



Gendered Marketplace Assessment

Women vendors' voices & aspirations for change



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About TOMAK

TOMAK (*To'os ba Moris Di'ak*, or Farming for Prosperity) is a 5-10 year agricultural livelihoods program funded by the Australian Government in Timor-Leste. Its goal is to ensure rural households live more prosperous and sustainable lives. To do this, TOMAK supports the implementation of parallel and linked interventions that aim to:

- Establish a foundation of food security and good nutrition for targeted rural households;
- Build their capacity to confidently and ably engage in profitable agricultural markets.

TOMAK works primarily in inland mid-altitude areas that have some irrigation capacity. In its first phase, this comprises 66 *suku* (villages) located in Baucau, Bobonaro & Viqueque municipalities.

TOMAK is committed to understanding and addressing the gender and social norms that impact on women's economic opportunities in the agriculture sector and related market systems. Through a range of activities, TOMAK is working to ensure women's contribution and achievements are recognised alongside men's, and that their voices are heard in the decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods.

For more information on our work please visit www.tomak.org.

About UN Women

UN Women is the UN organisation dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. Operating in 32 countries in Asia and the Pacific region, UN Women Timor-Leste works to turn commitments for gender equality into actions, in partnership with the Government, civil society, private sector stakeholders and development partners. UN Women's programming aims to empower women to have income security, decent work and autonomy, and to build sustainable peace and resilience through women's leadership and decision-making across sectors, including in the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts. These efforts support government plans and budgets that are gender responsive and create the conditions for women and girls to enjoy their right to live free of violence. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's joint work in advancing gender equality.

<http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/timor-leste>.

Collaboration between TOMAK and UN Women

In 2017, TOMAK and UN Women initiated a collaboration to advance women's economic empowerment and prevent violence in public spaces, using learnings from UN Women's [Markets for Change](#) program in the Pacific and UN Women's [Global Programme on Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces](#).

These programs are showing that investment in gendered market infrastructure and governance, including the leadership of women in marketplaces and public places, can contribute to safer, more vibrant areas where women can pursue economic opportunities. In Timor-Leste, UN Women's Safe Dili Scoping Study Report highlighted the need for "investment in the safety and economic potential of public spaces for women's economic empowerment. This includes building the capacity of local governments to invest and manage public infrastructure, such as local marketplaces, public transport, street lighting, water and sanitation". The full report of this study can be found at <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/timor-leste>.

UN Women and TOMAK will continue to work jointly toward a holistic intervention for improving equitable governance and safety in market spaces, drawing upon the results from this assessment, the Safe Cities scoping study and global learnings in this area.

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Executive summary

Traditional or local marketplaces are extremely important for economic and social development in Timor-Leste, where nearly 90% of the poor in rural areas depend on agriculture for their livelihoods¹. They are essential economic hubs, where consumers and vendors buy and sell a variety of goods for daily use. They are a vital link in the market system for agricultural products, as the majority of fresh food that is produced for sale is sold via the local marketplace and then on to urban centres. Local marketplaces are particularly important in supporting women's economic activity, with an estimated 75-85% of vendors in municipal and sub-municipal markets being women.²

Marketplaces by nature are rich with informal agricultural, market and business-related activity, enabling people to gain access to important information and networks that can assist them in making production and trade decisions. Figure 1 (below), highlights some of the more common, wider benefits of efficient, vibrant and safe marketplaces.



Figure 1. Characteristics and benefits of efficient, vibrant and safe marketplaces

1 Molyneux, M et al (2014) Climate Change and Population Growth in Timor Leste: Implications for Food Security

2 TOMAK, Marketplace Assessment Field Research 2017-18

TOMAK was interested in exploring how well local marketplace facilities and operations meet the needs of vendors, particularly women vendors and traders. Toward this end, TOMAK partnered with the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion (SEII) and UN Women to understand better the current context of local marketplaces and commissioned a Gendered Marketplace Assessment (GMA).

The GMA was conducted in two municipalities across Timor-Leste over a 3-month period (April-June 2018). Various data collection techniques were used to construct a picture of the situation and solicit the views of a broad range of stakeholders, both women and men. The assessment made considerable efforts to ensure the voice and aspirations of women were captured throughout the process and that the Municipal Presidents of Baucau and Bobonaro had a strong leadership role in the process. Overall, the assessment involved 197 stakeholders (75% female and 25% male) across the municipalities of Bobonaro and Baucau. Following the assessment, the validation results process brought together 163 stakeholders (65% female and 35% male) at the municipal and national level in Dili.

This report provides context and recommendations in the following areas: 1. Marketplace governance and management, 2. Marketplace infrastructure, 3. Safety, security and welfare, and 4. Service provision. The case studies on the four marketplaces enable reflection on the different issues affecting each marketplace while building a broader picture of the common issues facing local marketplaces.

While this assessment covers the situation in four marketplaces only, considering similarities between this assessment and gender issues identified in UN Women's Markets for Change intervention, there is a strong likelihood that the broader findings are relevant to other municipal and sub-municipal marketplaces.

Key findings of the GMA

Despite their undeniable importance to the local economy, this study indicates that there is inadequate investment in the equitable governance of marketplaces, resulting in economic inefficiencies and unsafe workplaces. Many of the infrastructure and management issues identified by vendors are well-known, and require explicit government level policy and investment decisions.

There is a need for greater and smarter public investment in marketplaces, to maximise their potential contribution to local and sustainable economic growth. Investments need to both include and move beyond the infrastructure of marketplaces, in order to establish governance and management mechanisms that are clear and inclusive. Security issues are a major concern, impacting particularly on women's decisions as to whether to sell their products in the marketplaces to begin with. This relates to both safety in the marketplace, as well as women's security when travelling to and from the marketplace.

This assessment overwhelmingly highlights the need to involve vendors in marketplace decision-making, and the particular value of understanding the inefficiencies, frustrations and experiences of being a female vendor, who represent the majority of marketplace sellers. The lack of engagement and decision-making by vendors in the past has often led to poor infrastructure and management choices in marketplaces, resulting in individual and communal socio-economic losses that could be lessened.

It is important not to underestimate the difficulty of achieving change in this area. Marketplace management is complex and involves striking a balance between the needs of multiple stakeholders. Advancing change requires a long-term vision, clear leadership and tireless collaboration. In all four marketplaces, there was a strong willingness of stakeholders at different levels - including both government and vendors - to work together for change. This collaboration is possible and has already begun. From the first meetings for this assessment, stakeholders were ready to take forward some of

their ideas and solutions to improve the marketplace. This has included re-establishing marketplace steering committees, improving security, enforcing parking and space regulations, and engaging with women vendors. The municipal authorities have also given stronger consideration to funding market management activities in the 2019 annual plan and budget.

Overall finding

There is a need for long-term economic and social investments in gender-responsive marketplaces.

The assessment identified three 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.
3. Unsafe marketplaces and travel to marketplaces restrict women's economic business potential, harm their wellbeing and that of their families, and limit broader economic growth.

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.
3. 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.

Specific recommendations by issue

Marketplace management & regulations

1. The Ministry of State Administration should work with municipal presidents 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 and the voices of 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.
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. The municipal police should revisit their schedule of patrols in and around market spaces and

organise regular meetings with vendors (female separate from male vendors) to understand specific security concerns and improve the safety of market spaces for everyone.

6. Key municipal authorities should look into the regulation of public transportation to ensure it is safe and accessible to users. In particular, this should include efforts to prevent price scamming, harassment and the intimidation of vendors going to and returning from marketplaces.
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. Building on the relationships established through the assessment process, municipal presidents could organise an annual vendor meeting to 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.
10. 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.
11. SEII and women's municipal associations from Baucau and Bobonaro 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

12. Vendor groups and market managers should consider how to establish or rearrange spaces within the market so as to attract service providers who can share information and undertake outreach in public spaces. Vendors could lead in building these relationships with service providers. Key services identified by vendors include: business skills, market information, agricultural production-related information, financial literacy and access to finance, social protection, nutrition and health.
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 supporting marketplaces should encourage vendors' business skills and creativity in secondary products at the marketplace (e.g. restaurants/tourism/handicrafts).
15. 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.



1. Background

In Timor-Leste, 77% of rural women and 76% of rural men consider themselves farmers.³ Women and men are farmers both through necessity and by choice. Farmers tend to focus their efforts on the production of food for both consumption and sale. The majority of surplus produce is sold in public sub-municipal, municipal and national marketplaces classified as traditional and/or local markets. This generally requires farmers to travel with their produce in order to sell it on specific market days. It is estimated that only a small amount of produce is sold at the farm gate.

On the farm, women's and men's workload in farm production is similar but women's role in food processing is more diverse and comprehensive than men's. Women tend also to dominate in the sale of farm produce. It is estimated that 75-85% of the vendors in traditional marketplaces are women.⁴ Women are the principal marketplace vendors for the sale of vegetables, rice, pulses, snack foods and other value-added agriculture products. In some areas, they are involved in aggregating produce to on-sell at other marketplaces. Women are equally involved with men in the sale of livestock at the marketplace, though the animals they sell may be different. Men tend to dominate in selling larger livestock (goat and cattle) and fresh meat.

The conditions of marketplaces in Timor-Leste vary. Some are enclosed with roofing, while others are more open to the elements. Some vendors make use of permanent or semi-permanent structures to trade in the marketplace. Other vendors trade on the periphery of the market, utilising makeshift structures along the roadsides, often spilling over onto footpaths and public areas on larger market days. Some have no shade from the sun or shelter from inclement weather. Some have seating and tables, while others are limited to floor level trading. Some markets have poor drainage and sanitation,

³ Census, 2015

⁴ TOMAK, Marketplace Assessment Field Research 2017-18

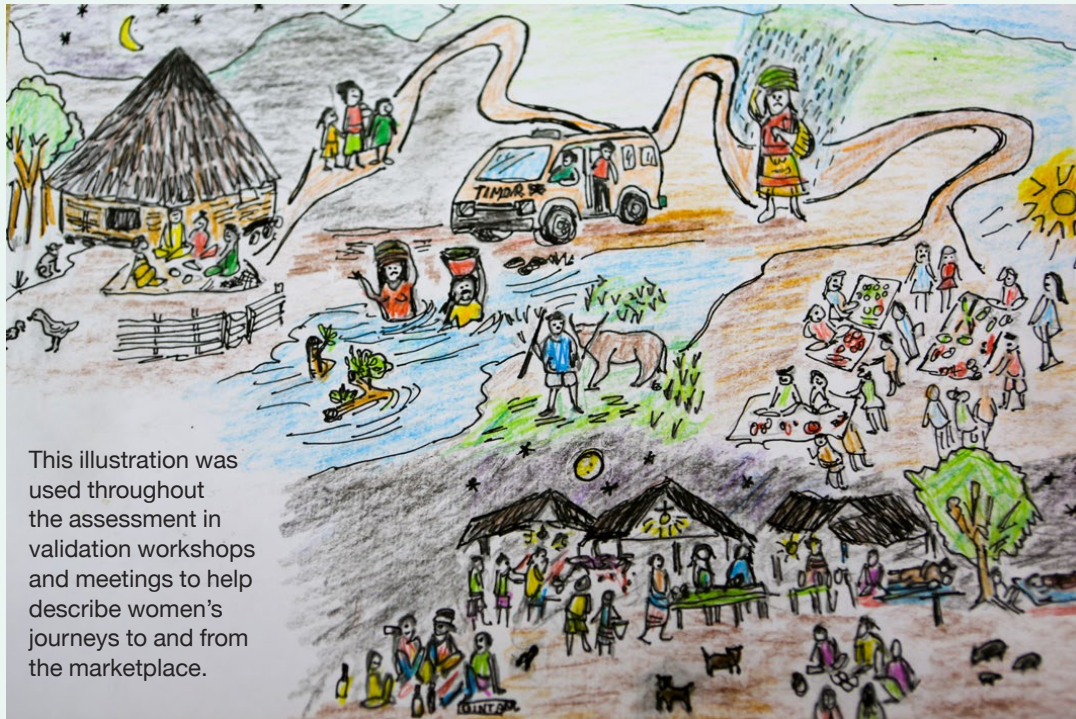


and water may or may not be available close to the marketplace. The existence and condition of toilet facilities varies, but they are often in poor condition and/or locked. There is little attention given to other vendor facilities beyond toilets, such as multi-use spaces for resting, breastfeeding or holding meetings.

