



World Development Report 2007 on Youth

Timor-Leste

Summary of Consultations held

November 26, 2005

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Consultation, November 26, 2005

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1. Background¹

Timor-Leste is a young country, with a population of 925,000 (based on the 2004 Census), which has just recovered from devastation by the 1999 violence. The fertility rate is 7.8 percent, high compared to other countries in the region. More than three quarters of the population live in rural areas. 48 percent of the population is below the age of 17. Youth - counted as those aged between 12 and 29 - account for 25 percent of the population and its proportion is rising. According to the Timor Living Standards Survey 2001, the labor force participation rate (for both men and women) is 59 percent, of which LPR for women is 38 percent. Furthermore, only a quarter of wage jobs are held by women who mainly work in service sector. About four-fifths of those employed are in agriculture. Unemployment rate is in excess of 12 percent for youth (aged 15-29) and especially high for 15-19 aged group (18 percent) and urban youth (23 percent).

This report is structured as follows: Section 2 describes general youth characteristics. Section 3 summarizes the results of the consultation held with young men and women. Section 4 presents the results of the consultations with young women. The last section provides a brief analysis of the youth consultation.

2. General Youth Characteristic in Timor-Leste

In Timor-Leste, the young age structure of the population continues to generate large cohorts of youth. The most recent data are from the National Census 2004 (preliminary data) and shows the youth population to be 24.7 percent of the total population. All year cohorts from age 15 to 20 are larger than any older year cohorts, reflecting the trend of increasingly young population. There is no significant difference between the sexes.

¹ Sections 1 and 2 are based largely on excerpts from (i) Ostgaard, Lene. 2004. *Timor-Leste Youth Social Analysis*. World Bank; and (ii) Subbarao, Kalanidhi and Nga Nguyet Nguyen. 2005. *Timor-Leste Youth Profile – Draft*. World Bank.

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Table 1 Percentage of total population by age and sex, 2004²

Age	Total	Male	Female
	% of total population	50,9	49,1
Total			
15	2,2	1,1	1,1
16	2,2	1,1	1,1
17	2,0	1,0	1,0
18	2,2	1,1	1,1
19	1,8	0,9	0,9
20	2,2	1,1	1,1
21	1,5	0,7	0,7
22	1,7	0,8	0,8
23	1,4	0,7	0,7
24	1,5	0,7	0,8
25	1,3	0,7	0,7
26	1,0	0,5	0,5
27	1,0	0,5	0,5
28	1,4	0,7	0,7
29	1,4	0,7	0,7
Total 15 - 29	24,7	12,3	12,4
All Others	75,3	38,6	36,7

Youth and education and training. According to the TLSS (2001) data, only about 31 percent of the 19-29 years old have not attended school compared to 72 percent of the population of over 30 years of age. According to the preliminary data from the National Census 2004, 27 percent of the persons aged 15-29 has attended only primary school, 12 percent having completed 6 years or more.³ These figures can be compared to the figures in Table 12, which are from the DHS 2003. It should be noted that the National Census data shows little difference between males and females in percentage having completed primary or secondary school.

The DHS data shows that within the age group 15-19 the majority has some secondary education, which represents a considerable asset for the nation, and is far above the levels of the older generations, see Table 12. It is particularly important to note that the high figure applies to females as well as males. It is particularly impressive, as the number of females having no education in the brackets 30-34 and 35-39 were 43.6 percent and 66.7 percent respectively, and for the older age brackets above 80 percent. It should be noted that although the women have made a tremendous progress, they are still not on par with the men.

² Direcção Nacional de Estatística (National Directorate of Statistics), preliminary data from the National Census 2004.

³ The rate of repeating classes is high, see also below Table 13.

