



POLICY PAPER

Pirilampu

UNSCR 1325 Advocacy Booklet



Funded by
the European Union



Edition

August, 2024.

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Front Cover Image

Members of Forum Pirilampu and Women Survivors of Sexual Violence participate in Pirilampu Workshop, Likisa.

Front Cover Image

Design by Asia Justice & Rights (AJAR)

Published by Asosiasaun Chega! Ba Ita (ACbit) and Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR). This work was carried out with funding from the European Union. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of the European Union.

Who We Are

Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR) is a regional human rights organisation that works to increase the capacity of local and national actors, in particular victims, victims' groups and local civil society organisations (CSOs) in the fight against entrenched impunity. This work focuses on conflict transformation, human rights documentation, education and the development of strong south-south connections across the Asia-Pacific region.

Association Chega Ba Ita (ACbit) is a women-led organisation in Timor-Leste whose mandate includes implementing the recommendations of the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission, known as CAVR. The aims of the organisation include supporting women survivors with trauma healing workshops, increasing women survivors' capacity through nutrition and business training, bringing together families separated by conflict and assisting children of war, and lobbying for the recognition of women survivors by relevant government and non-government bodies, educate the public on women's history, human rights, and gender-based violence in the past and present, pay tribute to women survivors at memorial services, research and publish materials with national and international researchers.

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Chapter I: Introduction

"The independence of Timor-Leste was built on the suffering of our bodies."—A Timorese woman and survivor of conflict-related sexual violence.

This booklet contains information to support members of Pirilampu Klibur Sobrevivente Feto 1974–1999 (Fireflies Forum of Women Survivors 1974–1999, Pirilampu) with their advocacy efforts towards policy makers in Timor-Leste.

Pirilampu was established in October 2022 by women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Timor-Leste as a vehicle for self-empowerment, outreach, and advocacy. Its primary aims are to protect and promote the rights of survivors, preserve their history, and ensure their involvement in decision making. The name Pirilampu means 'firefly' in Tetun. It represents a light in the darkness and serves as a reminder that no matter how bad the situation, there is always a glimmer of hope for a better future.

Advocacy means taking action to effect change. It can include campaigning to influence public opinion or direct lobbying with policy makers to persuade them to do something to further a cause. All successful advocacy strategies need strong, clear, accurate information. Without this, advocacy campaigns may be weak or rejected. The stronger the information, the more powerful the advocacy will be.

This booklet outlines commitments that the Government of Timor-Leste has made to support women survivors of sexual violence during conflict, highlighting these survivors' demands and identifying a way forward to ensure greater respect for and recognition of survivors and their rights. Specifically, it includes information on:

1. UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and its relevance to survivors in Timor-Leste.
2. Timor-Leste's National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325.
3. Key demands of survivors of sexual violence committed during conflict in Timor-Leste.
4. Suggestions for the way forward and next steps.

Chapter II: What is UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and how is it relevant to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Timor-Leste?

What is a UN Security Council Resolution?

The United Nations (UN) is an international organisation made up of representatives from 193 member states around the world. Timor-Leste has been a member since independence in 2002. The UN plays an important role in promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights. The Security Council is the part of the UN responsible for maintaining international peace and security. It has 15 members, including five permanent members—China; France; the Russian Federation; the United Kingdom; and the United States of America—and ten additional members who are each elected for a two-year term. . Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) is a decision or recommendation that is made by the members of the Security Council. When the Security Council passes a resolution, there is an expectation that all members of the UN will respect and follow it. UNSCRs are therefore important tools to use for advocacy, and referencing them can be an effective way to put pressure on governments to take action.

Every resolution the Security Council makes is given a number. So UNSCR 1325 is the 1,325th resolution adopted by the Security Council.

What is UNSCR 1325 and why is it important?

UNSCR 1325 is an important document which recognises the important role women play in the prevention and resolution of conflict. It was created on 31 October 2000 and outlines a set of commitments relating to women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.¹

UNSCR 1325 recognises that women and girls have an important role to play:

- To prevent violent conflict and keep the peace.
- To help end violent conflict when it happens and find peaceful solutions.
- To help build and strengthen peace.
- To help people recover after violent conflict.
- To help rebuild communities.

UNSCR 1325 contains two main sections:

- Section 1: outlines all the past agreements, resolutions, and commitments that came before and helped to shape it.

¹ The official version of UNSCR 1325 can be found at: http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf.

- Section 2: outlines the recommendations or the 'call to action' and lists actions that should be taken to support women and girls affected by conflict. These fall under four pillars: Participation, Protection, Prevention, and Relief and Recovery.

Importantly for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Timor-Leste, UNSCR 1325 emphasises the need to understand and address the special needs and rights of women and girls in both conflict and post-conflict settings.

