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# fundasaun Alola

A REPORT TO ALOLA FOUNDATION

Dili Timor Leste

by Jean Howe

Representing Threads of Life &

Yayasan Pecinta Budaya Bebali

*For ten days in May 2009 two YPBB staff (Willy Daos Kadati, I Wayan Sukadana) and three TOL staff (Jean Howe, William Ingram and I Made Rai Artha) visited FA weavers' groups in Timor-Leste to make an initial assessment and to plan future collaborations. This report will focus on that visit and the outcomes and recommendations from the perspective of Yayasan Pecinta Budaya Bebali*

## An Opportunity to promote traditional textile & basketry arts of Timor-Leste

*The traditional textile and basketry arts of Timor-Leste offer significant business opportunities to Alola Esperanza and community development opportunities to Fundasaun Alola.*



### Focus on Consumer Needs

*Taking advantage of these opportunities requires the development of a marketing focus aimed at fulfilling the consumers' needs, rather than a community development focus aimed at fulfilling the producers' needs. This shift from current practice is critical to the success of Alola Esperanza and to training communities to participate profitably in the marketplace.*

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**Middle:** Traditional textile with a *Sterculia foetida* seed pod which also appears as a motif

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# *An Opportunity to Promote Traditional Textile & Basketry Arts of Timor-Leste*

## 1. Executive Summary

**The traditional textile and basketry arts of Timor-Leste offer significant business opportunities** to *Alola Esperanza* and community development opportunities to *Fundasaun Alola*.

Taking advantage of these opportunities requires the development of a marketing focus aimed at fulfilling the consumers' needs, rather than a community development focus aimed at fulfilling the producers' needs. This shift from current practice is critical to the success of *Alola Esperanza* and to training communities to participate profitably in the marketplace.

***Alola Esperanza* must identify its market niche and address it in a focused way.** *YPBB* suggests that a viable niche exists for products that are characterized by:

- Having high quality and low volume,
- Being made from natural materials,
- Exhibiting cultural integrity, and
- Being handmade by Timor-Leste women.

*Alola Esperanza* field staff and retail staff will need to become experts on the textile and basketry arts of Timor-Leste, in order to be effective with the communities and with the store in addressing this market niche. Understanding and being able to explain the production processes, plant resources, and deep cultural context will be key to offering the producers appropriate support and giving consumers what they need. Staff will need appropriate training in order to make this shift. Internships with *Threads of Life*, *Yayasan Pecinta Budaya Bebal*, or similar organizations are one way of achieving this.

Addressing this niche in a focused way means no longer buying antique textiles and disaggregating *Taibesi* and the shop, which have significantly differing business profiles. Separation of producer groups between *Taibesi* and the shop is indicated.

Developing this business model will take time, perhaps several years, and *Alola* needs to decide whether it is willing to invest this time and money in *Esperanza*. That *Esperanza* has struggled in the past need not mean that it will do so in the future, if decisive action in support of a new direction is taken. *Threads of Life's* experience of its own business is that the investment is very worthwhile.

*Alola Esperanza* is currently over-paying for its textiles. A profitable business organized on fair trade principles will ensure the producers long-term wellbeing. This requires a reduction in the prices *Esperanza* pays to producers to sustainable local-market levels.

THREADS OF LIFE

## 2. Background

**The Fundasaun Alola (FA) Handcraft Industry program works with 22 women's groups that weave traditional Timor Leste textiles.** The participation of women and young people in the development of Timor Leste is essential to deliver sustainable outcomes in peace and reconciliation, justice and equality, economic development and the eradication of poverty. In the early years of its formation FA, made attempts to salvage the remnants of the historic textiles of Timor Leste, that had mainly disappeared after the violence in 1999. Since then, FA has noted that, due to the disruption and social destruction of the last thirty years, there is a loss of skill, technique and understanding of how to produce fine textiles, and the older women are dying without having passed on their skills to the younger women, or documenting their cultural knowledge.

FA through its retail arm, *Esperanza*, would like to combat the vulnerability of this important artistic tradition, and is currently seeking the support of its regional neighbors, specifically the foundation, *Yayasan Pecinta Budaya Bebalí (YPBB)*, and its sister organization, the retail gallery of *Threads of Life*. Both are based in Ubud Bali. Opportunities for collaboration focus on YPBB's core competencies in facilitating peer-to-peer learning, weavers' cooperative development, dye plant resource management, and with *Threads of Life* experience over the past ten years with marketing Indonesian traditional textiles. The textiles of Timor Leste are closely related to the textiles of eastern Indonesia, and the collaboration holds the key for understanding and reviving the Timor Leste tradition.

*Yayasan Pecinta Budaya Bebalí (YPBB)*, *Threads of Life (TOL)* and *Esperanza Timor Leste* which all focus on economic development through community-based revival of the traditional textile arts, have been trying to establish a working relationship between the networks of weavers that they serve since 2006. Although political problems and social unrest in Timor Leste have disrupted this process, YPBB/TOL and *Esperanza* continue to seek deeper ties due to the logic of reconnecting Indonesian and Timor Leste weavers from closely related cultural, ethnic and language groups, and the opportunity to participate in building peace and reconciliation between Indonesia and Timor Leste. In October 2008, FA CEO, Anne Finch, and four FA staff attended a weeklong YPBB networking workshop in Flores. At this time YPBB and FA through *Esperanza* decided to create a community exchange-based program between the weavers of *Esperanza* and YPBB's network of cooperatives in Indonesia.

### 3. Report Outline

**For ten days in May 2009**, two *YPBB* staff (Willy Daos Kadati, I Wayan Sukadana) and three *TOL* staff (Jean Howe, William Ingram and I Made Rai Artha) visited textiles weaving groups in Lautem, Baucau, and Bobonaro along with a visit to basket makers in Liquica and Lautem to make an initial assessment and to plan future collaborations. This report will focus on that visit and *YPBB*'s observations and recommendations.

- The sections of the report following this outline are:
- Market Viability for Traditional Textiles and Baskets in Timor Leste
- *Esperanza Retail Store* as an Outlet for Traditional Textiles
- Natural-Dyed Traditional Textiles and Cultural Continuity
- Availability of Plant Resources for Natural Dyes & Retained Knowledge of Natural Dye Recipes
- Analysis of Producer Groups

Section 4 determines how textile and basket sales offer a viable business opportunity in a niche market. Section 5 begins to discuss what *Esperanza* needs to do to achieve this market segment. Sections 6 and 7 explore cultural continuity, natural dye skills and dye plant resources as recorded by *YPBB* during a week in the field. This data is not meant to be exhaustive, and should be re-checked. Its inclusion in this report is intended to convey to *Esperanza* *YPBB*'s and *TOL*'s fieldwork methodologies and priorities, and their relevance to the marketing analysis of sections 3 and 4. Section 8 applies the rubric developed in all the preceding sections to specific producer groups that *Alola* is working with.

**The bulk of this report will focus on the textiles** although *YPBB* believes that the basketry is an equally important cultural art form. Gathering cultural information that gives context to a textile or basket is as important as gathering specific information about the textile's name, maker, materials, motifs, and community of origin. Traditional textiles are one important manifestations of a living culture. Therefore, this report will include a fair amount of information related to: ancestral villages where a community originated and current villages where a community currently lives, and the history of the movement between the two; traditional social structures, clan relationships, and languages; ceremonies and rituals once performed and those still being performed. The footnotes are intended as suggestions to *Esperanza* staff towards building their own cultural resource guide to the communities they will work with to support the continuation of traditional textile weaving.

The section on raw materials builds understanding of the plants used, where they are from, and how plentiful (or not) they are, and is important to both cultural and business sustainability. Where local language names vary, scientific identifications aid in the sharing of skills and knowledge between traditions within Timor-Leste and related traditions in Indonesia. Understanding weavers demand for a particular plant compared to its local population and sustainable yield is crucial to the building of a sustainable business.

