

## FAITH COMMUNITIES AND *CHEGA!* MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS REALITY

*“During the second half of the Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010) we will increase our efforts to work towards firmer alliances and more effective links between churches, networks and movements... in the search for reconciliation and peace.”*

World Council of Churches Assembly, Brazil, February 2006

*“O you who believe! Stand firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin; and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for God can best protect both.”*

Qur'an, An-Nisa (4): 135

*“Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world (are) a constitutive dimension of the Church's mission.”*

Justice in the World, Second Vatican Council.

*“As Prime Minister I will do my best to support the dissemination of the Report (Chega!) so that it becomes a learning process for all of us, so that we don't repeat the same errors that in part contributed to this tragedy, but also that the more concrete recommendations contained in the report... will be implemented.”*

Prime Minister Ramos-Horta, November 2006

***The Muslim, Protestant and Catholic faith communities of Timor-Leste have established an Inter-Faith Group (IFG) to work together for justice, peace and human rights in Timor-Leste. These shared values are also the values that Chega! was written to advance. At a conference in Baucau in June 2006 and subsequently, representatives of the three communities acknowledged the important contribution that Chega! can make to this common project. They committed the IFG to work for the implementation of the recommendations in Chega!, both within their own communities and within the wider community of Timor-Leste. This document contains practical suggestions to help make this commitment reality so that the lessons and recommendations in Chega! on accountability, non-violence, rule of law, impartiality of the security agencies, participative democracy and ending impunity are embedded in Timor-Leste.***

### **1. Faith communities and the conflict**

The Catholic Church, the largest faith community in Timor-Leste, played a central role in defending the rights of the people during the Indonesian occupation. This contribution is recognised in the Timor-Leste Constitution and was famously acknowledged by the granting of the Nobel Peace Prize to Dom Carlos Belo in 1996. *Chega!* devotes 10 pages of its chapter on self-determination (Chapter 7) to the role of the local Church, including its complex interaction with the international church. The Protestant and Muslim communities were small in size and minor players during the period which is the subject of *Chega!*

## **2. Faith communities and the CAVR**

The faith communities supported the CAVR process and made active contributions. On the philosophical level, there was a natural affinity between CAVR and the faith communities. The principles underlying transitional justice owe much to the faith traditions and their ethical systems, including the concept of reconciliation based on individual accountability and the restoration of broken community relationships. In practical terms, the faith communities assisted CAVR in a number of ways. The Protestant and Catholic churches each released one of their clergy from their regular duties to serve as National Commissioners. Rev Maria Fatima Gomes from the Assembly of God and Bishops Carlos Belo and Dom Basilio do Nascimento served as members of the CAVR Advisory Council. Individual Sisters and Priests participated in local community reconciliations in many parts of the country, assisted with worship and support for victims, and contributed information to the truth-seeking process. The CAVR also included adat rituals and practices in its community reconciliation processes.

## **3. Faith communities and the CAVR recommendations in *Chega!***

In addition to their support for the objectives of CAVR, faith communities in Timor-Leste are well-placed to convert this support into practical action and to contribute significantly to making the recommendations in *Chega!* reality. They can do this by distributing *Chega!* to the many communities they serve, discussing it in sermons, radio programs, articles and workshops, and encouraging implementation of its recommendations within their own communities and through external advocacy. Religious Orders can make a special contribution because of their numerous personnel, international connections and the many schools and other institutions they administer throughout Timor-Leste.

Most of the following recommendations are general. Each idea needs to be further developed into a program of action which details goals, steps to be taken, timetable, partners and resources.

### *3.1 Dissemination*

Faith communities can disseminate *Chega!* and its key lessons and recommendations by:

- Asking their leaders to issue pastoral letters and other public statements that support *Chega!* and encourage their communities to read it;
- Setting up *Chega!* study groups for their religious and lay personnel and in their parishes and congregations;
- Teaching *Chega!* in seminaries and training institutions;
- Translating and adapting sections of *Chega!* into Tetum (7.4.1);
- Using *Chega!* in the classroom to teach human rights, non-violence, and history (7.4.2);
- Making use of the information, video and other resources in the CAVR archives (3.7.5);
- recommending *Chega!* to their international colleagues (such as the WCC, CCA, headquarters of Religious Orders in Rome and elsewhere), and to colleagues in CPLP countries and ASEAN (1.1-1.3);
- putting *Chega!* on their websites and asking partner organizations to place links to the report.

### 3.2 *Promotion of human rights and non-violence within faith communities*

Faith communities can contribute to a culture of human rights and peace in Timor-Leste by undertaking the following recommendations in their own institutions and agencies:

- Teaching human rights and non-violence in their schools, training centres, clinics, places of worship and other programs (3.4.1; 3.4.6-3.4.7; 3.6.1; 3.7.2-3);
- Ensuring that their educational, medical and other services are not over-concentrated in Dili and reach the disadvantaged in isolated and remote areas (3.2.6);
- Providing education programs in their medical clinics on the relationship between health and the environment (3.8.4);
- Using their clinics and other facilities to treat those who continue to suffer physically or mentally from human rights violations (3.3.2).

