

## **XI. Timor Leste - UDF-TIM-07-186-3964 - *Enhancing Women's Role in Timor Leste Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Nation Building***

### **i. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT**

#### **a. The project**

The project *Enhancing Women's Role in Timor Leste Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Nation Building* was implemented in Timor Leste by Rede Feto Timor-Leste from October 2008 to December 2010 and included a 3-month no cost extension. The project had a total budget of US\$261,000 with a remaining balance of US \$20,262.56.

The project's goal is to enhance women's political empowerment at local level through enhancing women's participation in the *suco* (village) council election, which was held in 2009. The project, which was implemented in four districts<sup>1</sup>: Oecussi, Ermera, Viqueque, and Lautem<sup>2</sup>, viewed the *suco* council election as a strategic opportunity to strengthen women's role in post-conflict nation building and to incorporate a gender responsive reconstruction agenda at local level. The implementing agency, Rede Feto, sought to achieve this goal through a comprehensive set of strategies, including advocacy for gender responsive local electoral law, capacity building for women candidates, awareness raising activities for voters, and promotion of gender responsive policy platforms in campaigns. After the election the project focused on supporting a gender responsive local development agenda through capacity building of elected women *suco* councilors to participate fully in local governance, as well as accountability mechanisms to ensure the implementation of gender responsive local development plans. It also stresses the need for networking and encourages dialogue between elected women at national and *suco* levels.

#### **b. Evaluation objectives and methodology**

The evaluation process has been guided by the 2009 Memorandum of Understanding between UNDEF and UNIFEM and is in compliance with UNDEF evaluation guidelines, as well as UN Women Evaluation Policy and Guidelines, developed for the first round of UNDEF projects, and the UN Evaluation Group Norms (Standards for Evaluation in the UN system). According to the 2009 Memorandum of Understanding, UNIFEM will carry out a coherent thematic gender evaluation of the nine UNIFEM-executed UNDEF Round II Projects. The evaluation has four main objectives:

- to analyze the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in UNDEF project strategies and approaches and the impact on women's human rights;
- to capture more systematically the contributions made by UNDEF projects on enhancing engendered democratic governance;
- to assess and validate UNIFEM's contribution to UNDEF's primary purpose of supporting democratization around the world;
- to inform, develop and further refine UNDEF and UN Women's strategic and funding priorities regarding gender and governance and thus support efforts to generate and disseminate lessons and results on gender and democratic governance interventions.

The evaluation methodology is set out in the 2009 Memorandum of Understanding between UNDEF and UNIFEM, according to which the evaluation was conducted in two stages: scoping study

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<sup>1</sup> These four districts were identified due to high gender disparities in the area of education and health, high levels of sexual and gender-based violence, in particular domestic violence cases and limited access to formal justice system and women relying on the traditional justice system.

<sup>2</sup> There are 52 *sucos* in Emera, 34 in Lautem, 18 in Oecussi and 35 in Viqueque.

undertaken by the evaluator to analyze the nine UNIFEM-executed Round II project designs and create tailored guidelines/frameworks to ensure the success of the projects and end-line evaluation undertaken by the evaluator to assess each of the nine UNIFEM-executed projects in the framework of the established evaluation strategy goals.

The nine UNIFEM-executed Round II projects were informed by the Mid-term Assessment Reports, the Final Narrative Reports, and the Final Financial Reports. The evaluation was conducted by an international expert, and UN Women Political Participation Section managed the evaluation process. The evaluation was participatory and involved consultations with UNDEF, UN SRO/CO, UN partners and other major stakeholders.

### **c. Development context**

Timor-Leste gained independence on 20 May 2002. Prior to independence, the country was under UN administration (UN Transitional Administration of East Timor, UNTAET) for almost three years. Under UNTAET, Timor-Leste made significant progress: adopted a new constitution which integrates international human rights standards, established the institutional infrastructure that constitutes the core of a democratic sovereign State and is essential for the long-term development of the country and conducted seven free and fair elections. Nevertheless, the young nation faces deeply rooted challenges including chronic and extreme poverty, a high maternal mortality rate, high illiteracy, high levels of gender-based violence, a lack of basic infrastructure for delivery of public services, and lack of protection mechanisms. In addition, the patriarchal nature of the Timorese society has compounded gender inequalities where women are marginalized not only in access to services, but also in their effective political participation and decision making.

In this context, UNTAET strongly promoted women's participation in politics and decision making by establishing a Gender Affairs Unit, which facilitated the adoption of a gender mainstreaming strategy and the promotion of women's participation in the political, electoral and constitutional processes. The newly adopted Constitution includes explicit gender equality provisions, including Article 62 that states that the equal participation of women and men in political life is fundamental to democracy. The Electoral Law of 18 December 2006 also mandates political parties to include at least one woman per group of four candidates, as well as their substitution by a same sex candidate in the event of a vacancy.

