

GENDERED MARKETPLACE ASSESSMENT

- SUAI, COVALIMA



Marketplace vendor. Photo credit: Friends of Suai.

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Research team: Hilaria do Amaral (CCC RWDP Coordinator), Teresa Moniz (CCC RWDP Facilitator), Januario Inacio (CCC Haforsa Coordinator), Joao Amaral (CCC Field Staff), Frederico Miguel (CCC Field Staff), Juliao Afonso (CCC Facilitator Assistant). Research facilitated by Zenny Correia (Bridging Peoples Country Coordinator), with support provided remotely by Deborah Cummins (Bridging Peoples Director).

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Gendered Marketplace Assessments in Bobonaro and Baucau in 2018, this research was based on.

Finally, we thank everyone who participated in the research for generously sharing their time and insights, including: market vendors, marketplace managers, civil society representatives and government representatives. We hope that this report helps to elevate the voices of women vendors and can support change to make the Suai marketplaces more safe, accessible and productive for women and people living with disabilities.



Research team interviewing a representative of PNTL. Photo credit: Covalima Community Centre

INTRODUCTION

Summary of Findings

Marketplaces are extremely important for economic and social development in Timor-Leste. They are a vital link in the value chain for agricultural activity, as the majority of fresh food that is produced for sale in Timor-Leste is sold via the marketplace. And they form an important local economic hub, as vendors buy and sell goods for daily use including clothes, kitchen supplies and a variety of fresh and processed foods.

As workplaces, markets are particularly important in supporting women's economic activity, with an estimated 75-90% of vendors in municipal and sub-municipal (posto) markets being women.¹ Previous research facilitated by Bridging Peoples in four marketplaces in Timor-Leste indicate the importance of supporting women's work in marketplaces. By contrast with men vendors, who may spend a significant part of their income on items or leisure activities such as alcohol or gambling, women vendors typically invest all of their income for their family's benefit—for example, paying for their family's meals or for children's schooling (TOMAK 2018).

This assessment is a gender and disability assessment of two marketplaces in the town of Suai: Debus marketplace, and Kamnasa marketplace. Research results indicate that similarly to other Timor-Leste marketplaces that have been investigated using a similar methodology, there is an urgent need to provide basic facilities including toilets, fresh water, and waste management—as current arrangements pose a public health risk for vendors and consumers alike. This has increased importance in the context of COVID-19.² While women vendors have developed methods to keep themselves safe, it also appears the

police are very responsive—unlike some other marketplaces that were investigated during the TOMAK research in 2018. Nonetheless, there is an opportunity to improve the safety of women who stay overnight in the marketplace, as there appears to be a level of normalisation around gender-based harassment and abuse against women in the marketplace, and currently women vendors or consumers do not feel safe walking alone during the night-time.

Methodology

The methodology for this assessment is adapted from a previous project conducted by Bridging Peoples for the TOMAK program, investigating the experiences of women vendors in four marketplaces in Timor-Leste (TOMAK 2018). While the TOMAK program focused primarily on the experience of women vendors in the marketplace, this assessment took a broader approach, considering the experience for both women and people with disabilities.

The research was originally intended to focus on one marketplace only, but because there are two functioning marketplaces in Suai vila—the 'old' marketplace in Debus, and the 'new' marketplace in Kamnasa—and vendors often move between the two marketplaces,³ some limited information was also gathered about Kamnasa marketplace. The primary focus was on Debus market, with interviews with vendors physically conducted in the Debus marketplace. Safety and disability audit walks were conducted in both. Most findings presented in this assessment report refer to conditions and arrangements in Debus market; where there are interesting or useful insights on conditions in Kamnasa market this is clearly indicated.

