



DIPLOMACY TRAINING PROGRAM

AFFILIATED WITH THE FACULTY OF LAW AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
A training program for peoples of the Asia-Pacific region

Report of the 15th Annual Human Rights & Peoples' Diplomacy Training

In Cooperation with the Peace and Democracy Foundation

East Timor, 7-25 February 2005

Executive Summary:

In February 2005 the 15th Annual Regional Human Rights and Peoples' Diplomacy Training Program (DTP) was conducted in the Republic of Timor Leste. Twenty-six human rights defenders from thirteen countries across the Asia-Pacific region completed the program.

For the first time in its fifteen year history that DTP's annual regional human rights defenders program was held in Timor-Leste. It was organised in partnership with the Peace and Democracy Foundation (PDF) at the invitation of the Diplomacy Training Program's Founder and Patron, José Ramos-Horta. This was a special program, with the location and experiences of Timor-Leste making for an inspiring experience for all involved.

For three weeks participants and trainers learnt about the UN and international human rights law, discussed human rights in the region, and learnt from each other's experiences. There was considerable East Timorese input into the program – through the hosts PDF, through the East Timorese trainers and participants and through a focus on the lessons from East Timor's history and current challenges.

DTP and its participants were particularly appreciative of the high level of involvement of José Ramos-Horta in the program – both through formal presentations and the time he made available for informal small group discussions on weekends. The participants were also deeply appreciative of the opportunity to meet with the former political prisoner and leader of the East Timorese resistance and now President of Timor Leste, Xanana Gusmao.

This report provides information on the participants and the human rights challenges they face, and identifies some of the key themes of the training program and its outcomes. It draws on the comments and evaluations of participants.

The Diplomacy Training Program would like to express its appreciation to the Peace and Democracy Foundation for their invitation to hold the program in Timor Leste and for their work to make the program successful. DTP would also like to acknowledge all those who funded the program and to record its gratitude to them. Program funders were the governments of Norway, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Germany, NGOs including Oxfam, Greenpeace and HIVOS, The Japan Foundation and a number of private donors in Australia. DTP would also like to register its deep appreciation and gratitude to the trainers who generously donated their time and

shared their expertise and knowledge during the program. Finally DTP would like to thank the participants who contributed so much to the success of the program.

Background and Context of the Training

Preparations for the training program were overshadowed by the devastating tragedy of the Tsunami on December 26, 2004. While consideration was given to deferring the program, it was decided that the training should proceed, partly because the issues of human rights advocacy have great relevance as the region rebuilds after the devastation of the Tsunami. All of us at DTP were greatly relieved to hear from our participant from Banda Aceh, following the Tsunami and were heartened that he still wanted to attend the training.

Another event that cast its shadow over the training was the seizure of power in Nepal by the King and the mass arrests of human rights defenders, politicians and trade unionists, the imposition of censorship and the effective cutting off of the country. The coup, against the backdrop of an escalating civil conflict and widespread poverty, has resulted in one of the region's most pressing human rights emergencies. Only one of the two Nepalese participants was able to leave Nepal to attend the training.

Both of these crises, natural and manmade, and the responses to them, were the focus of discussion during the program. The changing global environment of international relations was also a focus for discussion. The willingness of the United States administration to bypass the UN and to use force in contravention of international law is clearly a concern to human rights advocates that look to international law and to the United Nations, for justice and for peaceful resolution of grievances. The difficulty in obtaining effective action on human rights violations through the UN Commission on Human Rights has also become a significant problem for advocates in recent years.

Proposals for reform of the UN, including expansion of the UN Security Council and abolition of the UN Commission on Human Rights, and discussions around an international duty of humanitarian intervention and action on terrorism were therefore important background issues that informed this program's proceedings.

Learning from Timor Leste

No country's struggle for human rights better symbolises the vision of José Ramos-Horta in establishing the Diplomacy Training Program in 1989 than that of his own people, the East Timorese. Since it was founded the Diplomacy Training Program has assisted in building the capacity of East Timorese advocates and provided opportunities for them to build relationships and network with the wider human rights movement in the region.