During the 2004-2005 local election women campaigned as candidates for the positions of *chefe de suco* (village chiefs) and *chefe do aldeia* (hamlet chiefs) and representatives to the *suco* councils. 29 women were elected as *suco* (7) and *aldeia* (22) chiefs. Over 1,300 women were elected as members of the village councils. Women represent 29% of the National Parliament and 27.6% in *suco*<sup>3</sup> (village) councils, largely due to the affirmative actions of the 2006 electoral law and *suco* electoral law<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, women still lack information, confidence, knowledge and skills to be meaningfully engaged in and influence post-conflict reconstruction and nation building processes that are responsive to their needs. Furthermore, citizens largely lack the tools to hold elected officials accountable to deliver gender responsive agendas and services.

### **Map of the provinces in Timor Leste**

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<sup>3</sup> Timor-Leste comprises 13 districts, 442 *sucos* (villages) and 2,228 *aldeias* (hamlets).

<sup>4</sup> The 2004 *suco* electoral law stipulates that a *suco* council comprises of one *suco* chief (male or female), one traditional leader or *lian nain* (male or female), two female adults, two youth members (one male and one female) and *aldeia* chiefs (male or female and depending on number of *aldeias* in a *suco*).



Despite the progress in the numbers of women participating in the national and village elections, there continues to be lack of critical mass of women’s participation in decision making. There is also a lack of accountability of those elected, as the links between women in leadership and their constituencies are weak. In most of the regions in Timor Leste women’s participation in local governance remains weak due to their low levels of education and confidence, limited access to information, lack of awareness and opportunities to engage in discussions on women’s issues and concerns, as well as limited time to participate in community activities. Additional limitations at the local level are that women play minor roles in decision making and lack organizational mechanisms to facilitate continued dialogue and realization of collective community activities. Against this background, the project views the situation as an opportunity to increase the number of women elected in political offices at local level, as *suco* councilors, and to support women’ political empowerment in general.

## ii. PROJECT STRATEGY

### a. Project approach and strategy

#### About Rede Feto

The implementing Agency, Rede Feto, is an umbrella organization encompassing 18 women’s organization. Its main mission is to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. Rede Feto’s goal is to work against gender discrimination, to promote women’s political and economic rights, and to encourage women’s active participation in the post-conflict building, reconstruction, and development in Timor Leste. Rede Feto has convened three national women’s congresses and partners with an extensive network of NGOs/CSOs. The implementing agency has collaborated successfully with the national gender equality machinery in Timor Leste - the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI).

### Convening a meeting on women's political participation, Rede Feto



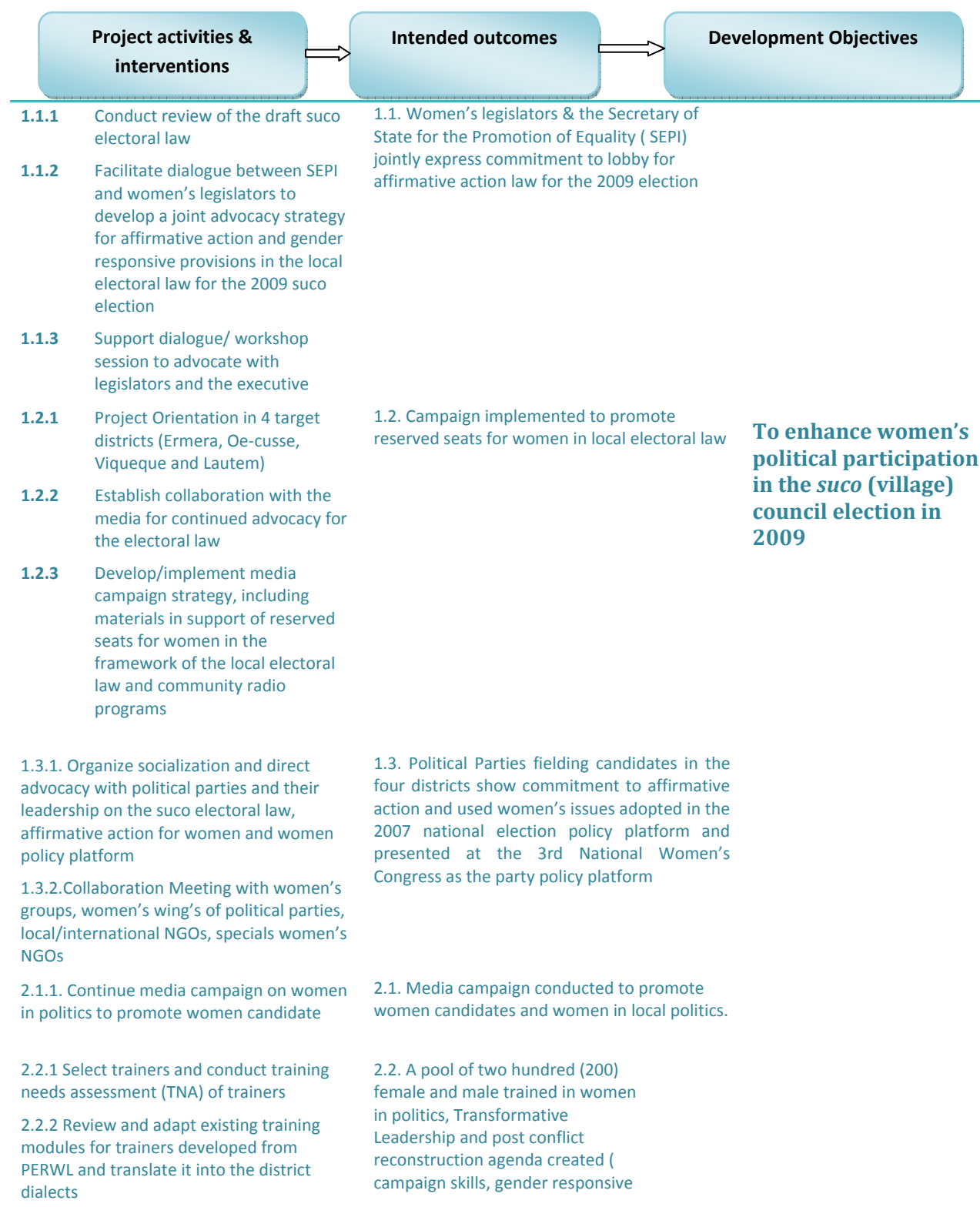
#### Strategies:

The project seeks to promote a gender responsive local development agenda through increasing the quantity and quality of women's representation at the *suco* councils in the 2009 local election, making them effective leaders with a clear, accountable and responsive relationship with their constituencies. To this end the project has employed a comprehensive set of strategies, including:

- **Capacity building** of women before (as candidates) and during (as elected officials) the local election. The capacity building activities promoted the concepts of transformative leadership and included training sessions on campaigning, negotiation and advocacy to women political candidates as well as refreshing sessions in the post-election period. The project also contributed to building the capacity of Rede Feto's staff through workshops and trainings.
- **Networking** to connect women elected in political office at national and local levels and encourage further integration of women in politics and decision making, thus facilitating the implementation of the women's agenda. This approach also contributed to building greater accountability between elected women and their constituencies and ensured the interconnectedness between national policies and local needs.
- **Awareness raising** and public commitment to the women's platform was achieved through media campaigns, including community radio programs. This approach aimed to increase women's visibility and achievements during and after the election for *suco* council and to ensure continued public attention on women in politics and other gender related issues. Civic education and sensitization of voters on the role of women in politics and decision making were also part of this strategy.
- **Accountability** and linkage between the women's political platform pledged by the political parties and the women's agenda as viewed by the women's NGOs/CSOs. These interactions encouraged discussions on local gender responsive policies and their monitoring by Women Watch Groups in the four districts of project implementation.

## b. Logical framework

The logical impact diagram that follows is based on the project logic as set out in the project document. The framework involves four distinct (immediate) outcomes.





<p>2.2.3 Conduct at least one training of trainers (ToT) in transformative leadership, Politics and Communities for each target district (at least 50 participants per district)</p>	<p>policies)</p>
<p>2.2.4 Regular sessions/meetings to strengthen capacity of core trainers (at least 1 session / meeting per quarter for all trainers in each district)</p>	
<p>2.3.1 Review / adapt training modules on transformative leadership and post conflict reconstruction with emphasis on accountability tools and delivering for results based from the PERWL evaluation and the training needs assessment and translate the manuals into the district dialects</p>	<p>Output 2.3. At least 900 hundred candidates and potentials candidates in four target districts have enhancing understanding on transformative leadership and gender responsive local governance &amp; post conflict reconstruction as well as skills to formulate and deliver clear campaign messages based on women's agenda</p>
<p>2.3.2. Conduct 9 batches of training of women's candidates and potential candidates to assist them in the formulation of a gender responsive platform for campaign (Ermera-3 batches, Lautem-3 batches, Viqueque-2 batches and Oe-cusse -1) with 50 participants per batch.</p>	
<p>2.3.3. Conduct follow-up session meeting with women candidate training</p>	
<p>2.4.1. Review / adapt training modules developed as part of PERWL evaluation and the training needs assessment and translate the manuals into the district dialects</p>	<p>2.4. Awareness of at least 450 least male candidates on gender equality increased and commitment strengthened to further gender responsive local development agenda</p>
<p>2.4.2 Conduct 9 batches of training of male candidate and potentials candidates for the suco council (Ermera-3 batches, Lautem-3 batches, Viqueque-2 batches and Oe-cusse -1).</p>	
<p>2.4.3. Conduct follow-up session meeting with male candidates trained ( 1 meeting per quarter)</p>	
<p>2.5.1. Conduct sensitization meetings for voters in the four target districts with emphasis on accountability between elected officials and constituencies and delivering on campaign platforms and for agreed results.</p>	<p>2.5. At least, 5000 voters have enhanced understanding and awareness of women's agenda and gender equality priorities, including the importance and benefits of women's participation in politics and decision making</p>
<p>3.1.1. Conduct analysis and assessment of performance of present elected women suco council members and conduct training needs assessment</p>	<p>3.1. Capacity of elected suco council representatives (both women and men) built to understand their roles and functions and to plan for and deliver on gender responsive policy.</p>
<p>3.1.2. Review / adaption of training modules on leadership skills and on planning for and deliver of gender responsive policies and develop monitoring and evaluation strategy to measure</p>	

