

An Assessment of the Media Sector in East Timor

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The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Great strides have been made in rebuilding and creating an independent East Timorese media in the last two and half years. In addition to the widespread destruction of 1999, the territory had no history of press freedom or access to uncensored information.

Radio UNTAET now reaches all thirteen districts with reliable news and information. Television Timor Lorosae (TVTL), the UNTAET television station, reaches Dili and, by delayed broadcast, Baucau. There are two daily newspapers, two weekly magazines and a handful of small district publications – all operating freely. Community radio stations are on-air in Dili, Liquica, Maliana and Los Palos. Journalists report that they feel little direct political pressure.

In addition, there also have been some obvious accomplishments in journalism training. Starting from a base of almost zero, service providers and UNTAET have used both in-house mentoring and classroom-style seminars to begin creating more competent journalists.

Dramatic deficiencies in the media sector, however, will require donor involvement at many levels for years to come. Among the key issues found in the course of this assessment are the following:

- The most pressing issue is a successful resolution of the hoped for transition from UNTAET media to an independent public broadcasting authority. At the time of this writing, there is no agreed upon plan and structure for a post-UNTAET national broadcaster and this affects everything from the future funding of the stations to their editorial independence, competence and integrity.
- Because of the country's dire poverty and small population, there is no commercially independent media in East Timor and every media entity has received vital support from donors in the form of equipment, training and direct financial contributions. The media in East Timor will likely require a long-term commitment from donors for years to come in terms of both financial support and training resources. It is unrealistic at this stage to expect that any large-scale media entity – either print or broadcast – can sustain itself on the basis of advertising and/or subscription revenue alone.
- Training of journalists at all levels will remain a long-term need as the profession remains a fledgling one, with a need for significant improvements in editorial, technical and managerial expertise.
- Journalists themselves in East Timor need to take a more direct hand in building a strong association which can speak with one voice on issues of press freedom during the post-UNTAET period.
- There is a need for greater donor coordination in the building of community radio, on which there is at present little common ground among those seeking to develop this sector. There is a risk that community radio stations may be built too quickly and lack the necessary financial and technical capability to sustain themselves.

Media Policies

In the course of the assessment, it was evident that there is a lack of generally available public information about the future of state media in East Timor. Even senior UNTAET officials seemed unclear about important aspects of the transition from UNTAET media to an East Timorese administration. The attitude of the transitional government toward the media is also not well understood. Chief Minister Mari Alkatiri said in an interview for this assessment that he favors placing state broadcasting and overall media policy under the control of the office of the Prime Minister following independence. It was not entirely clear from his remarks what he meant by media policy but he spoke of a need to have the media – including the private media – guided by the state through his office. If this comes to pass, it could have troubling implications for the independence of the press leading to the appearance of state intervention in controversial media issues.

In addition, a protocol of cooperation on support for the state broadcaster signed by the Chief Minister with the government of Portugal in October has created confusion with regard to the scope of the Portuguese commitment. Many senior Timorese journalists, for example, believed that the protocol meant that Portugal was going to be the sole funder of public broadcasting in order to promote the Portuguese language. This belief was not born out in discussions with the Portuguese aid mission in East Timor.

Among the recommendations in this regard are the following:

- That discussions be held with the Chief Minister and other senior leaders of the transitional government to urge that a public broadcasting system be created with an independent charter and board of directors.
- That the protocol with Portugal be publicly clarified by the transitional government and the Portuguese mission and that additional donors be brought into the process of supporting an independent public broadcasting authority.

Print Media

The print media have made impressive strides in East Timor but much remains to be done. The print consortium, a cooperative endeavor begun by UNTAET in 2000 and supported largely by OTI-USAID to share what at the time was the only printing facility in East Timor among several publications, remains in crisis and its future survival is far from certain. Two other print shops have now come on line but these are also subsidized to some extent and the issue of building a reliable printing capacity for the country has yet to be solved. Newspapers and magazines are poorly distributed, especially outside of Dili. Among the recommendations in regard to print media are the following:

- That the legal status of the print consortium be clarified and that its board show a commitment to address serious structural issues prior to further donor assistance.
- That the creation of a commercial newspaper distribution be encouraged to increase the flow of print materials in the country.

- Ongoing in-house mentoring programs in which seasoned journalists work closely with individual media outlets is both popular and productive for the print media sector and should be continued.
- Training abroad programs are expensive and may be counter-productive at this time when journalists are needed at home. It is more cost-effective to bring the training to East Timor.

Journalist Associations

There is a lack of unity and common purpose among journalists in East Timor. A split has developed within the journalists' association and now two competing organizations exist. This is an unnecessary and potentially dangerous division that can weaken support for press freedom and create an opportunity for political forces to exploit the division. It is recommended:

- That donors and others working with the media, encourage journalists to become active in defending their new-won freedom and that they resist the establishment of competing associations. There is room within one association in a country of this size for ample debate and there is plenty of work to be done.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ASSESSMENT

The United States' Agency for International Development-Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID/OTI) in Dili, East Timor assigned a team to produce a media sector study in January-February 2002 with the goal of assessing the state of media development in East Timor since the beginning of the United Nations Transitional Authority for East Timor (UNTAET) mandate in December 1999. The team was asked to identify issues of concern and general strategies for future donor initiatives in media development. This was felt to be of critical importance as East Timor prepares for formal independence on May 20, 2002.

USAID has been extremely active in East Timor's media development, assisting almost every media outlet in the country at some level, as well as providing substantial funding for journalism training through Internews and The Asia Foundation.¹ During this period, USAID has spent over \$3 million on media projects, making it by far the largest single bilateral donor in this field.

The leader of the assessment team was A. Lin Neumann, the principal author of this report. He is a journalist and consultant on Asian media based in Thailand and has been involved with the East Timorese media sector as a consultant to UNTAET, the United

¹ USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives and the Asia Near East Bureau's Democracy and Governance Office for East Timor both support media in East Timor. The Democracy and Governance Office supports Internews and The Asia Foundation. USAID/OTI's program focuses on small grants, mostly to local media groups, as well as the funding of supplementary activities by Internews and The Asia Foundation.

Nations Development Program (UNDP) and The Asia Foundation on several occasions since 1999. Jeanne du Toit, a veteran South African journalism professor and expert on community radio, was the other member of the team and is the author of a the sections of this report on community radio and Appendix Three.

In this report we attempt to balance a variety of issues, from concerns about the transition from UNTAET to independence to an analysis of individual media outlets to general conclusions about directions for future media development work. In the original Terms of Reference, there is a call for organizing the report by “environmental, institutional, technical and programmatic” categories. We chose, however, in the interest of clarity, to organize the report by more descriptive categories such as “print media, journalists associations” etc. In addition, due to the need to focus on specific issues of renewed importance at the time of the fieldwork, specifically the national public broadcaster, some areas indicated in the original TOR were not covered as extensively as would otherwise have been possible. This was the decision of the author(s) and one which we hope is useful to those who read this report. Recommendations follow each of the main issue areas addressed.

The methodology employed was largely based on interviews with the key players in media, government and the UNTAET mission. Where possible, the assessment team relied on public documents and other written materials but the fluid state of political and economic developments in East Timor makes interviewing the most viable technique available. For community radio, the emphasis was on collecting existing perspectives and observations of stakeholders who have been working within or alongside East Timor stations. These were weighed these against Jeanne du Toit’s own experience of the establishment of community radio in South Africa, to draw a series of conclusions about the situation in East Timor.

The team interviewed a number of senior East Timorese political leaders and UNTAET officials, among them Chief Minister Mari Alkatiri, Xanana Gusmao, Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary General Dennis McNamara and the Director of the Office of Communication and Public Information (OCPI), Mario Zamorano. The team spoke with service providers, donors, senior media professionals, officials and a number of local journalists (see appendix one for a list of interviews). We also visited the districts of Baucau, Manufahe, Los Palos and Maliana in the course of our research. Any conclusions – or errors – reached in this paper are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not reflect an official position of USAID.

THE STATE OF THE MEDIA IN EAST TIMOR

Great strides have been made in rebuilding a shattered infrastructure and creating an independent East Timorese media in the last two and half years. The violent aftermath of the vote for independence on August 30, 1999 left much of the country in ruins. Among the sectors gravely affected by the systematic destruction led by the Indonesian military and their local militia allies was the media. East Timor was left with no functioning

printing or broadcast facilities. Indonesian government installations, which had delivered satellite television and radio service to virtually every corner of the territory, were either looted or torched. East Timor's only daily newspaper, *Suara Timor Timur*, was burned to the ground and its presses destroyed. The dislocation also disrupted the regular delivery of print media from Indonesia to East Timor.

Compounding the dilemma, in terms of building a free press, was the fact that for most of the period of Indonesian rule, East Timor, like the rest of the country, was fed a steady diet of government-controlled news and information². Coupled with the lengthy period of harsh and neglectful Portuguese rule that ended in 1975, East Timor had little history of press freedom or access to uncensored information. It was only toward the end of Portuguese rule, after the socialist revolution in Lisbon, that the press began to be more active in debating issues of decolonization and independence.

The situation of media in East Timor has obviously changed for the better under UNTAET's guidance. Radio UNTAET now reaches all thirteen districts with reliable news and information in four languages (English, Tetun, Portuguese and Bahasa Indonesia), a fact that played a crucial role in the successful Constituent Assembly elections held last year. Television Timor Lorosae (TVTL), the UNTAET television station, reaches Dili and, by delayed broadcast, Baucau. There are two daily newspapers in Dili, two weekly magazines and a variety of NGO publications. In the districts, a handful of small publications are in operation – *Tolas*, the only local media outlet in the enclave of Oecussi; *Lian Berlaka* in Manufahe and *Kuda Ulun* in Maliana. Dili has several small radio stations and there are community radio operations in Liquica, Maliana and Los Palos. There are now three printing presses in operation – two in Dili and one in Baucau. Also, one of the Dili dailies, *Suara Timor Lorosae*, operates its own small press.

Importantly, there is at present no licensing of newspapers, a practice inimical to press freedom, and there has been little direct political pressure on the private media. The UNTAET media, it must be acknowledged, is not independent, per se, since it must, by design, serve the interests of the UN mission and through OCPI it is under the direct structural control of the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), the head of state under the United Nations mandate. UNTAET has gone to great lengths, however, to ensure that its news operations are unencumbered by political baggage and by and large this has been a successful effort. Radio UNTAET and TVTL are widely viewed as both credible and independent, a fact that was confirmed by the Independent Media Mediation Panel during the Constituent Assembly elections.

The public information (as opposed to journalistic) aspect of the UNTAET media is seen most obviously in *Tais Timor*, the elaborate, four-color, four-language monthly tabloid produced by UNTAET, which has rarely strayed into controversial territory or critical coverage of the UN mission and is unlikely to find a continuing role once the UNTAET presence ceases.

² The exception is the period after the downfall of former President Suharto in May 1998 when most controls on the Indonesian media were lifted resulting in the vibrant free press that exists today.

In addition, there also have been some obvious accomplishments in journalism training. Starting from a base of almost zero, Internews, The Asia Foundation and other service providers have used both in-house mentoring and classroom-style seminars to begin creating more competent journalists. During the same period, of course, UNTAET both formally and informally in-house, has contributed substantially to building a core of journalists and technicians able to operate Radio UNTAET and TVTL on a daily basis.

In the course of this report, we found that virtually all media practitioners in East Timor are comfortable in Tetun and Bahasa Indonesia, the two main languages most widely used. All media use these languages to an overwhelming degree. There was much interest expressed in improving English communication skills as a means of greater integration with the South Asian and Pacific regions.

There are dramatic deficiencies in the media sector, however, that will require donor involvement at many levels for years to come. In effect there is no commercially independent media in East Timor and the fragility of a free press in East Timor can hardly be overstated. Every media entity in East Timor has received vital support from donors in the form of equipment, training and direct financial contributions. Indirect support, in the form of training programs, remains crucial to the survival of the sector. Even the functioning printing presses in East Timor have all been either bought or rehabilitated by donor contributions.

Much of the initial donor support for media organizations and printing facilities came in the form of one-time capital expenses, a fact that does not address the issue of recurrent costs. Beginning in 1999, donor support enabled the media to get up and running fairly quickly following the post referendum trauma but in the absence of adequate revenue streams, the possibility exists that most, if not all, media outlets in the country will look to donors for continuing support for their recurrent expenses

In addition, the constitutional guarantees for press freedom may be insufficient in the charter drafted by the Constituent Assembly. The section on press freedom employs some concepts familiar from the Indonesian constitution and falls short of making press freedom absolute by placing the right to free expression subject to the provision of law. This fact makes it likely that there will be numerous legal battles in the future as the parliament comes to terms with the drafting of press and libel laws, criminal defamation and the like.

The most pressing issue as of this writing, is the hoped for transition from UNTAET media to an independent public broadcasting authority. No media outlet in East Timor could realistically be called commercially viable. The small population, high illiteracy, a devastated economy, and the lack of a nationwide distribution system for print media or private radio make it difficult to imagine a private East Timorese newspaper, radio or television station sustaining itself on the basis of subscriptions, sales or advertising revenue alone. This fact makes the future of independent public broadcasting the single most crucial issue facing the East Timorese media.

The de-facto government broadcaster, UNTAET radio and television, has existed in a kind of privileged bubble, serving the vital information needs of the peacekeeping mission and is thus sustained by UN assessed budget contributions and the technical and editorial expertise of the international staff. The winding down of the mission and a series of organizational and political problems swirling around the transition to an East Timorese state broadcaster have resulted in confusion and low morale inside the UNTAET media, with many staff and outside observers worrying about the independence of the stations after May 20.

As the only entity with a nationwide reach, Radio UNTAET's future as an independent public outlet for news and information is both vital and, sadly, far from certain.

