A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this mapping is to identify and survey existing and defunct Youth Centers (YC) in both urban and rural Timor Leste in order to understand the needs of YC’s, their perspective on community youth needs and their perception on youth development.

A Youth Centre, or ‘Centro Juventude’ / ‘Uma Foin Sae sira’, is a physical location where young men and women gather to discuss, coordinate and participate in youth related activities. A YC could be a designated house on church grounds, a room in a school, a Sub District office or a building allocated by the community for the purpose of youth related activities.

A YC in Timor Leste may be a modestly resourced house, or a derelict building where young people meet to organize national events, sporting competitions, or computer and language training. Sometimes it is simply be a meeting point ‘for empowerment’ where elected youth leaders from sucos (villages) and aldeias (hamlets) meet to raise awareness on youth related concerns.

The idea of a YC has existed in Timor Leste for many years and has evolved with time. From its beginnings when it was used mainly for cultural and traditional practices, to a place to conduct underground clandestine activities, to what they are today. The survival of the YC is determined by economic factors, but more importantly it is determined by the support of which the community provides. Nowadays, YC’s seem to all hold one common objective and that is to strive to deliver a range of diverse activities that attempt to improve the social and economic conditions of youth.

B. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to undertake this research was two fold. Surveys were conducted around the country by local survey group (G1), Insight (National consultancy organization). Interviews were then conducted (G2) by two people - a World Bank staff member and a Ministry of State Administration (MSA) representative.

G1 traveled for a period of 25 days, visited all 13 districts and surveyed 19 YC.

G2 traveled for a period of 12 days, visited 5 Districts (Baucau, Viqueque, Lautem, Cova Lima and Liquica), approximately 15 Sub Districts, sighted 13 YC’s and interviewed 18 people including youth, government officials, YC representatives, and YC staff. A range of questions where asked on infrastructure, history, activities, resources available, financial support and organizational management. Prior to departure meetings were held in Dili with government Ministries, religious organizations and I/NGO’s for possible contacts and links with YC’s in the districts.

The Secretary of State for Youth and Sport (SSYS) provided a list of national youth council (NYC) representatives in all 13 districts. The MSA provided contacts for all District and Sub District Administrators, and the Catholic Youth Organization (FOSKA) was able to provide G2 with a complete list of their centers and contact details throughout the country.
C. FINDINGS

The findings from this mapping are not final and will require further investigation in other Districts. They do however give users an insight into YC concerns and identify areas in which government and donor resources can be used to maximize the capacity of YC’s, and young people in Timor Leste. The findings below gather an understanding of the number of dedicated centers available for youth, infrastructural conditions, services and courses offered, resources and donor support available, and the YC’s overall ability to deliver sustainable youth friendly activities.

i. NUMBER OF YOUTH CENTRES

See annex 1

ii. INFRASTRUCTURE

Graph 1: Youth Center Status
32 Youth Centers where surveyed in total, participants where asked if they considered their centre active or defunct. The results are as follows:

![Youth Center Status Graph]

Of the 32 centers surveyed, 22 indicated that the YC were active and currently running regular activities. 10 were defunct and no longer delivering regular activities. 21 YC’s were surveyed by G1, 4 in Dili and 15 in the districts. 16 were active, 5 were defunct. 13 YC’s were surveyed by G2 in 5 districts. 8 were active, 5 were defunct.

10 YC identified as being defunct, 5 of the 10 still use the defunct centers to run small youth meetings. The remaining 5 centers were completely abandoned or closed. Comments from respondents why YC’s were defunct are as follows.

- Unsafe structural conditions for community use
- Lack of community and local government coordination to maintain the centre
- Political tensions in 2006 forced the closer
- Community disputes over land ownership
- YC completely destroyed in 1999
- No building allocated for youth activities
- YC building used by community for other purposes
- No basic resources i.e. books, chairs, tables, desks, computers
No financial support from donors and government

Of the 32 YC’s identified, 30 indicated that having links with another organization or institution was imperative to remaining active.