### 3.3 *Advocacy*

***Chega!*** advocates all human rights for all in Timor-Leste. Faith communities can contribute to this objective by advocacy to the government, parliament, and political parties which upholds:

- a human rights approach to development in keeping with Timor's international commitments (3.1.1-3.1.3);
- equitable development policies and programs that reach the most disadvantaged (3.2.6) and advance the rights of women (4.1.1-4.1.11), children (4.2.1-4.2.6) and the disabled (4.2.6);
- the promotion and protection of human rights by official agencies that promote and protect human rights including the public service (5.4.1-5.4.6), *provedor* (5.5.1-5.5.6), judiciary (5.3.1-5.3.6), police service (6.2.1-6.2.9), and defence forces (6.3.1-6.3.9);
- an independent judiciary (5.3.1-5.3.6), independent media (3.5.1-3.5.6) and independent civil society (5.1.1-5.1.6).

More specifically, faith communities can individually, jointly, and in collaboration with their international networks, advocate the following measures:

- Accountability for past violations by the Indonesian military and the relevant authorities and agencies (10.1-10.3; 10.8-10.17);
- no amnesty for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Timor-Leste that involved sexual violence against women and girls (4.1.3);
- an apology and reparations to victims by governments, agencies and corporations involved in supporting or directly responsible for human rights violations in Timor-Leste (1.6-1.8; 4.1.2; 10.16-10.17; 12.1);
- concrete measures to promote non-violence (3.4.1-3.4.7) directed to the government (3.4.6; 4.1.5), political parties (3.4.2), and security agencies (4.1.8; 6.2; 6.3);
- pressure on the historical political parties to address human rights violations committed in the past (9.5);

### 3.4 *Reconciliation*

Faith communities can contribute to reconciliation by acting on the following recommendations:

- establishment of a community-focussed mechanism for conflict prevention and resolution (8.1-8.6);
- requesting the Prosecutor-General to address the 85 cases of pending Community Reconciliation Processes held by his office (8.6);
- reconciliation in the Timor-Leste political community (9.1-9.8);
- reconciliation with Indonesia and creative ways of deepening Timor-Leste/Indonesia people-to-people relations (10.1-10.17-11.1.1-11.2.3).

### *3.5 Reparations*

Chega! recommends that reparations in various forms be provided to the most vulnerable victims of human rights violations (12.1-12.12).

To take this set of recommendations forward, it is suggested that the Inter-Faith Group convene a seminar or workshop on the subject of reparations in conjunction with Ministry of Labour and Community Re-insertion and the UNMIT Human Rights Unit (in view of Kofi Annan's solidarity fund recommendation).

It is suggested in Chega! that beneficiaries should include single mothers and their children, the disabled, widows, and survivors of sexual violence and torture, and severely affected communities. Faith communities are ideally placed to assist these victims. It is recommended that this section is read carefully. CAVR is not advocating wholesale reparations or only reparations in the form of monetary compensation.

### *3.6 Memorialisation*

Faith communities can contribute to healing and the promotion of human rights by:

- Lobbying government and Parliamentarians to convert the Comarca heritage site into a national memorial centre for victims and human rights (13.2; 8.1);
- Requesting the Vatican to honour Dom Martinho da Costa Lopes and working with interested institutions such as the Dom Martinho da Costa Lopes University for this purpose (1.12);
- Honouring, in collaboration with the Church in Indonesia, the priests and religious who were murdered in Timor-Leste in 1999 (1.12);
- Recording and marking sites and buildings where significant human rights violations occurred (3.2.2-3.2.3; 3.3.1);
- Contributing to the CAVR archives written and other records held by priests, religious orders and others;
- Encouraging and/or assisting clergy and others to write their stories or provide statements for the record relating to the conflict;
- Working with colleagues overseas to obtain for the CAVR archives documentation on Timor-Leste held by institutions such as the Vatican (1.4), the World Council of Churches, the Protestant and Catholic churches in Australia, Indonesia, Portugal (2.4) and the US, Progressio (formerly CIIR), and religious orders working in Timor such as the Canossians, Claretians, Jesuits, and Salesians.

## **4. Resources and coordination**

The full Chega! and summaries are available in multiple languages at <http://www.cavr-timorleste.org> or from the Bookshop at the Post-CAVR Technical Secretariat (STP-CAVR).

Staff at STP-CAVR are also available to assist in any way.  
Contact: Jaimito da Costa, Coordinator, Socialisation Team.  
[jaimitodacosta@yahoo.com](mailto:jaimitodacosta@yahoo.com) HP 723 4916.

STP-CAVR has also established focal points in all districts. For details of the focal point in your area, contact Jaimito da Costa.

To facilitate coordination, please inform Jaimito da Costa of your activities and proposals. STP-CAVR has a data base and will keep a central registry of who is doing what.

You are welcome to call and visit STP-CAVR and to use the facilities for workshops and meetings. STP-CAVR is based in the historic ex-Balide prison.

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