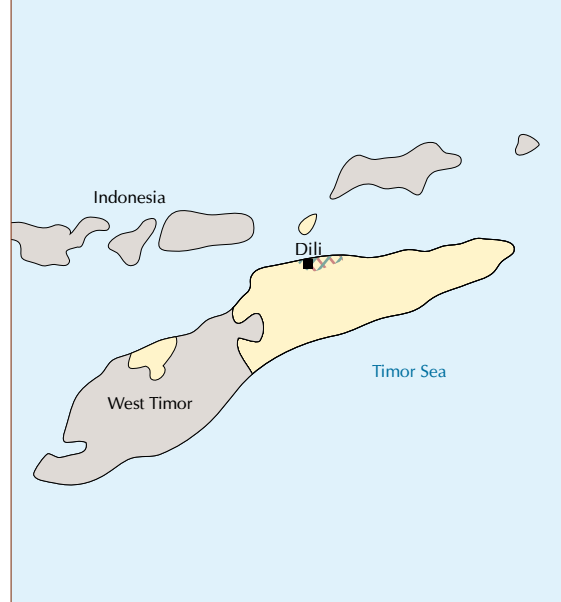


Timor-Leste



Quick facts

Number of IDPs	400
Percentage of total population	Up to ++0.1%
Start of current displacement situation	2006
Peak number of IDPs (Year)	150,000 (2006)
New displacement	100
Causes of displacement	Generalised violence, human rights violations
Human development index	162



An estimated 150,000 people in Timor-Leste were displaced in 2006 as their homes and property were seized or destroyed during violence between rival groups within the army and police and among the wider population. They sought refuge in the capital Dili, in government buildings, schools or churches and subsequently in makeshift camps, or with families and friends in rural districts.

The causes of the crisis included political rivalries dating back to the independence struggle up to 1999, divisions between “easterners” and “westerners”, but also chronic poverty and a large and disempowered youth population. Land disputes from before and immediately after the 1999 independence vote also continued to cause resentment.

During 2009 the government continued to distribute “recovery packages” consisting of cash compensation to people agreeing to leave the IDP camps, and by August the camps had all been closed. In September, the government started closing the transitional shelters where an estimated 2,500 IDPs were still living; it increased the compensation package from \$200 to \$1,500 to convince the remaining households to leave, and by the end of the year only a few hundred IDPs remained.

While the recovery strategy launched by the government in 2008 initially recognised the rights of IDPs to return, move to a transitional shelter or settle elsewhere, the lack of available land combined with the decision by the government in 2009 to close the transitional shelters meant that return was in practice the only option offered to the displaced. Only when communities openly and publicly opposed returns did IDPs settle elsewhere, usually with relatives or in rented accommodation. However, these cases were relatively rare: IOM and other agencies facilitated “go and see” visits and dialogue between IDPs and community members to address potential problems of reintegration, and the available data shows that up to February 2009 less than two per cent of returnees were re-displaced. Little can however be said about the extent to which reintegration was successful due to insufficient monitoring in areas of return.

Returnees shared a number of problems with non-displaced communities in 2009, mainly related to access to clean water and sanitation, food, basic services and economic opportunities. Other problems were more specific to IDPs. Of the total of 3,500 houses still damaged or destroyed as of February 2009, 2,400 belonged to returned IDPs. Land and property issues

were settled on a case-by-case basis, with squatters often agreeing to leave in exchange for some of the IDPs’ compensation money, but more serious cases involving conflicting ownership claims had not been resolved by the end of the year. Access to justice for displacement-related human rights violations remained very limited, due to the limited capacity of the judicial system and the insufficiency of the government’s efforts to prosecute those responsible.

The government’s approach to solving the internal displacement problem was up to 2009 centered on encouraging IDPs to leave the camps, and it carried out little monitoring in areas of return to measure their progress in re-integrating and their use of the compensation package. This made it difficult to assess the extent to which they had been able to achieve durable solutions, or the number who had reintegrated successfully. At the end of the year, the government initiated the second phase of the national recovery strategy (NRS) under which each of the 14,000 or more internally displaced households who received the recovery package became entitled to a further payment of \$500 to compensate for possessions and assets lost during the 2006 and 2007 crises.

The Ministry of Social Solidarity (MSS) is responsible for IDP assistance and coordination, while the Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights and Justice is responsible for monitoring and protecting the rights of IDPs. Like other ministries involved in the national recovery strategy, the capacity of the MSS for cooperation, coordination and planning remains limited.

The UN applied the cluster system in Timor-Leste in March 2009 to coordinate international humanitarian efforts in support of the government’s recovery effort. Most issues related to IDP protection and assistance were discussed through the protection cluster, the early recovery cluster and the group tasked with building trust between IDPs and receiving communities within the NRS. During 2009 the protection cluster was led jointly by NRC and the UN integrated mission’s Human Rights and Transitional Justice Section (HRTJS).

A number of outstanding issues must be addressed for durable solutions to become possible. There is a need to address the shortage of housing, create new economic opportunities in areas of return for both the returnees and the receiving community, and improve living conditions there. The application of new land laws and regulations will remain a complex and