

# 3

## ‘Refugees’, ‘ex-refugees’ and ‘new citizens’

Sitting in an office of the Indonesian Agency for National Unity, Politics, and Community Protection (Badan Kesatuan Bangsa, Politik, dan Perlindungan Masyarakat, or Kesbangpolinmas) of the Belu district government, near the border with Timor-Leste, I was asked to outline the topic of my research while seeking permission to conduct fieldwork. Kesbangpolinmas is the local government department with the authority to issue official consent for research activities in the region. ‘My research examines the experience of different East Timorese groups who are currently living here in Belu’, I explained, in an effort to summarise the aims and scope of my project. ‘If you are looking for the East Timorese,’ the officer in charge responded, ‘[they] are dispersed across the district, so you have to travel around.’ While reviewing my proposal, he moved on, ‘and as you are doing so, I would like to advise you that, in Belu, the East Timorese are called “new citizens” [*warga baru*]’. As I was about to leave the office with the fieldwork approval letter in hand, the officer reminded me: ‘The East Timorese are to be no longer considered “refugees” [*pengungsi*] or “ex-refugees” [*eks pengungsi*], but as “new citizens” of Belu District.’

This chapter examines the way labelling is used to accommodate the entitlements of displaced East Timorese and how they have sought to respond. Analysis of the definition and application of labelling is longstanding and ongoing. Labelling in sociological terms is often associated with deviance. Theorists argue that labelling creates a sense of being ‘outsiders’ for those so labelled and therefore restrains their

social interaction (Becker 1963; Matza 1969). Anthropologists using comparative analysis argue that the size and complexity of a society present conditions under which official labelling works (Raybeck 1988: 392–3). From the perspective of public policy, labelling is often perceived as imposed political action that involves ‘conflict as well as authority’ (Wood 1985: 347). While differing in their analytical approaches, each perspective shares a common view that identity labels are ascribed to groups of people for the purpose of control in a situation of often disputed power relations.

In the context of displacement, Harrell-Bond’s (1986) examination of the politics of humanitarian aid offers a clear picture of the bureaucratic and administrative exercise of power and control through labelling people as ‘refugees’ and the implications that carries. Harrell-Bond (1986: 3) argues that governments both create and sustain conditions of dependency when they label someone a ‘refugee’. The notion of labelling is further elaborated in the work of Zetter (1991: 51), whose analysis of the impact of a housing resettlement scheme in Cyprus shows that being labelled a refugee can come to mean a number of things over time and this imposition shapes the behaviour of refugee communities. Labelling, in Zetter’s (1991: 59) view, essentially illustrates ‘conditionality and differentiation, inclusion and exclusion, and stereotyping and control’.

Among East Timorese in West Timor, forms of labelling have varied over time. On their arrival in West Timor in late 1999, displaced East Timorese were identified as ‘refugees’ by the UNHCR in contrast to the category of IDP applied by the United Nations to people internally displaced within East Timor. In 2001, when East Timorese decided to stay in Indonesia, they were considered ‘ex-refugees’ by the Indonesian Government. As they moved on and sought to integrate themselves into local communities, they were called ‘new citizens’, even though before East Timorese independence they were already Indonesian citizens. I argue that these externally constructed categories have denied the agency of the displaced East Timorese and brought unintended consequences that have shaped their new lives in West Timor. In response, displaced East Timorese engage in various socioeconomic and political activities to show they have not submitted to the labels they deem to be derogatory. By actively exercising their citizenship rights and responsibilities, the East Timorese in West Timor show that those who have objectified, marginalised and denied their autonomy might have stalled their access to potential resources.

I begin by looking at the displacement process during the last turbulent months of 1999. In so doing, I trace how the category 'refugee' had a significant impact on the way humanitarian assistance was promoted and delivered. I then examine the way in which the Indonesian Government has sought to manage the East Timorese who decided to stay in West Timor. I argue that the categories of 'ex-refugee' and 'new citizen' are problematic conceptually and hinder efforts at integration by the East Timorese themselves. Finally, I outline various activities that are articulated by different East Timorese groups as a considered response to their labels.