The fact that Timor Leste can today host DTP's regional human rights defenders program with former East Timorese program alumni, political prisoners and prisoners of conscience as trainers is an affirmation of the value of DTP's work. In 2005 the *peoples' diplomats* trained by DTP over the years are in many cases the leading diplomats and officials of the new Timor Leste government. DTP therefore received a warm welcome, expressed clearly by a large banner strung over Dili's main street.

The East Timorese won their freedom from military occupation through the success of their appeals to the conscience of the world. Advocates made the international community bear witness to the suffering, resilience and courage of the East Timorese

in resisting the violent occupation of their land for nearly twenty-five years. This unequal struggle inside East Timor might still be continuing if a parallel battle for hearts and minds had not been fought and won in the corridors of the US Congress, the United Nations in New York and Geneva, in the capital cities of Asia and Europe, on university campuses and on the screens of CNN.

The victory of the East Timorese was a very much victory for peoples' diplomacy. It provides clear evidence of what can be achieved by appealing to the emerging force of global civil society, through an understanding of law and international relations, strategic advocacy and persistence. The experience of Timor Leste was ever present in the discussions at the 15th Annual Regional Diplomacy Training Program.

The challenges that Timor Leste faces today also provided a very relevant context for the program. It is one of the world's poorest countries and has one of the region's youngest and fastest growing populations. Realising the human rights to health, education, work, and to an adequate standard of living have become the new nation's most pressing human rights challenges.

It is in this context that the revenue from oil off the coast of Timor Leste takes on such significance. Oil revenues have the potential to transform the lives of the East Timorese now and into the future. Currently the share of oil revenues and the location of East Timor's maritime boundary is the focus of negotiation with Australia. The Australian government has refused to accept independent arbitration on the boundary issue through the International Court of Justice

In addition to the challenges of poverty and development, Timor Leste has the legacy of the recent violent past to come to terms with. Perhaps a third of the population was killed through conflict, disease and drought during the period of Indonesian occupation between 1975 and 1999. Evidence of the occupation and of the violent rampage that it ended in is still visible in the buildings and towns.

Less visible are the divisions created in communities, and the damage done to people through the conflict, the killings, torture, "disappearances" and many other human rights violations over twenty-five years. To date there has been little accountability for these human rights violations.

Many of these challenges: of seeking self-determination; securing accountability for human rights violations; establishing the truth and finding reconciliation; overcoming poverty; and accessing international solidarity resonated strongly among other participants in the program.

Participants

The program was widely advertised through regional networks and Indigenous networks in Australia. Participants were selected from over 100 strong applications. As in previous years the majority of applicants were men. Final participation in the program was heavily dependent on the availability of funding and the fundraising efforts of both successful applicants and DTP. DTP gave priority to finding funding for women participants to ensure gender balance in the program. Twelve of the 26 participants who completed the program were women.

A distinctive feature of DTP programs is that participants are drawn from both the Pacific and from across Asia. DTP would like to note the particular assistance of NZAID in enabling the participation of advocates from the Pacific.

The countries represented by advocates in the training were: Australia (2); Bangladesh; Burma; Cambodia; East Timor (6); Fiji/Samoa; India (Naga); Indonesia (3); Nepal; Papua New Guinea (4); Philippines (3); Solomon Islands; Thailand. Participants from Afghanistan, Burma, Nepal and West Papua were unable to attend at the last moment and their spaces were taken by three East Timorese UN staff for parts of the program.

The participants work on a wide range of human rights issues in their countries and across the region including child labour and child rights, self-determination, torture, Indigenous Peoples' rights, environmental protection and advocacy, access to land and resources, violence against women, and access to justice.

Some are engaged in high profile issues such as the campaign to bring to justice those responsible for last year's killing of Munir, Indonesia's best known human rights defender. Others have been working on human rights concerns associated with some of the longest running conflicts in the region including those in Aceh, Burma and Nagaland.

