

Consortium on
Gender, Security & Human Rights



UN Transitional Authority in East Timor: Ally or Adversary for Women?

Vijaya Joshi

Researcher

La'o Hamutuk (East Timor NGO)

Consortium Lecture

March 28, 2005

Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University

UN Transitional Authority in East Timor: Ally or Adversary for Women?

Vijaya Joshi

In August 1999, the East Timorese voted overwhelmingly to end 25 years of brutal Indonesian rule and to become an independent nation. For the next two and half years, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) functioned as the *de facto* government, overseeing reconstruction, governance and the building of institutional capacity. In this climate East Timorese women's groups found both an ally and an adversary to their organizing around women's issues. Drawing on frameworks as diverse as feminist international relations, post-conflict studies, and social movement theory, this talk explores the consequences for women's organizing when the UN plays the role of government.

Cynthia Enloe: It is with extra pleasure that I am able to introduce Vij on behalf of Carol. Vij, Vijaya Joshi, from Melbourne Australia is a specialist in women's studies and in women's organizing particularly in what we have now begun to call post-conflict zones, a whole new literature that Dyan Mazurana [here today] is one of the creators of. Vij will tell you more, but what is so striking to me is the way in which she has done NGO work with a human rights group in East Timor, but also then did work for a UN agency, again in East Timor, and began to really delve more deeply into how East Timorese women tried to organize under a UN administration. And so I think that Vij's work (which we will now push her to turn her dissertation into a book) really helps us to understand the contributions that a feminist analysis can bring to understanding how the UN operates, how women relate to the UN when it in fact is acting as a surrogate state.

Vijaya Joshi: Thank you. I thank you very much for being here and taking time out from your busy schedules and in this horrible weather to sit here with me. And I very much hope that this will be an exchange of information.

I'm going to talk a little bit about East Timor and women's attempts to organize and the success around some of these attempts with relationship to the UN administration in East Timor. I want to begin, however, by giving you a brief history of East Timor.

East Timor was colonized by Portugal for about 400 years from about 1500 to 1975. In 1975, the Portuguese decided to decolonize East Timor, much as they had done with Angola and Mozambique. What happened was that the process became kind of fraught with tension, a coup followed, and Portugal left precipitously. East Timor then declared independence on the 28th of November 1975. It was independent for approximately 9 days before Indonesia invaded on the 7th of December 1975. From that period on, there was a very brutal occupation of Indonesia by the Indonesian regime under President Suharto, primarily using the Indonesian state military as the form of repression. In the first three years of the occupation, approximately a third of the East Timorese population died, either being outright killed or through starvation – that's 200,000 people.

This occupation continued until 1999, when the question of East Timor's freedom became an issue in the UN. The UN decided to sponsor a referendum for East Timorese people to decide whether East Timor was going to be an autonomous state within Indonesia or whether it was going to be an independent country. Seventy eight per cent of people voted overwhelmingly for independence. The Indonesian military did not accept that result, and within three to six weeks there was incredible outbreak of violence. Most of the population was displaced, 3,000 people were killed, and most towns in East Timor were looted and burned.

The UN hastily cobbled together a response and created the mandate for the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) from Security Council Resolution 1264 – that's before 1325. That administration continued to reign over East Timor for approximately two and a half years, until May 20th 2002. I was studying women's activism during that period, predominantly from 1999 to 2002, but that also involved me looking back historically at women's activism as well as forward to women's activism under the independent East Timorese government from 2002 to date. So that's a very brief history of East Timor.

I arrived in East Timor at the beginning of August in 2001. It was very hot, but it had not yet reached the stifling temperatures of the pre-monsoon build-up -- that time of year in November where the air is just thick with the anticipation of rain. On my second day in East Timor, I went cycling around the capital, Dili, with an American friend. He pointed out landmarks, such as the Santa Cruz cemetery, the site of the Dili Massacre in 1991. He pointed out the UN compound where 3,000 Timorese and about 100 UN workers had been held hostage by the Indonesian military during the post-referendum violence in August 1999. And he also pointed out a gigantic statue, called Cristo Rei; for those of you who have been to Rio in Brazil, it's quite similar. This statue is 27 feet tall, and it's a statue of Jesus, which the Indonesian government had built some years earlier and given to the Timorese people. Now the Indonesian archipelago is predominantly Muslim, while the East Timorese are predominantly Catholic. The statue was intended to signify the Indonesian government's respect for the large Christian community. However, my American friend told me – he was a long-time activist in East Timor— that although the Timorese were devoutly Catholic, they were very suspicious of this statue because they felt that Jesus' face looked suspiciously like President Suharto's face. And the statue's height of 27 feet was self-consciously chosen to remind the East Timorese that they were the 27th province within the Indonesian archipelago.

On our way home, my friend asked if we could stop at someone's house. He had taken pictures of a Timorese woman by the name of Senora Josepha and wanted to give her these photos. I was very excited at the prospect of my first social outing on my second day in East Timor and readily agreed. We soon left the pavements of the biggest streets. We were on our bicycles, push-bicycles, and cycled up a very dusty and bumpy lane, weaving our way through chickens and pigs and burnt out buildings. This wasn't a particularly poor section of Dili. Indeed, there were buildings like this all over East Timor, sections of cities like this all over East Timor. When the Indonesian military and the militias heard the results of the referendum that 78 percent of Timorese were in favor of independence, they had begun a campaign to destroy East Timor, and the results of this destruction were still visible in 2001.

We arrived at Senora Josepha's house and she greeted us through the window, or at least through

the place where the window used to be. We sat down and my friend introduced us. I spoke no Tetum, the lingua franca of East Timor, and Senora spoke no English, though she did speak Portuguese, Indonesian, and Tetum fluently. So our friend translated for us. Senora Josepha was thrilled to receive the photos that my friend had brought. He had taken them a year earlier on the occasion of the first post-referendum hoisting of the FRETILIN flag. FRETILIN (The Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) was the political party that had declared independence in East Timor some 25 years ago for those 7 days of independence. The photos showed Senora Josepha with tears in her eyes as this flag was raised for the first time. They were very moving photos. I asked her through the interpreter if she'd been very active in the Timorese resistance to the Indonesian occupation. And she replied that she had been a member of the OPMT, which was the popular organization of Timorese women. It had started as a separate section of FRETILIN in 1975 -- so it's a similar form to the women's section within the Nicaraguan FSLN movement and other guerilla movements like that.