## Labelling 'refugees'

The militia and elements of the military invited all the villagers in Los Palos to come for a meeting at the village hall. The message was clear that everybody must immediately register and then leave East Timor. Those who stayed on would be considered pro-independence followers and would be killed. (Achmad 2003: 192)

This is the story of Fernando da Costa, a farmer from the village of Luro in the East Timor district of Lautem, and the way he and his family were forced to flee East Timor in September 1999. Fernando and his family of nine arrived in Kupang on 15 September 1999 after a night sailing on an Indonesian navy ship. They were then transported by military truck to Tuapukan camp.

Tuapukan is one of the largest East Timorese camps remaining in West Timor. It is located some 24 km outside the NTT capital of Kupang. In early 2000, Tuapukan camp hosted about 30,000 East Timorese from the districts of Lautem, Viqueque, Baucau, Aileu and Manatuto. Most have since returned to Timor-Leste under the repatriation program. Some others have joined the resettlement program and moved to surrounding villages such as Oebelo, Raknamo, Manusak, Oefafi and Merdeka. When I visited the area in February 2009, there were more than 300 households remaining in Tuapukan camp, mostly from Viqueque, with a few from Baucau and Manatuto. I was introduced to Mama Olandina Ximenes from Ossu village in Viqueque district, East Timor. As we sat and watched the children running around the shelters, Mama Olandina vividly recalled the events that changed her life forever:

On 8 September 1999, we were transported by the Indonesian army from Ossu to Viqueque, and later spent about four nights on the seashore before we boarded the ship. We heard the sounds of gunshots everywhere and all of us were crying as we thought about our families who were left behind. The local army commander [Danramil] said that all of us should be on board, and yet we never knew where they were going to take us. On the morning of September 17, we were moored in Kupang Bay. On the shore, several military and police trucks were waiting. We disembarked and were taken to this place [Tuapukan refugee camp]. I had no idea where I was at that time. This area [Tuapukan] used to be nothing but an empty land. No-one was living in this area but us and also a few houses near the main road. I kept crying as I remembered my relatives who were not here with me. But the soldiers and some other women said that we should not be worried because they would be joining us soon. And indeed, within about the next four months, people kept coming and coming, on a daily basis.

Mama Olandina is a widow with three children. Her husband was recruited by the Indonesian army and served as a combat soldier. He was killed by Falintil guerillas during one of their insurgencies in Viqueque in September 1996. A striking similarity between Mama Olandina's and Fernando's stories is the involvement of the militias and the military in their displacement process. The Indonesian term used to describe a displaced person is '*pengungsi*', which refers to both refugees and IDPs. But Mama Olandina's and Fernando's accounts illustrate the notion of 'refugee' that is generally used in the global political sense to describe a displaced person. As clearly exemplified in the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees:

[a refugee is] any person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (UNHCR 2010: 14–15)

This definition upholds certain entitlements for people granted refugee status; they should be offered not only legal protection, which they would not receive in their own country, but also social and humanitarian services (Shacknove 1985).

In anticipation of this humanitarian emergency, on 12 August 1999, then Indonesian minister for social welfare Justika Baharsjah made a visit to Kupang and met the governor of NTT. They discussed various responses to the expected influx of some 100,000 refugees from East Timor, including

evacuation, transportation and preparation of temporary accommodation sites across the region. The governor also decided to allocate five staff from each department in the provincial government to support these humanitarian services. The number of refugees apparently nearly tripled the initial estimation and the Indonesian Government welcomed the UNHCR and other international agencies to address the East Timorese refugee problem in West Timor.

On 15 September 1999, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1264 to authorise the establishment of a multinational force to restore peace and security in East Timor. This resolution also stressed—no less than three times—that the refugees must be allowed to return safely to East Timor (UNSC 1999). This resolution indicates that East Timorese who fled to West Timor were categorised as refugees as defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention. Four days after the resolution was passed, UNHCR high commissioner Sadako Ogata arrived in Kupang, accompanied by her staff from Geneva and the Indonesian Coordinating Minister of Welfare and Poverty Alleviation. The team flew by helicopter to visit the East Timorese refugees who were camped in Haliwen football stadium in Belu district. They then flew back to Kupang to observe the refugees encamped in and around the sports complex in Oepoi, near the office of the NTT governor. The next day, Mrs Ogata continued her mission to Jakarta and held a meeting with president Habibie to discuss UNHCR support. On 22 September 1999, president Habibie announced the position of the Indonesian Government to support the East Timorese refugees who decided to return to East Timor. This led to the establishment of UNHCR field offices in Atambua and Kupang (Achmad 2003: 204). In the government statement, displaced East Timorese were identified as *pengungsi* or refugees, and not IDPs.