1. The transition from UNTAET Media to an East Timorese Broadcast Authority: An Urgent Priority

Given that this assessment comes within a few months of the May 20, 2002 date for East Timor's independence, it is imperative to begin with a look at the extremely urgent question of the creation of an independent public broadcasting authority and the transfer of assets from UNTAET to an East Timorese body. This is far and away the most important issue facing the East Timorese media and it carries with it far reaching implications for the future of democratic governance in the country. If not addressed satisfactorily, this issue could make access to objective, accurate and publicly trusted information extremely difficult post-independence. With a small population and an impoverished economy, there is little likelihood that a viable nationwide commercial electronic media will emerge in East Timor in the near future. There is simply no revenue base on which to build such a business.

This issue, as we shall see below, is also closely linked with troubling provisions in the draft constitution that could be interpreted as providing the basis for restricting press freedom in the future.

Unfortunately, transitional media policy is clouded by misunderstanding and a lack of available public information. It is somewhat ironic that the media, which is the foundation of government transparency and public accountability in a democracy, is an area in which accurate information is very difficult to come by. During the course of this study East Timorese journalists, political leaders, international donors and NGO representatives have all said that they are unclear about the eventual disposition of the UNTAET media post-independence. Even within OCPI, Radio UNTAET and TVTL there is substantial confusion over the transition. Senior officials in the mission and the transitional Timorese administration were unable to offer a timetable for the transition, other than to say that the implementing legislation is still pending. At the time of this study, there was no publicly circulated document from either UNTAET or the East Timor Transitional Authority outlining a transition plan for media

The eventual orderly transfer of UNTAET media, especially radio, which until now provides the only national broadcast medium for East Timor, to an independent, public

broadcasting authority has been a stated objective of UNTAET's information office since the earliest days of the mission. At the first media donors meeting, sponsored by UNESCO in December 1999 in Bangkok, Manuel de Almeida, then the director of UNTAET-OCPI, committed his office to the establishment of such an authority and sought help from donors and experts at that early stage to begin laying the groundwork for its creation. There has been a rough consensus among donors, many East Timorese and UNTAET officials since that time that an independent public broadcasting authority should be a government-owned entity, insulated from political control through an independent charter and board of directors roughly along the lines of the BBC or the South African Broadcasting Corporation.

A public broadcaster should not be confused with simply state-controlled broadcasting. Under the type of public broadcasting authority envisaged by UNTAET and others for East Timor, the government would own the broadcast facility in much the same way that UNTAET owns the current national broadcaster but it would be insulated as much as possible from political influence with an independent board of directors who would be legislatively barred from holding posts in the government. Similarly, it would have a charter calling for editorial independence. This independent body would hopefully be the one to accept the transfer of media assets from UNTAET on May 21. This is far more than just a procedural detail. If not addressed satisfactorily, this issue could make access to objective, accurate and publicly trusted information in East Timor extremely difficult.

A. Structure, Regulation and Funding of Public Broadcasting

With less than 100 days before independence, there is still no provision for the transfer of UNTAET broadcast facilities and staff to a responsible independent East Timorese body. In an interview conducted during the preparation of this report, Chief Minister Mari Alkatiri said that he favors placing UNTAET'S current broadcast facilities under the direct supervision of the office of the Prime Minister after independence. This is a substantial departure from earlier OCPI-supported proposals for an independent broadcast authority.

Further, there is no line item in the current national budget for media services, meaning that as of this writing no funds are allocated to provide government-financed media services. A supplemental, unfunded infrastructure priority item of approximately \$1.1 million for radio and \$1.2 million for television was included as an appendix to the 2001-2002 national budget presented at the Oslo donors conference in December 2001. According to the Ministry of Finance, no bilateral or multilateral donors have come forward to act on this item.

While informal consultations have been held by OCPI with bilateral donors on the need for funding future radio and television, it is clearly impossible to obtain donor support without a structure for the transfer of assets to a government broadcast authority. UNTAET's office of donor coordination said that OCPI has been unable to present a plan to donors for funding the national broadcaster after May 20 because UNTAET policy requires that it be cleared by the Council of Ministers and the Chief Minister before it can

go to donors for support. That clearance has not been obtained. A draft funding proposal predicated on the establishment of a public broadcaster has been circulated privately by UNTAET-OCPI but no action has been taken – or indeed can be taken – by donors.

Should a public broadcasting authority not emerge or prove to be potentially undermined by political control, it seems likely that most bi-lateral, multi-lateral and private donors would shy away from offering financial support for such a body.

B. Broadcast Authority: the Legislative Path

An eventual structure for a national broadcaster may likely emerge through legislative action taken prior to independence by Sergio Vieira de Mello, the Special Representative of the Secretary General, in consultation with the Chief Minister, the Council of Ministers and the legislative committee of the Constituent Assembly. The Chief Minister said he has undertaken consultations within his office on these issues and that recommendations will be forthcoming shortly.

When the National Council was disbanded in July 2001 prior to the Constituent Assembly elections, one of several pending pieces of legislation was an UNTAET draft regulation, dated July 2001, to create an independent public broadcasting authority. This regulation would create a broadcast authority with substantial provisions for independence, including the creation of a board of directors whose members were neither to be in government service nor to be officials of any political party. The regulation was to provide the basis for an orderly and transparent transfer of the current assets of UNTAET media to an East Timorese body modeled roughly on similar independently chartered public broadcasting authorities in countries such as the United Kingdom and South Africa.

If created, this broadcast authority would be able to seek a license from the Communications Regulatory Authority, which was formally created by UNTAET regulation in September 2001, but which has yet to be appointed.

While the Council of Ministers have not made known the exact changes they envision for the regulation under consideration, Alkatiri's stated intention to create an office of media policy within the Prime Minister's office would include the state broadcaster. According to Alkatiri, who will become Prime Minister after May 20, this is necessary to guide the development of the media. "What I am looking for is a very effective and dynamic information sector but I think the state has a very important role in educating the people about democracy," he said. "I want my personal guidance in this regard."

Alkatiri added that the matter would be considered by the Council of Ministers in early February and then sent to the legislative committee of the Constituent Assembly for further consultation before being referred to the SRSG for his signature prior to May 20. Foreign Minister Jose Ramos Horta will be given an opportunity to offer his views on the subject also, according to Alkatiri. Horta has been seen by UNTAET as their lead contact for East Timor's media future.

The Council of Ministers' intentions regarding the public media are vital to the survival of a free and independent press in East Timor. If legislation is adopted which allows for direct government supervision of the public broadcasting entity, then the most vital source of news and information in the country may be undermined by at least the appearance if not the fact of pro-government bias. UNTAET has so far been unable to secure an independent public broadcast authority for the transition, despite a considerable desire for media independence on the part of the Timorese themselves and a broad international consensus on the need for a truly free press in the new country.

Unfortunately, the process to date on the issue has been relatively opaque with the Council of Ministers' plans regarding the media a source of speculation but little hard information beyond the draft regulation left unpassed by the National Council in July 2001. And because of the fact that no other viable national media entity is likely to emerge in the foreseeable future, both UNTAET and supporters of press freedom will be on the horns of a prickly dilemma should the new government push forward with a government-controlled broadcaster. UNTAET may have to face transferring the assets of Radio UNTAET and TVTL to a less-than-independent broadcast service while those donors who will certainly be approached to assist the state media will have to cope with either rejecting vital information needs for the country or funding a problematic broadcast service.

This makes the resolution of the issue of an independent public broadcaster a matter of urgent national concern. Since the earliest days of the mission, UNTAET officials have said repeatedly that they are committed to the creation of an independent public broadcaster and most donors, multi-lateral agencies, local and international NGOs have similarly expressed support for an independent broadcast body free from the appearance of political control or interference.

Recommendation:

- A strategy must be developed as soon as possible to enter into discussions, perhaps on a senior bi-lateral basis, with the Chief Minister and the Timorese leadership on the need for an independent public broadcast authority since the appearance of political control over what will likely be the dominant media in the country runs counter to democratic principles.
- As part of the strategy to create an independent public broadcaster, it should be pointed out that donors may find it difficult to support a state-run broadcaster and that access to funds for this vital part of the national infrastructure could be adversely affected by the plan to place the national broadcaster under the office of the prime minister.

C. Downsizing Issues

Inevitably, as the mission downsizes in personnel and transfers authority to the new sovereign nation, disruptions occur. This seems particularly acute in the case of

UNTAET radio and television. During the time of the assessment, there was considerable confusion within OCPI and among the staff of radio and television, regarding their job security and future. In addition, there are presidential elections, constitutional ratification and independence celebrations on the near horizon, events of singular importance in the life of the country. OCPI management says that they are not certain that they can cover these news events adequately under current downsizing plans, which call for continuing staff reductions. “How can they not understand the importance of public information, especially at the end of the mission?” asked one senior manager in frustration.

Management has been told to continue reducing staff, including local staff, in the near term. At present, only a skeleton crew of internationals remain and the process for retention of local staff as government employees after independence is not clear. This fact has led some of the more senior Timorese staff to begin looking for positions elsewhere. The local staff of Radio and Television constitute a crucial talent pool for East Timor’s broadcast media and if they are lost, two years of on-site training could go to waste with detrimental effects for the future of the public broadcaster.

Recommendations:

- The downsizing of local staff should be halted in order to allow the UN broadcast entity to effectively cover the upcoming presidential election, constitutional ratification and independence celebrations.
- Efforts should be made by OCPI to clarify with ETPA the status of the local staff so that a smooth transition can be assured and local staff will feel that they have job security with a future public broadcast authority.

2. Constitutional Issues

Potentially impacting on the media environment are substantial and troubling constitutional issues that were included in the draft charter under consideration by the Constituent Assembly. It is important to note that these issues were brought to the attention of the assembly by the Timor Lorosae Journalists Association, one of the only civil society groups in the country to attempt a coordinated lobbying campaign on issues before the assembly. Fortunately, some of the more onerous aspects of the draft in terms of the press freedom were eliminated at the eleventh hour by the assembly.

Some potential difficulties still lie with the following: Section 40 of the draft constitution approved by the assembly states:

1. Every citizen has the right to freedom of speech and the right to inform and be informed impartially.
2. The exercise of freedom of speech and information shall not be limited by any sort of censorship.

3. The exercise of the rights and freedoms referred to in this Section *shall be regulated by law* based on the imperative of respect for the Constitution and dignity of the human person. (emphasis added)

The section restricts the rights to citizens, whereas most constitutional provisions provide for rights of everyone subject to a state's jurisdiction, not only citizens. Second, it protects only the right to inform and be informed, a much more limited formulation than under international law, which refers to the right to "seek, receive and impart information and ideas." Third, it does not protect freedom of opinion, a right that is protected unconditionally under international law.³

The greatest difficulty, however, lies in Clause 3 above, which seems to imply that the rights guaranteed are subservient to law. It is vastly easier in almost all circumstances to change a law to suit the political moment than it is to change a constitution and this could lead to sweeping restrictions on the absolute right to press freedom. For example, in the Indonesian constitution language eerily similar to Section 40, Clause 3 was used repeatedly during the Sukarno and Suharto eras to justify harshly repressive press laws.⁴

Fortunately, another clause, which would have created a "High Authority for Mass Communications" with functions delineated by law, was eliminated from the charter at the urging of the journalists' association.

Recommendations:

- TLJA's partially successful effort to encourage a change in the constitutional provisions should be applauded and may serve as a basis for further activism by the association on issues of press freedom after independence.
- Following independence, the arena of concern will likely shift to the legislature and donors and NGOs should educate the public about press laws and the need for strong legal guarantees of press freedom.

3. The Portuguese Protocol on Media Cooperation

Another issue that has caused considerable confusion is the protocol of cooperation on media assistance signed by Chief Minister Mari Alkatiri with the government of Portugal on October 26, 2001. The document (see Appendix Two) commits Portugal to provide support for "National Radio and Television services" of East Timor and also calls for the government of East Timor to allow the public broadcast outlets of Portugal,

³ Note on the Draft Constitution of the Democratic Republic of East Timor of 9 February 2002, Focus on Provisions Affecting Freedom of Expression, ARTICLE 19, Global Campaign for Free Expression, London, February 2002

⁴ Article 28 of the 1945 Indonesian Constitution, which remains in effect, states: "Freedom of association and assembly, of verbal and written expression and the like, shall be prescribed by law."

Radiotelevisão Portuguesa S.A. (RTP) and Radiodifusão Portuguesa S.A. (RDP), to set up broadcast facilities in the country and to provide programming for the national broadcaster. RTP will also integrate East Timor into a network of Lusophone countries through a satellite link.

The protocol has created something of a storm in East Timor, prompting everything from fears that Portugal was going to “recolonize” the media in order to promote the Portuguese language to a belief that Radio UNTAET and TVTL would be given elaborate new state of the art broadcast facilities as part of the protocol. Neither of these things are correct, according to an interview with António Metelo, the Cooperation Counselor for the Portuguese Mission in Dili.

Metelo said the Protocol represented a commitment on the part of Portugal to assist the national broadcaster with capacity building through technical and material assistance but that Portugal was not in a position to be the sole donor for the national broadcaster. Metelo noted Portugal’s desire to assist the government of East Timor in implementing its own decision to make Portuguese the official language of the country by enabling a greater mix of Portuguese-language programming available in East Timor through a cooperative arrangement with both RTP and RDP. This is in keeping with similar efforts undertaken by Portugal in other sectors to promote the use of Portuguese as the national language. Seeking to allay fears expressed in some quarters about an abrupt change on radio and TV from the widely spoken Bahasa Indonesia and Tetun to Portuguese, Metelo said he favored a coherent “language strategy” which would slowly increase the amount of Portuguese being broadcast. Currently, it should be noted, Portuguese is spoken by a only a small minority of Timorese and virtually all media outlets in the country use a combination of the local tongue, Tetun, and Bahasa Indonesia, which was taught in the schools during the Indonesian occupation.