The purpose of this assessment was investigate, analyse and document the current conditions,

¹ TOMAK marketplace observation visits, conducted in 2018

² After the GMA was conducted, additional hand-washing stations have been established at the Suai marketplace in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

³ FOKUPERS Coordinator, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima

usability, and opportunities for improvements in Debus (and, where appropriate, Kamnasa) marketplaces. The methodology was entirely qualitative with a focus on participatory techniques, to use the research process as a first step in developing practical strategies for improvement, together with key stakeholders in the municipality or posto. The methodology and tools developed for this research were approved by IWDA internal ethics review process.

For this project, the process of carrying out the research and opening potential paths for local advocacy was just as important as the findings. All aspects of the research were designed to support Suai-based NGO Centro Comunidade Covalima (CCC) in carrying out the research, with Bridging Peoples staff largely taking a facilitating, mentoring and training role. A key part of this project was to demystify the research and advocacy process, and to teach and support CCC staff in using specific research approaches and tools. This skills development aspect was very successful, with RWDP Coordinator for CCC commenting: "I feel very happy and proud in carrying out this research. It has improved my ability to be brave in fighting for the rights of women vendors and women with disabilities."

Under the guidance and support of Bridging Peoples Country Coordinator (Eugenia Correia), CCC staff were responsible for carrying out all key informant interviews, organising the observational marketplace audit walks, and – very importantly – presenting and discussing research findings with key Municipal individuals, and developing an action plan going forward. As the participatory focus group discussion involved more advanced research skills, this aspect of the research was directly facilitated by Bridging Peoples Country Coordinator.

Respondents included market vendors, marketplace managers, civil society representatives and government representatives. The research focussed on people's perceptions and experiences across four key areas: (i) physical

infrastructure; (ii) security & welfare; (iii) usability for people with disabilities; and (iv) marketplace management, organisation & decision-making.

The in-country research team included: Hilaria do Amaral (CCC), Teresa Moniz (CCC), Januario Inacio (CCC), Joao Amaral (CCC), Frederico Miguel (CCC), and Juliao Afonso (CCC). Research was facilitated by Eugenia Correia (Bridging Peoples Country Coordinator), and some support was provided remotely by Deborah Cummins (Bridging Peoples Director).

Fieldwork for the assessment was conducted by the research team in October 2019 over a period of three days, as follows:

- 1. Two observational 'audit' walks in Debus and Kamnasa marketplaces, with 4 women who are regular users of the market;**
- 2. Ten semi-structured interviews with selected market vendors, the market 'chief', civil society representatives and government representatives;**
- 3. One focus group discussion (FGD) with eight women vendors (including one woman vendor with a disability), using a participatory 'voting' methodology for participants to discuss, identify, and then prioritise the most important issues to be addressed, from their own perspective.**

Follow-up workshops were then conducted in February 2020, to present and verify findings and to discuss how marketplace conditions might be improved with key stakeholders, including government officials, civil society representatives and women vendors themselves. An action plan was developed during this stakeholder workshop, but as the more important changes (eg. water supply & toilets) require budget allocations from the national government, stakeholders will need ongoing support in advocating for the necessary improvements.

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

About the Marketplaces

The Debus market is described by many as a ‘traditional’ market—meaning there is a collection of tables for vendors to sell from (and sleep beside at night), floor partly concrete and partly packed earth, with a roof for shelter, and no separation of different areas for selling different items (ie. clothes & kitchen wares, vegetables, fish, meat, and other goods are sold side-by-side.) Interviewees all agreed that there is not enough space, particularly for the vendors who also sleep in the marketplace overnight, and there are many problems with basic infrastructure including a lack of basic facilities such as water, toilets (existing but kept locked due to lack of water) and electricity.

The Kamnasa market, by contrast, has sufficient space with 1.5 hectares for vendor stalls and 1.5 hectares for parking. The plan is for Kamnasa market to become a Regional Market, where the space is better organised and managed with food sold separately to clothes & other goods. But it also has many problems, and the Municipal Administrator explained it still needs government budget to be developed properly.⁴ Spaces for vendors are not secure because there is no wall surrounding the market, making it difficult to provide security at night.⁵ The Kamnasa marketplace still needs basic facilities installed including water, toilets, and electricity. Vendors only sell from Kamnasa market on Saturdays because the road is in very poor condition, particularly during the wet season when people choose to not use it because it is too muddy.⁶

Safety and disability audit walks showed that neither markets have been built with the needs

of people with disabilities in mind. There is an opportunity for the Covalima Municipal Authority to learn from experiences in both markets, and to develop the Kamnasa market so that it provides a better, safer work environment for vendors, and with improved public health conditions for consumers.

