

29th Annual Regional Human Rights & Peoples Diplomacy Training Program August 2019 Timor-Leste

DTP's [29th Annual Regional Human Rights and Peoples' Diplomacy Training Program](#), opened in Dili, Timor-Leste on August 18th, with a panel of Timorese activists reflecting on the struggle for self-determination and efforts to secure justice 20 years after the vote for independence in the UN supervised popular consultation.

The program is a partnership between [JSMP](#), [Forum-Asia](#) and DTP. There are 27 participants from 11 countries from Fiji and PNG through to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. They work on a wide range of human rights issues – self-determination, “disappearances”, LGBT+, environmental issues, disability, the rights of migrant workers and Indigenous peoples.



Highlights of the first week included sessions with DTP's Founder and Patron, José Ramos-Horta, [Professor Virginia Dandan](#) and [Chris Sidoti](#). There was a special session with [Ian Martin](#), who led the UN mission that supervised the vote 20 years ago. At least three of the trainers so far have been DTP alumni of earlier programs.

It is a special time to be in Timor-Leste. The program is being held in Dili and in Balibo – the town where five Australian/NZ journalists were killed as they documented the invasion of Timor-Leste in 1975. Journalists working to expose human rights violations continue to be targeted – as they play a critical role in holding governments to account and exposing abuses of power and human rights. It is a good place to learn about video advocacy with [WITNESS](#) trainer [Arul Prakash](#).

Participants have learnt about human rights and the UN system, and from the Timorese struggle for self-determination and human rights – with a field visit to the converted prison that hosts the [Centro Nacional Chega!](#) International participants have been visibly moved the stories of survivors and have been inspired by how the Timorese were able to work in a very repressive environment, with their friends in Indonesia, to secure their right to self-determination.

Solidarity and action from civil society in Asia and the Pacific was vital to the Timorese during their long struggle and it is a good place to build new bonds of solidarity for different human rights struggles in the region.

DTP and its partners thank the trainers for their pro bono contribution – and the main funders of the program – the Australian government and the Netherlands government – and New Zealand for enabling Pacific participation.