It was clear from Metelo’s comments that he does not see the protocol as the answer to all of the national broadcaster’s needs. When asked if Portugal would support the entire budget of national radio and television, including salaries, he said this was not possible. Two technical teams from RTP and RDP have visited East Timor and are preparing a report and a budget that will provide the basis for fulfilling the obligations under the protocol. On-site training will also be part of the package offered by the Portuguese. There is as yet no budget for the Portuguese assistance and no timeline for its implementation, although it is important to note that a budget is being drawn up and that the agreement represents a binding commitment by the government of Portugal for a period of five years. Metelo also raised concerns about the effect that a lack of transition planning may be having on the state of TVTL and Radio UNTAET and how this might adversely effect the capacity of the stations after independence. Staff resources in a time of downsizing in the UN mission are a great worry and the possibility exists that many well-trained local staff will seek positions elsewhere rather than wait out the period of uncertainty. Given the scarce human resources in East Timor this could be a major problem for a national broadcaster affecting everything from on-air presentation to engineering maintenance. Portugal does not plan to train an entire new staff for the national broadcaster nor will it pay staff salaries, Metelo said.

Recommendations:

- The transitional administration should clarify, through the office of the Chief Minister, the scope and meaning of the protocol of cooperation. It has created confusion among donors and the public, raising false hopes and unwarranted fears.
- Donors should cooperate with Portuguese efforts to assist the state broadcaster, assuming that that broadcast entity is independent of undue political pressure.

4. The Print Media: Small but Surviving

In terms of national reach, the print media in East Timor may seem relatively insignificant. Indeed, the larger of the two daily newspapers, *Suara Timor Lorosae*, prints a bare 2000 copies a day, half of which are subsidized by USAID-OTI in Indonesia for distribution in West Timor through Catholic Relief Services. But the establishment of daily newspapers and weekly magazines shortly after the beginning of the UN mandate helped to give the capital a sense of normalcy while providing a forum for national debate unavailable elsewhere. Indeed, in the view of this assessment, the print media are vital to the continued intellectual and political development of East Timor and they deserve the continued support of the donor community. Every publication in East Timor was begun with and continues to rely on donor support to some extent. Training and equipment have been provided by USAID to all the publications discussed below. This is not surprising given the tiny market and the shattered economy of the country and should not be a reason to reject these publications as being unimportant or doomed to failure. Both radio and television are relatively ephemeral media, their messages quickly passing into the ether, while the newspapers are passed around from person to person, and discussed widely, providing a more concrete basis for ongoing dialogue and debate, a vital function in a democracy. It is a truism of the media world that even in this age of instant communication, print still sets the agenda for journalism by providing a more thoughtful and lasting platform for ideas and information than the electronic media.

A. The Publications in brief

Suara Timor Lorosae: Growing out of the literal ashes of occupied East Timor's only independent daily newspaper, *Suara Timor Timur* (STT), STL was reestablished by the same publisher on the same lot in Dili, just behind the burned-out ruins of his former newspaper. With donor funds, STL purchased its own small offset printing press and now publishes about 2,000 copies day. Within its pages are articles in Bahasa Indonesia, Tetun, Portuguese and English. With a staff of 18 journalists plus technicians and advertising staff, STL is probably the best managed publication in Dili. Publisher and chief editor Salvador Soares has deep roots in the media community in Indonesia and other countries and has been able to use his contacts to secure project funding and other

assistance for his paper. Currently Soares is rehabilitating a part of his former offices in preparation for the purchase of a small used web press for which he says he has secured funding from Europe.

Timor Post: The paper is an outgrowth of a political split among the staff of the former STT during the referendum period. When the publisher of that paper became the leader of a peaceful pro-autonomy political party, some members of his staff eventually felt that his political leanings colored the paper's reportage. Shortly after the referendum, *Timor Post* became the first new daily in Dili and it now prints 1200 copies a day in four languages. The chief editor of the newspaper, Aderito Hugo da Costa, is also the chairman of the print consortium. Da Costa says that the newspaper has taken steps recently to regularize its business structure, establishing a board of directors to oversee operations. This was in response to tensions within the staff over the structure of the business. Da Costa has long pursued the dream of bringing a donated 25-meter long web press to East Timor, a gift from Queensland Newspapers in Australia. Unfortunately, the press is inappropriately large for East Timor – there is no facility either large enough nor with sufficient structural foundation strength to house it. There appear to be no current plans to bring it into the country, despite announcements by Queensland Newspapers to the contrary.

Talitakum: A weekly magazine growing out of the Java-based East Timorese student movement it began as a Java-based underground publication in 1998. *Talitakum* features commentary and opinion in Bahasa Indonesia. Their current print run is 2500 copies per week. According to Chief editor Hugo Fernandes, *Talitakum* has recently implemented suggestions made by consultants from The Asia Foundation and Internews and has created a more segmented management structure, reducing the size of the staff and devoting some personnel to advertising sales duties. Previously the “collective” nature of the enterprise was somewhat chaotic with an overlarge staff of supporters and allies drawing an equal share of salary money regardless of whether they still worked at the magazine. Operating out of new offices and reasonably well-funded, *Talitakum* has shown itself able to use a network of donor resources, including funds from the UK-based Catholic Agency for Overseas Development and the government of Finland, to sustain itself while building a credible presence in the country.

Lian Maubere: The other major weekly magazine in Dili emerged out of another student group, Forum Demokrasi (ForDem), with roots among East Timorese students in Java. Following sessions with consultants from The Asia Foundation and Internews, the staff restructured their editorial and managerial operations to draw clearer lines of responsibility, thus tightening their production schedule and attempting to sell advertising. The changes appear to have made *Lian Maubere* more secure financially and they have begun, for the first time, to pay salaries to their employees. It is published in Bahasa Indonesia, and prints about 500 copies a week.

Cidadaun: This weekly magazine, published by the Yayasan Hak human rights NGO prints 5000 copies and is distributed free of charge. It is a quality operation, well edited, with thoughtful articles that challenge the status quo. *Cidadaun* has written critically

about UNTAET policies and raised important questions about the political process in East Timor. The NGO plans to launch *Cidadaun* as a commercial weekly in the near future and it seems destined to become a market leader on the strength of its distribution network and quality. *Cidadaun* has been subsidized largely by The Asia Foundation.

District Press: A handful of small papers in the districts operate on bare shoestring budgets with no printing facilities and modest donor support. They are useful primarily for the fact that without them there would be no real print media presence in these places. But if the papers in Dili are marginal from a financial point of view, these tiny periodicals will need donor assistance continuously *to stay alive*. There are three principal small papers: *Tolas*, the only local media in Oecussi; *Lian Berlaka*, published by a group of school teachers in Manufahe and *Kuda Ulun*, published irregularly in Maliana. No more than several hundred copies of any of these publications are printed using photocopiers and donated computer equipment, a situation which is both expensive and makes for inherent difficulties due to scarce electricity in the districts. All three have attended Dili-based seminars and have received in-house training from Internews or The Asia Foundation and seem eager to continue in business. The small papers will have a difficult time surviving without donor assistance, especially given scarce resources. For example, some of them have had to suspend publication from time to time when they ran out of toner for their photocopy machines. But demand is said to be high for the papers, with *Lian Berlaka* and *Tolas* saying they can sell all that they produce. Certainly it seems important that these paper continue to exist as a way to encourage flows of information in the information-scarce districts but for their long-term viability they will need access to print facilities and continued training and support.

B. Print Consortium

One of the first media initiatives in East Timor, the print consortium remains in perpetual crisis. Formed out of the remnants of the former Indonesian government printing operation in Dili with the direct encouragement of OCPI, the consortium seemed at the time to be a solution to the problem of providing desperately needed printing facilities for the media by creating a shop managed collectively by a board drawn from the media and NGO community. To date, the consortium has received a total of \$300,000 in assistance from USAID and Canadian CIDA to rehabilitate its aging sheet fed Heidelberg presses and supply other needs.

While it was given some managerial assistance from OCPI's media development office, UNTAET never did the legal work or managerial training of the board required to put the consortium on a proper footing. Its board of directors is now largely inactive and has not met for about a year. Print quality remains a concern and the shop has a reputation for being unreliable with frequent breakdowns of equipment. It is deeply troubling that neither the chairman of the consortium, nor the print shop manager were clear about the consortium's legal status and lease agreements post-independence. It may be that the new government could seek to take possession of the consortium on the basis of the fact that

the printing presses were owned by the Indonesian government prior to the 1999 referendum.

Two consortium members, *Talitakum* and Yayasan Hak, refuse to use the facility, instead taking their print jobs to Kupang and Jakarta respectively. UNTAET has rarely used the consortium because its publications department feels the quality and cost are sub par. Only *Timor Post* and *Lian Maubere* use the consortium regularly. There has even been confusion in the shop about its ability to accept commercial jobs, with da Costa saying in an interview that UNTAET's then-media development officer told the consortium to stop accepting commercial work. As a result, the consortium seems to sit idle much of the time, losing out on commercial clients and a revenue stream.

The consortium manager also complains that he is unclear about lines of responsibility and to whom he should report. In the absence of an active board, and with no contact person at UNTAET any longer, he seems cut adrift. He also complained that if clients – who are also board members – don't pay their bills on time, he feels he lacks the authority to challenge them or demand payment.

C. Other Print Facilities

A new church-owned print shop in Baucau was started in 2001 with equipment from a Portuguese donor. ETPA sends some of its print jobs to this shop, which appears to be professionally managed and capable of much higher quality printing than the Dili print consortium. The commercial media is not using this shop yet, although it may be an option worth exploring. The shop is run by a Timorese Diaspora manager who was trained in Australia.

The City of Lisbon donated printing facilities to the University of Timor Lorosae (UNITIL) in Dili but there have been some problems noted with regard to the skill level of the printers and they have looked to the consortium printers for technical assistance. The print consortium chairman said that the printers at the UNITIL shop were sent to Portugal to receive training for several months but, lacking an ability to speak fluent Portuguese, they returned to Dili with their lessons unlearned.

Recommendations:

- Without viable local printing, the country will be dependent on printers in Darwin or Indonesia and especially in the case of daily newspapers, this is not a worthwhile option because jobs cannot be turned around quickly enough. Local, efficient printing will assist the viability of the print media sector and options to enhance print capability should be explored. That said, the consortium has major problems with regard to the functioning of the board and the commitment of the members to its continued existence. The members themselves have to address these issues as a prerequisite to further assistance. It does not make sense for

donors to pour money into the consortium if the members themselves are not committed to its success.

- The legal status of the consortium and its assets has to be publicly clarified before independence. If it taken over by the government, the independence of the media using the consortium could be directly effected.
- It is worth investigating whether the church-owned press in Baucau could handle some of the publishing needs of the media, especially weekly magazines.

D. Distribution of Print Media

At present there is little systematic distribution of print media in the districts. Additional copies of papers have been subsidized by USAID and those reached the districts with the help of UNTAET but this was a temporary measure and it is unclear what will happen after independence since there is no commercial newspaper agency to handle distribution and UNTAET will likely not have the capability to handle distribution of print media in the second mission. Even in Dili, there are no newspaper kiosks and few retail vendors of printed material of any kind, other than newspaper boys who crowd around the streets near UNTAET headquarters to sell the two daily papers on weekday mornings. The newspapers and magazines distribute their materials by hand to subscribers and sell the remaining copies through these newspaper boys.

Adding to a general feeling of isolation from the printed word, there is no distribution of foreign periodicals. Even now-vibrant and uncensored Indonesian newspapers, which would seem to have a market in Indonesian-speaking East Timor, are not available. This again is a result of the a lack of a commercial newspaper agency – no one has come forward to make a real business of distributing any kind of printed press materials, foreign or local. It would not appear to be difficult to set up a distribution chain for Indonesian-produced periodicals like the *Jakarta Post*, *Tempo* and *Kompas*, given that there is a daily flight from Denpasar to Dili.

With limited distribution of local periodicals and even less access to external print media, East Timor can feel quite isolated from the intellectual life of the world. While the nation as a whole may suffer from low levels of literacy, surely students and professionals need access to a wider variety of printed media than they now receive. In addition, the Timorese press must improve its distribution networks if it is to become financially viable. For the two reasons above – the financial security of the Timorese press and the intellectual life of the community – requires that the issue of print media distribution be addressed.

Recommendations:

- A newspaper distribution agency is needed to increase the flow of print products to the districts and to aid in commercial viability. East Timor also needs greater access to foreign publications.

- Ongoing mentoring is still needed in all aspects of newspapering from management & advertising to ethics, editing and basic reporting. This is still a fledgling industry.
- Consideration should be given to continuing programs that increase print runs of the papers for distribution to the districts.
- Donors and international NGOs should continue to assist the media by purchasing advertising space in the print media. This can be a vital incentive to develop a viable revenue stream for the papers.
- A media monitoring program, perhaps inside a local NGO, should begin compiling a digest of local news articles and translating them into English and/or Portuguese for distribution abroad via the Internet. This would increase the level of awareness internationally about the development of the Timorese media. It is expected that international press coverage of the country will diminish post independence, making a flow of information from the Timorese press to the outside world an attractive project. Also, if the press were monitored and translated consistently it would give donors a means to assess progress being made in the quality of the media.
- Programs to provide affordable Internet access for the media are necessary and should continue. Without Internet access on a consistent basis, the media would have difficulty following world events and their isolation would likely grow. As it is, donors have provided Internet access on a limited, subsidized basis for most of the local media through Internews but it is unclear how long this assistance can continue. Internet access for the media in East Timor is not a luxury but an absolute necessity and that access should be available in media offices as much as possible because it is both a news resource and a learning tool for the staff. This may be an opportunity for a donor – perhaps from a private foundation – to step forward with a program of Internet access and education for the media. At present, given the paucity of outside news resources, the Internet is likely the best source of ongoing external news and information in East Timor for those lucky enough to have access.

