

**STOPPING AS SUCCESS:
TRANSITIONING TO LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT**

CENTRE OF STUDIES FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT (CEPAD) AND INTERPEACE: A PARTNERSHIP TRANSITION IN TIMOR-LESTE

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STOPPING AS SUCCESS

This case study was developed as part of Stopping As Success (SAS), implemented by a consortium consisting of Peace Direct, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, and Search for Common Ground, with support and funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). SAS is a collaborative learning project that aims to study the dynamics at play when ending a development program, and provide guidelines on how to ensure locally led development. In doing this, SAS looks beyond the technical aspects of an exit strategy to identify examples that demonstrate a transition toward locally led development. The case studies produced by the project highlight the past and present realities faced by international non-government organizations (INGOs), local civil society organizations (CSOs), and local NGOs, focusing in particular on how partnerships evolve during transitions or devolvement to local entities.

I. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

In countries emerging from long-standing and intensive conflict, partnerships with international organizations that can provide access to resources and case studies of what has worked in other conflict resolution and peacebuilding contexts can prove invaluable. Timor-Leste, as a country that not only emerged from long-standing occupation and war but fought for its independence, is an interesting case study through which to examine how such partnerships can best be constructed.

This case study provides an overview of the partnership between Interpeace, an INGO, and the Centre of Studies for Peace and Development (CEPAD), a local organization established in Timor-Leste. Interpeace provided ongoing financial, technical, and capacity-building support to CEPAD from its creation in 2007 through to its transition from program-driven entity to fully-fledged NGO. In 2015, Interpeace made the decision to phase out its financial support to CEPAD, but remains engaged in an advisory capacity as and when it is called upon. This transition provides a useful example of how an INGO can support the creation and growth of a locally led organization.



ACRONYMS

CSO	civil society organization
CEPAD	Centre of Studies for Peace and Development
PAR	participatory action research
FAR	Frameworks for Assessing Resilience
INGO	international non-governmental organization
MISEREOR	German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation
MoU	memorandum of understanding
NGO	non-governmental organization
PAR	participatory action research
PDF	Peace and Democracy Foundation
PRDP	Program of Research and Dialogue for Peace
SAS	Stopping As Success
UNMIT	United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

TYPE OF TRANSITION

The partnership between Interpeace and CEPAD is a case of progressive financial disengagement, with the former having contributed for many years to the organizational development of the latter. The financial transition began around 2014 and was fully completed by September 2016. Interpeace provides ongoing support in other areas.

This case study is based on a brief desk review and data collected through 21 key informant interviews with CEPAD and Interpeace staff members, UN agencies, government representatives, civil society actors and international NGOs. The majority of interviews were conducted in Timor-Leste by Peace Direct's Senior Researcher, Farzana Ahmed, and Timorese researcher, Eugenia Correia.

2. CONTEXT

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, with a population of around 1.3 million people, emerged as an independent nation-state in May 2002. This followed decades of conflict and a long history of occupation by Portugal (1500–1975) and then Indonesia (1976–1999). During Portuguese rule Timor-Leste was largely considered a poor and insignificant colony, and as such little focus was put on its social and economic development.¹ Toward the end of the Portuguese colonial era, some investment was made in the education sector, although this reached only a small section of the population and was mostly tied to the Catholic Church's mission to “civilize” the Timorese.²

In December 1975, soon after the Portuguese left Timor-Leste, and just nine days after the Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor-Leste (Fretilin) declared independence, the Indonesian military invaded. The following year, Indonesia declared Timor-Leste its twenty-seventh province. Although Indonesian forces put in place some degree of infrastructure development, this was offset by extreme cultural and political repression. Indonesian rule was characterized by forced displacement and mass migration, with thousands fleeing their homes to resettle in rural and mountainous areas that lacked basic amenities for survival. Many Timorese found themselves caught up in the violent conflict taking place between Timorese groups and the Indonesian military. In total, repressive measures led to the deaths of around one-fifth (as many as 200,000 people) of the population.

