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## WEST TIMOR / INDONESIA

# Durable solutions still out of reach for many “new citizens” from former East Timor province

In 2010, nearly 11 years after being displaced from what was then East Timor, several thousand people remain in camps in West Timor, in the province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). Most camps are located near the border with what became Timor-Leste in 2002, or around Kupang, the provincial capital. They are among the tens of thousands of people who have chosen not to return, the majority of whom have since been moved to resettlement sites inside West Timor.

The main issues affecting the people displaced are lack of access to land, poor integration with local communities, very poor living conditions, high unemployment levels, lack of access to education and unresolved compensation issues. In a province where 30 per cent of residents live below the poverty line and where resources and economic opportunities are scarce, the presence of the displaced, who are now considered by the Indonesian government as “new citizens” after losing their refugee status, has reportedly created tensions with local communities.

Official humanitarian assistance ended in 2005. However, between 2006 and 2010, the government built an estimated 11,000 houses in several regencies to accommodate the “new citizens” most of whom have been living there since. However, they have raised concerns about the poor quality of the housing, the lack of infrastructure and the fact that they have not been granted ownership of the land. Many have also complained that they have not received the compensation payment promised by the government. The government’s priority remains to close the remaining camps and it is therefore discouraging any assistance there. It considers that housing assistance and compensation payments provided since 2006 have closed the case and that the matter is now in the hands of the provincial authorities.



Source: UNHCR

More maps are available at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org)

## Background

After a UN-sponsored referendum in East Timor province in 1999 paved the way for its independence from Indonesia, between 250,000 and 280,000 people fled to neighbouring West Timor (CAVR, 30 January 2006, Chap.7.3, p.152; UNCHR, 6 April 2000, p.4). While some people decided to flee on their own, others were coerced into doing so by militias and the Indonesian army. By 2003, most had returned to the newly independent country of Timor-Leste with assistance from UNHCR, but some tens of thousands of people remained unwilling to return and opted to stay in West Timor or resettle elsewhere in the country. Most of them were members of pro-integrationist militias and their families, or Indonesian civil servants.

First considered as IDPs when they crossed into West Timor in 1999, the displaced became refugees following Timor-Leste’s independence in 2002. In 2003, they lost the refugee status when they were offered the choice between returning to Timor-Leste or becoming Indonesian citizens. Those who remained became “new citizens” of Indonesia and were given the option to resettle within the country.

The majority chose to resettle within East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) province, including in West Timor where they concentrated in two regencies: Belu, near the Timor-Leste border and Kupang, the provincial capital. Others went to neighbouring provinces such as south-east Sulawesi, where they had some family. By 2010, the majority of the people displaced had opted for resettlement, although several thousand people remained unwilling to move to resettlement sites and continued to live in emergency camps.

## IDP population figures

Getting reliable and updated data on the size and needs of the various groups that fled East Timor in

1999 has been a serious challenge for the central and local government agencies as well as for humanitarian organisations. Estimates provided by various sources have differed significantly, with the interests of IDP and local government representatives tending to lead them to overestimate their number. According to UNHCR, of up to 280,000 people who had left East Timor in 1999, 225,000 had gone back home by May 2003 (UNHCR, February 2004, p.2). The majority of those who stayed were living in the regencies of Belu (61 per cent) and Kupang (19 per cent), followed by North Central Timor (eight per cent), Kupang municipality (six per cent) and South Central Timor (two per cent) (UNDP, 2005, p. 13).

As of mid-2010, several thousand people who had remained were reportedly continuing to live in emergency camps near Kupang and in Belu district near the Timor-Leste border, in very difficult conditions with little assistance (NTA, 25 July 2010; Jakarta Post, 10 December 2009; West Australian, 26 July 2008). There is no reliable figure of their overall number, with estimates ranging from 5,000 to 40,000. The lower estimate refers to people living in “temporary shelters” (USDoS, 11 March 2010) while the higher end of the range, cited by the Timor Center for IDPs (CIS), a local NGO which has been assisting the displaced since 1999, refers to people living in “emergency barracks”. The local NGO adds that 3,700 families, or perhaps 19,000 people, are “without access to government assistance” (Jakarta Post, 10 December 2009). A newspaper reported in June 2009 that “20,000 remain in limbo in about 60 refugee camps” in Belu district alone (The Age, 16 June 2009).