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progress development from PERWL and based from TNA results and translation to dialects in the 4 districts

3.1.3. Conduct 9 batches of training of elected suco council's representatives - both women & men (50 participants per batch).

3.1.4. Conduct follow-up session meetings (at least session meeting per quarter for each of suco in the four target districts)

3.2.1 Support regular dialogue among women elected and non-elected leaders at the suco council level and develop joint advocacy strategies (at least 1 dialogue per district per quarter in the target district)

3.2.2 Facilitate dialogue and networking between suco council members and national women parliamentarians (at least 1 dialogue per district per quarter in the target district)

3.2.3 Participate in the National Women's Congress on Politics under the UNIFEM Integrated Program for Women in Politics and Decision Making (IPWPD) – (at least 5 women representatives from each district)

3.3.1 Review of women's issues and priorities and most-recently approved women's platform of action

3.3.2 Conduct of workshop on the formulation of gender responsive community development plans and how to monitor their implementation (at least 1 workshop in each suco)

3.3.3 Dissemination & socialization of gender responsive communities (at least 1 meeting per suco in all of the 4 target districts)

3.3.4 Develop local monitoring and evaluation mechanism and award system for outstanding performance or initiatives (at least 1 meeting per suco in all of the 4 target districts)

3.4.1. Create of women watch groups in each districts covered by the project (at least 1 network or federation of women leaders in each of the 4 target districts)

3.4.2 Inter-suco and inter-district sharing, discussion foras, study tour (as appropriate)

3.4.3 Continued regular quarterly meetings at suco and district levels (at least 1 meeting at each suco district in each of the target districts)

Output 3.2. Strengthened women's caucus at the local level including a network between women suco council members and national women parliamentarians

3.3. Gender responsive action plans and monitoring mechanism developed and implemented

3.4: Inter-linkages between and amongst suco councils to further women's agenda established and strengthened

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4.1.1. Training workshop on results based management and to facilitate development of work plans, monitoring and evaluation plan

4.1. Rede Feto demonstrates ability to manage projects and activities based on results based management (RBM)

4.1.2. End –of project workshop to track progress and share lessons learned & evaluation.

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### **iii. EVALUATION FINDINGS**

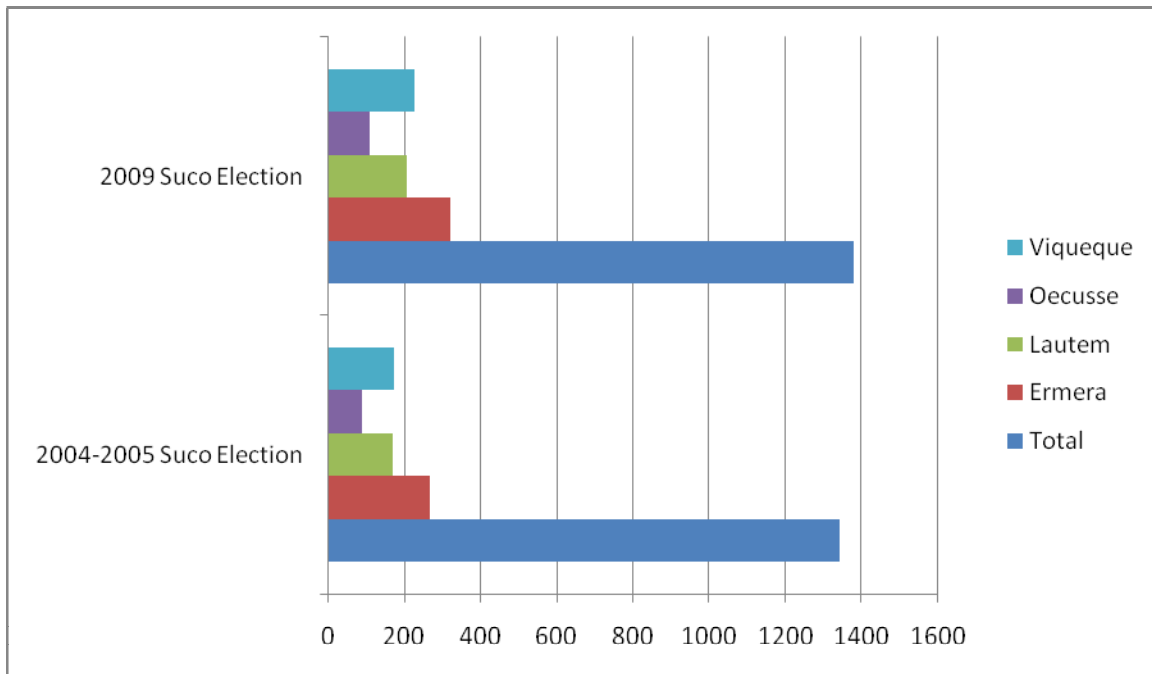
The evaluation is based on a set of questions, designed in compliance with UNDEF evaluation guidelines to cover the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, as well as the issue of UNDEF and UN Women value added. The Evaluation Questions and related sub-questions are presented in Annex 1.