Chapter III: Timor-Leste's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325

What is the National Action Plan?

Since adopting UNSCR 1325, the UN Security Council has encouraged governments around the world to adopt national-level strategies to implement the four pillars of the resolution. National Action Plans (NAPs) are important policy documents which outline how the government will approach implementation and what actions they plan to take to secure the rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings – both at the national and international levels.

Timor-Leste published its first NAP in 2016, covering the period 2016–2020². The document marked an important recognition of the importance of UNSCR 1325, as well as the Timorese government's commitment to its implementation. The first NAP highlighted the experiences of Timorese survivors of sexual violence during conflict and emphasised that there was still much more to do to recognise, rehabilitate, and support them. It specifically highlighted the ongoing suffering of many women survivors in rural and remote communities who lack access to services, as well as the continuing impact of stigmatisation and social exclusion of survivors and their children.

Importantly, it specifically mentioned implementation of recommendations of the Commission of Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR, or Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor-Leste), which documented the systematic abuses and violence committed by members of the

Indonesian armed forces, including rape, sexual torture, sexual slavery, and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in Timor-Leste. However, it did not identify specific actions to implement CAVR recommendations.

The second NAP was launched on 15 February 2024 and outlines the government's strategy for the period 2024–2028³. The NAP was developed following consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society, and will serve as a holistic national strategy over a five year period. Workshops were held with members of the NAP 1325 structure to reach an agreement on the terms of reference for implementation. This includes various dissemination activities across government institutions and in partnership with civil society organisations. The Ministry of Interior as the institution responsible for implementation will hold training on the NAP at national and district levels as well as regular meetings to discuss the implementation plan and budget allocation.

² The full 2016–2020 NAP can be found in English at: <https://1325naps.peacewomen.org/index.php/timor-leste/> and in Tetun at: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2020/12/Relatorio%20PAN%20Final%20Final%20Report.pdf>.

³ The development of the second NAP was delayed due to the COVID-19 global pandemic. The Full NAP 2024–2028 can be found in English at: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/tl-c636-vi-final-nap1325-020224_english-spdf and in Tetun at: https://timor-leste.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/tl-c636-vi-final-nap1325-020224_tetun-s.pdf.

The NAP 1325 Women Peace and Security places a strong emphasis on gender equality and women's participation, and highlights the important role women play in promoting peace, preventing and resolving community conflicts, and responding to humanitarian and natural disasters. It envisages expanding women's roles in decision-making and leadership at both the community and national levels.

There are strong hopes that the second NAP will overcome some of the limitations of the first one, in particular with regard to implementation of CAVR recommendations relating to the rights of women and girls. At present, many survivors have not received formal recognition, and do not have sufficient access to government support and assistance, including in the form of reparations.

Why is the NAP important?

The NAP is a very important document for Pirilampu advocates. It is a key tool to use to hold the government to account for its actions or inactions on the commitments made to implement UNSCR 1325. It also provides an opportunity for members of Pirilampu to advocate for a clear roadmap for support for survivors of sexual violence during conflict, including prioritizing their needs in both interim and full reparations programs.

Chapter IV: Survivor's Demand

Background to the demands:

It has been more than 20 years since conflict devastated communities across Timor-Leste, yet women survivors continue to push for their right to recognition by the state and for reparations.

In 2022, more than 30 women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence came together to share, reflect, and document their feelings, needs, and ideas for transformative reparations. The women participated in Participatory Action Research (PAR) workshops in Dili-Comoro and Lauhata- Liquiçá in 2022 and 2023 with the support of ACbit⁴. These workshops provided space for the women to reflect on their experiences and build a collective vision for action, while also allowing time for self-care and healing.

The workshops also led to the establishment of a new organisation, Pirilampu. In October 2022, a second workshop was held to further formalise Pirilampu. Working with ACbit and AJAR, Pirilampu members discussed the design of an interim reparations program. Other PAR workshops on peace and accountability were held in Dili, Manatuto, and Baucau in 2022–2023.

Survivor demands:

Pirilampu, AJAR, and ACbit believe that any effort to implement UNSCR 1325—and to address harms of the past—must be led by survivors themselves, taking in to account their specific needs and wishes. The demands outlined below were identified by survivors themselves, through a process of collective reflection, discussion, and research. They include both individual and collective demands.

INDIVIDUAL

Demanding secure and adequate housing

Pirilampu demands secure and adequate housing for women survivors. Many survivors have faced years social stigma and discrimination, and have been ostracised from their communities. As a result, many struggle to access services such as healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, which in turn makes them more vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion.