Marketplaces also differ in terms of who frequents them, and their systems of governance. Village markets, located at the *suku* (village) level, tend to be very localised, with members of the same village trading their produce with each other. At the next level of governance, *postu* (administrative post) markets typically comprise a mixture of local farmers (those selling their own produce) and vendors selling others' produce. *Postu* markets operate only a few days each week, but are getting increasingly busy with vendors from different municipalities coming to trade. Municipal markets are busiest, typically operating week-round, with vendors coming from other municipalities as well as local farmers and vendors. They tend to get busiest from 6pm onwards, when people come after work to buy fresh produce for their meals. As such, while they are not officially designated as night markets, market forces appear to be pushing them in that direction.

Current systems of marketplace governance are generally weak. Marketplace management falls under the competency of municipal and sub-municipal (administrative post) offices. Some have government officials who delegate authority to market chiefs or management committees, most of which are comprised of male vendor volunteers. However, a major issue is that these volunteers have very little power to make and enforce decisions in the marketplace. As such, vendor relations and general coordination of activities tend to favour vendors who are physically stronger or in an otherwise more powerful position. These vendors are often able to do as they wish, with others conceding in the absence of agreed norms.

As with any other group of people, vendors in Timor-Leste vary in their circumstances and experiences in selling at the market. The following image and narrative tells a collective story of the many experiences that were shared with us during the assessment.



Women's journeys to and from the market

"We go to the local market because it is usually the only place we can sell our produce for cash. No one buys from our farms much. We do this to get money for our families, so we just get on with it even though we know there are risks in selling at the local market."

"Some of us leave home in the dark and travel long distances to the market, so we can get there in time for the early trade. We have to decide whether or not to take our children with us. The children may miss school if they come to the market with us and if they sleep overnight in the marketplace, they can be frightened. If our children stay behind, we need to rely on older children or family members to look after them and we need to set up everything before we go so our husbands are not too put out. There is always the thought in the back of our minds that something could happen to our children."

"Some of us walk alone, while others walk together in groups. No one likes walking to the market at night. We are afraid of someone following us and attacking us or taking our produce. We worry about coming across wild animals or falling off the narrow mountainous paths. If we walk, we have to carry our produce and drinking water and sometimes young children. In the end, this means we can't carry a lot of produce to sell. It is often hard to see where we are going and sometimes it rains heavily. Some of us have to cross rivers up to our shoulders, or we must wait hours for the river to recede so we can cross safely. We go back and forth across the river sometimes, in order bring our children and produce over."

"Sometimes we travel on local transport, but doing this can make us vulnerable. There

are men who annoy us and sexually harass us on buses and *mikrolets* [minibuses]. Sometimes we are forced to pay higher transport prices than we should. Our big fear is being the last passenger on the bus or *mikrolet* and being alone with the driver.”

“Most of us come to the market very early in the morning, when it is still dark. Our markets often don’t have electricity or lighting or any places for us to really rest. After we arrive, we have to negotiate space to sell. Some vendors get into fights over space. We sometimes end up sitting on the ground in areas of the market that have no cover and are out in the sun. We stay until our produce is sold and sometimes we have to stay overnight in the market. It can be scary to sleep in the market, so sometimes we sell our produce very cheaply to other vendors, so we can leave before dark. When we leave early, we miss the evening sale period, where we can make good money in the municipal market.”

“At night we have to protect our produce and ourselves at all times. The only toilet is locked and it can be hard to find a place to rest. The marketplace is not a safe place for us at night because there are men who drink, gamble and fight in the market. We are often verbally and sexually harassed. We try to stay quiet and not bring attention to ourselves, but we don’t sleep well and it can be very stressful. We spend most of the night hoping we will sell our produce quickly tomorrow so we can go home early, feeling proud of ourselves for the money we have earned.”



2. Methodology

The purpose of this assessment was to investigate, analyse and document the current conditions, usability, and opportunities for improvements in Timor-Leste marketplaces, from the perspective of mainly women vendors, as well as those responsible for marketplace management and various other government and civil society stakeholders. The research focussed on people’s perceptions and experiences across four key areas:

1. Marketplace governance and management
2. Marketplace infrastructure
3. Safety, security & welfare; and
4. Service provision

The methodology was entirely qualitative with a focus on participatory techniques. Respondents were primarily female vendors, as they comprise the majority of marketplace vendors. Other respondents included male vendors, marketplace managers, civil society representatives and government representatives.

The assessment was conducted between April and June 2018, across four different marketplaces: the two municipal markets of Baucau and Maliana, and the two sub-municipal (*postu*) markets of Atabae and Venilale. Assessments in each marketplace were conducted over a period of three days each, and included a combination of observational walks⁵, individual interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and a municipal stakeholder meeting. In total 197 people were involved in this process.

⁵ These were conducted using UN Women’s Safe Cities Safety Audit methodology.

Bridging Peoples developed the methodology and managed the team in the field. Two Timorese researchers, as well as local researchers from each of the four case study sites, assisted in the research process and mobilised women vendors for participation in the assessment. The team also included staff members from TOMAK, UN Women and the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion (SEII).

At each marketplace site, the assessment team conducted a full-day participatory workshop involving between eight and 17 women vendors to identify the major issues from their own perspective, and to then develop recommendations for improvement. While discussions were facilitated by the team using a combination of small and large group techniques, the recommendations were developed by the women vendors themselves. The women then prioritised their recommendations using a participatory voting methodology in which each woman identified the three most important recommendations, from her own perspective. Results from each of these workshops are presented in the next section: *Case Study Sites*.



Women vendors rank their priority issues, and share their experiences and ideas for the future.

During the final day of the assessment at each site, the team facilitated a workshop with government stakeholders, civil society representatives and women vendors themselves, to present emerging findings and discuss how marketplace conditions might be improved.

Results feedback activities were undertaken between July and August 2018, across the four marketplaces involved in the assessment. This involved a validation workshop for each marketplace and a workshop in Dili to present final results. This process provided the opportunity to discuss and confirm the results and consider future action. Purposefully, the workshops also fostered linkages between the different stakeholders in order to ensure positive collaboration beyond the initial assessment of marketplace issues. At the Dili workshop, the Municipal Presidents from Baucau and Maliana presented the assessment results to national level Government ministries and development partners.



Left: Government and vendors collaborating together in Baucau, including from left- a xefe suku (village chief), a woman vendor, a Commander of the Baucau Police, a marketplace manager and a representative from the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion. Right: The Municipal President of Bobonaro presenting final assessment results to national level government ministries and development partners.

A breakdown of participation in all the activities are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Participant breakdown by method/activity

Activity	No.	Female	Male	Total participants
Assessment activities				
Observational walks (3 x 4 marketplaces)	12	-	-	-
Individual interviews- formal	30	22	8	30
Vendor focus group discussions (FGDs)	6	99	0	99
Municipal stakeholder workshops	4	28	40	68
Sub-total	149	48	197	14
Assessment results feedback activities				
Municipal results validation workshops	4	48	50	98
Dili stakeholder results workshop	1	38	27	65
Sub-total		86	77	163
Overall total		235	125	360

3. Case study sites

3.1. Maliana market



Maliana market is currently located in the heart of Maliana town, and has been in operation since Indonesian times. Being situated in the centre of town, there is limited space for the marketplace to expand.

The two most frequent problems raised by vendors were the lack of rubbish collection, and problems with access to water supply and toilets. While water supply is functioning, it is only pumped into the marketplace tanks that connect to the toilet block for two hours every day – being limited by Maliana’s water supply system. During the dry season (from May to October), water supply is even more limited. Because of the problems with water supply and rubbish collection, one enterprising older man has created a small business selling

water and collecting rubbish on behalf of the vendors. He typically charges between 50 cents to \$1 to carry water, and \$1 to \$2 to collect vendors’ rubbish. This is in comparison to female vegetable farmer vendors who typically earn between \$5 and \$20 a day.

The municipality is in the process of moving the market some 5km away – a cause of great concern for many vendors who are worried about the lack of transport for both themselves and potential customers. As one vendor explained:

“I’m worried because it’s far away, some people won’t be able to travel to and from the market, so they’ll just buy from places that are close to them.”⁶

However, as other vendors noted, they would be more supportive of the new marketplace if they could be guaranteed better conditions:

“We would like to have this market to be well facilitated with toilets and clean water, especially toilets are the most necessary. Leaders should also pay attention to this market by providing security guards, the toilets should not be locked... and there should be clean water so we don’t have to walk a long way to collect it.”⁷

The person responsible for oversight of the marketplace is the market manager, a salaried official in the Maliana municipal offices.

There is a mixture of permanent vendors and day traders in the marketplace. Many women day traders have to walk a long distance to and from their homes, typically leaving the marketplace at dusk so that they do not arrive home too late – with those walking longer distances needing to leave as the sun begins to set. Most of the walk to and from home is in the dark, with women navigating

6 Female vendors (2) - Maliana

7 Female vendor - Maliana

many different risks including potential theft and abuse, as well as river crossings and other natural threats. Some permanent residents live in their *kios* (a small shop/kiosk) with lockable doors; others simply sleep in the central marketplace building, on the concrete floor behind their stall. There have been numerous reports of young men in masks entering the marketplace late at night, vandalising property and terrorising the women vendors.



Left: Vendor sleeping under their table of produce. Right: Vendor preparing vegetables in the largest, permanent market building in Maliana market.

Priority issues for Maliana vendors

In Maliana, during a full-day FGD, women vendors made recommendations for improvement of marketplace conditions. Following a participatory voting exercise, they prioritised their recommendations in order of importance (with 10 indicating the most important), as follows.



Figure 2. Ranking of priorities for women vendors - Maliana market

3.2. Atabae market



Atabae market is located in the centre of town, officially operating only on Saturdays but in practice operating two days a week (Friday and Saturday). Vendors travel from a variety of places, with those from further away arriving on Friday and sleeping in the marketplace overnight to prepare for the market on Saturday. As well as the formal marketplace, there are also a number of vendors who sell informally from the other side of the road. Typically, vegetable or farmer vendors earn between \$4 - \$15 a day.

There is no designated government official who is responsible for managing the marketplace. Instead, the *Postu* Administrator has delegated an older man who he trusts (a local baker) to voluntarily manage the marketplace and organise regular clean-

ups. There is currently no water supply in the marketplace, and no rubbish collection truck. People generally carry marketplace waste to a nearby place and burn it.

The central marketplace building is not used for selling vegetables as was its original intent, with vendors instead preferring to set up their goods for sale closer to the road. However, a number of vendors use the central marketplace building to sleep in during the evening. During the day, the building is mostly a place for young men to hang out.



Vendors selling their produce on the side of the road in Atabae market.

A significant issue for women is security—both security for women sleeping in the marketplace,

and security for women using public transport. Drivers commonly abuse women vendors, taking advantage of their vulnerability by charging higher ticket prices and threatening them if they do not want to pay. Tellingly, women vendors made three separate recommendations to improve the provision of public transport for women (see below).

Priority issues for Atabae vendors

During the full-day FGD in Atabae, women vendors made the following recommendations for improvement of marketplace conditions.

