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Development in Practice >

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**Original Articles** 

# The World Bank's land of kiosks: Community driven development in Timor-Leste

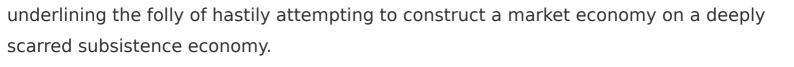
#### Ben Moxham

Pages 522-528 | Published online: 19 Jan 2007



### **Abstract**

The World Bank's Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project (CEP) was the key donor programme to assist with community reconstruction in a newly independent Timor-Leste. Commencing in 2000, the US\$18 million project provided funds to over 400 local development councils that had been newly created to meet their community's development needs. Rather than creating genuine participatory structures, tight deadlines to disburse project funds and bureaucratic project rules reduced the councils to little more than transmission lines to Bank-controlled dollars. By bypassing existing governance structures, including that of the fledging government, the councils also bypassed sources of local legitimacy and technical knowledge, which resulted in community conflict, indifference, and poor project sustainability. The CEP's poorly administered microcredit scheme led to a proliferation of unviable kiosks—



## Acknowledgements

The author assisted a joint Timorese government–civil society research team to study the CEP. They deserve strong thanks and include Bonifacio Belo, Tomas Freitas, Julino Ximenes da Costa, and Mateus Goncalves, as well as Emilia Pires from the National Directorate of Planning. All quotes in this article are from the report produced by the team (Rolling Think Tank Initiative 2004) unless otherwise indicated. I am also grateful for the suggestions and comments offered by Shalmali Guttal, Joy Chavez, Nicola Bullard, and Dan Nicholson.

## Notes

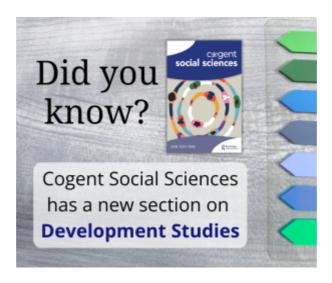
- 1. A nationwide consultation for Timor-Leste's National Development Plan organised over 1000 forums covering more than 38,000 Timorese citizens. They produced a 20-year national vision for the country, identifying education, health, and employment as the top priorities.
- 2. Ben Fine argues forcefully that such concepts have been used by the Bretton Woods institutions to enable their brand of economics to 'colonise the social sciences' (Fine 2002:18–33; see also Harriss 2002).

## Additional information

Notes on contributors

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Ben Moxham is a volunteer with Focus on the Global South, a research and advocacy organisation based in Bangkok, Thailand.



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