



Disability Survey in Four Municipalities in Timor-Leste: A Summary of Findings

Introduction

Understandings of the experiences of people with disability are yet to be captured at a population level on a systemic basis in Timor-Leste. To commence this process, in 2014 the Asosiasaun Defisiensia Timor-Leste (ADTL)¹ commissioned *Insight* to undertake a survey² (the survey) of people with disability in Timor-Leste to understand the opportunities, barriers and issues they face.

This paper provides an overview of the findings of the survey in the areas of education, information, employment, family and social life, justice and health. This summary includes key issues for consideration, including:

- the limited access people with disability have to *education*, with 40 percent of respondents never accessing education
- the need for expansion of *employment* opportunities for people with disability, with self-employment identified as the most common form of employment
- the influence *family* of people with disability have as both a source of support and a barrier to participation, indicting the need for continued aware-raising and support for families about the rights of people with disability; and
- the impact physical and attitudinal barriers have on the access people with disability have to health, education and employment opportunities.

Objectives and Methodology

The objective of the survey was to provide baseline data about the lives and experiences of people with disability in Timor-Leste. Inquiry focused on the following:

- Demographic information

¹ The Asosiasaun Defisiensia Timor-Leste (ADTL) is the national coordinating and representative umbrella body for organisations of and for people with disability in Timor-Leste. The organisation was known as the Disability Working Group (DWG) until December 2013 and now has 18 active member organisations.

² ADTL acknowledges the financial support of the Australian Government which made this research possible.

- Understanding *experiences* and *access* in relation to: education (formal and informal); livelihood programs; employment; health; social life and familial relationships; justice (including judicial or customary law) and exposure to discrimination and violence; and
- Greater knowledge about organisations that currently advocate for the rights of people in Timor-Leste.

Insight used the following methodology to gather the information for its report:

- *Sample method and size*: a purposive-proportional sampling method to identify the participants in its research and based its knowledge of potential participants on lists from disability organisations in the selected areas. The *sample size* was 300 people with disability, all aged 15 years or above and where able to express their opinion themselves or with assistance.³
- *Demographics*: 183 males and 117 females with disability were interviewed as part of the survey. The majority of respondents (180 or 60%) were single, with one third residing in Dili.
- *Locations*: Four districts in Timor-Leste: Aileu, Dili, Ermera, Liquica.
- Interviews were the primary method of data collection.

Summary of Findings and Implications for ADTL

The following summarises the key findings of the survey in the areas of demographics, access to education and information, employment, social protection and family and public life, justice and health. In each section, it provides some implications for the work of ADTL. The findings and recommendations are presented with recognition that the survey was relatively limited in scope and there is a continuing need for more comprehensive research on disability in Timor-Leste.

Demographics - Summary

More males (183) than females (117) with disability were interviewed as part of the survey and the majority of respondents were single (180 or 60%), with one third residing in Dili. Forty percent of respondents (120 people) indicated they had children, with the number of children ranging from 1-11.

Data quality

The reliability and breadth of data about people with disability in Timor-Leste is still evolving. The underlying issue is the lack of systematic collection of data about disability/support needs of people in Timor-Leste. As such, where this survey

³ The sample of 300 people in the 4 districts has a 5% margin of error.

disaggregated data by elements of identity, it is not known whether this demographic data is representative of the population of people with disability in Timor-Leste.

Demographics - Implications for ADTL: Given the lack of systemic collection of data about people with disability in Timor-Leste, it is recommended that ADTL continue to advocate to Government for the adoption of the Washington Group Short Set of Question in data collection mechanisms of Government, non-Government and international organisations in Timor-Leste, including the disaggregation of this data by gender. ADTL could also investigate further whether people with disability who have children have any particular support requirements.

Access to Education and Information – Summary

Access to education was identified as an issue for people with disability, with two-fifths of respondents never accessing education. Of those who have accessed education, the most common level of completion was some level of primary school, with nearly all respondents accessing government schools. The interaction between an individual's condition and the physical and social environment has a significant impact on ability to access or continue education, with respondents identifying physical accessibility of school facilities and infrastructure to get to school impacting their ability to attend. One third of respondents also encountered attitudinal barriers which impacted their participation; whilst lack of financial capacity also impacted on continuation of education opportunities.

These barriers to accessing education could have impact on how people with disability access education. In the month before the survey, most respondents identified using audio-visual (television and radio) as preferred mechanisms for information. Reading a book or participating in community meetings was also identified but was less common than audio-visual mechanisms.

Education and information - Implications for ADTL: Information from respondents about their experiences with education indicates the need for ADTL to focus advocacy on inclusive education, focusing on physical access to Government education facilities and attitudes towards students with disability. ADTL could also investigate how students with disability can access financial support to reduce this barrier to their studies.

Based on the preferences expressed in the survey about mechanisms for accessing education, it is recommended that a variety of communication mechanisms be used for communicating with people with disability, with particular emphasis on visual and audio methods. It is also worth noting that there was no question relating to internet access, so ADTL may wish to investigate this further.

Access to Employment - Summary

Self-employment was the most common form of employment, followed by unemployment or working in a family business without pay. One third of respondents indicated their employment was permanent whilst lack of transport was identified as a key barrier.

Education - Implications for ADTL: More research could be done about the employment situation of people with disability. However, given the responses from the survey, ADTL could focus advocacy or other support on diversifying employment opportunities for people with disability and encouraging secure (permanent) employment opportunities.

Social Protection and Family and Public Life

Findings indicate that family is a key component in the lives of people with disability, both in providing support and in influencing access to community and other activities. Many respondents lived with their family (either parents or other family members) but indicated that their family's attitude had a significant affect (many indicating negatively) their enjoyment of public activities. Access to financial resources to support business ventures or other needs was limited.

Social Protection, Family and Public Life - Implications for ADTL: These findings indicate the importance of attitudes – particularly amongst family and friends – on the ability of people with disability to participate in public and community life. It is recommended that ADTL and partners undertake work on community attitudes about people with disability and include families in this work.

Access to Justice

Nine respondents spoke about access to justice, indicating they had filed a case within the last 6 months. This relatively small number of respondents does not indicate whether people are having trouble accessing the justice system or whether they are not subject to instances requiring support (and therefore do not need to file a case). Of those who needed some form of assistance, local community leaders, Police and family members figured prominently as sources of support. It was also these same members of community who impacted a person with a disability's ability to progress their concerns,

Justice - Implications for ADTL: These findings indicate the importance of working with local community leaders, Police and family members to ensure they are receptive of people with disability when people with disability approach them for support.

Access to Health Care - Summary

Community clinics were the most likely locations for accessing health care, followed by the National Hospital. Respondents indicated that if they had faced barriers, these related to physical access, attitudes of staff, need for assistance with paperwork and lack of transport. Women who accessed Maternal and Child Health services indicated they received enough support.

Health - Implications for ADTL: These findings indicate that access to community clinics is important for people with disability and ADTL could consider this in its advocacy about health. The lack of physical access and staff attitudes need to be included in ADTL's work.