During the first three months of the operation (October to December), the UNHCR facilitated the return of 82,527 East Timorese refugees. At the same time, about 43,000 people made their own way back to East Timor (Dolan et al. 2004: 17). Fernando and his family were among those first East Timorese returnees. Most refugees returned to their former settlements, while others resettled in Dili, contributing to a dramatic swelling of the capital's population in that period. In January 2000, however, half of the East Timorese refugees were still in West Timor. Amnesty International (1999) observed that the 'crisis is not yet over'. In the Tuapukan refugee camp, for instance:

there were 174 people [who] died [between] September 1999 [and] the beginning of December 1999. In one two week period alone—from 22 November to 1 December 1999—32 children and three adults died in the camp from infectious diseases such as chronic diarrhoea, malaria and tuberculosis. (Amnesty International 1999: 3)

Despite this ongoing humanitarian crisis in West Timor, it was the post-conflict situation in East Timor that became the main focus of the international intervention. This is exemplified by the funding distribution of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). The first comprehensive UN appeal for donor support in October 1999 managed to garner about US\$199 million. Unfortunately, less than 10 per cent of those funds were allocated for West Timor (UNOCHA 1999, cited in Bradt and Drummond 2008: 75). The World Health Organization (WHO) 'had no dedicated funding for refugee-associated activities in West Timor for five months' and the UNHCR did not place its first health coordinator in West Timor until five months after the health crisis began in the refugee camps in West Timor (Bradt and Drummond 2008: 75). The situation became more complicated when rioting East Timorese militias killed three UNHCR staff in Atambua (the capital of Belu district) on 6 September 2000.

While there was an ongoing need for humanitarian assistance, the issue of East Timorese refugees in West Timor was not the main focus of international intervention. I would argue that there was a prevailing assumption that those East Timorese who had fled to West Timor and were subsequently categorised as refugees were perpetrators of the destruction and killing in East Timor, therefore they did not deserve the attention of the international community. From 1 January 2003, the UNHCR no longer recognised as refugees those East Timorese who stayed in West Timor (UNHCR 2002). With the end of their refugee status, the East Timorese in West Timor were considered by the UNHCR to be Indonesian citizens and its support was gradually withdrawn from West Timor. UNOCHA followed suit and ceased its activities in West Timor soon after (Sunarto et al. 2005: 29)—a decision that reinforced Shacknove's (1985: 276) comment that an 'overly narrow conception of "refugee" will contribute to the denial of international protection to countless people in dire circumstances whose claim to assistance is impeccable'.

## Labelling 'ex-refugees'

On 6 June 2001, with improving sociopolitical conditions in East Timor, two options were officially offered to the East Timorese then living in Indonesia: return to East Timor or remain in Indonesia. East Timorese were asked to vote on these options in a process facilitated by the Indonesian Government. Although the process was criticised as a 'sham' due to suspected militia propaganda during the voting, 98 per cent of the 113,794 East Timorese in Indonesia decided to remain there (Smith 2002: 73). In response, in a cabinet meeting in Jakarta three months later, the Indonesian Government outlined the 'National Policy to Accelerate the Handling of Refugees' (*Kebijakan Nasional Percepatan Penanganan Pengungsi*).<sup>1</sup> At this point, the Indonesian Government continued to use the term *pengungsi*, albeit with a change in reference to that of IDPs rather than refugees. The policy consisted of three components: repatriation (*repatriasi*), relocation (*permukiman kembali* and *transmigrasi*) and empowerment (*pemberdayaan*).