Table 2 Percentage distribution of educational level per age bracket and sex of total population⁴

Age group	No education		Some primary		Completed primary		Some secondary or more	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
15-19 years	13.3	15.4	23.1	20.8	1.7	3.4	61.9	60.4
20-24 years	18.3	23.9	18.5	18.5	6.0	8.7	57.2	49.0
25-29 years	21.1	33.3	18.3	20.7	12.2	12.6	48.4	33.3

The preliminary data from the National Census shows that 41 percent of the 15-29 year old have some secondary education, but the figures are slightly lower than those of the DHS, particularly for the group 15-19, of which 43 percent have some secondary education, and the group 20-24 for which the figure is 42%. Of the group 25-29, the National Census identified 34 percent as having some secondary education, which corresponds well to the findings of the DHS. It also finds that about 20 percent of the youth group had received a diploma from high school (11 percent men and 9 percent women).

The DHS finds that for the overall population there is a higher proportion of people having completed secondary schooling in the urban areas (34.7 percent for males and 32.2 percent for females) than in the rural areas (range 12.9-22.2 percent). There is also an expected lower level of education in poorer families: 45.2 percent of males and 52.7 percent of females have no education at all in the poorest group and only 16.4 percent of males and 11.6 percent of females having completed secondary education. The corresponding figures for the richest group are 20.1 percent for males and 27.1 percent for females having no education and 39.8 percent of males and 37.1 percent having some secondary education.⁵ This suggests that a major part of the problem of youth in Timor-Leste is one of inability to complete general education.

There is a serious gap in education attainment between youths from poor and non-poor families. The poor youth from 12-17 group is doing slightly worse than their counterpart from non-poor households. But the gap in education attainment between the poor and non-poor youths is quite significant for the 18-29 age group. More than 45 percent of older youth from poor households has no education at all, only a third has some junior secondary education, and about 15 percent reaches senior level. The dramatic fall in the percentage of poor youth from primary to junior secondary is worrisome and calls for some immediate policy action.

Youth and the labor market. In 2001, the labor force participation rate was estimated to be 59 percent - relatively low compared to other countries in the region. Female

⁴ DHS

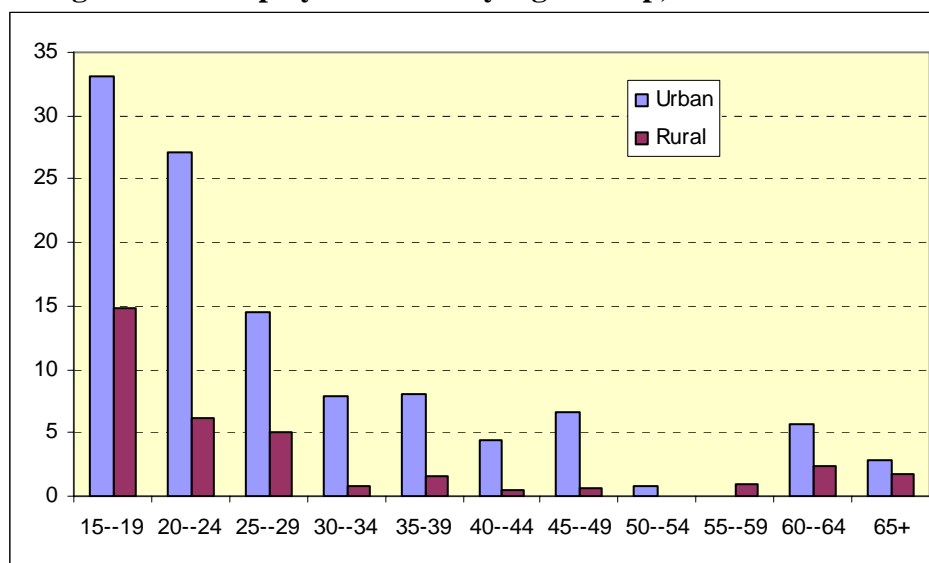
⁵ DHS

participation rate lags too far behind the participation rate of men. About 55 percent of Timor-Leste's labor force had no education and only about 21 percent has some secondary education and more.

The employment rate remains relatively low at 56 percent. Most of the employment comes from the agriculture, which accounts for nearly 81 percent of total employment in the economy. Employment in the service sector, the second largest sector, is at around 15 percent, while the manufacturing sector employment share is just less than 4 percent. This pattern of sectoral distribution of employment indicates that the available employment opportunities are concentrated in self-provisioning subsistence agricultural sector and not in wage-paying jobs in manufacturing and service sectors. Jobs in the formal sector, and also wage-employment in the farming sector, are obviously very limited in Timor-Leste.

