



Strengthening Peace in the Lives of Children:
Stopping the Violence Project

Ba Futuru



Building skills for positive discipline

Transforming the classroom environment

Empowering at-risk young people

Equipping key actors for child protection



Ba Futuru's Mission

Ba Futuru works to transform mistrust and violence into peace by supporting the people of Timor-Leste to engage in creating a positive future for themselves, their families and their communities. Ba Futuru's mission is to contribute to peace building and sustainable human development by facilitating the psychosocial recovery of conflict-affected, vulnerable and at-risk children and youth, and by developing the knowledge, skills and values of community leaders, young people and their care givers in the areas of human rights, children's rights, child protection and non-violent conflict transformation.

Transforming Lives

Ba Futuru's work transforms the lives of children both directly, through the provision of psychosocial support and skill building, as well as indirectly, by educating those who impact their lives about child rights, child protection and the importance of non-violent positive discipline. Children who engage in Ba Futuru's programs have increased self-esteem; engage more positively with peers and family members; feel supported in discussing and processing grief, loss and trauma; and are able to contribute to protection and peace building in their communities.



In 2011 Ba Futuru's work in the area of child protection was recognized by the STARS Foundation (UK), through its selection as the Rising STAR of Asia.

Experience



Ba Futuru is Timor-Leste's preeminent local protection and peace building organization. Ba Futuru staff are renowned for their quality training skills and have provided educational training programs to more than 25,000 children, youth, teachers and community leaders since 2004. Various organizations regularly contract Ba Futuru to offer its training programs in locations across the country. Ba Futuru has provided trainings in eleven of the thirteen districts of Timor-Leste.

Activities



Ba Futuru's activities are founded on the principles of mutual learning, capacity development, artistic self-expression and human rights-based programming. Ba Futuru believes that every child counts and thus works to transform the lives of children, both through working directly with children as well as improving the skills of individuals who affect the well-being of young people.

Impacts

1. Reduction of violence against, and abuse of, vulnerable populations
2. Empowerment of key actors for protection and conflict prevention
3. Establishment of local protection mechanisms in Dili and Atauro Island
4. Linking local protection issues to district and national level protection mechanisms
5. Improved government awareness of protection needs



Structural Support

Ba Futuru is working to achieve peaceful school environments, whereby children feel safe to express themselves and teachers are equipped with positive discipline skills.

Ba Futuru has started a groundbreaking local protection network in the most remote part of Dili District, Atauro Island, which feeds child protection issues into national level assistance mechanisms.

Ba Futuru has assisted the government in mapping and analysing the child protection system, and now will further assist in developing a vision for the child and family welfare system with key stakeholders.



What is happening in Timor-Leste Classrooms

Currently in many Timor-Leste schools discipline strategies used are not effective at encouraging children to learn. Students can learn better when they do not feel fear, and/or physical and mental pain from physical punishment, however still today many teachers use physical punishment in the classroom.

Due to the recent history of violent conflict in Timor-Leste, there is a lack of respect for children's rights and excessive use of violence in the home and in schools as a discipline measure.

As a result there is a pressing need for interventions to support children and youth. Timor-Leste is a new country and government entities for protection and access to justice are still taking shape and knowledge on how to access these entities is still lacking at the local level.

Those who have the ability to positively impact the lives of children, including teachers and parents, need knowledge of child protection mechanisms and skill building in the areas of child protection and positive discipline so that they can work together to stop violence, exploitation and abuse against children.

Despite the "Zero Tolerance" policy on violence against students in the classroom declared by the Minister of Education in 2008, students in classrooms across Timor-Leste continue to experience slapping, hitting and beating with sticks as discipline methods. Many teachers violate the rights of children without even realizing that they are doing so. They often feel that using physical punishment will help their students to get a better education and do not realize that is in itself is abusive.

Physical punishment has lasting negative consequences on the wellbeing of children. UNICEF and Plan International's 2006 joint report on Timor-Leste, entitled *"Speak Nicely To Me"*, cites that "two-thirds of children (67%) reported teachers beating them with a stick and almost four out of every ten children (38.7%) reported teachers slapping them in the face."

Their research also shows that physical abuse within schools has significant psychological implications for the well-being of both child victims and witnesses. As a consequence, victims suffer from lower academic performance and are at greater risk of dropping out of school.

Due to the many reasons that physical punishment is not conducive to creating a positive learning environment for future generations, it is extremely important that we can work together to find more effective and positive ways to discipline students and manage classrooms without violence.



What Ba Futuru is doing to transform the school environment

Ba Futuru's Strengthening Peace in the Lives of Children: Stopping the Violence project began in 2011 with generous funding support from the Justice Facility. This project provides skill building for individuals who impact the lives of children, in order that they can help to ensure children's access to justice and protection from abuse and neglect. The first stage of this project lasted 15 months and worked directly with students in a participatory process of creating positive discipline models together with their teachers and parents, in order to stop the use of violence in the classroom. A lessons learnt publication and educational DVD about the first stage of the project will be used in the second stage of the project, starting in May of 2012, in order to share replicable models of positive discipline and classroom management that have been successfully used in the Timor-Leste classroom environment.