The national policy did not specify East Timorese as its sole target because in the wake of the fall of Suharto's New Order government, Indonesia was hosting the single largest population of IDPs in the world by 2001 (Hedman 2008: 4).<sup>2</sup> In addition to the East Timorese, the term *pengungsi* in the national policy covered displaced people in the Indonesian regions of Aceh, Papua, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Maluku.<sup>3</sup> The concurrent displacement of such a large number of people throughout the archipelago made the job of improving the lives of displaced people a daunting task. The Indonesian Government also recognised that East Timorese displacement was different from other internal displacement in Indonesia because of its complex geopolitical situation. Following the referendum, East Timor was no longer part of the Indonesian unitary state, which is why, politically, the East Timorese who came to West Timor were initially identified as refugees and managed by the UNHCR. In response to a satisfactory post-conflict normalisation process in Timor-Leste, the UNHCR declared the refugee status accorded to East Timorese would cease on 31 December 2002. At this time, the UNHCR also claimed that

1 For further discussion of the use of *pengungsi* with reference to refugees and IDPs, see Hugo (2002).

2 According to the Indonesian National Coordination Agency for Disaster Management and the Handling of Refugees, there were about 1.3 million IDPs in Indonesia in late 2001 (Hugo 2002).

3 For comparison, see Duncan (2008: 213).

some 230,000 of 250,000 East Timorese refugees had returned to Timor-Leste. Following this announcement, the Indonesian Government, in its attempt to define a clear target for the national displacement intervention policy and to differentiate the East Timorese from other Indonesian IDPs, transformed the UNHCR refugee label and identified the East Timorese as 'ex-refugees' (*eks pengungsi*).

Labels such as 'ex-refugee' legitimated displaced East Timorese claims for assistance from the government. Ex-refugee also meant that the repatriation program to Timor-Leste would be continued with the support of the Indonesian Government. During this intervention, the government facilitated the repatriation of an additional 1,300 East Timorese. In addition, nearly 7,500 houses for East Timorese have been constructed in West Timor and some 500 East Timorese families have migrated to other regions, including Sumatra, Kalimantan and Maluku. After these interventions, in 2005, the Indonesian Government considered the issue of East Timorese in West Timor had been resolved and declared that there were no longer any ex-refugees from East Timor. Later that year, however, the NTT government conducted a registration of all resident East Timorese and found that 104,436 East Timorese had stayed in NTT, 90 per cent of whom were residing in West Timor (Satkorlak PBP NTT 2006).

The fact that many East Timorese opted to remain in West Timor rather than be repatriated challenged this externally constructed ex-refugee label. In explaining the situation, Wise (2006: 188), in her work on East Timorese refugees in Sydney, argued that a return to East Timor has never really been an option for those who had their life connected to and successfully engaged in Australia. East Timorese who chose to stay in West Timor, however, had different reasons, related to their different political and sociocultural circumstances. At the end of my conversation with Mama Olandina, I asked whether she had any plans to return<sup>4</sup> to East Timor, as repatriation was still being supported by an NGO tasked with this responsibility. She replied:

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4 Wise (2006: 183) has also pointed out that many East Timorese in Australia were happy to return to Timor-Leste after independence, although they have to 'engage in various strategies to renegotiate a sense of home, post-exile'. The International Crisis Group (ICG 2011) has also outlined different factors that influence East Timorese in West Timor to return, however, its report focuses more on return as repatriation. Taking the diversity of East Timorese groupings in West Timor into account, I note different ideas of return, including the notion of being in West Timor as a return, a return to visit Timor-Leste and an eventual return (after life).

For those who supported independence, it was safe for them to return to East Timor, but for us who have stood for the *Merah Putih* [the 'Red and White', the flag of Indonesia], we are considered enemies. We would put our life in danger if we went back there. Furthermore, although we suffer here, personally, I chose to stay because I want to continue the fight for that which my husband paid for with his own blood [for Indonesia].