About the Vendors

The majority of vendors in both marketplaces are women. Vendors work in different ways: some are farmers who bring their own produce to sell; some buy from the farmers who transport their produce to the market to sell wholesale to vendors; some sell their goods in different markets, moving from one market to the next; some larger traders come from Dili or Atambua (Indonesia) to buy the produce and then re-sell in these larger marketplaces.⁷

Many women bring their children into the marketplace as they are attending their stalls. The Suai representative of disability rights civil society organisation Raes Hadomi Timor Oan (RHTO) identified three vendors with disabilities: two men and one woman. However, it appears the woman stopped selling a while ago after she was sexually abused.⁸ The assessment team were unable to identify any other vendors with disabilities during the research, but it is possible that there are more vendors with disabilities who were not identified as such—or who were not there during the assessment team’s visit. There was insufficient scope in this assessment for a full census on vendors which would have given a more complete picture. The Suai representative of RHTO explained that they are aware of some issues of discrimination against people with disabilities in Suai generally, and

⁴ Municipal Administrator, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

⁵ Market Manager, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

⁶ Market Vendor, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

⁷ Market Manager, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

⁸ RHTO Coordinator, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

in the marketplace specifically, and that they are planning on supporting people in lodging complaints with the police.⁹

Incomes vary, with vendors earning anywhere between \$20 - \$100 in a day.¹⁰ Some vendors use microfinance or savings & loans groups to help them manage the ups and downs of their income throughout the year.¹¹ During the time of fieldwork (October 2019) sales had been down, as it was the end of the dry season and people explained there were fewer vegetables to sell.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) RESULTS: The Perspective of Women Vendors

The team conducted a participatory FGD with 8 women vendors. All were current vendors, with the exception of one woman vendor with a disability who previously worked in the marketplace but stopped selling a while ago. The purpose of this FGD was to identify the major issues from their own perspective, and then to develop recommendations for improvement.

In line with the participatory nature of the FGD, the women articulated and then prioritised their own recommendations for improvement using a participatory voting methodology, in which

each woman identified the three most important recommendations for women vendors, from her own perspective. The FGD had a dual purpose: to empower women vendors in expressing their own experiences and seeing these respected and raised with Municipal decision-makers, while also producing information that is useful for reporting and advocacy with decision-makers. In seeking to empower women vendors, process is as important as outcome. While discussions were facilitated by the team, the recommendations were developed by the women themselves. Facilitators were very careful not to lead or give examples to participants when eliciting comments from the women. They also ensured that analysis was conducted by the women themselves as they prioritised and 'voted' on the most important issues, from their own perspective. Women who could not read or write were supported by other women in the group.

The most important obstacles or challenges for these eight women vendors working in Debos marketplace, using their own words (but translated from Tetun), were identified. As the women spoke of their experiences as vendors in the marketplace, these were the issues and challenges that were front of mind for them, with some overlapping and repeating issues (for example, fighting between vendors).



Research team interviewing a marketplace vendor. Photo credit: Covalima Community Centre

⁹ RHTO Coordinator, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

¹⁰ This is gross income; after the cost of buying and transporting goods for sale, profits are much lower, but vendors were unable to give information on profits with any certainty.

