

The La'o Hamutuk Bulletin

Vol. 2, No. 4

July 2001

Reconstruction & Transition: *What Are the Next Steps?*

The twice-yearly international donors conference is a time when the international community and groups within East Timor evaluate the reconstruction process. Based on these assessments, they make recommendations regarding the roles of the international community and of East Timorese society in the country's ongoing reconstruction and development. This *Bulletin* looks at different perspectives on the reconstruction and transition--that of the World Bank and UNTAET and that of the East Timor NGO Forum--in the context of the recently concluded donors' meeting in Canberra, Australia. Given the intensifying "Timorization" of the territory's administration and the current planning for the "post-UNTAET" era, these evaluations and recommendations are especially important.

There are important points of agreement between UNTAET, the World Bank, and the NGO Forum--especially on the need to intensify capacity building efforts by international organizations and to develop a long-term development strategy.

As the overview of the UNTAET-World Bank "Background Paper" (p. 2) and the summary of the East Timor NGO Forum's concerns show (p. 4), however, there are significant differences as to what the two groupings perceive as priorities. Some of the differences grow out of dissimilar political visions of how international organizations should work and what they should do. Others result from the different mandates of the groupings, their positions in the process and the constituencies to which they are accountable. In this regard, the different priorities are not inherently mutually exclusive.

The World Bank and UNTAET highlight a number of important specific needs and, more generally, the necessity for the international community to be actively en-

gaged in East Timor and to provide sufficient financial and technical assistance following the transition to full independence. But the question remains, what will be the nature of the international community's involvement in post-UNTAET East Timor? While the report of the U.N.'s Working Group on Post-UNTAET Planning (see p. 3) offers some potential answers, fundamental questions about the nature of how major international institutions (especially UNTAET and the World Bank) function remain.

As the NGO Forum argues, the international community has to allow far greater levels of transparency and democratic control over international development funding, and civil society must have a significant role in monitoring the development process. At the same time, there are serious concerns that many parts of the transition process are rushed and insufficient, and that the international community is more concerned about the appearance of success than facilitating the creation of democratic and sustainable mechanisms of self-government. Finally, accountability for the crimes against the East Timorese people--not just in 1999, but in the more than 23 preceding years--must also be a priority. This includes greater efforts to address the ongoing plight of East Timorese refugees in Indonesia (see p. 8).

The major international actors in East Timor must make these priorities their own. The success of the transition and reconstruction in realizing the basic needs and human rights of the East Timorese people depends on it. ❖



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Accomplishments, Shortfalls, and Challenges: Overview of UNTAET and World Bank “Background Paper”

In preparation for the recently concluded international Donors’ Meeting on East Timor in Canberra, Australia (14-15 June 2001), the World Bank and UNTAET wrote a “Background Paper.” The document provides to donors an overview of the work of UNTAET and the World Bank over the preceding six months while identifying key medium term issues for a successful transition to independence. The three key issues identified are: completion of the U.N. Security Council’s mandate to establish a sustainable civilian administration; fiscal sustainability; and the need to develop post-independence strategies and development priorities.

Rather than attempt to summarize the 36-page document, this article highlights some of the more significant findings discussed in the document all of which relate to the three key issues mentioned above.

UNTAET and the World Bank see “significant progress” in building a civil administration for the emerging East Timorese government. That said, they are troubled about the slow pace of improvement in areas previously identified as points of concern by the international community. These include: the recruitment of East Timorese civil servants at senior levels of the civil administration; the pace of designing a plan to withdraw international staff; the development of an administrative framework for the new government; and the transition to a working language for the administration with which people in East Timor are comfortable. In terms of the latter, the current working language of UNTAET is English, which very few East Timorese understand well. For this reason, the Bank and UNTAET argue that as a result “the archival legacy left for an independent East Timor will be meaningless to most civil servants” in the medium term. In addition, UNTAET’s use of English (and, to a lesser extent, Portuguese) limits East Timorese participation in many regular administrative activities. Given such problems, the authors argue that there will be a need for “ongoing support [from donors] for international technical assistance to key areas in the administration.”

Precise data regarding the overall state of the economy is still lacking. Nevertheless, UNTAET and the World Bank state that the economic recovery has progressed both in Dili and in outlying, primarily agricultural areas—especially over the preceding six months. At the same time, however, it has been very uneven with much more growth taking place in Dili—due to the concentration of international community funding and private sector investment—than in other parts of East Timor. For this reason, the Bank and UNTAET argue for “continued disproportionate public investment in rural areas to

balance private investment flowing into the capital.” In addition to this rural-urban inequality, there are a number of “structural constraints” which are undermining economic growth and sustainability. Principal among these constraints is “the lack of legislation on property rights and land claims and the lack of a sound commercial regulatory framework.”