Senora Josepha said that part of her job as a member of OPMT was that she had hid resistance fighters, and provided them with food, and passed on information between resistance leaders. In fact, she stated "I served Xanana Gusmao (who was a resistance hero and leader and is the current president of East Timor) I served him coffee in these very coffee cups when he was down from the mountain one time." And I looked down at these cups, which were sort of unremarkable and quite cheap, and they held black sugary Timorese coffee. And I thought to myself that these are very important coffee cups; they deserve to be in a museum. They certainly didn't deserve to be sitting in front of me on this coffee table. So I asked Senora Josepha what she was going to do with the cups. And she said, "Well, what do you mean?" I said, "Well, aren't you going to put them in a museum as a relic of the resistance?" And I told her how excited I'd been to see Che Guevara's asthma mask in Havana some years earlier. She said, "Yes, but I still need these cups."

As we continued talking I found out that Senora Josepha had recently received some funding from the United States Agency for International Development, USAID, to start a women's organization called Gumotil, which in English translates to the East Timor Women's Observer Group. The organization was small, and was designed to monitor the upcoming elections for the constituent assembly on the 30th of August 2001. Senora Josepha wanted to make sure that women were going to be able to vote in the elections, which was why she started this organization. And she wanted to make sure that women felt able to vote for the "Men, family men, chiefs, village chiefs, and the people who want to retain control of this country."

Cycling home in the hot afternoon sun, I thought about those coffee cups and what they signified. To me they were a static piece of history to be treasured and preserved. But for Senora Josepha they were a piece of her personal history, interwoven with the Timorese political history, but that history for her was not over. I thought of those coffee cups as part of an ongoing dialogue with the future women of East Timor. Who else had drunk from those cups, apart from Gusmao? Had she served coffee in them to the representatives of USAID? Perhaps the first meetings of the members of GOMUTIL had taken place around that same coffee table - young women drinking from those cups. What was the tone of those conversations, and had it changed depending on who was in power, whether it had been the Indonesians or whether it had been the UN? I understood now that the Timorese political history for women did not end with the referendum that decided independence for East Timor. The vote was one small part of a larger

struggle. Like the coffee cups, Timorese women still had a lot of work to do.

What I'm going to do today is talk a little bit about how the UN Administration in East Timor was militarized and masculinized, and how this shaped East Timorese women's political opportunities for activism around women's issues. I'm going to discuss two specific examples of women's activism that had very different outcomes. These may seem to demonstrate the inconsistencies in the way in which the UN responds to women's activism, but the responses can actually be seen as consistent; when viewed through the lens of militarization and masculinization of an organizational structure.

East Timorese women have survived and challenged a number of patriarchies throughout their social and political history. From a patriarchal traditional justice and marriage system, to a 400-year Portuguese colonial enterprise that used women as slave labor, to a brief but brutal occupation by Japanese imperial forces during the Second World War – sorry, I missed that bit in my Introduction – to a violent 25-year occupation by the Indonesian military and through to a two and a half year United Nation administration.

East Timorese women, and their ideals of femininity, were shaped to serve the needs of those in power, often male elites. The femininities required by these different powers varied significantly depending on who was in power and what their aim was. The Timorese male elites required subservient, yet productive women who would attract value in marital exchange. The Indonesian military required that women's social role as reproducers of culture and nurturers of children was destroyed. And part of what was so horrific in East Timor was that from the 80's to the mid-90's the Indonesian state forcibly sterilized thousands of East Timorese women and girls, and they did this through the application of injections during school hours. The result was that many women actually withdrew their female children, from school to try and get away from this forcible contraceptive injection. And this 'family planning project' was funded by the World Bank.

Q: The sterilization project? What year was that?

VJ: It started in the mid-80s and went through to the mid-90s. It wasn't specifically for East Timor. It was given to the Indonesian state to undertake family planning, but it was specifically pronounced in East Timor. I'm not sure, but I would guess that it would also be prevalent in Aceh. So, that was part of the Indonesian male elite's requirements of East Timorese women. In each of these different phases, however, women's opportunities to challenge these patriarchies took different forms, and each opportunity was shaped by the social, cultural and political environment in which it occurred.

So, now to turn to these two examples of East Timorese women's activism and organizing that provide us with our initial puzzle. We're going to first talk about an agreement called the SOFA agreement, which stands for the Status of Forces Agreement, which is often undertaken between the UN and the host nations of UN peacekeepers. It articulates the rules of behavior, not so much the rules of engagement, but the rules of behavior. Now in East Timor, the UN was the sovereign authority so it was effectively making a pact with itself. Under these conditions, it has a sort of model SOFA that the UN just sort of pulls out of a drawer and uses.

November 2001, just after I arrived, the problem of international military and police personnel

fathering East Timorese children became an issue for women's groups. The issue slowly crept to prominence through increasing numbers of East Timorese women claiming that international personnel were the fathers of their children. The women were coming discreetly and quietly to women's organizations and NGOs asking what they could do about trying to provide for these children. In most instances the East Timorese women already had other children.

One particular case concerned a 37-year-old woman by the name of Maria, who I had the opportunity to speak with. Maria's husband, with whom she'd had four children, was killed in the post-election/referendum violence in August 1999. After CIVPOL had arrived, she had formed a relationship with an international police officer next door. She became pregnant, and reported that both she and the officer were very happy about this. Two months before the baby was born, the officer's contract finished (they were just on 6 month contracts, and he must have already renewed his contract once.), He promised to have his contract renewed it again, and gave her \$1400, which was a huge amount of money in East Timor then. She received two phone calls after the baby was born, but received no contact after that and had no way of contacting him.

In desperation, she approached a women's NGO and asked what she could do about this situation. In response, a group of women's NGOs decided to write a letter to the UNTAET bureaucracy asking what provisions could be made for children, using Maria as a test case. The 3-page letter asked key questions regarding the regulations governing military and police behavior, and the mechanisms for seeking justice should the personnel be found to be the father of any resulting child from a relationship.

Now remember, the SOFA agreement was the overriding agreement created by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations under which the police and military served. Usually, as I said, SOFAs are created with the host governments, but in East Timor's case, the UN created a pact with itself. The letter sent to UNTAET by women's groups noted that the issue of paternity cases was absent in the model SOFA, but suggested that, and I quote here, that "there was sufficient language in the model SOFA for creative interpretation such that paternity cases could be dealt with within its orbit." The women's groups then went on to provide clear examples where clarifying clauses could be inserted into the existing SOFA agreement. This letter was never responded to, and the model SOFA with its absence of any material pertaining to paternity cases remained, and the recommendations were not implemented by UNTAET or by the independent East Timorese government, which signed a new SOFA with the UN as an independent government on May 21st 2002.