The Timorese population campaigned tirelessly against the Indonesianization of their institutions, culture, and society. In November 1991, 200 protestors were killed by the Indonesian military in what became known as the Santa Cruz massacre. From that point on, the Timor-Leste independence movement began

gaining traction and support internationally, including from the United Nations (UN). In a UN-sponsored referendum held in August 1999, 78.5 percent of the population voted for independence. The United Nations Transitional Administration in Timor-Leste (UNTAET) was then set up to oversee the transition period, which extended until the country's first democratic elections in May 2002.

In 2006, Timor-Leste experienced its first major political crisis since independence. This initially involved clashes between army factions in the capital Dili, but eventually led to unrest throughout the country and the displacement of 150,000 people. The creation of CEPAD came as a direct response to this political crisis (explored further in Section 4 below).

Aid context

International assistance to Timor-Leste precedes the country's independence. In the early 1990s, foreign aid was mostly targeted at providing humanitarian assistance to displaced populations. When the vote for independence took place in 1999, there was an influx of aid agencies into Timor-Leste. The United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET) operated between 2002 to 2006, later replaced by the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), which operated as a peacekeeping mission from 2006 to 2012. Between 1999 and 2006, around US\$3 billion entered the country through UN missions and other INGOs. Prior to 2002, aid money was mainly focused on humanitarian assistance, and the international community's presence was largely welcomed. Then, from 2002 onwards, aid agencies shifted their focus to longer-term development and state-building work. Despite billions of dollars in aid being channeled into Timor-Leste, some have claimed that only a limited portion of the aid money reached ordinary Timorese citizens³. In 2018, official development assistance to Timor-Leste was approximately US\$244.8 million (\$181.73 million in grants and \$61.6 million in concessional loans).

In 2012, UNMIT ended its peacekeeping operation. This had knock-on effects for other INGOs, with fewer funding opportunities available due to the international development community deprioritizing the country. Many have questioned the effectiveness of programs implemented by the UN and other aid

agencies during this period. One interviewee from the government noted that sustainability was not a focus for international actors, and that much of the aid money was spent either on short-term relief projects or funding the lifestyles of international consultants and aid workers. For one president of a long-standing Timorese CSO, the UN's decision to close down its office came as a surprise: "... they suddenly stopped funding. We had to restructure ourselves. We resized from 500 staff to 20."

The withdrawal of the UN and other aid actors from Timor-Leste also impacted the local economy. According to one interviewee, an increased international presence meant "... economic circulation in the country ... expats were renting rooms and houses at the district and municipality level." Another interviewee described the mass exodus of international aid actors as leading to economic instability and financial pressures on the restaurants, cafes, and landlords that had relied on the flow of funds. Moreover, many young people who had worked for international organizations found themselves suddenly unemployed.

The role of civil society

Civil society in Timor-Leste has been shaped by various historical and political events. Before the Portuguese colonial era, Timorese society was structured mainly around traditional kingdoms. These local power structures persisted to some extent with the arrival of the Portuguese, but over time civil society activities became closely linked to the increasingly influential Catholic Church. During the Indonesian occupation, CSOs focused on the struggle for independence, with many going underground to mobilize resistance. These movements were mainly student-led and supported by the Timorese diaspora community abroad.

The influx of foreign aid money into Timor-Leste provided new opportunities for civil society. Many organizations previously at the forefront of the independence struggle were now part of the growing movement of international and local organizations seeking to build strong institutions and structures, as well as to respond to the socioeconomic needs of the population. Some have claimed that, during this time, Timorese CSOs who once focused on advocating for political change, took on a more service delivery-oriented role.



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According to the director of a national CSO that was a major player before and after independence, Timorese CSOs had to step up and provide shelter, food, and health care to the entire population, as there was no budget after independence and the government had not yet been formed. As the director put it: "We were practically running the country."

New Timorese organizations started to form in direct response to the international funding opportunities presented. Some have questioned the sustainability of such organizations, with one UN employee observing: "If you came here in the early 2000s, you'd see that there were many registered CSOs in this country. But when the UN left only a few sustained themselves."

3. THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN INTERPEACE AND CEPAD

Interpeace is an INGO, headquartered in Geneva, that supports locally led peacebuilding initiatives in 21 countries across Latin America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia (with an exclusive focus on Timor-Leste). Interpeace describes itself as an organization that "... tailors its approach to each society and ensures that the work is locally driven. Interpeace believes that every society has what it needs to build peace. Our role is to support societies to harness their strengths. Together with local partners, we jointly develop peacebuilding programs."⁴

The origins of Interpeace provide an interesting parallel to CEPAD's own organizational journey. In May 1994, the UN created the War-torn Societies Project to assist international and national actors in better responding to the challenges of countries emerging



from war. The project initially operated in Eritrea, Mozambique, Guatemala, and the Somali regions of Somaliland and Puntland, transitioning from a UN initiative to an independent NGO in 2000. In 2006, it changed its name to Interpeace to reflect the new scope and scale of its work.

Interpeace began its work in Timor-Leste in 2007, with CEPAD established the same year as a direct response to the country's 2006 political crisis, as well as to tackle ongoing issues of instability and corruption. Focused primarily on issues of anti-corruption and accountability, CEPAD works to increase community access to information and influence public servants to operate with transparency and openness.

The Program of Research and Dialogue for Peace (PRDP) in Timor-Leste

The origins of CEPAD lie in a joint peacebuilding program with Interpeace. Interpeace began its work in Timor-Leste with a Timorese NGO called the Peace and Democracy Foundation (PDF), led by José Ramos Horta, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate who was one of the leaders of the resistance movement during the Indonesian occupation. As part of Interpeace's initial connection with PDF, it shared experiences of its work in Rwanda, which were seen by Timorese stakeholders as highly relevant to their own situation. In response to the violent crisis of 2006, Interpeace shifted its support to the creation of the Program of Research and Dialogue for Peace (PRDP).

The driving question behind the formation of the PRDP, as described by CEPAD's director João Boavida, was why, despite numerous efforts at dialogue spearheaded by the Church, government, and civil society, Timor-Leste had suffered crises every two years since independence. The objective of the PRDP program was therefore to bring Timorese communities face-to-face with key stakeholders in order to discuss the obstacles to peace facing the country, and what could be done to address them. The PRDP was implemented in three phases between 2007 and 2009:

- Phase I consisted of mapping the key obstacles to peace and development. These included the promotion of individual and party interests over the national interest; an ineffective formal judicial system; a culture of impunity; a historical review of the resistance and the occupation; and corruption,

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a research approach that emphasizes community participation and locally led approaches. PAR entails researchers working closely with communities and other participants to jointly understand particular problems and outline potential solutions.⁶ PAR inverts the top-down dynamics of more traditional research approaches, which more clearly distinguish between the researchers and the participants.

collusion, and nepotism (known in Timor-Leste as KKN).

- Phase 2 consisted of the formulation of recommendations based on this mapping.
- Phase 3 consisted of implementing the action plans aimed at addressing the identified obstacles.

In order to ensure ownership of the research process, CEPAD and Interpeace adopted a participatory action research (PAR) approach from the outset of their work together, with Interpeace sharing its lessons learned from Rwanda and elsewhere. As noted by CEPAD: “Taking a participatory and inclusive approach to researching conflict-related issues in Timor-Leste is central to CEPAD’s core belief that sustainable peace can only be achieved if the process of addressing key obstacles to, or strengthening capacities for, peace are driven by those from within the society, according to a broad-based understanding of the dynamics and opportunities that exist in that particular context.”⁵ This belief that the “how” is just as important as the “what” when it comes to research continues to be central to CEPAD’s work.

