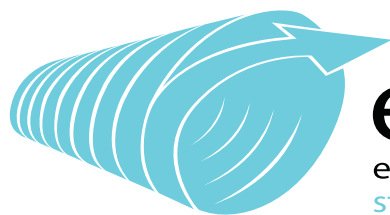


EARLY WARNING AND RESPONSE SYSTEM IN TIMOR-LESTE



Trimester Report
February-May 2009



ewer

early warning and response
strengthening national and
community responses to conflict

In 2009 BELUN, in cooperation with Columbia University's Center for International Conflict Resolution (CICR), established the Early Warning and Response System (EWER) in Timor-Leste. EWER is designed to increase early responses to conflict and prevent the escalation of violence at the national and community level.

The EWER system is generously supported by the Government of Ireland's Department of Foreign Affairs through the Conflict Resolution Unit.

A Program Of



Suporta Husi Governu Irlandia,
Departementu Asuntus Estrangeiros,
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Executive Summary

During its first four months of monitoring, BELUN's Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) system has collected data on incidents of violence and on a range of social, economic, political and external indicators that provide an index of local tensions and peace capacities. This data is gathered by a network of male and female civil society volunteers recruited from thirteen target sub-districts. Information received is then verified through other networks and sources where possible, and analysed to determine concerns in the monitored areas and nationally. Over time reporting will contribute to the systematic identification of trends in conflict dynamics in reference to particular themes and will enable targeted responses to challenges that may contribute to violence if left unaddressed.

The results presented in this report are made available to the Government, development partners and the communities themselves in order to inform programming and guide action. BELUN will utilise its own peace-strengthening experience to assist communities to address the tensions identified by monitors toward preventing the escalation of conflict. BELUN and the Center for International Conflict Resolution (CICR) will engage with Government actors where a policy response is warranted.

Over the reporting period 1 February to 31 May 2009, a total of 187 incidents were reported to the EWER system. Community responses to violence were frequently reported, with 252 parties identified as intervening in these instances – that is, in a full third of cases, more than one community representative would attend and attempt a resolution. On very few occasions (21 reports in total) was there a clear connection to a previous incident. Most commonly, reported conflicts comprised verbal threats and intimidation (79 incidents) rather than fights between individuals (54 incidents). Private homes were the most common site of these incidents (112) and family members were most often parties to the unrest (72 incidents), followed by farmers (46) and neighbours (32). This suggests that conflict across the country is typically a personal matter.

The violence correlates strongly to gender, with women involved in less than half of the reported incidents. Most violence was through unarmed assault (115 incidents), with machetes used in twenty-six cases and stones thrown on nineteen occasions. No incidents involving guns were reported. Reports of 43 injuries and one alleged murder were received, with property destroyed in eleven incidents and reports of people fleeing their community following fifty-two incidents. PNTL were the most regular responders to conflict, attending 66 of the incidents, followed by local leaders (55 incidents). It is troubling, though, that there was no reported response in at least 38 incidents, which allows tensions to develop further and raises the potential for future violence.

Across the country, situation report monitoring revealed a troubling presence of domestic and sexual abuse. A high degree of tension over natural resources, land use and animal control was also reported. Economic pressures are hitting these areas hard, with prices for local goods dropping, and commerce slowing. Consequently, many young people are reported to be leaving their communities in search of work. Martial arts group activity was reported as a source of tension in many sub-districts, and the presence of armed forces and police was often no less a concern. Despite high levels of reliance, traditional justice is failing to resolve many disputes. This may lead to higher rates of recourse to formal justice. Given the handover of policing responsibilities in Lautem and progressively across other districts, there is clearly much to be done in developing positive relations with the security sector, and also in supporting appropriate dispute resolution options.

Within the short span of monitoring to date, there appears to be a spike in community tensions across the entire country over March and April that subsides by the end of May. The rise in conflict potential is visible across economic, political and social issues. Its scope and pervasiveness suggest tensions may be seasonal, especially as no political event can easily be linked to a country-wide shift in tensions during the reporting period.

At a national level, the first monitoring period highlights key areas of focus for conflict prevention efforts, such as addressing gender-inequalities that enable domestic violence, land titling and resource-sharing, community-police relations and options for effective dispute resolution. The report also highlights individuals who respond to incidents of violence at the community level. These local actors may be engaged as partners to address these issues and are among the local resources that should be strengthened to promote future stability within communities and nationwide.

Introduction

Since its founding over five years ago, BELUN has developed a strong reputation for its civil society strengthening and conflict prevention work. In partnership with Columbia University's Center for International Conflict Resolution and with the generous support of the Government of Ireland's Conflict Resolution Unit, BELUN established the Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) community-based system for monitoring and addressing conflict and tensions nationwide.

The system utilises a network of sub-district-based volunteer monitors to gather information relevant to the potential for civil unrest. At present, 13 target sub-districts are monitored under the EWER system, one in each district, representing a spread of urban and rural locales, all with a particular history of local conflict.

This report represents the culmination of the first four months of EWER monitoring. It is hoped that the snapshot of local conditions will be used by Government, development partners and communities themselves, in order to address emerging concerns and reinforce local resources that promote peace. BELUN will contribute its peace-strengthening expertise where needed in volatile locations and will continue to support monitoring to develop a more complete picture of community conflict dynamics. As data continues to be gathered, it is anticipated that over time a deeper analysis of the trends will be possible, enabling a more structured and systematic response to conflict.

