LOCAL RESILIENCE: LIVING WITH RISK IN VULNERABLE INTERNALLY DISPLACED COMMUNITIES IN TIMOR-LESTE

Presented by
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Abstract
The eruption of violence in April 2006 in Timor-Leste was accompanied by widespread looting and burning with destruction of the environment, infrastructure, property and the means of livelihood for a significant section of the population, with over 15% fleeing their homes. In May 2008, two years after the conflict, there were still an estimated 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) within the capital Dili and scattered throughout the country. As a result there were severe stressors on both the displaced and host populations and their local environments with attendant environmental health problems. This qualitative case study explores the influences on the capacity of internally displaced communities in Timor-Leste to recover from and adapt to living with risk in the aftermath of the civil and political conflict in 2006-07. Drawing on a framework of vulnerability and resilience from a humanitarian and social change perspective, semi-structured and key informant interviews, focus group discussions and transect walks were undertaken in Dili and Baucau within both IDPs and host communities. Additional key informant interviews and documentary data were obtained from Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and humanitarian agency personnel. Analysis of the data revealed that communities have key concerns regarding governance and future stability in the country, lack of demonstrable progress in health, education & infrastructure, and future employment opportunities for the youth. The study documented that sustained peace was vital for development and progress in the country.
About the presenters

Jaya Earnest has over twenty-two years experience working in India, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, East Timor and Australia as an educator and researcher. Educated in India and England, Jaya completed her PhD at Curtin University, where she is currently an Associate Professor at the Centre for International Health (CIH) and a fellow of the Centre for Advanced Studies in Australia, Asia and the Pacific (CASAAP). Jaya is involved in research projects in Australia, India, and East Timor and in supervising students with a strong focus on post-conflict transitional nations and vulnerable populations.

Patricia Faulkner qualified as a dentist and has worked in allied health for over twenty-five years, in Britain and Australia. Born and educated in Tanzania, East Africa and then Scotland, an interest in international health was fostered during her years in Tanzania, where her parents were involved in community health. Currently she is a completing her Masters in Public Health and Postgraduate Diploma in International Health, at Curtin University. She undertook research on displaced communities in East Timor in 2008 and in 2009 will assist in putting together a book on Education in Rwanda.