The week after my meeting with Mama Olandina, I visited Oebelo, a neighbouring village. Here, there are two main sites of East Timorese settlement, Oebelo Atas (Upper Oebelo) and Oebelo Bawah (Lower Oebelo). Most of the East Timorese living in Oebelo come from the Los Palos district in far eastern Timor, but there are also people from Dili, Viqueque and Baucau. After Sunday mass, I was introduced to one of the East Timorese elders who lived next to the chapel, Bapa Matheos from Dili, who invited me to sit in front of his house, where he shared his experience:

I never wanted to leave East Timor in 1999. I don't know how many battles I have been involved in, as I have fought for Indonesia since 1975. I ran with bullets in my body [he showed me the wounds in both his legs] and am still alive, so I preferred to die rather than abandon East Timor without a fight. It was shameful. Most of the Indonesian supporters fled Dili as we were told that we must retreat to Indonesia on 4–6 September. My wife and children had gone ahead. I cried desperately, but said to myself, 'Over my dead body will anyone send me out of East Timor'.

I insisted on staying [to fight] but on 17 September 1999, the army held a meeting at the office of the provincial military command in Dili, and the commander instructed us to leave East Timor or we would face him and the Indonesian army, our own friends. I was ready to face my foes, not my friends. It was frustrating as we were forced to surrender and leave East Timor without having any chance to defend it. Afterwards, I went to Alor [Island] for a couple of months, and then spent Christmas in Soe [the capital of South Central Timor district], and eventually ended up here [in Oebelo] in April 2000. I was the only one in the family who was in favour of heading to Indonesia and I decided to stay here because it is my political ideology. My parents, my brothers and sisters—they are all in Dili.

Bapa Matheos shares almost identical views about Indonesia with Mama Olandina. They suggest that, for many East Timorese in West Timor, Indonesia is regarded not as the place from which they came, but the nation to which they chose to belong. Aspinall (2003: 128), in his discussion of Acehnese in contemporary Indonesia, argues that integral to

an understanding of emerging postcolonial nationalism in Indonesia are three distinct elements: ‘a nationalist future of modernity and liberation, the construction of a nationalist history stretching back to antiquity, and an official emphasis on ethnic diversity’. Many Indonesians, according to Anderson (1999: 8), are ‘still inclined to think of Indonesia as an “inheritance”’.

For many East Timorese, however, Indonesia is not something they have inherited but something for which they have struggled and sacrificed. This is why living as a displaced person in West Timor is something an East Timorese must bear at all costs as the consequence of their attempt to preserve Indonesia and their (political) belonging to that nation. It is a sacrifice they must make for their struggle (*perjuangan*) to defend the ‘Red and White’.

## Labelling ‘new citizens’

In early March 2004, almost all the relevant parties involved in East Timorese displacement intervention were invited to Kefamenanu, the capital of North Central Timor (TTU) district to share their experiences and seek ways to improve their support for the East Timorese. During three days of meetings, the Bishop of Atambua, Monsignor Anton Pian Ratu, SVD, put forward his idea of ‘new citizenship’ (*warga baru*). According to the priest, who also chaired the Forum for Communication among Religious Leaders (Forum Komunikasi antar Pimpinan Agama): ‘Our brothers and sisters from East Timor who have decided to stay in Indonesia and maintain their Indonesian citizenship were uncomfortable to be identified as ex-refugee.’ As a solution, he went on to propose that perhaps they should be called ‘new citizens’<sup>5</sup> of Belu or TTU district.

In 2005, the Indonesian Government declared the end of official humanitarian assistance for the East Timorese across the country. This also signalled the transformation of labelling activities into a domestic frame. At this stage, the ‘new citizen’ label was recognised as a way to accommodate

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5 ‘New citizens’ was coined to facilitate the process of integration. Although the label has been widely ascribed to the East Timorese, its official recognition was actually limited. The East Timorese were issued the same Indonesian identity card as other Indonesians. The label was not adopted in the 2010 national population census. The recent census by Statistics Indonesia as part of the resettlement project funded by the Ministry of Public Housing did not issue additional identity cards, but merely put a sticker on the door of a house or a shelter as a sign of completed registration.