¹¹ PNTL, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima; RHTO Coordinator, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

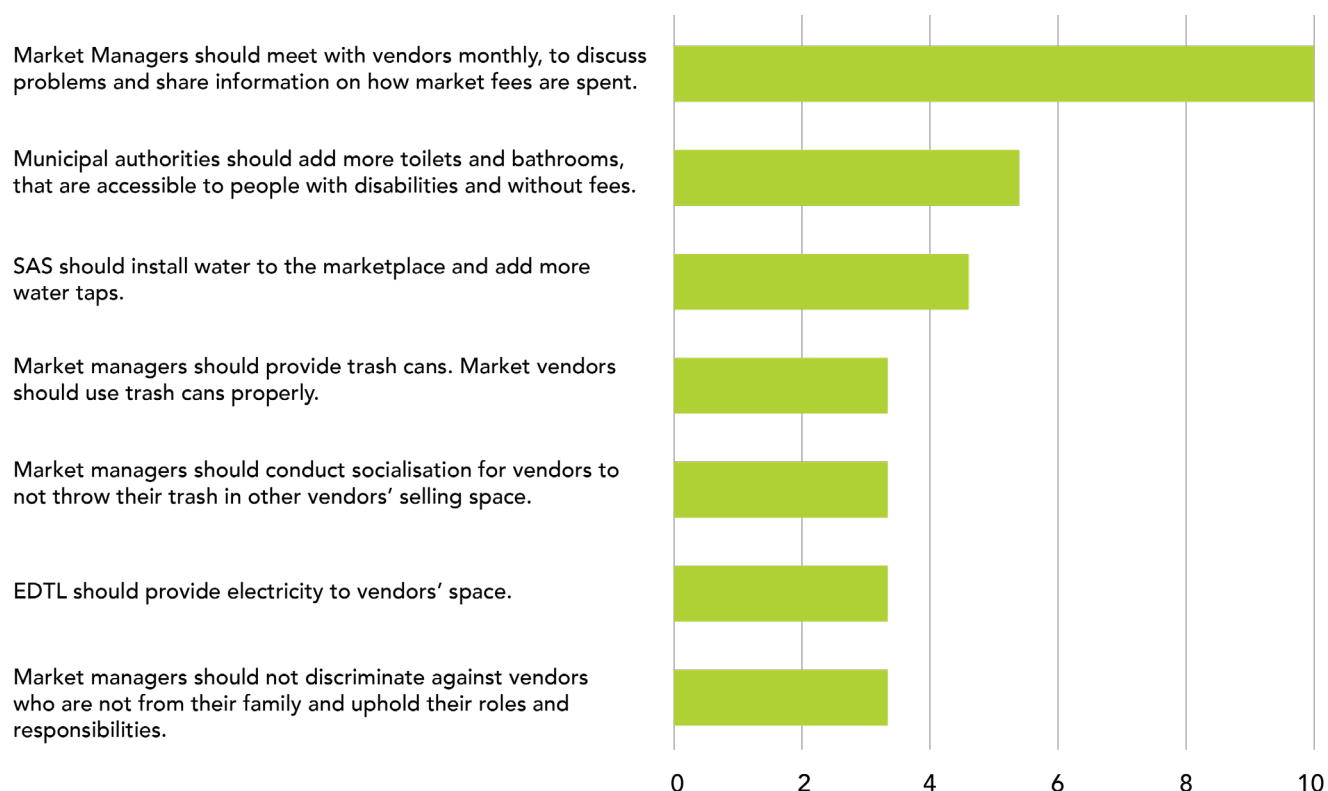
The research team then facilitated the group in combining issues that were repetitive or overlapping, and developed recommendations for improvement:

NO.	ISSUE	RECOMMENDATION
1	Market's management structure is not effective and not doing its function well.	Market Managers should meet with vendors monthly, to discuss problems and share information on how market fees are spent.
2	Management for the toilet is not effective to facilitate everyone's access.	Municipal authorities should add more toilets and bathrooms, that are accessible to people with disabilities and without fees.
3	Lack of clean water for the vendors and also for the toilet.	SAS should install water to the marketplace and add more water taps.
4	Lack of trash cans	Market managers should provide trash cans. Market vendors should use trash cans properly.
5	Lack of ethics/morals of some vendors when they throw the trash into other vendors' space.	Market managers should conduct socialisation for vendors to not throw their trash in other vendors' selling space.
6	Some vendors cannot access electricity.	EDTL should provide electricity to vendors' space.
7	Market manager preferences their relatives (nepotism).	Market managers should not discriminate against vendors who are not from their family and uphold their roles and responsibilities.