During the program most of the participants made a presentation about the issues of concern to them and what they were working to achieve. Through these presentations participants and trainers received personal insights into many of the human rights issues in the region. Bunthea, a survivor of the genocide in Cambodia made us acutely aware of both the failure to bring to justice the Khmer Rouge leaders responsible for the genocide, and of the current political environment where dissent can be dangerous and corruption of officials is widespread. Maria, from Western Australia, recounted her family history to provide participants with a compelling and very personal insight into the impact of past Australian policies of separating children from their families and of systematic racial discrimination.

All the East Timorese participants in the program had grown up while East Timor was occupied, and each had experienced or witnessed the terrifying violence in 1999 when Dili was burnt, the UN evacuated and thousands fled for their lives. Each had their own story to tell. Their warmth and generosity of spirit in sharing their experiences brought a particular richness to many individual sessions and the program overall.

The Program

The Opening Ceremony of the 15th Annual Human Rights and Peoples' Diplomacy Program was held on the evening of Sunday, February 6th at José Ramos-Horta's house in Dili. Participants were officially welcomed by José Ramos-Horta, Board members and the Executive Directors of PDF and DTP. The program ran for the next three weeks, starting each day at 8.30 am and going through to 5.30pm or 6.00pm. The last week of the schedule was particularly busy.

Week One

The first week of the training took place in the renovated Catholic Seminary at Dare high in the hills overlooking Dili. Dare has a particular place in the history of East Timor's struggle for independence. In 1999 as flames and violence engulfed the city below, thousands of people fled to the hills and sought sanctuary at Dare. For a month they sheltered there, living off roots and leaves from the forest, fearful that they would be attacked at any time by the Indonesian military or the militias they controlled. One of the young women participants had been through this terrifying experience and told the story as participants were taken on a guided walk of Dare.

International intervention under UN auspices finally ensured the safety of those seeking safety in Dare and the main focus in the first week of the program was on the international framework of human rights law that has been developed and adopted by the global community over the past sixty years to offer hope to those suffering the denial of their human rights.

It was these sessions that provided the foundations for the remainder of the course and they were led by Dr Clarence Dias and Dr Sarah Pritchard. Olandina Caeiro Alves, a resistance leader during the occupation and now National Commissioner on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Roberto Soares from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided background on East Timor's struggle for independence and its current challenges. Roberto is also a DTP alumnus.

There was a special presentation from Max Stahl, the journalist and filmmaker. Max's courage in filming the Dili Massacre and in smuggling the film out of East Timor played a major part in putting the plight of the East Timorese on to the world agenda. Participants had the opportunity to see Max's films and to discuss these with him. It was the fact that the Dili Massacre was filmed that made it a pivotal event in the East Timorese struggle. The international impact of Max's footage eloquently demonstrates the power of visual images and the potential reach and influence of the media. Media coverage of the Dili Massacre broke down the image being carefully created by Indonesia that the situation in East Timor was improving and that resistance to its rule was a thing of the past. Max's images galvanised international solidarity for the East Timorese and his evidence of human rights violations became the focal point for lobbying and advocacy work at the UN.

Video advocacy, understanding the potential power of video, how to integrate video technology into advocacy work was returned to as a major focus for the second week.

Following the introductory sessions on international human rights standards, the focus moved on to the UN system itself. Jose Campino led the discussions with his insights from working at the UN in New York for over twenty years. His efforts to rise above the rattling of monsoonal rain on the tin roof at Dare were appreciated by all.

The significance of understanding the mechanisms, procedures and forums of the UN was illustrated with reference to East Timor's own history. East Timor's fate was on the agenda of the Decolonization Committee, the UN Commission on Human Rights and the Security Council. Advocates ensured that Indonesia's occupation was never recognised by the UN, despite vigorous Indonesian government lobbying. At the end of the training President Xanana Gusmao described how the East Timorese resistance followed these developments closely, even as they hid in the jungles, understanding the significance of UN recognition of their struggle and UN scrutiny of Indonesia's actions.