Overall, the general picture that emerges in this section points towards weakly functioning labor market. Job creation at the national level and in the urban areas in particular did not keep up with the large cohorts of new entrants into the labor force and with urbanization. The resulting challenges in the labor market include low educated labor force, the high unemployment rate among urban educated youth, arguably a highly vulnerable group, with a high share of the long term unemployed, a large proportion of the workforce engaged in subsistence activities and the low participation rate for women. The wage analysis further underlines the disadvantaged position of some of these vulnerable groups, including youth, women and the unskilled.

As mentioned above, the unemployment rate for youth is very high, especially in urban areas. A closer look at the unemployment rate for different age groups reveals significant differences between young adults within a region as well as across different regions. Teenage unemployment rate is as high as 33 percent (15 percent) in urban areas (rural areas).

Figure 1: Unemployment Rate by Age Group, Urban and Rural

The vulnerability of youth in Timor-Leste is dependent upon various factors of which unemployment rate is one. The share of the unemployed among the overall youth population is very high in urban areas especially for the youngest three age groups. However, it is low in rural areas. The fact that the unemployment rate being low in rural areas does not reflect the rural youth's vulnerability inasmuch as their educational attainments are so low as not to allow them to break into formal wage labor market.

3. Summary of Youth Consultation

The preparation for the World Development Report Consultation was held on November 26, 2005. The representatives were invited: National Council of Youth (1), district council representative (26, 13 males and 13 females), Church Scouts (1), Ojetil (political affiliation) (1), Renetil (student movement) (1), Foska (affiliated with Catholic Church) (1), disabled youth representative (1), Dewan Solidaritas (student movement) (1), Feto Ki'ik (Women NGO) (1), Objelatil (youth organization) (1), Protestant youth representative (1) and Muslim youth representative (1). 29 youth representative participated, including 23 males and 6 females.

The limited participation by women was due to cultural barriers which prevent particularly women from rural areas to participate in events like this. First, parents did not allow their daughters to participate both in the consultation as well as in youth councils. Secondly, the consultation coincided with a UNICEF survey on youth that involved most of the female council members as numerators. Due to the gender imbalance during the consultation held on November 26, 2005, the Country Manager proposed to have a separate consultation with women in order to capture their interest and needs and to include these in the World Development Report.

The discussion was facilitated by a national consultant who used the WDR guiding questionnaire translated into a local language (Tetum). Participants were encouraged to share their views on the topic of transition to work. It was a lively discussion. Most participants, both men and women, were able to express their views concerning youth unemployment, job creation, labor market and access to information. The participants were split into four groups to discuss issues concerning (i) unemployment, (ii) human resources as the main constraint to be absorbed in the labor market, (iii) political decision, (iv) labor market, (v) work in public versus private sector and (vi) solutions for the issues that had been raised.

Each of the four groups presented the outcome of their discussions. The following are the results of each group presentation:

Group Presentation:

Group 1:

Cause of Unemployment

a. Human resources

- Problem of formal and informal education
- Development of human resources:
 - Level of education is low
 - Majority of young people have an attitude of dependence. It is a major barrier to achieve self-reliance. Youth are waiting for outside/government help. Lack of capacity poses a barrier to actively participate in the development process. Youth often criticize without presenting evidence due to their lack of capacity to address their concerns and to follow the entire process of development
 - Limited job opportunities.

b. Political Decision:

- Youth organizations and government have not established a good collaboration and coordination to identify and address youth issues in Timor-Leste
- There is no clear role model for youth in Timor-Leste which youth could take one as a good example to follow
- The government has not authorized youth to assume responsibility, even though youth in many respects have tried hard to play their role to neutralize tense situation, (a real example was the church and government dispute over religion on whether it should be part of curriculum or not)

c. Labor Market:

- There is no significant investment in Timor-Leste since the investment laws (foreign and domestic) were passed by parliament and promulgated by the president and it has been implemented. Some companies have already shown interest to invest in Timor-Leste. However, no major investment has taken place and thus the impact on the labor market has been limited.
- The private sector is unable to provide employment for unemployed youth
- Recruitment of public servants is very limited, notably 12,000, and there is no chance for youth to be recruited.

d. Public Sector versus Private Sector Work

Obtaining a position in the public and private sector is often not based on merit but on political affiliation.