CEPAD: from program to NGO

Interpeace made the decision to connect with João Boavida, a Timorese professional with extensive experience in programs ranging from humanitarian and emergency to development and peacebuilding, to champion the initiative and to support him in creating CEPAD. Boavida had recently returned from Africa, having worked with the UN. It is important to note Boavida’s personality, experience, and leadership skills were crucial to the early success of the PRDP and to the establishment of CEPAD. Based on experiences in other contexts, Interpeace had learned the importance of working with someone who is credible, has the ability to bring together conflicting sides under a common platform, and is able to take full ownership of a local organization and its mission. Their process for identifying the right person entails asking leaders across several sectors – such as civil society, the police, and the political elite – who they believe would be a strong convener. Boavida was consistently identified as the best person. As such, Interpeace invested time and effort to bringing him on board. Initially, Boavida required convincing, but ultimately he was excited at the prospect of setting up a Timorese-led organization to address the root causes of conflict and corruption.

After Boavida came onboard, CEPAD was registered as an independent NGO and association under Timorese law.⁷ Following CEPAD’s establishment in 2007, the PRDP became a jointly run program, with Interpeace seeking additional funding from donor countries, including Germany, Portugal, Ireland, and Norway. These donors provided initial funding for CEPAD, while Interpeace provided capacity-building support as the NGO found its feet.

CEPAD’s stated mission is to “... use collaborative research and interactive dialogue to advance the understanding of conflict-related issues and the major challenges to the consolidation of democracy in Timor-Leste.”⁸ As Boavida describes it: “CEPAD is a home-grown and organic civil society organization with its own priorities. Priorities were identified by the very communities we work with, rather than an organization that is externally manufactured by funding pressure and donor prerequisites and demands. CEPAD worked differently. First, we looked to set priorities that were identified by communities based on which of those priorities became the main program for CEPAD, or the rationale behind CEPAD’s formation.”

Today, CEPAD is recognized as a leading organization in the areas of peacebuilding and anti-corruption. Along with its core research team, CEPAD has District Liaison Officers in each of Timor-Leste’s 13 districts in order to ensure participation throughout the country. CEPAD is governed by a Board of Directors and supported by a General Assembly, which includes key stakeholders from the government, the military, civil society, and other sectors of Timorese society. CEPAD has deliberately selected influential board members in order to increase the likelihood of impact on government policies, in particular with regard to corruption prevention. As described by the Board’s Director: “CEPAD is really niche in Timor-Leste, as it supports both communities and the government.”

Interpeace: an active but trusting partner

From the outset of their partnership, Interpeace supported CEPAD’s technical work in areas such as grant applications, financial management, and software. At times, Interpeace was able to provide financial support critical to cover the core operational capacities needed to ensure CEPAD’s sustainability, something that was deemed essential in a context

characterized by diminishing donor interest in Timor-Leste. Interpeace does not have a representative or an office in Timor-Leste, but rather places its trust in CEPAD as its partner. This is a relatively unique model for INGOs, which tend to establish a presence in countries either through specific programs or by registering a local entity.

The cooperation between Interpeace and CEPAD was formalized in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in 2011. This MoU recognized the complementarity between the two organizations and the value-added of working together, making clear that this was a mutually beneficial partnership. As described by a CEPAD staff member: “Interpeace is a unique organization. Even though they provide us with funds, they don’t monitor every day what we do. They have trust in us to implement these programs.” This sentiment was shared by a member of CEPAD’s General Assembly, who interacted with Interpeace on a number of occasions during meetings: “Interpeace provided ideas, experiences, but we always revise them so it fits the Timorese context. Interpeace never forced CEPAD staff to adopt their ways. They were clear that things should be adapted to Timorese ways.” Interpeace has not requested representation on CEPAD’s Board of Directors, who are all Timorese, nor has it got involved in the selection of members of CEPAD’s General Assembly, which contributes ideas and recommendations to the organization’s decision-making.

This “silent partnership” is a deliberate strategy by Interpeace, which it uses everywhere it works. As one senior staff member told us: “It’s not about sticking our flag in the sand and saying ‘we’re here.’ The premise of Interpeace has never been about representing ourselves.”

