

PROOF

8

Do as We Say, Not as We Do? Gender and Police Reform in Timor-Leste

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Introduction

Although more than a decade has passed since the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, mainstreaming of gender into security sector reform (SSR) policy formulation and implementation has been slow, particularly in Southeast Asia, where at the time of writing only the Philippines has drafted a National Action Plan (NAP) for implementing UNSCR 1325 (2000).¹

This chapter will look at the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into the SSR processes in Timor-Leste as well as the discrepancies between national and international actors in this respect. The country provides an interesting case study for a number of reasons: the country's security forces have only been built up relatively recently and, following a major breakdown of the security forces in 2006, the police have been undergoing a partial reform process. The country has also been host to several peacekeeping missions under the auspices of the UN, which have held complete or partial responsibility for internal and external security provision for the greater part of the period from September 1999 to December 2012. The UN missions and external bilateral actors such as Portugal and Australia have been actively involved in the SSR processes and numerous general capacity-building programs of the new national security forces.

In these processes, both national and international actors have subscribed to gender mainstreaming policies, at least on paper. The key questions of this paper are: how successful has the mainstreaming of gender into SSR processes in Timor-Leste been? What differences have

there been in this implementation between national and international actors? And, lastly, what does this reveal about how norms underlying SSR processes are (re)interpreted by local and external actors?

My focus here will be on the national and international police forces, the Timor-Leste National Police Force (PNTL – *Policía Nacional de Timor-Leste*) and the United Nations Police (UNPOL). I have left out the armed forces (F-FDTL – *Falintil-Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste*) for a number of reasons. First, unlike the PNTL, the F-FDTL was not subjected to a comprehensive SSR process after the 2006 crisis. The armed forces have instead focussed more on technical and material improvement through bilateral and multilateral training programs, in line with the general guiding principles of the “Força 2020” policy paper (Ministério da Defesa e Segurança 2007). Second, though the F-FDTL does have a relatively high percentage of women, it has little in the way of an internal or external gender policy. “Força 2020”, its main strategic paper, makes some references to human security but does not refer to gender in any way.

Similarly, I will not analyze the gender policies of the Australia–New Zealand International Stabilization Force (ISF), deployed in the country from 2006 to 2012. This military force has no gender policy of its own per se but, rather, is dependent on the gender policies of the respective defense forces. For reasons of space and practicality, I have also not examined other actors in the security sector, such as intelligence agencies, private security companies, the judiciary, the penal services or democratic oversight bodies, though these are clearly also of importance and warrant further research.

In this chapter I will first provide a brief introduction to issues of gender and SSR, with specific reference to gender relations in Timor-Leste. This will be followed by a summary and critique of SSR efforts in the country, after which I will examine more specifically the way in which gender issues have played out in the reform process of the PNTL. By way of contrast, I will then examine the consideration given to gender issues in UNPOL. I argue that gender mainstreaming has been implemented narrowly and patchily, and that, in spite of the policies and rhetoric in place among the international community, it is, in fact, the East Timorese side that has made the greater advances in gender mainstreaming. As with other aspects of SSR in Timor-Leste, such as the division of internal and external security provision between the police and armed forces, the international community’s approach seems to have been one of “do as we say, not as we do”.

Methodologically, much of the information relies on formal and informal interviews carried out with various actors in the security sector

by the author, both in Timor-Leste and by e-mail. Given the sensitivity of the topic, the interviewees will appear anonymously unless their statements have been published elsewhere. The chapter builds in part on research I carried out earlier (Myrntinen 2009) but is augmented by more recent data and an added perspective on international actors which was absent from the previous paper.

Gender and SSR

For the purposes of this chapter, I take gender to refer to the socially and culturally constructed identities, attributes, expectations, opportunities, roles and relationships associated with being female and male in a particular cultural, economic, social and temporal situation. Gender roles are learned, changeable and context- and time-specific. Often, the learning processes take place seemingly sub-consciously and start at an early age, making gender roles often seem like “natural” attributes of being female or male. Gender roles are also often both consciously and sub-consciously produced and reproduced in institutions, such as the security forces, in which members are actively and passively taught certain gendered ways or styles of performing their duties. As security sector institutions are often heavily male-dominated and security provision is often seen as a “masculine” task or duty, these institutional cultures often become “coded” as masculine.