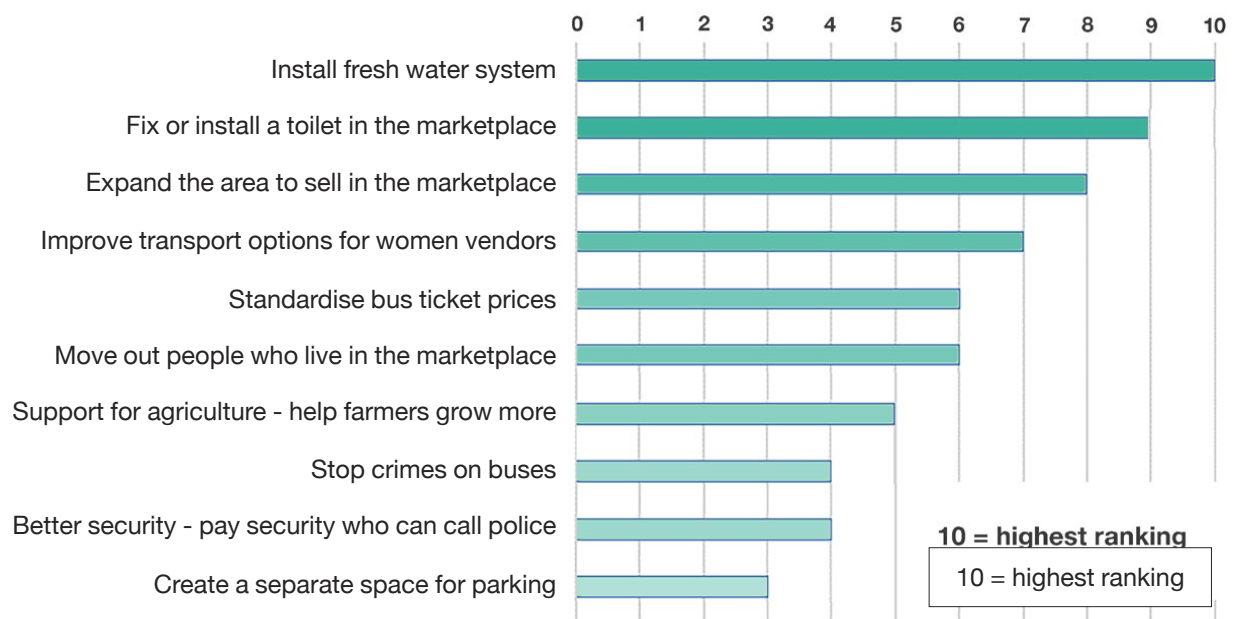
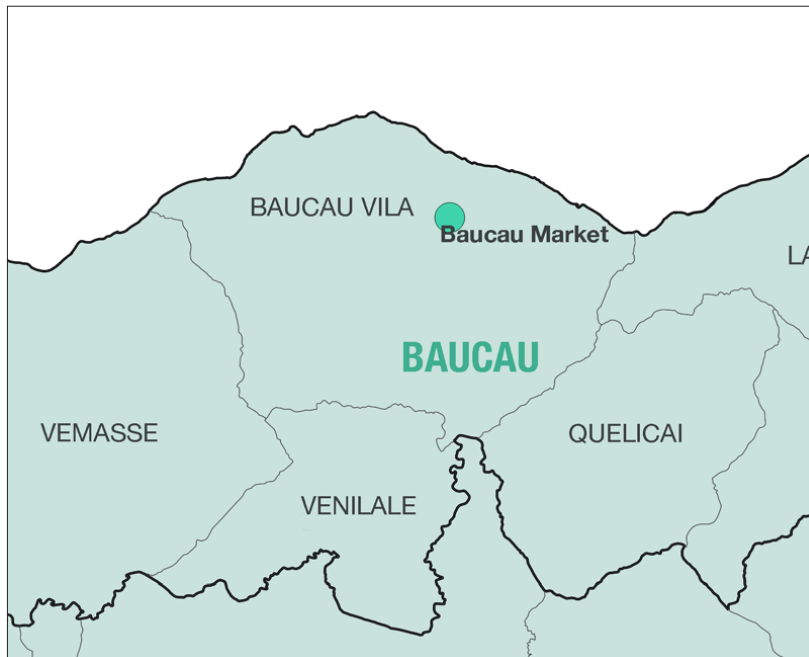


Figure 3. Ranking of priorities for women vendors - Atabae market

3.3. Baucau market



Baucau market is located on community land, about 1.5km from the centre of town, near the Baucau football stadium. It was moved to this location in 2003, and there are plans in place to move it to yet a new location. The market operates all week, with vendors coming from three different municipalities: Lautem, Baucau and Viqueque. Typically, vegetable or farmer vendors earn between \$4 -\$20 a day.

While there is a Department for Planning at the municipal level, there is no designated official or department responsible for marketplace management in the

municipal authority. Instead, the marketplace is managed by the male *xefe aldeia* (hamlet chief), who is also a respected customary authority (*lia-na'in*) and a veteran. Another male veteran assists him in managing the market, and his wife operates as the women's representative for the *aldeia* (hamlet).

Because the market is located next to a major bus terminal, it gets very busy and is difficult to manage. There is no water supply and there are no public toilet facilities. Of the four marketplaces, security in Baucau is the most problematic, with young men gambling and getting drunk, fighting, vandalising and burning down buildings, and using weapons, including guns. Vendors complain that the police do not attend to problems quickly enough, and that they need a permanent police post in the marketplace.



Left: Men gambling in a central part of the Baucau market. Right: Women vendors trade in areas crowded with pedestrians, motorbikes, trucks and other vehicles.

The municipality is in the process of moving the market to a new location, but people are unsure when this will happen, or the implications for them. The market chiefs noted that they would be supportive of the new marketplace if they could be guaranteed better conditions:

“When the new market is available for us to move in, we want to ask: what are the primary needs of those people who are living in the market? Electricity, roads, clean water, toilets, security, sanitation services, bus station. Also, security guards to help both of us who are in charge of this market. These facilities must be in the new market”.⁸

Priority issues for Baucau vendors

During the full-day FGD in Baucau, women vendors made the following recommendations for improvement of marketplace conditions.

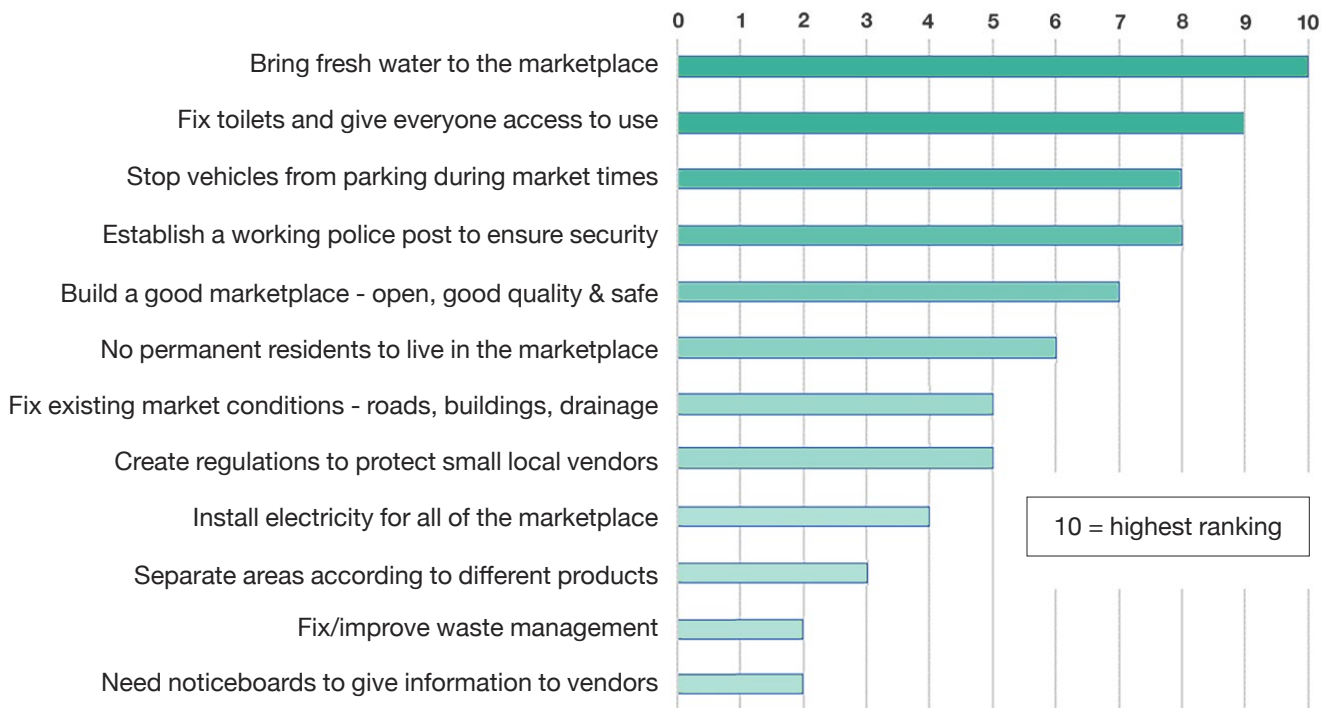
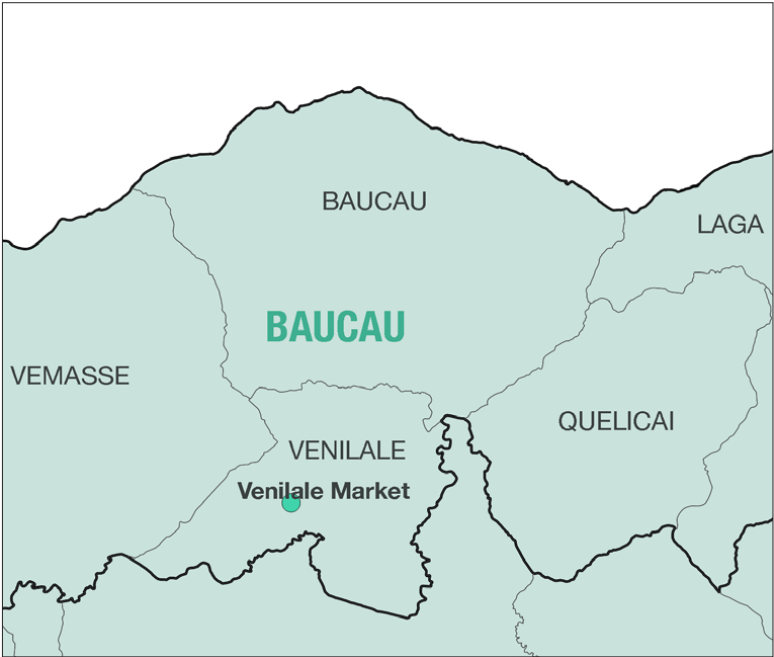


Figure 4. Ranking of priorities for women vendors - Baucau market

8 Female vendor- Baucau town hall meeting

3.4. Venilale market



Venilale market has been in place since Portuguese times and through Indonesian times. It is officially open on Wednesday and Saturday, but vendors who come from further away typically arrive on Tuesday and Friday and sleep overnight, so now people think of it as a four-day market.

The market is managed via a market committee, comprising 11 elected representatives (two women and nine men), including a coordinator, two vice-coordinators, two secretaries, two treasurers, and 'sections' responsible for monitoring different aspects of the market. Unlike the other three

marketplaces where the market chief was designated by relevant government officials, representatives on the market committee were elected following a meeting of 200 vendors and other stakeholders in 2013. While this committee was initially quite active in management, it had been inactive prior to this assessment.

The major issues for women vendors in the market include the lack of water and toilet facilities, followed by a variety of other problems including poor drainage and buildings in disrepair. Security is also an issue, with women particularly worried about theft in the marketplace and on the walk to and from home.



Women vendors are impacted by a lack of water and toilet facilities at Venilale market.

Priority issues for Venilale vendors

During the full-day FGD in Venilale, women vendors made the following recommendations for improvement of marketplace conditions:

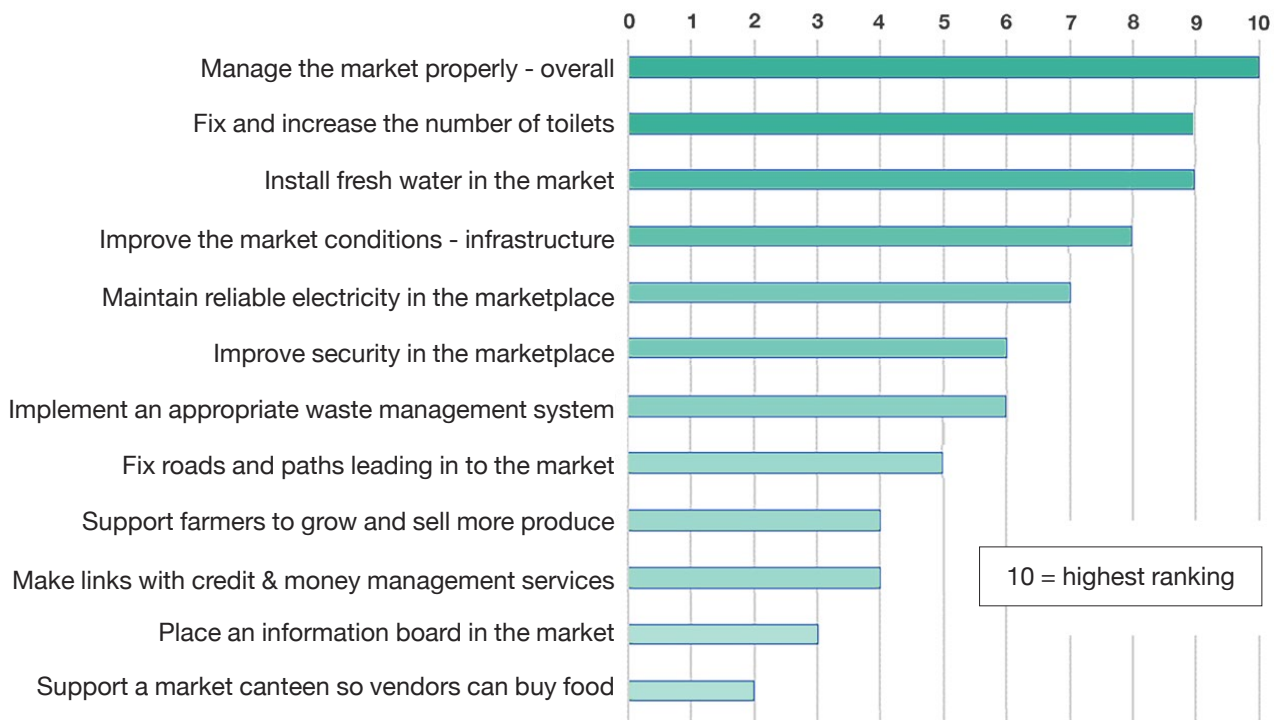


Figure 5. Ranking of priorities for women vendors - Venilale market

3.5. Common issues across all the marketplaces

Very similar issues were raised across all four marketplaces. Viewed together, the top three priority issues for women vendors were 1) toilets and water; 2) waste management; and 3) management, governance and control of market spaces.