the East Timorese into Indonesian society. As a label, however, it was not appealing to funding bodies, either the international agencies or the Indonesian Government. Oxfam Great Britain, for instance, chose the term 'uprooted people' in their transitional shelter and livelihood projects between 2005 and 2008. Around the same period, CARE International employed the term 'IDPs' for their community integration and local economy project. UN-Habitat went further and came up with the notion of 'ex-IDPs' in their capacity-building project (2011–13). The Indonesian Government also deployed various terms. The Ministry of Social Affairs used the nomenclature 'victims of social disaster' (*korban bencana sosial*) to support the East Timorese in 2007. Most recently, the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing identified the East Timorese as 'people with low incomes' (*masyarakat berpenghasilan rendah*), using a term deployed across Indonesia. As part of this project, they assigned Statistics Indonesia to conduct a registration census of the East Timorese and made use of the 'new citizen' label by identifying the East Timorese as 'new citizens of East Timor origin' (*warga baru asal Timor Timur*).<sup>6</sup>

While the registration census was proceeding, I made a visit to the East Timorese camp in Naibonat village, 32 km from Kupang. During a discussion with a handful of Baucau elders, one of them, Cristiano Ximenes, who is often jokingly called 'the professor', made a comment about his status as a new citizen:

I don't know why they called us 'new citizens'. You know, I was born a Portuguese citizen because East Timor at that time was an overseas province of Portugal. When Indonesia came in, I joined Indonesia and became an Indonesian citizen and I am still an Indonesian citizen up to now. If for this reason I became a new citizen then who are the local [existing] citizens [*warga lokal*]?

Cristiano draws our attention to established citizenship as a category contrasting with 'new citizens'. This dual categorisation is further exemplified in comments made by the former speaker of East Timor's provincial parliament, Armindo Soares Mariano. When I met him in his house, he posed the following questions:

Why weren't the people [migrants] from Java, Sulawesi or any other places in Indonesia who come and stay in this area identified as new citizens? Why is it only us from East Timor?

<sup>6</sup> For further discussion of various refugee labels, see Zetter (2007).

Without waiting for my response, Armindo continued:

We [the East Timorese] are moving to West Timor because East Timor is no longer part of Indonesia. We were Indonesian citizens and we are still Indonesian citizens and not new citizens.

Here, Armindo takes the ideas of sameness and difference to problematise the ‘new citizen’ label.



Plate 3.1 Registration sticker identifying a house occupied by East Timorese, Belu district

Source: Andrey Damaledo.

The deployment of oppositional categories by both Chris and Armindo suggests that the ‘new citizen’ label is another category for asserting priority and superiority within Indonesian society. This understanding is implicit in Chris’s intent: why should we become new citizens if we were Indonesian in the first place? It is clear that instead of integrating people, as was initially intended, the ‘new citizen’ label has been divisive and has created a perception of East Timorese as an inferior class of citizen. This situation relegates many East Timorese who have decided to maintain their citizenship and integrate with their fellow Indonesians to the margins of the Indonesian national imagination.

## The impact of labelling

Labelling activities have diverse impacts on the lives of displaced people. Waldron (1988) argues that bureaucratic labels fail to articulate the salient factors that make up the refugee identity. In fact, government procedures have led to gross misinterpretation or even nonrecognition of existing problems and have resulted in ill-conceived policies and programs. Labels such as 'refugee', 'ex-refugee' and 'new citizen' have impacted on East Timorese experiences of displacement and involvement in the pre-referendum and post-referendum conflicts in terms of their eligibility for humanitarian and development assistance.

This situation has often been politicised by the local government during its annual planning and budgeting process.<sup>7</sup> With its limited financial capacity, local government tends to exclude the 'problem' of the East Timorese despite the fact these people have been living in their administrative areas for almost 15 years. When I discussed this issue with government officers across West Timor, their response was similar: 'Displacement is not our responsibility, but that of the central government.' Therefore, 'we will pass along your concern to the central government' is the typical answer of the NTT governor and the heads of district (*bupati*) whenever a demand for clarity and transparency is raised by the East Timorese community.