- 9 indicated that they had direct links with community and government
- 4 Indicated that they had direct links to community and religious organizations
- 7 had direct links to community and NGO
- 10 had links with community and NYC
- 2 had links to the community only

Religious and I/NGO affiliated YC’s were seen as generally better resourced and have the ability to run a range of programs from trades courses, sporting competitions and religious activities. It was also identified that faith based affiliated YC’s work in harmonization with one another in the districts to maximize their capacity to reach as many youth as possible. Youth from the districts are mobilized by YC within the Sub Districts to participate in faith based programs plus activities ranging from carpentry, mechanic, tailoring, tais weaving, music and traditional theater.

YC’s associated with INGO’s are also well resourced but seem to be less in sync with one another and work quite individually to deliver services. Common responses to activities offered at these YC’s were English / Portuguese language courses and computers.

Of the 32 Youth Centers surveyed, 22 respondents identified their YC as being open and active to youth groups. Although it was observed by the researcher that out of the 13 centers visited by G2, only 2 were open and manned during the visits. Most YC’s identified themselves as being open and active but for the purpose of organized activities and did not have regular opening hours.

Out of 32 YC that were surveyed, approximately 80% identified that small to large size rehabilitation was needed to improve the conditions of the YC.

The majority of YC surveyed had approximately 3 to 5 rooms in the centre. A small proportion of YC had only one room in the building allocated for youth.

**Libraries and Resource Centers**

5 out of the 32 YC’s identified as having an allocated area for books, DVDs and other resources for youth to access.

All 5 indicated that they wished to increase their books available as they find them a great resource, specifically running classes for illiterate youth. The barrier at the moment is that many of their books in their libraries are in English and are ex-high text books such as mathematics, biology etc. Suggestions made included more books on language, agriculture and children’s books.
Out of the 32 YC surveyed 6 indicated that a complete rehabilitation was required for their centre. All 6 respondents said funding had not been secured for rehabilitation. The rehabilitation that is required by these YC’s varies greatly. A significant proportion require minimal to medium rehabilitation such as a new paint job, new windows, patched roofing, new water pipes, or new electrical cabling. 3 YC’s were identified as needing a complete rehabilitation. When asked if another building had been allocated for youth, respondents said:

- nothing had been allocated so young people meet wherever they can
- their current derelict building was the only one designated for youth activities
- the local police had taken over the house that was allocated for youth as a private residence

The rehabilitation of public service infrastructure requires community participation at all levels of the decision making processes. There are a number of examples around the country of rehabilitated public infrastructures that have been completely destroyed by communities because of the lack of community participation and consultation when rehabilitation occurred. The Liquica YC is one example. The decision making processes for rehabilitation was not sought from the community and as a result a total lack of community ownership for the centre and the program evolved.

In order to ensure a successful rehabilitation of a community building a number of strategies need to be adhered to. Youth should be the first contact for ideas as they know what would attract them to use the centre, what services should be delivered, how many rooms would be needed, and what resources should be available. Young people should be given the opportunity to seek reputable local contractors and should be hired to do some of the skilled and non-skilled work. Young people should decide what color the centre should be, what type of management is required, and what would be the opening hours. This will not only increase the level of ownership amongst young people towards the YC but also ensure long term sustainability and interest levels of the centre.
Out of the 32 Youth Centers, 26 identified as having regular access to drinking water during the wet seasons. Participants also indicated that during the dry season between the months of June to November water becomes scarce. Some participants also suggested ways of conserving rain by building proper drains, gutters and water tanks.

- 6 YC’s indicated that they had no access to water at all
- 8 YC’s indicated that they needed some minimal rehabilitation to their water supply

All 32 respondents identified as having toilets facilities inside the centre or near the building.

