

**Humanitarian Volunteer Team of Flores
and the Problem of Domestic Violence**

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Introduction:

In this address I will initially talk about the issue of *domestic violence* on the Indonesian island of Flores, with particular reference to the regency of Sikka. The information that I will present is based upon data provided by an NGO known as TRUK-F, which is a humanitarian volunteer team set-up operated by two Catholic religious orders, the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters [SSpS] and the Divine Word Missionaries [SVD].

It should be noted, though, that domestic violence is a problem not just on Flores, but throughout eastern Indonesia. This is because there are many cultural similarities in all the communities in this part of the country, which is economically way behind western Indonesia.

A General Picture of Flores, and the Regency of Sikka:

Flores

The island of Flores covers an area of 13,540 km². Its population according to the census of 2010 was 1,831,000. Politically, the island is divided into 8 regencies: East Manggarai, West Manggarai, Manggarai, Ngada, Nagikeo, Ende, Sikka and Eastern Flores. It is a part of the NTT Province, of which Kupang in West Timor, is the capital city.

Most Flores people are small farmers. Data collated in 2018 shows that there are 460,820 farmers. Of these, at least 134,004 have very small lots or do not own land..

In the first two decades of the 21st century, NTT has sent each year many migrant workers over seas, both legally and illegally. Between 200,000 and 400,000 have gone away. Many of these come from Flores. Many of these are subsistence farmers with a very low standard of education. Because of this they don't have the necessary skills to get good jobs. They are forced to take employment either in dangerous positions in the construction industry or on the land, working often in the palm oil plantations of Borneo, both in a Indonesia and Malaysia.

Consequently, many migrant workers from this province die overseas. Each year, more and more corpses are transported back to the province. In 2014, 27 bodies were repatriated. In 2018, the number had risen to 107. From 2014 until 2018, there were 268. During this past year, until mid September, already approximately 85 bodies have been sent from overseas to be buried here.

Based upon data provided by the Dept. of Statistics, in September, 2018, the poverty level of NTT Province, including Flores, stands at 21.03%, just above 20%, almost on par with West Papua, 22.6%, and Papua, 27.43%. These figures are twice as high as the national poverty level of 9.66%, which the central government so proudly trumpeted prior to the recent general elections. The poverty level of this province , including Flores, has witnessed little change in the past 20 years, just 0.2%.

Misuse of authority for personal gain is common practice in the bureaucracy and political sphere of Flores. About 97% of funds provided by the central government for the development of Flores is misappropriated by bureaucrats and politicians. At the village level, corruption by village leaders is rampant. It is common practice for politicians and senior bureaucrats to demand a payment of 10% of the

cost of infrastructure projects from contractors.

In Flores, the judiciary is not free from corrupt infrastructure practices, either. For example, the head of the Dept. of Public Works in the regency of Manggarai, Flores, was jailed after being found guilty of corruption. He had been arrested following the intervention of the Flores judiciary. Regarding this case a respondent gave the following explanation: "The Prosecutor requested 3 projects, but he only gave one which was in accord with the direction of the Regent. A month later, a case of corruption was raised and he was arrested, and received. 12 month jail term in Kupang. If he had gone along with the Prosecutor, the long standing case of corruption would not have been processed.

The Regency of Sikka:

Truk F, or the Flores Humanitarian Volunteer Team, is based in the regency of Sikka, on the island of Flores. There are 318,920 inhabitants, living in an area of 1,731.90 km². The majority of them are small farmers. Cultural problems, and social and economic issues that Flores people as a whole are dealing with, are experienced here.

The main social-economic problems of the Sikka people are poverty, corruption, domestic violence towards women and children, human trafficking, and the growing number of HIV-AIDS cases.

At the end of September 2019, there were 811 HIV-AIDS sufferers, 508 men (62.76%) and women 303 (36.23%) here. These are people who have actually sought help from a hospital. Generally, people are loath to have an HIV-AIDS test because of the stigma: There is a common belief in society that HIV-AIDS sufferers are immoral, having been involved in free sex.

The reality is different. If we look at the facts, we find that of those suffering from HIV-AIDS in Sikka, 192 are housewives, 127 are male

farmers, 129 are businessmen, and just 35 are commercial sex workers. Sex workers would appear to have higher morals than housewives.

Domestic Violence and Truk F:

History of TRUK F

The Humanitarian Volunteer Team of Flores, (Truk F) was formed in 1997 at the St. Paul Major Seminary, Ledalero, by several Divine Word Missionary priests, some Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, and some human rights activists from Flores. The reason for setting up Truk-F, was to give legal aid to poor people who were often treated unjustly by the State, for example when their land was taken over by big business people who were involved with political figures, military or police.

During what was known as the New Order, following the usurping of power by President Soeharto in 1965, several human rights activists sought refuge in Flores. Truk-F facilitated this.