The current number of camps is unknown. A few thousand people were reportedly still living in at least three emergency camps in Kupang district in 2010. As of July 2010, it was estimated that Tuapukan camp, 20 kilometres east of Kupang, hosted between 250 and 300 families (1,200 to 1,500 people) who had been there since 1999 (NTA, 25 July 2010). Noelbaki camp, home to

20,000 people at the height of the displacement crisis in 1999, still housed up to 2,000 people in 2008 (The Age, 28 July 2008).

In 2008, CARE identified 2,500 displaced households, or roughly 12,500 individuals, in need of reintegration assistance in both Kupang and Belu district (CARE, 6 May 2008, p.14). In 2006, estimates of the number still in need of relocation and assistance ranged from 4,200 families, or around 21,000 people, to 100,000 people (Li, December 2007; UCA News, 2 October 2006; ICG, 4 May 2006, p.2; EC, 2006; Kompas, 21 March 2006; UNDP, 2005, p.15).

The government has moved the majority of the people displaced to up to 80 resettlement sites in West Timor since 2003. In the past four years, a total of 11,000 housing units have been provided, to benefit up to 55,000 people. The majority were constructed in Belu and Kupang. Others have since 1999 resettled, often spontaneously, in other areas of the country where they had family, in particular in a number of provinces in Sulawesi. In May 2009, there were an estimated 4,600 households, or 23,000 people, displaced from East Timor in five Sulawesi provinces (Jakarta Post, 19 May 2009).

While the government now considers this displacement situation as ended, having provided material and financial assistance to the majority of them in the past 11 years, many people consider they have not yet recovered from their displacement and think they deserve more assistance from a government they have been loyal to. In June 2010, representatives of the “new citizens” claimed that 15,000 families or 75,000 people were still entitled to financial assistance from the government (NTA, 25 July 2010)..

## **Access to basic necessities**

### *Shelter and housing*

The government has discouraged support from international agencies to residents of remaining

emergency camps. For example, in 2008, Noelbaki camp lacked electricity and running water and had not seen any recent improvements (The Age, 28 July 2008). Initiatives to improve shelter and infrastructure by international NGOs such as CARE had also been reportedly hampered by the IDPs’ limited access to natural resources compared to local community members, by regular changes in the government’s IDP policy and the need for IDPs to frequently move out of the camp in search of work (CARE, 6 May 2008, pp.10-11).

Conditions in the resettlement sites are better than in the emergency camps, with wooden house providing better shelter. However, most sites lack basic infrastructure such as roads, clean water and electricity (Jakarta Post, 18 August 2009). The houses are reportedly of poor quality and already in need of maintenance and improvements (NTA, 25 July 2010; The Age, 16 June 2009). The resettlement process has been slow to move forward, mainly because of the difficulty in finding land. Tensions with local communities have also been reported, with some communities expressing their reluctance to host the sites. The number of houses available to people who have been displaced has also been limited as the government reserved 60 per cent of the houses in some resettlement areas to the local population and migrants from other regions (La’o Hamutuk, November 2003, p.12).

The residents of the resettlement sites have not been granted ownership of the land on which the houses are built. While some expected the government to pay directly for the land, others thought they would receive support payments out of which they could buy the land. Many claim they never received the money and are now asked by the landowner to pay rent, making some wish to return to the camps (NTA, 25 July 2010). Other problems mentioned include the fact that most sites are in remote places far from markets, schools, health care services and job opportunities (Warung Kopi, 25 March 2010).

### *Food and water*

There is no specific data on the food security or nutritional status of each displaced group but they are likely to be worse off than the general population given their weaker social networks, their lack of access to land and their limited livelihood opportunities. Most of the displaced are reported to have very limited resources and poor access to public facilities (UNDP, 2005, p. 46; UCA News, 2 October 2006; EC, 2006; Li, December 2007). The lack of clean water in the camps and in the resettlement sites reportedly presents very serious problems for residents (NTA, 25 July 2010).