Maria's case is illuminating because it reveals the gendered and militarized structure of political opportunities for women's activism, and the women's organizations responses to them. Under this militarized gender regime, which privileged a militarized masculinity, activism on SOFA was met with silence. I want to expand a bit more on that later, but I'll talk now about a very different experience. And this was women's activism around the women's constituent assembly elections.

Perhaps some more successful activism was undertaken by women's groups around the constituent assembly elections held on August 30, 2001. The elections were held to vote in an 88-member body charged with writing the constitution for the country. So it's a very important

election, and a very important body. It was also widely speculated that this body, after independence, would form the legislative assembly in independent East Timor, and indeed this has been the case. So, these people that the East Timorese people voted for in 2001, moved themselves immediately after independence to the legislative assembly with a term of five years. Thus, they'll serve from 2001 to 2007 uninterrupted, which makes them a very important group of people.

The UN's independent electoral commission, known as the IAC, was to run the elections. Seventy five of the elected members were to be national, with the 13 (that's one from each district in East Timor) being elected at the district level, to make a total of 88 members. Political parties fielded a number of candidates, but people were asked to cast just one vote, either for a party or for an independent candidate. Based on the number of votes garnered, a proportion of party members or independents within served on the constituent assembly.

A network of women's organizations lobbied both the Timorese elites and the UNTAET regarding the recommendation of a quota system for women in the constituent assembly election. Apart from lobbying key individuals within UNTAET and the independent electoral commission, the women's NGOs also enlisted the support of key Timorese male figures such as Jose Ramos Horta and Gusmao. With the support of the NGO forum, these women also sent a letter to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and members of the Security Council, outlining the justification and support for the quota system. Ultimately UNTAET, as advised by the independent electoral commission, rejected the recommendation, arguing that a quota system would compromise the idea of free and fair elections.

Despite this rejection of the quota system for women candidates, UNTAET put in place a number of affirmative action mechanisms to promote women's participation in the electorate. The special representative for the Secretary-General, that is the head of the mission in East Timor, urged political parties to nominate women for winnable slots. So not down at number 274 but up at number 5. And to incorporate women's issues into party platforms. He suggested also that extra broadcast time, radio being the prime dissemination of information, would be available if it was for women candidates. As a result of his activism, a record 27 percent of members elected to the constituent assembly were women. It's interesting here that despite a rejection of the quota system, women's organizations continued to lobby and continued to remain active leading up to this election. And the persistence of NGOs to draw attention to the issues at the highest levels, the Security Council, using Timorese male elites, as well as lobbying key members of UNTAET, resulted in a successful outcome.

Although UNTAET was favorable towards women's political participation, they did stop short of endorsing the formal quota system. We need to be alert to these kinds of inconsistencies. This represents a change in political opportunities, but only of a specific kind. Unlike the SOFA paternity case, UNTAET was prepared to engage with women's organizations and although they did not formally endorse the quota system they did undertake a number of informal measures to increase women's political participation.

It is useful to think about women's activism within a framework here. Imagining UNTAET as a militarized and masculinized institution is perhaps the most applicable context. This picture helps us understand why, even when political opportunity structures appear to be at their most

expansive, certain kinds of women's organizing is still marginalized. In discussion of women's activism this framework helps us to understand why certain actions, such as increasing women's political participation, were readily accepted, while women's organization around the SOFA agreement was ignored. Within UNTAET, women's *political participation* was clearly part of an appropriate view of femininity held by those in power, namely by UN male officials. That is, it did not threaten that militarized, masculinized identity that UNTAET had. Activism around *peacekeepers behavior*, however, was met with silence or with hostility, indicating that this kind of activism transgressed the boundaries of appropriate femininity as determined by UNTAET in this setting.

So then, how was UNTAET militarized? What was the militarization and masculinization within UNTAET, and how did this come into being? Sometimes you can see militarization in the most unlikely places, and we're all students of Cynthia Enloe in this, from her seminal work on canned soup, among other things!

Between January and May 2002, I worked as a UN training officer in the South of East Timor in a town called Same, (spelled "same," but pronounced "SAMAY"). Same was set high up in the mountains and was four hours from Dili. The town's main street began at the top of a very steep hill, and gradually sloped down until you reached the sea. The administration of Same, as with most districts, had a two-pillar system. That is, the UN with one pillar and the East Timorese with one pillar. It's like a dual disk system in a sense. At the top of the UN hierarchy, and at the top of the main street, was the field administration office, and the field administration officer was the effective head of the UN mission in Same. He was responsible for reconstruction and rehabilitation. Within the local language, Tetum, the field administration officer (or FAO) was called *Chefe bo'ot*, or the big chief. He also liaised with the Portuguese peacekeeper battalion, which was located on a nearby mountain and was responsible for security. The, if you followed the main street all the way down toward the sea, you came to the East Timorese offices. In these offices were the District Administrator and his UN advisor, who was an Eritrean diplomat and District staff.

It was in Same that I got my first taste of militarization, and began to wonder if the geographic distribution of offices was not random, but referred to some other kind of hierarchy. The FAO was a Croatian. He had been in the Yugoslav army for 20 years and his commitment to rehabilitation was admirable. Having been through a war and the UN prisons in his own country, he was determined that the East Timorese should have buildings, schools, and community centers. In fact, he quit the army once the Yugoslav war started, and then he became local staff once the UN presence came into Croatia and from then on he started going onto other missions. He had served in Angola for three years, and then came to East Timor for three years, and then from East Timor he went to Afghanistan. So he was a serial UN missions person. And he was determined that East Timor should have buildings, schools and community centers. In this sense, he worked extremely hard, and was able to manipulate the UN bureaucracy in order to ensure these things were built as quickly as possible.

As the head of the UN presence in Same, he was also responsible for setting the tone of the mission. And this was both militarized and masculinized. Despite holding a civilian position, the FAO liaised regularly with the military commander of the Portuguese battalion, and often co-

opted the military to work on UN rehabilitation projects such as water and sanitation or humanitarian relief or moving displaced people. Within his staff, he had no women. And indeed, he vocalized on more than one occasion that women were not suitable for senior positions. He had had a deputy that was a woman, but she had left prior to my arrival. In this respect, he had strange relations with the UN advisor to the UN administrator who, as I said, was an Eritrean diplomat and a woman, because he made it clear that the UN was the predominant administration in East Timor, and that as head of the UN he was indeed the chief of this town. That's the UN cultural framework that existed in Same, and it was on view for the East Timorese to see; it spoke of sexism and militarism. That is, it was a culture in which women were treated as professionally inferior to men, and where the military was seen as the UN's most able partner, not the East Timorese and not civilians.

