

By UNMISSET Spokesperson's Office

Dili, 31 October 2002

NINE UNDERGO COMMUNITY RECONCILIATION HEARINGS IN VIQUQUE

The Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) held community hearings yesterday in Lakluta, Viqueque District for nine perpetrators of crimes there in 1999.

The reconciliation hearings are one step in the "Community Reconciliation Process." The first step is for the perpetrator of the crime or other harmful acts – other than serious crimes – to first voluntarily make a formal statement of his wrong-doing. The Office of the Prosecutor General then makes a decision whether it is appropriate, given the nature of the crime, for the perpetrator to meet with the community as a part of the reconciliation process.

Approximately 200 members of the community were present for yesterday's hearings in Viqueque, including village chiefs and a CAVR Regional Commissioner.

The nine perpetrators read statements to the gathering in which they admitted to having committed assaults or to having been present at the time houses were destroyed in 1999. Some of the nine perpetrators apologised and expressed remorse for their actions.

The victims and community members were then given the opportunity to respond to the perpetrators' statements and to suggest acts of reconciliation the perpetrators might make to repay the community for their crimes.

The Viqueque gathering eventually agreed that the nine perpetrators should spend one month voluntarily renovating the Lakluta Church.

Once a perpetrator has gone through the Community Reconciliation Process -- including making a statement of guilt, going before the community where the crime occurred and performing an act of reconciliation, such as community service – he is then immune from prosecution for the crime he has admitted.

The CAVR has now organized reconciliation gatherings for 11 perpetrators since the first was held in Liquica in August 2002.

SPECIAL TRAINING FOR TIMOR-LESTE POLICE UNIT

An eight-day, intensive course to combat domestic violence began yesterday in Dili for members of the Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU) of the Timor-Leste Police Service (TLPS). The course is a follow-up on training Unit members received in August 2002.



MEDIA BRIEFING NOTE

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One aspect of the police training focuses on the legal system and human rights in Timor-Leste with inputs being provided by UNMISSET's Human Rights Unit, the Prosecutor's Office and the Judiciary.

The eight-day course is a joint collaboration between the United Nations Police (UNPOL), the Vulnerable Persons Unit and UNFPA.