Figure 6. Priority issues for women across all marketplaces

Throughout this assessment, women vendors also regularly raised concerns about safety and security risks they face both within the marketplace, and in their journeys to and from the market. These threats, together with issues of unsafe and unfairly priced transport, represent major issues for women vendors, although they consistently prioritised infrastructure and management reforms in participatory voting exercises (see section below: *Safety, Security & Welfare*).



Figure 7. Other serious concerns for women vendors

Some of the issues raised by women vendors impact on the day-to-day work environment, conditions and vibrancy of the marketplace. Others, such as the lack of clear marketplace management, governance and safety arrangements, are more serious structural challenges that hamper the socio-economic potential of the marketplace and limit the income people can earn.

Lower priority issues raised by women such as the lack of outreach services and the limited business, market and product information being exchanged can be considered missed opportunities. In the next section, we explore these issues in depth, highlighting the possibilities for reform and transformation in each of the marketplaces, as well as more broadly across the marketplace settings.



4. Marketplace governance & management

4.1. Subnational governance context

Subnational governance is an evolving space. While Decree Law 3/2016⁹ sets out the process for administrative decentralisation (de-concentration), and includes marketplace management as a core competency for municipal authorities and municipal administrations, implementation of this law is still a work in progress. Stakeholders working in the municipal offices explained that their powers in marketplace management are unclear, making it difficult for them to exercise authority and coordinate with other stakeholders. As an official in Maliana explained:

“We need a clearly defined policy from the government. Does the competency to manage the markets fall under the municipal authority? Or under MCI [Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Environment]? Or under the [Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries] Directorate for Agro-Commerce? We need this to be clear so that as subordinates we can do our work—if not, marketplace management will always be like this, with the representative from Agro-Commerce doing the management under direction from the municipal administration, but no coordination in the marketplace.”¹⁰

9 Decree Law 3/2016 on Statutes of Municipal Administrations, Municipal Authorities and the Interministerial Technical Group for Administrative Decentralisation.

10 MAF - Maliana.

In addition to the limited awareness by marketplace managers under the municipal authority of their competencies under the law, managers are unaware of how, and in what manner, they must coordinate with other subnational stakeholders when exercising these competencies. As another municipal stakeholder explained, there are always differing opinions between local government authorities and the marketplace manager, which creates confusion for the vendors.

“In Maliana, no one can decide on the space allocated for each vendor... this is why I said that the government should give responsibility to a single institution so they can manage it properly. If each individual institution works separately, there is no proper management or control of the market”.¹¹

Similar sentiments were expressed by the President of the Municipal Authority in Baucau, who stated that while he is aware of many of the marketplace problems and is frequently blamed for not fixing these problems, he believes his hands are tied because he is waiting on clear direction and regulations from the national government.¹² This lack of awareness regarding legal competencies, budget oversight and the required levels of coordination with other government stakeholders is a clear impediment to addressing fundamental issues regarding marketplace conditions (see section below: *Service Provision*).

Currently, different marketplaces have different approaches to governance and management structures. As discussed above, Maliana marketplace management is in the hands of a salaried official in the municipal authority. This official works without the assistance of vendor-volunteers, such as a market chief or committee, to assist with management and coordination on the ground. Many vendors complained that the marketplace manager is inactive in his role, stating that the market needs more oversight and assistance (see section below: *Service Provision*). As a municipal stakeholder noted, part of the problem is that many aspects of market management need close daily management, which would be best undertaken by someone actually based in the marketplace, rather than trying to manage it from the municipal offices:

“It would be better if we gave competency to a market coordinator to manage things, as they know the market conditions. When management comes from the municipal administration, they are busy with other work... and you’re not giving responsibility to a single person...”¹³

Using on-the-ground market coordinators is the approach which has been taken in the marketplaces of Baucau and Atabae, where vendor-volunteers are designated by the municipal authority and *postu* administration respectively as *xefe merkadu* (market chief), and are given responsibility for looking after the day-to-day affairs of the market. In both places, the market chiefs (both male) are assisted by another person (also male), who has no recognised title and is referred to in this report as the market chief’s assistant. However, this approach has also had its challenges. In both of these markets, a major issue is that volunteer market chiefs have been given limited formal competencies, rendering them unable to carry out basic management functions such as allocating space for vendors so as to better manage marketplace space, and to prevent disputes between vendors (see section below: *Regulating Market Space*).

A third approach has been taken in Venilale, working through a volunteer management committee rather than one or two designated market chiefs. The committee was established in 2013 when the *postu* administrator realised the market vendors were too busy to organise themselves. At the time, he facilitated a meeting with all of the *xefe suku* in Venilale, marketplace vendors, and various other

11 Municipal stakeholder - Maliana

12 Female stakeholder workshop - Baucau

13 Male municipal stakeholder - Maliana

stakeholders, electing members of a marketplace management committee comprising a president, vice-president, secretary and various 'sections'. This participatory approach to voting for committee members was generally appreciated by the vendors, with only one vendor stating that while she appreciated that all local leaders were actively involved, she and other vendors weren't invited.¹⁴ This appears to have been an oversight, however, as many other women vendors confirmed that they did receive an invitation and voted for members of the committee structure.

The committee appears to have worked well for a while, with the same official explaining:

"They kept a good eye on the market from 2013... We accompanied them, let them know what they should keep an eye on, that if there were problems that they cannot resolve they could come to us in the administrative post or to the police so that we can all work together to resolve it."¹⁵

This system of using a marketplace committee has been undermined by the same problem as that experienced by market chiefs. Because volunteer chiefs and committee members have limited formal authority, respondents in all four marketplaces described marketplace governance as generally very weak, leading to various problems including conflict between vendors either because the rules are unclear or non-existent, or due to a lack of anyone who can enforce the rules. As one vendor in Venilale succinctly put it:

"There are no rules. If there were rules to regulate the market, we sellers would be aware of the rules."¹⁶

Discussions with vendors clearly showed that there is a hunger for improved governance. As another vendor bluntly replied: "We want market management. Why would you think we would not want this? There should be a person in charge to look after this market."¹⁷ Reflecting their frustration, some vendors blame the market chief or management committee for not doing enough to help them—creating a vicious cycle as vendors lose trust in the volunteer leadership. As one woman described it, "sometimes they don't even know their tasks. They just know that they are leaders, but to do what? They just come and sit down, saying that you should not use that place..."¹⁸

In addition to limited rules, market chiefs have not been granted any formal authority to carry out their role by government, meaning that market chiefs must rely on whatever informal social or cultural authority they already have. In Baucau, the market chief and his second-in-command are able to do this, because they are both veterans and *rai-na'in* (traditional land owners) and because the market chief is also the *xefe aldeia*.¹⁹ Vendors respect their cultural and social status, which gives them the capacity to manage conflicts and resolve disputes. As one vendor put it, "with everything we go to the chief. If there is violence, or a house burns down, in all of these things we trust the chief..."²⁰ As he went on to explain, there was a recent fire which the market chief and his son organised other vendors to put it out:

"Lots of houses burn down here, and the chief and his son came... we're so lucky the chief and his son came quickly to sort things out. We also rang the firefighters but they didn't come".²¹

14 Female vendor - Venilale.

15 Male marketplace committee member - Venilale

16 Municipal stakeholder - Venilale

17 Female vendor - Venilale

18 Municipal stakeholder - Venilale

19 Female vendor - Baucau

20 Female vendor - Baucau

21 Female vendor - Baucau

The Atabae market has a slightly different story. While the market chief was nominated by the *postu* administrator because he trusts him, it is more difficult for him to manage conflicts because he has no particular social or cultural legitimacy to draw on. While he carries out his functions well in organising other vendors to do regular clean-ups, he is much less successful in controlling vendors' competitive behaviour. Ironically, although he is the designated market chief and volunteers significant time in helping to look after the marketplace, the other vendors do not allow him or his wife to sell their baked produce in the marketplace, because the other bakers don't want the competition which they see as diverting sales away from themselves.²²

In addition, respondents in Baucau and Venilale noted that their marketplaces have been getting busier, with people from different municipalities coming to sell and buy. This is resulting in volunteer chiefs or committee members becoming more focussed on their own market business, with less time to dedicate to their volunteer positions as the marketplace becomes simultaneously more complicated to manage.²³ While there are clear merits to managing the market via vendor-volunteers, there are limits to what can be asked of them if they are not receiving any financial (or other) incentives. As the market chief in Baucau explained, the increasingly heavy demands in managing conflicts and resolving disputes are becoming difficult for them to sustain:

“If there is violence, vendors never go directly to the police. If we can't resolve it internally, then they will go to the police. If a problem comes to us, we are always ready to help... but when we (the chiefs) have problems, the state doesn't look after us. This is our problem... the government has given us work, but they don't take any responsibility for us.”²⁴

As he went on to explain, while he and his assistant are committed to managing the market to make vendors' lives a little easier, they also need to earn money and so cannot volunteer all of their time to manage the market:

“Both of us need to sustain our lives... when there are fights, we want to come and calm down the situation, but our stomachs insist that we leave the market to earn money for food. Our hands and feet act as security here, and the government should pay for security. Plus, the police should provide permanent support, since this market is in a major bus station in Baucau.”²⁵

Similar sentiments were also expressed by the market chief in Atabae, and members of the informal management committee—indicating a potential need to consider small stipends for those who volunteer significant time in marketplace management. This could possibly be covered via vendor contributions (see section below: *Vendor Contributions*).

4.2. Regulating market space

All four marketplaces were described as full to bursting, with stakeholders across all four sites explaining that they needed to look for new land that would give them more space. As previously noted, plans are already in place to move the Baucau and Maliana markets to new locations. In Venilale and Atabae, stakeholders simply spoke of this as an option for the future.

Vendors and other stakeholders explained that as the marketplaces become increasingly more crowded, tensions between vendors also become more inflamed, causing fights to break out. The market chief in Baucau explained:

22 Female vendor - Atabae

23 Male stakeholder - Venilale; Female stakeholder - Baucau

24 Female vendor - Baucau

25 Market volunteers - Baucau

“In Baucau the marketplace is no longer sufficient for the population, with people coming from Viqueque and Lospalos including Ossu, Watulari, Beobe, Bekari. And the space is not sufficient for them, sometimes they fight with each other and we need to resolve it.”²⁶

Similarly, in Atabae, a woman described:

“There is not enough space and there are lots of people. We just keep our stuff on the ground... and even then, people come to argue with us saying ‘don’t you know that this my place?’... in the end they chase us away, saying ‘you guys should not come to sell your produce here, you should sell them on your own place’.”²⁷

Vendors are fiercely competitive with each other, sometimes to the point of quite aggressive behaviour. Many respondents commented on the general lack of regulation in the marketplace, meaning that vendors who are physically stronger and/or more intimidating tend to get what they want. In Baucau, the market chief explained: “there is no law to regulate vendors... they say it’s a free market.”²⁸ This situation of ‘might makes right’ means that women often miss out, with women vendors in Maliana complaining that when food trucks arrived delivering fresh produce for sale, it was common for fights to break out, with men and stronger women using their greater physical force to get first pick of the produce.²⁹ In Baucau, another vendor described, “often we are forced to move around, until we find ourselves a proper place to sell our products. But there is no-one who is willing to support and organise us so it is not very good at the moment.”³⁰

In Atabae, two other vendors complained of being routinely sworn at and abused because they sold better quality goods, with other vendors saying “your tomatoes are as big as her ass” because they did not want the added competition.³¹ As one of these women described, she didn’t think it was fair but she just accepted the abuse for fear of violence if she tried to defend herself: “we don’t argue with them, we just need to be patient and quiet when they yell at us.”³² As another vendor argued:

“The market should be for everyone, it’s a public place, but they won’t accept that everyone can sell anywhere in the market... they just do not understand that we also need money to support our children’s education. Our children are also attending university... we also want our children to achieve well.”³³

In an effort to gain strategic advantage, many vendors choose not to use the designated marketplace building, preferring to set up their goods closer to the road side, as customers believe that those on the outskirts of the market have arrived later (and therefore with fresher produce). In Maliana, a number of fresh food vendors choose to use carts to push their produce around the marketplace rather than staying in their designated stall, impeding people’s movement in the marketplace, and sometimes causing fights with other vendors who sell from the market building.³⁴ In Baucau, some vendors explained that as they try to find a good place to sell, they set up on the road side but sometimes get chased away by the police: “if we sit on the ground like this, the police officers tell us to go away. We have to pack our products, and move around for a long time, and our produce

26 Female market volunteer - Baucau

27 Female vendor - Atabae

28 Female vendor- Baucau

29 FGD Maliana

30 Female vendor - Baucau

31 Female vendor - Atabae

32 Female vendor - Atabae

33 Female vendor - Atabae

34 Older female vendor & FGD Maliana

gets damaged and withered.”³⁵ This becomes a cat-and-mouse game between the vendors and the police: “when we look and the police are not there, we come to sell again. If they come back and tell us to go, we have to go inside the market to sell our products.”³⁶

Numerous vendors and officials mentioned wanting better organisation of market space, and the creation of different sections of the market according to the types of products being sold. In Venilale, respondents also suggested dedicating an area to traditional goods such as *tais* (traditional woven fabric).³⁷

The existence of permanent male entertainment spaces for cock fighting, gambling, and drinking in the middle of marketplaces also contributes to the crowding and negative environment. Male entertainment areas take up a lot of space in the Baucau and Maliana marketplaces. Overwhelmingly, all respondents, vendors and government alike, would like these areas to be separated out from the marketplace.