The impact of this exclusion is clearly exemplified in Oebelo Bawah resettlement site, which houses many East Timorese from Los Palos. Every year during the monsoon, the resettlement site floods. At the peak of the rainy season in February 2009, more than 30 families were evacuated from their houses to the chapel by the side of the main road. They remained there for four days because deep floodwaters had swamped their houses and surrounding areas. I visited Oebelo in the aftermath and observed how people struggled to get rid of the mud and make their houses liveable again. The surrounding landscape is lower than the road and makes the resettlement site a perfect spot to catch all of the run-off water during the rainy season. Yet I found no floodway or drainage system

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7 I note that the Kupang district government allocated IRD519 million (approximately A\$49,000) in its 2012 budget to support the central government's relocation project for the East Timorese. However, as emphasised by the district secretary (*sekretaris daerah*), the fund was allocated to facilitate the removal of East Timorese shelters that had created slum areas around new government buildings. Essentially, the fund served the interest of the government rather than that of the East Timorese community.

installed. The initial permanent resettlement site was completed in 2004 and a larger one was built by the Indonesian military in 2007–08, but no additional investment was made by the local government to protect the East Timorese settlement from flooding.<sup>8</sup>

References to ‘refugees’, ‘ex-refugees’ and ‘new citizens’ may call into doubt the trustworthiness of the East Timorese. An East Timorese camp coordinator, regarded as a camp representative based on his management role during the 1999 evacuation process, explained that his people encountered difficulties obtaining bank loans because of concerns they might return to Timor-Leste without repaying them (Sunarto et al. 2005: 33). In another case, some East Timorese learned of their exclusion from the social protection program providing direct cash assistance (*bantuan langsung tunai*) to the poor. This program was funded by the central government as compensation for increasing oil prices, but was managed by local authorities (The Jakarta Post 2009).

## Proactive response to labelling

Many displaced East Timorese acknowledge that the humanitarian and development program has the objective of trying to improve their socioeconomic conditions in contemporary Indonesia. But they also know that the various labels that accompanied those interventions have brought unintended consequences and hindered their integration into local communities. This is why displaced East Timorese chose to resist being labelled by asserting their rights and responsibilities as Indonesian citizens. I want to suggest that this represents a proactive response whereby the East Timorese are able to identify opportunity and mobilise resources to distance themselves from these labels and at the same time confirm and realise their imagined ideal of maintaining Indonesian citizenship.

Different East Timorese groups respond in their own way. Many are actively trying to work through the formal political system and join Indonesian political parties to represent their communities. During each of the past three local parliamentary elections (in 2004, 2009 and 2014), politicians

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8 The flood occurred just one month after ‘extraordinary event’ (*kejadian luar biasa*) status was removed from the surrounding area. It was imposed after a diarrhoea outbreak in January claimed the lives of four children and two elders in the resettlement site. While the latter deaths could have been caused by other illnesses, the former were the result of a lack of potable water and poor sanitation. I noted no change—apart from a neighbourhood pathway—when visiting the area in 2013.

of East Timorese origin have been elected to office from Indonesian mainstream political parties. Currently, there is one East Timorese-born representative in the NTT parliament. At the district level, better progress is evident, with one representative in the Kupang district parliament and three in Belu district. Some East Timorese have attempted to run for national parliament, but so far without success. In the government sector, some have managed to attain high-level managerial positions in government departments in West Timor.

East Timorese have also engaged in informal strategies to further their interests. In their attempts to secure land on which to settle, for example, East Timorese in Naibonat village in Kupang district handed the responsibility for locating and negotiating for land on their behalf—either land in the camp or land nearby—to the camp coordinator. Other groups, such as those camped in Belu district, prefer to work collectively by using existing ethnic and kinship networks. But the basic aim is the same everywhere. Through cash payments or credit instalments, by late 2006, more than 2,000 displaced East Timorese families had been able to legally obtain land either in or near their former camps (many are currently in the process of certification).

These proactive responses are revealed not only through the way landownership has been secured, but also in the way both men and women engage in a range of income-generating activities. Some are labouring on local farmers' land or renting and making use of such land; others are working as middlemen, taking agricultural products from the subdistricts to trade in the city. Some women weave cloth (*tais*). Some also make money by tapping palm trees to sell the juice or ferment it into a popular alcoholic drink (*sopi*). Duarte Dos Santos, from Fatuboro village in Liquiçá district, who is now settled on his own land in Belu district, recalled:

When we were here in 1999, this was a camp, but now as you see this land is ours and we have managed to buy it from the local landowner after 2001–2002. We are farmers. We are not civil servants who have a regular income but it does not mean we can't do anything. I saw palm trees when I was looking for some fire wood, I climbed and tapped the juice, and I took it to the market and it was sold out. Every day I climb up to eight palms and I have made money to purchase the land. In fact, we can save some for the children's education. (Djami 2006: 12)

Once land and housing have been secured, the main focus for East Timorese is their children's education. Francisco Ximenes, a leader of the East Timorese community from Baucau, once told me after celebrating the achievement of national senior high school accreditation for the school in Naibonat:

When we were about to leave East Timor, our families who decided to stay reminded us, if you remain in West Timor, the children's education has to be your top priority. We are not living in that memory, but living for that memory.

It was the only school in the entire Kupang district that qualified for accreditation, and the majority of its students were displaced East Timorese. 'The East Timorese can also make the Kupang district proud, you know,' he added with a big smile.

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the ways in which displaced East Timorese now living in Indonesia have negotiated issues of identity and belonging, and how complex forms of official labelling have influenced the ways in which humanitarian and development assistance has been delivered to displaced people in Indonesian Timor. Petrin (2002: 7) has argued that 'managing the returnees is not always possible', and I would add that managing those who choose to stay and maintain their citizenship is not always possible either. But the fact that the Indonesian Government explicitly encourages East Timorese to live among their fellow Indonesians should be seen in a positive light. For example, former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the day before attending the inauguration in Dili of the newly elected president of Timor-Leste, Taur Matan Ruak, declared: 'By 2014, I want all existing problems solved. [The East Timorese] must have somewhere to live because they have lived in the area [West Timor] since 1999 with little money' (Jakarta Globe 2012).

Nevertheless, as I have pointed out, the 'will to improve' (Li 2007) the life of East Timorese among government and humanitarian agencies has been dominated by 'simplifications' (Scott 1998), depersonalisation (Malkki 1997; Harrell-Bond 1999) and successive misinterpretation of East Timorese identities. In early October 2013, I held a meeting with the East Timorese group in Naibonat camp. On this occasion, Mauricio

Freitas and Augusto da Costa, both of whom had served as speakers of the Baucau district parliament and were considered elders of the Baucau people, declared:

Andrey, we want you to know that we have nothing but our dignity [*dignidade*] when we decided to leave our homeland in East Timor and stay here in West Timor. That is what we preserve and celebrate.

Silva (2010: 110), in her discussion of East Timorese social conflict, suggests that 'to have dignity' in an East Timorese context means 'to be recognised for occupying a hierarchical position of such importance as to deserve deference and obedience'. While I support this recognition of East Timorese sensitivity to hierarchy and social precedence,<sup>9</sup> I believe that what Mauricio and Augusto meant by East Timorese dignity<sup>10</sup> refers to more than just honour and status. They were emphasising that East Timorese are not 'objects' of state charity but fellow human beings in possession of their own identities, histories and experiences, and the autonomy to act and react in response to situations of disadvantage. To understand how these values are further articulated, it is appropriate to quote Basilio Araujo (2009: 7), the former spokesperson of the pro-integration East Timorese, reflecting on a decade of life in Indonesia:

The Indonesian government deserved to know that we came to Indonesia not to beg for food or illegal shelter. Nor did we come to Indonesia to ask for a piece of land to stay. Ninety percent of our people were slaves who had served their masters for years and centuries, sometimes even without food for days and nights. This experience taught us that we are resilient people who will always survive. The government can cease all support. The government can force us to stay on barren land. Nevertheless, be assured that we will stay and prevail even with cassava and maize. All we need is for this country to recognise us as Indonesian citizens and treat us equally as fellow Indonesians [so that] we can maintain our identity as East Timorese in Indonesia.

9 For a discussion of the idea of precedence, see Fox (2006d).

10 The lack of attention paid to human dignity in refugee intervention programming is not exclusive to the East Timorese. An executive director of an Irish NGO who worked among African refugees said: '[D]ignity is the vital ingredient missing when basic physical needs are delivered in a mechanistic and impersonal way. Respect for human dignity is too often the first casualty of emergency responses to assist refugees' (Needham 1994). This expression helped me to bring out concluding points on dignity in this section.

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