Using a participatory 'voting' methodology in which each woman identified the three most important areas for improvement, the recommendations were ranked in terms of relative importance as follows:

Women vendors' recommendations for marketplace improvement, ranked by relative importance

10 = Highest ranking



INFRASTRUCTURE & SERVICE DELIVERY

Marketplace Governance

Poor marketplace management was noted by FGD participants as the number one priority to be addressed. Currently, management is provided by the marketplace manager, who is referred to as the xefe merkadu, who has been in his role since 2016 and who is responsible for organising the vendors, market customers, waste management and other responsibilities. He was selected by the vendors to this role. However, many interview and FGD respondents complained about the manager's nepotism with his family, stating that he has not been active in his role as manager, and requesting the Municipal Authority to take more of a role in marketplace management.¹² During the stakeholder workshop when assessment results were presented to key stakeholders, including the Municipal Administrator, the manager explained that while he did convene meetings there was limited attendance from vendors. Participants in the stakeholder workshop decided that from March 2020 onwards, there would be regular monthly meetings between the manager and vendors, and that convening these meetings would be a joint responsibility, overseen by local authorities including APA Suai, relevant suku council and the market manager.

Vendors pay a small contribution to a central fund for marketplace management, which varies depending on whether they are large or small traders. Large vendors pay around \$7 per month, and small vendors around \$2 per month, but this arrangement also varies for vendors who pay on a daily basis (0.25 to 0.50 per day).¹³ It also varies depending on whether vendors have been able to do good business, with one vendor

explaining that recently their income had been very poor, so they also were not paying to the market management fund.¹⁴

The market management fund is used to pay for small repairs and issues in the marketplace, waste management & sanitation, and also for the xefe merkadu's salary. The xefe merkadu explained that in a good month he might receive US\$50; in a month where there are fewer vendors this can drop to US\$20-25.¹⁵

Sanitation officials are also paid for from this fund to collect marketplace waste, as are various other people working in the market management structure (see below.)

Water & Toilets

Lack of water and toilets was listed by women vendors as the second and third priority issues that need to be addressed. While water pipes and toilet infrastructure exist in Debos (but not Kamnasa) marketplaces, during the time of research (October 2019), they were not available for use by vendors. As well as being a serious concern for vendors, many stakeholders noted that the basic lack of facilities pose major public health concerns, as the market is a primary source of food for the community.¹⁶ In the context of COVID-19, the public health risks are even greater.

While water is piped to Debus market, the water supply is not sufficient to match vendors' needs, and even this supply dries up during the dry season. As vendors explained, wealthier vendors are able to buy water from neighbours, but others must walk a long distance to carry water.¹⁷

¹² RHTO Coordinator, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima; Market Vendor, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima; PNTL, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

¹³ Market Manager, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima; RHTO Coordinator, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

¹⁴ Market Vendor, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

¹⁵ Market Manager, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

¹⁶ Pontu Fokal AcBit, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

¹⁷ FOKUPERS Coordinator, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

Insufficient water supply also means that the toilets, which were not provided by government but were built and paid for using vendors' own contributions, cannot be used and are kept locked.¹⁸ During times of the year when water is available, the toilet keys are held by one family who charge 0.25 or 0.50 for each person to use it—which is quite expensive when compared to the daily rate for marketplace use of 0.25 or 0.50 per vendor stall. FGD participants strongly criticised this family for this practice, explaining that the family is related to the marketplace manager which is why they have a monopoly over these facilities.

Lack of toilet facilities is a particular concern for women who stay overnight, and who must find other areas to defecate.¹⁹ The lack of usable toilets is also a security concern, with women vendors in the FGD explaining that during the evening, they always go in groups so that they will not be harassed or assaulted as they find a place to go to the toilet.

