

Conflict Transformation Institute (CTI)

The organization is based in Baucau. CTI is delivering their trainings in twenty four selected places in Baucau (sub districts: Baucau, Laga, Queilikai and Vemasse) that are know as potential hot spots of conflict features in the past.

Background

For a country of less than one million people, Timor-Leste features a breathtakingly diverse array of groups, ranging from MAGs and social movements to small street-corner gangs and youth groups. Like the militia of 1999, however, they are not a new, spontaneous phenomenon. While some might be older, most of these groups had their genesis during the intense militarization of Timorese society under the Indonesian occupation between 1975 and 1999. Most of the current groups either were formed to oppose the occupation or, as with MAGs, are legacies of the Indonesian army's attempts to impose social control. While the bulk of these groups may be composed of disenfranchised youths, their membership is drawn from all sectors of society, with members in the police force, the army, and among the political and economic elite.

It is both difficult and contentious to render clear cut distinctions between these groups. Many exhibit overlapping membership and a number of characteristics in common, such as featuring ex-veterans among their membership or being ex-clandestine organizations. Groups routinely reinvent themselves: the clandestine and disaffected groups, for example, grew out of resistance to the Indonesian occupation, but have since become protest movements, or have formed political parties or become criminal syndicates. There are few reliable figures on the numbers of such groups.

The present law on the practice of martial arts (Law No.10/2008 of 16 July THE PRACTICE OF MARTIAL ARTS)¹ legalizes existing martial arts associations, regulates the establishment of centres, clubs and schools and the number of members. It also defines behaviour constituting criminal offences. Martial Arts groups promote sporting activities that develop physical strength, along with mental awareness – a nation's valuable good to ensure stability and the security of the country. For Martial Arts groups to become professional and competitive centres, clubs or schools, members have to follow the provisions of the law. Therefore, each Martial Arts group has to review its statutes and strengthen them to regulate the practice of Martial Arts techniques according to the law. The members of Martial Arts groups may use their physical, mental and spiritual capabilities to protect the nation in the face of a threat to safety.

The members of Martial Arts groups are entitled to teach martial arts to practitioners, but have also the duty to respect the right of the citizens to life and freedom. The rights and duties are already set out in universal laws, in the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, in the Law on the practice of martial arts and even in the statutes of each Martial Arts group.

If members are purposely trained to cause violence and commit crimes, the constitution and the law is violated as such. Martial Arts groups – at least in theory - have to be professional and promote the practice of Martial Arts as a sport that contributes to the nation's sovereignty, the strengthening of security and the consolidation of stability.

It can be concluded that far from being merely victims or potential perpetrators, there are highly distinct groups within Timorese youth actively seeking solutions to improve their lives and the lives of their communities. These groups are in many cases elementary, grassroots civil society organizations, which play a crucial role in their own communities in engaging youth in constructive behaviour, as a circuit breaker for youth alienation.

But in Timor-Leste, reality shows at the same time that youth is frequently involved in situations that degrade other people's dignity as human beings. This violence compels CTI to take a look at the moral responsibility and act towards developing and raising moral conscience and promoting change of behaviour. According to CTI's observation, martial arts groups are, in general, not as dreadful as their

¹ See the details of the law in the attachment.

reputation. Seldomly it is tried to establish a relationship and communication with MA in an act of brotherhood, install human, traditional and cultural values or teach them about mentioned law and religious issues. The approach cannot be limited and it goes beyond a mere project. People have to feel morally compelled to build the capacity of the youth at all levels as the nation needs them and not because there is money involved.

Activities

CTI conducts training activities. The so far involved MA are: Pajajran, Kerah Sakti, PSK and Korka. The trainings are considered as a two days input and reflexion forum. The content is mainly divided into three sections:

1) Human Rights. According to CTI, the duties of MA are:

- To respect the dignity of the human being – i.e., act in a way that doesn't affect other people's lives, dignity and reputation.
- To recognize other people's right to life. A person who respects the other also recognizes the person's right to life.
- To promote – human rights. They are the same for all people regardless of their differences.
- To protect – human rights in daily lives, families, groups, societies.

2) Conflict resolution and mediation

Martial Arts members learn fighting techniques, but they also need to acquire deep understanding of the root conflicts and skills in conflict management in order to achieve peace, establish good relations and ensure security. They also provide information about non-violent conflict resolution procedures, e.g. mediation.

3) Information about criminal procedures

According to CTI, it is important for the members of Martial Arts groups to learn about criminal proceedings. The hope is that they will regulate their activities according to the law and turn away from violence. The training gives also space to share about the members' knowledge and insights about the law with newcomers in the groups.

CTI invites resources persons as a surplus to the training who are very well known among the target group and are specialists in their field, e.g. lawyers that used to be veterans as well. They also involve local leaders and members of the police (PNTL: Policia Nacional de Timor Leste) in the training.

Approach

CTI is taking the effort to empower the members of MA groups to ensure that youth development takes place constructively and with sustainability in the future. The seminars are furthermore meant to be a place where exchange and understanding each other can take off.

The persons who are involved in the trainings as resource persons are mainly veterans of the independence fight themselves, such as the coordinator, lidio Gusmao, himself. They are highly well known and have authority among the youngsters because of their former life as persons of the resistance movement. Their example and word is being heart and taken very seriously.

Their approach is also carried by a spiritual belief system; most of the people who work for CTI are active members of the church.

CTI ensures to work together with the local authorities (DLO: District Liaison Officer, CJP: Justice and Peace Commission, HAK: Association for Law, Human Right and Justice) in view of developing the knowledge of the youth involved in martial arts.

Target Group

The organization reaches its target group. A single training reaches up to 55 persons. So far six trainings were conducted.

Obstacles

CTI has a lack of facilities and the sequence of the trainings according to the proposal has to be conducted within a very short time. This is experienced as pressure upon the coordinator.

Approaches that proved to be successful

Authority with experience – CTI

The organisation of CTI delivers their message through persons who have been played a role in the independence fight. "I was in the woods" is an expression for those who had to hide and everyone knows that this person was an important one. Incorporating veterans ten years later in the teaching and empowering process towards youth is very unique: The veterans that are involved have "converted" to the insight that constructive approaches to conflict transformation are better and more sustainable than any fighting or violence.

This very unique approach cannot be copied unless other veterans see their responsibility in that way and become "public promoter of conflict transformation".