Methodology

During this first stage of monitoring under the EWER system, BELUN has recruited twenty-six monitors in total – two (typically male and female) for each of the targeted sub-districts. Monitors are all established members of these communities, with many in a pre-existing civil society position to which this monitoring has been added as a volunteer function. Monitors receive ongoing conflict analysis and transformation training, and are directly supported by BELUN's five regional co-ordinators. Gaps in data collection may occur from time to time as a result of monitor turnover.

Monitoring has been undertaken largely through an observation, rather than investigation, model using local networks of contacts and understanding of community dynamics to inform their responses. Reporting occurs in two forms – one capturing incidents of violence (extending from threats and intimidation through to property destruction and physical harm) and the other examining a range of social, economic, political and external factors linked to community tension. Peace and development activities are also captured in monitoring reports. Given the observational (rather than investigative) nature of the monitoring, and the lack of specialist skills, the EWER system is unable to directly address problems such as gender-based violence that may require more expert and in-depth attention. Monitors, nonetheless, are trained to recommend appropriate referral pathways.

The monitoring system has been constructed following a comprehensive study of early warning mechanisms in other countries, and seeks to limit the subjectivity of responses, gathering information on incidents of violence and visible changes within communities that allows for comparative analysis across regions, themes and periods of time. When reporting an incident, monitors are asked to select from a list of possible actors, respondents, methods and impacts (among other measures) to describe the event. A minimum of two sources are required to confirm an incident, preventing the reporting of rumors. Situation reports are partly in a yes/no format and require an indication of whether an indicator has increased, decreased, stayed the same or is unknown.

Incident reports are collected weekly and situation reports fortnightly. Data is verified by reference to other local and national information where possible, and entered into a National Peace and Conflict Database. Incident features are tallied and ranked for analysis and particular events referred for action. Indicators from the situation reports are scored for their conflict potential – the existence of a natural disaster, for example, may increase local pressures. A rise in the price of household goods may similarly raise tensions. This allows for a broader sense of whether the situation in target communities is improving or worsening.

National Findings and Analysis

Over the reporting period 1 February to 31 May 2009, a total of 187 incidents were reported to the EWER system from the monitored sub-districts. Regrettably, it must be noted that this total does not include data from Vemasse, in Baucau district, due to monitor turnover at this location. Community responses to the reported incidents were generally positive, with 252 parties identified as intervening in these instances – that is, in a full third of cases, more than one community representative would attend and broker a resolution. Only twenty-one incidents were reported to have a clear connection to a previous incident, which suggests that motives may not be obvious even to members of the same community, or alternately that conflict is flaring in a more widely distributed, even arbitrary, fashion than previously believed.

Most commonly, reported violence comprised verbal threats and intimidation (79 incidents) rather than fights between individuals (54). Group violence was far less common (13 cases). Private homes or property were overwhelmingly the most common sites of incidents (112), dwarfing the next most common locations of streets (29) and markets (16). Given these venues, it is not so surprising to find that members of the same family were most often parties to the unrest (72 incidents), followed by farmers (46) and neighbours (32). These characteristics suggest that violence across the country is typically a personal matter, occurring behind closed doors.

The violence is highly gender-specific, with women involved in less than half the reported incidents, and charged with initiating only fourteen. Most violence was perpetrated through unarmed assault (115 incidents), with machetes used in twenty-six cases, stones thrown on nineteen occasions, and no incidents involving guns reported. Forty-three reports of injury were received, with property destroyed on eleven occasions and 52 incidents believed to have caused people to flee their respective communities.

Sub-district	District	Number of Incidents
Passabe	Oecusse	50
Ainaro Vila	Ainaro	31
Letefoho	Ermera	18
Maliana Vila	Bobonaro	13
Tutuala	Lautem	12
Manatuto Vila	Manatuto	12
Viqueque Vila	Viqueque	10
Remexio	Aileu	10
Liquica Vila	Liquica	10
Metinaro (inc. IDP camp)	Dili	8
Same	Manufahi	7
Suai	Covalima	6*
*3 months data only		