The most compelling reason to do this is that it disrupts the vendors ability to earn an income. The other reason is that it brings down the reputation of the marketplace. Vendors reported wanting to feel proud of their marketplace so as to attract buyers and tourists and show off their local culture and produce. If male entertainment spaces were separate, then vendors and government officials all felt they could manage and maintain the marketplace more efficiently.

There were also clear social divisions between local vendors, and ‘outsiders’, which also contributes to conflicts between vendors. Many vendors requested policies to protect small vendors and/or local vendors, explaining that they felt unable to effectively compete with Chinese and Indonesian traders, or traders from other municipalities and Dili, who often have large stores. However, while in some cases this was a reasonable request – such as the Maliana market where traders from Indonesia were given licence to day trade and sell their cheaper goods from across the border – these requests also represent a warning sign of potential future conflict. In particular, such ‘us and them’ social divisions may set people up to discriminate against or fight with different groups as they try to stop ‘outside’ traders from operating in the marketplace. In the future market management may need to consider this issue further, so as to avoid deepening these social divisions.

As discussed above, market chiefs and committees have limited formal competencies, rendering them unable to pro-actively prevent disputes between vendors over marketplace space. While in Maliana the designated market manager (a salaried official) theoretically has the authority to allocate specific spaces to vendors, in practice he only exercises this power when giving space to people to build a *kios*; those selling in the open marketplace negotiate their space between themselves.³⁸ In the other three marketplaces (Baucau, Venilale and Atabae) where volunteer-vendors undertake most of the management responsibilities, the market chiefs and committee members explained that because “it is a free market”, vendors can come and go as they wish. As the Baucau marketplace chief explained:

“We aren’t authorised to allocate space for them, so each individual needs to coordinate with each other as to where they should sell... To determine new space for them, this is really difficult for us because there’s not enough space.”³⁹

As he went on to explain, because of their limited competencies he and his assistant are unable to proactively prevent many disputes which regularly arise between vendors: “the two of us don’t

35 Female vendor - Baucau

36 Female vendor - Baucau

37 Market volunteer - Venilale

38 MAF - Maliana

39 Female vendor - Baucau

have any power to stop people from making problems and then returning home. This needs to be guaranteed via law.”⁴⁰

In addition to inflaming tensions between vendors, the lack of regulation around vendors’ use of space can also cause traffic hazards. In Venilale, an official explained that they have put out a public notice advising vendors to only sell from the market building but that this is generally ignored, with vendors spilling out onto the public road: “we’re scared a car or motorbike might hit one of them and that someone could die.”⁴¹

People building permanent residences in the marketplace were also noted as a serious problems in some sites, making an already crowded marketplace even more crowded. In Baucau, women vendors prioritised it as their sixth most important recommendation; in Atabae it ranked seventh. As a vendor in Atabae explained, many people had just gone ahead and done it, without seeking permission:

“During Indonesian occupation, there were no houses inside the market, it was spacious. Now we are independent, people are building houses in the markets. The *xefe suku* told them to tear down their houses, but they do not want to, they treat the market like their own property, like their inheritance.”⁴²

Animals were also noted as a problem. In Maliana and Atabae, vendors complained about people keeping their animals in the marketplace, with vicious dogs sometimes attacking people, and animals defecating on the same ground where vendors sell their fresh produce:

“They keep pigs in the market, and goats in the market. What are we going to do? Vendors who come from other places, their pigs and goats defecate on the ground... and then they also sell their vegetables from the same ground.”⁴³

4.3. Parking

Across all four marketplaces, vendors argued that parking should be better regulated. This was a particular issue in Venilale and Baucau, with respondents explaining that vendors frequently park in the marketplace rather than in designated parking areas, preventing other vendors from using that space and sometimes resulting in fights between vendors. In Baucau, this practice causes many fights, with women vendors prioritising it as the third most important recommendation for improvement. Many vendors explained that many of the more affluent sellers (who already own large shops in town) park their trucks right next to their stalls – providing them with easy access to the goods they have brought to the market, while also (possibly strategically) impeding other vendors.

As women vendors explained, because there are many fights, with drivers aggressively defending their right to park wherever they wish, they rely on the market chief to try and manage the situation, rather than risking violent behaviour from the drivers:

“The market chief tries to speak to the drivers. We as sellers do not have the courage to talk to some of them, or the drivers might get angry with us. If they ever get angry at us, we just stay quiet.”⁴⁴

However, similar to conflicts over vendors’ use of selling space, the market chief and his assistant can only respond retroactively to disputes that arise. They cannot proactively prevent them because

40 Female vendor - Baucau

41 Market manager - Venilale

42 Female vendor - Atabae

43 Female vendor - Atabae

44 Female vendor - Baucau

of their limited formal authority to manage vendors: larger vendors and drivers simply ignore their requests to use the designated parking areas. As the market chief described:

“We haven’t been able to control this well... we might be able to attend to this if there were clear laws. But the two of us just talking to people doesn’t work. It’s a free market, but there should be laws to control people parking, telling them how to move their goods... right now cars come and park right next to their tables where they sell their goods.”⁴⁵

Because of these problems, respondents across all four marketplaces suggested that there should be clear regulations implemented to ensure cars and trucks park in the designated area. As one vendor noted:

“The government should pay attention to this, and quickly attend to the big trucks from bigger shops. This should be the priority. Because bigger trucks frequently occupy the roads, this affects pedestrians as well as the movement of public transport”.⁴⁶

Another vendor proposed, “it should be like in Taibesse market [a large, recently renovated marketplace in Dili]... cars can’t go into the marketplace. The market managers say that because people make a living in the market, cars cannot come inside.”⁴⁷

In addition to providing better use of space, vendors also suggested that regulation, together with small parking fees, could provide an income stream for the marketplace to pay for things such as a security guard⁴⁸ (see also section below: *Vendor Contributions*). This idea was supported by the presidents of the municipal authorities in both Bobonaro and Baucau, who both stated that they would need clear authorisation from the central government before they were able to put such a measure in place.⁴⁹ This reinforces the point previously made on how information and/or implementation of Decree Law 3/2016 outlining municipal competencies might be useful for improved marketplace management.

45 Market chief - Baucau

46 Female vendor - Baucau

47 Female vendor - Baucau

48 FGD Atabae

49 Stakeholder workshops - Baucau & Maliana



5. Marketplace infrastructure

Problems with access to toilets and water were consistently raised across all four marketplaces, with women vendors clearly prioritising them as the most important issues to be addressed. In addition to the two interrelated issues of toilets and water, various other infrastructure needs such as electricity, adequate drainage during the wet season and building repairs were also raised, depending on the specific conditions of each marketplace.

5.1. Access to functional toilets

While all four marketplaces had toilets, none were available for vendor use. They were either locked, lacking water supply, and/or in disrepair. Women vendors identified access to functional toilets as a top priority issue, which would have direct impact on women's safety, health and economic wellbeing. In the Maliana marketplace, while there is water piped into the market for a few hours each day, the toilets have been privatised for use by a single family, with other vendors not being given access. The young woman vendor who has a *kios* close to the toilets and keeps the keys explained that she and other members of her family are volunteer toilet cleaners; when someone needs to use the toilets, she unlocks the door for them.⁵⁰ However, many other vendors complained that they have argued and fought, but were never allowed access:

“The government built the toilet/shower block so that we could live together... but even if we carry our own water [to use in the toilet block] they get angry, and we argue and

⁵⁰ Marketplace observational walk, 26th May 2018.

even hit each other. We don't want this, so we just... go somewhere else."⁵¹

Lack of access to the public toilets was also identified by relevant officials in the municipal authority, who explained that because water was only piped in for a few hours daily, it is not enough for everyone in the market. In this regard, they were not surprised that the family keeps it locked for themselves.⁵² It is also unsurprising given that the key holders are also the cleaners of the toilet block. There is no incentive for them to allow wider use, as it simply means that they will have more cleaning to do.

During a separate Safety Audit of the Baucau Marketplace conducted by UN Women in 2018, participants identified significant negative consequences from the lack of proper toilet facilities:

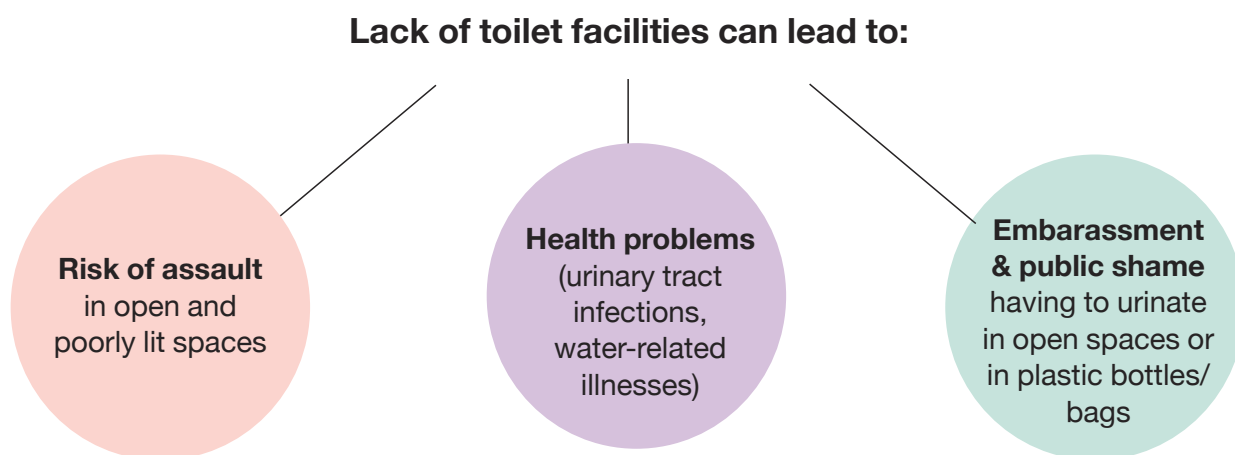


Figure 8: Negative consequences arising from a lack of proper toilet facilities

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In Baucau, Venilale and Atabae marketplaces, there is no water piped into the market (see section below: *Provision of Water*). As a result, in Atabae and Venilale, vendors have repurposed the toilet buildings as storage sheds, and in Atabae the toilet door is missing. In Baucau, there are a few people who have keys to the toilet block, but they carry their own water.⁵³ As one vendor explained, while his family originally had a key to the toilet block, he's since handed it onto others because water must be carried too far.⁵⁴

Lack of toilet facilities is difficult for women to navigate, particularly for those that are pregnant or menstruating. Vendors need to either walk a long distance to find a secluded field to go to the toilet, or ask permission from neighbouring shops or houses to use their toilets. Some vendors in Maliana and Atabae pay to use the toilets of neighbouring restaurants or houses, with the going rate generally around 25 cents.⁵⁵ For others, there are fewer formal arrangements. When asking to use neighbours' toilets, vendors explained they were often embarrassed, because they were dependent on people's goodwill and sometimes were not given access—explaining that they would prefer a more formal arrangement. As one woman stated:

"It should be similar to Taibesse [market in Dili]. People should pay at least \$0.10 cent per person to enter a toilet just to pee, while toilet usage should cost \$0.25... Sellers should be honest with their clients, they should not privatise the public toilets for

51 Elderly female vendor - Maliana

52 Male municipal stakeholder - Maliana

53 Female municipal stakeholder - Venilale

54 Male vendor, town hall meeting Baucau

55 Interview female vendor – Maliana; Female vendor - Atabae

personal purposes.”⁵⁶

Many women described their loss of dignity because of the toilet situation. As one older woman in Baucau described:

“I’m sorry, we are talking about our reality. We and other *tia-lipa* [old-fashioned women] go out in a group of three or four. When we reach an empty area, one of us will pee or defecate, while the other three are security to watch out for people. If men unintentionally walk past us, the only thing we can do is just bow down our heads while walking: we cannot tell them to go away, we cannot bother them...”⁵⁷

Other women also recounted deliberately reducing their water intake during the day, particularly during the later stages of pregnancy, in order to limit their use of toilets. As one woman described, “if you need to go the toilet, you hold it in until you almost feel sick... but others just pee wherever they like.”⁵⁸ As many vendors explained, the lack of toilet facilities poses a real public health issue. One woman in Venilale described:

“We just go into the trees to go to the toilet. Behind the market looks like a pig pen. Even inside the market, it is just like a pig pen as well.”⁵⁹

Similarly, in Baucau, a woman explained:

“Spare spaces near the houses are used as toilets, even inside unused buildings are used as toilets... they are now just like pig pens, all of them are like pig pens. That’s why we need a person to be in charge to clean a little bit otherwise it will just get worse.”⁶⁰

In an attempt to deal with these issues, some people have organised their own solutions. For example, in Venilale, the person who was previously responsible for providing security also took it on himself to carry water, charging people a small fee to use the toilets with the water he provided. However, he stopped doing this because he was afraid that by charging a fee for use of the public toilets he was operating illegally, and was “afraid he might go to prison” (see section below: *Vendor Contributions*). Since he stopped providing this service, the toilet is no longer used, and the building is now being used for storage.⁶¹

In Baucau, management of the toilets is made more complicated because the market is right next to the bus terminal. As a woman vendor explained, “because the bus station is crowded, drivers and passengers throw their rubbish on the ground, and go to the toilet inappropriately [don’t clean up after themselves].”⁶² Because of these issues, a number of vendors have organised among themselves and fixed a toilet for their private use. However, they do not make it available for all of the vendors. As another vendor from a different section of the market explained, “those people further up the market, they have built it for private usage, and they lock it, only they and their relatives may use it.”⁶³ As the people who look after this toilet explained, this is because they are the ones who contributed to the toilet rehabilitation, and who ensure it is kept clean:

“There was a public toilet up there, but it was blocked by waste, we had to contribute

56 Female vendor - Baucau town hall meeting

57 Older female vendor - Baucau town hall meeting

58 Female vendor - Atabae

59 Female vendor - Venilale

60 Female vendor - Baucau town hall meeting

61 Male market committee member - Venilale

62 Female vendor - Baucau town hall meeting

63 Female municipal stakeholder - Baucau

\$10 (USD) per person to fix it. But... we prefer our friends. If other people ask us for the keys, we will say “the toilet is not for public use”... people have to know how to properly use it... because we could get diseases from sharing the toilet. For our health’s sake, we need to clean the toilet. Sometimes others might have a bad intention toward us and not clean up after themselves.”⁶⁴

There is clear desire among vendors for improved toilet facilities, with informal contribution schemes such as the one in Baucau indicating a willingness to pay. Going forward, there is scope to formalise such schemes, with toilet users paying a small fee to those responsible for toilet maintenance (see section below: *Vendor Contributions*).

5.2. Provision of water

As vendors across all four marketplaces explained, provision of water is central to ensuring a functioning marketplace. It is necessary to secure public health, and to support their economic activity, allowing vendors to clean their stalls properly, and wash and water their produce for sale – essential to keep leafy vegetables fresh and saleable in a tropical climate. In addition, as noted in the previous section, it is also necessary for functioning toilets. Installation of a fresh water supply was identified by women vendors as the number one priority recommendation for improvement in three of the four marketplaces (Atabae, Baucau and Maliana). In the fourth marketplace, Venilale, fresh water supply came out as the second highest priority, topped only by access to toilets as the first priority recommendation.

In three of the four marketplaces (Baucau, Venilale and Atabae), while there was water piped into the marketplace in the past, the pipes have since been vandalised or stolen, leaving the marketplace without water. In Baucau, pipes were destroyed as a result of conflict in the community.⁶⁵ In Venilale, pipes were broken by community members living a few kilometres out of town, who regularly tap the pipes in order to water their gardens.⁶⁶ In Atabae, water supply had been interrupted a few years ago while a road was being built, and during the dry period the pipes were stolen.⁶⁷ In contrast with the other three marketplaces, Maliana market has water piped into the toilet block for two hours each day, or for longer periods during the rainy season. However as noted above, because of the limited water supply and because of poor governance (see section above: *Marketplace Governance*) the toilet block has been effectively privatised for use by one family.

Without access to fresh water, vendors must manage as best they can, minimising as much as possible the water that they consume. Some women explained that they carry water themselves, but if the water source is far away then this takes them away from their economic activities. Others pay for water to be fetched for them, with a Maliana vendor explaining that she pays an older man to carry water for her on his bike from the nearest water source, a 4km round trip, paying him 50 cents for a five-litre container and 1USD per jerrycan.⁶⁸ Similar stories were recounted across all four marketplaces. These compensatory mechanisms to gain access to water have obvious implications on the vendors’ already-meagre profit margins, as they must pay fees or divert their time away from working in the market.

The current lack of water supply underlines a public policy failure to invest in marketplaces, which is out of step with their importance in supporting the local economy. However, the issue is complex. Examining the history of water supply in the four marketplaces, where water supply was originally

64 Female vendor - Baucau

65 Female vendor - Baucau

66 Male market committee member - Venilale

67 Female leader - Atabae

68 Female vendor - Maliana

provided but then interrupted for a variety of reasons, highlights that the problem is not just around the provision of water infrastructure. Rather, the problem lies with water *management and operations*, with water supply infrastructure being vandalised, stolen, or privatised. This reflects other problems in the local community, including poor governance and security (see sections on *Marketplace Governance* and *Pro-active Security Provision*). In Baucau, for example, the market chief explained that he and his second-in-command were unable to do anything when people destroyed the water pipes, and were frustrated that relevant authorities did not control the conflict properly, or later repair the pipes:

“In the past, there was water piped here but the pipes were destroyed, because there was no-one who took responsibility for dealing with the conflict. Speaking honestly, the two of us weren’t able to do anything. [Now] each person buys and carries their own water.”⁶⁹

Similarly, in Venilale, a market vendor argued that local village leaders should fix the problem, because it is beyond vendors’ capacity to handle the problem:

“The local leaders should in be charge, for example, they should ensure with the *postu* administration that the water pipelines are working. The local leaders are the ones who make decisions and respond to people’s needs... There is no water in those toilets so people are using them to store their belongings.”⁷⁰

However, as the community development officer working in the administrative post office explained, the water problems have proved beyond their capacity to manage. While the local authorities have tried to fix the problem by implementing *tara-bandu* (local prohibitions according to customary law), these local regulations have simply been ignored by community members who are continuing to vandalise the water pipes so they get easy water supply.⁷¹

These histories of water problems highlight that while new water infrastructure may be established by the government, this will only be short-term if the problems with governance, operations and security are not also addressed. As a vendor in Baucau noted:

“If public toilets are placed here, it is also necessary to provide security and to charge the users... The government needs to do this... if you lay down water pipes, but there is no water in those pipes, those pipes will be stolen the next day. Who will steal those pipes? Those in the market might do it, or perhaps a thief from outside. We don’t have proper rules to control this kind of situation, we need more security provided.”⁷²

Attending to problems of local water politics, including the deliberate vandalism and theft of water pipes, is not easy, with lack of trust between people undermining their capacity to work together and to look after the infrastructure. In Atabae, for example, the market chief pointed out that while vendors could conceivably supply their own water by drilling a well into the large underground aquifer located six to eight metres below ground level, there is no incentive for a single person or family to do this considering that other marketplace users would get water for free and may not treat the infrastructure with respect.⁷³

Attending to such issues requires a coordinated and inclusive approach between relevant government authorities, local leaders, and community members/market users themselves. It also requires a clear system of management (and security) of water and toilet infrastructure. Timor-Leste

69 Female vendor - Baucau

70 Female municipal stakeholder - Venilale

71 Male police officer - Venilale

72 Female vendor - Baucau

73 Older male vendor - Atabae

has many community-based water management groups across the country which use a system of mandatory contributions to pay for small repairs and to promote a sense of local ownership by water users—some of which have been more successful than others. It would be worth considering how to adapt this approach specifically for marketplace conditions. It is likely that the group structure and regulations would need to take a slightly different approach to other water user groups, as vendors come from a variety of places (so there are no immediate family or cultural connections, with a more limited sense of communal connection to build on). It would also need to reflect the fact that some vendors sell in up to three or four marketplaces within a single week.

5.3. Other infrastructure

While toilets and water were the most important infrastructural issues noted, respondents also noted other areas for improvement. While all four markets have electricity supply, there were some areas where the lighting needed to be repaired, making those areas less secure in the evening. Vendors in Venilale prioritised electricity and lighting as their fourth most important issue, explaining that they currently have to sleep in the dark and are vulnerable to potential theft or abuse (see section below: *Safety, Security and Welfare*).⁷⁴

In addition, water drainage during the wet season was noted as a problem in Maliana, Venilale and Baucau, with one respondent explaining that the place becomes “like a rice paddy” during the wet season.⁷⁵ And in Venilale and Baucau, respondents identified various buildings which were in disrepair. In Baucau, this also included the unused police post, which has been vandalised by young people, including stealing the glass from the windows.⁷⁶

74 FGD Venilale

75 Male vendor - Baucau

76 Female vendor - Baucau



6. Safety, security & welfare

Personal and collective safety en-route and in and around the marketplace was a major issue for women.

The issues that were raised broadly fell into two categories: firstly security concerns for women who sleep in the marketplace; and secondly security concerns for women travelling to and from the marketplace. Security issues during market hours were also mentioned, but were not identified as priority concerns, which could be interpreted as a reflection of the frequency of such incidents and the normalisation of harassment and abuse. This has also forced vendors to adapt and accept the harassment as experiences to be expected.

6.1. Security in the marketplace

The primary security concern for vendors during the day was theft, with a general feeling that theft was an emerging problem across all four marketplaces. Some experiences of harassment and violence during the day were also mentioned, but such incidents generally occurred at night time in the absence of witnesses, demonstrating the increased vulnerability of women sleeping in the open marketplace, in darkness, away from their home and family.

Harassment interferes with a vendor's ability to earn an income in more direct ways, as can be seen in the following vendor experience.

“One day a youth started talking to me in the marketplace, asking me my name and telling me he liked me. I just wanted to sell my vegetables and was not interested. He

kept going and I tried to ignore it. The more I tried to ignore it, the more he became angry and called me rude names, everyone was looking at me.... I said to my friend lets go home as we were selling nothing. We walked home (which is 2.5 hours), and he followed us part of the way, grabbing at me and calling me more names. At home, my husband and other family members asked me why I did not sell the vegetables. I didn't tell them the real reason... just that I felt sick."⁷⁷

While security concerns were mentioned across all four marketplaces, it was noted as a significant problem in Baucau, with market chiefs and vendors reporting intoxicated young men who gamble, steal and fight in the marketplace, even during the day. This included male high school students who miss school so they can hang out in the market and cause problems. As the market chief described:

“Some [young men] get drunk before coming to the market, and then fight with each other. Another thing is sometimes when they are drunk, they wear their martial arts uniform. Some come to the market instead of going to school. This place is prepared to support the sellers to improve their lives, but sellers' goods get stolen.”⁷⁸

Baucau vendors described many different experiences, reflecting on a general sense of insecurity in the marketplace, particularly at night. One woman described, “two days ago there were gunshots, about four times, and the police came. We heard this during the sleeping hours.”⁷⁹ A male vendor explained that several times he heard women yelling at night time because of groups of young men trying to grab their belongings and touching their bodies.⁸⁰ Another vendor explained that there are times when she is unable to sleep in her house because of the violence, and instead has to seek refuge in a neighbour's house: “sometimes when people are fighting, we cannot run away, we cannot sleep at night in our house or this *kios*. Instead we spend the night in a neighbour's house because they have a safer house.”⁸¹

Across all four marketplaces women, and some men, reported traumatic stories in which their safety was threatened. Degrading forms of harassment, vandalism and intimidation were also extremely common across all marketplaces, including people putting out cigarettes on bundles of clothes making them unsellable, urinating into water bottles and throwing it over women's merchandise and destroying lighting in parts of the marketplace. Strikingly, many women did not conceive these to represent major threats to their security, having become accustomed to consistent harassment—indicating the normalisation of these occurrences. As one young woman described:

“They butt out their cigarettes on my clothes [for sale], they also destroyed the electricity line, they do lots of bad things. Because of this we really need security... they get drunk, come in late at night and pee everywhere... shout and scare us... then they pee into water bottles and then throw them all over our goods, they also defecate... we don't know why.”⁸²

However, when asked whether she felt her safety was at risk, she said she felt fine. It was only when she was questioned more closely about whether she would leave the stall where she sleeps late at night for any reason, that she said absolutely not – that she would be too frightened.