5. Community Radio

Given the potential importance of community radio to East Timor and the intense donor interest in the sector, we devoted a good deal of the team's time to community radio. Some of the observations are summarized in this section but a fuller discussion of the sector can be found in Appendix 3.

There appears to be no precise agreement amongst stations, donors, training providers etc in East Timor as to the exact definition of community radio. For purposes of the assessment we focus on those who define themselves as “community radio stations” – in practice, this is all stations besides Radio Untaet and includes four Dili-based stations (Radio Falintil \ Voz de Esperanca; Radio Timor Kmanek; Radio Rakambia; and Loriko Lian) and the three stations in other districts (Radio Tokodede in Liquicia, Lospalos Community Radio in the Lautem district and Maliana Community Radio in Bobonaro).

A. The concept of a community radio ‘sector’

This assessment assumes the need for formalized community radio association. Community radio stations have very little chance of surviving in the long term outside the context of such an association. The notion of a station that is owned and controlled by its local target community, and is contrary to mainstream trends in media industries. It is therefore highly unlikely that such a station will survive if it does not form part of a larger movement of like-minded stations. Such a community radio association would also address the fact that, because of the availability of international funding for community radio, there tends to be a growth of projects which claim to be community broadcasters without giving substance to such claims. If an association agrees to clear definitions for its own membership, and find ways of monitoring its own members accordingly, this will help to ensure the legitimacy of the sector as a whole.

The establishment of a coherent and organized community radio sector would also increase the chances of ensuring an enabling legal and regulatory environment. Stations and community stakeholders need their own power base from which to lobby and advocate on issues of broadcast law and policy in a way that serves the interests of such stations – and the communities they represent. The existence of a regulatory system that is informed by a rigorous understanding of the purpose and operation of community radio stations is crucial. Such a system should be set up in a way that protects the rights of community broadcasters and regulates the quality of the service that such stations provide.

Ideally, community stations are set up in deliberate stages with broadcasters moving on to each stage once the previous one has been completed with success. These stages should include an initial needs assessment and community consultation, followed by the establishment of a representative governing structure for a given station. This governing structure should then be taken through a thorough induction process with regards to the principles of community radio and then a strategic planning process in which it determines the station’s aims, objectives and strategies. Only after this follows the securing of funds for equipment, for basic running costs and a venue – and only then would the governing structure move on to the recruitment of staff (i.e. paid employees) and volunteers, and their training. Each of these stages needs assistance – both through financing and the availing of expert advice. In an ideal situation, a community radio association would mentor aspirant stations through these stages, in close partnership with donor organizations and service providers.

B. Contradictory Plans

In East Timor, there are contradictory strategies being employed. For example, there is the very ambitious plan of the Community Empowerment Project (CEP)⁵ to establish,

⁵ The CEP Project is funded by contributing donors through the Trust Fund for East Timor, managed by the World Bank.

over a very short period of time, a station in at least eight different districts (to compliment those districts where stations have already been set up). On the other hand, Michael Copeland from Apheda notes that his organization works with a few stations, providing them with support over a long period of time. He believes that one needs to work with stations at their own pace. This has also resulted in the duplication of strategies. For example, both CEP and Apheda are talking about setting up community radio resource centers – and both are facilitating the establishment of community radio associations.

There is an urgent need for discussion amongst institutions such as the CEP and other organizations working in East Timor about appropriate strategies for the setting up and maintenance of stations. Without such a system, mistakes are very likely to happen. The CEP's acquisition of very large stores of equipment to be granted to stations by the boards that are presently being set up in districts is worrisome. At this stage, it makes more sense to acquire equipment in smaller quantities. This would allow for corrective measures, if it turns out that such equipment is inappropriate to the local environment. The granting of equipment and running costs to Maliana Community Radio by USAID\OTI may have been a mistake. This station did not have the managerial capacity to take responsibility for these resources, and the inevitable internal conflict caused damage to the organization.

C. The issue of volunteerism.

Many people interviewed believe that to be a 'true' community radio station, everyone should work as a volunteer – and that volunteerism somehow ensures accountability to the station's target community. On the other hand, there is an underlying assumption that volunteers are only there because there is no money to pay staff. None of the stations presently in operation have worked out a way of operating without paid staff. Stations talk, rather, of the difficulty of working with volunteers. keeping their volunteer staff; people leaving because there is 'no incentive' for staying. No matter how many times it is explained to volunteers that the intention is not to pay them, expectations of future salaried employment remains a central reasons for joining stations.

The model of volunteerism is inappropriate to the context of East Timor. It is unrealistic to expect a community consisting of a majority of unemployed people to run a station without fully salaried positions for one or two skilled people who carry the burden of managing finances, programming – and, crucially, the skilled management of a volunteer team. This issue needs urgent discussion, in order to help stations to strategies around the problems they are experiencing with volunteers, and in order to develop appropriate donor policies with regards to salaries for community radio staff.

D. Financial sustainability

Similar discussions should take place around realistic strategies for financial sustainability. Because of the economic problems in Timor a community radio station cannot survive by the means traditional to wealthy societies - such as membership fees

or advertising contracts. However, that there is a further need to discuss realistic alternatives.

Stations primarily depend on donor funding, and to a lesser extent on collaborative programming contracts with NGOs who pay them for airtime. Los Palos has had particular success at setting up these kinds of contracts, and is attempting to move away from dependency on donor funding. It is unlikely that stations will be able to survive on such contracts alone, without a commitment on the part of donors for continued assistance.

E. Technical capacity

A contradictory picture emerges here. Most stations are not too badly equipped but much of the equipment is not in working order. Motorbikes are not working, minidisks often 'broken', transmission equipment does not work properly, and crucial spare parts are missing. The problem, here, is more one of maintenance and of the management of resources. Stations cannot be expected to have expertise in the management of transmission equipment, for example.

F. And what is community journalism?

Here, again, is an area in which no coherent approach is being developed. One interviewee commented that organizations like Internews have an "agenda" to push journalism in their training. I noted a similar "agenda" on the part of Apheda, who emphasize the use of mobile broadcasts. In my view, such agendas are valuable. The emphasis on the importance of journalism was, in fact, echoed by many respondents. Similarly, the tradition that has developed amongst Dili-based stations for mobile broadcasts is one of their strengths worth building on.

There is very little dialogue about the development of appropriate programming and production strategies for East Timor community radio. This means that the interventions made by training organizations do not really form part of an overall strategy, with clear aims with regards to what should be established at stations. One respondent noted that the journalism training that so far has been provided by mainstream practitioners, not by experts in community radio programming. Even where community radio experts were brought in, their background tends to be in management rather than journalism. There is a risk in only bringing in mainstream journalism expertise. The journalism formats of mainstream broadcasting are not necessarily appropriate to East Timor community stations – and the people who are working with stations need to be aware of this.

One agenda that might be pushed is the live magazine show, in which a show is divided into segments, each consisting of a combination of live and recorded items (interviews, reports, mini-dramas, chat, etc). This format can be used for current events as well as lighter content. The use of segments means that such programming invites the presentation of a variety of points of view on a given topic, and in this way allows the inclusion of many different voices – a crucial strategy for community radio

programming. This can be an appropriate alternative to the traditional production of “news” bulletins which in East Timor suffer from a lack of access to traditional news sources and may be perceived to be biased in some way by a community.

G. Recommendations and General Conclusions

Projects can only be successfully established with long-term commitment from outside agencies.

There has been a tendency in East Timor to start radio projects without taking full responsibility for their successful operation. If this continues, there is very little chance for the survival of local or community radio in this country. The following needs to be taken seriously:

- That the establishment of governing structures demand a very substantial investment of training and ongoing support. They cannot be left to their own devices in doing this work.
- Capacity building is a slow and expensive business, which demands a substantial investment over a long period of time. Intensive support structures need to exist for both projects and individuals, such as local Timorese staff, who are expected to carry the burden of implementing donors’ plans.

A coherent approach to developing community radio in East Timor is needed.

It is urgent that donors and service providers agree on an approach in order to avoid serious errors in the way that stations are established. There are instances in which such mistakes have already impacted on the chances of particular stations’ survival (see appendix for further discussion) The following needs to be considered:

- An appropriate model should address organizational management programmed formats, community relations, etc.
- What role does a community radio network play? Both the CEP and Apheda are interested in facilitating the establishment of such a network but the facilitators need to decide whether to encourage an association that is defined as a service provider or as a representative body of stations that lobbies for their rights and facilitates their relationship to service providers, government etc. There is danger in combining these roles, since this can blur agendas.
- Donors, service providers and existing stations should agree on a strategy for establishing and supporting stations. Only if they find a way of working together in a consultative manner can a strong sector be developed.
- Prioritize only a few stations for assistance at this stage, and provide such stations with concentrated help that ensures their establishment as healthy, viable projects. The advantage of this approach is, firstly in not spreading assistance too thin – and, secondly, in ensuring the development of tried and tested systems for East Timor community radio before expanding the sector.

- Build close relationships between service providers and stations founded on detailed contracts that are regularly reviewed. Contracts should articulate the stations' interests as well as those of the service provider, clarify issues of ownership of equipment, and outline clear terms under which the contract remains valid. Again, a service provider should only build such contracts with a few stations, and avoid spreading their support too widely.

Build understanding of community radio through investment in ongoing training and advocacy.

Stations often experience difficulties in relations of ownership and accountability with their target communities. Part of this relates to a lack of understanding of principles of community radio – and of how to implement such principles. It is important to build a culture of understanding, amongst stations, within communities and amongst donors and service providers. The following should be considered:

- Monitor what is happening on the ground at stations, their implementation of plans for programming and management, and the impact that these have on communities.
- Facilitate sharing of experience amongst stations, through programmed exchange, staff exchange and focused seminars (with station managers, journalists, etc).
- Facilitate regular opportunities to feed information gathered through such monitoring into debates amongst service providers, donors and stations.

Bring appropriate expertise into the process.

The failure of stations to fulfill the requirements of community radio is often due to lack of expertise. Similarly, decisions made by donors and service organizations are often not informed by appropriate expertise. For expert assistance to have an impact, the following strategies should be considered:

- A collaborative approach is needed in which donors and service providers work together to bring skilled advisors to service the community radio sector as a whole. An expert in transmission technology could, for example, be employed to visit each station that forms part of a community radio network, to diagnose problems and come up with general solutions.
- It is expected that much of this expertise will come from international sources. But strategies for local capacity building should be built into the work that such advisors do by setting up mentoring relationships with staff working at local service providers and developing a phased strategy for such staff to take over the advisory work.

6. Journalist Associations

The Timor Lorosae Journalist Association (TLJA), with assistance from a number of organizations, including the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA), USAID and APHEDA, Internews, and UNESCO has taken a leading role in lobbying for free press protections in the constitution and has been recognized internationally as a representative of East Timor's journalists. Founded in late 1999, TLJA had a very successful first congress in January 2001, drawing nearly every journalist in East Timor to its ranks. Since that time, however, only very few of its members have stepped forward to assist TLJA in its activities, leaving most of the ambitious program adopted by the congress unfulfilled. While journalists have enjoyed over two years of unprecedented press freedom the idea that an independent journalists' association is needed to guard that freedom has not taken hold. Still, TLJA has opened an office, maintained links with the international press freedom advocacy community and begun a modest program of seminars on journalist protection and constitutional education. With independence approaching and troubling constitutional problems already identified, East Timor needs a strong journalist association and it is hoped that more journalists will become active on these issues.

Unfortunately, deep divisions have also appeared in the small journalist community in East Timor. A new group, Sindicato Journalista, was formed late last year, apparently in reaction to political, professional or personal differences among members of the local press. Most of the members of this new group are drawn from the ranks of TVTL, Radio UNTAET and the *Timor Post*. Sindicato has not been very active since its founding but it intends to hold a founding congress of its own later this year. Some journalists said in interviews that they were persuaded to join the new group by their supervisors while others said they were promised free health care and other benefits if they became members (no such benefits exist). The leaders of Sindicato, including the current director of Radio UNTAET and the editor of the *Timor Post*, said the group was formed to differentiate so-called "professional" journalists from "activist" journalists currently leading TLJA. Whatever the reason for the split, it could seriously undermine unity in the face of potential challenges to press freedom and thus it is hoped the groups will reconcile.

Recommendations:

- A strong journalists' association remains vital post-independence. It is important that local reporters speak with one voice in their dealings with government and political parties on issues of political pressure and freedom. Efforts should be made to encourage dialogue between TLJA and Sindicato and to heal the split, if possible. This is a false division, assuming that those inside both organizations are individuals of good will who are genuinely concerned about the development of a free and independent press in East Timor.

7. Human Resources: Training and Staffing

Following the August 1999 referendum there were only a bare handful of journalists in East Timor. Since that time, their numbers have grown substantially and some training has been made available to virtually all of them. Skills levels in journalism, as in most other areas in the new country, remain generally low, however, and it will take considerable time to build a pool of skilled journalistic talent. With no history of independent journalism, even the concept of an adversarial press serving as a check on government excess or power is new to East Timor. There is a marked timidity in questioning political leaders and the daily newspapers rarely venture into critical territory or in-depth coverage of UNTAET issues. The NGO press, principally *Cidadaun* of Yayasan Hak, has probably been the most consistently thoughtful and critical media outlet. The weekly magazines have also ventured into longer form journalism and have benefited from mentoring and in-house training to improve their analysis and reporting.