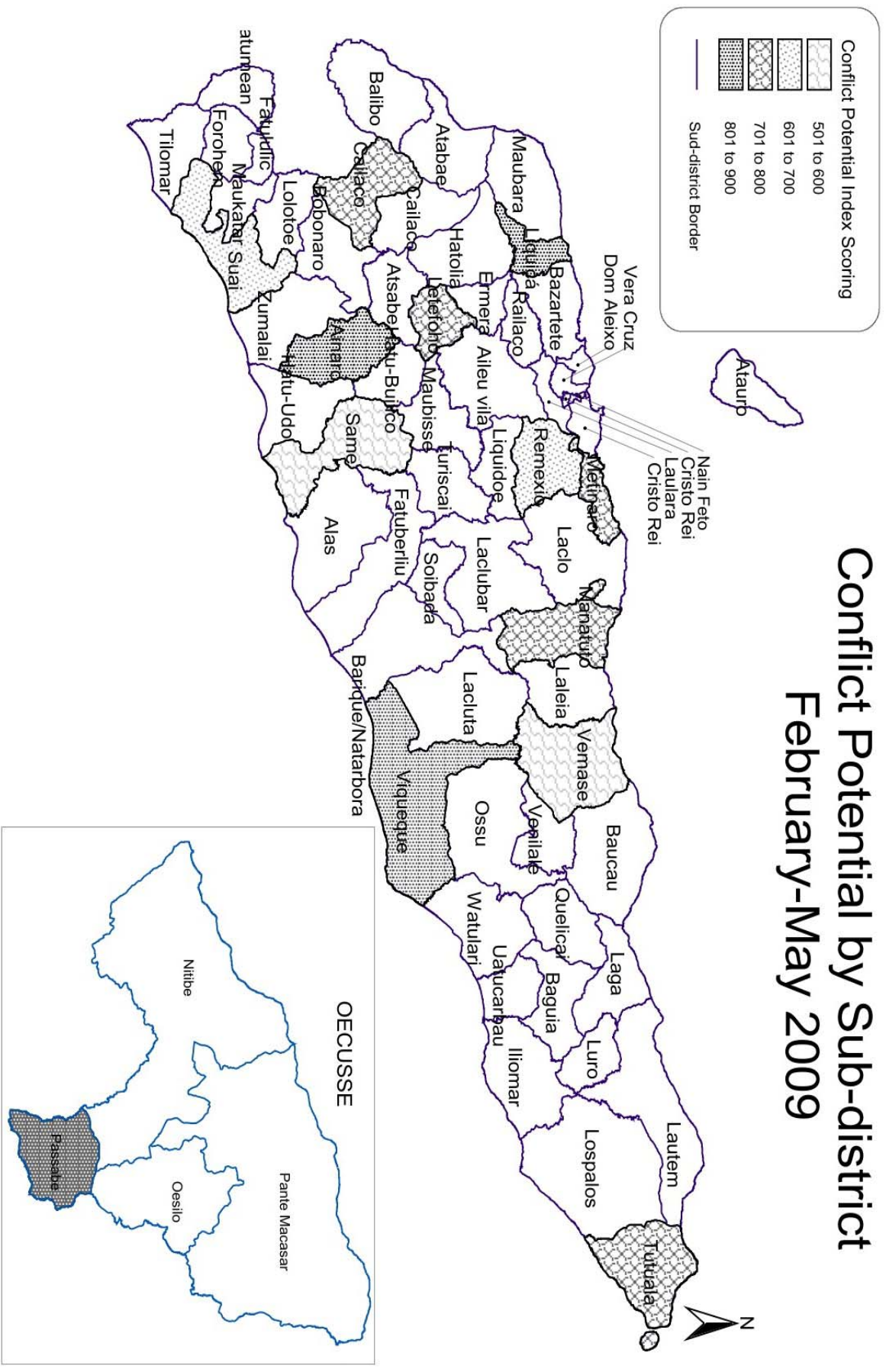
Boding well for the progressive handover of local policing responsibilities, the PNTL most regularly responded to violence, attending 66 of the reported incidents. Local leaders were almost as engaged, intervening in 55 incidents. Troubling, though, is the suggestion that on at least thirty-eight occasions, confrontations were left to reach their own conclusion with no official attempt at resolution. Although

community responses to violence are present across districts, the lack of resolution following many incidents indicates local response, and the attendant methodologies, may require attention.

Across the country, monitoring revealed a troubling presence of domestic and sexual abuse, mostly committed by men against women and girls, with both forms of violence ranking in the top ten of sixty-two indicators identified as increasing in the target sub-districts. In regard to economic issues, the high degree of reported tension over natural resources, land use and animal control is predictable given the agriculture-based economies of many Timorese communities. Increased tree-cutting and burning was reported at many locations, as residents sought to draw more from the environment. Economic pressures are significantly affecting these areas, with a common complaint that prices for local goods are dropping, and buyers are fewer. Food security was identified as an increasing concern, linked to these issues. Almost universally across the districts, male and female young people are reported to be increasingly leaving their communities in search of non-agricultural work.

Sub-district	District	Conflict Potential Index†
Passabe	Oecusse	896
Ainaro Vila	Ainaro	844
Viqueque Vila	Viqueque	840
Liquica Vila	Liquica	827
Maliana Vila	Bobonaro	798
Letefoho	Ermera	785
Tutuala	Lautem	762
Metinaro (inc. IDP camp)	Dili	761
Manatuto Vila	Manatuto	760
Remexio	Aileu	653
Suai	Covalima	601
Same	Manufahi	557
Vemasse	Baucau	545
† This represents scoring on 62 indicators reflecting levels of community tension. Within this framework, a maximum (reflecting negative results on all indicators) would equal 1,128. Minimum (reflecting a universally positive trend) equals 496.		

Conflict Potential by Sub-district February-May 2009



Martial arts group activity was consistently reported as a source of tension in many sub-districts, and engagement with armed forces and police was similarly a concern. Many reports were received that suggested PNTL and F-FD'TL patrols may have made residents feel less secure. This situation may be exacerbated by dissatisfaction with traditional dispute resolution measures indicated by the reports. In particular it is reported that traditional justice fails to resolve many disputes, allowing tensions to deepen. Given the progressive handover of community policing responsibilities, there is a critical need to strengthen positive relations with security actors, and also support appropriate dispute resolution options within communities.

Sub-district Findings and Analysis

Oecusse

Across the monitored sub-districts, Passabe stands out as the most troubled in terms of its gross reporting of violence. Fifty separate incidents were logged over four months, with most entailing verbal abuse and physical assaults, and six representing a recurrence of a previous dispute. Escalation seems to have been relatively minimal, with property damage recorded in only four cases and wider-scale fighting on only one occasion. Overwhelmingly, the reported incidents occurred in private homes or on private property (34), with only single instances of violence at schools, sports fields and churches.

Given the sites of most incidents, the parties are often family members – consistent with a high rate of domestic violence – (19) or neighbours (8). Less common were confrontations involving students or police members. Men and women were almost equally the victims, with men most often (22 cases) exclusively the instigators. Women alone were victims in 17 incidents. The vast majority of violence involved fists and feet only, with stones and machetes used on five and three occasions respectively. As a result, five women and seven men were reported as injured, and some parties (7) were reported to have fled following the violence.