How to resolve it:

1. Government and relevant organizations need to expand education and literacy programs to reduce the number of illiterates targeting young people, provide training opportunities and create jobs for youth.
2. Government and youth organizations should conduct a survey to identify youth issues and their needs in order to prepare a comprehensive action plan for youth in Timor-Leste.
3. Government should guarantee national stability and introduce laws to ensure that entrepreneurs employ youth.
4. Positions should be filled based on merit.

Group 2

Unemployment: Sensitive issue in Timor-Leste

a. Human Resources:

- No access to education
- Economy is weak. Therefore, many families can not afford to send their children to school.
- Strong paternalistic culture
- High population growth, fertility rate is 7,8% which is on of the highest in the world
- Unclear political decisions, or the decisions made are not suitable for the real condition of youth in Timor-Leste
- Unemployment in Timor-Leste is a complex issue that has to be tackled from policy, economic and socio-cultural aspects

b. Labor Market:

- Complexity of job application criteria and requirements for youth. Many youth have no access to both formal and informal education
- Youth who look for a job have very limited skills to meet the respective job requirements. As a result there is an influx of workers from outside who fill the positions which could be filled Timorese youth
- Lack of information on labor market especially affects youth; outreach at district and remote areas would be necessary

c. Public Sector work versus Private Sector Work

- Lack of understanding regarding job requirements

Solution:

- Training targeting youth is needed in order to improve their skills
- Socializing formal and non-formal education for youth
- Provide training through Business Development Centers (BDCs) targeting youth

- Diversification and improvement of local products to increase competitiveness, improvement of access to markets
- Provide training to different youth council centers in all 13 districts. The centers would gradually start functioning as youth core centers to address youth needs concerning dissemination of information, training opportunities, etc.
- Minimize the domination of paternalistic culture that is a barrier to youth participation in the development process.
- Pass laws/regulation to regulate hierarchical cultural system so that youth are able to participate in the development process
- Present policy and political issues democratically, both to parliament and government, that address youth issues and interests
- Reduce job requirements according to the Timorese context and enhance capacity through non-formal education

Group 3

Unemployment: A sensitive issue

a. Human resources:

Education: Quality of education is low. The government should take serious action to regulate universities and establish competency framework so that these universities are able to produce highly qualified graduates able to compete on the labor market. So far, the government has paid little attention to this specific and crucial issue.

b. Political decision:

- A deeply rooted nepotism system: the decision makers decisions' benefit primarily their families and friends
- Decisions that have been made often ignore youth's ability and interests due to lack of consultation and socialization in particular with youth groups

c. Public Sector work versus Private Sector Work

- No transparency mechanism and youth have less access to information
- Lack of facilities and conducive business environment

Solution:

- Create jobs
- Improve quality of human resources
- Government has to make use or absorb skilled youth in Timor-Leste

Solution regarding employment:

To be able to get a job in the future:

1. Establish training centers for youth by decentralizing their branches at districts level (not only in Dili). The World Bank should cooperate with the government of Timor-Leste to establish training centers, which should cover all districts to reduce influx of youth seeking jobs in Dili. This may help youth to take part and contribute positively to the development of their own districts.
Training centers provide training as part of non-formal education to enhance youth capacity.
Training centers need to be decentralized, and they have to accommodate women needs with regards to their empowerment and enhancement of their capacity.
Improve education system in order to produce qualified human resources. This includes: curriculum, finance, education policy and relevant laws and regulation on education. In addition, enhancing capacity of teachers would improve the quality of education.
2. Government has to entrust local entrepreneurs, encourage them as well as create a conducive business environment for them in order to be able to create jobs which will eventually target youth at the local level.
3. To create laws/policies that may provide benefits to investors and thus attract investors to invest in Timor-Leste. This may help to provide job opportunities for youth.
4. Guarantee security and stability to enable youth travel.
5. Improve and add school facilities such as laboratories to help youth in schools to get access to information and improve their practical skills in many areas before entering the labor market.
6. Require regulation regarding universities.
7. Prioritize technical skills.
8. Disseminate information.
9. Organize exhibition to support young entrepreneurs by promoting their products and services, especially for female entrepreneurs.
10. Establish training centers that provide specific training that benefit women in rural areas who are unable to continue their formal education due to cultural constraints and early marriage.
11. Create opportunities for women to be involved in many activities that helps them to sustain themselves.
12. Identify communication as one of the main problems.
13. Promote women's rights.
14. Create good condition and environment for young men and women to participate in the development of Timor-Leste.
15. Define and determine working ages through labor law.

Group 4: Unemployment: A sensitive issue

A) Human resources:

- Education system is weak and does not enable young people to take part in the social and political life. This can be described as follows:

First, the formal education system provides limited opportunities for youth to be able to participate in the process of development. Second; little attention is paid to non-formal education compared to formal education, especially important would be to focus on youth skill development to enable them to participate in the process of reconstruction and development.

B) Political Decision:

Political system and government policies are not clear. Politician and decision makers are not clear in making their decisions which is not favorable to youth and exclude this group. In addition, youth have no power and capacity to change policies that are currently being implemented, which are not favorable and do not benefit their lives. In many occasions, youth can only accept these policies or what has been decided and cannot do anything about them (powerless) due to their lack of capacity and inexperience to deal with those policies. Tax policies with increasing taxes has also an impact on the limited investment by foreign investors in Timor-Leste. This also affects the labor market, which offers few job opportunities for youth, both in urban and rural areas. The control mechanism and centralized government tend to benefit only some government officials to enrich themselves. For example, the government does not take action to combat collusion, corruption and favoritism in the Border Control.

C) Labor Market

Condition is not favorable: Internal and external

Internal: Government has not developed human resources, especially among youth. Youth are mostly ignored and "disfranchized" . There are many opportunities concentrated in places like Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste.

External: The increase of taxes. If the situation remains the same, it will affect the decision of foreign investors to invest in Timor-Leste.

D) Work in public institutions versus private sectors

- There are many young people who have a low level of education. They are disadvantaged since they do not have access to available opportunities in public institutions.
- Imbalance of political decisions. For example, many job opportunities are given to those, who were involved in the resistance as a "reward" or "compensation" without considering their ability and capacity to carry out their work and if they perform well.

Solution:

- Improve education system, both formal and informal

- Formal: Policy makers should take responsibility instead of blaming each other for problems in the education sector. They also should lead a constructive dialogue within the government and with youth groups. Additionally, youth groups should structure their views and ideas better in order to be able to constructively participate in the process of development. Seminars and workshops at district level are crucial to exchange views and experiences from intellectuals to help youth. In addition to this effort, visiting other countries is also important to help young people to see the broad picture of development, not only limited to their own district where they reside.
- Non formal: Improving condition such as drafting laws and policies that benefit young people and create stability.

Recommendation:

- Need for support from the World Bank to help the government of Timor-Leste to focus on District Youth Councils by providing various training opportunities
- Information access: Most of the information is concentrated in Dili. There is a need to decentralize access to information.

4. Summary of Consultation with Women

In Timor-Leste women have increasingly a voice in the development of their communities and gender related barriers to opportunities have been reduced. However, culture remains the main constrain in efforts to reduce gender disparities and gender inequalities. Ideally, women and men should work together to develop their new country, Timor-Leste. In reality, however, women have still very limited access to education, especially to post-primary education, jobs, and decision making processes. This is the main concern that emerged during the consultation held on January 20, 2005 with 22 women from 8 districts (out of 13). Culture is major impediment for women's empowerment and development. Women in rural areas spend most of their time with household work such as taking care of their siblings, cooking, and carrying water over long distances. Furthermore, their parents pressure them to marry at a young age, for example at an age of 13 or 14, so that their parents get a share of the dowry. The parents are often not aware of the negative impact on their daughters health (due pregnancies at a young age) and the daughters' ability to earn an income due to the fact that girls do not continue their education after marriage. In addition, the concept of being independent does not exist in Timor-Leste. For example, parents often do not allow their daughters to work with foreigners since they fear their daughters would become prostitutes.