Perceptions of security are also often gendered, for example, with boys and men in most societies being more likely to be both perpetrators and victims of armed violence, while sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is often mostly (but not exclusively) directed against women and girls.²

Although both security – especially in the sense of human security – and the security sector itself are highly gendered, it has only been in the decade after the passing of UNSCR 1325 (2000) that a growing body of academic literature has looked at issues of gender in the security sector. Much of this interest has focussed on the military and on police forces rather than other institutions such as intelligence or penal services. Increasingly, academic research has also looked at issues of gender and peacekeeping forces (PKF), including intersectionalities between gender, class, ethnicity and the performing of security work in the context of international interventions in post-conflict environments (see, for example, Helms 2006; Higate and Henry 2009; Kronsell and Svedberg 2012; Väyrynen 2004; Whitworth 2004). The gender dimensions of SSR, however, remain relatively understudied.

Key policy documents for integrating gender perspectives in SSR programs and achieving the goals of USCR 1325 include the comprehensive DCAF Gender and SSR Handbook (Bastick and Valasek 2008) and the gender awareness and equality section of the OECD DAC SSR Handbook (OECD DAC 2009). The UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has made a commitment to implement UNSCR 1235 (2000) in its programming, including increasing the number of women deployed as UNPOL and PKF and ensuring that SSR processes in which the UN is involved in are carried out in a way that takes account of the varied security needs of boys and girls, women and men (UNDPKO 2004; UNDPKO 2008; UNDPKO 2010).

As the “Gender and SSR Toolkit” (Valasek 2008, 6–10) of the DCAF Handbook argues, incorporating gender perspectives into SSR processes enhances:

- Local ownership,
- Effective service delivery by the security sector, and
- Oversight and accountability of the security sector.

In the SSR context, gender mainstreaming is understood according to Kristin Valasek (2008, 4) as follows:

Gender mainstreaming means that the impact of all SSR policies and programmes on women, men, boys and girls should be considered at every stage of the programme cycle, including assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. For example, mainstreaming gender into an SSR assessment involves including questions to identify the different insecurities faced by men, women, girls and boys.

Gender roles play a central role in processes which have the potential to increase or undermine the efficiency and professionalism of the security sector institutions. These include, for example, the divided loyalties of male members of the security forces who are also involved with male-dominated networks of loyalty, patronage and collusion within the forces (for a fuller discussion of these issues in the Timor-Leste context, see, for example, Myrntinen 2009). The ways in which the provision of security is conceptualized can also be seen as having a gendered dimension. “Hard” or “robust” security provision, e.g. through the visible deployment of military or paramilitary forces, is often rendered wittingly or unwittingly as masculine, while “soft” policing methods such

as community policing are seen as being “feminine” or “effeminate” (see also Higate and Henry 2009, 118–36).³

While the scope of UN and OECD policy papers and 1325 NAPs is relatively broad, the understanding of gender mainstreaming and its operationalization have in practice been rather narrow. The focus has tended to be solely on increasing the number of women in the particular forces, a limited degree of women’s empowerment in the forces and addressing issues of SGBV. Increasing the number of women is often an important first step, but, as will be explored below, not a sufficient one. If the increase in female officers is not flanked by changes in institutional culture and structure, the measure will remain an ineffectual “add women and stir” approach. Improving responses to SGBV both inside the security sector and in society are key components of mainstreaming gender into SSR processes, but also require a critical examination of masculine role ideals that may reproduce conditions conducive to SGBV. In general, critical examinations and discussions of institutional and personal gender role expectations within male-dominated security sector institutions, especially as far as masculine role expectations are concerned, tend to be wholly lacking from SSR processes.

Background to the security sector in Timor-Leste

The SSR processes and the international presence in Timor-Leste need to be seen in the historical context of the territory, which was a Portuguese colony for approximately 450 years (with a short but bloody Japanese intermezzo during the Second World War), followed by a hasty decolonization process, a short, bitter civil war and an Indonesian invasion in 1975. The Indonesian occupation was resisted militarily by the *Falintil* (*Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste*), flanked by a civilian resistance movement, for 24 years. In 1999, the population opted for independence in a UN-organized referendum in 1999. The extreme violence carried out by the Indonesian security forces and their Timorese militia proxies that accompanied the referendum led to the deployment of an international peacekeeping force, and the territory came under the auspices of a UN administration (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor – UNTAET) until its independence in 2002.