I Made Rai Artha of *TOL* made a statement to the *FA* group while we were traveling that is important to note at this point:

“If there is one woman left who still knows how to make a textile and remembers the dye recipes than it is possible to revive the tradition.”



#### 4. Market Viability for Traditional Textiles and Baskets in Timor Leste by *Esperanza*

Across the entire range of government, AID, INGO and NGO interventions in support of handicraft-based livelihoods, organizations are primarily community development focused with methodologies correctly based on community consultation and the fulfillment of community needs. Their business initiatives are usually designed from this perspective, seeking to fulfill the producers' needs, and result in a culture of dependence within which producers feel that whatever they make should be bought by the supporting organization. By contrast, **sound business practice is focused on fulfilling customer needs.**

**Building good business in this environment means constantly working against the current of unachievable expectations that weavers have leaned from years of distorted exposure to the market.** *YPBB's* and *Threads of Life's* strategy is therefore to expose weavers' groups, in stages and over time, to the full reality of the market challenges they face, the market opportunities they have, and the competitive advantage they enjoy.

*Alola Esperanza* is competing in the same market with all the textile and textile-related handicraft retailers and producers in Bali. Most of the people who buy traditional textiles from the gallery in Dili are holidaying in Bali too, and what is sold in Australia is also competing with Indonesian traditional textiles. What, therefore, is *Esperanza's* competitive advantage in this marketplace? It currently struggles to compete in terms of both price and quality (though this can change over time), but there are aspects to *Esperanza's* work that differentiate it, mark its uniqueness, and define a potential market niche. Assuming the quality and price issues are addressed, the potential competitive advantage can be outlined as follows:

1. The traditional textiles and baskets are from Timor Leste, which makes them unusual and attractive in the marketplace;
2. *Esperanza* is based in Timor Leste and is therefore in a unique position to prove the relevance of this through the way it articulates its local knowledge of the textiles and their traditions;
3. Natural dyes add value to a product (in Indonesia return to labor for the weaver on natural dyes is at least 370% of the return on Synthetic dyes) in a way that cannot be duplicated in the factory production against which weavers are competing if they use synthetic dyes;
4. The above play into the bottom line that sales support sustainable livelihoods for women weavers, though this point must be carefully presented. *Esperanza* must decide whether it wants to market from an activist standpoint that raises awareness of the women's situation (arguably what has been tried up to now), or market from a business standpoint that regards the weavers as legitimate and full participants in the marketplace, treating them as business partners rather than recipients of aid (a position *YPBB* and *Threads of Life* argue is more sustainable since it embodies the change we are seeking to facilitate).
5. The difference between activism and business is communicated to the buyer through the marketing materials: when the weavers' names, villages and dignified photographs are displayed with their textiles, the image is one of solidarity and the support is implicit rather than explicit. The ability to facilitate such a direct peer-to-peer connection between the buyer and producer is then the key competitive advantage that creates a lasting emotional bond to the weaver and her product. No organization that is not working in the communities can achieve this and *Esperanza* should play it to its full advantage.

Products in this niche are therefore characterized by:

1. Having high quality and low volume,
2. Being made from natural materials,
3. Exhibiting cultural integrity, and
4. Being handmade by Timor-Leste women.

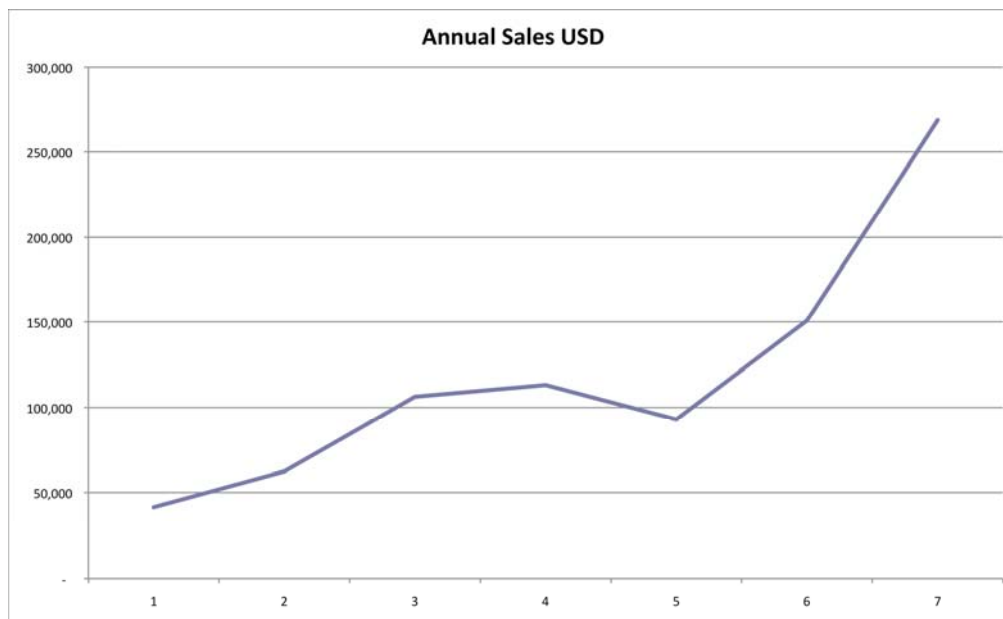
The order of importance of these characteristics proceeds from the physical nature of the object (1 and 2); the value-adding characteristics (3 and 4) are significant, but secondary. High quality is essential to attract buyers, since the producers and *Esperanza* cannot compete in the high-volume low-price market segment. The use of natural dyes and natural materials add significant aesthetic and therefore financial value to the

product itself, making for a viable business. Cultural integrity and the relationship to the women producers add symbolic value that contributes to sale-ability, but these are not sufficient without a quality product.

**The clearest contradiction within current practice to achieving this niche market is that Esperanza buys and sells both old and new textiles.** This confuses both the buyer and the seller. The reputation that the shop is trying to build for itself is muddled because enough potential buyers become unclear about the shop's mission and ask themselves how buying antiques contributes to sustainable livelihood today. The impact of this lack of clarity should not be underestimated. Building a name depends on word of mouth promotion, so the message about what *Esperanza* does needs to be unambiguous and easily repeated.

There are two further issues to consider concerning the marketing of old textiles, but these are related to the supply. First, old textiles are sold at the village level at a much cheaper price than the new textiles and thus can be retailed at *Esperanza* for less money than the new textiles, thus undermining their market. Second, the supply of these old textiles will be exhausted at some time in the near future and then what will *Esperanza* sell? The old textiles provide both the model and the inspiration for contemporary production of traditional textiles. That a tradition cannot survive solely in weavers' memories has been documented in many cultures. Traditional textiles remaining in their communities of origin are vital to the continuation of the art. *Esperanza* cannot hope to succeed in maintaining a vital contemporary production while also stripping its supplier communities of their textile archive. Currently, *Esperanza* is not actively supporting the continuation of the traditional art either on a retail level or in the field.

## 5. Esperanza Retail Store as an Outlet for Traditional Textiles



*Annual Sales of Threads of Life gallery in USD for its first seven years of operation (2001-2008).*

**Any marketing strategy working with rural producer groups on products that have multi-year production cycles (natural-dyed textiles) must be willing to invest a significant amount of time and resources in the appropriate way if it is to expect profitability.** The graphic of *Threads of Life*'s first seven years of business demonstrate the amount of time needed to develop producer groups, production levels and quality, marketing skill, reputation, and market penetration. The business was profitable from the first year, but it took five years to establish strong growth. After taking five years to double the first year's sales, the next doubling took only eighteen months.

**The lesson that Alola can draw from this is that past performance should not limit the time given for future improvement, as long as significant changes in fieldwork and marketing practice can be documented.** Any new strategies must be given time to bare fruit, perhaps as many as five years more time.