In May 2010, a “food security and vulnerability atlas” (FSVA) covering Indonesia designated most West Timor regencies, in particular Kupang, as particularly vulnerable to food insecurity (WFP, 25 May 2010). In the past years, West Timor has suffered successive droughts which have resulted in harvest failures and further reduced the availability of water. In April 2010, the province was reported to be experiencing yet another serious drought with more than half of the regencies affected, but in July the drought had reportedly not yet had a significant impact on food security (OCHA, 1 May 2010, p.1 and 7 July 2010, p.1).

### *Documentation, land, livelihoods and social integration*

Often marginalised and excluded from local social support systems, many “new citizens” have reportedly been unable to get the identity cards needed to receive social assistance (Li, December 2007). The ID card, which gives access to subsidised rice, gas and education, should be provided free of charge, but it is instead reportedly sold at a cost equivalent to one week’s income (The Age, 16 June 2009).

Access to farming land is very limited for the people in resettlement sites and emergency camps, both as a result of its scarcity and because the majority have long depleted their assets and have no resources left to purchase land. Few alternative livelihood opportunities are available (The Age,

16 June 2009; Writenet, March 2007, p. 6). Houses and property left in East Timor in 1999 have long been occupied, and most people displaced have received no compensation for lost property (Jakarta Post, 28 April 2003).

The majority of the residents of Noelbaki and Tuapukan camps have no access to land and little or no source of alternative income (NTA, 25 July 2010; The Age, 28 July 2008). Many people have reportedly made a living by working on land owned by communities or by local landlords, on a share-cropping basis that has left them barely enough to survive. Others have sold vegetables and animals in local markets, worked as urban labourers or as taxi drivers (Warung Kopi, 25 March 2010; Jakarta Globe, 24 June 2010; UNDP, 2005, p.14).

Lack of access to land ownership is also reported as a major challenge to recovery in resettlement sites (West Australian, 26 July 2008; UCA News, 2 October 2006). Many people were unwilling to move to resettlement sites far from towns because job opportunities were scarce and access to health services limited (CARE, August 2007, p.8).

Even some people who have been able to legally buy land have struggled to get certificates proving their ownership of the land, as they have not had ID cards, because no proper documents have been drawn up to prove land transactions, because the status of land bought on credit has been unclear, or payments have not been completed. There has also been difficulty in determining the boundaries of land which had had been bought collectively (CARE, 6 May 2008, p.8).

In a region with scarce resources and extremely high poverty and unemployment levels, the presence of displaced people has been a constant source of tension with local communities as they have occupied land owned by the community or its members and competed with them for jobs (Jakarta Post, 5 February 2010). The displaced people living in camps or resettlement villages near

the border with Timor-Leste or near the capital Kupang are reportedly also poorly integrated into local communities because of strong cultural differences, in particular in Kupang (CARE, August 2007, pp.5-6). In December 2009, several houses were burned down and six people injured in a clash between local people and residents of resettlement sites in central Kupang sub-district (Jakarta Post, 20 December 2009). More recently, in March 2010, five houses were burned to the ground in violence in Fatuleu sub-district of Kupang.

The social integration of the “new citizens” within the broader West Timor community may be encouraged as they participate more in village and district affairs. In 2006, some complained of discrimination because they were not involved in the village head voting process (ILO, April 2008, p.43). However, in 2009, 28 people who had been displaced ran for seats in the Belu district legislative assembly, with two of them winning seats (Jakarta Post, 18 August 2009).

#### *Access to education*

The harsh living conditions have made it harder for the children of people displaced to attend school. According to CIS Timor, thousands of them cannot go to school because of the economic hardship faced by their parents (Jakarta Post, 10 December 2009). Children have instead to support their family by selling vegetables or newspapers on the street (Jakarta Globe, 24 June 2010).

Their lack of birth certificates and the failure of the government to provide ID cards to all children have also reportedly stopped some displaced children from attending public schools.