During the UNTAET interregnum, the remaining *Falintil* force of approximately 1900 members underwent a DDR (Demilitarization, Demobilization, and Reintegration) process. Approximately 650 former *Falintil* were recruited into the new national armed forces (F-FDTL) and around 150 were incorporated into the new national police force

(PNTL). The rest of the demobilized *Falintil* were given small financial reintegration packages and several 100 benefited from internationally funded reintegration programmes, though these were mostly short-term and ad hoc.

Animosities between, and within, the police and army came to a head in 2006, compounded by political and regional rivalries. The ensuing violence led directly to 37 deaths and the displacement of around 150,000 people, who fled into IDP (internally displaced persons) camps.⁴ A new, more robust UNPOL force under the new UN mission (United Nations Integrated Mission to Timor-Leste – UNMIT) and the Australian–New Zealand ISF took over responsibility for security provision. The PNTL was to undergo a thorough reform process. Full responsibility for policing was handed back to PNTL in March 2011 and both UNMIT and ISF were withdrawn at the end of 2012.

The demobilization of the former *Falintil* guerrillas, their partial incorporation into the new security forces and the build-up of the F-FDTL and PNTL have been well documented and critiqued.⁵ The same applies to the post-2006 police reform process, which has been repeatedly and roundly criticized by both East Timorese and international observers for a range of reasons. These have included the exclusive focus on the PNTL in the process, the ineffectuality of the SSR measures undertaken by UNMIT, a lack of cooperation and trust between international and local actors, and increasing local reluctance against perceived outside meddling, as well as the lack of strategic vision for the SSR process.⁶

A fundamental question which has not been addressed is the delineation of which security sector institution is responsible for internal and which for external security provision.⁷ The F-FDTL continues to play a visible role in internal security provision, especially through the military police, while the PNTL has been taking over external security provision roles, for example through its newly established naval arm (ICG 2013). The two forces also conduct joint internal security provision operations, following the Joint Command model, which was established as a temporary measure after the 2008 attacks on the president (Wilson 2009; ICG 2013)

The sustained critique of the SSR efforts goes to the heart of the UNMIT mission, as addressing the root causes of the implosion of the national security forces 2006 was meant to be its *raison d'être*. Given East Timorese political sensitivities, the army was exempted from the reform process and police reform was to be a nationally driven process. The Security Sector Support Unit of UNMIT was to “[...] not to engage in reform per se but to assist the national authorities ‘in conducting a

comprehensive review of the future role and needs of the security sector' (UNMIT 2011a). In the process, PNTL officers were to be vetted and those involved in crimes and misconduct in the 2006 crisis dismissed from the force. UNPOL was to mentor and train the national police, increasing its capacity and capabilities.

Between 2009 and 2011, the UN mission handed over responsibility for policing district-by-district and unit-by-unit to the PNTL. Theoretically, this meant that the respective police units had fulfilled prior benchmarks, but in practice this was not enforced. PNTL police officers (and, for that matter, F-FDTL soldiers) accused of crimes and misconduct during the 2006 crisis have been allowed to remain in service (ICG 2009 and 2010; UNMIT 2011b). With the withdrawal of the international peacekeepers at the end of 2012, the PNTL does not have the capacity to provide security across the country. The respective roles of the armed forces and police have not been clearly defined, while human rights abuses and misconduct by members of both forces remain issues of concern (ICG 2013).

Gender, SSR and the PNTL

Some of the main human security challenges faced by Timor-Leste society are closely linked to perceptions of gender roles. Although statistics on the issue are unreliable, SGBV continues to be a major security concern in the country.⁸ This is especially the case for women and girls, but, as there is little to no information about SGBV committed against men and boys due to the social taboos surrounding the issue, the extent of the latter cannot be gauged reliably.

The violence-prone activities of gangs, martial arts groups and ritual arts groups which consist almost exclusively of young men are also closely linked to local understandings of masculine role behavior, as is the involvement of older male members of the veterans' organizations.⁹ Furthermore, a number of the institutional problems faced by the security forces are also directly related to gender role perceptions.