Sexual harassment and abuse were common night-time experiences in the marketplace. In Maliana, men entered the marketplace with the clear intention of harassing and terrorising the women vendors sleeping there. They call out women's names to try and get them to go into the dark, and use face

77 Female vendor from Atabae at the Dili results workshop

78 Female vendor - Baucau

79 Female vendor - Baucau

80 Male vendor - Baucau

81 Female vendor - Baucau

82 Female vendor - Maliana

masks to conceal their identity, ostensibly increasing the terror they impose on women. Women who had access to an enclosed *kios* to sleep in were luckier than those who slept out in the open marketplace. However, even those sleeping indoors were targeted – reporting people banging on their doors aggressively or throwing rocks on their roof to torment and intimidate.⁸³ Many such incidents of harassment and intimidation were recounted by women vendors across all four marketplaces, increasing women’s general sense of insecurity and vulnerability.

In addition to the problems for women vendors, the welfare of children was noted as a major concern in this environment. One woman described how she is obliged to be apart from her three children while she goes to the marketplace, because it is not safe. Others come with their mothers, and sleep with them in the open. As one vendor from Venilale described:

“Even children come here. Some children come from far away, and have to stay overnight and sleep on the ground. They come with their mothers, using rice sacks as sleeping mats... The mothers sleep next to their children’s mats during the night until the market starts operating, as early as 1, 2 or 3 o’clock in the morning till late-morning.”⁸⁴

6.2. Travelling to and from the marketplace

Many women vendors must walk long distances between their home and the marketplace, and travel to and from the marketplace is fraught with difficulty. Regardless of their mode of transport (walking or public transport), women were confronted with security issues, including natural hazards such as rivers or unstable roads, walking cross-country in the dark, as well as the risk of being robbed, violently attacked or sexually harassed along the way.

Women vendors who did not have access to public transport described walking along unlit roads, walking together in groups for support, to help in navigating hazards such as difficult and dangerous river crossings, to protect themselves from the wild animals, and to protect themselves from potential male abuse. These threats to physical safety were compounded for those living in more remote areas, as they needed to walk further and for longer, often along more difficult and dangerous paths. Across all four marketplaces, many women vendors described needing to leave their house as early as two, three or four o’clock in the morning in order to make it to the market in time. As one woman from Venilale described:

“I’m scared when I’m walking alone, because I must return at night time when it’s dark- there’s no lighting. I’m scared because if I’m walking in the fields, there might be people, not those from the marketplace but others walking along the road who might assault me or steal my bag.”⁸⁵

For those who had access to public transport, there were also a number of security issues that were recounted. One respondent described how her clothes were stolen when travelling late at night on the *mikrolet* in order to get to the marketplace.⁸⁶ Others described abusive and exploitative male public transport drivers, taking advantage of their vulnerability by charging them higher ticket prices and physically threatening them if they did not want to pay.⁸⁷ Public transport shortages also meant that people were fighting for space and crammed into tight spaces, creating more opportunities

83 Older female vendor - Maliana; Female vendor - Baucau

84 Female vendor - Venilale

85 Female vendor - Venilale

86 Female vendor - Maliana

87 FGD Atabae

for sexual harassment.⁸⁸ Women participants in Atabae explained that in the past, all buses had a sticker providing the phone number of the police, but that bus drivers have since removed them because they did not want to be held accountable for their behaviour.⁸⁹ These interactions with public transport drivers added to the stress and general sense of insecurity for women traveling to and from the market.

6.3. Constrained choices

“I’m brave only because this is my life; if I don’t travel these roads, where will we get money for my family?”⁹⁰

In this context of harassment, violence and intimidation, women vendors are forced to make a difficult choice: either travelling home in the dark on unsafe roads – or sleeping in an unsafe marketplace overnight. Participation in the marketplace was non-negotiable for all women interviewed for this research: they all explained that they must provide for their children, and therefore had no choice but to accept the risks which come with working in, and travelling to and from, the marketplace. As one woman vendor bluntly stated: “of course I’m scared walking home late at night in the dark: but why would I think about that? I have no choice, and I must be brave.”⁹¹

Women vendors lose sales every day because of the constrained choices they must make. Particularly in the municipal markets of Maliana and Baucau, which only become busy from 6pm onwards (after work), women must time their departure carefully. They try to stay as late as possible because they don’t want to lose out on too many sales. At the same time, they also try to ensure they leave the market at sunset so that they limit the time walking in the dark. Those who live further away must leave earlier, meaning they lose more potential sales. Because of this, many female vendors decide to sleep overnight in the marketplace in order to trade for longer into the night, or because they did not sell all of their produce.

As one woman explained, “if we come on Friday and our products are sold out quickly, we go home right after; otherwise we have to stay overnight for the next day, and go home after the Saturday market.”⁹² However, as she and other vendors explained, if she had a choice, she would not sleep in an unsafe marketplace overnight. The sense of insecurity that women vendors deal with on a nightly basis was underlined by one older woman, who explained that even though she would prefer to sleep in the marketplace because of problems with her legs, she feels so unsafe she walks home every evening.⁹³

Implications for community policing and security provision are discussed in the section below: *Gender-Responsive Security Provision*.

6.4. Men as potential market vendors for their household

As the assessment results emerged, the research team began to inquire why men were not taking more of a role as vendors if there are so many security risks for women going to and staying at the market. After the initial assessment, we posed this question to stakeholders during the results workshops.

88 Female vendor - Maliana

89 FGD Atabae

90 Female vendor - Maliana

91 Safety audit - Maliana

92 Female vendor - Venilale

93 Older female vendor - Baucau

A number of different factors were revealed as to why men were not more actively involved in trading produce at marketplaces. Some women hid the harassment and challenges they face in travelling to, from and within the marketplace due to the widespread blame and stigma that is often placed on women who experience harassment and abuse. Women reported rarely telling their husbands or family for fear they could be blamed for the situation rather than assisted. This results in limited discussion about what happens, even among vendors.

“No one knows what we really go through, this assessment has been the first time I have shared with other people about my experiences, even with other women in the marketplace...I was ashamed these things happened to me.”⁹⁴

There is also a general perception, amongst both men and women, that marketplace selling is largely women’s business. It is commonly believed that women receive better prices for the sale of produce than men. However, there were many examples where women reported bringing a male relative with them to the market, both to help in selling produce and to provide some protection. Some couples went to the market together, especially if the distance was not too far. This was more likely to happen at a *postu*-level market.

Except for the sale of cattle, which is dominated by male sellers, women were hesitant to have men sell their farm produce at the marketplace alone. Women reported that their husbands have a tendency to use the money on things that are not useful to the family, such as alcohol, gambling and tobacco. Women also felt men were more likely to return to the house without buying key household staples, such as oil, sugar, flour, soap and kids’ clothing. Many women vendors reported being fearful of not getting by financially if their income was wasted in male entertainment areas found in and around all four marketplaces. Discussions with women vendors and stakeholders revealed a general sense that there is too much temptation and peer pressure on men to engage in these activities on market days.

Male vendors in the marketplace were sympathetic to what happens to female vendors and were aware that women vendors are targeted and experience more harassment. To some extent, they see this as normal, but would be happy to see it reduced. Male vendors said that they try to assist and help women vendors in difficult situations. They often chase off youth and intervene if they can, but are hesitant to do this particularly at night. They also asked for more security, as they too, were fearful of gangs and fights.

94 Female vendor - Atabae



7. Service provision

Across all four marketplaces, improved waste management and security guards and/or permanent police posts were raised as priority service delivery issues. Various other outreach or services were also raised in the different marketplaces, generally revolving around support for vendors' economic activities, but were not given the same level of priority.

7.1. Waste management

In three of the four marketplaces (Maliana, Atabae and Venilale), waste management was raised as a priority issue to be addressed. In Baucau, it was also noted as a problem, but was clearly less of an issue compared to the other three marketplaces. There were two main problem areas that vendors and other stakeholders identified: (i) designated garbage trucks not collecting rubbish regularly enough, and (ii) collective clean-ups with the vendors not being organised well-enough.

Vendors across all four marketplaces described the various problems posed by poor waste management: the stench because waste is not collected regularly; people using the waste disposal area to dispose of faecal waste and menstrual pads; dogs spreading the disposed waste around the marketplace; and mosquitoes breeding in the waste. These problems are further exacerbated during the wet season, as poor drainage means that waste overflows into the marketplace paths. All of these issues pose clear public health hazards.

Systems for waste management vary depending on where the market is located. At the municipal level, there is a garbage truck and staff who are responsible for garbage collection for the entire

municipal centre, including the market. At the *postu* level, there is generally no garbage truck available, and people must deal with their own waste. Even in municipal markets where garbage trucks are available, there were problems with the truck not visiting regularly enough to collect the waste.

In Baucau, vendors explained that the garbage truck waits until a lot of waste has accumulated, generally collecting waste once every three or four days—with the odour causing problems for nearby shops and stalls.⁹⁵ Vendors in Maliana market, however, had much bigger concerns with waste management. Reports varied, with some vendors saying that the garbage truck only came once every two or three weeks; others saying that it came only once every one or two months. Because of the limited garbage collection, Maliana vendors must deal with the situation as best they can. Some vendors explained that they pay a man to collect their individual waste and dispose of it—generally \$1 or \$2 per day, reducing their already-tight profit margins.⁹⁶ This poor delivery of waste disposal services appears to come back to poor governance in the municipal authority offices. As one stakeholder explained, even though the Canadian government donated a garbage truck specifically for waste management in the marketplace, the truck is not under the direct management of the market manager, and as such, is used for other work.⁹⁷

In Maliana, Atabae and Venilale, problems with irregular or non-existent waste collection are compounded by problems in coordinating regular clean-ups of the marketplace. In Maliana, vendors unfavourably compared the work of the current marketplace manager with the previous one, who they explained was much better in visiting and organising the vendors to do regular *limpeza* (clean-ups).⁹⁸ Similarly in Venilale, people explained that the system was much better in the past, because the previous *postu* administrator organised regular clean-ups, involving the market vendors and also other local officials:

“The *postu* administrator also came down... he also did clean-ups together with us. The police also came, the nuns also helped, we all did clean-ups to improve our health conditions. The *postu* administrator organised a roster: every Wednesday ten people, and every Saturday ten other people helped to clean. Everyone from Health, Agriculture & Fisheries, and other officials all worked together.”⁹⁹

However, as vendors went on to explain, with the new *postu* administrator who is less active in marketplace management, these clean-up sessions have become less regular. Reflecting the general desire for improved market management many vendors requested greater coordination of market clean-ups, with one vendor stating: “I think that everyone has the right to come into the market to sell, but they should clean up after themselves, that’s my opinion...”¹⁰⁰ Because of this, she requested more coordination from local leaders: “please tell the *xefe suku* and *xefe aldeia* they should work with us and clean the marketplace.”¹⁰¹

Similarly, in Atabae, vendors explained that they need more coordination and oversight of waste management from relevant authorities. While there used to be four waste disposal areas, built by students from UNTL (the National University of Timor-Leste) as part of the social service work required for their university degree, these are no longer functional, having either been torn down or used to burn things and rendered unusable.¹⁰² In addition, the market chief explained, while he did the best he could as a volunteer, he only has authority with some vendors and not with others, who

95 Female vendors - Baucau

96 Female vendor - Maliana

97 Municipal stakeholder - Maliana

98 Female vendor - Maliana

99 Female marketplace chief - Venilale

100 Female vendor - Venilale

101 Female vendor - Venilale

102 Female vendor - Atabae

just throw their rubbish on the ground and leave it. At the end of market-day, he organises those who live permanently in or near the marketplace to do a clean-up, but the day traders simply return home:

“It’s the same with waste, we prepared a waste disposal site, but now it’s not used. Why isn’t it used? People’s waste stinks... and also people don’t know how to separate waste... Each person only thinks about themselves.”¹⁰³

Similar sentiments were repeated by another vendor, who stated “sometimes vendors from Dili come, they just throw their rubbish [on the ground]. We come, we see the rubbish and we clean it up.”¹⁰⁴

Waste management is a clear public health issue for women vendors and community members who buy fresh produce from the market, underlining the need for better management of waste collection services, and regular clean-ups of the marketplace.