Unmarried women and girl survivors who became pregnant as a result of sexual violence faced additional stigma. Some were denied access to support networks and secure housing opportunities – for example if their families disowned them or their marriage prospects diminished. Stigma and dis-

4 This included a PAR workshop in Dili-Comoro from 4-7 July 2022, which was attended by 31 women participants, including women survivors of sexual violence, children born of war and witnesses. From 22-23 October 2022, a second workshop was held in Lauhata-Liquiçá. In total, there were 33 participants, including Pirilampu members, women survivors of sexual violence, and children born of war.

criminatorial gender stereotypes meant that many survivors were effectively barred from marriage. Even those who have access to housing raised concerns about their safety and security, and several participants reflected on the inadequacy of their current housing situation.

Participants also highlighted the importance of women's autonomy in ensuring safe, secure, and sustainable housing. Survivors of sexual violence during conflict who became single mothers have often been excluded from land inheritance opportunities, especially in rural areas. This has become a driving force of intergenerational poverty for survivors, their children and, in some cases, their grandchildren. Survivors who experienced forced displacement also often reported that they have been unable to access their former lands and houses.

"When receiving housing assistance, we must ensure that the house's certificate is in our name, not our families."—
Pirilampu member and survivor of sexual violence, Liquiçá

Demanding support for education

Pirilampu demands support for education for survivors' children. This includes children born as a result of rapes committed during the conflict. One of the biggest barriers facing many survivors and their families is access to education. This can be a result of geography and the isolation of municipalities. It can also be the result of lack financial accessibility, for example high costs associated with transportation or tuition fees. Some survivors do not receive government subsidies to support their children's attend school and cannot afford to pay school fees by themselves. In tertiary education, priority for financial support is often given to the family or children of veterans but not to the families of victims of conflict, including survivors of sexual violence. Older survivors face specific challenges such as poor health, lack of employment opportunities, and limited family support, however, often bear the burden of financial responsibility.

"To purchase food to eat has also been difficult, how can you pay your children for school."— Pirilampu member and female survivors of sexual violence, Dili

"Buying food is already difficult, how can we pay for our children to go to school?"— Pirilampu member and female survivor of sexual violence, Dili

"We ask the government to pay attention to us and our children, to appreciate us, and to provide scholarships for our children"—Pirilampu member and female survivor of sexual violence, Liquiçá

Demanding healthcare support

Pirilampu demand support for healthcare, especially for survivors living in remote and rural areas. Many survivors are aging and are experiencing increased health problems. In addition to physical healthcare, they also need mental health support to address ongoing and long-standing psychological impacts of their experiences during the conflict. Many survivors have still not been able to access sufficient healthcare or psychosocial support, even years after the harm they suffered. High levels of violence against women and girls in Timor-Leste, including domestic and intimate partner violence,

have further exacerbated the situation.

“As well as the psychological trauma, I continue to suffer physical health problems... my body is sick. I have been to see a doctor, but I don't have enough money to keep up the treatment. So, I just continue to be sick.” — Female survivor of sexual violence, Dili

Demanding livelihood support

Pirilampu demands livelihood support for survivors and their children. This includes more training, access to capital as well as job opportunities. Children born of rape should be prioritised for vocational training as well as access to opportunities in government jobs.

Pirilampu also demands financial assistance for those who are unable to work, especially ageing or physically disabled women who in the past relied on physical labour for their income and survival, for example subsistence farmers. Pensions and related benefits would provide much needed assistance.

COLLECTIVE

Demanding reparations from the state of Timor-Leste

“As victims of sexual violence, I believe we have a right to reparations. We are citizens of this country, we suffered for this country, and we need assistance and reparations, not to have our rights played with. We need the Timor-Leste government to help us repair our lives, because we lost our dignity for this country.” — Female survivor of sexual violence, Dili“

“We survivors have the right to reparation because the rape and torture that we experienced during the conflict wasn't our fault... it happened because we struggled for Timor's independence.” — Pirilampu member and female survivor of sexual violence, Dili

Pirilampu demands recognition and reparations from the state of Timor-Leste. Reparations are measures which aim to redress violations of human rights by providing material or symbolic benefits to victims as well as their families and affected communities. They should address not only the immediate harm caused but also associated suffering, marginalisation, and discrimination. Many Pirilampu members feel they have a right to be compensated by the state because they were subjected to sexual violence and other serious crimes during the conflict.

Women survivors are clear that responsibility for reparations is primarily that of the state of Timor-Leste, even if violations against them were committed by members of the Indonesian military. Survivors see their relationship as being with the state of Timor-Leste. A number of survivors said that the state of Indonesia should contribute to reparations, though this should not override the responsibility of Timor-Leste to its citizens.