Waste Management

Problems with waste management was also a major concern for FGD participants, and was noted by audit participants as posing a problem for accessibility, as the paths are strewn with rubbish, making it difficult to walk. There is a rubbish disposal area located next to the marketplace which was built by UNPAZ students, but many vendors do not use it and instead leave their rubbish on the paths between stalls. A number of informants explained that this may be because the marketplace conditions are so bad, vendors have no sense of pride, or desire to keep the place clean and tidy.

In Suai vila, the Municipal Authority provides sanitation trucks that collect rubbish, but only on public roads and not in the marketplace.²⁰

In response to this, the marketplace management has organised a system with the local authorities, in which vendors and rubbish collection officers share responsibility for waste management. Vendors are organised twice a week to pick up rubbish in the marketplace and take it to the rubbish disposal area, and rubbish collection officers collect rubbish from the rubbish disposal area twice a week. The rubbish collection officers are paid \$50 per month, which is paid from vendor contributions, as this work is not paid for by the government.²¹ Comparing these results from similar research conducted for TOMAK in 2018, the lack of waste management within the marketplace is a common scenario. Most markets have concrete rubbish disposal areas located on the road near the market, where sanitation trucks collect waste.

However, the challenge is within the marketplace, as consumers and vendors throw rubbish on the ground during a busy market day, and there is no clear division of responsibilities for who is responsible in keeping the market clean. Often at the end of the market day, day vendors are keen to leave as soon as possible, because of safety concerns walking home in the evening.

Electricity

In addition to the lack of water and toilets, the other key infrastructural issue that was noted in Debus market was lack of electricity for many vendors. Electricity is managed by the marketplace manager and paid for through vendor contributions.²² A number of respondents noted that the marketplace does not have lighting at night, which poses a security risk for vendors staying in the marketplace overnight.

¹⁸ Market Manager, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima; Vice Market Manager, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

¹⁹ Market Vendor, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

²⁰ PNTL, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

²¹ Market Manager, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

²² Market Vendor, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima; Market Manager, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

Safety & Security

When asked about issues with conflict and security, the most common issue that respondents raised were vendors fighting over space because of the confined marketplace conditions, or vendors arguing with farmers over prices. Respondents explained that if a vendor does not use his or her space for a day, another vendor might take it, which then results in conflict. The second most common issue that respondents raised was theft of goods during the evening, however the number of reported thefts have reduced significantly as the Oficial Polisia Suku (OPS) have increased their patrols and involvement in the market.²³ Respondents agreed that the OPS are very responsive to problems that arise, coordinating well with the marketplace manager, and providing patrols during the night for vendors sleeping in the market.²⁴

In terms of conflict prevention, the police commander noted that while there are limited problems in the marketplace, market conditions could nonetheless be improved to assist with security provision. In particular, he noted that Debus market is located on a major road and parking is very disorganised.²⁵

Results on gender-related violence and harassment were mixed. Women vendors themselves did not note any major issues of harassment or gender-related violence or abuse in the market, but participants in the safety audit walk who commonly use the market explained that they do not use the market at night, because of safety concerns both in the market and when travelling to and from the market via ojek. The lack of commentary about gender-based harassment, abuse and violence appears to indicate a normalisation of these issues among women vendors, who also explained during the FGD that they are 'used' to market conditions and routinely put in place measures to keep themselves safe, such as only going out in groups to find a place to

go to the toilet, and actively avoiding some areas of the market such as the area used by young men for gambling and drinking alcohol.

Two of the ten interview respondents spoke of sexual abuse cases in the marketplace—one against a woman with a disability who is no longer working in the marketplace, and another against a woman respondent herself. However, no further details were given.²⁶ Others also spoke of problems in the past with the young men who gambled and got drunk in the marketplace, and who verbally harassed the women vendors who were sleeping, but explained that the situation has improved with increased police patrols.²⁷

In terms of travel to and from the market, audit participants generally agreed that it is better to not go at night because there is insufficient lighting in Suai, the ojek may be unsafe to use during the evening, and walking on the roads also feels unsafe at night. During the day, they agreed that Debus market is easy to access because it's next to a main road, and there are regular ojek that are easy to use.