Movement of inventory between the shop and *Taibesi* would then be regarded as internal sales; both would have to agree whether these sales were made with or without a degree of profit. *Taibesi* should also account for the in-kind donations it receives, adding their nominal value to its income figures and balance sheet, and calculating this value into its product pricing structure. *YPBB* suspects that *Alola Esperanza* is significantly and unintentionally under-representing its current profitability to *FA* by disregarding donated inventory.

Most of the villages *YPBB-TOL* visited are among the few places that *Alola* takes visitors when wanting to highlight the weaving art. This is understandable but when a group is primarily visited for this purpose, the weaver group's expectations are usually that they will perform a demonstration and then sell textiles, usually at inflated retail prices. While this brings needed short-term cash infusions into a producer community, it undermines efforts to build a sustainable wholesale market for the weavers and a profitable retail market for *Esperanza*.

Buying textiles at a fair price means understanding what the local market price is so that the textiles continue to be available locally. Buying at inflated prices will destroy the local market by making textiles unaffordable for locals, have an adverse affect on the cultural continuity of a community's textiles, and ultimately erode the quality and cultural integrity of the textile art, which will cause the external market to collapse too.



**When a weaver sells a textile for a high price, leaving Esperanza with very narrow profit margins, there is no room in the pricing structure to continue working on quality issues.**

*Threads of Life's* experience with new weavers groups is that after an initial brief increase in quality in response to higher prices, production volume increases and quality drops as women seek to increase their income. Yet weavers will still want the high price for this poorer work.

If initial purchases are at a lower price that reflects the local market, than there is room to increase the price as the quality increases. A weaver will work with this if they see you are coming on a regular basis and are not a one-time visitor. Given that the current weaver groups are already in the habit of selling to *Esperanza* as high prices it would be important to establish better working relationships with new groups while slowly working to change the nature of the relationships with the current groups.

Being firm on the business pricing policy does not mean that the weavers groups are not offered other support. *YPBB* and *Threads of Life* field staff endeavor to develop strong peer-to-peer relationships with the weavers, and seek to help address a range of issues with the community, which may include: the social cohesion of a weaving cooperative, effective bookkeeping practices that provide transparency, the availability of raw materials such as dye plants and cotton thread, and the loss of dye recipes. Regular visits also allow the field staff to better understand the cultural context in which the textiles are made and used. This information can be then retold in point of sales material that adds value to the textiles.

**In YPBB's estimation, having visited Timor Leste weavers in the field, there is potential for Esperanza to develop a viable business with a healthy markup that also offers the weaving groups a long-term market with increasing prices.**

One issue that will need to be resolved is the different supply needs of *Esperanza* and *Taibesi*. At this time our understanding is that *Esperanza* buys textiles that have cultural relevance to resell as art, and *Taibesi* buys textiles as raw materials for the production of fine accessories and homewares. These are very different aims that should be met with different quality control standards and pricing policies. We suggest that *Taibesi* and *Esperanza* buy from different producer groups so that the weavers receive a clear and consistent message from the *Alola* entity they are working with regarding standards and pricing. In *Threads of Life's* experience, weavers with little market experience struggle to differentiate between two sets of purchasing standards from the same organization, and end up fulfilling neither properly.

Differentiating the supply streams for *Taibesi* and the shop addresses a retail challenge inherent in the current practices. *Taibesi* has a major presence in the retail outlet and *Taibesi* products account for most of the shop's sales. *Taibesi* makes products out of the same textiles the shop sells in complete form but, whereas the full textile (say a good *Sabu* textile from Bobonaro) is priced at US\$ 200, the bags made out of the same textile are sold for US\$ 5 and US\$ 20. Potential buyers see the same cloth in the bags and displayed on the wall and must wonder about the relatively high price of the full cloth. It is therefore important that *Taibesi's* production is in coordination with the shop's purpose.

## 6. Natural Dyed Traditional Textiles and Cultural Continuity

### 1). District of Lautem

#### a) Village of Tututala

Tututala is an ethnic group with their own language, Fatuluku, that literally translates as “to speak the truth”. Tututala has a strong traditional culture despite the loss of traditional houses (*Uma Lulik*) along with the loss of traditional architects to rebuild these houses during the fighting in the later 1990s through the early 2000s. The traditional social structure had three classes: *Liurae* (raja or king), *ratu* (nobelman), *paca* (the middle class), and the *akan* (servant group).



**Above:** *Uma Lulik* traditional house in male and female pair.

**Right:** Ceci and grandmother, Joanna, with stripes of cloth handed down.

The traditional houses called *Uma Lulik* translate as “house that is culturally potent”. The houses each are called by a name related to the ancestral line. The houses are made in male and female pairs<sup>1</sup>. The major difference between the male and female houses is in the roofline. The thicker roof would be the female house where the women and children would sleep. The older women would sleep on the first level with a second level where the children would sleep<sup>2</sup>.

We had only a short time to talk with weavers but it was clear that the elder women particularly still have knowledge of the traditional textiles, their meaning and use. Our guide and translator was Cecilia Da Fonseca, head of Livelihood at FA. It was with her older relatives that we discussed textiles and their cultural relevance.

While Mana Cecilia has not lived in Tututala since she was a child, it is very evident what strong ties she feels to her culture even though she is not a weaver and does not have specific information related to traditional textiles. We did not see any women weaving but were told that the women weave when there is a need to weave for wedding gifts or funerals. They do not weave for a commercial market. We spoke at length with her remarkably vital step-grandmother, Joanna Da Fonseca who I would imagine to be in her early 80s. Mana Joanna was born in the old traditional compound of Ili Kare Kare which is the area where the rock art is located. They moved to the current compound of Ili Miri where we visited in 1920s. We were fortunate that Joanna was so willing to share information about the textiles of Tututala as much of the culture is considered to be “lulik” meaning it is culturally powerful and therefore not discussed lightly.



Mana Joanna and her brother both talked to us for several hours about Tututala textiles. Generally, *lau* means cloth, *tupur lau* is a woman’s cloth and *nami lau* is a man’s cloth. Two types of textile were described as “lulik”: the *Sika Lau* and the *Reti Ifi*. These are used as gifts exchanged at marriages between the bride’s family and the groom’s family. It was implied that neither of these cloths are to be sold or to leave the village<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Told by Casiano Luis De Costa Soares Rangel from Rasa, Lautem. Casiano works in the Livelihood Section at FA. His grandfather was a traditional architect.

<sup>2</sup> There is much information to collect on these fascinating traditional houses as there are carvings that relate to textile motifs, the textiles would have been stored in certain parts of the house and textiles would more than likely have been used in ceremonies related to the house either for the family or for the building itself.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to determine for certain that the *Sika Lau* and *Reti Ifi* textiles of Tututala may not be reproduced for sale. We have found this to be the case in some traditional communities in Indonesia and we have been unable to work with these communities to revive the art form.



**Top:** Joanna and Sika Lau  
**Bottom:** Laku Lili on Uma Lulik is the wood hanging down from first floor.

The *Sika lau* is a cloth made by the mother and given to her daughter at marriage. The daughter would follow this by passing it on to her daughter. The tradition of making this cloth is continued by presenting the daughter at marriage with a wrapped bundle that contains cuts sections of *Sika Lau* textiles that were woven by the grandmothers in the past.

- **Sika Lau**

The *Sika Lau* is a handspun, natural dyed textile with a prescribed structure. The motifs on the head and foot of the cloth are related to the rock art from Ili Kare Kare. The cloth we were shown contained many of the images that were discussed. Other



**Top:** Rock art man on horse  
**Right:** Laku Lili motif on left and Nani Ropi on right



images discussed were *olo* (bird), *faria* (bells), *nana ropi* (nana means snake in Fatuluku, *ropi* means seven), and *la furi* (a cooking place). Motifs in the textiles that we were shown that are also depicted in the rock art are: *ma'ar lau hana asu hiape* (person in a boat) and *kuca hau ma'ar lau hana hiape* (person riding a horse). *Lakulili* is also depicted which is a piece of wood that hangs from the traditional house. The textile motifs that we saw in Tututala are still considered proprietary by the people of Tututala but are now found throughout other areas of Lautem such as Com and Los Palos.