Perhaps due to the remoteness of the community, local leaders in Passabe most commonly responded to incidents of violence (13 incidents) rather than police (7). It is concerning that there was no intervention following almost half the cases (16), which may remain unresolved. In some incidents, disputes over land and animals were settled amicably among the parties themselves, and sub-village chiefs and traditional leaders mediated in response to one instance each. With little consistent civil society presence, only one incident was resolved with such assistance. The high reports of violence could benefit from stronger dispute resolution options.

As might be expected given its high rate of violence, monitoring reveals a variety of concerns stemming from economic factors. Food security is a source of anxiety, and local commerce is seemingly in decline. Many young women and men are leaving in search of work, and those who remain are seeking an outlet through gambling. Natural disasters such as flooding are exacerbating the problem, limiting access and fuelling conflicts over land use. Engagement with state institutions is challenged given the level of isolation of the community. In line with this context, one of the main challenges represented during the reporting period is the apparent inability of traditional justice to consistently broker resolutions to conflict. Although reliance on customary dispute resolution methods have not measurably changed, reports suggest the methods have a diminishing ability to effect a suitable resolution.

The disputes being referred to customary law vary from the typical disagreements over property and animal control to conflict relating to martial arts groups, and other group conflicts within the relatively small community. The data suggests the presence of some deeply entrenched divisions that present an opportunity for peace-building activities.

Ainaro

Ainaro Vila followed Passabe with the second highest reports of violence (31). Most of these comprised threats and intimidation only (21 cases), with physical violence taking place on only seven occasions over the four-month period. Some fighting between individuals was recorded (5) and property damaged only once. Three incidents were linked to prior conflict. Whilst homes and private property were still the most common venue (24 incidents), public places such as markets and streets were also used in seven cases. It is troubling that Protestant churches and associated buildings were sites of violence (3 incidents), highlighting the emerging tension between religious groups reported in the community.

Family members were most often involved in violence (21 incidents), with neighbours clashing on fourteen occasions and farmers in six incidents. It is surprising that civil society representatives (including the church) were involved in seven incidents, Protestant church congregants being specifically identified in a further three. The violence was almost entirely between men alone (20), with women the sole victims in only three incidents.

Although machetes were used in five incidents, threats and intimidation (21 incidents) were followed by fistfights less than half of the time (9 incidents). The incidents resulted in one reported injury and fifteen reports of people fleeing the community to avoid further violence, despite a high rate of police response (15 incidents). The high police response is understandable given the locale of the district centre, although local leaders were equally as engaged in responding to incidents. The official presence in Ainaro Vila may contribute to limiting violence but there are clearly tensions that remain to be addressed.

The monitoring reports of economic factors in Ainaro Vila is particularly concerning, with a high potential for conflict returned against almost every measure. Although families are still finding enough to eat, commercial activity is seeing less return, and many young people are leaving the community in search of non-agricultural work. There is an consistent rise, over the reporting period, in the risk of conflict over access to land or natural resources – which underscores the economic pressures in the community. This has also been linked to the rising incidence of prostitution, which should be monitored carefully to ensure trafficking is not taking place.

Whilst there have not been any measurable changes in behaviour relating to the political or institutional context of the community (party activities are neither increasing nor decreasing; levels of bribery are steady) there is evidence of tension over the leadership of Ainaro Vila. Rumours are spreading, and people are voicing concerns about public officials, which may be associated with the economic difficulties faced by many.

Adding to the potential for violence in the area, reports indicate a very high likelihood of conflict over property, and also in relation to divisions within the community. This may relate to the claims of inter-religious tension in Ainaro. Violence is already common within the home, with reports of domestic violence (against women and children) increasing, along with sexual violence. As there is little engagement with neighbouring communities over land or other potential triggers for conflict, the tensions identified have the most potential to impact stability within Ainaro Vila.

Ermera

Monitors in Letefoho reported 18 incidents over the reporting period. Although the gross number of conflict-related events was fewer than the preceding districts, there appears to have been a higher likelihood of these escalating from verbal (16 incidents) to physical assaults (13). Property damage was recorded in six cases.

Most incidents occurred in homes or on private property (15), with two cases of confrontation on the street and single instances at a church, community centre, market and hospital, respectively. The

majority of these incidents were between farmers (11 incidents), with fewer incidents reported between local officials (2) and students (1). Men were often the sole parties to these incidents (10), with women exclusively involved in six events.

Fourteen of these incidents involved fistfights, and machetes were used as a weapon in eight. It is likely that machete-related incidents are common given the frequency of violence between farmers, which is concerning given the potential impact of the weapon, as seen in the two men and two women reported injured. Violence often related to resource use, with local leaders engaged in responding to incidents (9 incidents), followed by police (8), and traditional leaders (4). The data suggests a community where pressures are felt most by those making a living from the land and a tendency for a greater intensity, rather than frequency, of violence.

Letefoho is a community that relies heavily on agriculture – and as such features many conflicts over natural resources. Agriculture is diminishing as a livelihood, however, as more young people seek work of a different kind, and the price of local products decreases. With economic pressures mounting, and no new infrastructure or training projects benefiting the community over the reporting period, tensions in the community may increase in the future. Political parties are cited by many as increasing divisions among Letefoho residents, and the police and armed force's presence is also a reported cause for concern.

