readily accepted by members of the public.

³³ Susan Marx, *Law and Justice in Timor-Leste: A Survey of Citizen Awareness and Attitudes Regarding Law and Justice 2013* (Dili: The Asia Foundation, 2014).

³⁴ See note 9.

The inclusion of religious institutions and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in community level discussions and mediations strengthens the capacity of KPKs because these members can provide information where it is often lacking. Additionally, NGOs have the capacity to serve as intermediaries between policymakers and community actors. In the district of Aileu, The Asia Foundation supports communities and the PNTL by training and facilitating KPKs through a bottom-up approach. Such grassroots initiatives, alongside the strengthening of community relationships with the Secretariat for State Security and partnering NGOs, demonstrate the legitimacy of KPKs as a sustainable community-policing intervention.

Challenges

Despite achievements in community security, the expansion of the KPK initiative is inhibited by three factors:

1. Article 18 of the PNTL Organic Decree-Law No. 9/2009 of February 18, 2009, which gives support to PNTL District Commanders, according to their competencies in the districts and is thus limited by personalities reluctant to adhere to community policing principles;
2. A lack of PNTL command at the district level; and
3. Inter-ministerial disinterest in community-driven crime prevention

The establishment of KPKs is therefore dependent not on centralized decision-making within the PNTL nor on ministerial decisions, but rather on the drive and intention of each individual PNTL district commander.³⁵

This is most evident in Dili and Baucau, where, despite successful KPKs during the program's pilot phase, limited support by then-district commanders restricted the proliferation of KPKs in these two districts. In contrast to Dili, support for the KPK initiative from Commanders Lae and Belo in the districts of Aileu and Bobonaro respectively has provided the PNTL with an opportunity to work collaboratively with community leaders, youth, women's groups, and MAGs to develop community-driven security strategies.

Commander Belo remains persistent that "community policing is in its prime" in Timor-Leste,³⁶ with donor support and training from the New Zealand Police and The Asia Foundation ensuring that successful community-security initiatives are noticed by decision-makers.

Through the core PNTL practice model of "visibility, involvement and professionalism" community policing is the cornerstone of the PNTL's 2014–2018 Strategic Plan, which identifies KPKs as the model's definitive implementing arm. Both District Commander Belo and Community Police Commander Boavida Ribeiro highlight the importance of developing a KPK manual defining the approach that can be distributed to every district in Timor-Leste.

Concluding Remarks

The intention of KPKs is to provide communities with access-to-justice mechanisms that are otherwise absent or inaccessible from rural settings. Additionally, KPKs assist the PNTL to initiate community-policing activities in circumstances where funding or institutional support is lacking. The partnership between community members and the PNTL creates a nexus where diverse security providers can take leadership in maintaining peace and security at the local level. Through direct community involvement in this process, community-police connections are not only strengthened, but institutional costs are reduced, and the potential for state-community relationships improved.

Local ownership of community security has been achieved in the areas where KPKs have been implemented, and this bottom-up approach to community security exhibits the potential for longevity as a security solution - on the condition the state is proactive in supporting it. However, legitimization of this ownership must be accompanied by community-police relationships and recognized by the Government of Timor-Leste in order to be a sustainable intervention.

35 See note 1.
36 See note 28.

CONCLUSION

Though distinct and relevant to each of the community contexts presented, the three organic community-police interventions outlined in this paper highlight a nascent community-policing model in Timor-Leste that identifies and capitalizes on the synergies between customary and formal justice providers.

The police of Timor-Leste—one of the world’s youngest nations—have taken inspiration from tried-and-tested examples of community policing around the world, innovatively appropriating them to fit the local context.

Despite insufficient material and personnel resources, the PNTL has gained trust from communities by engaging with the full gamut of community actors and upholding professionalism towards those that seek their services. The PNTL officers interviewed for this paper have shown remarkable adaptability and leadership in the face of underfunding and have developed new ways to work with the variety of actors who provide peace and security at the *suku* level.

Built on the foundations of “visibility, involvement, and professionalism,” the PNTL’s 2014–2018 Strategic Plan holds promise for the future of community policing in Timor-Leste. As more communities benefit from Suku Volunteer Security (SVS; Seguransa Voluntáriu Suku), Marine Police Unit (UPM; Unidade Polísia Marítima) and Community Police Councils (KPK; Konsellu Polísia Komunitária) and Suku Police Posts (PPS; Postu Polísia Suku) throughout Timor-Leste, the continued decentralization of leadership through such innovative community-oriented interventions will ensure that community peace and security is upheld.

