



Women in the PNTL: Initiatives, Successes and Challenges

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Introduction

The National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL) was established on 27 March 2000. Since the PNTL was established in Timor-Leste, women have worked to exert their rights to work equally towards the development of the nation. According to FM's monitoring, lots of women have dedicated themselves to upholding law and order and guaranteeing peace and stability by serving in the PNTL.

Female participation in the reconstruction process of the nation through participation in the PNTL has been significant. FM believes that female leaders in the PNTL are to thank for a range of institutional accomplishments. The successes they have achieved and initiatives they have sought have been positive impacts that have helped to ensure peace and stability in communities across Timor-Leste.

The PNTL Commander of Liquica district, superintendent Natersia Eufrasia Martins, serves as one example of this success. Superintendent Martins worked with development partners, NGO's, community leaders, and the community of Liquica to initiate a Volunteer Security (VS) service in her district. The VS has been successful and now serves as a model other districts aim to replicate in initiating community policing for conflict prevention.

Despite the impact women have had, their efforts have yet to receive any significant attention from the government. According to FM's monitoring, women in the PNTL face some challenges. Oftentimes, it is harder for women to voice their ideas, and when they do those ideas may not receive the same consideration as ideas from their male counterparts. In addition, some women who hold positions of authority lack the power to make decisions, instead being expected to simply obey the policies and ideas raised by men.¹

This report focuses on women in the security sector, particularly within the institution of the PNTL. FM's analysis focuses on the initiatives and successes of female leadership, as well as the challenges they face within the institution of PNTL. Information used in the creation of this report was gained from interviews conducted with women in the PNTL, PNTL superior officers, as well as collecting information from relevant institutional reports or sources. FM used a method called "Security Sector Discussions" to gather information.

Women in the PNTL

Data from the PNTL suggests that the number of PNTL members, and female members in particular, is increasing. Currently there are around 593 women in the PNTL across the 13 districts. According to the figures, around 148 women in the PNTL hold a specific position or posting of authority, while 445 women do not hold a specific posting.²

¹ Interview With Source of the PNTL Females Within the PNTL General Commander. Wednesday 19 August 2013

² Datas From The National Human Resource Department of, PNTL. Thursday, 22 August 2013

Women in the PNTL According to Rank and Position Assignment - 2013

No.	Rank	Holds Position	No Position	Total
1	Commissioner	0	0	0
2	Chief Superintendent	0	0	0
3	Superintendent	1	0	1
4	Assistant Superintendent	1	0	1
5	Chief Inspector	3	0	3
6	Inspector	6	7	13
7	Assistant Inspector	9	6	15
8	Chief Sergeant	8	25	33
9	First Sergeant	6	3	9
10	Sergeant	28	112	140
11	Chief Agent	58	220	278
12	Principal Agent	27	44	71
13	Agent	1	28	29
	Total	148	445	593

Source: The National Human Resource Department of PNTL, 22 August 2013

Data accessed by FM reveals that 148 women in the PNTL hold a designated position/posting, although the data does not indicate the details of what specific positions these women hold.³ According to the hierarchy of position categories,⁴ there are currently only two women in the PNTL who occupy a position categorized as “superior official”. These two women hold posts of superintendent and assistant superintendent, respectively.

Based on the information provided in the table above, out of the 593 women in the PNTL, there are only two women who hold an “official superior rank”, one of whom holds a very important position within the PNTL’s command structure based on Chapter II of the organic structure, session I, article 9 of the PNTL regulations.⁵ Those numbers pale in comparison to the 56 men in the PNTL who hold “official superior rankings”.⁶

The following table shows the two highest-ranking women in the PNTL, each of whom also holds a specific position:

³ Until this report published FM has not accessed yet the data refers from the PNTL commander even FM had sent a letter to the PNTL general commander and it has no response yet..

⁴ Decree Law No. 16 /2009 18 March. A Regime Promotion of the National Police of Timor-Leste’s

⁵ Decree Law No. 09/2009, 18 February, the Organic Law of the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL)

⁶ Datas of the National Human Resource Department. Information System of PNTL. Thursday, 22 August 2013

Superior Officials: PNTL Women- 2013⁷

No.	Name	Rank	Position	Total
1.	Natercia Soares Martins	Superintendent	Liquica District Commander	1
2.	Umbelina Soares	Assistant Superintendent	Chief Section of Gender Equality of PNTL	1
Total				2

Sorce: The National Human Resource Departement – PNTL, 22 Augsut 2013

Initiative of Female leadership in the PNTL

Since assuming her position as Liquisa District Commander, superintendent Natércia Soares Martins has shown great initiative and capacity in her leadership. She has cooperated with development partners, NGO's community leaders, and community members from Liquica to establish a Volunteer Security (VS) program in the district. The program has been implemented effectively, and serves as a model of successful community policing for other districts to follow.⁸

Liquica district has been implementing the VS community policing program since 2009. The aim of the program is to enable the community to protect itself and gather information, in hopes of creating a safe and peaceful environment. The program aims to have at least two VS members in each village (one man and one women), as well as the involvement of community leaders in the village.

PNTL action to curb domestic violence in Liquica district has been effective, presumably partly resulting from the fact that the district commander is a women who has prioritized a zero-tolerance policy against domestic violence. Superintendent Martins has stated that the rate of domestic violence cases in Liquica district has declined since she assumed command of the district.⁹

Superintendent Martins has emphasized the importance of combating domestic violence since she assumed her position in 2010. One case that occurred soon after Martins began her position concerned a PNTL officer involved in a domestic violence case. Martins investigated the matter after a wife of the officer in question approached her. In addition to being vigilant herself, Superintendent Martins reinforces the importance of protecting women's rights every day during morning ceremonies at the PNTL station in Liquica. She also emphasizes that as a women in command of her station, she would not tolerate the abuse of her colleagues by men.