As is common in rural settings, property disputes are reportedly high, and customary methods for dispute settlement are strained. Drug and alcohol related offences are on the rise, as is the incidence of gender-based violence. With Ermera relatively close to Dili, and many local products sold there, conflicts over market presence and land boundaries may be anticipated and as such, are among the important issues for conflict prevention efforts to address.

Bobonaro

In Maliana Vila, monitors reported thirteen incidents between February and May, four of which related to earlier conflicts. Unlike other areas, fighting between two people was most common (9 incidents), followed by physical assaults and fighting among groups (4). Verbal intimidation was a feature of only three incidents, suggesting that conflicts often escalate into violence.

As in other sub-districts, most assaults occurred on private land (5 incidents), although the local market (4) was also a frequent site of incidents. The parties involved in the incidents reflect the usual high proportion of family disputes (3 incidents) and agricultural quarrels (3), although students (2) and martial arts group members (2) were also represented. Twice as many incidents involved men (8) acting alone than involved women, who were victims in three reported incidents. Fists were used as a weapon in all but one incident, where rocks were thrown. Two individuals were reported injured, with an additional four fleeing the community.

Reporting from Maliana Vila suggests tensions arise principally in connection with unemployment – more young men are spending their time in the street or at home. A rise in gambling may be related. Among those in work, conflicts over natural resources are high, suggesting many people operate at a subsistence level. Lack of consistent income is not limited to men alone – high reported rates of prostitution indicate limited opportunities for women and suggest a need for more dedicated, and specialized, monitoring.

Despite the tensions inherent in the economic situation, there remains steady engagement with political institutions. No concerns regarding wide-scale insecurity were noted, and there is a consistent reliance on customary dispute resolution methods. However, tensions are evident in the high rates of violence reported as occurring between martial arts groups and others in the community, and also related to land rights. Domestic abuse, including sexual violence appears also to be on the rise. The various levels of violence reported and limited engagement with other sub-districts suggests efforts to reduce

violence and cultivate opportunities for both women and men, are critical to prevent the future escalation of violence.

Considering the centrality of the community within the district, it is concerning that, in most cases, no response – official or otherwise – was reported. The police only responded to three incidents. The figures suggest tensions are running high among male youth in the community, which may require a more concerted effort to engage in dispute resolution with high-risk groups.

Lautem

Within the easternmost district, monitors in Tutuala reported twelve incidents. Most of these entailed threats only, with fighting reported on four occasions. Half of the reported violence took place in private homes, with a few incidents in the fields. This correlates to the parties involved – farmers (6 incidents), neighbours (3) and family members (5). Unusually, no reported incidents involved women as either perpetrators or victims.

Physical violence, most often used bare hands (5 incidents), with machetes being a weapon in only three incidents, most often connected to farmer-related incidents. Three injuries were reported, but no incident caused people to leave Tutuala. Reflecting the relative remoteness of the sub-district, and perhaps the nature of conflicts – which often appear related to land use. Local leaders most commonly intervened (5 incidents), with the police assisting in a resolution only once. The reported violence in Tutuala is less severe than other areas, which offers an opportunity for local actors to maintain and further strengthen community relations before tensions escalate into violence.

Tutuala is a community with gradually improving conditions and opportunities. Food security improved over the reporting period, and the price of local goods is stable. Fewer young people are leaving to find work. There are still conflicts over land use, as might be expected in an agriculture-dependent sub-district, but there is also evidence of new infrastructure projects, new plans to address natural disasters and other events that threaten local production.

An interesting feature of this area is that PNITL have resumed much responsibility for security and maintaining the peace. Over the reporting period, however, concerns increased about the police presence. Although few incidents of violence were reported, there is some uncertainty about the changes taking place. There was also discontent in relation to traditional justice – which is responsible for settling many disputes (and is often the only option given the lack of a nearby court), but resolutions are only irregularly being found. These disputes appear primarily to involve agreements on the use of land, the presence of martial arts groups, and the incidence of domestic abuse.

Manatuto

Monitors in Manatuto Vila reported twelve incidents of violence, only one of which is believed to have been in reprisal. Intimidation and verbal threats (3 cases) do not appear to have preceded physical violence, where physical assaults between individuals (9) and groups (2) were reported as more common incidents. Atypically, most incidents were public, taking place in streets (5 incidents) and schools (2) more than in homes (4).

The common phenomenon of violence between family members was present (6 incidents), although conflict between youth – both male and female – was almost as common (5). Men were perpetrators in eight of the reported conflicts, and women in five. Perhaps reflecting the domestic nature of some conflicts, and youth involvement in others, most incidents did not involve weapons (8), with stones thrown on two occasions.

Injuries were reported in three cases and six people reportedly left the community. This may relate to the low level of reprisals, reflect youth involvement and the high degree of police intervention. Manatuto reported the greatest proportion of PNITL response to violence (10 incidents), with local leaders engaged in only one incident.

Reports from Manatuto Vila were consistent over the reporting period, with no new economic concerns in respect of food security or commercial activity. Unlike other areas, conflicts over land and resource use were minimal. Although there are still young people leaving the area to seek work, this is not occurring at a measurably increased rate. It seems the status quo, and the lack of new opportunities, is creating a certain amount of attrition.

Although there is generally little concern over political or institutional interactions in Manatuto, one area of engagement stands out. Over the reporting period, there were very clear responses that indicate both tension over police patrols in the area, and also incidents of violence involving the PNTL directly. The confluence of these separate indicators suggests a significant breakdown in relations between police and the community. Other concerns relate to property disputes and the reportedly high incidence of domestic abuse. Principally, though, the question of these police-related incidents requires immediate intervention.

