

GENDER EQUALITY PROMOTION

- UNTAET established the first ever functioning *Gender Affairs Unit* in a Peacekeeping Mission, which focuses on raising awareness on promoting gender equality in policies, programmes and legislation of the East Timor Transitional Administration. Specific gender orientation sessions have also been conducted for the Peacekeeping Forces, Civilian Police and East Timor Police Service, on cultural awareness of gender roles and the different impact of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction on the women and men of East Timor.
- The basic foundation for incorporating gender into the policies of a mission with as broad a mandate of UNTAET is an understanding of the gender situation of East Timor. Like women in most societies, East Timorese women have traditionally had less access than East Timorese men to resources, opportunities and decision-making. UNTAET has made efforts to understand the overarching patterns of inequality and develop ideas and strategies to overcome entrenched barriers to equality.
- Following the elections of August 2001 and the establishment of the final transitional phase of the government, the Gender Affairs Unit became the office of the *Advisor for the Promotion of Equality*, located within the Office of the Chief Minister, headed by Maria Domingas Fernandes (Micato) former director of women's NGO Fokupers, and an independent political candidate who ran on the platform of equal rights for women.

East Timorese Women in Decision-making

- In **East Timor**, the Constituent Assembly elections were held on 30 August 2001. The people of East Timor chose 88 members: 75 at the national level and 13 at the district level (one representative for each district). Sixteen political parties were registered at the national level whose lists comprised **991 candidates, 268 of whom were women representing 27 per cent of the total**. Sixteen political parties and five national independent candidates were registered. **Three of the independent candidates were women** elected by representatives of the East Timorese Women's Network (REDE), an umbrella organisation encompassing fifteen women's NGOs and women's groups. At the district level in addition to the representatives of political parties, eleven independent candidates were registered three of whom were women.
- In order to ensure that the women of east Timor had a voice in the political process leading up to the 30 August elections last year, and were represented in the Constituent Assembly, the Gender Affairs Unit in conjunction with the United Nations development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), **conducted training workshops for 150 potential women candidates**, with participants from every district, and representative of all major political parties as well as Civil Society Organisations.



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- Following the results of the elections, **a new East Timorese government was announced** on 15 September 2001 composed of eleven ministers and a Chief minister. **Two women were appointed to the ministerial portfolios of Justice and Finance** while a third was given the position for Vice-minister for Internal Administration. Two women Advisers were appointed in the Office of the Chief Minister, one for the Promotion of Equality, the other for Human Rights. The outcome of the elections produced **a remarkable 27% return of women to the Constituent Assembly**, one of the highest in the Asia-Pacific region.

Women and the Constitution

- **Constitutional Commissions** were established to consult with the East Timorese people on the future constitution and **at least 40 percent of the Commissioners were women**. The constitutional consultation process was implemented in a participatory manner and Commissioners made special efforts to encourage women to participate, including holding special hearings for women. The **Independent Electoral Commission (IEC)** formed a *gender equity working group* and took concrete actions to ensure that women fully participate in the process, not only as candidates and voters, but also as electoral administrators.
- A working group on **Women and the Constitution**, composed of several civil society organisations was formed and, in consultation with the Gender Affairs Unit, organised consultations with women's groups all over the country on basic issues affecting women in East Timor. At the end of this process a **Women's Charter of Rights in East Timor was agreed upon, with eight thousand signatures** collected mostly from women all over the country supporting the Charter. The Charter was presented to the SRSG, Sergio Vieira de Mello, on 25 September 2001 by representatives of the Working Group and was later presented to the Members of the Constituent Assembly.
- Due to the raising of public consciousness around gender equality and non-discrimination, the resulting **Constitution of East Timor**, has among the fundamental objectives of the State ***To promote and guarantee the effective equality of opportunities between women and men and the principle of non-discrimination on grounds of gender is a fundamental principle***. Equality between women and men is included with *Women and men shall have the same rights and duties in all areas of family life and political, economic, social, cultural*. It also states that *marriage shall be based upon free consent by the parties and on terms of full equality of rights between spouses, in accordance with the law*. Maternity leave for working women is upheld, *without loss of remuneration or any other benefits, in accordance with the law*, and *Every citizen, regardless of gender, has the right and the duty to work and to choose freely his or her profession*. In the area of political life, the Constitution upholds *Direct and active participation by men and women in political life is a requirement of, and a fundamental instrument for consolidating, the democratic system. The law shall promote equality in the exercise of civil and political rights and non-discrimination on the basis of gender for access to political positions*.



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Campaign Against Domestic Violence

- With Peace Support Operations becoming increasingly responsible for development of civil justice systems and policing, one of the key issues that needs to be addressed in post-conflict reconstruction is that of domestic violence which is exacerbated by the “culture of violence” and militarisation. *The cycle of violence, intimidation and discrimination of the past, has come to an end, giving way to an environment of stability that will allow a political and economic cohesion in our country. But for this cohesion to be truly achieved, we must nonetheless face a new battle - the eradication of domestic violence within and outside our own homes.* (Maria Domingas Fernandes, **Advisor to the Chief Minister for Promotion of Equality**).
- In East Timor, in December 2001 alone, **a record 40 percent of all reported crimes were offences against women.** They included crimes such as domestic abuse, rape, attempted rape and sexual assault, making violence against women being the number one reported crime in that month. CivPol further says that while 382 cases of domestic violence were reported last year, it was just the tip of the iceberg as the figure is believed to represent only 15 percent of total cases.
- UNTAET has launched a nation-wide campaign to address the issue of domestic violence. Support has been given at the highest levels by the both the SRSG and Deputy SRSG, the Chief Minister and Justice Minister, CivPol Commissioner and the East Timor Police Service (ETPS), and the Advisor for the Promotion of Equality. Initiated by UNTAET’s Office of Communication and Public Information (OCPI), the campaign aims to raise awareness on how to prevent domestic violence and inform victims about where they can seek help. Posters and public service announcements have been produced and the message that violence is unacceptable is being disseminated through Radio, TV and various publications.