#### **a. Relevance**

The project focuses on the issue of women’s political participation at local level, which is central to the mandate of both UN Women and UNDEF. In view of this fact, the project activities encompassed training and capacity building of women candidates for suco council and post-election training and mentoring of women elected in office; advocacy and networking between women elected in suco councils and women parliamentarians on one hand and women in positions of leadership and women’s NGOs on the other; and awareness-raising seeking to reaffirm the role of women in politics. Most of these activities were implemented as envisaged in the logical framework.

The project succeeded in increasing the number of women elected in the *suco* councils during the 2009 local election, contributing to women’s political empowerment. The project implementation benefited to great extent from an amendment in the quota provisions of the Community Leadership and Election Law No 3/2009, known as the 2009 Suco Election Law. This amendment was adopted before the local election, held in October 2009, and represented an increase from 2 to 3 in the number of reserved seats for women. As a result of the increased quota 442 more women were elected in the suco councils across the country, making the total number of 1,326. Furthermore, in the four targeted districts the number of elected women was above the one prescribed by the quota law - an increase of 515 women elected. However, this increase was not evenly distributed in the four project districts. In Oecussi the increase of local women elected in suco councils was 35%, in Ermera - 25%, Viqueque - 36%, and Lautem - 31%. It remains to be determined to what extent the increase in the number of women engaged in local governance will promote a gender responsive local development agenda and improve the effectiveness of decision making processes by establishing accountable and responsive relationships between o elected women and their constituencies.





### b. Effectiveness

The overarching goal of the project is to increase women's political empowerment in the local governments of Timor Leste through enhancing women's political participation in the *suco* (village) council election in 2009. To this end, the project implementation encompassed activities related to building women candidates' skills on campaigning, negotiation and advocacy, training sessions for women elected in the suco councils in the post-election period, awareness raising and media campaigns, promotion of the concepts of transformative leadership and accountability of the women in office to their constituencies.

#### **Affirmative measures increasing women's quota**

The aim of increasing the number of women elected in local governments was accomplished mostly through the adoption of affirmative measures in the local electoral law which required the women's quota to be increased by 1/3 i.e. 3 seats for women instead of 2 as was the case in the 2004-2005 local elections. This change was the result of advocacy initiatives led by women legislators, the Secretariat of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI), the media, and political parties. Currently the Community Leadership and Election Law provides for 3 elected seats reserved for women in the suco council - two rural women representatives and one young woman (17 to 30 years old). As a result, the number of women elected increased by 442 or 33%, and the total number of women in local government (442 sucos) in Timor Leste reached 1,326. In addition to the 3 seats for suco councils, women were eligible to run for election as Suco Chief, Aldeia Chief and Female Elder.

#### **Transformative leadership training**

Building the capacity of women candidates was accomplished through 2 training sessions on transformative leadership and 8 meetings and discussions with women in each district seeking to increase the quota for women in the suco councils during the legislative review of the electoral law. The training sessions included various topics including leadership, public speaking, gender equality, the CEDAW convention, functions and roles of the village council members, etc. The eight group discussions sought to improve the candidate's knowledge of local governance and in particular women's role in the village councils, the electoral process - eligibility of candidates,

political campaign, networking for women in offices, women’s political participation and the importance of women’s vote for suco councils, partnering with men in the local governance, etc. In addition, over 1,219 campaign materials were distributed in the four project districts, including 19 banners, 600 posters, 252 t-shirts, 148 CDs, and 200 document folders promoting women’s candidates in the 2009 suco election. Media campaigns were also part of the pre-election activities.



