



An elderly displaced woman waiting to go back to her home.

General Situation

The situation in November 2007 was relatively calm, yet incidences of throwing stones and gang fights still continue. The month of November 07, was also marked by the failed efforts of dialogue between the government, the petitioners and Maj. Alfredo (the group of F-FDTL who deserted the central military command. The petitioners refused to come to the dialogue and stressed that it's the military's business (the situation is still the same until now). Maj. Alfredo even stated that he will come down to Dilli, if the government failed to solve problems of the IDPs and the current political crisis.

The current government tried its best to build the roads to districts, bring some improvement in city's drainage system so that it could create some job opportunities. But that was not enough, at the moment, since the recent security situation is still unstable. The investors are doubtful, due to the current unstable situation, to put more money into Timor Leste economy, which could create more work opportunity. The spreading of rumors, daily fightings and throwing stones, the dead lock in dialogue with Maj. Alfredo and petitioners and some other political manuevres are still the main daily conversations in the country.

The IDP Situation

Anticipating the rainy season, humanitarian agencies distributed tents in IDP camps. At the moment the estimated number of IDPs in Timor is about 100.000 (30.000 in Dilli and 70.000 in the districts)

according the IOM sources. IOM distributed about 835 new tents to the 11 IDP camps in Dilli. The distribution of tents created an incident in Metinaro camps of Dilli. The IDPs were not satisfied with the distribution and had started protesting and became hostile towards the humanitarian staff, leading to a small scale violence. The camp's manager was later arrested.

In Sional IDP camp (near the Dilli diocese), some of the IDP while replacing their tents also moved their camps to the beach across their previous place. The reason for this is the flooded area of previous place during the rainy season. It seems that the drainage system doesn't function well. Something that is common to the whole drainage system.

The security issues are the main concern of IDPs. They are still afraid to return as according to them, it's not safe to return. An IDP woman from Haslaran IDP camp (the Canossian Sisters of Comoro IDP camp) said that when she returned home, she was threatened by the neighbours. This kind of threat is common in some of the refugees who already visited their original house in Dilli. Some can't go home since their houses were burnt down and destroyed. The tension among the communities especially related to the ethnic community is still prevalent and has the potential to become a source of violent conflict. In addition to the fear, the land title is a major problem now connected to the idps problems. Some of the IDPs illegally occupied the houses or land belonging to the Indonesian people from pre-1999. Most of them are not originally from Dilli but from the districts especially from the Eastern part. Since there was



Visiting IDPs camps of San Jose

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Some vocational activities carried out by the women in the camps

It started with people selling things for the IDPs, and then some others soon followed the same action until it became a small market in the IDP camps.

no clear strategy and resolution regarding the illegally occupied land, it somehow managed to keep the potential conflict, which is just waiting to explode. Among these tensions, one can add personal conflict, which in turn has complicated the situations. For this kind of IDPs, to return means to return to the district where they are from originally.

Economically speaking, there is nothing much one could expect from the district. Most of the economic activities take place in Dilli. This is why the government program of providing materials for houses seems to have failed, since the IDPs returned to Dilli for their economic resources. Even though there is a genuine fear among the IDPs, there are some who have also abused the situation. The current humanitarian assistance distributed to the IDP, gives them the opportunity to get daily logistics. During the daytime, the IDP camps are quiet and one can only find children and some women in the camps. During the night time, more return to the camps.

According to the IDP themselves, some of them are already working in the market or in other places. In some camps the owners have left and have returned to their own house, they have still kept their name registered as an IDP in order to keep on getting the daily logistic distribution. It is not surprising that during the distribution time, there are a lot of IDPs and when there is no distribution one can only find a small number of them. Some humanitarian staff have also expressed their opinion that the IDP camps could slowly turn into slum areas if it is not resolved, since people will choose to stay more due to the economic reason. Like it or not, Dilli is the most attractive place for earning money, education and another facilities that is hard to find in the districts let alone in the villages. It is interesting to see that some IDP camps are now growing as a small market place. It is a phenomenon in Jardin IDP camps (the town park IDP camps).

Programme and Activities

JRS started its presence in Timor Leste by visiting IDP camps, talking with the local NGOs and INGO's, church people and people at PDHJ (Providoria Direitus Humanus-e Justicia/Ombudsman of Human Rights and Justice). The first initiative undertaken was to have a series of interesting protection training, establishing the office of JRS and enabling the future long term involvement of JRS in Timor Leste in terms of finding durable solutions.

JRS Timor Leste together with PDHJ conducted series of training. Caritas Australia joined the training by providing funds for the trainer and sent four staff to follow the training. The idea of training was to capacitate the knowledge of local NGO staff and also camps managers with issues on advocacy and protection. The trainings itself consisted of three trainings with the focus of protection especially related to Guiding Principles on IDP.