Demanding Justice

“[There are many] people who suffered for this land, lost their families, lost their children, or were tortured... there is still no justice for victims of human rights violations.” — Female survivor of sexual violence, Dili

"Justice for the violence of the past does not yet exist." — Female survivor of sexual violence, Dili

Pirilampu demands the state of Timor-Leste do more to pursue justice for the crimes committed against them during the conflict, by both Indonesian and Timorese perpetrators. However, they feel strongly that reparations should not be tied to prosecutions, especially as their needs are immediate and court processes to date have taken a long time.

Demanding recognition and appreciation from the state of Timor-Leste

"Female victims experienced various sufferings during the conflict. We need to convey this message to the government so that they can give equal attention to female victims and not only focus on veterans." — Pirilampu member and female survivor of sexual violence, Liquiçá

"I feel sad in my heart when the state recognises veterans but not survivors [of sexual violence]." — Female survivor of sexual violence, Dili

"As victims of sexual violence committed during the conflict, we feel that nobody pays any attention to us, especially as we are women. Men get far more recognition and support." — Female survivor of sexual violence, Dili

Pirilampu demand recognition and appreciation. A key component of reparations is official recognition from the state, publicly acknowledging that they are victims of conflict-related violations which continue to impact their lives. Pirilampu notes that veterans are provided with state honours and pensions because of their sacrifice for independence, while women and men who experienced sexual violence, including those targeted due to their participation in the resistance, continue to be ignored and marginalised.

Official recognition is an important way to address the historic and ongoing stigma experienced by women survivors as well as children born of rape. One way this could be done is through memorialisation, for example the building of a physical monument or establishing a national day. This would help younger generations understand the sacrifices of survivors of sexual violence during conflict and respect them. Children born of rape should also be granted official state documentation such as birth certificates.

"After I gave testimony to the CAVR, both my family and members of the community blamed me. When I recall what happened [to me], I feel like I am losing my mind... my chest and whole body hurts." — Pirilampu member and female survivor of sexual violence, Dili

"In the community people always say bad things about us and discriminate against us victims of sexual violence. It's worse if we became pregnant after being raped by Indonesian soldiers. It still affects us psychologically. We are human, but the war took away our dignity." — Female survivor of sexual violence, Dili

Chapter V: Way Forward

“Why doesn't the Government work with us to develop a transformative approach to repair the damage from the past?” — Female survivor of sexual violence, Baucau

Women survivors identify four levels for reparations:

- Internally within survivors' own self-belief, agency and sense of dignity.
- Within families.
- At the community level.
- At the national level.

Many women survivors have already begun the internal work, especially with support by NGOs such as AJAR and ACbit. Participating in a range of participatory action research activities and working to produce advocacy reports, as well as arts and performance events and campaigns has helped to restore their confidence and dignity. The establishment of Pirilampu is another step in this process, as the organisation gives strength and provides support to individual survivors. The work of organisations like AJAR and ACbit and their support for Pirilampu should be sustained.

“These candles reflect each of Pirilampu's survivors. Pirilampu comprises small lights from each municipality. We unite to give light to those who need it. We will put these candles around the bonfire. While we do it, we remember our friends and relatives who died during the conflict. Our struggles and visions are the same as theirs. Thus, we must continue their struggle.” — Pirilampu member and female survivor of sexual violence, Liquiçá

The next transformative step is recognition by the state at the national level. This could unlock practical assistance to meet survivors' needs as well as contribute to family and community level change to overcome the stigma and discrimination faced by survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Pirilampu believes that this official recognition is the pathway to change.

Official state recognition at national level should be supported by linking to municipal and village level governance and leadership structures to ensure the transformative messages are heard and acted on at the community level where survivors and their children live.

Small-scale NGO programs should be supported and sustained to stop the cycle of re-victimisation. This would also help to address the ongoing crisis of violence against women and girls in their communities.

At the same time, practical assistance must reach survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and their children. A reparations scheme must be:

- **Timely.** Many survivors have already passed away, others are ageing and need immediate recognition and support.
- **Broad and flexible in scope and delivery.** The assistance should be ongoing so it can address both urgent and longer term needs of survivors rather than a one-off benefit. This approach is more

suitable for addressing the complex needs of survivors.

- ***Informed and led by survivors.*** The voices of survivors must be central to the design of a reparations program. Survivors are bravely speaking up and by doing so are encouraging others to share their experiences and their needs.
- ***Inclusive.*** Reparations programs must be available to everyone without discrimination. Extra time and space must be given for survivors who have more recently come forward, such as LGBTQIA+ survivors, survivors with disabilities, survivors in Indonesia from the 'stolen children' generation, and male survivors of sexual violence during conflict.