### Increasing the number of women candidates for suco councils

The project has achieved the objective of increasing by 25% the number of women candidates. As noted above, the increase is largely due to the amendment of the electoral law for suco elections which increases the quota for women by 33%.

Nationwide, 1,025 more women were running for suco council election, which represents a 28% increase compared to the 2004-2005 election. In the four project districts the increase was 34% - 515 additional spots for women in comparison to the previous local elections. Yet, it is hard to establish to what extent the increase is directly related to the project activities after the higher quota for women was adopted. Table 1 below reflects the increase of women candidates per district. All the information is provided by the implementing agency, Rede Feto.

**TABLE 1: Female Suco Council Candidates in 4 target districts**

		Ermera	Lautem	Oecusse	Viqueque	Total 4 target districts	% change 2004-05 to 2009
Women Representative in Packet	2004-05	199	84	52	131	466	41%
	2009	306	153	166	162	788	

**TABLE 1: Female Suco Council Candidates in 4 target districts**

		Ermera	Lautem	Oecusse	Viqueque	Total 4 target districts	% change 2004-05 to 2009
Young Women Representative in Packet	2004-05*	60	53	30	96	239	39%
	2009	153	77	83	81	394	
Suco (Village) Chief	2004-05	24	3	1	1	29	-48%
	2009	4	2	6	3	15	
Aldeia (Hamlet) Chief	2004-05	78	6	3	2	89	-66%
	2009	16	2	2	10	30	
Lian Nian (Traditional / Elderly Representative)	2004-05**	0	0	0	0	0	100%
	2009	4	0	3	4	11	
Total	2004-05	361	163	170	165	906	34%
	2009	483	235	260	260	1238	
<b>% Change 2004-05 to 2009</b>		<b>25%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>34%</b>	

### Increasing the number of women elected in suco councils

In comparison to the local election in 2004-2005, the number of elected women in 2009 increased as follows: Ermera district by 16%, Lautem 18%, Oecusse 18%, and Viqueque 24%. Nationwide, the number of elected women for the same period has increased by only 3%. These results are reflected in Table 2.

There was an increase of 33% in women being elected to suco chief positions and 53% to aldeia chief positions. The district of Viqueque had the best achievements - 2 suco chiefs and 11 aldeia chiefs.

**TABLE 2: Elected Female Suco Council Representatives**

		Ermera	Lautem	Oecusse	Viqueque	Total 4 target districts	Percentage change Target Districts (2004/05 – 2009)	Total Timor Leste	Percentage change Timor Leste (2004/05 – 2009)
Women Representative	2004-05	102	68	35	67	272	1%	873	1%
	2009	104	68	36	70	278		882	

Young Women Representative	2004-05*	52	34	17	35	138	2%	438	1%
	2009	52	34	18	35	139		441	
Suco Chief	2004-05	2	0	0	0	2	33%	7	30%
	2009	1	0	0	2	3		10	
Aldeia Chief	2004-05	6	1	1	0	8	53%	22	41%
	2009	6	1	0	11	17		37	
Lian Nian (Traditional / Elderly Representative)	2004-05**	0	0	0	0	0	100%	2	67%
	2009	0	0	0	2	2		6	
Total elected	2004-05	266	168	89	172	696	19%	1342	3%
	2009	318	205	108	225	856		1379	
<b>% Change 2004-05 to 2009</b>		<b>16%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>19%</b>		<b>3%</b>	

### **Gender sensitive policies and gender responsive budgeting**

The increase in the number of women elected as suco council members and aldeia chiefs in the four project regions was not reflected in the policies and budgets adopted by the local governments. The newly elected women have adopted only one gender sensitive development plan which reflects the needs of the local women, demonstrating a lack of capacity to support a women's agenda. Nevertheless, gender responsive budgeting has been developed in all four project districts and includes:

- Health programs - immunization, family planning, maternal health and nutrition for primary school children,
- Agriculture programs providing access to the agricultural resources and training on growing local products
- Infrastructure programs concerning improvements of the road, water purification, and sanitation.
- Education - literacy programs, sports activities for school children
- Economic development programs - access to credit, and
- Media and Communication programs including awareness raising on the law against domestic violence, CEDAW provisions, etc.

### **Accountability of the elected suco council representatives and perceptions of their constituents**

Due to the fact that the 2009 suco elections were held in October and the project's end date was December 2010, the elected women did not have enough time to change community perceptions about the effectiveness of women's political leadership. It should be taken into account that this process takes longer than one year given that gender stereotypes are deeply embedded in the

culture and the traditions of each society. Nevertheless, the initial observations of the implementing agency show that the elected women in the suco councils are fulfilling their commitments in accordance with the law and expectations of the community. Elected women are supporting victims of domestic violence, encouraging women in the community to attend family planning discussions, or trainings on agriculture, providing mediation of minor cases, assisting with information on health's programme on immunization and identifying community women's needs.

