Justice for the Poor

Timor-Leste Program

Promoting equity and managing conflict in development

Justice for the Poor Overview

Justice for the Poor (J4P) is a World Bank program that engages with justice reform as a cross-cutting issue in the practice of development. Grounded in evidence-based approaches focused on the perspective of the poor and marginalized, the program aims to improve the delivery of justice services and to support sustainable and equitable development processes which manage grievance and conflict stresses effectively.

Timor-Leste Background

In the years since Timor-Leste’s independence, the country has reached middle income status due to oil resources and sound revenue management. But many challenges common to low income countries persist: poor human development outcomes; rural poverty; fragile institutions with poor implementation capacity; and low agricultural productivity. The Government’s development strategy emphasizes (i) large scale infrastructure development and (ii) diversification of the economy beyond its dependence on petroleum through agribusiness engagements. Regardless of the type of development that the Government pursues (agribusiness, large scale infrastructure, building cities to accommodate the rural-urban drift), it needs to facilitate partnerships at the local level around land, public investment and livelihoods.

Timor-Leste Program Areas

Established in 2008, the J4P program supports analytical and advisory work linked to the development agenda of the Government of Timor-Leste and the World Bank’s country program. From 2008-2011, the program undertook two major streams of work. The first related to local governance, and explored how the Government’s substantial expenditure on development programs was affecting traditional decision-making, power dynamics and dispute resolution processes at the local level. The second, land stream of work supported a framework of fair negotiation between investors and communal landholders to produce more durable and equitable deals and to promote greater equity in the distribution of benefits for all community members. The program also provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Justice regarding options for the regulation of communal land under the draft Land Law.

Building on this previous work, in 2012 the program entered into a second stage and activities now focus on three main project areas:

- **Infrastructure**: The J4P program is working to increase the voice of poor and vulnerable groups around infrastructure projects for better development outcomes. The Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 places significant emphasis on infrastructure development and the program is working with government and civil society to support the development of systems and capacities that are needed to mitigate grievance and conflict, as well as maximize development outcomes for the poor.

- **Land Policy and Administration**: The program is working to support national dialogue and advocacy on land policy and administration to enhance evidence-based policy discussion around land reform.

- **Urban State Land**: The J4P program aims to develop national systems and capacities to manage urban state land more sustainably and equitably. Urbanization is increasing in Timor-Leste and tenure insecurity represents a significant challenge. The program works with partners in government and civil society to collect and review existing state land data, identify key gaps, and generate strategically significant data on urban state land, including how the governance of state land affects the land market in Dili and other peri-urban locations.

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