

Press Advisory

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Timorese Children Celebrate Their Rights

Dili, Timor-Leste – Representatives from the Ministry of Justice's Department of Human Rights and Citizenship are jointly organizing an event with Ba Futuru, Plan International and other NGOs whereby children will compete in fun and educational activities in celebration of Children's Day.

Government officials will visit sites where Ba Futuru holds transformative peace building workshops with children for Universal Children's Day on November 20, 2007. Universal Children's Day is celebrated on November 20 to commemorate the adoption of the Declaration and Convention on the Rights of the Child. This celebration is used around the world to raise public awareness of the importance of the welfare of children.

At both Tibar IDP camp and at the Seroja Center in Comoro, children have been provided with opportunities for overcoming the negative affects of conflict. These children have been supported with months of training in Ba Futuru's Transformative Arts and Human Rights Education Program.

"There can be no better measure of our governance than the way we treat our children, and no greater failing on our part than to allow them to be subjected to violence, abuse or exploitation," stated Jessica Lange Actress and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador.

In Timor-Leste where the use of physical discipline is extremely prevalent, the facilitation of dialogue about healthy interpersonal relationships between children and those who care for children can significantly help to protect children from all forms of violence and abuse.

In UNICEF and Plan International's 2002 joint report on Timor-Leste called "Speak Nicely To Me," it was cited that teachers use physical punishment:

Two-thirds of children (67 per cent) reported teachers beating them with a stick and almost four out of every ten children (38.7 per cent) reported teachers slapping them in the face.

In order to help reduce the prevalence of violent discipline practices Ba Futuru has developed a training curriculum and resource materials on positive discipline. This initiative was taken after childcare center staff in orphanages expressed a need for more information on non-violent ways to discipline children.

In response to this need Ba Futuru developed A Non-Violent Discipline Guide and corresponding training modules. This training covered the negative impacts of physical discipline as well as positive discipline strategies.

Reasons not to use violence or physical punishment with children as discipline:

- it teaches children to react with violence
- it is not productive to create behavioral change
- it reinforces negative behavior
- it is an abuse
- it can cause long-term psychosocial damage
- it hinders education
- it disregards more effective discipline methods

The ideas from this manual and the corresponding trainings have been remarkably well-received. Teachers feel that these discussions provide important new information that they had not been exposed to before and they showed enthusiasm about wanting to stop using physical discipline after realizing that it can have negative impacts on children.

One training participant, Graciela do Rosario, said that, “The Positive Discipline training is very important because through sharing this information we can help to decrease the violence that is happening in our daily lives.”

Another participant, Elias da Cruz, said that, “The training on Positive Discipline has value because I can now better understand not to use physical punishment with children.”

This type of training for adults is instrumental to stopping the cycle of violence in homes, schools and communities. Hence, positive discipline trainings have become an integral way for Ba Futuru to achieve its mission of peace building in Timor-Leste.

Ba Futuru, meaning ‘for the future’, is a not-for-profit NGO established in Timor-Leste in 2004. This year Ba Futuru has received support from the Government of Timor-Leste, Global Fund for Children, Concern, the Australian Embassy, the British Embassy, CRS, UNMIT, Save the Children Sweden, Friends of Idlewild Stables, UNICEF, Silverton Foundation and Lonely Planet. Ba Futuru has worked with more than 10,000 conflict affected, vulnerable and at-risk children and youth to provide them education reach their fullest potential and regain a sense of confidence in the future.

If you are interested in receiving a Positive Discipline manual please come by Ba Futuru’s office near Cathedral roundabout in Vila Verde, Dili.

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