In 1999, Truk F was actively involved in assisting refugees from East Timor who fled into Indonesia away from the strife there. Truk F helped find aid for them and also hid several who were being pursued by the Indonesian military.

Nowadays, The focus of Truk F is on supporting women and children who are victims of domestic violence in its different forms. Truk-F stands by the universally accepted basic human rights. Violence against women includes, every act of force against a woman on the basis of gender, which causes her physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including threats of violence, taking away freedom both privately or publicly." (CEDAW, 1,1: Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against

Women).

Vision and Mission:

Vision: “Defend the right of women to be valued and acknowledged.”

Mission:

- Empower women to know their rights.
- Encourage women to pursue their rights, so that they may be free from intimidation, discrimination and violence.

Case Studies: Statistics and Naration:

- In the period 2000-2015, 1572 cases of domestic violence were handled by Truk F. Of these, 800 were adult women, while 722 were children.
- In 2018, 80 victims sought help from Truk F: 45 children and 35 adult women.
- Of the 80 cases, 64 happened in a home environment, 15 in the community (ie in a school or village) and one involved a civil authority.
- It can be seen from this data that the home is where the majority cases of violence occur.
- The victims have suffered from physical, mental abuse, as well as being evicted from their homes.
- Three examples:
 - A victim, Petra (not her real name) is 19. She is living at the Truk-F Shelter and studying economics at a local university. She was raped by her step-father over a period of 5 years, before she had

- the courage to contact Truk-F. The case has been reported to the police, and now her step-father is a wanted man. But there is evidence that the police have a close relationship with him. Petra can't go home, as her mother supports the rapist and accuses her of disgracing their family.
- Ten Timorese children worked in slave-labour conditions, in the Kaigi Bakery, Maumere. They worked 19 hours a day, and did not receive wages. Truk-F took up this case which polarised in the Church and in the community at large. The bishop supported the abusers, because they were pious Catholics who generously supported the Church financially.
 - Ten mature-age women who were unable to marry as their would-husbands could not afford to pay the required dowry.

A Picture of the Victim and the Perpetrator:

- The victims were aged between 3 and 69 years.
- 95 % of the perpetrators of sexual violence were known by the victims or were close to them.
- Almost every year there are cases of incest.
- Usually, sexual abuse of a child only becomes known when the child becomes pregnant or infected with an STD.
- Victims usually come from poor families..
- The perpetrator usually makes a promise, then seduces, threatens and violates.
- Sometimes a victim, usually male, becomes a perpetrator as well..

What does Truk-F do?:

- Accompany the victims.
- Holds and facilitates discussions, seminars, radio shows, campaigns,

and researches sex/gender based violence.

- Dialogues with those authorities who make policy and regulations re human rights, in relation to human trafficking of women and children.
- Publicise laws re human rights of women and children.
- Put pressure in the media on law enforcers re the implementation of relevant laws, and also by organising demonstrations..
- Offer training to religious and cultural leaders to reflect on cultural practices in light of human rights and gender equality.
- Cooperate with tertiary institutions, encouraging them to put gender and human rights issues on their agendas.
- Give shelter to victims, assisting them:
 - Spiritually: praying together, Mass.
 - Skills training.
 - Sharing experiences and counseling.
 - Providing recreation and group support.
 - Support efforts for victim's family to become better-off financially.

Networking:

- At international level: Caritas Germany, Misereor Holland, Vivat International (SVD& SSpS), AusAID.
- At national level: National Women's Commission, National Human Rights Commission, Vivat Indonesia.
- At the local level: Church, Ledalero Institute of Catholic Philosophy, local NGOs, women's forums, local mass media.

When will the Rights of the Victims be Realised?

- When the following are guaranteed: justice, truth, retribution, and the victims know that they will not be subject to violence again.

Taking on and Resolving Cases:

Not all cases taken-on by Truk F are resolved to the satisfaction of the victim. In actual fact only about 25% of legal cases are resolved satisfactorily. Influencing factors include:

- Weak supervision by the government.
- The strength of the network of deception on the part of the perpetrator, particularly when a child is abused.
- The legal apparatus is not inclined to support victims, particularly in the trafficking of children.

Looking to the Future, Awareness of the following Realities:

- The State often demonstrates little interest in the rights of victims and restitution.
- Corruption: Funds intended for victims are stolen by government personnel. Law enforcers are corrupt.
- There can be a conflict between positive laws designed to protect human rights, and cultural law which always is male biased.
- A national challenge: The development of democracy in Indonesia needs an ethical foundation influenced by liberalism and socialism, such as that which has propped up democracy in Europe.
 - Liberalism: Acknowledgement of civil rights and political

rights written about by John Locke and Rousseau in the 17th century, as opposed to the line of thought that opposed personal freedoms, particularly the rights of minorities.

- Sosialism: Acknowledgement of the right for justice, the rights of workers, etc, (Marxism), as opposed to the criminalisation of unions, and of labelling workers with the stigma of being communists or, in Indonesia's case, being anti the national ideology.