Access for People With Disabilities

The audit group noted lots of open drainage in Debus market, which pose a particular danger for people with disabilities as they make their way through the marketplace. They also noted that the narrow paths in Debus market are often clogged with rubbish, making it difficult and dangerous for people with visual disabilities or people who use a walking stick to navigate. In both markets, the group noted very dusty or muddy paths, depending on whether it is wet or dry season, making it difficult to walk through. There is no wheelchair access in either Debus or Kamnasa marketplaces. The group recommended that when toilets are constructed in Kamnasa market, they should be built so they are accessible for wheelchair users.

²³ PNTL, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

²⁴ Vice Market Manager, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

²⁵ Municipal Commander, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

²⁶ Market Vendor, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima; RHTO Coordinator, interview conducted 13 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

²⁷ Market Manager, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima; Market Vendor, interview conducted 14 November 2019, Suai Covalima.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The assessment process identified that there is significant potential to improve conditions in the marketplace for women vendors and people with disabilities. During the stakeholder workshop, there was a clear willingness among different stakeholders, including the police, suku council representatives, municipal representatives and Municipal Administrator, civil society organisations, as well as and the vendors themselves, to collaboratively improve market conditions.

With a few key differences such as a higher level of satisfaction with police responsiveness to problems in the marketplace, the results from this assessment closely mirror the results from the assessment conducted for TOMAK in 2018 in four other marketplaces. This suggests that many of these common themes are likely relevant to other marketplaces. In many cases, these infrastructural and management issues are well-known, and it is important to recognise the complexity of achieving change in this area. It would require major governmental policy and investment decisions, if these issues were to be systematically addressed across all of the marketplaces in the country.

This point was made by participants in the stakeholder workshop, who explained that due to the political standoff at national level, resulting in limited budget allocations for the Municipal Administration, there are some issues they were unable to address. Nonetheless, they also recognised that there were areas that simply required better coordination and management, and which they could improve on immediately—and committed to doing so in an Action Plan that was drafted and agreed during the workshop (see below).

The focus on women vendors and people with disabilities in this research was important. It is a common situation that conditions for more vulnerable groups such as women or people with disabilities are overlooked, as they are given limited opportunity to raise their opinions

in the public sphere, so their perspectives are neither heard nor incorporated into public decision-making. These perspectives need to be heard and understood if conditions are to be improved for everyone. By using the assessment process to bring together people who would not ordinarily speak to each other, having them share perspectives and look for workable, practical solutions that will help to address some of the problems, it is hoped that the groundwork has been laid for future collaboration. Nonetheless, while improved collaboration is important, greater political will is needed to support improved policies and resourcing for marketplaces in Suai, and across Timor-Leste.

The purpose of this section is to identify interventions that could support systemic change in marketplaces for women vendors and people with disabilities.

Overall Finding

There is a need for long-term economic and social investments marketplaces that are gender-responsive and accessible to people with disabilities.

The assessment identified two overarching issues that need to be addressed:

1. Current levels of investment in marketplaces do not reflect the economic value that marketplaces bring to the local economy.
2. Marketplace planning, governance and management arrangements are poor, unregulated and reinforce existing gender inequalities.

Overall recommendations

1. Long-term gender-responsive public planning and investment in marketplaces is needed to build efficient, vibrant and safe marketplaces that promote economic opportunities and social cohesion.