Gender mainstreaming in the PNTL

Gender mainstreaming has not been a central focus of the SSR processes in Timor-Leste but was meant to be incorporated implicitly as a cross-cutting issue, as outlined in key UN policy documents.¹⁰ In spite of frequent references to gender-relevant UNSC (United Nations Security Council) resolutions in its policy documents, the UN-supported reform program of the PNTL did not comprehensively integrate gender

perspectives into its work, especially in terms of addressing issues of how institutional gender role expectations affect security provision. This is not a Timor-Leste-specific failure but, rather, part of the broader challenge of comprehensively addressing gender issues in SSR. Nonetheless, arguably one of the areas where there has been progress, especially within the PNTL, has been gender mainstreaming, though only with respect to increasing the number of women in the force and responses to SGBV.

Since its establishment, the PNTL has consistently had around 20 per cent female officers.¹¹ While the force obviously still does not fully reflect the demographic structure of the population, the figure is relatively high in international comparison. However, merely increasing the number of women does not automatically increase gender equity.

Women often tend to be relegated to “female-coded” positions (e.g. secretarial work, support staff), which can lead to the emergence of “gender ghettos” within the force, with women being placed mostly into clerical positions or vulnerable person’s units (VPUs) and being excluded from “masculine” positions such as the riot police or close protection units. These trends also can lead to SGBV issues being regarded as being “women’s issues” and consequently as less prestigious than the more “masculine” areas of policing, leading to less funding and support for the former (Styles-Power et al. 2008, 5–9; Myrntinen 2009, 31–3; Siapno 2009, 206–7).

Women in the PNTL have also long been confronted with a glass ceiling in terms of career advancement, as leadership positions remains largely in male hands (Myrntinen, 2009). The 2010 appointment of the country’s first woman district police commander, Natercia Martins, in Liquiçá District was, therefore, an important first step both symbolically and practically in promoting gender equity within the male-dominated leadership of the force.

Crucially for work on SGBV, a new Law on Domestic Violence (No.7/2010) was passed in 2010, which uses a broad definition of the term, including psychological violence, neglect and abuse of economic dependence. The law stipulates that both SGBV and domestic violence are public crimes, making it mandatory to report them to the police. Until the law took effect, those cases which were brought to court were handled under Indonesian laws still in effect from the time of the Indonesian occupation, though the vast majority of cases were settled out of court through traditional justice mechanisms, often to the detriment of the survivors of the violence (IRC 2003; UNFPA 2005; TLAVA 2009).¹² Based on interviews, the training given to the PNTL

on SGBV and increased public awareness seem to have improved police responses, although individual instances of SGBV cases being referred back to the informal system continue to be reported.¹³

With the help of the UN missions, various UN agencies, bilateral programs and international donors as well as, critically, the active involvement of local civil society organizations, the capacity of the police force to respond to SGBV cases has been greatly increased.¹⁴ These include the setting up of VPUs at the district level, training on responses to cases and visible campaigns against domestic and sexual violence. These training programs have included the formulation of guidelines on responding to SGBV and domestic violence cases (PNTL et al. 2010). In addition, between 2008 and 2009, 43 national police officers were trained as trainers on SGBV investigations (UN 2011).

Ireland has been actively supporting the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 in Timor-Leste, though to date this has mainly been on a policy level, involving government officials and civil society representatives in the “Cross-Learning Process of Ireland/Northern Ireland, Timor-Leste and Liberia”, in which experiences from the three rather different post-conflict environments with respect to SSR, gender mainstreaming and peace-building were exchanged (DFA 2010).

Shortcomings of the gender mainstreaming process

In spite of the advances in increasing gender equality and the capacity to address SGBV, mainstreaming of gender issues in the security sector in Timor-Leste has stopped well short of questioning male and female gender role expectations within the forces and how these impact their work. Some of the key problems within both the PNTL and F-FDTL can be seen as stemming from local conceptualizations of masculinities in general as well as of male roles in the security sector in particular. These include the strong social role of male networks of allegiance and patronage, a cavalier attitude to SGBV, and a distinct preference for “hard” security provision which has led to numerous cases of inappropriate and excessive use of force.

As in other parts of Melanesia, social constructions of masculinities in Timor-Leste are often tied to formal and informal memberships in networks of patronage and allegiance. The networks are in part linked to regional and clan membership, but also to membership in political groups, in organizations such as martial arts groups as well as networks of allegiance dating back to the resistance years.¹⁵ These can and do often compete with the allegiance of the individual to the security sector institution (see also Myrtilinen 2009, 18–19). Male-dominated networks

within the security sector institutions have also been linked to illegal practices such as smuggling and trafficking, which undermine the professionalism of the forces (Siapno 2009, 193; Fundasaun Mahein 2010).