There were also sessions on women's rights, the content of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and its potential to advance women's human rights and to address the issues of violence against women. This is a major human rights challenge in Timor Leste and elsewhere in the region.

The first week concluded with a visit to the Offices of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Dili. The Commission is housed in the gaol that was used during both the Portuguese and Indonesian occupation to detain and torture political activists. An introductory tour was given by Pat Walsh, a leading human rights defender from

Australia. For over twenty years Pat was an advocate for East Timor and human rights in the region, and was invited to help establish and work with the Commission, where he has worked for the past five years. Maria Isabel Olandina Caeiro Alves, National Commissioner led the subsequent discussion with a presentation about the work of the Commission. Olandina was a leading and respected figure in the underground resistance, a woman of tremendous courage and determination.

The aim of the Commission is to gather information, to record the events and experiences of the occupation period, to provide an opportunity for the victims (& the perpetrators) to tell their stories and to foster the process of reconciliation.

There was also the opportunity to explore some of the dilemmas that Timor Leste now faces in relation to truth, justice and reconciliation. Few of those responsible for the terrible violations of human rights that occurred have been held to account. Those responsible in the Indonesian military returned to Indonesia, as did many of the high ranking members of the militias that wreaked such destruction in 1999. The voices of some victims, supported by human rights organisations, are demanding justice in the form of an international process to hold those responsible to account, while the government of Timor Leste is negotiating an alternative path with the Indonesian government and the international community.

One effect of the occupation was to divide families and communities within Timor Leste and the Commission's work acknowledges the need for a healing process that looks to the future. Reference to experiences of reconciliation processes in Australia, the Solomon Islands and in Cambodia added to the richness of the discussion.

Week 2

The second week of the training program was held in the small village of Com, on the eastern tip of Timor Leste. There was a six-hour bus journey up over the hills out of Dili, along the dramatic cliff-hugging road above the coast and on through the second city of Bacau and beyond through the many small villages that straddled the narrow coast road. The journey gave a good impression of the east of the country and of Timor Leste's physical beauty. Evidence of the occupation and its violent end was visible everywhere in abandoned military posts and burnt out and still-abandoned buildings. Goats, pigs, buffalos and dogs roamed and kids played and waved as we travelled through the villages.

The focus of the second week was on developing knowledge and skills in effective advocacy. Ravi Nair, one of Asia's most experienced human rights advocates, and Sam Gregory Program Director with WITNESS were the main trainers in the second week. Ravi focussed on good NGO practice, lobbying at the UN Commission on Human Rights and on exploring the potential of working effectively with National Human Rights Institutions and the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions. Ravi was able to give practical advice and insight based on his experience with these forums, and from his role as Director of the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre and the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Network. There was emphasis on the need for NGOs to work hard, and to be accountable to their constituencies if they are to be effective and to retain their credibility and relevance. Independence and sustainability could only be ensured by avoiding dependency on any single funding source –. There were sessions on principles of effective lobbying and advocacy and on the human rights based approach to development.

Sam Gregory, delivered sessions on video advocacy in the last two-days of the week. WITNESS is the New York based NGO that specialises in building the

capacity of human rights defenders to work with video and new technology. This was the first time that Sam has trained with DTP and his sessions proved a highlight for many participants. Sam was able to draw on many examples of the use of video and worked through practical examples to develop participants' understanding of how video can be used effectively in different settings and for different purposes – in generating media coverage of human rights violations, providing testimony of victims and survivors in meetings with officials, and for supporting reports before UN bodies. The sessions emphasised many of the broader principles of effective advocacy and media work and also provided participants with the opportunity to develop their skills in using video.

Field Trip

The second week of the training included a field trip to the village of Tutu'ala, the last village at the Eastern tip of East Timor. This region was a major area of resistance to the Indonesian occupation, and is culturally and linguistically distinct from the rest of Timor Leste. The scenery is dramatic with rugged mountains rising sharply from the sea, high plains and forest. The village of Tutu'ala is located on the cliff tops with sweeping views along the coast to the west. A three hour journey over rough roads from Com delivered participants to a very warm traditional welcome from village and community leaders.