While I was in Same, there were instances of sexual assault of Timorese women by UN civilians and Portuguese military. There were also unconfirmed reports of UN workers fuelling ad-hoc prostitution, as well as numerous relationships between male international workers and Timorese women. None of these allegations was ever taken up by the FAO. As a result, I wondered if the FAO saw this sort of behavior as normal, that is to say, normal for women, normal for men, and expected of women. As I read about other UN missions I realized that Same was not an anomaly. The subjugation of femininity I witnessed here through the lens of militarization was not merely a function of our FAO, but part of a wider system of militarization within the UN. The sense of militarization that I had experienced in Same turned out to be the consequence of concrete policies and decisions by those within the higher echelons of the UN in New York and in Dili. So, in other words, I came to realize that the FAO was not an accident; it was not an accident that he was there. There were whole systems that were garnered to create his presence in East Timor as the head of the mission in Same.

Perhaps the most pervasive evidence of militarization of UNTAET was the fact that the mission was planned and coordinated by the department of peacekeeping operations, yet resolution 1264, which mandates UNTAET, makes clear that most of the tasks of the mandate are non-military governance activities. Military planners in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) may have simply ignored these aspects of the mission or they may have assumed that peacekeepers could fulfill these functions in addition to their security role. After all, how hard can it be to set up a health system? The decision by the Secretary-General that DPKO should plan and control the mission created a militarized structure and philosophy within UNTAET that included facets such as the supremacy of military personnel planning the UNTAET mandate -- that is, it was planned by military men and it was structured so as to protect and privilege the power and position of the military within the mission. In the most concrete terms, more money was spent on the military component of UNTAET than on any other part of the mission. And it was just one pillar of a three-pillar system. I have some figures here, but you know, vast amounts of money, up to 40 to 50 percent of the budget, was spent on the military. Now this type of financial allocation to the military was not specific to UNTAET. In Somalia, ten times more funds were spent on the military than on humanitarian assistance, and Somalia was a humanitarian mission. For the life of UNTAET, a 10,000 strong peacekeeping force was maintained, and that's approximately one peacekeeper for 80 Timorese. I observed peacekeepers everywhere: the supermarket, the beach, the street. This is not surprising given that the military peacekeepers were eight times more numerous than the civilian personnel, even though the civilian mandate was perhaps broader and more involved than the military mandate.

Within UNTAET, civilian functions were also eroded or undertaken by the military. And, I'll explain those two things. The erosion of civilian functions occurred because fewer personnel and less money was devoted to civilian functions. For example, the government sections of the mission were very slow to be recruited, and by the end of 1999, there were still no senior personnel in health, education or agriculture, which were key areas of concern for the Timorese. Plus, while UNTAET was an integrated system, the military constantly continued to remain outside the control of any civilian authority within the mission. So they acted on their own.

So despite its different guises, this process of militarization combined with the philosophy of militarism actively shaped the political opportunities available to women activists. The militarized budget allocated financial importance to the military aspects of the mission relative to all other functions. And this shaped opportunities in two ways, firstly by increasing the military's relative power. It became the most important part of the mission, and thus more likely to be protected from criticism - and here is the time to remember the SOFA paternity suit. Secondly, by leaving the governance and capacity building functions under-funded, these sectors did not have the staff or the material resources to pursue civilian agendas. The consequences of this combination can be seen in the trajectory of women's activism around the SOFA agreement. The fact that UNTAET did not take action demonstrates its protective stance towards its forces, regardless of their behavior. Yet, around increasing women's political participation, women's activism was received much more enthusiastically. Inconsistencies can be revealing although difficult to comprehend. It would have been much easier to assume that UNTAET had met all women's activism with disinterest and hostility, and indeed when I went to East Timor, my first inkling was yes, they've got a closed-door policy on all women's activism. But it turned out to be more complicated than that.

The inconsistency with which UNTAET managed women's activism reveals who and what they privileged. The downgrading of governance functions made them less important in the militarized minds of the planners. They were less important because they did not impinge on any military activity undertaken by the UN, so in this sense the women's activism that promoted women's political participation was more likely to be accepted by UNTAET because it did not threaten or alter the military dominance within the mission. As Sandra Whitworth has argued, gender critiques have been forced to fit within the UN's way of doing business without actually transforming how that business is done, so it's kind of co-opted and used as another specialized little section. East Timorese women's activism in governance did not attempt to alter that militarized power dynamic between the governance and military functions. The success of women's activism in any country cannot be defined by an aggregate leap forward. It is more interesting, and I think more useful, to chart the specific areas in which women activists had to push their own agendas, and those in which the UN aided them. Similarly we gain a more complicated picture of success if we document which kinds of concerns UNTAET responded to and which they remained silent on. These questions are at the heart of this larger study for they allow us to reveal not only where the political opportunities were available for women's groups, but also which forces shaped those political opportunities. In East Timor, through a combination of institutional arrangements and formal policies and informal assumptions and organized relationships the militarized gender regime shaped political opportunities for women's activism such that that activism which threatened or otherwise diminished the power of the military was

met with hostility.

So what do these inconsistencies tell us about East Timor, women's organizing and the UN presence in that country or indeed in any country? Well they provide us with a framework for analyzing why some activism by women's groups is successful and why some is not. They provide us with an opportunity to analyze the militarized and masculinized nature of the UN and the ways in which this shapes ideas of appropriate masculinity and femininity upheld by the UN in any given context. The wider implications of these inconsistencies give us evidence of a militarized gender regime operating throughout nation-building missions and shaping women's activism all over the world. Perhaps most interestingly, we are able to learn about UN nation-building missions from the people who live with and challenge them on a day-to-day basis. Very early on in my time in East Timor, I found that although I had found these inconsistencies very troubling, many East Timorese women activists had already accurately read UNTAET. In the two examples discussed here, activism took on different forms. While the SOFA paternity suit was met with silence and women activists did not pursue this further, when the attempt to create a quota for women's political participation was crushed, however, women continued their activism around this despite receiving this sort of negative feedback. From this we can infer that perhaps women's organizations did have a sense of this militarized gender regime and the way in which it created structures that were both resistant to and sort of porous to women's activism. As one woman, who was a member of an NGO called Fokupers, a domestic violence NGO, stated in my interview, "none of our activism about peacekeepers or CIVPOL officers were successful." So right there and then she's rating UNTAET, as someone who's living and working with UNTAET. Now gendered analyses of UN missions and culture really should be driven by these women's experiences because they give us our first clues as to the gendered and militarized structure of the UN in different countries. And I'd like to finish up there, but just as a little epilogue, I will tell you that I did go back and see Senora Josepha just before I left East Timor in 2003, and I guess it's further evidence that our research needs to be driven by these women's experiences. I asked her once again about her coffee cups which were still there in her kitchen – and her house had been completely rebuilt by this time – and she said, "they're looking a bit old and chipped I agree, but I'm going to keep them, and I think one day I'm going to give them to my daughter." So I think there's still a lot of work to be done there.