"Women need to have access to education, health, and employment opportunities. We want training to be provided in rural areas to strengthen women's capacity so that they can compete with men...."
(Quote by participants from Manufahi, Viqueque and Baucau)

The Timorese saying “women’s steps are short and men’s steps are long” is deeply embedded in rural communities. Parents are reluctant to allow their daughters to continue their education beyond primary education because women are expected to eventually serve their husband and take care of their children at home. All participants expressed the need to change these attitudes and behavior and expressed the hope that interventions by the World Bank and the Government will aim at reducing gender related barriers.

Consultation and issues:

The Consultation was guided by a nun because women, especially in rural areas, tend to feel more comfortable to discuss issues more openly in the presence of a church representative. The consultation was guided by eight questions:

1. Unemployment is an issue for youth. How do you address and resolve it?
2. Why is employment important for youth?
3. Why is the percentage of young women who are looking for jobs low compared to young men?
4. What are your views regarding the labor market in general and for youth in particular?
5. What are the major steps that have to be taken to find a job?
6. Based on your analysis or observation, why do many young women not attend school?
7. What do you expect from the government of Timor-Leste and other institutions to do for young people, specifically women?
8. What role should the World Bank play?

The 22 participants were split into three discussion groups. Their answers to the eight questions are listed in the table below.

Questions	Group		
	I	II	II
Q1: Unemployment is an issue for youth. How do you address and resolve it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National stability is a necessary condition for job creation • More job opportunities in all sectors specifically targeting women in rural areas • Focus on women specific activities such as weaving of traditional handicraft or “Tais” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational training should be offered in all districts targeting young women in order to enhance their employment opportunities and thus enable women to generate income. • Provide job opportunities in specific areas such as textile, salt, weaving, coconut oil, soaps, traditional handicrafts such as Tais, clay pots, Krupuk⁶ • Establish a institution at district level which would assist unemployed 	Government should provide job opportunities for young, skilled women, for example, in factories, cake making, bread factories and banana krupuk processing

⁶ Fried cassava crackers

Q2: Why is employment important for youth?			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment is important for women to enhance their capacity and improve their economic condition • Employment will give women the opportunity to participate in the development process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To avoid making any trouble or violence, sustain young women's lives, reduce unemployment, maintain stability for the nation and reduce gender inequality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment is important for young people, especially young women,
Q3: Why is the percentage of young women who are looking for jobs low compared to young men?			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women feel inferior and lack confidence • They are not well prepared to take a risk • Lack of curiosity and constrained by culture 	<p>Culture and tradition are still rooted in society, lack of confidence, low capacity, lack of support by men and lastly the government has not established its mechanism and policies that are targeting young people</p>	<p>Cultural constraints; feel discouraged seek employment to do manual work, prefer office work and high income without considering their actual skills level, unprepared mentality</p>
Q4: What are your views regarding the labor market in general and for youth in particular?			
	<p>There are many constrains which the government needs to address otherwise they will have a negative effect on young women's lives</p>	<p>Try to understand labor market situation and its implication; be responsible, disciplined; be prepared to take any job although it may be considered to be a low level job; do not demand high salary at the initial stage in order to be recruited; dedication, etc.</p>	<p>Considering value of works and appreciate any type of work; personal discipline and attitude; improve work ethics; be responsible for own work; commitment and dedication</p>