Interpeace used Boavida as the main conduit through which it connects with CEPAD, playing a supportive role as and when required. Interpeace has, for example, contributed ideas and recommendations to reports written by CEPAD, and has also supported with conducting program evaluations. In addition, Interpeace has not only provided funding, but has also delivered ongoing training to CEPAD staff on financial systems and management, as well as developing program budgets. Interpeace’s Head of Finance has conducted visits to directly train staff, including in the use of accounting software.

4. MAPPING THE TRANSITION

Interpeace’s approach to and communication on transition

From the beginning of their partnership, Interpeace put its trust in CEPAD’s director and his team of researchers and officers to lead the strategic management and implementation of all project activities. This trust enabled openness on both sides when the time came for Interpeace to transition away from financial support to CEPAD.

Between April 2014 and December 2015, Interpeace initiated the Frameworks for Assessing Resilience (FAR) program in Timor-Leste, Guatemala, and Liberia. The objective of FAR, funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), was to “... understand resilience to violent conflict from a local perspective and to determine how existing capacities for resilience can be leveraged and strengthened to better contribute to sustainable peace.”⁹ Through FAR, CEPAD led a multi-phased process to better understand sources of resilience in Timor-Leste. As described by Interpeace: “A resilience approach to peacebuilding gives particular importance to processes by which societies collectively and peacefully transform relationships to address the factors which enabled conflict to emerge in the first place.”¹⁰

Process of financial disengagement

Interpeace began the process of disengaging financially from CEPAD at the end of the FAR program. As international interest in Timor-Leste began to wane, so did funding sources. Initially, Interpeace was able to provide financial support to CEPAD through its own core, unrestricted funding, but this proved unsustainable

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in the long term. Interpeace, having witnessed CEPAD progressively adopt a more independent role in pursuing funding and collaboration opportunities, and in leading the implementation of projects, came to the conclusion that CEPAD could successfully continue on its own. Interpeace therefore advised CEPAD that its direct funding support would come to an end in two years. As Interpeace told us: "... we can sometimes invest from our own funds, but the objective of our work is to build sustainable organizations that can make a contribution to their society." At the time, CEPAD was not solely reliant on Interpeace funding, and therefore the gradual financial disengagement was not seen as jeopardizing CEPAD's operations and sustainability.

Boavida acknowledged that CEPAD was well placed to seek financial autonomy from Interpeace: "... finance wise, we were able to attract a few key donors, and that is how we moved on. However difficult the situation was, we ensured that we didn't bring in just any project. Any project we were attracted to had to complement our main work."

Members of CEPAD were broadly complimentary about Interpeace's approach to the transition, noting that the spirit of communication and collaboration remained unchanged. Members of the Board pointed out that the transition was intentionally gradual, and frequent mention of the exit strategy was made during the two year disengagement period, including a focus on finding alternative funding sources. At the time, CEPAD was also receiving funding from USAID, while MISEREOR (the German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation) had shown interest in pursuing its financial support. MISEREOR has since gone on to provide funding to CEPAD.

Regarding Interpeace's communication on the transition, the decision was discussed directly with Boavida. Though Interpeace did not visit Timor-Leste to communicate the decision at the time, two staff members later visited to participate in strategic planning discussions. No exit events or ceremonies were held, largely because only the financial element of Interpeace's support was coming to an end, not the broader relationship.

By September 2016, Interpeace's financial disengagement was complete. Since then, however, it has continued to provide technical and advisory support to CEPAD as

needed. As a CEPAD staff member told us: "Interpeace stopped the funds in 2016 but the relationship continued. Whenever we have any difficulties, we contact Interpeace and get their ideas and comments on our work and situations that we are facing." CEPAD has continued to share updated financial reports with Interpeace for their input.