Cases of sexual misconduct and harassment by members of the security forces both against civilians and within the security forces have not been seriously addressed (Myrntinen 2009). Disciplinary problems in the forces are also linked to behavior seen as stereotypically masculine: security force members have been involved in drunken brawls, including an incident in 2012 in which the son of the F-FDTL commander, together with some soldiers, was involved in a punch-up in a Chinese-run brothel in Dili (*Timor Post* 2012).

Both the PNTL and the F-FDTL have also tended to show a preference for “robust” policing methods, often leading to an excessive use of force, reflecting stereotypes of militarized masculinity.¹⁶ While these have been applauded especially by the security sector elites, the increasingly militarized presence of the police force has raised disquiet among the public and civil society organizations (Abdullah and Myrntinen 2009, 197–8; Asosiasaun HAK 2010; Belo 2010). The preference for “hard”, “masculine” methods has led to numerous complaints of excessive violence and human rights abuses against both forces, as well as the F-FDTL/PNTL Joint Command.¹⁷ The complaints have, however, not led to any reprimands, and both PNTL commander Monteiro and F-FDTL commander Major-General Lere Anan Timur have shown a penchant for rhetorically advocating excessive use of force.¹⁸ Men especially have also shown a tendency in public to turn their pride in their social standing as members of the police or the military into arrogance often bordering on the aggressive.¹⁹

Gender mainstreaming and UNPOL

The various UN missions in Timor-Leste have consistently stressed the importance of gender mainstreaming in their policies. UNTAET was among the first UN missions to have a Gender Affairs Unit, and subsequent UN missions have also highlighted gender issues. Nonetheless, while the PNTL has made slow but commendable progress in terms of gender mainstreaming, the same could not be said for the UNPOL presence.

All UNPOL deployed to Timor-Leste were required to attend a mandatory Gender Induction Programme (UNMIT 2010). The contents of this half-day training program were, however, rather superficial, focussing in very basic terms on increasing gender equality, responding to SGBV

and implementing a zero tolerance policy towards sexual misconduct. Deeper issues such as persistence of gender stereotypes in the police and their impacts on security provision were not problematized.²⁰

Together with the national authorities and civil society organizations, the UN missions in Timor-Leste have been successful in raising awareness of gender issues, especially with respect to SGBV. Important advances have been made in terms of increasing the PNTL's capacity to respond to cases, and the VPUs have been able to provide valuable services to survivors of violence, often thanks to the personal initiative of individuals in UNPOL. Within UNPOL, however, gender mainstreaming efforts lagged behind the rhetoric on many counts. Women were consistently heavily underrepresented in the force, and the zero tolerance policy on sexual misconduct was repeatedly flouted. Persistent gender stereotypes continued to characterize much of the work, with the formed police units (FPUs) often adopting a hypermasculine, militarized approach to police work while female UNPOL were relegated to "female-coded" tasks.²¹

In terms of numbers of female officers, the UNPOL deployed in Timor-Leste paled in comparison to the PNTL. The percentage of female community police officers in 2011, for example, was 5.6 per cent, and, when one includes the heavily male-dominated FPUs and border police units (BPUs), the number drops even further (UNMIT 2011b). UNPOL leadership was almost exclusively male.

Much of this imbalance was due to structural issues of how the UN recruits and deploys police forces.²² Most of the responsibility for the choosing and training of police officers lies with the police-contributing countries (PCCs), leading to greatly differing approaches. While some PCCs, such as India and Bangladesh, have recently deployed all-female FPUs to Haiti and Liberia, those deployed to Timor-Leste by Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan and Portugal were almost exclusively male. The PCCs sending FPUs to Timor-Leste often displayed a preference for a highly militarized style of "hard" policing. Excesses due to misplaced conceptions of "hard" police masculinity were not checked, and, despite policies favoring "softer" community policing methods, FPU responses were often marked by the use of overwhelming force. Other PCCs have been more open to using community policing approaches (see, for example, Bevan 2011) and to deploying female officers, with the contingent of the Royal Thai Police deployed in 2011 even having a majority of women officers, ten out of a total of 18 (Tansubhapol 2011).