Viqueque

Viqueque Vila reported 10 incidents of violence over the last four months. Given its history of recurring conflict, it is fortunate that most incidents (6) principally involved verbal assaults, with four devolving into physical violence between individuals and two between groups. Most of the confrontations occurred in homes (7) and the remainder took place in streets and markets.

Among the involved parties, family members were consistently represented (4 incidents), with government officials, neighbours, students and farmers each involved in one incident. Men were identified as the initiators of violence in all but one incident, with women suffering disproportionately, as victims in three cases.

Where physical violence took place, most parties were unarmed (6 incidents), with a knife used on only one occasion. Two injuries were reported (both males) and no displacement was reported. Local (and especially traditional) leaders played a significant role in resolving incidents (3), with the police attending two. It appears, though, that no official response took place following the remaining cases, suggesting a high potential for recurrence.

There are some clear economic pressures in Viqueque Vila, according to monitoring reports. The price of local products has decreased substantially, and unemployment (along with gambling) is on the rise. Natural disasters have affected the community, increasing concerns over income. Martial arts group activity may also be eroding solidarity in this sub-district.

As is common across Timor-Leste, the high incidence of disputes over property and animal control are often referred to traditional dispute resolution. Unfortunately, local confidence in this approach is waning, with reports indicating a decreasing rate of resolution. In any case, studies suggest it has rarely dealt effectively with domestic and sexual abuse, high rates of which are reported here. With Viqueque so far from any outpost of the court system, clearly many conflicts are being imperfectly dealt with outside of formal justice.

Aileu

The sub-district Remexio, not far from Dili, reported ten incidents over the monitoring period. Violence was more often physical than verbal, with three incidents of threats and intimidation, and five physical assaults. The remaining two cases involved the property destruction and/or theft. Incidents also took place more often in public, with three incidents in private homes, and the remainder taking place in community centres (2) or as single events at markets, schools and fields.

Overwhelmingly, incidents involved youth or students (7), with only one related to a dispute between family members. Following the national trend, men were more often reported to be aggressors (7) than

women. No reports of weapons were received, although two people were identified as injured as a result of the violence, and one person was reported to have fled. Local and traditional leaders collaborated in response to 3 incidents, followed by the police (2). A further three incidents had no reported response. In considering the high proportion of male youth violence in Remexio, it is necessary to recognise that 'youth' as a term in Timor-Leste is notoriously broad.

In terms of economic factors, Remexio showed few increasing concerns. Although reported rates of job-seeking are high, and commercial activity low, these factors do not appear to be increasing the potential for conflict. A number of indicators that relate to community interactions show positive signs over the reporting period, with decreasing disputes over land and resources and interfamilial exchanges and other linkages being used to greater effect in order to distribute wealth. The lack of an apparent increase in training programs or infrastructure projects in the area has likely meant that local residents must collaborate in order to thrive.

Most responses from Remexio suggest the community is relatively stable in respect of political and institutional measures. Very low reporting of bribery, weapons use or partisan rivalry – among other factors – give the impression of settled and inclusive leadership. One area of concern is in respect of PNLT and F-FDTL patrols. In February and March, monitoring indicated that people were moving less freely due to armed forces and police activity in the sub-district. Incidents of violence were not reported as a consequence, and these concerns diminished in the following months. There was, however, an evident concern over the presence of such personnel. The only other area of concern was in relation to traditional justice mechanisms – monitoring indicates a high degree of reliance, but also that many disputes go unresolved. This suggests that state-sponsored legal approaches may be under-represented here.

In the social sphere, there are few reported changes to programming or access to education and healthcare. Civil society activity, however, seems to be becoming more rigid, with less interaction between groups from different religious or linguistic backgrounds. At the same time, peacebuilding activities have decreased markedly over the reporting period, particularly dialogues between martial arts groups (historically a problem in the area). This suggests the potential for a polarisation of groups within the community and given its geographic isolation, tensions are likely to remain within the sub-district level.

Liquica

Monitors in Liquica Vila reported ten incidents during the reporting period. Threats and intimidation were the most regular feature of conflict (6 incidents), with violence perpetrated through property damage or theft (6) rather than physical violence between individuals or groups (4).

Almost all incidents occurred on private property (9 incidents), among family members (5) or members of civil society, including the church (4). As in Ainaro and elsewhere in Timor-Leste, new religious groups in the community were the focus of some antagonism. Martial arts group activity was also reported to have been linked to the violence. Men were most often the aggressors of violence (7 incidents), although the incidents often involved both men and women (6) as victims rather than men or women alone (2 incidents each).

Perpetrators of violence were most often unarmed, but knives and stones were reported in four incidents. Although only one injury was reported, surprisingly high numbers of people were claimed to leave the community as a result of incidents (6 women, 5 men), hinting at deeply entrenched social divisions and perhaps fear of reprisals. Responses to incidents were, very strong – with PNLT attending seven cases, along with local leaders in eight out of ten.

Liquica Vila's relative proximity to Dili may be linked to the movement of some young unemployed to seek office-based work. The alternative, within this community, appears to be engagement with a

market that contains fewer consumers and where the risk of conflict over resources is escalating. Liquica's climate and local environment, renowned for producing floods and landslides, exacerbates resource tensions – and was reported as creating further economic pressures over the reporting period.

Very high levels of conflict were recorded in Liquica Vila. Disputes over land use, access to natural resources, and animal control are congruent with the economic factors currently prevailing. Martial arts activity is commonplace, and the degree of reported violence against women and children in the home is quite simply the highest in the country. Contributing to these challenges are the low reported levels of engagement with government and local leaders, and increasing dissatisfaction with traditional dispute resolution. Such factors suggest an urgent need to review the capacities to maintain stability in the community and identify opportunities to protect individuals from violence and support community livelihoods.