Some reasons why YC’s were not able to access water included:
- Conflict between communities who share the water line (damaging pipes and diverting water)
- System had gradually deteriorated over the time
- Unreliable contractor
- Bad season for water

A Sub District Administrator (SDA) mentioned that unreliable contractors were the cause for their water scarcity. The SDA mentioned that they used a local contractor to rehabilitate their water supply and within a few weeks of completion the community realized that the pipes were not installed based on the approved design and therefore some areas had missed out on accessing water. The contractor was not asked to repair the work as some community members held him in high regard, and therefore he was not made accountable to the community.

Out of 32 YC’s, 25 indicated that they have regular electricity. Regular meaning from 6:00pm to 12:00am. 7 YC’s indicated that they have no electricity at all.
1 out of 32 YC’s indicated that they have 24 hour electricity because they had installed solar power.

18 YC’s have generators, all mentioned the benefits having a generator but also raised concerns with maintaining one. Some indicated that theirs where no longer in use because of the lack of funds for fuel and constant maintenance. Other comments from participants regarding the use of generators included:

- Fuel price too high
- Theft of fuel by staff
- Miss management of fuel funds
- Generators that were not regularly maintained were noisy and blew a lot of smoke
- No regular funds provided by donors for fuel
- Staff taking generators home for personal use

Out of 32 YC’s, 18 indicated that they had IT equipment including computers, printers and scanners and all relied on electricity meaning youth could only access IT resources after hours or only when fuel was available.

**EQUIPMENT**

**Graph 5: Sports Equipment**

![Graph showing sports equipment](image)

Of the 32 YC’s mapped, 14 indicated that they did have sporting equipment provided to them via a range of donors. 18 YC’s indicated that they did not have any sporting equipment at all.

Out of the 18 YC’s that said they did not have sporting equipment, 10 indicated that they did have sporting equipment in the past but due to time, quality and management of these equipment they no longer have sporting equipment.

4 YC out of 14 indicated that they had received equipment from the SSYS and the remaining 10 received equipment from a range of donors including the local church, UN agencies, World Vision, YMCA and IOM.

Some YC’s indicated that they had received sports equipment from the SSYS but through the District Administration office, and others mentioned that they had received funds to purchase equipment from the SSYS.

The range of sporting equipment received includes; soccer balls, volley balls and nets, basketballs and badminton equipment.
Some concerns brought up by respondents included the quality of the sporting equipment and problems with durability. One respondent out of frustration mentioned that the balls only last the tournament that it's purchased for because the individuals who purchase the equipment are not usually the ones who use it, so they are not really interested if it's durable or not.

A range of respondents raised some concerns about the sports equipment provided by the SSYS that they had received a small amount of equipment and what was the real purpose of the distribution of this equipment. Was it to be divided amongst the different sucos, kept and managed for the YC’s use, or to be used for the district tournament only.

**Graph 6: IT Equipment**

The number of YC’s that have IT equipment compared to those that don’t are quite similar. Every YC that identified as having a computer also mentioned that maintenance and viruses are the main reasons why they have stopped functioning. The majority of centers that have computers also mentioned that more than 50% of their IT equipment is no longer functioning. One example YC had 5 computers and only one to date is still usable. The same centre also said that they had organized computer maintenance training for a small selected group of youth so they could maintain the centers computers. Unfortunately after the course was complete the ones that passed the course gained employment outside of their districts.

The majority of centers that have computers also indicated that they did have a generator but presently have no funds to purchase fuel or no funds for maintenance and therefore have allowed the generator to stop functioning.

18 centers that had computers only have electricity between 6:00pm and 12:00am. When asked the question who uses the YC computers while not being used during training, the response generally was, “those who have transport to travel to the centre at nights, generally males”. This defeats the purpose of an inclusive centre for all youth and further marginalizing women and those who do not have access to transport.

Only two YC’s were identified as having 24 hour electricity. One was due to the installation of solar panels which provide full time electricity and are maintained regularly, and the other is located close to the District capital.
17 respondents indicated that they did have furniture in the centre.
15 respondents indicated that they did not have any furniture or minimal furniture available.

Furniture that was available included chairs, tables, cupboards, bookshelves and desks.