2. Stakeholders planning future investments in marketplace infrastructure should conduct gender and socially inclusive assessments to ensure the voice and needs of all stakeholders are taken into consideration, including people with disabilities.
3. In line with international obligations, stakeholders planning future investments in marketplace infrastructure should carefully consider the accessibility needs of vendors and consumers with disabilities.
4. Any infrastructure built should include a representative governance mechanism to ensure infrastructure and facilities are sustainable, fit for purpose, maintainable and provide equitable access to all stakeholders.
4. National and municipal authorities should integrate maintenance of market-related water, sanitation and waste facilities in urban planning and maintenance plans and budgets, with resources allocated for establishing and supporting local governance structures and capacities.
5. While women vendors appreciate police responsiveness in Suai, this is always an area of concern—particularly as Kamnasa market is physically less secure. Municipal police should continue their schedule of patrols in and around both market spaces and organise regular meetings with vendors (female separate from male vendors) to understand specific security concerns and ensure the safety of market spaces for everyone.

Specific recommendations by issue

Marketplace management & regulations

1. The Ministry of State Administration should work with Municipal Presidents and Administrators to clarify the scope of marketplace management responsibilities and regulations, and to help them implement and manage their respective responsibilities in these areas.
2. Key line ministries and institutions, municipal authorities and vendors should identify specific actions that can be taken to improve inclusive and representative marketplace governance and safety, that considers gender balance, inclusion for people with disabilities, and the voices of other less influential vendors.
3. Key line ministries and institutions and municipal authorities should meet with market managers and vendors to discuss priority issues identified in each site and agree on practical action based on their respective capacities and resources. The municipal authorities could lead this, with support from relevant development partners as required.
6. Key municipal authorities should look into the regulation of public transportation to ensure it is safe and accessible to users at night.
7. National and municipal authorities should consider regulating and possibly separating the male-dominated entertainment areas that operate within local marketplace spaces, with an aim to make marketplaces an attractive and safe economic space for all.

Vendor status, voice and decision-making

8. All stakeholders should invest in efforts to improve the status and visibility of women vendors in Timor-Leste. There is a clear need to change perceptions and imagery associated with being a vendor, and to promote the potential of vendors to drive marketplace changes.
9. All stakeholders should invest in efforts to improve the status and visibility of vendors and consumers with disabilities in Timor-Leste. This work must be done in collaboration with people with disabilities, to provide practical solutions for vendors with disabilities, to improve their access

to work, and consumers with disabilities, providing a marketplace that is accessible and so people can buy their daily needs.

10. Building on the relationships established through the assessment process, relevant officials including suku council and the xefe merkadu should meet with vendors monthly to discuss issues, and provide transparency in the use of market funds. This could be followed up by an annual meeting with Municipal President to keep marketplace management high on the municipal agenda, agree on marketplace norms, build relationships between different groups of vendors, and improve practices in order to increase the wellbeing of vendors and marketplace users.
11. Authorities and development partners should invest in developing the leadership skills of women vendors so that they are able to better participate in marketplace planning and governance forums.
12. SEII and women's municipal associations from Covalima should integrate recommendations from the vendors identified in the assessment into municipal gender action plans to be shared with the municipal authorities and relevant line ministries at the national level.

Services and market outreach to vendors

13. Service providers and development partners should consider how their resources individually and/or collectively can contribute to supporting better conditions and opportunities for marketplace vendors. This particularly relates to partners in the sectors of public works, water and sanitation, governance, business services, health and social protection.
14. Stakeholders (government and civil society) working with young people should conduct outreach in the marketplaces to understand which young men are using the market space for recreational activities and engage those groups for more productive activities.

**Centro Comunidade
Covalima (CCC)**

Rua Liverdade de Impresa,
Município Covalima
Facebook: Centro
Comunidade Covalima

www.suaicovalima.weebly.com

**International Women's
Development Agency (IWDA)**

Level 1, 250 Queen Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
1300 661 812
iwda@iwda.org.au

www.iwda.org.au

Oxfam in Timor-Leste

Hudi Laran, Ai Mutin
Dili, Timor-Leste
Facebook:
OxfamTimorLeste

[www.asia.oxfam.org/
countries](http://www.asia.oxfam.org/countries)

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