Carol Cohn: Thank you so much for such an interesting presentation. I'm sure there are many questions and comments.

Q: The logic of militarizing peacekeeping operations seems problematic to me: On the one hand, there seems to be the idea that only a militarized operation is robust enough to actually protect these women and children. On the other hand, the growth of this military seems to be having an even greater disadvantage on women since its just reinforcing this really masculine structure. So, what do you think can be done in the face of the fact that there are 16 peacekeeping operations, there are probably going to be more, and they're going to be more militarized in the future?

VJ: This is a very interesting question, maybe even the 64 million dollar question. And you're absolutely right, I think that's how the UN talks about their peacekeeping engagements: "We need to make ourselves more robust." But there's also an increasing militarization of all forms of international presence in these countries, not just peacekeepers. This militarization,

masculinization is spilling over into all other forms, into international NGOs, in UN agencies, into donors, and into international bilateral agreements, to name but a few. And as Paul Higate has written about, I think that it's now seen as quite sexy to be wearing a helmet and a flack jacket even if you are a project officer for a water sanitation project. And I think that in these missions we really need to remind ourselves to ask, as Sandra Whitworth has suggested, "who is being protected and what are they being protected from?" And that really needs to be the base level of analysis of any post-conflict situation. How is a population being affected by violence, how can we disaggregate how the different groups have been affected by violence, and then how can we best protect them? And often, what is needed is not so much this robust AK-47 type of protection but economic protection and labor protection and reproductive protection. And those don't need to be undertaken by militaries.

In East Timor, it was a very interesting situation, because, as I said, there were 10,000 peacekeepers, 1 for 80 Timorese, and this is in a situation where the Timorese were incredibly receptive to the UN. They were opening their arms saying "Hurray, you're here, you're here." And with the exception of the border with West Timor, which continues to be run by Indonesia, most of East Timor remained relatively safe and secure. Now I say relatively because domestic violence is the most highly reported crime in East Timor, and in some places it is quite endemic. So once again, that's a situation where you could look at security, and you could empower a legal system to deal with people's security; you don't have to go through Chapter 7 and put in peacekeepers. But of course, the military also is means money. As shown by UNTAET, the only way that UNTAET was funded was on the basis of its military component, through the actual allocated budget. All the governance functions were provided by voluntary contributions. They don't even think in terms of a non-military peacekeeping mission.

Q: I was wondering what your opinion is on the role of women in peacekeeping missions.

VJ: I think that the role of women in peacekeeping missions is very critical, although I guess I also see it as a double-edged sword: If you go back to the militaries that contribute these personnel to the missions, we know from so much good work done in the last 20 years that having women in militaries often doesn't necessarily change the culture of the military, in the same way in which having gays in military doesn't often change the homophobic nature of military groups. So, in that sense, I'm hesitant to be essentialist and say, let's just put a whole lot of women in peacekeeping missions. But, as Dyan Mazurana has pointed out, they have also made a tremendous impact in certain missions. And the level of abuse of local women and also, I guess, the use of prostitutes or sex workers has been decreased significantly when women peacekeepers do serve alongside male peacekeepers. So, I'm really not quite sure how to answer that one, but I guess those two things are something that need to be balanced. I think it would be interesting to look at some of the gendered analyses of the force in Iraq to see if that has any difference on the way in which both the US forces and UN peacekeepers are perceived and also the way in which they operate. But I don't know that that's going to come out yet. In terms of trying to get more women to work for someone, say the FAO in that position, the UN is encouraging women to go out into the field and undertake field mission service, and, a lot of the agencies are very good on this, they're quite proactive. UNHCR and UNICEF are very good at hiring women and having women in senior positions as well. Within the DPKO, it is less pronounced. To get a position within the DPKO is perhaps more difficult for a woman, for some of the reasons I alluded to in here in this paper -- essentially, it is quite a masculinized and

militarized environment -- but I do think it would help to have more women peacekeepers.

Q: I noticed that your narrative at no point mentions the DPKO gender advisor who was in the mission, and I wonder if you could talk a little bit about her?

VJ: There was a gender advisor within the UN mission, and basically the Office for Gender Affairs existed within UNTAET. It had a bit of a choppy beginning, I should say, in the sense that it was first proposed on paper and then it fell off the paper completely. I think it was whited out or something. And, so the mission slowly started to come together in late October, early November, and both international solidarity activists and East Timorese women came together and really pushed very hard, saying, “we need this Office for Gender Affairs. We need it within the mission.” It did then come into existence in a downgraded capacity, and it was headed by someone who was very good. She worked for UNICEF prior to working for this mission. The Office of Gender Affairs really took as its mandate the UN and the UNTAET mission, and, as I understood their mandate, they were there to train the incoming civilian members of UNTAET and the peacekeepers on issues of gender affairs. So each time a new batch of peacekeepers came in, part of their training included a half-day seminar on gender and human rights, which they were all required to sit through. Now, the Office of Gender Affairs was actually not allowed to give this seminar; a male Brazilian paratrooper gave this seminar on gender and human rights, which was fine. He actually did a very good job, I sat in on one of his trainings.

Q: Why is it that the Gender Adviser was not allowed to give the seminar?

VJ: Well, it was just seen to be a politically sensitive issue, and if there were a group of soldiers sitting in a room, they were not going to listen to issues of gender and human rights from a woman -- or certainly not from an East Timorese woman, but also not from an international woman, not even Sherrill Whittington (the Gender Adviser), even though she was such a strong presence. They thought it would be better coming from someone within their own cultural and organizational framework.