Liquica district commander Natercia also makes monthly visits to the sub-districts of Bazartete, Maubara and Liquica town in order to observe the situation "on the ground". During her visits, she conducts meeting with community groups, and informs them that domestic violence is now a crime by law. Commander Martins also looks for influential leaders, especially young or old women, to

⁷ PNTL Human Resource, the Information System – PSAD 2011

⁸ Martins, Natercia (2013). Liquica District Commander. Private Interview

⁹ Martins, Natercia (2013). Liquica District Commander. Private Interview

cooperate with the VS in their village. Through her visits, she also seeks to inform women that if they face any domestic violence or know anyone who is a victim, they should report the case to the PNTL.

Commander Martins makes it a priority to involve herself in discussions with all groups (women's groups and others) in the villages and sub-districts. She has urged women to increase their involvement in the VS program, in hopes that at least one woman will be a part of VS in each village. Martins hopes that the presence of women in the VS will encourage women to report cases of domestic violence.

Commander Martins also works with NGO's to empower women's rights at the national level. To achieve this, she cooperates with the Secretary of State for Equality Promotion, to share information about domestic violence laws. Her involvement is crucial to spreading the word about the importance of women's involvement in national development. Martins also facilitated the transportation of women from the districts into Dili to participate in seminars discussing gender issues. These women were then encouraged to share the information they learned from the seminar in Dili with other women back in their home village. Martins' overarching goal is to increase the knowledge to enable them to recognize all forms of domestic violence, and to build their capacity to respond to it and prevent it using legal frameworks.¹⁰

Although these efforts have received no political or funding support from the central government, community members have sustained these activities through their grassroots movement. The success of this initiative can serve as a model for the prevention of not only domestic violence cases, but for all forms of conflict prevention, including assault and other areas.

Challenges for Women in the PNTL

Women in the PNTL, including officers and those holding high positions, sometimes face challenges based on their gender. These challenges often undermine their authority and ability to make decisions or give orders.

The PNTL's Chief of Gender Equality and the assistant to Superintendent Umbelina Soares stated:

"My position is the Chief of Gender Equality, but I do not attend the meetings of the PNTL superior council, as PNTL law does not permit it. Sometimes, females in the PNTL do not have equal access to state equipment, and priority is given to male members of the PNTL instead. The men in power in the PNTL fail to adequately acknowledge gender inequality. When training or workshop sessions to discuss this issue are organized, men do not participate well. They come and make comments in opening ceremonies, but do not really want the headache of eliminating the problems faced by women in the PNTL.

Another issue is the lack of transparency in the PNTL promotion process, which makes it easier for women to be discriminated against in the promotion process. Sometimes women who score high on the exam are not promoted, while those who scored poorly did get

¹⁰ Martins, Natercia (2013). Liquica District Commander. Private Interview

*promoted, and the promotion council did not provide any explanation for why women with high scores failed to gain promotion”.*¹¹

Another challenge women face in the PNTL is the marginalization of their voice and influence. The ideas put forth by women often do not receive the same attention or consideration put forth by men. As a result, many women in the PNTL have given up and simply keep quiet and go along with the decisions made by male PNTL members, even if they disagree. Sometimes women are even afraid to voice their opinion, even when they know it is correct.¹²

Another challenge faced by women is the lack of attention they receive from men in the PNTL. The constant challenges they face may have a negative impact on their psychology, as men constantly hold more power. Females in the PNTL have become a second option inside the organization, rendering them less capable for management and superior administration positions.

Security initiatives that have been successful in conflict prevention efforts have usually come from the grassroots and community level. One example has been the success of the “missed call” system established under Commanders Natercia’s leadership in the implementation of the VS. The missed call system allows for community members to call their local PNTL office to report emergencies or other incidents free of charge. In the system, community members call a designated number and the call is not picked up. The PNTL will then immediately call the community member back, and they can report their reason for calling. Under the VS, this system has been used in Liquica to report and prevent assaults, domestic violence, and other incidents that arise. According to FM’s observations, this initiative has been implemented successfully to prevent conflict at the community level.¹³

Summary of Recommendations

1. Recommend to SEPI and Rede Feto, as advocates of gender equality in Timor-Leste, to pay closer attention to the situation of women in the security and defense sectors. Ensuring that women in these sectors are capable and equally is not only important for gender equality, but will also help to ensure that violence and other forms of abuse against women are stopped.
2. Recommend to SEPI to provide more training on gender equality within security institutions, particularly within the PNTL, as well as conducting observation and analyses about the implementation of gender equality.
3. Recommend to the Secretary of State for Security to provide women in the PNTL with increased training and support through the establishment of formal and non-formal

¹¹ Soares Umbelina, (2013). Chief Section of Genders Equality of PNTL. Private Interview.

¹² Interview With Source of the PNTL Females Within the PNTL General Commander. Wednesday 19 August 201

¹³ Martins, Natercia (2013). Liquica District Commander. Private Interview

education programs, as well as providing scholarships for women with minimal educational backgrounds to make them more effective members and possibly decision makers within the PNTL.

4. Recommend to the Ministry of Defense and Security, through the Council of Ministers, to revise decree law No. 09/2009 of the PNTL organic law by establishing an office of gender equality within the PNTL to advocate and work to ensure gender equality in the institution.
5. Recommend to Parliament Committee B and Gender Parliamentary Groups to monitor the issue of gender equality within security sector institutions, and use observations to formulate recommendations to the government to improve gender equality within security sector institutions.
6. Recommend to the Secretary of State for Security to provide political and funding support for community policing activities, such as the Volunteer Security program in Liquica which showcases female leadership in the PTNL.

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