A delegation of youth leaders provided participants with an overview of some of the challenges that they face – the lack of resources, very high levels of unemployment, the need to provide education to the children, the young leaving to work elsewhere, the need for economic development. Following this introduction there were more personal discussions where stories and experiences were shared. The villagers, with the permission of the traditional custodian, extended a rare privilege for participants and invited them to visit the sacred feature that gives the village its name (which translates as Pillar of God) – a limestone pillar and cave, and cave paintings at the base of a cliff. The warmth and generosity of the welcome and the insight it provided into the challenges this village faces was a deeply moving experience.

Week 3

The third week of the program was held in Dili, mainly at Independence Hall, a very modern conference and training venue in the heart of Dili. The last week was packed full of sessions dealing with diverse human rights issues, particularly those human rights issues associated with accelerating processes of globalisation.

There were a number of late changes to the schedule as José Ramos-Horta became available, a meeting with the President was arranged and participants organised a media conference on the human rights crisis in Nepal.

The Monday was dedicated to Internet training with DTP Board member Philip Chung. Great efforts were made to provide the best possible facilities but unfortunately a power cut added to the difficult conditions. As a result it was not possible to have computers and air-conditioning on at the same time without overloading the back-up generator. In an exercise in participatory democracy the participants decided on the computers over the air conditioning. It is eloquent testimony to Philip's skills that they stayed the course. The feedback on these sessions was very positive despite the difficult and uncomfortable environment.

A team from UNICEF delivered sessions on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and how the Convention has been applied with other agreements to guide the practical development interventions of UNICEF and others.

There were sessions on migrant workers, on the relationship between human rights and trade, corporations and the environment. Conflict, human rights violations, poverty and remarkable rates of economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region have resulted in great movements of people across borders in the region and sessions were devoted to looking at the human rights standards that should apply to how people are treated as they move to seek safety and economic security. These standards include the UN Convention on Migrant Workers, ILO Conventions and the Refugee Convention. The East Timorese Aloia Foundation presented on their work on issues of people trafficking and the sex industry in East Timor. The problems are still on quite a small scale in East Timor, but are major concern across the region.

An afternoon was dedicated to the issue of UN Treaty Body reporting. This was led by Catherine Anderson, Joao Camara and Joaquim Fonseca. Timor Leste already has the best record in the Asia-Pacific region in ratifying international human rights treaties. The reporting process is designed to assist governments to implement their human rights commitments. Attention is currently being given to efforts to lessen the reporting burden and make the reports more effective. Catherine is involved in groundbreaking work on consolidated treaty reporting by governments to UN treaty bodies. Joao Camara, a former political prisoner, is involved in the process as a senior official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Joaquim Fonseca is involved in encouraging civil society participation in the process.

There is an increasing focus by the human rights community on the issues of trade, and international and bilateral trade frameworks and on the role and responsibilities of corporations. Trade and trade regimes, such as those negotiated through and policed by, the World Trade Organisation, have a profound effect on the extent to which people can realise their human rights, and on the capacity of governments to act in specific areas such as health. Ann Marie Devereaux, acting head of the UN Human Rights Office in Timor Leste provided participants with an introduction to these issues.

In sessions on the environment, Indigenous Australian advocate and academic Robynne Quiggin highlighted the particular implications that regulations on patenting and intellectual property rights have for Indigenous Peoples. Pressure on the environment is becoming more acute across the region as demand for resources accelerates. This pressure is felt particularly by Indigenous Peoples and communities who have coexisted with and lived from the land and resources and who are vulnerable to the impacts of forestry and mining operations.