### iii. FUNDING SOURCE

**Operational**
No YC’s identified that they receive funding from large donors. The majority of the YC’s interviewed indicated that all their funds were provided by international NGO’s such as World Vision, CRS, Care and Oxfam. There were no YC’s that identified receiving regular funds for operational cost except for the Suai YC and those YC’s associated with the church. All respondents indicated that they do receive funding from the GoTL for specific national events.

**Salary funding for the centre**
Out of the 32 YC’s only 2 mentioned that they have paid staff.

### iv. USERS OF THE CENTRE

Respondents indicated that on average both men and women are represented evenly when accessing the YC’s services although women’s participation was greater when cultural/national events were organized.

YC’s that had regular support, such as religious and NGO support, offered regular programs specifically for young women i.e. sewing and traditional weaving, and men i.e. mechanics and carpentry.

Respondents also mentioned that all program are available to any gender.

When asked what the average ages of participants are, the majority indicated that users were aged ‘between’ 15 to 35.

When asked who the users of the centre are, respondents replied “youth”. Some extended their responses by saying, “although, the centers do not discriminate individuals based on age” or ‘Youth are generally considered people who are unmarried’ or ‘it depends on the individuals on how youthful they feel’.
When asked what sort of youth groups use the centre? The majority of respondents identified “the community in general”, and a number of social groups (martial arts, sewing, weaving, spiritual sporting, and musical). One centre in Suai mentioned that NGO’s and the UN also use the centre to run workshops and conduct IT training for their staff.

v. OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT

District youth leaders, priests and government staffs were identified by all YC’s as being those responsible for managing the YC.

Of the 32 YC’s interviewed, only 10 identified as having a constitution or mandate that governs their YC. Some even had allocated special subgroups to tackle certain social issues in the area.

All YC’s indicated that even though a constitution had not been written, an executive structure had been set up to oversee operational management and to constitute certain positions for youth leaders in the centre.

vi. YOUTH CENTRE ACTIVITIES

Graph 8: Centre Activities

The main 3 activities that currently run in YC’s include: sports activities, computer training and English language training. Sports competition was also widely supported by both government and NGO’s. Youth also added that more sustainable national and district sporting competitions needed to be funded, such as soccer, volleyball, and badminton were needed to prevent youth involvement in anti social behavior, rather than short weekend competitions organized on national days only.

Respondents indicated that computer training was widely available in the centers, although regular maintenance and electricity was an issue as electricity is only available from 6:00pm to 12:00am. Computer equipment and training courses were mainly supported by I/NGO’s.

Graph 9: Future YC activities

When asked what type of activities they would like to see more of in the future, respondents indicated the following:
Agricultural/fisheries/husbandry and computers courses were the most common responses given by YC's. Sports activities, English courses and carpentry training were also in high demand. Some respondents also mentioned income generating activities as something to consider in the near future. When asked what types of income generating activities respondents suggested small nurseries, traditional weaving, jam making, straw baskets etc. Respondents also considered the importance of computer training but at the same time acknowledged high maintenance and if not funded properly could prove a burden for the YC's activities. Respondents suggested alternative power such as solar and wind as a means to overcome current electricity concerns.

Respondents also considered that courses such as computers, language and management created preconceived ideas about employment opportunities in the districts. Comments from YC's suggested that youth had gained employment after the completion of their courses but as the researcher delved further into this question, it was identified that it was quite the contrary because employment was only gained in Dili. Therefore, adding to the influx of youth coming to Dili to look for work. Initiatives that increase youth capacity to better serve their local community and retain youth in their district would be more advantageous in the longer term than those that force youth to seek employment in the city.

When respondents were asked if they received funding from a donor what activities they would run, the majority suggested agricultural training and more sports competitions, followed by computers, music and arts. Comparing graph 10 and graph 8, activities such as English and...
computer courses that appear in graph 8 are not reflected as priority needs for those interviewed through this study. Needs may have changed with time, or activities that are being offered now may be offered on the basis of assumed needs rather than research.

D. CONCLUSION

Young people should be given the opportunity to test ideas and behaviors, experiment with different roles in society, learn how to act in the world around them, explore, belong, and influence. YC’s are a great avenue for such opportunities.