Dili

Metinaro was lately the site of a major resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) whose residents were included in EWER monitoring as part of the broader sub-district population. From this area, a total of eight incidents were recorded over the reporting period. Five incidents involved verbal abuse, with the remaining three comprised of fighting between individuals (2) and groups (1).

Given the centrality of the Dili-Baucau road to the Metinaro IDP camp and the presence of many homes and businesses, it is not surprising that the road was the single most frequent site of violence (4 incidents), whereas private homes featured in only two incidents. Reflecting the porous public/private divide that exists in high population density settlements such as IDP camps, the public sites of violence did not correlate to the people involved. Most violence involved family members (5 incidents), as elsewhere, and then – allowing some crossover – between farmers (4 incidents).

Men were again the most common instigators, with women involved only on two occasions. Most perpetrators were unarmed, with one incident involving a knife. The incidents resulted in one injury and no further displacement following the violence was noted. Local leaders responded to most unrest (5 incidents), with civil society – a strong presence in Metinaro – stepping in twice and PNTL attending once. It remains to be seen what impact the scheduled resettlement of IDPs may have for ongoing monitoring.

With the IDP camp dominating Metinaro, the economic and political situation is closely linked to this context. Unemployment is high, but few are seeking office-based work, or otherwise leaving the community to find employment. Stress on the local environment is high, with tree-cutting and burning of land increasing over the reporting period. Despite these conditions, Metinaro is a relatively well-served community, with well-developed infrastructure and access to training for its residents.

Likely reflecting the longstanding displacement of many Metinaro residents, there is evidence of disenfranchisement with political leaders and with state institutions, such as increasing reports of bribes becoming common. While customary methods continue to be used heavily, there are increasing conflicts over traditional dispute resolution. The regular police and armed forces presence is amplifying tensions, and martial arts group activity has reportedly been on the rise. Given the different groups represented in Metinaro, and its relative isolation from surrounding communities, it is unsurprising to find multiple social divisions emerging.

Manufabi

Same, with a comparatively low seven incidents, was also the site of the only alleged murder occurring in a target sub-district during the monitoring period. Four further incidents of fighting were reported, only one of which involved a verbal precursor. This suggests that violence may flare unexpectedly and escalate rapidly in the area. The incidents were mostly public, occurring in streets (2 incidents) and markets (2) more often than in private homes (1 incident).

Corresponding to the sites of violence, incidents involved traders (2) or students (2), more than family members (1). Men were, as in other locations, most often both the initiators and victims of violence, with women involved in only two confrontations. Weapons were uncommon and stones were thrown on a single occasion. The reported incidents resulted in one death (by what weapon?) and five injuries, and goods destroyed. PNTL attended three of the reported incidents, while the market coordinator and other local leaders also provided a response (4 incidents) – especially related to commercial tensions. The police are conducting an ongoing investigation of the alleged murder following confirmation of the death.

Data from Same covers three months of situation reports that show a high unemployment problem. Fewer people are buying from the markets, more young men are sitting idle in the streets, and more people are leaving in search of work. Despite the apparent high profile of political leaders within the community, monitors found that state institutions were often disregarded in favour of traditional methods of social organization. Reports even suggest that political party activities are partly to blame for increasing divisions in Same. This is, however, far from the only source of concern – reporting notes the incidence of martial arts group activity and other group-related confrontations, alongside the usual disputes over property.

Covalima

Monitors in Suai registered six incidents, the fewest among sub-districts, although local police concerns about monitoring (now resolved through national-level negotiations) may have limited the initial reports of violence. The incidents involve fighting between groups (3) and of individual physical assaults (2). The level of physical violence, and lack of preceding verbal altercations, suggests underlying issues over which established groups in the community may be clashing.

This group dynamic is further illustrated by the exclusively public nature of the reported incidents – four of which occurred in the marketplace, and another at the football field. None took place in private homes. Parties to the conflict were most often identified as martial arts group members, or civil society representatives. The violence was entirely gender-specific, with no women involved as perpetrators or victims. Most violence did not involve weapons, with stones thrown or machetes brandished in one incident. The reported violence led to four injuries, and five incidents caused people to leave Suai. Monitors reported a high response-rate from the local PNTL in all six incidents, along with civil society representatives in at least one case.

Figures from Suai show a distinct improvement over the reporting period, with positive trends in relation to the availability of food, the price of local goods, commercial activity and access to training and other income-generating opportunities. More jobs were sought in office environments, and fewer conflicts were recorded in respect of natural resources. There are, however, still many young men leaving the sub-district to look for work. It may be that traditional reliance on agriculture is being replaced gradually by a more commerce-driven economy that places less pressure on the land.

The structure of the community appears durable, however economic patterns may be changing. Monitors reported no evident change in engagement with local leaders. There was, however, some concern surrounding the occasional presence of F-FDTL, and also in relation to PNTL patrols. Incidents of violence were reported on several occasions. Martial arts group activity remains a problem centred on Suai, and domestic abuse (especially against children) appears a constant concern.

Baucau

Vemasse, despite being a relatively rural location, may still draw benefits from its proximity to Timor-Leste's second largest city. In general, the economic picture is good, with few concerns raised over the price of local goods or the availability of food. Consumer activity appears stable.

Positive changes reported included new training and/or credit opportunities expanding options for further income. Perhaps as a result, the number of young men and women leaving the area to look for work, although originally reported as very high, has dropped substantially over April and May.