**Far Left:** Rock art people in boat

**Left:** Motifs reading from right to left - *Ma'ar lau hana asu hiape*, *kuca hau ma'ar lau hana hiape*, and *faria* or bell

- **Reti Ifi**

This textile is from the father's family and given to the bride at her marriage being symbolic of her carrying on the traditions of the man's lineage. At first glance and without its cultural context, this textile looks rather ordinary. It is a boldly striped synthetic dyed textile using reds, black and yellows. When understanding its cultural context, one is struck with the power of the textile. *Reti* and *ifi* both mean snake. The head and foot of the textile both contain the head of the snake making this textile a two-headed snake.



The first small red band on either end of the cloth is said to be the mouth of the snake, the next band with motifs is the head of the snake and the black band is the neck. The middle bands are the chest or organs of the snake and the blue-black bands are the tail. The sewn middle section of the textile is the end and also the beginning of the tail as one continues to view the striped sections in the reverse order.



**Far Left:** Joanna explains the Reti Ifi motif. The first red stripe is the mouth of a snake.

If the textile were to be eaten by a rat, it is seen as a warning that something ominous will happen. However, an *Ina haranu* or paranormal could be asked to intercede. He would know what to do by reading the signs from random sliced bits of a banana leaf and the liver of a chicken.

#### b. Village of Com

Com appears to be a recent community that has developed along the northern coastline of Lautem. There are beach resorts and the weaving community group *Baira Mar* is right across the street from the beach. We did not meet Mana Rosa who is the head of the weaving group but we were able to talk to Robela Mendes and Candida Docarmo who are members of the group. There are fifteen weavers in the group and many are making new stripped cloth made with synthetic dyes and sold as table runners. They also make betelnut baskets that are very intricate although we only saw lontar woven baskets with large red synthetic dyed patterns. Most of the better cloths were old (30–50 years) and the new ones were expensive, selling for US\$ 200–400.



**Left:** Depicts *Upu Lakua* textile (right) and *Caru Naku* textile (left) used for marriage gift exchanges.



However, the information that Mana Robela and Mana Candida shared with us demonstrated that they still retain a lot of information about their traditional textiles of which they spoke proudly. They have three traditional textiles used for marriage gift exchanges. These are *Sika Lau*, *Caru Naku*, and *Upu Lakuar*. There is also a common textile called *Racikea*. The *Sika Lau* is more identified with Tutuala and the women seemed more eager to explain the *Caru Naku* and *Upu Lakuar*.

*Upu Lakuar* is identified by its bold black and red strips which are close together. The center seam is generally sewn with yellow thread. The *Caru Naku* has a seam that is sewn with black threads and has large black bands in its structure. *Caru* means indigo.

In the older textiles, there is a central band containing nine ikat motifs. From right to left they read: 1) *capuk* (crab), 2) *mae* (eagle), 3) *nana caufitu* (seven headed snake), 4) *keo* (silver ceremonial bracelet), 5) *poreasa* (*Sterculia foetida* leaf), 6) *keo* is repeated, 7) *poreasa* is repeated, 8) *hual saka* (ceremonial comb made from turtle shell), and 9) *rekisana* (border or boundary). Over time the motifs have been made larger to save time resulting in fewer than nine motifs appearing in these large ikat bands.



**Upu Lakua motifs from Top Left to Right:** 1) *Capuk* (crab), 2) *Mae* (eagle), 3) *Nana Caufitu* (seven headed snake), 4) *Keo* (silver ceremonial bracelet).



**Upu Lakua motifs from Top Left to Right:** 5) Poreasa (*Sterculia foetida* leaf), 6) Keo is repeated, 7) Poreasa is repeated, 8) Hual Saka (ceremonial comb made from turtle shell) and 9) Rekisana (border or boundary)

*Opi letu ci'i lana* is the name for the ikat between the stripes. Small dashes called *kakun*



also appear on the textile. *Kakun* is either the seeds inside a bean pod or the teeth of a goat. The type of stitching that was originally used in joining a woman's sarong is called *puuk note* or sack stitch. The Portuguese introduced a French seam as this was what was used on woman's clothes so the seam lays down. On a traditional textile this type of stitching looks more bulky. The *puuk note* is much more attractive.

### c) Village of Ira Ara

Ira Ara is the community just outside of the town of Los Palos. It clearly has visitors who buy textiles as the group was well prepared to receive visitors and sell textiles. Joanina Marques is the head of the weaving group of Ira Ara and Magaleana Marques is considered the master weaver. Joanina is the wife of Afonso Marques and together they are the clan elders as was evident by their role in the procession for the month of May where statues of Mary and Joseph are processed through the streets accompanied by the community.



**Above:** Clan Elders Joanina Marques and Afonso Marques of Ira Ara  
**Right:** 9 motifs of the Sika Lau textile.

In the community hall textiles were hung along the walls and lines were strung to hang more. Many of the textiles were old selling for as little as US\$35–50 while the new textiles, such as a handspun natural dyed *Sika lau*, were selling for US\$ 250–400.

There are nine main motifs in the prominent ikat band of the *Sika lau* textile although some of the motifs repeat. Reading the motifs from left to right: 1) *Ara lopo*, 2) *Mai* (eagle), 3) *Keu ca'u walu* (eight headed bracelet) 4) *Lau Nail* (traditional comb), 5) *Ara lopo*, 6) *Keu ca'u walu* 7) *Lau Nail*, 8) *Keu* (a ceremonial bracelet), and 9) *Cepuka* (crab).



There were a number of other textiles that demonstrated a wide range of techniques still used along with *sisirana* or ikat<sup>4</sup>

- a. *Porose* – a tapestry weave like kilim

<sup>4</sup> The names for these techniques needs to be re-checked. We were getting conflicting information due to the chaos of the market place. It would be good to work in making small weavings using these techniques to encourage the art. Standards of quality would need to be established by the weaving group and the market.



- b. *Tere* – Supplementary weft
- c. *Kei ilana* – supplementary warp
- d. *Pele* – Warp wrap technique

We joined Mana Joanina to collect dye plants for the dye demonstration. (Dye Table, Section 2). The weaving cooperative has no pricing structure and the prices go up and down depending on what local passers-by suggest. While we were there, the weaving cooperative started off showing their own textiles – old and new - but by the end anyone with a textile was coming in to try and sell it.<sup>5</sup>



**Top:** A type of tapestry weave technique used in Ira Ara is called *porose*  
**Bottom:** Supplementary weft called *tere*



**Top:** *Kei ilana* supplementary warp technique  
**Bottom:** *Pele* Warp wrap technique

<sup>5</sup> The cooperative needs to be worked with on what it means to be a cooperative. Fair market prices need to be established and held to in order to ensure repeat business. This would require on-going visits and workshops with functioning cooperatives.



## 2). District of Baucau

### a) Village of Quelicai

The *Feto Forte* (“strong women”) Weaving Cooperative has about twenty members with perhaps five members that know about the process of making natural dyes. Most of the weaving that this cooperative is selling is colorful synthetic dyed striped textiles.<sup>6</sup>



*Above: Quelicai weaver with textile*



*Above: Cooperative Feto Forte from the Village of Quelicai*

A handful of women were very happy to take us to the fields and point out the plants they use to make natural dyed textiles. Here we also noticed the number of traditional houses still in tact on the three hills around us, indicating a strong traditional culture in this area.<sup>7</sup> The handspun natural dyed textiles that we were shown had integrity. Perhaps because the culture is still in tact so are the textile arts. Prices were high with the large piece being US\$80 and the smaller pieces selling for US\$10 and US\$15.