Upon arrival in Timor-Leste, women UNPOL officers often found themselves confronted with gender stereotypes within the force. Based

on interviews, these included reluctance by contingent commanders to deploy women officers outside Dili in spite of the officers' explicit wishes, deeming the deployments "too demanding" for women. Women were often relegated to secretarial work, in spite of the officers possessing badly needed skills, training and experience, such as in criminal investigations.²³ As in the case of the PNTL, there was a tendency to see SGBV work in the VPUs as being a "women's issue", creating gender ghettos in the force. Women officers ran the risk of being regarded as merely "pretty" accessories, suited to representative office work rather than being taken seriously as competent police officers. This trend was underlined by UNPOL awarding a prize for the woman officer "with the prettiest eyes" for International Women's Day 2010.²⁴ In addition to belittling the professionalism of female officers, these pre-suppositions also led to a waste of badly needed human resources and skills.

While the majority of male UNPOL officers in Timor-Leste conducted themselves professionally, there was often a palpable sense of misplaced *laissez-faire* machismo that accompanied the UN presence. Throughout the various UN missions in Timor-Leste, male UN staff were caught frequenting brothels and were on occasion accused of sexual misconduct (see, for example, Alola Foundation 2004; Koyama and Myrntinen 2007). Although the UNMIT SRSG (Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the UN)

Atul Khare proclaimed a "zero tolerance" policy on UN staff frequenting blacklisted nightclubs and brothels, this was only loosely enforced, and UNPOL officers repeatedly frequented blacklisted venues with no disciplinary consequences for those involved.²⁵ Alcohol-fuelled fights between UNPOL and East Timorese security force members in bars and nightclubs were also not uncommon, at times escalating into outright fire fights. These became serious and frequent enough in 2009 for the US Embassy to issue a special security warning to its citizens to avoid bars frequented by UNPOL (US Embassy 2009).

Discussion

Gender issues played an ambivalent role in the SSR support given by the UN to the PNTL. They were referred to repeatedly, almost ritualistically, on the policy side, yet were often mostly seen as an add-on compared with the "bigger issues" such as the delineation of the respective roles of the police and armed forces, the vetting of officers or the timetable of the handover of policing to the PNTL.

Nonetheless, gender mainstreaming is perhaps one of the areas where the SSR process yielded more results than in other fields. Much of this has been due to the actors outside the system, such as civil society organizations, as well as the personal (rather than institutional) dedication of individuals within both the PNTL and the UN system, who have pushed the issue beyond mere rhetoric. Though much of the rhetoric demanding gender mainstreaming came from the international side, the international security presence made less progress than the East Timorese side in this respect. As with other aspects of SSR in Timor-Leste, such as delineating military and police duties, it can be seen as having been a case of “do as we say, not as we do”.

Gender mainstreaming in the PNTL has mostly concentrated on maintaining and increasing the number of female police officers and enhancing their advancement possibilities as well as improving SGBV response. In spite of these advances, gender remains a pertinent issue for both the PNTL and UNPOL. Dominant and arguably misplaced understandings of appropriate gender roles continue to play a major role in a number of the key problems in both forces. In the PNTL, male networks of patronage undermine the efficacy and neutrality of the security sector institutions. In UNPOL, highly qualified women are relegated to minor secretarial positions, while “real” policing is taken over by male colleagues. “Cockfights” continue to erupt in the nightclubs of Dili between intoxicated male members of security forces. The “hard” (or “masculine”-coded) policing methods favored by a number of the UNPOL FPU and PNTL units have led to a number of abuses and often diminished, rather than enhanced, local feelings of security. Circumvention of the UNMIT “zero tolerance” policy by UNPOL was more or less an open secret, fostering an institutional culture of impunity with respect to sexual misconduct. The same applies to a large degree to disciplinary issues within the East Timorese security forces. Though the senior political leadership of both Timor-Leste and UNMIT were visibly outspoken on gender issues,²⁶ at the operational level gender issues tended to be seen narrowly as women’s issues and, as such, secondary to “real” SSR questions.

Many of these problems can be traced back to the narrow understanding of gender in the SSR processes. If the question of gender is framed, as it has been in Timor-Leste to date, as merely pertaining to adding more women to the force and combating SGBV (as important as these objectives are), deeper, underlying issues linked to institutionalized understandings of gender roles are left untouched. As the example

of Timor-Leste shows, these gendered conceptualizations can often also become highly counterproductive for security provision.

