

# SEMINAR SERIES



The Centre for Dialogue,  
La Trobe University  
presents



## Between Earth and Heaven: the Politics of Gender in Timor-Leste

with  
**Sara Niner**

Gender inequality in post-conflict Timor-Leste (East Timor) is well-documented and there is pressure for women to conform to 'traditional' cultural norms now the war is over, yet a strong women's movement resists this pressure. However, any rise in status for the majority of women must be made through an engagement with indigenous or 'traditional' society as that is culturally dominant in Timor. The impact of recent conflict and violence has been profound for the new nation and its people, with public and private or domestic violence still pervasive. The male political and military elite dominant in Timor-Leste today is seen as largely responsible for outbreaks of violence on a national scale (2004-8) and these contemporary events lead us to define Timorese post-conflict society as militaristic in nature. A strong culture of male political domination in Timor-Leste today holds back the women's movement, along with development, security and a more expansive version of democracy. While 'gender' has featured heavily on the development agenda of Timor-Leste over the last ten years little intellectual analysis has been made of what these trends mean for development, security and democracy there.



**Dr Sara Niner** is an Adjunct Research Fellow in the Arts Faculty at Monash University. She has recently completed a research program on gender relations in the post-conflict period while on an Endeavour Fellowship in partnership with the National Directorate of Culture in Timor-Leste. This follows a two year post-doctoral fellowship at Monash researching women, development and handcrafts in Timor-Leste.



She is the editor of *'To Resist is to Win: the Autobiography of Xanana Gusmão with selected letters and speeches'* (Aurora/David Lovell Publishing 2000). Her new book *'XANANA: Leader of the Struggle for Independent*

*Timor-Leste'* (2009) is published by Australian Scholarly Publishing and is currently being translated into Portuguese. This book was based on her PhD completed in the politics department at La Trobe University in 2005.

Please visit <http://saraniner.blogspot.com>.

THURSDAY 26TH MAY  
12:30 - 2:00PM

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SEMINAR ROOM 301

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