We were impressed with the cooperative and how they help each other. From the sale of every small textile sold US\$ 1 is deposited in the cooperative’s savings and loan program while US\$ 5 is stored from the sale of large textiles. Funds from this saving account can be borrowed by the members as needed.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> It would be important to find out who they sell these textiles to. What is the local demand for the textiles they make? What do they sell them for and how many do they make a year?

<sup>7</sup> If a field staff is trained to work with these weaving groups it would be important to return to this village to understand the traditional culture and the use and importance of textiles in the tradition.

<sup>8</sup> Find out more how the cooperatives’ saving and loan system works. What are the interest rates, amounts loaned, rates of repayment, etc.

### 3). District of Bobonaro

#### a) Village of Taliltae, Morobo

The textiles of the *Kemak* ethnic group, are black with small sections of ikat. The *Kemak* are living in Bobonaro and Ermera Districts<sup>9</sup>. A master weaver, Selina Gorla Leite from Bobonaro seems to have been working with Esperanza for some time. We first met her at a meeting at the office in Dili. Mana Selina had traveled from Bobonaro to Dili with her daughter by bus along with textiles for sale and samples of her dye plants and process. The textiles she showed us were the three traditional textiles used for marriage gift exchanges, funerals and for agricultural ceremonies:

1. *Tais Feto Bodato* – A woman's sarong that is mostly black with small bands of brown ikat and decorated with a very small supplementary warp wrap patterning at the edge of the foot and head of the textile.
2. *Tais Mane Sabu* – A man's hip cloth with a centerfield and small bands of ikat patterning on the outer edges. The square lines with a wave like pattern are called *kleu* and the dashes are called *gun*.
3. *Tais Mane Api Den* – A man's hip cloth mostly black with white bands of ikat called *sara mata*.

Mana Selina's description of her dye process was very impressive and was the motivation for us making the trip to Bobonaro to visit her the next day. We drove to Malinana and then to Mana Selina's *aldeia* called Atu Aben (means "in front of the rock" in *Kemak*).

There are two more *aldeia*: Ilat Laun and Soi Lesu. These three places are referenced back to the three sons of the clan leader originating in Morobo. The three sons were Lolu Ubun who settled in Ilat Laun, Dasi Ubun who settled in Soi Lesu, and Bere Ubun who settled in Atu Aben. The three brothers had different roles, which are maintained by their descendants, which are listed below in descending order of importance:

- Lolu Ubun is similar to a priest who would make sure that appropriate traditional practices and ceremonies are carried out;
- Dasi Ubun is similar to a judge who would settle disputes related to land and conflicts between families;
- Bere Ubun organizes events and receives guests.

As in other areas, the Portuguese chose to give more power to the position of the judge and gave the person who held this traditional role the title Don, which put him above the traditional ruler. Every year at the time of harvest the whole clan gathers in Ilat Laun and then process to Atu Aben and Soi Les thereby circling all of the area of Morobo.

We bought textiles for a very high price in the village. They wanted US\$ 120 as they had just gotten that price recently. We were able to settle on US\$ 100 for a *Tais Mane Sabu*. The next day we saw two *Tais Mane Sabu* for sale in the Maliana market for US\$ 40 each. It is very important to know what the local price is and to start to buy at that price.



**Top:** Bodato woman's sarong

**Middle:** Sabu man's hip cloth

**Bottom:** Api Den man's hip cloth

<sup>9</sup> Helen Gomoies, working as the retail manager of Esperanza, is from Ermera and speaks *Kemak* and knows about the Bobonaro textiles as they are the same as those made and used in her own area. She described these bordering areas as having been one ethnic group in the past but are now two different districts.

## 7. Natural Availability of Plant Resources for Natural Dyes & Retained Knowledge of Natural Dye Recipes

### 1). District of Lautem

#### a. Village of Tututala

There is a large tract of intact forest where we collected plant specimens. The forest is a National Forest but is cared for by the community and they are allowed to take plants and trees as needed for their household and garden purposes. This needs to be better researched relative to how they get permission to clear forest for their gardens or new homes. We walked through the forest looking for *rufa* and found a reasonable specimen for identification and we collected enough leaves to take back to the YPBB dye studio to experiment with. We also found an interesting tree, called *parawela*, which is found in fairly large numbers and used to make canoes. The bark of *parawela* is used to make bark cloth. Joanina Marques of Ira Ara had a strip of bark cloth in her collection. We will attempt to identify this tree as it has important cultural value. We saw *upara kulaik* (*Casia fistula*) growing in the forest. In Indonesia the bark is used in a black dye process but the men we were walking with said that it is used to make *sopi* or alcohol with no reference to dyes. We also saw *wanigua* (Tetun: *hau absa*), which is used in West Timor in mordant process but is used as a vegetable with taro root and corn. *Wata wata* (Tetun: *mat brisa*) was seen also used in the mordant process in West Timor but we were told both *wanigua* and *wata wata* had no dye relevance. The weavers referred to *mutu mutu petina* (white *Jatropha sp.*) and *mutu mutu mimiraka* (red *Jatropha sp.*). The red *Jatropha sp.* was mentioned as being used in the black dye process.



The dye recipes as reported by the women we talked to in Tututala were very incomplete. They described using *hai* (*Aleurites moluccana*) for the oil, *nenuka* roots (*Morinda sp.*) and *rufa* leaves.<sup>10</sup>

Generally when using *Morinda* roots for dyeing it is necessary to also use a plant that contains aluminum as part of a mordant process. In Tututala the weavers use *rufa* with *Morinda* and we wonder if this is the Alum source. While in Tututala forest we collected enough *rufa* leaves so that we could test the leaves for aluminum once we returned to Bali. We did a controlled experiment between June 15-18, 2009, using *Morinda* roots with dried *rufa* and with dried *Symplocos* leaves. (A tree that contains one of the highest levels of aluminum is *Symplocos sp.*) The results showed that the *rufa* contain some aluminum as the threads did go red although not as red as when using *Symplocos*. We will get the *rufa* identified and have the leaves chemically tested for aluminum content.

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<sup>10</sup> If there were a trained field staff, it would be important to return to Tututala and find other women who are also weaving and explore dye recipes further. They have a very intact forest with plenty of plants for dye work.

**RED**

Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
NO PICTURE	<i>Hai</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Aleurites moluccana	Nuts	Used in the mordant process. Seeds are pounded and then put in water that is brought to simmer. Threads are soaked in this oil bath	Would be good to know what is the amounts used and how long the threads are soaked for
	<i>Nenuka</i>	Rubiaceae	Morinda sp	Roots	Small roots are gathered, bark is removed these materials are chopped up and soaked in water. The water is brought to a simmer and then the threads are soaked along with the <i>rufa</i>	It would be good to see how the roots are taken, and how much material is pressed into the water and if there are repeated dyes using the same material or new material
	<i>Rufa</i>			Leaves	Used in the mordant process. <i>Nenuka</i> is mixed with the fresh leaves of <i>rufa</i> that are pounded to a fine powder. Threads are soaked in this dye bath	Collected plant specimens for identification. It would be good to see the dye process directly and see if in fact the <i>rufa</i> is used fresh or dried and what are the amounts of all of the materials used. We collected good plant specimens with fruit for identification. We also took dried leaves to experiment with in Bali to see how it works with <i>Morinda</i>

BLUE

Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
	<i>Silare</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Phyllanthus sp	leaves	Leaves of both <i>silare</i> and <i>tarum</i> are put in water and brought to a simmer	
NO PICTURE	" <i>tarun melilit</i> " (Indonesian)			leaves	The leaves of both <i>silare</i> and the <i>tarum</i> are soaked in water and brought to a simmer. The leaf matter is then discarded and placed on a jackfruit leaf. The threads are put in to the dye bath and soaked. The threads are then taken out and put on the jackfruit leaf with the discarded leaf matter. Lime is added and the threads are kneaded into the lime	We did not see or collect the <i>tarum melilit</i> but from the description it sounds like it may be <i>Marsdenia</i> sp as this grows like a vine. (The other likelihood is that it is <i>Taru Lakawaru</i> which is a vine and is used in Ira Ara). We have seen this process used in other places where the lime is not added to the bath but done by kneading the threads with lime until they are fully saturated and blue
	<i>Tahu</i>			mud	Indigo dyed threads are then soaked in the mud. The process is repeated 4 times	Unclear if the whole indigo and Phyllanthus process is repeated or only mud.