Even teachers who recognize the negative impacts of violence are struggling to find discipline strategies that don't use physical punishment and fear-based teaching methods.

Thus Ba Futuru has created a positive discipline training and lessons learnt manual and DVD publication to explain practical strategies for classroom management and education that create a safe and inspiring learning environment.



After to receiving a training on the material about positive classroom management, one female senior high school teacher reported:

"I think this training was great because it opened our minds to ways to seek assistance when children face problems. It also provided knowledge on how to teach positive discipline. I want to speak honestly and say that before I attended this training I would often use violence to discipline children.

After the training I have tried to reduce my negative behaviour. To speak about positive discipline is very important but then to implement it is quite difficult because we work with so many students and there are some students that are easy to control but others that sometimes make you very emotional.

To respond to those students I don't want to use violence any more. When you hit someone the impact is often they will look at you angrily and have angry feelings towards you.



They won't pay better attention to the class material and often they won't want to come to your class. I've experienced this, and I try to speak again with them nicely and in the end they become interested again in what I'm teaching.

From now on I think that I have to continue to use positive discipline strategies that won't have negative impacts, including on myself.

I'm grateful for these bi-monthly meetings [with Ba Futuru, parents and students], as the discussions have been very supportive and have helped to strengthen the implementation of positive discipline strategies in our school."



Student Response to the Project

"My teacher use to beat us with a stick when we came in late or broke the rules, and then he would tell us to go back home and come the next day. However, my teacher has changed after participating in the training that was organized by NGO Ba Futuru. Since then, if we break the rules or behave badly in the class, he no longer beats us. Instead he tells us to repeat what he has explained in the front of the class. Also, if we are late at school, he tells us to clean up the schoolyard and fill water into the restroom, and then we can enter the class. I think this is a good discipline strategy because we don't need to miss our class material like before."

One Male teacher explains his understanding

"I am very proud of taking part in the training offered by Ba Futuru... I can honestly say that Ba Futuru has exposed my negative teaching methods."

When I listened to your explanation about using positive discipline, it made me reflect back on my past and the negative way I have used discipline with my students and also my own children. I think in the past, when I was teaching, if some students slept in class or did not pay attention to the subject I was teaching, I just let them, knowing that they would miss out. And sometimes, outside of class time, I would slap students to make them follow my instructions."

This training has pushed me to try to use positive methods to encourage my students, pay attention to them, praise them when they do well, and explain to them the importance of following the rules. I feel that this training has benefitted me greatly and in this way, it reminds me that to be a teacher is not to use force to show the way, but to set a good example that students can and which have a positive effect for the long term."

Objectives - Stage Two



Ba Futuru will use the replicable models of positive discipline and classroom management from the intensive work in schools in stage one in order to train teachers and teacher trainers from across Timor-Leste. In order to reach the widest group of teachers possible, Ba Futuru is partnering with the Ministry of Education to provide a training of trainers for two individuals from each district so that they can return to their districts and provide skills transfer to teachers there.



This training will equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to be able to better protect their students from abuse and neglect, and assist those who are victims of maltreatment.

Simultaneously, it will equip them with the skills and knowledge to diminish (and ideally stop) the use of corporal punishment in the classroom, thereby providing safer and more productive learning environments for children.

School Director's opinion of the project

"I am happy with the program that Ba Futuru has brought to our school. I have seen that the program has so far really helped my teachers and the students.

As the Director, besides looking after the needs of the school, I also spend time controlling students in the school environment, for example; if students are still standing outside after the warning bell to start the class, I would hit the students with a stick so that they would enter the classroom.

However, after I participated in the training that was facilitated by NGO Ba Futuru focusing on child protection and positive discipline, this made me realize the actions I was using were part of physical abuse.



I realized that the behaviour I was engaging in was damaging to the students' mentality.

I haven't yet changed my behaviour 100%, but slowly I am improving and instead of always using the stick I am changing this to speaking nicely with them.

I am grateful to Ba Futuru for this partnership that has helped my teachers and students by offering training to increase their knowledge."

Towards the end of the project in this school, Ba Futuru assisted the school Director above in creating and socializing a Child Protection Policy explicitly banning the use of corporal punishment.





Support Ba Futuru

Ba Futuru is a non-profit organization that is funded by financial contributions and donations from individuals and donor organizations.

Financial gifts to Ba Futuru can be made by cash, transfer or cheque. If you would like to donate materials in-kind, please contact us about your idea.

Also, if you're interested in becoming a member of Ba Futuru, receiving our newsletter or volunteering, please contact us.

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