The resources, conditions and activities of the YC’s assessed in Timor Leste through this mapping vary significantly from one another and usually depend on social/funding affiliations. The activities offered are generally small in scale and have limited coordination with similar government and NGO activities in the area and at times even compete for youth participation and donor funding, creating further dissatisfaction in the community.

The majority of YC’s in general have strong links to the community, some have direct affiliations with local churches and NGO’s giving them a level of support above the others. Faith based and NGO’s supported YC’s are modestly resourced. The remaining YC’s who have strong links with government, were extremely under resourced but still had the ability to deliver a range of activities focusing on the immediate needs of young people in the community such mediation, conflict resolution, sports and the coordination of national events.

The general infrastructure conditions of YC’s, although ok compared to other houses in the area, could be improved by providing minimal rehabilitation such as new painting, extra rooms, better toilet facilities, new windows, roofing, electricity and water.

A standard package of educational resources such as reading materials, in the form of posters, books, pamphlets and fliers should be sourced through INGO’s, businesses etc for the purpose of increasing reading materials in the local language.

Having access to water is a basic need in every youth centre, although the majority indicated that water was not an immediate concern it is imperative that action be taken to address YC’s which do not have access to drinking water and sanitation facilities. It is a health hazard to have a meeting point for the community that does not provide these basic services.

Electricity was one of the main concerns addressed by the YC’s. It was hard to imagine while conducting this survey the survival of YC’s without any electricity, specifically when trying to run computer classes and other training programs. It is recommended that the SSYS consider the possibility of funding alternative power to run the YC’s. One excellent example was the Suai YC that uses solar panels to power the YC. Out of the 32 centre that were mapped in the districts, the Suai YC was the most active in regard to youth participation.

It is recommended that the installation of solar power be taken into consideration by the SSYS when planning for next year’s budget. An Australian organization by the name of Alternative Technology Australia (ATA) has extensive experience installing solar power panels in a number of districts in Timor. Installations have occurred in clinics, schools and community centers. If a decision is made to pursue this avenue than the SSYS should initiate contacts with ATA for future collaboration. There are a number of local businesses which have experience in this area also. Star Tech Enterprise (Ph 7233868) is a local alternative technology organization in Timor who is willing to provide advice and quotes for parts and installation to the SSYS. STE have installed a number of solar panels for the GoTL and are currently contracted by government to provide and install Solar panels for the Suco offices.
It was also identified that courses in language and IT could result in young people attempting to seek employment in Dili, where as courses in agriculture, carpentry, and mechanics would retain youth in the districts.

Of the 32 YC’s evaluated, the Suai YC in the Cova Lima District is a great model for the Government of Timor Leste (GoTL) to replicate. Limited resources for operational and program costs are provided by Oxfam and the City of Port Phillip in Australia but the YC is still able to address specific community youth needs through centre activities.

Self sustaining mechanisms such as a solar power energy system have been installed providing 24 hours electricity that also maintains the water and sanitation facilities. Training is provided to young people in basic software applications and hardware maintenance, allowing the YC to build youth skills in an area which is essential to the IT maintenance of the centre. The YC also hires out their centre and resources to local businesses and NGO’s to generate small income to maintain the centre activities.

The centre has identified cultural practices of certain communities that exploit and undermine the human dignity of young women and therefore have addressed this social issue by signing an agreement with local government to address these concerns through schools and youth groups in the area. Overall the YC provides some very good example of a youth lead youth centre in Timor Leste. There are still minor improvement that could be made such as a fresh coat of paint in colors that are pleasant and welcoming, posters on the walls that address youth concerns and youth activities, and a waiting area that is comfortable and resourced with educational materials.

Overall, there remains many gaps in sustainable support provided to youth centers in Timor Leste. As close to 50% of the population is under the age of 15, it is essential that replicable YC’s such as that in Suai are used as a model when determining future donor funding allocations and support for YC’s in all Districts.