Positive outcomes

Since its establishment, CEPAD has grown into a trusted and credible organization, able to independently seek international funding and composed of a diverse range of individuals reflecting the major segments of Timorese society. Notably, CEPAD's emphasis on inclusive and representative participatory approaches has been validated by the Timorese population, with the nation's leaders – including the President – and civil society all highlighting the importance of CEPAD's role in implementing innovative peacebuilding projects. As noted by Boavida: "... by 2015, when we were quite well established, we had a strategic plan and clear vision and mission. We were commanding quite an authority in terms of promoting community-based consultation, interactive dialogue, and promoting community participation. This was thanks to PAR – Participatory Action Research – that was our signature and it remains our signature."

The clearest positive outcome of the partnership is that Interpeace's transition has not interfered with CEPAD being considered "... the 'go-to' organization for anti-corruption" and being "... recognized for promoting inclusive democracy by providing safe spaces for community dialogue."¹¹ In 2017, CEPAD signed an MoU with five key anti-corruption state institutions, including the Anti-Corruption Commission (KAK) and the National Human Rights Institution (PDHJ). CEPAD also became the first civil society organization ever to sign an MoU with the Public Prosecutor's Office. According to Interpeace: "... these agreements will further increase CEPAD's authority and legitimacy to engage the public in demanding quality basic services and accountability in government."¹²

Another positive outcome of the Interpeace transition has been the establishment of a national consultative group, which involves directors from seven government ministries working collectively on good governance. Although this had already been planned by CEPAD, Interpeace's financial disengagement accelerated

CEPAD's goal of becoming Timor-Leste's key organization dedicated to anti-corruption work.

Sustainability: ongoing advisory support

Post transition, Interpeace and CEPAD remain close partners. According to CEPAD: "... our relationship remains pretty much the same minus the cash assistance." The two organizations have signed a new MoU, which enables Interpeace to continue providing technical assistance as and when requested by CEPAD. Interpeace has been available to support CEPAD in other ways as well, for instance by lending money to cover the costs of CEPAD's ongoing work for USAID, which is not able to provide advance funding due to internal restrictions. The same support has been provided in instances where funding transfers from MISEREOR have been delayed. Advancing money for projects is a severe challenge for most Timorese NGOs, and Boavida highlighted Interpeace's flexibility in providing this bridging support despite its official financial disengagement. Interpeace has also supported CEPAD in finding additional funding from other donors, including through technical support in writing bid proposals.

In addition, Interpeace has contributed to physical infrastructure that has been used by CEPAD beyond its financial transition. Together, Interpeace and CEPAD have built five Peace Houses in Timor-Leste, which are based on the traditional custom of *nahe-bitu boot*, or "rolling out the mat" to discuss and resolve disputes¹³. Peace Houses are not CEPAD offices, but rather are "... safe, neutral and community owned venues [that] act as a bridge between municipalities and Timor-Leste's capital by fostering local debates and linking these to issues of national importance."¹⁴ Interpeace also connected CEPAD with Steve Killelea, an entrepreneur who initiated the Global Peace Index, who went on to provide funding for three Peace Houses. As Boavida explained: "... the Peace Houses were built by local communities themselves, they owned it right from day one. Unlike other construction projects, CEPAD gave the ownership right from day one to local communities."

Financial sustainability

One of CEPAD's current donors has noted that one of the organization's strengths has been its management of the partnership with Interpeace, and the fact that this relationship remains strong. This is important in a

context such as Timor-Leste, where several NGOs are facing the pressures of international funding cuts.

However, with Interpeace no longer able to provide finance, CEPAD has faced difficulties in finding sufficient funding to cover its core and operational costs, which are not covered by existing donors. MISEREOR, for example, exclusively funds project work in the area of anti-corruption, including training public servants, the police, and the military on corruption prevention. As a result, CEPAD has had to downsize its staff and decrease costs. Boavida noted that the "... ongoing two-year political crisis that we are now living through between the presidency and executive has impacted negatively on our work and therefore we have reduced the number of staff in order to survive. We cut down around 30 percent. We are now about 12 people in CEPAD in terms of permanent staff." Staff members' salaries were gradually reduced to soften their transition out of the organization, as opposed to them being made immediately redundant. Work also continues through an extensive volunteer network.