Q5: What are the major steps that have to be taken to find a job?			
	Responsibility, patience, self confidence, be ready to take risks, education, and capacity to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be at the right place at the right time • Clear criteria, appreciation to the job offered, • Commitment and dedication needs to be rewarded, able to work as a team, respect time and avoid “rubber time”⁷, be diligent and responsible, able to negotiate and communicate 	To be able to have access to labor market; improve education enhance capacity and gain more experience
Q6: Based on your analysis or observation, why do many young women not attend school?			
	Political and cultural impacts, constraints from their parents, lack of parent’s education and information, economic impact, lack of job opportunities, and the government has not provided a good policy to encourage people to go to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics and economic situation is not favorable and conducive • Traditions are dominant • Importance of education is often not understood • Importance of education needs to be communicated at the village level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government policies have to make sure that women have access to education, health and employment • Women tend to marry early without planning ahead, cultural influence • Economically, parents do not have resources to finance adequate education for their children

⁷Less appreciation or not consistent with the time agreed, for example a meeting is scheduled for 10 o’clock can be delayed until 10:30. This has been a problem for people in Timor after long occupation.

Q7: What do you expect from the government of Timor-Leste and other institutions to do for young people, specifically women?			
	They are expecting the government of Timor-Leste to show commitment to resolve those issues	Create job opportunities according to people's skills and demand driven	The government has to pay attention to support women in various areas/sectors
Q8: What role should the World Bank play?			
	The World Bank, in partnership with the government of Timor-Leste, needs to address those issues and to resolve them	The World Bank should convince the government to take up all these issues and to establish a good mechanism/institution to address women's issues consistently	Request the World Bank to help the government to initiated training in many areas, targeting women in rural areas.

5. Analysis and Comments

5.1. Education

The fourth discussion group strongly indicated that education, both formal and informal requires special attention in order to improve human resources in Timor-Leste; despite the fact that about 60% of youth aged 15-19 years have some secondary education. However, this does not guarantee that they would automatically enter or be absorbed in the labor market. At this point youth recommended to have a combination of both formal and informal education, for example, formal education with the strong emphasis on technical skills. Informal education, especially vocational training, can help to enhance their capacity and skills. Those, who are not able to continue their education, would benefit from informal education. Two comments by two participants from Manatuto and Dili regarding education capture these views:

There are many young people who are unemployed due to their lack of skills. Education should be the priority to improve their skills to be more competitive. After independence, universities are growing like “mushrooms” in the rainy season almost everywhere without having any quality assurance and clearly defined core competencies which would help to produce a good quality of human resources. The government should pay more attention to this” (Januario Natalino Soares da Silva)

“.....Youth have so many issues, have to deal with a complexity of problems, and often criticize without offering an alternative solution constructively. Education can help them to be able to address their issues in more constructive manner. Therefore there is a need for collaboration between the World Bank and the government to start expanding vocational training targeting rural areas” (Tito de Jesus Filipe, participants from Dili)

It was proposed that the government of Timor-Leste should prepare a comprehensive education policy to improve the quality of education in all sectors, targeting youth, so that they are well prepared to enter the labor market. In addition, they proposed to improve the quality assurance at the university level to improve the quality of graduates. Human resources should be more competitive, not only in the local but also in international labor market. This policy has to also ensure that parents enroll their children at the correct age. This will gradually improve their skills and capacity to participate in the development of Timor-Leste in the future. A conditional cash transfer project could improve the demand for education by families and promote education, especially for girls. These kind of programs have been successful in many countries in the world and improved school attendance of girls and poor children. Both the State Secretary for Youth and Sport and Minister of Labor and Community Reinsertion agree with this idea. However, they emphasize the importance of having an in-depth study and good coordination with other responsible ministries such as Education as well as Planning and Finance for its implementation

During the consultation the youth participants emphasized the need for having vocational training centers not only centralized in Dili, but also in all other districts. There are 5 Business Development Centers⁸ that have been established. However, the ability to train youth to become entrepreneurs is constrained by the reality that there are not many young people interested in doing business as mentioned by some participants during the consultation.