A. UNTAET Media Personnel Issues

On the job training at Radio UNTAET and TVTL has also created a core of some 60 local employees, many of whom have acquired invaluable technical and journalistic skills in the last two years. Individuals who had never been inside a television studio previously have learned to handle complex satellite downloads and mixing boards with relative ease. They have gone on-air with credible news reporting and learned to produce both remote broadcasts and studio operations. During the very busy election period last year, the UNTAET media probably reached its high point, airing coverage of all political parties on both radio and television and handling daily electoral briefings. This period was undoubtedly a great learning experience for local staff.

With the current downsizing of UNTAET media operations, however, the morale levels at both outlets have plummeted as staff fear they may lose their jobs after independence. Senior management has been unable to allay the fears of the staff because of the lack of an accepted plan for the transition to an East Timorese broadcaster. Many of the most senior local staff of the UNTAET media are actively seeking employment elsewhere. This is a great concern because it could be extremely difficult to replace these staff members with others of similar training. In many cases, there are only one or two people in the entire country with the skills they have acquired at Radio UNTAET and TVTL.

A further concern noted during the assessment period is a rise in perceived political tensions inside the UNTAET media. In interviews staff members said there is a growing feeling that “pro-Fretilin” and “pro-Partido Democratico” wings now exist more or less openly inside the stations. This is a delicate question, obviously, and it carries with it great concerns for the future independent reporting of these media outlets.

B. Media Training Center

For at least the last year, a proposal has been making the rounds to set up a media training and resource center at the University of Timor Lorosae (UNITIL). UNTAET-OCPI, UNESCO, APHEDA, TLJA and many others have been involved in discussions on this issue with UNITIL administrators and the Education Ministry. Little has been resolved. Currently, according to Karen Polglaze of APHEDA and TLJA, UNESCO has indicated a willingness to fund the center in partnership with Queensland University where journalism professor John Wallace has been identified with this idea for some time. This proposal, however, has been a little difficult to pin down and commitments from UNITIL have not been forthcoming.

Originally, the intention was to establish a central location for media training within the university and perhaps to offer a certificate program in journalism through UNITIL, with visiting foreign journalists serving as professors. Officers of TLJA said in an interview that the university has rejected the idea of a certificate or degree program in journalism as unimportant for East Timor's future. According to TLJA, the university rector said the decision about the media training center would have to be made by the Ministry of Education. There is a larger context, of course, in which the university has scarce resources and may not see an immediate need to support journalism as a course. The Education Department's involvement may still be troubling because it raises a similar issue – potential government interference – as that occasioned by the Chief Minister's remarks on the state broadcaster. Media donors would be well-advised to steer clear of UNITIL if it appears that a media training center could be held hostage to the agenda of a government ministry. It would be unfortunate if UNESCO or Queensland University were to invest in a training center only to find that what it had to offer – an independent media curriculum – was not wanted by the host institution. There is plenty of time in East Timor to build training centers and the like in the future and it would be unwise to embark on a program to establish a physical training site at great cost before the question of government policy toward the media and education is fully resolved after independence.

C. District Reporters

A real bright spot in the staffing and training picture is the district reporting program. Begun as a joint effort of USAID, UNTAET and the World Bank-CEP in August 2001, 32 reporters were subsequently trained by Radio UNTAET and Internews and have taken up posts in the districts as stringers for Radio UNTAET. Most observers rate this program as highly effective. Originally, this program was designed to provide a core of personnel for community radio, however, given that before its existence there were virtually no reporters outside of Dili, the district reporters have become an invaluable part of Radio UNTAET. A lack of funding in the future makes their status uncertain and USAID is funding 16 of the original 32 reporters through September 2002.

District public information officers and others all said that the presence of the reporters was a positive development. In Manufahe, for example, the two district reporters there

have used their own initiative to start a small bi-weekly newspaper to carry their reports to the villages. The small tabloid, *Noticias Manufahe*, is produced by the reporters and then distributed with the help of the UNTAET PIO to local officials and village leaders in the sub-districts.

D. Political Pressures

None of the journalists interviewed for the assessment complained of receiving any direct political pressure from parties or officials, other than some incidents at STL related to the Constituent Assembly elections. Most journalists said they feel free to ask questions and report freely. However, there is also a strong belief among nearly all journalists that the government will try to control the press after independence. This is felt by many to be inevitable and is a troubling sign of a deep cynicism regarding the political process. For most reporters interviewed for this assessment, the constitutional difficulties and broadcast authority issues discussed above are simply a confirmation of their belief that this process of government interference is well under way.

Given the intense political climate in East Timor and the very close family and clan relationships most people have to one another, pressure on the media is very easy to apply and the fears expressed by journalists about the post-independence environment seem reasonable.

E. Training Issues

In the view of this assessment, the most effective journalism training invariably comes from on-the-job experience. Good, critical editors are the most effective journalism educators. In East Timor, as in other so-called emerging democracies in Asia and elsewhere, funders have sought to jump-start this process with seminars, overseas scholarship opportunities and other training activities. In East Timor, most journalists interviewed for this assessment have asked that training be concentrated in-house – which is, for the purpose of this assessment, the same thing as what is called mentoring – and in a language that their reporters can understand. Journalists say they are skeptical of the value of seminar experiences, except in certain instances where technical expertise is transferred. They want and need assistance in building viable media institutions of their own and they need time to address particular problems. The print media in East Timor all have praised in-house mentoring programs which they say have brought them necessary skills and led to managerial and editorial changes. *Suara Timor Lorosae*, for example, has brought an Indonesian journalist into their shop to work with the staff for several months funded by Internews. Others have followed suit and this seems far and away the most appropriate use of training resources at the current moment. Both Internews and The Asia Foundation have made in-house mentoring a key part of their program – it is the main component of The Asia Foundation’s media work and a feature of the Internews program.

The least useful training technique to date has probably been the strategy of sending Timorese journalists abroad for periods of time to study, an approach favored by a

number of early contributors to media development in East Timor but *not* USAID. This is an expensive training alternative which takes the student away from his or her home paper or radio station with only modest benefit. While undoubtedly popular with those who are given the opportunity for travel, many respondents indicated that little of the information gained has been shared with those back home. Also, during crucial periods like the September 2001 elections, relatively large numbers of the most senior journalists in the country were abroad studying in England, Indonesia or Australia. This depleted the available talent pool at a time when the media was a vital part of the process and where opportunities to learn on the job were plentiful.

Recommendations:

- The district reporting program is worthy of continued support. These folks are virtually the only trained reporters working outside of Dili and should become part of an independent national broadcast entity after independence. It would be a great shame if this resource was lost to the nation. The program should be supported until such time as the reporters are integrated into national radio.
- Funding priority should be given to in-house mentoring programs in basic journalism, technical skills development, management and advertising – in Bahasa Indonesia or Tetun, when possible.
- More time is needed to study the Media Training Center idea and consideration should be given to housing such a center at an independent location away from UNITIL. If the university does not wish to have a degree or certificate program in journalism then why house a training center at the university? If the possibility of even the appearance of government interference exists, then the center could easily become counter-productive to the development of an independent media. It may not be necessary, given the other training programs on offer, to start an expensive and possibly counter-productive media center at this time.

F. Donor and Service Provider Coordination

Efforts made at donor coordination since the start of the mission have been partly successful but there is need to continue cooperation in this effort. It appears that regular donor coordination meetings are no longer being held. There remain areas of confusion between agencies that are ostensibly working toward the same goal: that of building a strong and independent media sector. The lack of a strong journalist association may be a factor in this lack of coordination, since there is no natural body to serve this function. There is also a tendency for donors and NGOs to be separated by boundaries of nationality, even in so small a place as East Timor. As the UNTAET presence diminishes, of course, the donor and agency role will be of even greater importance and thus the issue of coordination will continue to be a priority. There is also a tendency for service providers working in the arena of media training to feel a certain amount of jealousy and a need to guard their turf from one another. Despite improved coordination, there is ongoing tension between the offices of both Internews and The Asia Foundation over crossed signals on who is doing what and for whom. This should be resolved by the service providers in consultation with the donor. Donors should take a firm role in

encouraging service providers to share information with one another and to eliminate misunderstandings.

Recommendations:

- Regular donor coordination meetings should be reestablished across agency lines.
- Service providers should share information and avoid duplicating efforts. This is not a competitive exercise but a cooperative one.

Appendix One: Interview List

Conducted by A. Lin Neumann for USAID Media Assessment East Timor – Jan 15 – Feb 6, 2002

Aderito Hugo da Costa, Chief Editor, *Timor Post*
Helio Freitas & Abilio Sarmento, Manager and Editor, *Lian Maubere*
Titi Irawati, Editor, *Cidadaun*, Yayasan Hak
Domingos Saldaña, Deputy Chief Editor, *Suara Timor Lorosae*
Hugo Fernandes, *Talitakum* & Timor Lorosae Journalists Association (TLJA)
Karen Polglaze, APHEDA
Xanana Gusmão
Fernanda Borges, Minister of Finance, ETPA
Jose Filipe, Director, Radio UNTAET
António Metelo, Cooperation Counselor, Portuguese Mission
Mario Zamorano, Director, OCPI
Brennon Jones, Deputy Director, OCPI
Bendito Neves, Manager, Print Consortium
Reporting staff, *Timor Post*
Reporting staff, TVTL
Ricardo Ribeiro, National Security Advisor, ETPA
Eduardo Soares, Media Program Advisor, The Asia Foundation
Lyndal Barry, Country Director, Internews
Bishop Carlos Belo
Santina Fernandes, editor, *Babadok*, FOKUPERS
Jason Benedek, TVTL
Maria Gabriela Carrascalão, Director, TVTL
Richard Manning, World Bank
Demetrio Amaral, HABURAS Foundation
Dennis McNamara, Deputy SRSG
Michael Chelsius, UNTAET PIO, Baucau District
“Febu”, district reporter, Baucau
Father Juvito Rego de Jesus Araujo, Commission on Truth & Reconciliation
Rodolfo Sousa, *Lian Berlaka*, Same, Manufahe District
Omar Mendoza, UNTAET PIO, Manufahe District
Lizia Tilman, district reporter, Manufahe
Fernando de Araujo, Deputy Foreign Minister, ETPA
Salvador Soares, Publisher, *Suara Timor Lorosae*
Mari Alkatiri, Chief Minister, ETPA
Finn Riske-Nielsen, UNDP Representative and UN Development Coordinator
Catherine Walker, Director, Donor Coordination Unit, UNTAET

Appendix Two: Protocol of Cooperation with Portugal

PROTOCOL OF COOPERATION

BETWEEN

THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT OF EAST TIMOR

AND

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC

for the media sector

Considering the scope of cooperation between the Transitional Government of East Timor and the Government of the Portuguese Republic, with the understanding that the media are privileged vehicles to channel mutual awareness;

Considering the important role of the media in the consolidation of democracy and in enhancing as well as strengthening national identities;

Considering the role of the media in building closer ties between people's, by raising mutual awareness;

Taking also into account the overall objective of reinforcing means to increase broadcasts in the Portuguese language, as a tool to deepen mutual friendship and solidarity;

The Transitional Government of East Timor and the Government of the Portuguese Republic have thus decided to agree on the following Protocol:

Article 1

The Transitional Government of East Timor and the Government of the Portuguese Republic, henceforth designated as "Parties", agree to provide incentives to a number of projects for media development in order to:

insure the setting up of public radio and television broadcasting services in East Timor;

implement in practice the desire expressed by both Parties aiming to insure that public radio and television services reinforce the ties of solidarity between the two countries;

c) insure the transmission on a regular basis of public radio and television broadcasting services.

Article 2

The projects mentioned in the previous article shall be developed by the Timorese party, through National Radio and Television services, and by the Portuguese party through RTP, Radiotelevisão Portuguesa S.A. and RDP – Radiodifusão Portuguesa S.A. with the financial amounts allocated by the Portuguese Government or provided by international cooperation.

Article 3

Fulfilling project goals provided for in Article 1

a) RTP (Rádio Televisão Portuguesa) and RDP (Rádio Difusão Portuguesa) will organize technical missions to facilitate the drafting of Radio and Television stations profiles as well as their organizational design, personnel cadres, plan for construction or refurbishment of buildings, adjudication and surveillance procedures of project development and its adjudication methods.

RTP and RDP shall also organize the selection, adjudication, set-up and installation of equipment, technical testing procedures and staff training, as well as the necessary stage-by-stage approval, to be completed as scheduled to the full execution of the project, involving both Portuguese and East Timorese parties.

b) The National Timorese Radio and Television Services will provide for all the necessary authorizations and safeguard the compliance of all norms established by the Transitional government of East Timor.

Article 4

To fulfill this joint partnership project, and in order to manage the co-production of projects, the Portuguese Government commits itself to send and oversee the operations of an RTP delegation to East Timor, and acquire all systems, equipment or any other necessary tools, as well as goods or services necessary for its effective operation. The Portuguese Government also commits itself to financing the full installation of a studio and acquire all equipment and goods needed to insure the effective operation of an RDP journalist/correspondent in East Timor.

Article 5

In the framework of cooperation between the public service bodies of both countries, the mission of RTP's delegation involves:

a) providing consultancy services to the National Television of East Timor, when launching and following-up original productions and programs made for Television;

participating in training and recycling projects designed for East Timorese television professionals.

c) facilitating all means of cooperation and support for the original television programs in Portuguese as well as facilitating their distribution and free access for the Community of the seven Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) and their respective "diaspora", worldwide.

d) insure the smooth transition and flow of programs for which the status of "all rights reserved" has been acquired.