## b. Village of Com

The dye recipes as reported by the women we talked to in Com were very incomplete. Perhaps Mana Rosa knows more and it would be good to interview her and go out to the area where she may collect dye plants. The most interesting thing was that they showed us dry *rufa* although we did not see evidence of new red dye work. They did know *nenuka* or *Morinda* and they referred to another bark they use, *roko roko*, which they knew in Tetun as *ai na*. *Ai na* is *Pterocarpus indicus*.

### District of Lautem— Village of Com, Baira Mar

Local Language: Fatuluku

Source: Robela Mendes

BLUE						
Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
NO PICTURE	<i>Fofon asa</i>	Leguminosae	<i>Cajanus cajan</i>	leaves	Cold method	Needs further research

RED						
Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
	<i>Nenuka</i>	Rubiaceae	<i>Morinda</i> sp	Dried roots	Cold method. Dried roots from <i>Nenuka</i> , bark from <i>Roko roko</i> and dried leaves of <i>rufa</i> are all pounded and then squeezed into water. The water is used to soak the threads for 30 minutes. New material is added into the old dye bath and the threads are dyed up to 3 times	This information was recorded orally as we did not have time to see the actual dyeing. It would be important to see the process to understand quantities and timing
NO PICTURE	<i>Roko roko</i>	Fabaceae	<i>Pterocarpus indicus</i>	Dried bark		While we did not see the tree, they referred to it as <i>ai na</i> which is Tetun for <i>Pterocarpus indicus</i>
	<i>Rufa</i>			Dried leaf		We collected leaves in Tututala to take back to Bali and experiment with them using <i>Morinda</i> . <i>Rufa</i> is the name used in Com and Tutuala



### c. Village of Ira Ara

We collected plants with Mana Joanina Marques after driving more than thirty minutes (which might suggest that the dye plants are too far from home for women to seek them out often enough). Driving through water soaked fields we stopped at the edge of the forest. From here the ancestral compound of *Le Ira Ara* is located another thirty minutes walk up the hill. Joanina picked many dye plants that are used in the black dye recipe. We collected specimens for identification of the vine, *taru lakuwaru mane* (male with no fruit) and *feto* (female with fruit).

We also dug up a *Morinda* tree. I Wayan Sukadana instructed that the main root ball be taken and replanted back in the village along with cuttings. *Morinda* grows very readily from root and branch cuttings. Both the root and branch cuttings taken back to Ira Ara will sprout if replanted<sup>11</sup>.

#### District of Lautem — Village of Ira Ara

Local Language: Fatuluku

Source: Joanina Marques

#### YELLOW



Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
NO PICTURE	<i>Kaneri</i>	Zingiberaceae	<i>Cucurmus domestica</i>	tuber	Cold method	Needs further research
NO PICTURE	<i>Payawella</i>	Anacardiaceae	<i>Mangifera indica</i>	bark	Cold method	Needs further research

#### GREEN


Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
	<i>Fofon asa</i>	Leguminosae	<i>Cajanus cajan?</i>	leaves	Cold method	Needs further research

<sup>11</sup> It would be good to see if they did replant the *Morinda* and even if they ever used the *Morinda* roots as we did not stay a second day for this part of the demonstration.

## RED

Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
NO PICTURE	<i>Roko</i> <i>roko (ai na'a - Tetun)</i>	Fabaceae	<i>Pterocarpus indicus</i>	wood	The <i>nenuka</i> , <i>roko roko</i> and <i>rufa</i> are all pounded fine. The threads are soaked in the dye bath. The threads are dyed up to 5 times until the desired red is achieved	The information about this process was limited although we did not choose to stay a second day. The most knowledge was on the black dyeing but is this because it is what currently is getting the most attention? We collected <i>Morinda</i> roots and even took a cutting which Joanina said she would plant near her house
	<i>Nenuka</i>	Rubiaceae	<i>Morinda</i> sp	roots	The <i>nenuka</i> , <i>roko roko</i> and <i>rufa</i> are all pounded fine. The threads are soaked in the dye bath. The threads are dyed up to 5 times until the desired red is achieved	
	<i>Rufa</i>			Dried leaves	The <i>nenuka</i> , <i>roko roko</i> and <i>rufa</i> are all pounded fine. The threads are soaked in the dye bath. The threads are dyed up to 5 times until the desired red is achieved	Collected plants in Tutuala that appear to be the same as we were shown by the dyers in Ira Ara.
NO PICTURE	<i>Nolek (Fatuluku)</i> <i>Sereja Fuik (Tetun)</i>	Tiliaceae	<i>Greweia koordersiana</i>	Bark		

**BLACK**

Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
	<i>Carunu</i>	Fabaceae Leguminosae	Indigo suffruticosa	Leaf	The leaves are put into water and left until they ferment. The leaf matter is then discarded and lime is added. The threads are dyed in this up to 5 times	
	<i>Silari</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Phyllanthus sp	Leaf	These plant materials are put together into water and brought to simmer. The indigo threads are then dyed in this water. The threads are repeatedly dyed up to 4 times	
	<i>Pe'wele</i>	Fabaceae	Albizza chinensis	Bark		
	<i>Taru lakuwaru Mane</i>			Leaves (plant with no fruit)		Collected plants for identification. This plant is a vine with no fruit

	<i>Taru lakuwaru Feto</i>			Leaves (plant with fruit)	These plant materials are put together into water and brought to simmer. The indigo threads are then dyed in this water. The threads are repeatedly dyed up to 4 times	Collected plants for identification. This plant is a vine and has fruit,
	<i>Hoku</i>			Mud	The threads that have been dyed indigo and the over dyed black are then worked with mud	

### Plant Collection in Ira Ara & Los Palos for use in Black Dye Recipe

Caru: *Indigo suffruticosa*. The leaves are used in black dye.

Botanical components of black dye bath in Ira Ara.

Ira Ara woman selecting leaves of *Indigo suffruticosa*.





## 2). District of Baucau

### a. Village of Quelicai


Together with the weavers, we gathered dye plants used in the black dye process. They did not describe having a red dye process.

District of Baucau — Village of Quelicai				Feto Forte Dye Plants		Local Language: Maka'sae
YELLOW						
Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
NO PICTURE	<i>Onekai</i>	Zingiberaceae	Cucurma domestica	tuber	Cold method is used. We were told they use lime in this process	Needs research
NO PICTURE	<i>"Kulit mangga" (Indonesian)</i>	Anacardiaceae	Mangifera indica	bark		Needs research. Did not get the local name for this. The name in quotes in Indonesian
RED or PINK						
Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
NO PICTURE	Oso	Casuarinaceae	Casurina junghuhniana sp	bark	Pound fine and bring to simmer, soak threads. Get pink color	There was no real information about this process. We did see <i>Morinda</i> trees but they referred to the fruit as being medicinal rather than talking about the roots
NO PICTURE	Sae	Euphorbiaceae	Aleurites moluccana	seed	Not clear on how or if it is or was used traditionally	

## BLACK

Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
	<i>Daru</i>	Fabaceae Leguminasea	Indigo suffruticosa	Leaf	Cold method	It is unclear how many times they dye with indigo but appears very little indigo is used
	<i>Lalakasa</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Phyllanthus sp	Leaf		
	<i>Talekai</i> <i>/Boleha</i>			Bark	This is also used in the hot method described below	It is possible that this is <i>Denu</i> , the same bark in Bobonoro as the tree pointed out to us was young but looked same
NO PICTURE	<i>Kaiseba</i>	Fabaceae	Pterocarpus indicus	Wood	Hot method is used whereby all the plant material are put in water and then brought to boil and then simmered. Threads that are dyed with indigo are put in this dye bath	This was reported to us orally and we did not see the process
NO PICTURE	<i>Baeuli</i>	Fabaceae	Abizzia chinensis	Bark		
NO PICTURE	<i>Saebadu</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Jatropha curcas	Bark		
NO PICTURE	<i>Dirikai</i>	Leguminosae	Erythrina sp	Bark		