If the UN gender mainstreaming rhetoric of the policy level is to be taken seriously on the ground, concrete measures will need to be implemented on the operational level. Fundamental issues of gender role expectations, both in the host society and within UNPOL, need to be addressed both in the gender trainings given and in the daily work of the force. The few women who have been deployed often find themselves relegated to tasks not in line with their training. In part, these shortcomings may be due to a reluctance within the UN system to address issues which are seen as being culturally or politically sensitive. There has, however, been a lack of political leadership in the UNMIT mission to address breaches of internal zero tolerance policies or to change gendered perceptions of appropriate policing methods and roles for female and male UNPOL officers.

The advances in terms of gender mainstreaming have also been made possible due to major attitudinal changes in East Timorese society. While, apart from dedicated individuals, both the national and international security sector institutions have struggled with the fundamental challenges posed by taking masculinities and femininities seriously in gender mainstreaming, large parts of society have advanced further. The degree to which local perceptions of gender norms and of the traditionally heavily male-dominated security sector have changed were visible in mid-2012, when the line-up of the new cabinet of Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão was announced. Not soon after, the local newspaper *Tempo Semanal* reported that President Taur Matan Ruak, the respected former head of the F-FDTL, had allegedly refused to accept the appointment of Maria Domingas Fernandes Alves as defense minister on the basis that she is a woman. While the details remained unclear and Maria Alves in the end refused to join the cabinet, the possibility of gender-based discrimination kicked off a wave of indignation and harsh criticism of the president from political, civil society and media commentators (Gunter 2012). Civil society has been repeatedly highly critical of the heavy-handed, “masculine” policing tactics of the PNTL and UNPOL, and the criminalization of SGBV is widely accepted socially – although the definition of what the term covers may vary significantly.

In spite of all its shortcomings, the experiences of gender mainstreaming in the SSR processes in Timor-Leste also offer positive lessons. Much of the progress in terms of increasing the number of women in the security sector and putting SGBV firmly on the agenda has been thanks

to informal coalitions involving national authorities, the UN missions and agencies, civil society, academics and international donor agencies. The advances have been achieved through changed local perceptions of gender-based and domestic violence, of the acceptance of women in security sector institutions and forms of security provision. While the often harsh critique of the UN's SSR efforts is well founded, it is important not to lose sight of these positive impacts and to see how these can be built upon in Timor-Leste following the end of the global organization's 13-year presence.

Notes

1. At the time of writing, 41 countries had developed NAPs, including 23 in Europe and 11 in Africa. The only other Asian countries with NAPs are Kyrgyzstan and Nepal (Peacewomen 2013).
2. For the purposes of this chapter, I will rely on the definition given by Jeanne Ward (2002, 8–9): “Gender-based violence is an umbrella term for any harm that is perpetrated against a person's will; that has a negative impact on the physical or psychological health, development, and identity of the person; and that is the result of gendered power inequities that exploit distinctions between males and females, among males, and among females.”
3. A revealing quote in this respect is a comment by an UNPOL officer deployed in Timor-Leste and quoted by Bevan (2011): “We are supposed to do community policing now but nobody really likes that because community policing is kind of gay.”
4. For a comprehensive summary of the events of 2006, see UN (2006). In total, an estimated 200 people died in the violence which persisted, at a low level, for the next two years, especially in the capital Dili.
5. See, for example, Hood (2006); Mobekk (2003); Rees (2004); and Roll (2011).
6. Post-2006 critiques include, for example, Della-Giacoma (2009); Funaki (2009); ICG (2008, 2009 and 2010); Lothe and Peake (2010); Peake (2009); Pinto (2009); and Wilson (2008). Many of the structural, political and conceptual shortcomings were, however, already pointed out in earlier, pre-crisis reports such as Hood (2006); Mobekk (2003); and Rees (2004).
7. The question of the responsibility for internal and external security provision has plagued relations between the F-FDTL and PNTL since they were established. In spite of the international critique of the lack of a clear division, the peacekeeping forces themselves often mixed the two in practice, with military contingents engaging in what were essentially police activities and vice versa.
8. SGBV is generally estimated as making up between 30 and 40 per cent of the crimes reported to the PNTL (Myrntinen 2009). An underlying problem in addressing SGBV issues in Timor-Leste lies in the issue of conceptualizing what falls under this category. In Tetum usage, SGBV tends to be translated into *violénsia doméstika* (domestic violence) and *violénsia seksuál* (sexual violence). What is considered, in Western legal conceptualizations, to fall under SGBV may or may not be covered by these local understandings, and vice