### **Adoption of gender sensitive local development plans**

Despite the fact that a number of proposals for local development plans have been submitted and approved by Assistance to Suco Administration (DNAATS), they have not yet been finalized. Among the programs approved by DNAATS there are gender sensitive proposals on sanitation, nutrition, sports, and training, which are the result of a consultative process between suco council members and their constituencies.

### **Accountability for adoption of local development plans**

Monthly community meetings were held to discuss topics of local relevance and the implementation of the local development plans. The elected women in the suco council demonstrated confidence and capacity to fulfill their commitments to their constituents and represent the issues of the local communities



***“I have self confidence and can talk to the people”, Cristalina Quintao - Chefe de Railaco-Leten Suco in the District of Ermera. Cristalina is the only female chefe de suco in the district of Ermera. Working with her community in the central highlands of Timor-Leste, she challenges the traditional norms, demonstrating that women can be effective and respected in the local decision making process. As chefe de suco, Cristalina focuses on programs that benefit the vulnerable in her community and further the women's agenda, such as the bolsa da mae program, which assists widows and ensures their children's schools attendance. Better roads and sanitation are two areas where she hopes to have impact in her community.***

### **c. Efficiency**

#### **Work relationships**

To carry out pre and post election training for candidates, potential candidates and elected representatives the project core staff recruited 195 district facilitators/ trainers, divided as follows: 50 for Ermera district; 46 for Lautem; 50 for Viqueque; and 49 for Oecusse. In addition, Redo Fete had signed a partnership agreement with FONGTIL to support its advocacy campaign for the adoption of a gender sensitive Suco Election Law. Another partnership agreement was signed with the local media to disseminate the project information and promote the results in support of women's political participation.

#### **Capacity to manage projects**

Rede Feto and its partner organizations have complied with the reporting requirements of results based management (RBM). The capacity of the implementing agency's staff was enhanced through trainings and workshops. As was previously noted, the project implementation benefited to a great extent from the amendment of the local electoral law. Multiple actors such as the state gender

equality machinery, media, and women's NGOs were actively involved in advocacy and lobbying campaigns which resulted in the adoption of the legislative amendment. The effect of the increased quota is intertwined with the project's objectives to an extent that it is hard to determine the share of the project's contribution at national level. However, at district level, in the four target districts, the project implementation clearly has influenced the advancement of women's political participation.



Pre-election training



Candidate Jefa Kai Beti

Over 1,219 campaign materials, including banners, posters, CDs, T-shirts, etc., were distributed in the four project districts

The effectiveness of the interventions of the elected councils has been less successful. Despite the requirement that every elected woman had to propose a gender sensitive policy or advocate for a local development plan only one such policy was adopted. This fact clearly testifies to the lack of effectiveness in incorporating the women's agenda into local policies. It can be assumed that one year is not enough to implement a women's agenda and that further capacity building activities for local women in office are needed if they are to continue enhancing women's political participation at local level.

### Delay

The 3 months no-cost extension of the project implementation was due to both internal and external reasons. On one hand, the project staff could not reach agreements with the personnel recruited to assist with the project implementation. Salary negotiations with personnel resulted in a delay in signing the project document, postponement in the selection of implementing partners and finally a delay in the project activities.

The late disbursement of funds in the initial stage of the project resulted in a general delay of all project activities. The remaining balance of \$ 20,262.56 is associated with changes in the schedule of planned activities due to delays in the signing of the project documents and a prolonged wet season. However, no significant changes in the project document have been made. The changes in the logical framework reflect a refinement of the indicators, data collection methods, and timing of the outcome and output indicators and do not impact the planned output or activities beyond minor refinements.

### Challenges



There are several challenges which have impacted the project implementation:

- **Unavailability of management team** – the management team was not able to implement all activities according to the planned schedule because of delays in funding, lack of commitment of the district project team to continue the project, project staff having other priorities beyond project implementation, resignation of some project field staff and/or transiting to another NGOs, etc. The issues of the Management Project Team (PMT) were raised on the organizational meetings with no significant result.
- **Traditions and gender perceptions** - gender inequality is still a defining characteristic of Timorese society, where 61% of all women are illiterate. In addition, women lack access to public services, such as education, information, health care and decision making, especially in post conflict reconstruction. This results in women's marginalization from governance and policy processes, and is a reflection of weak accountability mechanisms,.
- **Election-related violence** – which may be rooted in jealousy, rivalry and other personal conflicts, or adverse sentiments among candidates and their supporters. This risk remained hypothetical as the 2009 local elections were spared from violent incidents which had been recurring in the country since the 2006 government crisis.