Professor Paul Redmond, Chair of the DTP Board, provided participants with a solid grounding in the debates and emerging standards on corporate accountability and human rights. As the role of governments in many areas of economic and social life recedes, the role and influence of corporations has increased posing new challenges for human rights advocates. The OECD Guidelines on Multi-National Enterprises and the UN Draft Norms on the Human Rights responsibilities of companies were a particular focus.

There were special sessions on the issue of East Timor's boundary dispute with Australia - perhaps the single most important issue determining East Timor's economic prospects.

Special and inspirational moments in the final week of the training were provided by José Ramos-Horta's reflections on Timor Leste's struggle for independence and how international support for this had been painstakingly built over 25 years. The importance of creativity, flexibility, persistence and of understanding the positions of others and the changing context in which a campaign operates were all richly illustrated with examples from personal experience. There was also discussion of current global international relations and the challenges facing human rights advocates in Burma, Aceh and West Papua. José Ramos-Horta returned the next day for a media conference to launch a number of new initiatives by the Peace and Democracy Foundation, including a new regional peace prize supported by former Nobel Laureates.

On the last day there was a special session on human rights fact-finding and investigation organised by the UN human rights office. Participants organised a media conference on the situation in Nepal. This was a very practical exercise of putting to use the lessons learned in the course, and an example of international solidarity in action. This was followed by the final role play – a simulation of the UN Commission on Human Rights, a traditional highlight of the program that serves to consolidate much of the learning of the three weeks intensive program.

Participants then went to meet President Xanana Gusmao and had the opportunity to provide an introduction to their issues of concern as the basis for a very thoughtful exchange and discussion.

The Closing Ceremony was held at the home of the British Ambassador by her kind invitation, and Professor Paul Redmond formally presented the participants with their certificates in a ceremony that was notable for its warmth and hospitality.

Course Materials

The DTP Manual was the core reference material for the course. Learning from last year, introductory chapters were mailed to participants in the weeks before the training. While a number of new chapters were added or updated in 2004. The course materials were provided in both hard copy and on CD Rom at the conclusion of the training, along with copies of the presentations and papers prepared by the individual trainers. This provides participants with a very valuable and useful resource to take away, to use and share with others. Other materials were provided on human rights defenders (*Frontline*) and on the WTO and Human Rights (*3D Associates & Forum Asia*)

Participant Evaluations

Each DTP course is evaluated through questionnaires on each individual trainer during the program and through completion by participants of two anonymous evaluation questionnaires at the end of the program. All the individual trainers were positively evaluated by the participants in the 15th Annual Program. The collaboration with WITNESS was particularly well received. The range of styles and approaches of the different trainers clearly adds to the richness of the program and provides participants with a wide range of perspectives.

Through this diversity of approaches and experiences the relationship between the local and the global came through strongly – whether it is to think globally and act locally or to think locally and act globally. Many human rights problems have local roots, but international dimensions. International discussions and developments associated with processes of economic globalisation clearly have a bearing on very

local human rights challenges. How human rights advocates respond, and with what mixture of local and international advocacy involves strategic and often tactical choices that advocates must make.

I have picked up tips on how to lobby for support and build networks, and the channels that my organisation can go through to seek international redress.

It will help me in the future. I know how to address the issues and have a clear understanding of human rights advocacy.

It... has given me more inputs on how human rights work, how human rights standards could be fit into our national law.

Participant Evaluations

I am infinitely empowered; I feel like I am loaded with a unique mix of ammunition; I am ready to fire.

Before I came here, I had no idea about the diplomacy training program. But now I know diplomacy is not only useful for the diplomacy, but also for human rights activists.

It was a tremendously useful training program for me. I found almost all the sessions very valuable...

Participant Evaluations

The diversity of the participants and the range of the knowledge, experiences and skills that they brought to the program and shared with each other and with the trainers contributed greatly to widening perspectives, to developing a more global understanding of particular issues and of the different choices that are available for advancing human rights in different circumstances. The presentations made by participants and interspersed throughout the program provided the catalyst for further discussion, and for the development of support and solidarity. The presentations and the opportunity to develop bonds of solidarity and friendship was clearly a highlight of the three weeks.