7.2. Gender-responsive security provision

Ongoing problems with security across all four marketplaces indicate a need for a community-oriented and gender-responsive approach to security and policing in the market. Reflecting the serious problems with security in Baucau market, one vendor stated:

“We need security guards to keep us safe. It goes up and down... for example we have not been peaceful for a few weeks now... people have been drinking alcohol, getting drunk, fighting with each other and throwing stones on our roof. We need to ensure security within minutes, not within a few hours.”¹⁰⁵

While the market chief and his assistant have significant legitimacy with vendors who listen to and trust them, many of these problems come from young men who are not connected to the market, but who use the space to get drunk and get into fights. Because the chief and his assistant have been unable to deal with all of the conflicts and fights that are brought into the marketplace, they have had a snowballing effect, resulting in bigger, more dangerous conflicts. The assistant explained:

“These cases then lead to bigger problems, and then we are overwhelmed with problems, sometimes resulting in burning houses and serious injuries before we manage to report the conflict.”¹⁰⁶

Because of the severity of the security problem in Baucau marketplace, they have requested a permanent police presence. However, while he and the market chief have made multiple complaints to the police, and even renovated a police post that they can use, “there were no public officers who were willing to stay there. We renovated a building [to use as a police post] but it wasn’t used and then people came and destroyed it, stealing the glass from the windows.”¹⁰⁷

In contrast with Baucau, vendors in Maliana, Atabae and Venilale were generally happy with police responsiveness, with many explaining that they had the direct phone number to ring police if there were problems. In Maliana, respondents noted that security was much better since martial arts gangs had been officially disbanded, and F-FDTL (military personnel) became more active in patrolling, making potential troublemakers scared to create problems. As an official in the Maliana municipal offices commented:

103 Male municipal stakeholder - Baucau
104 Female vendor - Atabae
105 Female vendor - Baucau
106 Female vendor - Baucau
107 Male *suku* leader in the Baucau marketplace area

“Security is good now in the market, they don’t have the challenges they used to have. In the past, late at night people would go banging on people’s doors, demanding cigarettes, money, alcohol. But now the situation is better because PNTL [National Police] do more patrolling... After F-FDTL came to accompany the police, these problems stopped.”¹⁰⁸

However, because of ongoing issues with intoxication, vandalism, harassment and abuse in the markets of Maliana, Atabae and Venilale, respondents all suggested the provision of security guards to undertake regular patrols and to ring the police in the case of problems. As a vendor in Venilale explained:

“We want the leader of the market to set an effective security system to enable a fast police-contacting process when there is a trouble... That way, in the night if drunk young people come from far away and cause problems, the security can quickly contact the police.”¹⁰⁹

Similar suggestions were also made by women vendors in Maliana and Atabae, who explained that security guards’ main role would be to quickly contact the police.¹¹⁰

In addition to provision of security guards and community-oriented policing, various other suggestions were made to improve the safety and security of the marketplace. In Maliana and Atabae, the openness of the marketplace was noted as a problem, making it too easy for troublemakers to enter and exit at night from many different points. An official in Maliana explained:

“To make security guards effective, the conditions need to be changed. Currently the marketplace is too open and allows troublemakers to come and go as they wish. Even if we were to recruit security to look after the place, we need to set it up so that there is one entrance and one exit.”¹¹¹

However, it is also important to note that such an approach would need to take into account other possible security issues, including ensuring safe egress for vendors in the case of fire.

In addition to the openness of some marketplaces, other respondents suggested restricting the market hours of operation to daytime only. As one vendor in Venilale recounted: “because there was a fight in the night that affected the sellers, we were all running away, the violence was that bad. That’s why there should not be a night market.”¹¹² Similar sentiments were repeated by an official in the Venilale administrative post, who explained:

“When the market is operating in the evening, we heard from people that people’s things get stolen: chickens have been stolen, and various other things. So, we think ‘oh, so then night markets are no good.’”¹¹³

In addition to restricting trading hours at night, another potential improvement might be to move the current location of male-dominated entertainment facilities such as cock-fighting and pool-playing facilities away from the marketplace, as these activities often also attract intoxication and violence amongst participants.¹¹⁴

It is clear that more engagement between security personnel and vendors is needed to strengthen the relationship and facilitate the presence requested in the marketplace. This would also strengthen

108 MAF - Maliana
109 Female vendor - Venilale
110 FGD Atabae; interviews Maliana
111 Official - Maliana
112 Women vendor - Venilale
113 Municipal stakeholder - Venilale
114 Safety audit walks - Baucau, Maliana, Atabae, Venilale

vendor ability to contact the police in the event of a problem. It is notable that the proposals identified were reactive to problems encountered, such as having a permanent police post, walls to better control easy entry and exit, and/or restriction of market operating hours. This reflects the perception of police as law enforcers and security as protection, whereas a more gender-responsive and community-oriented policing approach could offer a more sustainable and preventive approach to security in the marketplace. This could build on existing efforts to promote women's active participation in security institutions and community conflict prevention as well as other security initiatives such as community police councils.

7.3. Outreach services

There is an opportunity for government agencies and NGOs to strategically use marketplaces as a site for reaching and supporting vendors. Across all four marketplaces, a common request was the provision of information via the marketplace: either via noticeboards, using loudspeakers, or specific outreach services for government programs. Much of the information requested was about business and government support programs.

Vendors in Venilale and Baucau specifically suggested improved information on social protection schemes (*bolsa da mae*). In Maliana, Venilale and Atabae, vendors stated that they would appreciate basic education on small business, and vendors in Venilale wanted more information on prices to help them in pricing their goods. It is important to note the barriers that may exist for women vendors in trying to access such information through other channels. As one older woman in Maliana market stated, she is very keen to learn more about different government programs, but she is too embarrassed to go to government offices because her clothes are poor.

While micro-credit facilities are offered in markets, this can also create problems for vendors who have poor numeracy skills and lack basic business training. As one stakeholder noted, when vendors use the micro-credit, they often don't make a profit on their investment, and sometimes lose their money entirely. For this reason, he suggested more training in the marketplace:

“For agribusiness they need technical training, how to buy products [that will make a profit] and technical training on business management. This is MCI and IADE [the Business Support Institute]’s work...I think we need coordination between the banks and IADE so that they can give good training... and so that when they access bank credit, they understand.”¹¹⁵

In Venilale, a *postu* official described a plan they have to rehabilitate an existing building to serve as a centre where an association could provide different services to vendors:

“We want to meet with groups from diferent suku, and together create an association... We want to put in a proposal to the MCI Directorate... to fix up the building for use by an association formed of different groups in Venilale. We can establish credit facilities to help the groups... We can also sell agricultural items such as compost, fertiliser, pesticides and other things.”¹¹⁶

7.4. Vendor contributions

Vendors recognise that not all services should come from the government, and that they should also be making contributions. While the provision and repair of large infrastructure needs to come from public investment, there is scope to implement a system of vendor contributions (labour and financial)

115 Official - Maliana

116 Marketplace volunteer - Venilale

to provide for things such as cleaning and repairs of market facilities, and oversight and security for the marketplace. Across all four marketplaces, vendors noted that they want improved management, and are willing to contribute to this if it means improved market conditions. As one vendor put it:

“Contributions are important, because people should not need to ask the government for money to repair little problems in the market, things like looking after water in the bathrooms and toilets, that’s my opinion.”¹¹⁷

Similar comments were made by vendors across all four marketplaces. However, vendors also noted that such a system should be fair, reflecting the vendors’ economic situations and the value of the facilities that they use. Women vendors in Maliana noted that in determining contributions, different spaces should be valued differently, depending on how good the space is.¹¹⁸ Similarly, a vendor in Venilale explained:

“We’re ready to make contributions, but if we’re going to pay it should reflect the reality. If we have been given a good space to sell, and we can make a good profit, we should pay for this. If we can’t make a profit, our contributions should reflect this.”¹¹⁹

This was repeated by another Venilale vendor, who noted:

“Well, for me contributions are good for those who are selling inside the market, since the government spent money to provide the building, and a selling space for them. So, I am suggesting that it would be better if the tax is based on the people’s income.”¹²⁰

In addition to contributions for market use, and as noted previously, vendors also suggested other possible income streams for the market. This included a system of paid parking to pay for a security guard, and a system of payment for toilet/shower usage.

While there is clear willingness from the vendors to participate in a contribution system which is fair, a key impediment is that delegated managers are unsure of their legal competencies, and have not been given explicit permission to set up such a system. Instead, it was explained across all four marketplaces that because they are ‘free markets’, it might be illegal to introduce such contribution systems. As an official in Venilale explained:

“We’ve also suggested doing something like... some sort of contribution. But I went to talk to the MCI Directorate in Baucau and they said we couldn’t, because to do something like that we need to ask the national government. It must be based on a Law or a Decree Law to enforce contributions... if not people will say it’s illegal.”¹²¹

Similar points were also made by the market chief in Baucau, who explained that while it would be helpful to set up a system of contributions, they have not been empowered to do so. These concerns have even had the impact of stopping potentially positive local initiatives, such as the Venilale security volunteer who initiated an exchange to carry water for the marketplace toilets for a small fee for people wanting to use the toilet. While people were willing to pay for the service, he explained that he was afraid it would be seen as corruption, and that he might go to jail, so he stopped the practice.¹²²

In some situations, this may be remedied by better information clearly advising people’s rights (and the limits to those rights) in carrying out such a business. It is also worth investigating how a

117 Female vendor - Venilale
118 FGD Maliana
119 Female vendor - Venilale
120 Market committee member - Venilale
121 Official - Venilale
122 Marketplace volunteer - Venilale

contribution system might be integrated into the marketplace management structure, to enhance people's capacity to pay for ongoing operations and management costs while also ensuring that they are acting fairly and within clearly stated guidelines.



8. Summary & recommendations

The assessment process identified that there is potential and willingness of stakeholders at different levels and sectors, including within the Government and amongst vendors, to collaboratively improve marketplaces. The process was specifically designed to build the connections between female vendors and municipal stakeholders, to support the possibility of collaboration going forwards. At the final results validation and planning seminars held with all stakeholders, it was clear this was happening. Municipal authorities were showing leadership by re-establishing multi-stakeholder market steering committees. The vendors, *suku* representatives and PNTL were working together to address some of the identified security issues.

While this initial assessment only covers four marketplaces, the similarities identified by women vendors including exclusion from marketplace governance, gaps in key infrastructure, and insecurity in and around markets emerges as common themes also identified in other UN Women safe market initiatives. This suggests that the broader findings may be relevant to other municipal and sub-municipal marketplaces. Many of the infrastructure and management issues identified by vendors are well known, and require major government level policy and investment decisions. It is important to recognise the complexity of achieving change in this area. Marketplace management requires striking a balance between the needs of multiple stakeholders. The lack of national level marketplace regulations and lack of clarity on oversight responsibilities between the national and municipal government creates marketplace inefficiencies that impact mainly on vendors.

This assessment overwhelmingly highlights the need to involve vendors in all aspects of marketplace governance, and the particular value of understanding the inefficiencies and experiences of being a female vendor. In many cases, overlooking the ideas of vendors, in their diversity, has led to poor infrastructure and management choices in marketplaces and suboptimal investment outcomes.

The purpose of this section is to identify interventions that could support systemic change, while also highlighting short to medium term changes that could create economic and social improvement for vendors and the wider market system.

Overall finding

There is a need for long-term economic and social investments in gender-responsive marketplaces.

The assessment identified three 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.
3. Unsafe marketplaces and travel to marketplaces restrict women's economic business potential, harm their wellbeing and that of their families, and limit broader economic growth.

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.
3. 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..

Specific recommendations by issue

Marketplace management & regulations

1. The Ministry of State Administration should work with Municipal Presidents 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 and the voices of 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.
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. The municipal police should revisit their schedule of patrols in and around market spaces and organise regular meetings with vendors (female separate from male vendors) to understand specific security concerns and improve the safety of market spaces for everyone.
6. Key municipal authorities should look into the regulation of public transportation to ensure it is safe and accessible to users. In particular, this should include efforts to prevent price

scamming, harassment and the intimidation of vendors going to and returning from marketplaces.

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. Building on the relationships established through the assessment process, Municipal Presidents could organise an annual vendor meeting to 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.
10. 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.
11. SEII and women's municipal associations from Baucau and Bobonaro 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

12. Vendor groups and market managers should consider how to establish or rearrange spaces within the market so as to attract service providers who can share information and undertake outreach in public spaces. Vendors could lead in building these relationships with service providers. Key services identified by vendors include: business skills, market information, agricultural production-related information, financial literacy and access to finance, social protection, nutrition and health.
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 supporting marketplaces should encourage vendors' business skills and creativity in secondary products at the marketplace (e.g. restaurants/tourism/handicrafts).
15. 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.