As noted by the Board: "... the challenge for CEPAD is that it is dependent on donors. It is hard to implement big projects across the country without funding. We dream that one day CEPAD will become a public institution to provide training and education to students and public servants about corruption. We hope that CEPAD becomes an institution because most Timorese lack understanding of corruption. In institutions they can also make a profit for running their programs, which would sustain the institution itself."

CEPAD's unique role in Timor-Leste as a middle ground between government and communities has also brought with it several challenges. As a result of its aim of holding the government to account through constructive critique and recommendations, CEPAD has always been reluctant to accept direct funding from the government. Boavida explained that the current political environment has negatively affected CEPAD's ability to seek further sources of international funding: "Donors are either scared of putting in more money, or they have to abide by the commitment of only working with government through bilateral arrangements, as a result of which there is a shrinking space for organic and home-grown organizations like CEPAD."

5. KEY LESSONS

Strong leadership is an important factor when creating and sustaining an NGO that can operate successfully when financial support from an INGO partner ends. Interpeace worked hard to bring Boavida into the PRDP, a recognition of the fact that his leadership skills and personality would be crucial to the program's (and later CEPAD's) success. Given his extensive experience with peacebuilding in Timor-Leste, and his work with the UN, Boavida was well placed to take the initiative in setting up CEPAD. He credits the success of CEPAD to the fact that it is a "... homegrown and organic organization with its own priorities, and which includes participation of stakeholders at every level – from communities to top government officials." As is the case in most post-conflict situations, the role of homegrown organizations is often to empower citizens and amplify their concerns. CEPAD's leadership has to continually manage the political space in order to ensure the participation of government officials to address communities' identified priorities, while also being creative in looking for funding opportunities.

Adopting bottom-up, locally led models from the outset – as opposed to time-bound, top-down projects – contributes to a more sustainable transition process. CEPAD's approach to PAR enables local ownership through involving communities and other key stakeholders in identifying the root causes of problems and possible solutions. This contributes to greater sustainability due to a range of local actors, rather than just one organization, being involved from the outset. Although CEPAD has had to scale back on staff, it continues to work with an extensive network of volunteers in communities it has engaged with over the past decade. This network would not have developed as successfully as it has were it not for CEPAD's commitment to participatory research approaches.

It can be challenging for organizations who are reluctant to accept funding from their governments to achieve financial sustainability when INGOs withdraw funding. CEPAD has been successful in retaining its independence despite working on initiatives that are highly politically sensitive, such as preventing and combating corruption. Since Interpeace's financial transition, however, CEPAD's director has found it increasingly challenging to push back against his board members, who have recommended that CEPAD apply for money from the civil society fund of the Prime Minister's office. Although CEPAD is known as the go-to organization when it comes to anti-corruption and peacebuilding initiatives in Timor-Leste, shrinking civil society space and lack of external funding makes direct governmental funding potentially both an organizational opportunity and a challenge, which may be difficult to reconcile.

NGOs that do not accept funding from every available international source are better able to operate sustainably over the long term. CEPAD has stuck closely to its values by not indiscriminately accepting international funding. It is discerning in its choices, ensuring that any funding it does accept furthers both its strategy and mission. In Timor-Leste more broadly, many CSOs were created in the post-independence period in response to the influx of donor funding. The only CSOs that have survived since donors began withdrawing funding are those that aligned their pursuit of funding with long-term, locally led strategies. CEPAD has sought to learn from these experiences, and works hard to stick to its values when considering both international and domestic sources of financing.

It is possible for INGOs to find creative ways of continuing to support locally led organizations and initiatives after transitions have concluded. As noted above, one of CEPAD's current donors recognized the importance of Interpeace's continued support post-financial disengagement. They also noted that INGOs are generally weak in this area: "... when contracts end, relationships end." The partnership between CEPAD and Interpeace demonstrates that ending a relationship is not an inevitability, and that non-financial forms of support can be extremely valuable.

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