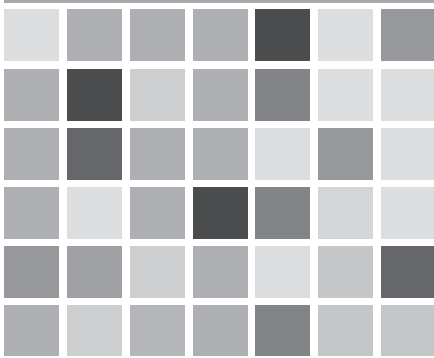


Helping create sustainable police forces in Timor-Leste



Experience in Timor-Leste shows that reconstituting police forces in countries torn by violence requires much more than putting boots on the ground.

This year, Timor-Leste will celebrate a decade of independence from centuries of rule by foreign powers. Establishing the institutions of a viable democracy is no easy matter for the new country which is facing many complex issues simultaneously.

Assistance from friends and neighbours is helping Timor-Leste set up solid foundations for the future and a significant component of Australia's development assistance since 2004 has been directed toward strengthening the capacity of the Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste (PNTL).

The Timor-Leste Police Development Program (TLPDP), implemented by the AFP in conjunction with AusAID, was initially relatively small. In 2006, Timor-Leste was wracked by violence involving former soldiers that later spread to wider sections of the community. The Timor-Leste government sought additional assistance in the wake of the upheaval and last year the Federal Government announced it would boost the program and provide \$53.7 million in funding over two years. It is expected that more than 130 AFP members will be deployed to Timor-Leste under the program: about 80 to assist the TLPDP and the rest to

work with the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste.

TLPDP Commander Grant Edwards said that from the beginning, the program has taken an innovative approach, employing people who have expertise and experience outside of direct police work to contribute.

"The program recognises that solely deploying police officers alone, or boots on the ground as it is colloquially termed, which has so often happened in the past, is in itself an imperfect means to achieve change within a police institution," Commander Edwards said.

"Just as doctors do not build hospitals, or lawyers build courts, the program recognises that police alone do not – and cannot – build police institutions. The practicalities of police building involve an understanding of much more: of politics, of history, of culture, of identity, of past efforts, of resistance, and the emotions and actions they arouse.

"Ever since the inception of the TLPDP program in 2004, the thinking has been to seek a blend of individuals with a police background, either serving police officers or those with more enabling backgrounds in building up the internal

apparatus of an organisation. Accordingly, we have working for us current serving police officers as well as individuals with backgrounds in strategic planning, human resourcing, information technology, policy and management."

TLPDP Senior Policy Advisor Gordon Peake is one of the non-police contributors to the enhanced program. Several years ago, Dr Peake wrote an analysis of the International Deployment Group's police-building work under the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands. In that paper, Dr Peake said that while the IDG program demonstrated that the AFP had learned from other international police-building missions, a greater focus was needed on the human skills of police-building, and that programs needed to be individually designed and implemented so they flowed within the 'cadences and rhythms' of the places where they were delivered.

Dr Peake described police-building as a subjective and changeable endeavour rather than a linear or technical process. Using a term originally coined to describe the complex and changing issues confronting urban planners, Dr Peake said it was more helpful to characterise police-building as a set of 'wicked problems'.

“The concept of wicked problems recognises that there are certain issues which are fundamentally idiosyncratic and enjoy no clear agreement about what a solution would even look like, let alone how it could be achieved,” Dr Peake said.

“Police reform takes place at multiple levels and requires cutting through gnarls of management, leadership, political will, set attitudes, established behaviours and negative public perceptions.”

While this complexity might seem daunting, Dr Peake believes that acknowledging the issues as wicked problems actually makes achieving change far more hopeful as more pragmatic goals are set and these help build the support of those within police institutions, thus laying the foundation for actual and sustainable reform.

“In a Timor-Leste context, this means acknowledging the need to speak relevant

languages and to understand history and personalities,” he said.

“Most fundamentally, police building in Timor-Leste requires recognising and engaging with, not wishing away, the complicated, transient, sometimes irrational nature of institutions and political life. It will require not just doing something differently, but thinking about the situation differently.”



From Left: Federal Agent Phillip Demarte, Dirk Stoelhorst, PNTL Inspector Julio Hornay, Leanne Giraud, Lorraine Morgan, Federal Agent Andrew Morgione in Timor-Leste.

Commander Edwards said the enhanced TLPDP takes a comprehensive approach to building police capacity, with its pillars involving focusing on aspects of security sector reform, strategic planning, legal planning, corporate services, investigations, training, accountability, civil security, and supporting the Office of the Secretary of State for Security within the Government of Timor-Leste.

The TLPDP aims to introduce lasting reform and takes a holistic approach to build capacity from four angles: developing human capital by increasing the functional literacy, numeracy and broader education of police members; augmenting vocational capability and operational behaviour; increasing training, experience and confidence to build leadership; and strengthening institutional structures including practices, procedures, policy and governance.

Lessons learned from other international police-building efforts have been used in the creation of the TLPDP. For example, language skills in Tetun have been prioritised.

“Simply put, one cannot do very much useful work or build relationships with PNTL members if one cannot have elementary conversations with them,” Commander Edwards said.

“To do so is not only of practical necessity. It is also a powerful statement which tells people that our program officers are sufficiently interested in the job, the people and their culture to learn the language. Accordingly, the program is putting all incoming staff through an intensive Tetun language program that aims to equip them with rudimentary skills.”

The program takes a long-term vision, another lesson learned, which means it recognises that reconstituting police is a generational endeavour. The visible part of that vision is that advisors are required to commit to the program for a minimum of two years. Additionally, the program focuses on issues beyond police which is reflected in the recognition that not all issues pertaining to police actually require a police response, and that ensuring security relies on more

than just law enforcement. The broader range of skills and expertise recruited to the program both acknowledges the complexity of assisting the development of sustainable institutions and helps ensure that thinking about the program remains dynamic.

Despite the broad range of areas covered by the TLPDP, no single program could meet all needs. Building a police force could be done only in collaboration and cooperation with other bilateral and multilateral programs, Commander Edwards said.

“It will only be through the collegiate commitment of all partnerships with a vested interest in police reform in Timor-Leste that success will be achieved,” he said.

This article is based on a paper written by Commander Grant Edwards and Dr Gordon Peake entitled ‘The Practicalities of Police-building in Timor-Leste.’