The first training was held in Maubara from 8 – 10 November 2007 for PDHJ staff, local NGO Yayasan HAK and Caritas Australia in Timor Leste. The second training a ToT (Training of Trainers) focused on preparing 4 selected PDHJ staff to provide trainings for camp managers from 6 different camps located on the grounds of religious communities and seminary. Eve Leste, who worked with JRS before in Cambodia and Geneva and also with Amnesty International in London facilitated the whole trainings.



Visiting IDPs at St. Elizabeth

A voice for the displaced people in Timor Leste

Each training had its own dynamics and results. The first training provided more information on protection issues with special reference on health due to the limited time frame. It provided the 23 participants with more information on special conventions, understandings and more specific monitoring on certain aspect of IDP situation. The weak point of the first training was the gap of knowledge between the participants and the trainers. At the same time there were language barriers, even though there was a translator, it had not really succeed in bridging the gap in order to make a more closer communication and mingling between participants and trainers. For PDHJ, the training in the long run would be followed with making an improvement in monitoring the IDP system and handling the reports from other NGO's.

At the moment, it seems too early to know how the benefit of the trainings can be seen. As a short term goal and impact, the follow up was to provide PDHJ staff with knowledge and experience of giving the training on Guiding Principle.



NGO's training on IDP Protection



Group picture of the Protection Trainees and Trainers

The second training started with the selection of four PDHJ staff (two male and two female) and prepared them for conducting the training for the camps managers. Eve acted as a mentor for the four of them and together they formed a program for the training. Observations during the two days ToT (13 – 14 November 2007) pointed to an emerging fact, that, the female staff were more keen on the materials and to be a facilitator. The two women staff, also quickly grasped the materials from the first training. The male staff were passive, not quiet knowledgeable with the materials and not too keen to be a facilitator.

The third training was for the camp managers. There were 17 camp managers from 6 different camps who attended the training. The two days training from 15-16 November was run well and yet again it showed the capacity of female staff to run the training and handle the discussions and questions. Most of the questions asked are about solving the real day to day problem faced by the camp manager's, like who to contact for shortage of food, solving the conflict among the IDPs and domestic violence that happens in the camps etc. Some questions were difficult enough to answer and there were some participants who felt dissatisfied, especially the camp manager's who had more experiences on handling the IDP situation and the issues. There was expectations that the training would deliver some practical solutions, which off-course were very hard to fulfill for the trainers. The participants suggested that the facilitators be more active and use their own experiences to give some suggestions, etc.

By the end of training, the camp managers wrote their advocacy strategy for their own camps. There were at least two follow-up activities proposed by camp managers as part of their advocacy strategies. One was to start the networking of the camp managers attending the trainings and to include more camp managers. This is the followup JRS Timor Leste would like to do.

The other is to ask PDHJ to socialize the Guiding Principle among the idps. The reason for this is that not many camps managers are aware that there is an existing Guiding Principle as a protection frame for IDP.

Return of 24 IDPs

JRS Timor Leste is still trying to get some more specific information on the number of IDPs in the three camps. Asking for data is now a sensitive thing to do in several camps, because people are suspicious, that it will be used for other interest either political

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Camp managers meeting to discuss the ongoing situation and the problems faced.

or for NGO's. The suspicion comes because there is an expectation that the data provided will directly follow some material assistance.

Meanwhile the problem faced by most of the agencies at the moment including the government is to obtain an accurate number of IDPs. The IDPs move quite often and sometimes they use different names or register in the two or three different camps. Even some students who want to continue his/her studies also live in the camps with relatives and are being counted as an IDP. This is perhaps why the numbers are not exact but approximate.

On 3 December 2007, 24 families had finally decided to return home. The return process involved Ministry of Social and Solidarity (MSS), UN Police, chefe succo (chief of the village) and chefe aldeia (chief of the sub village).

The IDP who decided to return actually did some to-and-fro visits to their village and made some contacts. Some of them have already started living in the village. After feeling safe, they decided to return and started their lives in their respective places. The others have not yet decided to return due to safety reasons, or due to the fact that their houses were totally destroyed and that they can't go back.

Before returning to their respective

villages on 1st December 2007, the 24 families had a meeting with UN Police, chief of village and chief of sub village, the Cannossian sisters and representatives of MSS. The meeting intended to explain the assistance that could be provided by the government and the issues of concern for the IDPs, especially the security issues.

Most of the IDPs asked for assistance on their return especially materials for house since most of the houses were already burnt down. The others questioned about the security arrangements provided to them upon their return. During the meeting, the IDPs felt that there were no clear answers to the assistance that could be provided on their return, especially the UN Police could only guarantee that they would only patrol the area. This of course was not the kind of answers most of the IDPs wanted to hear.

On 2nd December 2007, with the initiative of the IDP camp manager, there was a thanksgiving mass for those who decided to return. Fr. Bambang and Fr. Angelo from the Diocese of Dilli concelebrated the mass. As the Catholic Church entered the Advent season to prepare for the coming of God in their midst, it was also a chance for the IDPs to start over their life in their former homes. ●



The basic sanitation facilities for the IDP camp hosted in Don Bosco, Dilli.

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