## **Durable solutions**

According to the Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs, a number of criteria determine to what extent a durable solution has been achieved. The relevant criteria include:

- a) an adequate standard of living, including, at a minimum, access to adequate food, water, housing, health care and basic education;
  - b) access to employment and livelihoods;
  - c) access to effective mechanisms that restore their housing, land and property or provide them with compensation;
  - d) access to and replacement of personal and other documentation; and
  - e) participation in public affairs at all levels on an equal basis with the resident population.
- (HRC, 9 February 2010, p.3)

While it seems clear that those still living in camps near Kupang have continued to face a very difficult situation with little or no access to basic services, adequate shelter, land ownership or job opportunities, there are also serious doubt that the majority of people resettled since 2003 have been able to achieve durable solutions, as many have reportedly continued to face similar challenges linked to their displacement. These include the absence of infrastructure, the poor quality of housing, the absence of secure tenure, and the lack of access to basic social services; the lack of agricultural land or resources to purchase land has severely reduced their livelihood opportunities and forced many to work as daily labourers with little prospect of moving out of poverty and ending their displacement.

## **National response**

In response to the displacement crisis in 1999, a wide range of actors cooperated to immediately provide emergency assistance, including the central government, the NTT provincial and district governments, and the army and the police. Assistance was also offered until 2003 to repatriate people willing to return. Despite efforts by the government and international agencies to promote peace-building activities and resolve conflict between displaced groups and host communities, many contentious issues such as

land disputes and competition for resources have not been addressed and tensions have remained (UNDP, 2005, p.55).

Official humanitarian assistance officially ended in 2005, although a number of programmes, mainly centred around housing assistance, continued until 2010. A social integration assistance fund was set up in 2005, but it only benefited those who agreed to resettle and integrate with local communities. Many people also failed to register in time and were excluded (Jakarta Post, 2 April 2008). In 2008, the government announced the creation of a training programme to improve the farming and home industry skills of people who had been displaced (Jakarta Post, 1 August 2008).

In recent years, the issue of financial claims by families displaced to West Timor or other provinces has been complicated by the lack of reliable data on the number of beneficiaries, by administrative hurdles, poor local government capacity and above all corruption (Warung Kopi, 25 March 2005; Jakarta Post, 2 April 2008; Jakarta Post, 21 October 2005). Displaced people have protested, sometimes violently, over the insufficiency and poor management of government assistance (Jakarta Post, 3 April 2008; Tempo Interaktif, 4 December 2006; Kompas, 21 March 2006). In response, to ensure assistance reached beneficiaries, the government decided in May 2009 to use postal orders to directly reach almost 4,700 households in five provinces across Sulawesi. Each family received Rp.5 million (\$480) (Jakarta Post, 19 May 2009). However, in January 2010, it was reported that close to 2,000 households in South Sulawesi reported they had not received the payments. In June 2010, representatives of the “new citizens” in West Timor requested that the government provide the same financial assistance to each of the estimated 15,000 families there (NTA, 25 July 2010).

## International response

As in most other former conflict-affected areas in Indonesia, all IDP programmes in West Timor have now ended. CARE ran a project from 2008 to 2009 in support of 3,000 households living in Belu and Kupang districts, including both displaced and host communities (CARE, 6 May 2008, p.1). Between 2005 and 2007, CARE conducted a livelihoods and health care programme with thousands of former IDPs and host communities. Building on traditional customs to help the displaced integrate, CARE’s programme sought to improve their access to land, shelter, public infrastructure and income generating skills. CARE also facilitated land certification to try to reduce the number of land disputes (CARE, 7 December 2007). Other international agencies involved in IDP assistance programmes have included Church World Service (CWS) and Oxfam GB. Between 2006 and 2007, Oxfam GB helped 2,000 displaced families resettle and build transitional shelters in areas with improved access to safe water and sanitation, and increased food and income security.

The majority of international agencies currently in West Timor focus on food security, disaster preparedness and development. These include Action Against Hunger (*Action Contre la Faim* or ACF), Save the Children UK, World Vision, Plan International, UNICEF and the World Food Programme. The European Commission has since 2009 provided €2 million (\$2.6 million) in support of humanitarian projects intended to help vulnerable groups in NTT province improve their nutritional status and reinforce community resilience against natural disasters. In 2010, it supported ACF and CARE Netherlands (EC, January 2010).

**Note:** This is a summary of IDMC’s internal displacement profile on West Timor/Indonesia. The full profile is available online [here](#).

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The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people.

In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org).

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