	<i>Koi basa</i>	Myrtaceae	Psidium guajava	Bark	Hot method is used whereby all the plant material are put in water and then brought to boil and then simmered. Threads that are dyed with indigo are put in this dye bath	This was reported to us orally and we did not see the process
NO PICTURE	<i>Bika</i>	(jambu air)	Eugenia aguaea ?	Bark		
	<i>Gala</i>	Leguminosae	Cajanus cajan	Fruit	The fruit is boiled and then water is squeezed out from the fruit and into dye bath	
	<i>Loke</i>			Mud	The dyed threads are saturated with mud	Used at the end of the indigo and black dye process above. Do not know how long or the exact process

# District of Baucau — Village of Quelicai

## Feto Forte Dye Plants

Local Language: Maka'sae

### GREEN

Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
NO PICTURE	<i>Sakalai (parasite)</i>			leaves	Hot method is used. Squeezed out into water. Threads are soaked in this dye bath	This is what was described but would be good to see what else is used and if the color is light fast

## COTTON

Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
NO PICTURE	<i>Diki Haele (cotton local)</i>	Malvaceae	Gossypium			Described as being hard to remove the seeds which is what most communities describe their original cottons.
NO PICTURE	<i>Dai Haele</i>	Malvaceae	Gossypium			This variety is said to be easy to remove the seeds. Most of the introduced species have this quality. It would be good to better research these two types to see which ones make the finer and stronger thread

### 3. District of Bobonaro



#### a). Village of Atu Aben

We gathered dye plants that are used in the black dye process with Mana Selina's husband. The leaves and bark of the *denu* tree that are used as one of the tannins in the black dye process were collected so that we can identify it. We also collected their *Diki Haele* cotton plant that is indigenous to this area as it was a species we do not usually see. The other species of cotton is called *Dai Haele*. The seeds of *Diki Haele* are more difficult to remove. Weavers of this area also use *uskai* (Appears to be a *Symplocos*) with *nuneka* (*Morinda*) which they buy from the market in Ermera. *Uskai* is a type of *Symplocos* and it would be important to find the source of this plant and collect species for identification.<sup>12</sup>

#### District of Bobonaro — Village of Atu Aben




Local Language: Kemak


Source: Selina Goreia Leite

RED						
Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
NO PICTURE	<i>Mi'i</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Aleurites moluccana	seed	The <i>mi'i</i> seeds are pounded and then soaked in water that is brought to a simmer. The threads are left in the water for 3 days and then dried	
	<i>Uskai</i> (collected specimen from weaver)	Symplocaceae	<i>Symplocos</i> sp	Dried leaf	The leaves of <i>uskai</i> and the roots of <i>nunuka</i> are both pounded and mixed together in water. Unknown if a cold or hot method is used.	The dried leaf sample we were shown is very likely a <i>Symplocos</i> species. It is said to come from the area of Ermera (Weavers in Belu talk about getting their <i>Symplocos</i> from Letefoho). Important to source where this tree may be growing so that plant specimens can be collected and sent for identification.  <i>Symplocos</i> has an aluminum salt that is essential in the red dye process using <i>Morinda</i> . Without <i>Symplocos</i> there is no red color but only brown
	<i>Nunuka</i>	Rubiaceae	<i>Morinda</i> sp	roots		

<sup>12</sup> It is important to also understand the market for the *Symplocos* growing here to see how far reaching it is. Without the *Symplocos* or another aluminum source, red dye with *Morinda* on cotton threads is not possible.

## BLACK

Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
	<i>Denu</i>	Malvaceae		Bark	The bark is put in water and brought to a boil. Threads are put in this as a first step to the dye process	Collected plant specimens with flowers for identification
NO PICTURE	<i>Taum</i>	Leguminosae	Indigo suffruticosa	Leaf	An indigo paste is made first and threads are dyed 12-14 times	They dye the threads 14 times. They make a paste from the leaves
	<i>Kalan</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Phyllanthus sp	Leaf	Leaves are put in water and brought to a boil. The threads are dyed until the color that is desired is achieved	This information was recorded and we did not see the actual dye process. It would be important to see the whole process to understand the proportions and timing
	<i>Tapo</i>			Mud	The threads are then kneaded with mud until the desired color is achieved	


	<i>Kakeu</i>	Casuarinaceae	Casuarina junghuhniana	bark	Bark from <i>Kakeu</i> is burnt and the ash is then put in water and brought to a simmer. The black threads are then soaked in this water.	
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District of Bobonaro — **Village of Atu Aben**

Local Language: Kemak

Source: Selina Goreia Leite

#### COTTON

Photo	Local Name	Family	Species	Part of Plant Used	Process	Comments
	<i>Bai</i>	Malvaceae	Gossypium sp			Collected plant specimens with fruit and flowers for identification. Hard to remove the seeds. Said to be a local variety.

## Textile production and Dye Plants in Atu Aben

Arminda spinning very fine cotton.



Black dye process soaks white threads in ash & plants



Arminda holding a finished *Tais Mane Sabu* man's textile





## 8. Current Alola Esperanza Textile Producer Groups and Market Viability

Of the weaving groups we visited, our comments are based on how Threads of Life would approach these groups:

### A. District of Lautem

#### (i) Village of Tututala

There is still a lot of knowledge about the textiles relative to their cultural context. We did not see women weaving or dyeing so it would be important to see how many women are still weaving. The natural resources are available for dyeing as they have a large in tact forest. The first step would be to see if there would be 2–4 women who would want to begin to work together and weave. We would start with ordering a *selendang* or shoulder cloth per weaver. Threads of Life initially would pay, on average, US\$10 for a natural dyed *selendang* depending on the complexity of motifs. Once the quality issues are being addressed consistently we will pay as much as US\$15–20 per *selendang*. Threads of Life works with many different weaving groups. Thus the quality and price needs to be competitive between the island groups. For Esperanza it would be important to know how the textiles that are bought in Timor Leste compared in price and quality to Indonesian textiles as this is the nearest competitive market.

#### (ii) Village of Com

We saw very little natural dyed work here. Initially we would not work with this group to buy textiles. However we understand that they weave the *Mama Fatim* basket, which is a very marketable product.

#### (iii) Village of Ira Ara

This is a community that seems accustomed to receiving visitors who come for a demonstration and then buy textiles. It is not clear if the cooperative work together in situations other than for visitors. Over time it might be interesting for them to look at ways they could more affectively organize themselves as a cooperative to enhance their productivity, accountability and create agreed upon quality standards. This would require facilitated dialogue and perhaps exchanges with better functioning cooperatives. We would suggest a few women begin to make *selendangs* using commercial and handspun thread along with natural dyes using traditional motifs. The pricing structure would start at US\$10–15 for the *selendang*.

### B. District of Baucau

#### (i) Village of Quelicai

The majority of the textiles that this group is producing are the synthetic dyed stripped textiles. The few handspun textiles we saw had cultural integrity but are not as attractive as textiles from other areas. This area would be good to explore given its strong cultural connections. Perhaps there is more to be learned about the textiles from here. One question we would have is whether the dye recipe used more of an indigo base in the past. The current recipe uses some indigo but then mud and tannins with the end result being very muddy looking. We would buy only a few select handspun *selendangs* again at this time to just provide variety in Esperanza, and build the cultural story behind these textiles to enhance their appeal.