### **Good Practices**

The project encouraged women's political participation and contributed to building of momentum in women's empowerment in Timor Leste. The concerted efforts of the women's movement, the gender machinery, and other stakeholders allowed for full participation of local women in the political arena, in particular incorporating women's agenda into local and national policies and development plans, involvement of rural and marginalized women, developing leadership skills, and giving women confidence to participate in politics and decision making.

### **d. Impact**

This project's has contributed to the advancement of women's political participation in the local governance of Timor Leste in the following ways:

- Contribution to the interventions, lobbying and advocacy campaigns of local women's organizations for adoption of the amendment of the suco election law which increased by 1/3 the seats for women.
- Training and capacity building of women candidates for election and elected women in the suco councils – these activities have improved the trainees' understanding of the principles of local governance, in particular suco councils, and have built communication and leadership skills and knowledge on how to integrate the women's agenda in the policy making. Training of trainers increased the district facilitators' skills to assist suco council candidates and elected suco council representatives. In this context, the providing of training material in the four local languages (Fataluko in the district of Lautem, Tetun Terik in Viqueque, Mambae in Ermera and Baiqueino in Oe-cusse) of each district proved useful.
- The awareness raising activities and the media campaign, including distribution of election material about women candidates and the role of women in the local government have added value in shifting the traditional perceptions in Timor Leste, thus increasing women's chances to advance gender equality in the local suco councils.
- Networking – in the four districts the linkage and communication between local governments, women's NGOs and district gender focal points have improved, as has the support for women suco council members to incorporate gender equality in the local policies and development plans.

The project has demonstrated the need for similar interventions at local level in Timor Leste – project beneficiaries have expressed their understanding that more work is needed with respect to capacity building of women candidates for local election, voter education, and especially more training of elected women, most of whom have been elected in office for the first time during the 2009 suco election. Likewise, more awareness raising activities targeting not only women in office but also men and boys are required to allow for a change towards gender equality to take place in Timor Leste.

Overall, the project has demonstrated the increased capacity of women at local level to participate in public life and in particular to be effective in leadership positions. The 2009 suco election has provided an opportunity for more women to be involved in the local governance; however more efforts are needed to train those elected, to build their leadership skills and gain confidence as their community representative, as well as increase their accountability to their constituents. In addition, the project has contributed to improving the coordination between different stakeholders and raising awareness, including sensitizing men, about the role of women in the public life and in their communities. Women in office in Timor Leste are becoming more confident in raising issues of women's concern, such as women's rights and activities in rural areas, as well as gender equality in the community development planning. As a result women's actions have become more visible for the whole Timorese society.

#### **e. Sustainability**

One of the flaws of the project design is that it has not envisaged sustainability measures to ensure continuity beyond the project's lifetime. Although it has established connections such as networks of elected officials at national and local levels, building on the existing Women Parliamentary Caucus (Grupo das Mulheres Parlamentares Timor-Leste GMPTL), without provision of resources these networks are unlikely to remain active. Likewise, the project has created a pool of trainers at the local level who are capable of providing training and support to women in the four districts as well as Women Watch Groups that could monitor progress on women's policy proposals. However, without adequate funding and continued monitoring this human capital will not benefit the local communities.

It is to be expected that Rede Feto, as an umbrella women's organization, will continue its commitment to work for gender equality and to improve the status of women at local level by maintaining the efforts invested in this project and finding additional donors beyond this project's duration. In this respect, it is encouraging that suco councils are participating and receive funding for implementation of the State Government's Millennium Village initiative, which seeks to increase gender awareness and responsive governance in compliance with the MDG targets.

The capacity of the implementing agency and its 18 women's NGO members was strengthened during the project through trainings on transformative leadership, management, and other skill-building activities which will contribute to the development and implementation of their future projects.

#### **f. UNDEF and UN Women value-added**

The project clearly engages pertinent issues such as democratization, women's political participation at local level, and advancement of women's political empowerment, thus fitting into

both UNDEF's and UN Women's mandates. The main project activities related to increasing the number of women in the local suco (village) councils is a step forward in the enhancing of women's leadership and has an impact on the policy making at local level. Similarly, the awareness raising and capacity building activities implemented clearly reflect its commitment to the principles of gender equality and democratic development. The lessons learned will be applicable to similar programs which will be envisioned in Timor Leste and other countries in the region.

#### **iv. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The project *Enhancing Women's Role in Timor Leste Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Nation Building*, has contributed to strengthening women's political participation at the local level in Timor Leste. By increasing the number of women in the local suco councils the project has created conditions for introduction and implementation of gender sensitive policies and programs at local level and has raised awareness about the role of women's leadership in the process of democratization in the local governments of Timor Leste. The challenges and lessons learned indicate the need to pursue efforts to mainstream gender equality and good governance in policy making in Timor Leste.