⁸ through the Small Enterprise Project II, a TFET funded project,

“.....We need practical or hands-on activities provided by vocational training centers, for example sewing activities for women or similar types of activities to use bamboos, like in Viqueque district, supported by a Non Governmental Organization, to make chairs and tables. This enables young women to gain experience and skills as well as to sustain themselves” (Filomena do Carmo, Participants from Ainaro District)

Therefore, the Business Development Centers should integrate additional training opportunities, for example those that focus on different sectors and skill development according to the needs of the local context.

The impact of training opportunities provided by different vocational training centers is often limited. Many, who have received training, do not find employment after completion of the respective course. Some of them have sold their tool kits that they received after graduation from the training centers such as Don Bosco in Comoro, Training Center in Tibar and Training Center SENAE in Becora. The World Bank, in coordination with the government, under the State Secretary of Youth and Sport, Labor and Community Reinsertion have discussed the possibility of training being based on demand from the companies or “demand driven” (see TIMOR-LESTE’S YOUTH PROFILE, Nga Nguyet Nguyen & Kalanidhi Subbarao)

5.3.Political Decision

Participants strongly emphasized the need for a clear youth policy. The government should work closely with youth organizations and youth councils in order to formulate a youth policy which would address the needs and concerns of youth.

Another crucial issue, which as proven to be important during the years of resistance, is the need of young people to have a “role model” or figure that they trust to represent them.

To date, it is very difficult for the youth to have a role model that they can follow and they can listen to. Youth feel that there is no one to represent them, to advocate their problems and concerns, and fight for their interest, including unemployment issues.

Youth in Timor-Leste has played a significant role in the mediation in conflicts and in facilitating dialogue in disputes in order to find a good solution, like for example during the dispute over whether religion should be part of curriculum or not, which had brought tension between the government and Catholic Church in Timor-Leste in April-May 2005. The concern was raised because the demonstration involved also many young people. The National Youth Council, along with other youth organizations, approached the government and the church to resolve the issue through dialogue.

The participants added that it is important for youth in Timor-Leste to play this role because the experience has shown that young people do not have “past grievances” and political interest even though some youth organizations have political affiliations. Youth should have a common agreement and common goals about the future of their country.

Nepotism in the government is an issue that needs to be paid much attention to in order to ensure good governance. In a young country, recruitment should not be based on favoritism and collusion which in practice only benefits certain groups or relatives of the decision makers. If it roots in our bureaucracy, it will marginalize young people with skills in the development of Timor-Leste. There is a need to establish a control mechanism to monitor the recruitment process and a clear distinction between a “political positions” and “structural/ professional position”, which would be filled on merit basis.

The youth expressed their concern about the lack of consultation and socialization of the policies and laws that are currently being implemented. It was felt that these were formulated without consultations with youth and thus do not necessarily accommodate youth needs and aspiration.

5.3. Labor Market

During the consultation, youth groups were hopeful and optimistic that the implementation of the investment laws, both domestic and foreign, will boost the economy of Timor-Leste and attract foreign investors. They believed that the effective implementation of the two laws will eventually create jobs for youth.

The youth members in the group discussion touched relevant issues that affect youth unemployment. Unfortunately, they did not mention the issue of minimum wage, which is, compared to other countries in the region, relatively high and hurts especially the youth in Timor-Leste. There is a tendency for foreign companies in Timor-Leste to employ workers from their own countries who have competitive skills and demand lower wages the workers in Timor-Leste which also often lack the required skills.

5.4. Working in public institutions versus private sectors

Many young people who work in the informal sector, especially in the agricultural sector, do not consider themselves as workers. They consider a worker to be someone employed in the formal sector receiving a permanent salary. There are many young people who have temporary jobs such as in a road maintenance project, a community based maintenance project that is currently being implemented by the Ministry of Public Works in Timor-Leste.

The group raised concerns about recruitment of public servant that is seen as a reward for his or her contribution during the resistance. This may result in less recruitment of youth who have skills. They are also concerned about limited attention paid by the government to encourage private sector to absorb number of youth unemployment. Even though there are some job opportunities for youth in the private sector, however they are too limited.

Transparency in the recruitment process in the public sector/public servant is deemed as critical for youth to understand the whole process.