### C. District of Bobonaro

#### (i) Village of Atu Aben

These textiles have a strong market potential but the prices from this weaver group (Mana Selina) are dramatically over inflated. Similar textiles were selling in the Maliana market for a third of the price, which suggests that local weavers are prepared to work for less than this given that the market seller must be making a profit too. We would explain the situation to Mana Selina and offer her the open market price. She will probably refuse the offer and Esperanza should then temporarily discontinue buying from Mana Selina and her group while establishing other weavers groups that are willing to make textiles for a price that is closer to the local market. Continuing to visit Mana Selina and her group throughout this process maintains the relationship and offers her a way back in once her expectations have become more realistic.

## Basketry and Market Viability

Basketry is often thought of as a craft. However, when baskets are made in their traditional context, with the tight high-quality weave of the past, they become “timeless art” and are very marketable. Details such as finely woven straps, or ways of finishing the basket that show the basket weavers care, all add to the value of the art form. Basketry uses natural resources, such as *lontar* and *pandanus* which are not threatened species, and the relationship of the basket to its natural environment is also an appealing story. The story of how baskets are made and used along with photographs adds value to a basket. Because baskets, such as carrying baskets or betelnut baskets, are still in demand in the communities where they are made, the prices are reasonable which allow for reselling at a profit. Baskets are light and easy to ship. Even this small price can add up to a healthy stream of income for a family or a community if there is regular demand.

### A. District of Liquica

#### Village of Maubara



Maria Da Costa Cobral began to organize women in Maubara to weave baskets in 2000 to improve livelihood levels for her community. There are now three groups of basket weavers with a total of 45 members. Each group has a stall on the beach along the main westward road from Dili. They use lontar palm leaves (*Borassus flaberifera*). The weaving is mostly making new designs for a tourist market.

These baskets make good small gifts as they are reasonably priced but could not be sold for as much as the more “classis” baskets as they are competing with more producers, such as those in Java and Bali, who are also making the same kinds of basketry for the craft market.

Were Threads of Life to be working with this group we would suggest that they begin a second line of more traditional basketry. We would not advise abandoning what they are doing by any means, as they are making sales with these designs to the people passing by and through shops in Dili.<sup>13</sup>



### B. District of Lautem

#### Sica

The baskets called *sica* (Fatuluku) in Lautem are still functional in people’s lives as a way to carry goods to market and produce from the fields. They come in a variety of sizes. These baskets are in communities who have access to the lontar palm (*Borassus flaberifera*). These palms grow in dry areas and at low elevations. The young lontar leaves are cut and dried to weave the baskets from. The tumpline straps that are worn over the forehead, so that the load is carried by the head, are woven from the *Corphyra utan* palm that is also the fiber used to knot the threads in the ikat process.



The basket has a rough look to it yet the strap is so finely woven it provides a wonderful contrast. The only market drawback is that if the leaves are too young then bugs are attracted and eat the basket. The basket would then need to be sprayed before being sold. This problem could be worked out if a new community group would be interested in working through this problem.<sup>14</sup>

**Top Above:** Woman weaving in Maubara..

**Top Below:** Woman weaving a sica basket in Lautem.

**Right:** Sica baskets come in various sizes.

The different sizes of baskets made are a plus for marketing as it gives people a reason to buy more than one! Unlike the textiles that are mostly overpriced, the baskets are very reasonable and can be bought for US\$ 1, making it possible to resell them at a profit even with shipping.

<sup>13</sup> If a field staff is trained to work with weaving groups it would be easy to work with this community as they are well organized and open to ideas. It would be important to go to their homes and see what baskets they use in the fields, in their houses, and for betelnut, and start to have them make these for resale.

<sup>14</sup> If a field staff is trained to work with weaving groups it would be easy to include the basket making communities as well. Cooperatives like the one in Maubara could be invited to dialogue with new cooperatives.



### ***Mama Fatim***

A betelnut basket called *Mama Fatim* is a very attractive basket made from lontar palm with the straps also woven from *Corphyra utan*. These baskets are finer than the *sica* and have several compartments for putting the different materials to make a betel quid. These baskets are sold for US\$2 in the market of Los Palos. Like the *sica*<sup>15</sup> it would be possible to resell them at a profit.

### **Basket for Holding Cotton while spinning**

This basket is seen many places and would be very attractive if offered for sale in a retail setting given the story of how it is used.<sup>16</sup>



***Left Above:*** *Mama Fatim* basket from lontar palm.

***Left Below:*** woman spinning in Baucau market.

***Right:*** Ira Ara weaver using basket while spinning thread.



<sup>15</sup> Ira Ara makes these baskets, we are told, but I would be concerned that their prices would be too high. We would encourage looking beyond Ira Ara to communities who do not have inflated prices and gather a few basket weavers together and buy from them.

<sup>16</sup> It is important that the field staff is able to take quality pictures of how the baskets are used so that it can help tell the story making the objects more appealing to the buyer.

## 9. Summary of Footnotes as Action Items

The following are footnotes taken directly from this document. They might be considered action items for follow-up by Alola. Please refer to the actual source reference within this document for the full context. We include them here for emphasis so they will not be lost.

1. Told by Casiano Luis De Costa Soares Rangel from Rasa, Lautem. Casiano works in the Livelihood Section at FA. His grandfather was a traditional architect. (Regarding Traditional house of Lautem)
2. There is much information to collect on these fascinating traditional houses as there are carvings that relate to textile motifs, the textiles would have been stored in certain parts of the house and textiles would more than likely have been used in ceremonies related to the house either for the family or for the building itself.
3. It is important to determine for certain that the Sika Lau and Reti Ifi textiles of Tutuala may not be reproduced for sale. We have found this to be the case in some traditional communities in Indonesia and we have been unable to work with these communities to revive the art form.
4. The names for these techniques, (in Ira Ara) needs to be re-checked. We were getting conflicting information due to the chaos of the market place. It would be good to work in making small weavings using these techniques to encourage the art. Standards of quality would need to be established by the weaving group and the market.
5. The cooperative (Ira Ara) needs to be worked with on what it means to be a cooperative. Fair market prices need to be established and held to in order to ensure repeat business. This would require on-going visits and workshops with functioning cooperatives.
6. It would be important to find out who they sell these textiles to (Quelicaí). What is the local demand for the textiles they make? What do they sell them for and how many do they make a year?
7. If a field staff is trained to work with these weaving groups it would be important to return to this village to understand the traditional culture and the use and importance of textiles in the tradition.
8. Find out more how the cooperatives' saving and loan system works. What are the interest rates, amounts loaned, rates of repayment, etc. (Quelicaí)
9. Helen Gomoies, working as the retail manager of Esperanza, is from Ermera and speaks Kemak and knows about the Bobonaro textiles as they are the same as those made and used in her own area. She described these bordering areas as having been one ethnic group in the past but are now two different districts.
10. If there were a trained field staff, it would be important to return to Tutuala and find other women who are also weaving and explore dye recipes further. They have a very intact forest with plenty of plants for dye work.
11. It would be good to see if they did replant the Morinda and even if they ever used the Morinda roots as we did not stay a second day for this part of the demonstration. (Ira Ara)
12. It is important to also understand the market for the Symplocos growing here to see how far reaching it is. Without the Symplocos or another aluminum source, red dye with Morinda on cotton threads is not possible. (Bobonaro and Ermera)
13. If a field staff is trained to work with weaving groups it would be easy to work with this community as they are well organized and open to ideas. It would be important to go to their homes and see what baskets they use in the fields, in their houses, and for betelnut, and start to have them make these for resale. (Maubara)
14. If a field staff is trained to work with weaving groups it would be easy to include the basket making communities as well. Cooperatives like the one in Maubara could be invited to dialogue with new cooperatives.
15. Ira Ara makes these baskets, we are told, but I would be concerned that their prices would be too high. We would encourage looking beyond Ira Ara to communities who do not have inflated prices and gather a few basket weavers together and buy from them.
16. It is important that the field staff is able to take quality pictures of how the baskets are used so that it can help tell the story making the objects more appealing to the buyer.