Q: And who made that decision?

VJ: I think Sherrill Whittington decided in consultation with the head of the Training Unit.

Q: How was she seen by the local group of other East Timorese activists? Was she even visible to them? Was she somebody that they had coffee with, those famous cups, and sort of schmoozed with, and strategized with, and connived with, informally?

VJ: Well, I guess something that she did in the office, that the Office of Gender Affairs did, was really throw the weight behind this issue of women’s political participation, so they were very active in this. And so, on that issue, I wouldn’t go so far as to say that she would have had coffee with members of Fokupers, but certainly they would have been welcome in her office, having gone through the security barrier and handed in their badge and written down their numbers and all of that sort of stuff. Because the Office of Gender Affairs, much like the rest of UNTAET, was behind barbed wire, and you had to enter numerous kinds of security measures to go through. So, I think she was seen as a reasonably useful ally, but not someone who was necessarily that approachable. But she was also seen as someone who was within the political philosophy of UNTAET, and in that sense I think, they felt that she was not an ally on issues of

peacekeeper sexual abuse, she was not an ally on the SOFA paternity issue because she had to remain loyal UNTAET. There was really nothing she could do to speak-out publicly against that, so in that sense she was also constrained by that militarized and masculinized identity and so was the office, which really conforms to what Sandra Whitworth is telling us about how gender is, in a sense, co-opted and used inconsistently to facilitate some kinds of women's participation, but not others.

Q: Just a follow-on to that, at UN headquarters in NY, UNTAET is spoken about as THE success story of having a Gender Adviser, in relation to women's political participation. I'm wondering what your own sense is, having done this work with the women's organizations, about how much of a difference it actually made to have her there, or, what would have happened with this women's organizing without her being there. Also, do you know whether the Timorese women's organizations, are aware of the amount of credit that Sherrill Whittington gets for their political organization? (By the way, she has an article in *Signs*, if any of you want to look, about being a Gender Adviser.).

VJ: Alright, yes, UNTAET is the success story. It's just seen as absolutely wonderful -- full stop, and also with reference to the Gender Adviser. There's also the fact that she directed her focus towards the military, right from the beginning. She's an Australian, and in Australia she'd worked for the Department of Defense, and she said to me that she was very good mates with Major General Peter Cosgrove who had led the initial peacekeeping effort in East Timor, and that this friendship pre-dated East Timor and the UN, et cetera. So she was very focused on the military component within UNTAET. But in another way, she was able to trade on that friendship by being able to do things such as the peacekeeper training, which was one of the first places that gender training of peacekeepers took place within a UN mission. So, in that sense, it is a success story. In the sense of test-driving some of these theories that had been thrown around the headquarters in New York and the training and research section of the UN, UNTAET was a success story. And the legacy of that Gender Affairs Unit is an Office for the Promotion of Equality within the East Timorese independent government, and that office is attached to the Prime Minister, and I can't praise Sherrill highly enough. She really lobbied for that. She said, "No, it can't be anywhere else. It can't be in Health, it can't be in Education. It is not going to be in Social Services and Labor, it is going to be attached to the Prime Minister. We need some importance behind this." And she really did a fantastic job, and was very forthright and vehement about the need for the existence of an Office for the Promotion of Equality.

Q: Who is the woman who is now in charge of the Office for the Promotion of Equality? Wasn't she a former women's activist?

VJ: Yes, she was. She actually started Fokupers, the East Timorese women's rights group.

Q: Because I know that Sherrill worked closely with her. And this woman, from my understanding, was apparently very anxious about being in charge and occupying such an important role. And Sherrill really pushed her, saying "this is where you are going to move your women's organization. You all wanted a voice; we're going to put you right in front of the Prime Minister."

VJ: Yes, that actually brings up an interesting point about East Timorese civil society culture.

If you've been colonized for 400 years, followed by a violent occupation for 25 years, civil society organizations have had no way to learn what it's like to work with an elected government. In fact, you have no idea what an elected government is like. A friend of mine, Janet Hunt, is actually doing her PhD in Australia now on that very issue - the culture and the organizational culture of NGOs in East Timor, with reference to this independent government. Many of these civil society organizations started off during the Indonesian occupation, so there was a lot of flag waving, and a lot of undercover work, networks and clandestine activities. But most importantly, they have no idea how to work collaboratively with the government. And they're just learning that now. So I can understand the situation Maria [Domingas Fernandes], or "Mana Micato" as she is known, is in, with most activists saying to her "why are you doing this? Why are you basically going with the government, the government is traditionally our enemy?" But she decided eventually that she could do better work there, and that she would give it a go. She is also very strong and tough. And she received a lot of criticism and continues to receive a lot of criticism for being in that position, because she appears to many as having sold out her roots. But I think that has generally to do with the relationship between an organization and the state authority in East Timor; and this is going to take many, many years to evolve.

In terms of women's organizing with the Gender Affairs Unit (GAU), I think that the Gender Affairs Unit lays the profile of women's issues across the board within the mission. I'm not sure this always translated into something substantive, in terms of action, but it was an issue. As I mentioned before, there was an apparent inconsistency in the sense that some of women's organizing was supported, and other not. I think that on issues of political participation they were considerably aided. But on the others - I only spoke about one of them here, the SOFA paternity issue, but there was also some activism around three cases of alleged rape by peacekeepers, and on issues of domestic violence. I really don't know that women's organizing would have been that different had GAU not existed, but certainly some aspects of their agenda were supported more than others. And finally, going back to that question, are East Timorese women aware? Yes, they are very aware of the level of credit given to so many UN workers, not just in Gender Affairs, for doing these wonderful things.

Q: One of the things we've been studying together in our class is criminal accountability under the Status of Forces Agreement, and usually the troop contributing countries have the sole prerogative to prosecute soldiers who rape, or steal or murder, and so forth. The host country doesn't have that. Was that the same Status of Forces Agreement for Timor?

VJ: Exactly. And, basically, only in exceptional circumstances could the Secretary-General intervene. So, by the third case of alleged rape, the Secretary-General did intervene in East Timor. But it never went anywhere. The Secretary-General basically said this person needs to be brought to trial, and that "we need to show the Timorese people that we actually are addressing this situation." The peacekeeper was jailed and then released. He was then kept on full pay, but not working, until he was sent back to his country at the end of his contract. In the meantime, the courts were slowly, slowly processing this rape case, and by the time it finally came up in the courts just prior to independence in late April or early May, he'd been back in his own country for six to eight months. And UNTAET said they simply couldn't afford to fly him back to face charges. Now I wonder about that -- if the head of the mission needed to be flown back, I wonder if they would have somehow been able to afford to do that. So, it's really just a question of priorities.