versa. In previous field research (Myrntinen et al. 2010), for example, domestic physical violence beneath the threshold of “blood flowing” was often not seen as falling into the category of *violência doméstica*, while consensual sexual relationships between unmarried adults were regarded within some of the communities canvassed as constituting *violência sexual* (see also IRC 2003).

9. For SGBV, see, for example, TLAVA (2009) and UNFPA (2005), and for the gangs, martial arts groups and ritual arts groups, see, for example, Myrntinen (2010), Scambary et al. (2006) and Muggah (2010).
10. UNSCR 1969 (2011), for example, which extended the UNMIT mandate: “Requests UNMIT to fully take into account gender considerations as set out in Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) as a cross-cutting issue throughout its mandate, stressing the importance of strengthening the responsiveness of the security sector to specific needs of women . . .”
11. The percentage in May 2011 was 18.8 per cent, or 653 officers out of a total force strength of 3466 officers (PNTL 2011).
12. Based on initial findings from field research (Myrntinen et al. 2010) and interviews by the author in 2011 and 2012, the various measures have led to increased awareness of SGBV issues in both urban and rural areas, including seeing SGBV and domestic violence as a crime. Nonetheless, a large number of cases would seem to be settled through traditional methods, especially in cases of domestic violence which are seen as being below the threshold of a crime.
13. Author’s interviews, Dili and Liquiçá District, 2010 and 2011.
14. These collaborative efforts have involved the PNTL, the Timor-Leste Police Development Program (TLPDP) of the Australian Federal Police, UNPOL, UN agencies (especially UNFPA and UN Women) and local and international NGOs.
15. These links may be either formalized, e.g. through membership in a veterans’ organization or martial/ritual arts group, or informal.
16. While it is difficult to establish a direct, causal link, the “hard” policing methods of the PNTL reflect and emulate both the methods used by the Indonesian paramilitary *Brigade Mobil* (Brimob) police force and the highly visible Portuguese FPU of UNMIT, the *Guarda Nacional Republicana* (GNR). East Timorese civilians routinely refer to the PNTL riot control units as *Brimob*, a somewhat unflattering comparison given the latter’s involvement in massive human rights abuses during the Indonesian occupation.
17. These include, for example, the killing of the popular musician Baldir Lebre “Kuka” Correia on 28 December 2009 by the PNTL (*Timor Post*, 2010), the apparently unprovoked beating-up of a youth on Atauro Island by PNTL, which was witnessed by UNPOL officers (Callinan 2010), a range of alleged abuses during an operation against “ninjas” in Bobonaro and Covalima districts (Asosiasaun HAK 2010) and alleged abuses by the Joint Command (UNMIT 2008) as well as excessive force used in *Operasaun 88* in Quelicai (ICG 2013).
18. For example, during the 2012 parliamentary and presidential elections, both commanders stated that anyone disturbing the electoral process would be shot on sight (Fundasaun Mahein 2012; *Jornal Independente* 2012), while

Maj.-Gen. Lere in early 2013 threatened the country's restive youth with physical abuse and extra-legal detention "now that the UN no longer confuses our minds with human rights" (East Timor Law and Justice Bulletin 2013).

19. Author's observations.
20. Author's interviews with course attendees and UNPOL, Dili, 2010 and 2011.
21. Author's interviews with UNPOL, Dili, 2010 and 2011.
22. Other structural issues include high turnover rates of police officers, unequal levels of skills and training, and different understandings of gender issues.
23. Criminal investigations skills are an area in which PNTL would need major assistance and capacity-building, yet female officers with these skills have found themselves working as UNPOL car pool attendants and secretaries to UNPOL commanders instead. Author's interviews, Dili, 2010 and 2011.
24. Personal communication by the author.
25. Author's observations and interviews, Dili, 2009 and 2010.
26. For example, the president, prime minister, speaker of parliament and the acting SRSG at the time participated in an awareness-raising campaign against domestic violence in 2008.

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