Article 6

Likewise, the Transitional Governments of East Timor commits itself to:

authorize the launching and continuous operations of the future delegation of RTP in East Timor and insure the continuity of the activities of RDP's correspondent in East Timor, as well as to install a distribution network (transmitters and re-transmitters) for Radio and Television, to enable the effective transmission of RTP's and RDP's international or other type of broadcasts;

authorize from the outset the installation and operational activities, in RTP's premises in East Timor, of the land-based satellite station, which is necessary of the exchange of via satellite programs through NET:RTP and the continuous operation of mobile and fixed communication schemes, via satellite, enabling both the reception and transmission of RDP programs;

adopt appropriate legislative measures to insure that all systems, equipment, goods and services necessary to enable the effective performance of RDP's correspondent, and RTP's delegation, are tax-exempt.

Article 7

With a view to attain qualitative improvement of Public Television Broadcasts, divulge information to “diaspora” in the five continents, on the realities experienced in both countries, and enhance the exchange of television programs between the 7 CPLP countries;

In keeping with this goal, the parties involved shall use the satellite program exchange services, namely: NET:RTP.

All inherent costs associated with this exchange, shall be borne by the Portuguese side of the cooperation program.

Article 8

So as to allow the National Television of East Timor the full use of NET:RTP, the Portuguese Government, on behalf of RTP, commits itself to:

Once RTP has been informed of the frequencies to be used, RTP will immediately install a fixed hertz connection between East Timor’s National Television and RTP, to send television programs back and forth, between the parties.

b) Providing the National Television of East Timor, according to availability schemes agreed upon by the two Television Public Services, with the free of charge use of NET:RTP, for an effective television exchange program between RTP and/ or other users of the satellite service.

ARTICLE 9

This Protocol shall go into effect on the date of the last notification stating that all required legal formalities, binding both Parties have been fulfilled. It is valid for a period of five years starting on such date, and it shall be automatically and successfully renewed for periods of five years, if neither of the Parties gives a previous notice of its intention to denounce the agreement. Such notice must be received at least one year before the final date of expiration.

Drawn in Lisbon on the 26th of October 2001, in two original versions in the Portuguese language, in good mutual faith.

1st Signatory

2nd Signatory

Chief Minister of
The Transitional Government
of East Timor

Prime Minister of
the Republic of Portugal

(Mari Alkatiri)

(António Guterres)

Appendix Three: Making Community Radio Work

MAKING COMMUNITY RADIO WORK

**An assessment of the factors currently impacting on the establishment of a viable,
independent and professional community radio sector in East Timor**

By Jeanne du Toit

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The research aims

This research is intended to assist donors and other stakeholders in defining long-term funding priorities for the East Timor community radio sector. It is also intended to be of assistance as a discussion document in any dialogue that may take place between a wider group of stakeholders about the future of a community radio in East Timor. The study assesses the factors currently impacting on the establishment of a viable, independent and professional community radio sector. I attempted, firstly, to establish the potential of existing stations in Timor to form part of such a sector. Such stations are assessed in terms of their current technical capacity, professionalism, institutional strength and viability. Secondly, I explore the extent to which there currently exists an enabling environment in East Timor which would allow for the establishment of a community radio sector. This exploration necessitated an assessment of support structures and service providers in terms of their role in ensuring the survival of the community radio sector.

Methodology

Given the time constraints of this research project, it was not viable to gather primary data through monitoring of the output of stations, observation of the way they work on a day to day basis, or research with members of their target audiences about their impact within communities. Instead, the emphasis was on collecting existing perspectives and observations of stakeholders who have been working within or alongside East Timor stations. I then weighed these against my own experience of the establishment of community radio in South Africa, to draw a series of conclusions about the situation in East Timor.

Given that there appears to be no precise agreement amongst stations, donors, training providers etc in East Timor as to the exact definition of community radio, there was no rigorous way to identify which stations should form part of this assessment. I decided, therefore, to simply focus on those which define themselves as 'community radio stations'. In practice, this turned out to be all stations besides Radio Untaet. I include both one-on-one discussions with people in key management positions and, where possible, group discussions with the broader memberships of the stations. Also, I interviewed staff working in donor organizations and support services.

Limitations

Discussion of an enabling environment should, ideally, explore legal and regulatory factors, as well as the impact of the social and political environment. I included questions about these issues in the interviews, but a more focused assessment of these factors would be necessary to form a clear picture of the challenges faced by stations.

Using this report

This is *not* a thorough assessment of individual projects, but rather offers a rough overview of the current trends and patterns in the community radio sector. The point of the assessment is also not to provide final answers and solutions to the challenges faced by projects, but instead identifies what these challenges are, and sets them out in a coherent fashion. With this in mind, I have organized the document into action-oriented sections, targeted for different users.

Section One explains the terms and definitions which informs my assessment of stations and of the sector as a whole. Section Two summarizes the conclusions of this research, and makes proposals and comments which are meant to be of immediate use within discussions taking place about the future of community radio in this country. The last two sections are designed to be of value in the longer term for people working directly in the community radio sector (i.e. trainers, station members, etc). They illustrate the arguments set out in Section Two in more detail. Section Three does this through a series of ‘snapshot’ impressions of the situation existing at each station, and Section Four through a description of the various supportive projects organized by stakeholder organizations (donors and service providers) presently involved in the sector. There is necessarily a lot of detail missing.

SECTION ONE

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Defining ‘community radio’

The word “community radio” was used in different ways by people that I interviewed. I measure these uses against principles of community broadcasting around which there is general international consensus.

One core principle is that a community radio station is necessarily a non-profit venture. This does not mean that people working at such a station cannot be paid proper salaries. It means, rather, that such a station is not driven by profit motives, but rather by the aim of empowering its target audience. Implied in this is also that income cannot be used for the personal enrichment of the custodians (i.e. the volunteer and paid staff, and management) of such a station. Explanations of this often include the statement that any income made over and above the payment of salaries, running costs etc needs to be plowed into station to ensure its long term sustainability, and to improve the services that it provides for its target community.

Secondly, and linked to the above, there is the principle of ownership and control of a station by its target community. A community broadcaster should demonstrate, through measurable indicators, that it is ensuring a high level of ownership and control by the community it serves, and is accountable to that community. Organizational structures and systems should, for example, ensure transparency with regards to financial management and the inclusion of that community in decisions around editorial policy and programming. A key component is often a governing board or council, with representative community membership. Another is regular open meetings with members

of that community, to consult on decisions the station wishes to make about its programming or management. Program design and production strategies should also facilitate participation in broadcasts by that target community. Participation should be understood, here, in more rigorous terms than simply inviting members of the community as guests onto talk shows, or interviewing them in the field. It should mean the inclusion of a broad and diverse group of members of the community in the production of programs. The inclusion of trained volunteers in news- and other production teams would be one example of such a strategy.

A third principle is that a community radio station needs to be sustainable in the long term. The nature of such sustainability needs to be defined in a way that is appropriate to the economic conditions within which such a station exists.

My assessment of Timor stations also assumes that, in order to build and maintain such a relationship with a target community that is based on the above three principles, a station necessarily has to serve a fairly small target area.

Beyond this, I believe that it is important to be open to local reinterpretations of models of community radio. For example, I have not assumed that community radio stations are necessarily volunteer driven. It could be argued that the volunteer model, in its purest sense, was developed in very different economic conditions to that of East Timor. It is important for a new community radio sector to develop locally appropriate systems – and this may very well mean an interrogation of the very principle of volunteerism. I have therefore remained open to alternatives to the volunteer system and other traditional guidelines for community radio stations.

The concept of a community radio ‘sector’

This research is an assessment of a “community radio sector” rather than individual community radio stations. It assumes the need for a coherent movement consisting both of stations and other stakeholders. The assumption is further that such a movement demands the existence of a formalized community radio association. I would argue that community radio stations, as defined above, have very little chance of surviving in the long term outside the context of a such an association. The notion of a station that is owned and controlled by its local target community, and which is not driven by profit but rather by the intention of empowering that community is contrary to mainstream trends in media industries. It is therefore highly unlikely that such a station will survive if it does not form part of a larger movement of like-minded stations, that works against the grain of commercial pressures. There is a need for the deliberate establishment of a culture which such broadcasting can be understood and maintained. It is important that East Timor stations create their own interpretation of what this culture is about, and within this develops their own model for community radio appropriate to the local environment. Such an association would also address the fact that, because of the availability of international funding for community radio, there tends to be a growth of projects which claim to be community broadcasters without giving substance to such claims. If an association agrees to clear definitions for its own membership, and find ways of

monitoring its own members accordingly, this will help to ensure the legitimacy of the sector as a whole.

The establishment of a coherent and organized community radio sector would also increase the chances of ensuring an enabling legal and regulatory environment. Only if stations and community stakeholders have their own power base from which to lobby and advocate, can one be sure that broadcast law and policy has a chance of being defined in a way that serves the interests of such stations – and the communities they represent.

The existence of a regulatory system that is informed by a rigorous understanding of the purpose and operation of community radio stations is, in fact crucial. Not only should such a system be set up in a way that protects the rights of community broadcasters, but it should also be designed to regulate the quality of the service that such stations provide to their own communities. A community radio sector cannot be expected to provide the only controls over the quality of such services, and need to be backed up by the regulatory framework in which they operate. For all these reasons, my assessment includes a scrutiny of the potential, in Timor, for the establishment of a community radio movement with a coherent, agreed understanding of its own purpose.

SECTION TWO GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Based on my assessment of existing stations and the environment in which they operate, I would make the following recommendations to donors and service providers who wish to support community radio in East Timor:

1. To consider that projects can only be successfully established with long-term commitment from outside agencies.

I argue later in this document (for example on page ten) that there has been a tendency to start radio projects without taking full responsibility for their successful establishment. If this tendency continues, there is very little chance for the survival of local or community radio in this country. The following needs to be taken seriously:

- That the establishment of governing structures (such as station boards or the CEP's district boards) demand a very substantial investment of training and induction, and then of ongoing support. It is such structures that will determine the successful setting up of stations, and they cannot be left to their own devices in doing this work.
- That capacity building is a slow and expensive business, which demands a substantial investment over a long period of time. Long-term and intensive support structures need to exist for both projects and also for individuals, such as local Timorese staff who are expected to carry the burden of implementing donors' plans. Only once capacity has successfully been achieved should people be expected to survive on their own.

2. To agree on a coherent approach to developing community radio in East Timor.

Donors and service providers need to establish such agreement, in order to avoid serious errors in the way that the establishment and maintenance of stations takes place. This is urgent, since such errors can permanently damage the chances of success for community radio in this country. There are instances in which such mistakes have already impacted on the chances of particular stations' survival (see discussions further into this section). As part of such an approach, the following needs to be considered:

- A model for community radio appropriate to East Timor. This should address organizational management (and as part of this, volunteerism and financial management), program formats, community relations, etc. Later in this section, I point out ways in which the haphazard and uncritical adoption of foreign community radio models has already caused East Timor stations a great deal of difficulty. Such a model can of course only be established over time, but some key principles can already be agreed upon. Also see Section One for an explanation of some principles that should inform any model of community radio.

- The precise role that should be played by a community radio network. Both the CEP and Apheda are interested in facilitating the establishment of such a network. I would suggest that such facilitators need to decide whether to encourage an association that is defined as a service provider or as a representative body of stations that lobbies for their rights and facilitates their relationship to service providers, government etc. There is danger in combining these roles, since this causes a blurring of agendas. The decision made here will have implications for the infrastructures it would need to operate effectively, and the way that the membership of such a network is defined. If a network is defined as a representative body (which I would encourage), service organizations could be members of the association.
- Donors, service providers and existing stations should agree on a strategy for establishing and supporting stations. Only if they find a way of working together in a consultative manner can a strong sector be developed (there is a description on page ten of a model for such collaboration).
- To prioritize only a few stations for assistance at this stage, and to provide such stations with concentrated help that ensures their establishment as healthy, viable projects. The advantage of this approach is, firstly in not spreading assistance too thin – and, secondly, in ensuring the development tried and tested systems for East Timor community radio before expanding the sector.
- To build close relationships between service providers and stations, founded on detailed contracts that are regularly reviewed. This contract should articulate the stations' interests as well as those of the service provider, clarify issues of ownership of equipment, and outline clear terms under which the contract remains valid. Again, a service provider should only build such contracts with a few stations, and avoid spreading their support too widely.

3. To build understanding of community radio in East Timor–this needs investment, through ongoing training and advocacy.

Later in this document I refer to the difficulty that stations experience in setting up relations of ownership and accountability with their target communities. Part of this difficulty relates to a lack of understanding (in stations, in communities, and amongst service providers and donors) of principles of community radio – and of how to implement such principles. It is important to build a culture of such understanding, amongst stations, within communities and amongst donors and service providers. Service providers, and staff working for a community radio network, have the advantage of a birds eye view, and could play a key role in establishing such understanding through the following contributions:

- To monitor what is happening on the ground at stations, in their implementation of plans for programming and management, and the impact that these have on communities.

- To facilitate sharing of experience amongst stations, through program exchange, staff exchange and focussed seminars (with station managers, journalists, etc)
- To facilitate regular opportunities to feed the information gathered through such monitoring into debates amongst service providers, donors and stations.

4. To bring appropriate expertise into the process, and in an appropriate manner.

The failure of stations to fulfil the requirements of community radio is often due to lack of expertise. Similarly, decisions made by donors and service organizations are often not informed by appropriate expertise. For expert assistance to have an impact, the following strategies should be considered:

- A collaborative approach, in which donors and support organizations work together to bring in skilled advisors to service the community radio sector as a whole. An expert in transmission technology could, for example, be employed to visit each station that forms part of a community radio network, to diagnose problems and come up with general solutions.
- It has to be accepted that much of this expertise will presently have to be from international sources. To address this problem, strategies for local capacity building should be built into the work that such advisors do – by setting up mentoring relationships with staff working at local support services, and a phased strategy for such staff to take over the advisory work.
- There should be a strong emphasis on station-based consultation and training, with experts working for extended periods of time at stations.
- It has to be accepted that expertise is needed in widely diverging areas, which are unlikely to be addressed by one person.