The recent report on peacekeeper sexual exploitation and abuse by Jordanian Prince Zeid addresses some of these issues, such as paternity tests and the creation of a trust fund once a biological parent has been established, and that pay be withheld from peacekeepers or police officers who are accused of rape or sexual assault, and that there is the ability to prosecute, in some form, either within the UN mission or in the home country, but with the UN actually really pushing that country to deal with the case seriously. But it is now about translating these recommendations into action.

Q: And this is coming out of the report of the DRC?

VJ: Yes. In fact, it is actually from the report from Bosnia, Kosovo, Cambodia, East Timor, the DRC, and West Africa, so that would be Sierra Leone as well. It's interesting, because ten years ago women in Sierra Leone raised their babies to a group of departing peacekeepers saying, "these are your children." This is ten years ago, and still nothing is really being done to address this issue. I think the UN has continued to hope that it'll be swept under the carpet, but it can't be. And I think that one of the reasons that it can't be is because of the internet and transnational feminist organizing. I don't think the UN can rely anymore on the fact that, for instance, Kosovo feminists aren't going to talk to East Timorese feminists who then aren't going to talk to Sierra Leonean feminists, and so on., These people are now talking to one another and patterns are now being established and they're being put out there in the public domain. This is a pattern; this has happened to us, and it has happened to a whole lot of people, and you need to do something about it.

Q: On one hand, I've heard that the mission in Timor is considered a real success. On the other hand, I've heard people saying that "the UN gave Timor a stillborn democracy." So, could you speak about more about these differing views? How would you judge the situation today and what exactly are some of the repercussions that lead people to be so critical about the UN mission in Timor?

VJ: I guess, notions of a 'stillborn democracy' result from the fact the type of government that has been elected in. Let's go back to the constituent assembly election: These are the people that were voted back in August 2001 and who are now members of the legislative assembly. The party that returned to power was FRETILIN, if you recall that was the political party formed a good 30 years ago now, and it was and is a very popular party. The head of that party, that is number one on the FRETILIN ticket in those constituent assembly elections, is the prime minister. Now, when they sat down to write their constitution, they wrote a constitution that empowered the prime minister and disempowered the president. The president is a separately elected official, his name is Xanana Gusmao, and he actually has no effective control over what the legislative assembly does or doesn't do. He has no control over the prime minister either. He is quite a vocal opponent to FRETILIN, what he perceives and what he sees as FRETILIN totalitarian rule. The prime minister himself, and in fact he is referred to as the prime 'miniature'- he's very short, and people say that this lack of stature is responsible for his maintenance of the country, where he does not allow dissent, really in any form. He sues people left right, and center for defamation. He keeps a very tight control of the country, effectively.

It is a stillborn nation in the sense that the culture of the civil service and the government hasn't really been allowed to evolve, because there's no space for debate with this man as the head of the government. But, I don't know that the UN really could have done anything. He was the head of FRETILIN well before the referendum, and he was always going to be the head of FRETILIN. And in some ways, the fact that FRETILIN got in was a *fait accompli*. There were very few other political parties. So in that sense it's stillborn.

The issue of money is also of concern, and the fact that East Timor is extremely poor. It has effectively no way of generating its own income. It still imports much more than it exports. It only has one export, which is coffee. Its staple diet is rice and noodles, and they are imported from Indonesia, so it can't even feed itself its staple produce.

It is waiting on money, billions and billions of dollars of money from oil located in the Timor Sea. It is currently in negotiation with Australia over that and the Australian government is being particularly pig-headed. The Australian government made a deal for exploration in the oil fields with the Indonesian government prior to '99. The East Timorese government is seeking to contest the boundaries of that deal, and the Australian government is basically saying "no, you're not allowed to do that." And they've also said that any decision made by an international court based on the regulations as determined by Law of the Sea will be ignored. So, they've effectively waved the results of any responsibility, basically because they stand to lose quite a lot of money. There is a growing movement in Australia to try and make the Australian government more accountable.

Sorry, back to your question about the stillborn nation. This lack of democracy: it is an elected government, but there's no free speech as such. There is no money with which to empower any government department, and most organizations still run on hand to mouth existence, with no internet nor phone, meaning there's no way of income generation. The population itself is very poor. A good 70 percent of people live on less than a dollar a day. It's very, very, very poor, and there's no hope of financial gain in the short term without this oil money coming in, really. So in terms of women's organizing, if you look at sort of classic social movement theory, the resources aren't there, the networks aren't there, the phones, the fax, there's no electricity. Those sorts of things are very difficult for a movement to operate without.

CE: One of the things that has really struck me in your analysis just now is that a lot of us who do feminist analyses in post-conflict, post-war, and wartime and revolutionary movements, really don't spend enough time on the popular political parties. Those who analyze electoral politics in France, and in Italy and the US and Canada and Japan; they spend a lot of time talking about political parties. But not those of us who are following post-war, post-revolution kinds of political evolutions, and we need to be looking at political parties in those situations and see where the genderings occur. And this is a way that your work looking at the gender regime of FRETILIN, just like Karen Kampwirth's in El Salvador and Nicaragua and Guatemala, is so important. We need to figure out tools to follow parties and follow parties as feminist analysts. For instance, do you think the Fokupers people, if they got together with the AMLAE [the Nicaraguan Asociacion de Mujeres Luisa Amanda Espinoza] people, would have a lot to strategize about together?

VJ: Yes, I think they would, and in fact, to your list of things we need to be and do, I would also say that we need to be historians because we need to look at where FRETILIN came from, and we need to look at where the Sandanistas came from before we can actually start looking at their gendering, trying to account for some of the different kinds of gendering. So I think they would have a lot to say to those women. They'd also have quite a lot to say to the women's committee within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in very different ways. And, I'd hesitate to say that a lot of these political situations are very similar, but in different ways, the consequences of what they do for women's organizing is very similar.

CE: Now that would be something, for say, the Dutch government to really fund. To get together with us, the Vietnamese Women's Federation people, the Eritreans, and so forth. In fact, another Clark graduate student has just finished an amazing paper on what's happened to the ex-fighters in Eritrea, how the Eritrean EPLF has become increasingly authoritarian and more masculinized as it gains more authority.