The program emphasised the value of international solidarity, and explored the avenues through which this could be sought and expressed – through the media, through appeals to global civil society and through the UN system. The program did not encourage an illusion that the United Nations would offer a solution to the human rights challenges that advocates face around the region. Clearly working though the UN system can be a time-consuming, frustrating and sometimes futile experience. Ultimately most governments are more responsive to domestic pressures where there is the democratic space for these to be expressed, and human rights cultures have to be built domestically.

Learning the mechanisms, strengths and weaknesses of the UN and its many different arms and functions has been enlightening for me

We have knowledge that be put to use in our campaigns e.g. reporting to a treaty body as a way of pressuring governments for change.

It has assisted me very much on how the treaties can be a tool for advocacy...

In my organisation we lack information about human rights standards in economic, social and cultural rights. My new knowledge about this treaty will help motivate me to improve our approach.

The knowledge of human rights I gained from this training will help a lot in clearly describing the issues, in order to better develop approaches to the programs related to children.

This training will assist me to more actively promote human rights in my country

Participant Evaluations

Although working through the UN system can be slow and inefficient, it is hard to overstate the value of the human rights framework that has been developed and negotiated through the UN over the past sixty years. The universality of the values that human rights agreements express was reaffirmed in the experience of the participants in the program and the respect that they accorded each other. Participants of all religious and cultural backgrounds found common ground in this framework of international standards, in the clear obligations they place on governments individually and collectively to address injustice in the values that bind and unite across borders and barriers.

Conclusion

It is encouraging that the number of applications for the program continues to rise. It is an illustration both of the continuing need in the region and of the regard in which DTP courses are held.

Holding the training program in Timor Leste for the first time provided both opportunities and challenges. Because it was being held for the first time it was difficult to anticipate some expenses for food and accommodation, and there was some unanticipated expense for transportation and travel. The transit arrangements through Bali worked very well. The benefits of experiencing three very different training venues were balanced by the extra logistical load placed on organisers and the tiring process of travel on participants. The mix of venues was partly a product of necessity – the costs and availability of venues, but also the intention to show participants more of the country of Timor Leste. The mix of accommodation and facilities, combined with the heat, proved difficult for some participants.

Locating the training in Timor Leste provided an opportunity to provide more spaces on the program for East Timorese advocates than would otherwise have been the case – and to build greater knowledge and understanding of East Timor's situation among wider networks in the region. East Timorese NGO advocates are comparatively isolated from the regional networks of the Asia-Pacific region through cost and distance.

To take advantage of the location there was a commitment to integrate East Timorese issues and case studies into the program and East Timorese resource people and experts were heavily involved – particularly in the first and final weeks.

It was also agreed that wherever possible DTP's trainers and resource people would make extra time available to work with East Timorese government agencies, NGOs and students. This is not something that has happened elsewhere and it proved to be a valuable part of the program, something that could be built on in the future.

Very consciously PDF saw the hosting of the program and the collaboration as a learning experience – part of building the capacity of their staff. To the extent that this was achieved it should be seen as a positive outcome of this program. This was also a learning experience for DTP and much was learnt from the staff and volunteers at PDF. Because of the Dengue outbreak in Timor Leste the DTP

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administrative support person could not attend the training, adding to the burden on PDF and the program and on DTP volunteer, Sarah Knuckey. The participant evaluations were positive, but there is a need for continuing reflection and development of program content and materials to ensure that the program responds to the changing international, regional and local human rights challenges.

At the conclusion of the program, when the farewells were being made, DTP was very conscious that a number of new DTP alumni were returning to situations where their advocacy for human rights puts their liberty and their lives at risk. To be an advocate in these circumstances takes great courage. For 25 years this was the story of Timor Leste, and perhaps the most important aspect of holding the 15th Annual Regional Human Rights and Peoples Diplomacy Training Program in Timor Leste was the hope and inspiration their story provides to others. The lesson that advocates can make a real difference, that it is possible to make a different future.