Although political behaviours and interactions with state institutions altered little over the monitoring period, access to leaders appears to have diminished from its formerly high levels. Fewer activities involving multiple political parties were staged. With perceptions of the economic outlook so encouraging, it may be that less need is felt for engagement with local leadership.

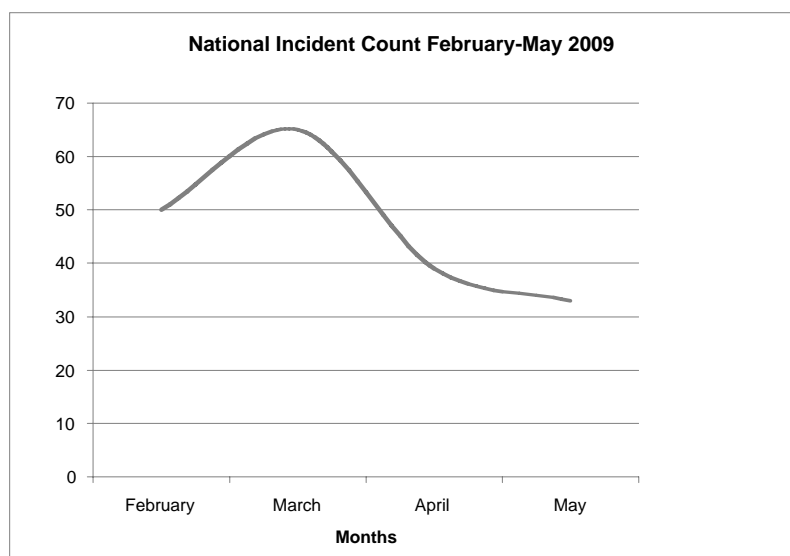
Although there continue to be martial arts group activities, and some divisions within the community along linguistic or religious lines, most of the disputes occurring relate to the use of land or the control of animals. This appears to be happening almost entirely within Vemassee, rather than involving other communities. Reports of gender-based violence are low, and access to healthcare and other services, while minimal, has at least not diminished.

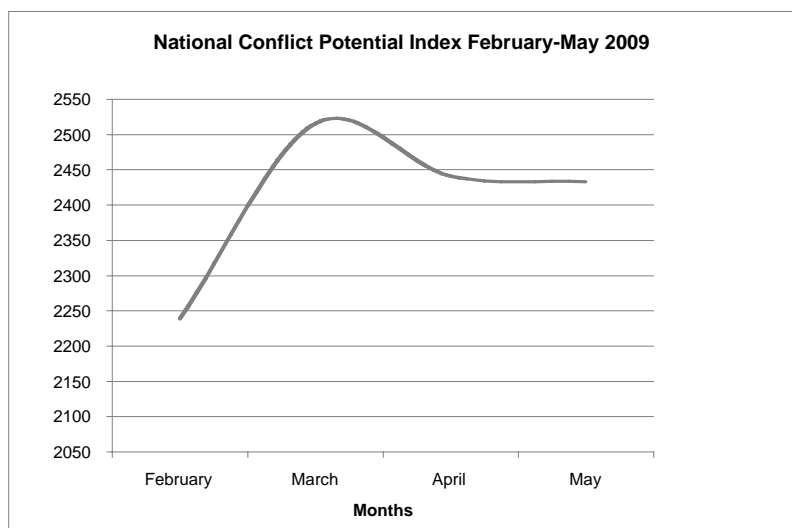
Trends over Time

Given the relatively short span of monitoring to date, it is difficult to assess reported trends, which are more appropriately short-term snapshots of change in economic, social and political conditions. However, analysis of both incident and situation reports reveal a spike in community tensions over March and April that subsides by the end of May. This rise in conflict potential tracks across the entire country, and across the majority of conflict indicators.

Reports received over this period were consistent, ruling out methodological error. Although it will take some repetition of monitoring to determine a clear rationale for this rise and fall, the national scope, and its appearance across various themes and locations suggests a seasonal character, especially as no political event can easily be pointed to as producing so universal a social shift during the reporting period.

Numeric values in the second figure below (tracking situation reporting) again represents scoring on 62 indicators reflecting levels of community tension. Within this framework, a national maximum (reflecting negative results on all indicators, every month) would equal 3,525. A national minimum (reflecting a universally positive trend over successive months) would produce a value of 1,550. Accordingly, it can be seen that a negative trend, i.e. a rise in conflict potential, brings results into the higher end of the range during the months of March and April whereas starting and ending figures also show that tensions are high.





Conclusion

As data collection under the EWER system continues and expands as planned over the next two years to cover other (and eventually all) sub-districts, trends will undoubtedly become clearer. In the short term, however, it is hoped that this snapshot of community conflict potential may provide some empirical basis for programme and policy decision-making by Government, development partners and target communities.

As suggested in other studies, domestic and sexual abuse against women and girls was identified as the primary form of violence occurring across the nation. Reliance on traditional justice, which is reported as increasingly failing to render an agreed settlement, may be compounding the problem of unaddressed grievances. An additional factor in escalating conflict potential was the community attitude toward security actors (police and army). Despite their consistent intervention in violent incidents, monitors continue to report community anxieties around patrolling. The frequency and nature of conflicts suggests clear priorities for conflict prevention including addressing gender-based inequalities that perpetuate violence, clarifying (and communicating) equitable procedures for the determination of conflicts over land, improving community-police relations, and supporting the functioning of appropriate dispute resolution mechanisms.