The discussion below illustrates the need for these strategies by setting out some of the general trends and patterns presently existing in the East Timor community radio. Individual comments about each station are then set out in Section Three, while Section Four contains information about each of the other stakeholders (donor organizations and service providers).

Taking responsibility

In Section Three, I describe the situation in Maliana community radio, where UNESCO provided some equipment and a few days training and then expected the stations to survive on their own. Similarly CEP recruited and supported some of the district stringers for Radio UNTAET, who were also supported by USAID, in the expectation that they would eventually form part of a network of community radio stations or become part of the national public broadcaster staff. In both cases assistance has been provided to keep the projects going. However, there has been no long-term commitment to this process.

This is, I believe, one of the key threats facing community stations and local radio generally in East Timor.

The ideal sequence for the setting up of community stations is one that happens in deliberate stages. Aspirant broadcasters move on to each stage once the previous one has been completed with success. Members of a community radio association should strategize around how these stages are to be facilitated.

These stages should include an initial needs assessment and community consultation, followed by the establishment of a representative governing structure for a given station. This governing structure should then be taken through a thorough induction process with regards to the principles of community radio and then a strategic planning process in which it determines the station's aims, objectives and strategies. Only after this follows the securing of funds for equipment, for basic running costs and a venue – and only *then* would the governing structure move on to the recruitment of staff (i.e. paid employees) and volunteers, and their training. Each of these stages needs assistance – both through financing and the availing of expert advice. In an ideal situation, a community radio association would mentor aspirant stations through these stages, in close partnership with donor organizations and service providers. It is against this model that I have measured what is presently taking place in East Timor with the setting up of stations.

There is some very substantive understanding by the people I interviewed about the correct way to support the establishment of new stations. It was, for example, often mentioned that the establishment of stations should happen 'from the bottom up', and also that there is an urgent need for independence, accountability and viability. Nevertheless, the support given by donors and service providers takes place without first having established agreed parameters in which the setting up and maintenance of community radio can be understood. This has resulted in a situation in which contradictory strategies are being employed. For example, on the one hand, there is the very ambitious plans of the CEP to establish, over a very short period of time, a station in at least eight different districts (to compliment those districts where stations have already been set up). On the other hand, there is the approach adopted by organizations who believe in working more slowly. Michael Copeland from Apheda notes, for example, that his organization works with a few stations, providing them with support over a long period of time. He believes that one needs to work with stations at their own pace. This dual approach, has also resulted in the duplication of strategies. For example, both CEP and Apheda are talking about setting up community radio resource centers – and both are facilitating the establishment of community radio associations.

There is, I believe, an urgent need for discussion amongst institutions such as the CEP and other organizations working in East Timor about appropriate strategies for the setting up and maintenance of stations. Crucially, such strategies need to take on board the importance of testing the success of strategies, and working slowly enough to correct for mistakes.

Without such a system, mistakes are very likely to happen. There is, for example, potential for such mistakes in the CEP's acquisition of very large stores of equipment – these are to be granted to stations by the boards that are presently being set up in districts. At this stage, I would argue, it makes more sense to acquire equipment in smaller quantities. This would allow for corrective measures, *if* it turns out that such equipment is inappropriate to the local environment. The granting of equipment and running costs to Maliana Community Radio by USAID\OTI could be another example of a mistake. This station did not have the managerial capacity to take responsibility for these resources, and the inevitable internal conflict has caused damage to the organization. Such problems could be avoided through a more systematic approach to the stages of development of aspirant stations.

I would guess that the haste with which decisions are being made results from an understandable sense of urgency about the needs that exist on the ground. However, exactly because of this urgency, decisions such as the acquisition and granting of equipment must not be made outside the context of an overall strategy.

So what is community radio anyway?

There is, as already pointed out, a need for an ongoing dialogue amongst players in the community radio sector about what they actually mean when they talk about community radio. Amongst the people I interviewed there was no agreed understanding of what is meant by “community radio. Two of the contributors used the concept in very rigorous and precise way – i.e. the Australian Volunteers working at Los Palos and Maliana, Juliet Fox and Maria. On the other end of the spectrum, one or two of the managers at ‘community radio stations’ used the term very loosely indeed – simply because they did not fit comfortably into either the commercial or public broadcasting model. In between, there are many of the people from donor organizations and training institutions, who have a good understanding of the broad principles of community radio, but in a very generalized sense, without specific expertise.

One of the dangers created by this situation is that people underestimate the complexity of the concept of community radio, and the difficulties and challenges facing anyone trying to set up such a station. This means that one underestimates the level of support – both financial and in terms of expert assistance - that stations need both in the “setting up” stage and later in the maintenance of their management and programming systems.

The issue of volunteerism.

This is probably the most crucial part of the discussion that needs to take place in terms of defining an appropriate model of community radio for East Timor. Many of the people I interviewed referred to the idea that to be a ‘true’ community radio station, everyone should work as volunteers – since this somehow ensures accountability to the station’s target community. On the other hand, there was an underlying assumption in many of the interviews that volunteers are a necessary evil which one has to adopt because there is no money to pay staff.

The fact is that none of the stations presently in operation have worked out a way of operating without paid staff. Stations talk, rather, of the *difficulty* of working with volunteers. Keeping their volunteer staff; people leaving because there is ‘no incentive’ for staying. I heard repeatedly from managers that no matter how many times it is explained to volunteers that the intention is not to pay them, expectations of future possibilities of salaried employment still remain one of the central reasons for joining stations.

The model of volunteerism introduced at these stations is, in my view, inappropriate to the context of East Timor. It is unrealistic to expect a community consisting of a majority of unemployed people to run a station without the existence of fully salaried positions for one or two skilled people who carry the burden of responsibility of managing finances, programming – and, crucially, the skilled management of a volunteer team. This issue clearly needs urgent discussion, in order to help stations to strategize around the problems they are experiencing with volunteers, and in order to develop appropriate donor policies with regards to salaries for community radio staff.

Financial sustainability

Similar discussions should take place around realistic strategies for financial sustainability. There seems to be general acceptance that, because of the economic context in Timor, one would not expect a community radio station to survive by the means traditional to wealthy societies – such as membership fees or advertising contracts. This is clearly correct. I would say, however, that there is a further need to discuss realistic alternatives.

Stations primarily depend on donor funding, and to a lesser extent on establishing collaborative programming contracts with NGO’s, who pay them for airtime. Los Palos has had particular success at setting up these kinds of contracts. The CEP quoted Los Palos’ approach as an example of what they hope will happen at other stations. I would however argue that it is unlikely that stations will be able to survive on such contracts alone, without a commitment on the part of the government and donors for continued assistance.

ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH

Almost every station in East Timor has an ‘organogram’ – a graphic map of the station’s structures, either on paper or displayed on a board on an office wall. Often, there are crucial elements missing from these maps – such as governance structures. In many stations, there is recognition of the need to include such governance structures – but stations often struggle with their actual establishment. This is not surprising, given the lack of awareness in communities of the nature of community radios stations and their potential value. Also, the kind of people who should form part of such boards are often already completely over committed elsewhere.

This is a crucial area in which stations need expert assistance. Despite the difficulties involved in setting up such structures, their establishment has to be prioritized as a matter

of urgency. Without the existence of functional governing structures, no other measures for the improvement of stations are likely to have much permanent effect.

Another problem with the organizational maps are that although the different structures and posts are indicated, the ‘white spaces’ in between remain unexplained. The relationships that exist between the different parts of the organization are, in other words, not clearly articulated. This means that there is lack of clarity about lines of accountability, decision making processes and systems for communication.

Similarly, the relationship between the structures and posts and each station’s target community mostly remains unexplained. This points to a lack of strategy on the part of stations to strategize around community involvement. Here, again, is an area that can only really be addressed with station-based assistance over an extended period of time by an advisor with the necessary skills in community radio – and, more specifically, community participation.

Technical capacity

A contradictory picture emerges here. Most stations were not too badly equipped. At the same time, much of the equipment is not in working order. Motorbikes are not working, minidisks often ‘broken’, transmission equipment does not work properly, and crucial spare parts are missing. The problem, here, is more one of maintenance and of the management of resources. Stations cannot be expected to have expertise in the management of transmission equipment, for example.

And what is community journalism?

Here, again, is an area in which no coherent approach is being developed. One interviewee commented that organizations like Internews have an agenda - that they push the importance of journalism in the work that they do with stations, emphasizing this in their training, rather than taking their cue from the skills that community radio stations themselves are looking for. I noted a similar ‘agenda’ on the part of Apheda, who emphasize the use of mobile broadcasts. In my view, such agendas are quite valuable. The emphasis on the importance of journalism was, in fact, echoed by everyone I spoke to in the stations and everyone stressed that the dissemination of information lies at the heart of their work. Similarly, the tradition that has developed amongst Dili-based stations for mobile broadcasts is, I believe, one of their strengths – and one worth building on.

It is, however, true that there is very little dialogue amongst stations and other organizations about the development of appropriate programming and production strategies for East Timor community radio. This means that the interventions made by training organizations do not really form part of an overall strategy, with clear aims with regards to what should be established at stations. It also means that there is a danger of the unconscious wholesale adoption of approaches to programming born either from mainstream media or from community radio operating under very different conditions to that of Timor.

Of relevance, here, is the comment made by Juliet Fox that, in her observation, the journalism training that has so far taken place with community stations has been provided by mainstream practitioners, not by experts in community radio programming. Even where community radio experts such as Juliet and Maria were brought in, their background tends to be on the side of management rather than journalism. There is, I believe, a risk in only bringing in mainstream journalism expertise. The journalism formats of mainstream broadcasting are not necessarily appropriate to East Timor community stations – and the people who are working with stations around their programming decisions need to be aware of this.

I observed, in fact, a strong emphasis in many stations on the production of news bulletins. The paid staff at Los Palos and Maliana focus most of their attention on generating content for such bulletins. One would guess that this is because of models of journalism offered to the community radio members during training. It is a matter of opinion whether the news bulletin is in fact the most important journalistic format to encourage on community radio stations. This restrictive format does not allow space for much of the kind of content that needs to be covered in districts at a local level. From my limited monitoring of the news output of the different stations, it did appear that they tend to push the traditional news bulletin format to its limit, by using very long readers and including full interviews as part of the bulletin – so that, in a sense, it becomes a little current events newscast. This was certainly the case with Los Palos. If a mainstream journalist was to assess such bulletins, the tendency would be to redirect stations back to a more traditional format, instead of recognizing the reasons why the bulletin format was being stretched, and working with the station on developing a way of doing so that really works. This, I believe, is another reason why there should be ongoing debates amongst trainers, and including journalists at stations, about the pros and cons of various options for program design.

Another topic that should be explored in such debates can be found in the use of news sources. An issue that has been brought to my attention repeatedly is that many East Timor community stations use newspaper stories as a source for national news. In some cases, such stories are re-written for the ear, but in other cases they are more or less cut and pasted as is into the bulletins. Either use is, in my view, problematic, since the station's bulletins then become the expression of other media organization's editorial priorities. Given the status that is accorded to news on Timor stations, as moments of ultimate 'truth', this is a serious compromise to the stations' editorial credibility. When I put this to the Tokodede newsteam, they explained to me that the scalping of print stories is acceptable given the problem of literacy amongst their listeners. The bulletins gives listeners access to newspapers, while at the same time encouraging them to become interested in learning to read such papers. I would suggest that the approach taken by Los Palos Community Radio is more appropriate – they present a programme, separate from the news, in which newspapers are read for people who cannot read. The Los Palos and Maliana teams explained that, in any case, they hardly ever get national newspapers in time to use for their news bulletins. Los Palos are more likely to use the internet and satellite radio as sources, while Maliana have in the past derived content from Radio

Untaet news bulletins (although the local PIO apparently objected to this). Here, then, is another example of an issue which stations could benefit from discussing with each other.

Similarly, there is the issue of mobile broadcasts. Some stations have developed a great deal of expertise in how to do such broadcasts – in particular, Radio Rakambia and Loriko Lian. These stations have tended to organize these broadcasts in areas outside their transmission area for the general purpose of raising awareness in East Timor about the value of community radio. What has not yet been explored is the potential of such broadcasts to build a closer, more interactive relationship between a given station and its target audience. There would therefore be value in facilitating dialogue about the value of this tool for other purposes.

Then there is the use of the coupon system. All the community stations use this strategy, as a way of managing music dedication programs for a small income (an average of ten or fifteen cents per coupon). There is, I believe, enormous potential in utilizing this system in order to increase community interaction – by asking people to write an answer to a question about the station, about a community issue.

The agenda that I would personally push in discussions with East Timor community radio stations would be the live magazine show. By a live magazine format I mean a show which is divided into segments, each consisting of a combination of live and recorded items (interviews, reports, mini-dramas, chat, etc). This format can be used for current events as well as softer, lighter content. The use of segments means that such programming invites the presentation of a variety of points of view on a given topic, and in this way allows the inclusion of many different voices – a crucial strategy for community radio programming. This emphasis provides an alternative to the notion inherent to the bulletin format that there is one ‘truth’, one set of facts. It also allows for the exploration of subjective, emotional responses to events. Such an approach to content is important for community radio. Live magazine programming can also include a significant quota of music, and as such provides a relief for producers from the constant demands of filling airtime with substantive content. By integrating music with content, one avoids the tendency for community radio programming to consist of small blocks of information (in bulletins) followed by long stretches of wall-to-wall music. A tightly produced live magazine program is also unlikely to be produced by one person – it demands teamwork from a fairly large group. As such, it is a format well suited to participatory community radio programming. It is a demanding format – but not as demanding as a completely pre-recorded packaged show.