Q: To add to this: We're seeing the same thing in South Sudan. Women who were very talented military commanders within the SPLN have now been completely sidelined. In fact, they're actually being pushed out first into DDR, and they're saying, "why are we being demobilized first?" It is because they're going to restructure the security forces. So now they're actually trying to organize talking with women from South Africa.

CE: And they, in turn, learned from the Zimbabwean women. The Zimbabwean women, in 1992, "hell", they said "we lost it entirely." And they invited the ANC women to come, to have a little tutoring session on how not to lose the post-colonial, the post-war political system.

Q: In the SPLF, they basically lost that. And Somalia, too.

VJ: It was also interesting to read your DDR work, and especially about just this whole process of demobilization and how different it can be for women and children, depending on how the camps are run, and how it is structured in terms of giving cash for guns.

Q: That was Timor too. Most of the women didn't get anything.

VJ: No, they didn't get anything.

Q: The men got computer training and they got money, and the women got nothing.

VJ: Well, because East Timorese women are rarely acknowledged as fighters. For instance, you can see photos of them, but they're seen not as the "out there" fighters like the men are. They're not the "real" fighters; they're seen as the supporters who serve coffee and, you know, pass on information between two male resistance leaders. But they're the leaders, they facilitate that. But also, the East Timorese -- sorry, just to go back to your question about this stillborn democracy -- the ex-guerillas in East Timor are currently in a very tenuous position because they have moral authority, but they don't really have any state authority. And, they're really kicking up a stink and they present quite a destabilizing influence on security because they fight quite

readily with the police services. They're quite a disenfranchised group that also had the support of the population. They're all male. So, the notion of women as fighters fell off the agenda.

Q: I was just curious what the domestic gender effects are now, if you bring a gendered lens...? Looking at all the things that went wrong with UNTAET, as well as all the things that UNTAET and the NGOs have tried to do, men and women often don't receive them in the same ways, and there can be real repercussions for women and for domestic relations between men and women.

VJ: It does indeed have repercussions for women. In fact, women, East Timorese women, were seen as much more employable than East Timorese men by UNTAET, and, there are actually quite a lot of women working for UNTAET in a range of professional jobs. And there are quite a lot of women in civil service, as nurses and teachers. And male unemployment is very, very high. It was about 50 – 70 percent, when I was there. And of course there are no unemployment benefits. So that sort of dynamic really did upset the apple cart in the sense that women were going out to work, they were earning US dollars (because the currency in East Timor is US dollars), and they were bringing home this money, and men were basically quite idle. The other way to look at it is that it's also historically quite an anomaly in the sense that the majority of East Timorese live outside cities, so they're an agriculture-based population. So work is divided quite differently to, say, in an urban environment. And thus this system of women going out to work did also upset the historical gender divisions of labor; even if they hadn't been necessarily implemented in an urban environment, they were still understood to be the Timorese way. All in all, women going out and earning money seemingly at the expense of men was seen as quite a difficult thing.

I'm just thinking back to the experiences of some of my colleagues within the UN administration in Same. You know, we'd always have festivals, they're very big on festivals, and the UN is and the Timorese are as well. Every time someone came or left there'd be this spread, buffalos, chickens, and lettuce and all sorts of things. And I'd always speak to my colleague who was a program officer, administrative officer, and she would also be always absent the day before one of these festivals. And I'd say to her the next day, "where were you?" And she'd say, "I was making food." And I said, "well, don't they pay for food?" And she said, "yeah, they pay for the food, but they don't pay for the labor." This is a government employee. So she gets money for the buffalo, but she has to go out and find it, and kill it, and cook it and put it on her plates from her kitchen and then bring it in. And that is an understood part of the functioning civil service within East Timor.

CE: This reminds me of that woman peacekeeper's story in Haiti – a French woman in a police unit. She said that in the French military unit, there was one woman and I don't know how many guys. And in the barracks, the French military guys assumed that their female colleague would do all their laundry. And, in fact, she felt so intimidated that she did it until the mission's Gender Adviser came along and said, "actually, that isn't your job." So it is in East Timor, but it is also within organizational cultures more generally, in many countries, including here. And it has power implications. I mean, she who is seen cleaning up the cups afterwards is not he who is seen as making networking deals as you walk out the door.

VJ: But, you know, if we've got up the five women in that administration around that buffalo, if they're cooking it, talking about the injustice of it all, couldn't something special happen? Just as in the 60's, when they got that space in the Catholic church in so many countries where they actually talked and said, "hang on, we've got this women-only space now. Sure we're within the confines of the Catholic Church, but let's think about how we can look at women's issues around this."

Q: At least the women are now making money. I'm just wondering, whether domestic violence has gone up or the resentment of men is somehow affected in ways that signals a power shift domestically. Do you think this may open up an opportunity for a change in power relations?

VJ: I think there is on an individual level, but not so much on a collective level at this stage. I don't think the structure allows for such a change I mean, life is hard, and even if you're bringing home money, you're still only bringing home maybe 70 dollars a month, and that's a good wage. And life is very difficult, and if you're the woman earning, you're supporting your family, your parents, your husband's parents, and anyone else you can support. And so it's never really seen to be enough. And on top of that, you're carrying water. I mean, it's that double burden we've read about so many times. You're carrying water, and you're cooking, and you're looking after kids and more. So, those opportunities for collective action, and just even a collective exchange of ideas, are not yet there. But I think we need to make the buffalo a political space, and then maybe something will come out of it. And I think that's one of the things with this organizing and looking at the UN. In many instances, the UN did go in and say, "well, alright, let's do something about women's issues." So they'd hold a community meeting, and there'd be a group of women sitting around the circle, and there'd be all the village men standing around behind them watching what they were going to say. The UN people would walk away from this thinking, "well, that wasn't very useful at all. Nobody really said anything." Instead, why don't you just go to the well in the morning, you know, at 7:30 in the morning you've got all the women there from the village. You can talk to them all, and you're not actually disrupting their space or their workday. So, I think it has to do with thinking a bit more creatively, in that sense.

Biography

Vijaya Joshi, Ph.D., worked in East Timor between August 2001 and February 2003. She worked as a researcher for a local NGO called La'o Hamutuk; as a training officer for the UN; and as a project manager for the International Rescue Committee. Most recently she has taught a course titled "Rethinking Rights and Global Development" to Masters students at the University Melbourne. She has recently completed her PhD in Women's Studies at Clark University. She lives in Melbourne, Australia.