



**Fundasaun Mahein (FM), 31 July 2018**

## **Press Release**

### **The Impact of Migration on Timor-Leste and its Security Sector**

Since independence, Timor-Leste has experienced an influx of regular and irregular migrants, working primarily in the construction, service and commerce sectors. This has been due to both a lack of skilled human resources and a dollar-based economy, combined with an extensive frontier with the Republic of Indonesia (RI), which has made the monitoring and regulation of migration difficult.

The purpose of this report by Fundasaun Mahein (FM) is to determine migration flows into Timor-Leste, the impacts of this on Timor-Leste's development and security, and how effective security actors have been in addressing this on both an operational level and through legislation and policy. The impacts of migration that are most of concern for the Timor-Leste security sector are twofold.

Firstly, there is a perception of competition between local and migrant workers in urban environments, with young Timorese workers and graduates facing strong competition in a labour market that calls upon significant skilled human resources from migrant workers. The potential danger in this is that such competition may become a driver for conflict due to the horizontal inequality this creates between local and migrant workers, especially when considering Timor-Leste's youth bulge and high levels of youth unemployment. Secondly, there is the issue of trafficking in persons for forced labour and sex work, with Timor-Leste being a source and destination country as well as experiencing internal trafficking in persons.

Migration Legislation passed in 2017 does provide for greater clarity on visa entry conditions towards regulating migration more effectively yet has not been fully implemented. Doing so will require greater coordination between the Migration Service, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and the Secretariat of State of Professional Training and Employment. There is also currently an absence of policy to guide this process.

Counter-trafficking Legislation passed in 2017 provides stronger mechanisms with which to Prevent and Combat trafficking in persons, complemented by a comprehensive National Action Plan against Human Trafficking. To be more effective however, an adjusted interdiction model is required. This would need to leverage the surveillance capacity of regional neighbours for monitoring of Timorese waters and terrestrial frontiers, see increased cross-border cooperation with the Republic of Indonesia and wider socialisations of security actors and communities towards building awareness and resilience against trafficking in persons.

## **Recommendations**

1. A refocus of the Education system towards generating graduates with practical working skills to reduce reliance on skilled migrant workers and provide greater employment opportunities for Timorese nationals.
2. Alteration of the current interdiction model for counter-trafficking to include increased intelligence-sharing arrangements to leverage the surveillance capacity of regional neighbours for monitoring of Timorese waters and terrestrial frontiers, cross-border and cross-agency cooperation with the Republic of Indonesia, socialisations of security actors and communities towards building awareness and resilience against trafficking in persons.
3. Provision of Government funding for Human Trafficking Working Group stakeholders focusing on prevention to enable greater community engagement and resilience.
4. Socialisations of current legislation on migration for Timorese nationals and the international community in Timor-Leste, towards effective implementation of this legislation.
5. An efficient and transparent process for applying from outside of Timor for a Work Visa, a Visa to Establish Permanent Residence (which is the precursor to a Residence Permit), a Research Visa, a Volunteer Visa etc. outside of Timor-Leste should be made available as soon as possible so that migrants are not obliged to start their work in Timor illegally. Until this is in place, migrants who have submitted an application for a non-tourism visa should not be required to renew tourism visas, in order to properly clarify the number of migrant workers in Timor-Leste and avoid the continuing use of Tourist Visas for work purposes.
6. A Working Group is established between Migration Service, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and the Secretariat of State of Professional Training and Employment, to develop migrations policy and enhance coordination regarding Visa applications, issuing and monitoring
7. The Migration Service, as a minimum and as a matter of urgency, provides full information on which foreign nationals may be denied entry in Timor-Leste and why, on the Migration website and directly to Embassies of affected countries.
8. Tourist Visas on arrival to include 1, 2 and 3-month Visas, in order to facilitate more accessible tourism and decrease the bureaucratic process for visa extensions.

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