In the next section, I will again illustrate some of the points made above, this time in context of a detailed profile of each of the stations.

SECTION THREE THE STATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This section sets out a case study of a station chosen from among the existing radio stations in Timor. All managers, by the way, referred to their stations as ‘community radio’. This included four Dili-based stations (Radio Falintil \ Voz de Esperanca; Radio Timor Kmanek; Radio Rakambia; and Loriko Lian) and three stations in other districts (Tokodede Community radio in Liquicia, Lospalos Community Radio in the Lautem district and Maliana Community Radio in Bobonaro). In conducting interviews with Radio Maliana, I set out to answer what I regard to be the three most crucial questions (as explained in my terms above): Is the station driven by profit motives, or by the intention to empower its target community? How successful is the station at establishing relationships of ownership and control by its target community (and if not successful, where is the problem)? And how good are its chances at sustainability?

Case Study

RADIO COMUNIDADE MALIANA

Frequency: FM100 MHz

Areas of reception: Bobonaro District, East Timor; Belu district, Atambua, West Timor.

People interviewed: Justino, station manager. Paulino Tilman and Suzanna Gouveia, PIOs. Maria, resident Australian Volunteer International.

Origins: This station is one of the only three who were set up specifically as community broadcasters. It was initiated by UNESCO in February 2000 and was set up because of its critical location near the border. Broadcasts can be heard by East Timorese refugees in camps near the border, and as such can be provided with alternative sources of information about the situation in East Timor. A Filipino community radio organization, Tambuli, was brought in to facilitate the establishment of the station. They worked closely with Susana Gouveia, PIO in Maliana, who assisted with the initial recruitment of station members. UNESCO provided basic equipment and, through Tambuli, a few day’s training. They also helped with establishing a representative council for the station. One of the key principles that appeared to have formed part of the original agreement with station members was that they would work as volunteers, without payment, and would have to generate their own income for the station (i.e. not be dependent on outside funding). The station began broadcasting on April 26, 2000.

Aims: There appears to be very little coherent connection between the original aims as envisaged by UNESCO and those of people presently involved in the station. I assume that one reason for this is lack of continuity. Justino explained to me that there were forty people involved in the training provided by UNESCO in February 2000, but that these people soon started leaving:

“Most of them left to find other jobs, for example in the police force. Finally there were only six people left of the original team. And now there are only three of us left, although we have been able to bring some other new people into the station”.

This necessarily means that not many of the people left at the station would have been part of the initial brief provided by the trainers about principles of community radio. This lack of continuity was exacerbated by the station’s inability to consolidate documentation around its aims. As in the case of Los Palos Community Radio, UNESCO presented Maliana with some guidelines for developing their own constitution and other organizational bylaws. This never happened. My impression is that, as a result, the station’s membership never really established an agreed understanding of their reason for existence. Instead, there are various expectations as to what the station is supposed to achieve, from different groups working with them. On the one hand, the PIO views the station as a very viable communication tool for disseminating information. Susana explained that the station seemed a particularly good idea since, at the time when it was proposed, Radio Untaet was not yet broadcasting in Bobonaro. She explains further:

“Community Radio was for us an important resource; in the beginning this was the only way to disseminate information to the community. There was the situation with the refugees, since we are a border district, and it was important to inform them that it was safe for them to come back to East Timor. We needed to get out information about the availability of housing, that the community would welcome them, that they can come back.”

When asked about the purpose of the station, Justino says the following:

“The aim of the station is to help the refugees with information. Returnees come back to East Timor because they hear on the station that it is safe. Our aim is also to give information, to try to give the truth to people because rumors flow around.”

Expedito Belo who works with OTI explained to me that USAID provided the station with funding because they, too, saw the value of the broadcasting of such information across the national border.

It is a point of concern that all the people I interviewed about Maliana were quoting the refugee situation as being the station’s central reason for existence. Certainly, the station’s geographical location means that its target audience falls on two sides of the Timorese border, and it is therefore very well placed to define its aims in terms of the building of bridges across this divide. Nevertheless, it seemed to me that the station’s mission is being too narrowly defined. Although providing refugees with such information is clearly a valuable activity, such an objective should be one of many for a station like Maliana.

Technical capacity: UNESCO provided the station with some basic equipment, and USAID then added to this by providing computers, motorcycles, a generator, tape-

recorders, and basic supplies. Justino told me that the station needs a cable in order to make the generator operational, and a table for the mixing desk. He also mentioned to me that the station needs more motorbikes to make it possible to cover stories further afield, and computers to increase the station's ability to involve local school children in projects. This, however, appears to be a point of debate between Maria and the station. Maria feels that station members are quick to ask for further handouts from funders, and should instead be recognizing the value of what they have and utilizing this to its fullest potential.

Institutional strength: Maliana has suffered from the fact that there have been a lot of interventions from different organizations, but not really sustained professional mentoring. Maria's arrival at the station has changed this, and the improvement in the station's operations over the past few months are, I think, largely to the continuity she has provided.

Organizational health has also been severely affected by an ongoing struggle with the implementation of the volunteer model of community radio. As already mentioned, above, almost all of the original group of volunteers quickly abandoned the station. Justino explains that new people do still join the station, but they soon leave again:

This thing about working as volunteers is difficult ... they will come to the station because they want the experience, but they don't stay. There is no incentive to do so. Once they find out that the station is not interesting, they find other jobs.

The problem appears to be that people still have expectations of payment or employment even though it has been clearly explained to them that the station is run on a volunteer model. Justino explains:

The problem seems to be that ... (even if they know this is volunteer work) people still expect something. This causes conflict between team members. Even though Maria frequently tells them that Community Radio is about volunteers, it still remains a problem.

Traditionally, the idea of involving volunteers in a community radio station is not as a 'necessary evil' because of lack of funds, but rather because such involvement increases community participation and empowerment. There is some understanding of this at the station and amongst the people who work with the station. Susana makes a direct link between the station's struggle with volunteerism and the strength of its relationship with its target community and the extent of participatory programming:

There is a problem with ownership at the station. When Maria came, this got better. There are now more volunteers involved. This has changed things – there is more good programming, public announcements and so on.

On the whole, however, I did not get the sense that the connection between volunteerism and community accountability is understood. Significantly, Justino linked UNESCO's emphasis on volunteers to what sounded like the classic funder's policy of prioritizing the funding of capital equipment while avoiding running costs (but stated in quite crude terms, possibly because of translation):

At that time, these people left equipment for Maliana Community Radio. Mr. Luis said 'we won't give you cash, because if we give you money you will spend it all and what will happen with the future of the station?'

My guess is that there is no real agreed understanding as to why it is that people do not get paid, or what the power of volunteerism really is.

Another key problem appears to be the fact that the council established by UNESCO no longer exists. Clearly, without the benefit of governing structures, no way of dealing with setting up accountable structures. Much of the fights about resources and leadership could have been sorted out by such a board.

The station has come to the conclusion that there is indeed a real need for such a structure. The station has now made some initial attempts at getting this process going. Maria explained that this council was very important for as part of building relations with the community "since they will remain isolated otherwise'. However, the task of doing so is turning out to be challenging. When a meeting was called to discuss community involvement in the station only seven people turned up. Justino says that it is difficult to interest people in making a contribution to the station:

We often invite different leaders to meetings to discuss the station, so that we can tell people about community radio, and that it is owned by everyone. But somehow we can't get this meeting together. Not everyone participates; they have other priorities, and often fail to come because of that.

I would guess that part of the problem lies with how such meetings are organized. The station possibly lacks people with enough expertise in the kind of management that community interaction of this kind demands. Apheda has already assisted Maliana on this issue, and it may be useful if they continue to do so. Maria also notes that it would be good if someone replaces her when she leaves the station, and urges that that person should have 'networking skills':

It should be someone with community radio expertise – and particularly who understands the concept of volunteerism. But most important of all they should know about networking, building relationships with the community. They should be more of a management person than a journalist.

Fourthly, it is clear that the station has suffered from the wrong people being in leadership positions. For different reasons, both John and Denise were unable to carry the responsibilities of the station's management. Justino is, it would appear, the first

coordinator who is playing a constructive role. Furthermore the practice, in the station, of rotating coordinators every three months seems to me highly problematic. Clearly, if a governing council had been in place, some of these problems could have been sorted out or avoided.

Finally, and I would guess as a result of the lack of leadership amongst management and the lack of governance by a council, there is a problem with the organizational culture existing at Maliana. In particular, the station does not appear to have a culture of self reliance. Maria's descriptions of her attempts to work with the station's leadership illustrates this point.

Maria had to play a key role in helping the station to change itself around – first through formal training and then by mentoring the management team. Through her work, the station now appears to have organized systems for production management, including daily editorial meetings run by Justino:

We go through the program guide, to see in detail what needed to be organized over the next two days, and also plan ahead a bit for day three. We assign tasks, allocate resources, like the motorbikes. You have to run this meeting very tightly, but you also have to make space for general meeting issues. We also now have general meetings on the first of each month.

There is, clearly, a need for a dramatic rebirth at Maliana Community Radio. I would suggest that such a process is only possible under the governance of a well-established governing council – and that the station needs intensive external assistance with this process.

Programming strategies: The station's programming appears to have improved over the past few months. Maria explains that when she first arrived, there was a great deal of chaos at the station and that this included the approach to broadcasting:

They clearly needed help with programming. There was a guide on the wall for their program schedule, but no one followed it, and it didn't make sense.

With the establishment of clear editorial systems, as described above, this has changed. Reporters go out to collect local stories; the station has started a new program for reading newspapers on air, contracts have been established with NGO's for carrying programming on the station and there are more volunteers involved. The station would, clearly, benefit from continued assistance in the improvement of its programming.

Financial viability: A similar picture emerges here. Through Maria's prompting, and under Justino's leadership, the station has strengthened its financial management systems. As pointed out above, Maliana has now successfully established partnerships with NGO's (Yayasan Hak and Oxfam) in which these organizations pay them for airtime and produce programming on the station.

There continues, however, to be two contradictory approaches within the station to financial management. On the one hand, there are the ideas that Maria is pushing for; the slow building of financial independence through setting up working partnerships with NGO's, and the development of local fundraising projects. On the other hand, there is the approach adopted most of the other station members, that the station needs to find support from donors who can assist them with extra computers, motorbikes, etc. This position is linked to the organizational culture of dependence referred to above.

I would suggest that the only chance that the station has of developing a focussed strategy around increasing its financial independence is through the establishment of governing council, with members who have an astute understanding of the stations economic potential.

Appendix Four: Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference Team Leader East Timor Media Assessment

Duration 3 weeks

Background

Since the end of Indonesia's 24-year occupation of East Timor in 1999, the country has developed a significant number of local, independent media organizations. Currently, there are two daily newspapers, two national weekly magazines, three regional bulletins, four community radio stations, and two commercial radio stations in Dili. Additionally, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor has established a television station and a radio station under the purview of the UN mission which may become national broadcasters. A number of international organizations have conducted training programs aimed at strengthening essential journalism skills and the management of independent media groups. While there are fewer international donors supporting the media than other sectors, a substantial amount of international funding has nonetheless been invested in the media sector. Since 1999, the media has been able to operate in an atmosphere largely free of intimidation.

As East Timor moves closer to independence, a new government establishes itself, and international donors shift toward longer-term development priorities, the context in which the nascent Timorese media has arisen is changing. Against this background, USAID/OTI is funding a sector-wide media assessment. The consultant will conduct the research and submit a final report. The views expressed in the report will be exclusively those of the team leader and the assessment team. The team leader will be responsible for facilitating the work of the team members, for allocating individual responsibilities, and for ensuring a final report is drafted and submitted to USAID/OTI.

Objective of Assessment

To assess the legal and regulatory environment, technical professional capacities, institutional strength, and financial viability of existing media entities; to identify common financial, technical, and organizational constraints, and; to recommend potential solutions.

Specific Tasks and Responsibilities

- Review the work of media groups to assess standards of professionalism.
- Examine larger political, social, and economic context of East Timor in terms of its bearing on the viability, freedom, and professionalism of the media. It is

anticipated that this will involve wide-ranging discussions with media entities, civil society groups, political leaders, UNTAET staff, donors, and UN agencies.

- Examine the current legal and regulatory framework in terms of how it positively and negatively affects the media (broadcast and telecommunications, freedom of expression and association, libel, and tax laws).
- Examine common trends in institutional strengths and weaknesses (ownership structure, governance, administrative and financial systems).
- Assess the extent to which financial restraints impose barriers to media sector development (for example, limited advertising revenues, start up capital and investors, business skills, and understandings of audience share or audience preferences). Review need for capitalization, training in business management and accounting, improving distribution mechanisms, how to manage business operations, and attract advertisers.
- Examine the potential for the development of the journalist association, a media monitoring organization, a community radio association, and other entities capable of supporting and helping to professionals the media.
- Review the training capacity of Timorese organizations, methods of providing training for members, the ability to accessing training courses offered by NGOs, and means of defining training needs.
- Assess the options for institutionalizing journalist education (professional skills in writing, reporting, editing, production, research, and management).
- Examine the availability of technical support services and assess the vulnerability of Timorese media groups to technical breakdowns in terms of lost revenue and difficulty, and expense of repairing broken machinery.
- Organize and facilitate a workshop for presentation of preliminary assessment findings
- Submit a final report presenting environmental, institutional, technical, and programmatic quality opportunities and constraints, and recommendations for strengthening the media institutions and support to the sector as a whole. The final report will be expected to contain the following: (i) executive summary; (ii) a description of assessment methodology and its limitations; (iii) findings and recommendations; and (iv) appendix with a comprehensive list of the media organizations in East Timor including brief descriptions of each organization, estimated readership/listenership, revenue base, and management structure.