Regarding the health sector, there has been a good deal of progress. According to the report, 80 percent of the population had access to permanent health care facilities as of March 2001, for example. Yet, there remain a number of deficiencies. Actual utilization by the population of health services, for instance, is low and varies widely. Just below 40 percent of health facilities are sufficiently utilized, according to the report. (The Department of Health Services [DHS] is planning a demographic survey to find out why.) And while the polio immunization program in late 2000 was successful, child immunization rates in general are low. Redressing such problems, write UNTAET and the Bank, is “constrained more by human resources than by physical facilities or policy issues.” Among East Timorese staff, work performance has been “less than ideal” due to “problems of absenteeism, supervision and morale.” They contend that the situation is likely to improve with “the formal recruitment of Timorese staff into the national health service [up until now, contracts for East Timorese staff have been temporary] and the intensification of training efforts.” At the same time, “a clearer definition of the role of NGO providers” in the health sector should also help. In this regard, the DHS will soon consult with NGOs with the goal of focusing their roles more in the areas of capacity building and departmental management support.

The final area of concern identified in the document relates to public finances. While there has been significant progress in strengthening the management of public expenditure, more is needed. The recruitment of East Timorese staff at lower levels of the Central Fiscal Authority has been successful, but lacking at senior levels. But perhaps of greater concern is the actual financing of future government activities.

While the current ETTA budget stands at US\$65 million, there are fears that “a number of factors will drive the recurring [year-to-year] costs of government service provision considerably higher in future years.”

The World Bank-managed Trust Fund for East Timor (TFET) and bilateral (government-to-government) donors currently finance activities such as emergency road repair and the purchasing of school textbooks. In the future, the

government of East Timor will be primarily responsible for such expenditures, in addition to having to finance many capital expenditures (such as the maintenance and some-time-replacement of government buildings). At the same time, increases in governmental activities and services will lead to budget growth. As such, it is expected that yearly governmental expenditures will increase to at least \$100 million by approximately 2005.

Such budget growth could consume all the revenues

from the Timor Sea, thus eliminating alternative uses of the revenues such as saving some for future years when oil- and natural gas-related income declines. At the same time, UNTAET and the World Bank state that widespread poverty will continue to be a problem faced by East Timor despite the projected revenues from the Timor Gap. For this reason, they argue that the international community will need to provide financial and technical assistance to East Timor over the long-term. ❖

Planning for the Post-UNTAET Era

Recently, a Working Group on Post-UNTAET Planning completed a report containing 21 recommendations on international civilian assistance to the government of an independent East Timor. The recommendations grew out of consultations with East Timorese and international groups and individuals. Sergio Vieira de Mello has reportedly approved and transmitted the report on behalf of UNTAET to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Annan will draw from the report in the recommendations he must make to the U.N. Security Council by the end of July regarding the international community's role in East Timor following the end of UNTAET's current mandate (31 January 2002).

The recommendations include:

A) There should be a significant reduction in the number of international staff in the transitional administration (currently approximately 900) following the 30 August elections, with East Timorese taking over all decision-making positions as soon as possible. The international staff positions that remain should only be of a "very high technical content" (especially in public finance, justice and law) for which there are not enough qualified East Timorese available to fill. "With very few exceptions" international staff should only be mentors, advisors or technical experts whose work supports East Timorese officials within the new administration. Preferably, they should also speak Indonesian or Portuguese. If not, the U.N. should ensure one translator per international staff.

B) Within the districts, the reduction of international staff should also be very significant. In terms of the staff positions that remain, they should be limited to one senior advisor and one development advisor in each district, and a regional public finance officer, each of which would be responsible for 2-3 districts.

C) The recruitment of international staff should take place to a far greater degree in Dili in the post-UNTAET era than it does currently. In this regard, the process should be more responsive to and flow from the needs and management of the East Timorese government. This new recruitment process must also be transparent and accountable given the use of "assessed contributions" (monies all U.N. member countries must contribute to missions such as UNTAET) to finance the international staff positions. At the same time, the international staff will be fully accountable to the new government.

D) There should be a policy to encourage, and perhaps to provide incentives for the return of skilled East Timorese living abroad to assume positions in the new government.

E) The United Nations should provide funding to translate necessary UNTAET documents (in English) into the language(s) adopted by the new East Timorese government.

F) UNTAET should soon draw up a concrete plan for the formal transition to an independent East Timorese government, with a systematic strategy for the well-coordinated withdrawal of international staff. To avoid confusion, worries, and unrealistic expectations on the part of the East Timorese population, there should be a public awareness campaign on the formal transition and the process of withdrawing international staff. ❖



NGO Forum Raises Concerns with International Donors Conference

The East Timor NGO Forum--the institutional expression of East Timorese civil society--undertook a far-reaching consultative process in the weeks preceding the international Donors Conference in Canberra, Australia (14-15 June 2001). Out of this process, the Forum identified five key issues "critical to the sustainable development of a new East Timor." Comprised of both local and international non-governmental organizations, the NGO grouping communicated these issues to the donors with the goal of influencing the activities of international players in the reconstruction of the country.

The first issue concerned the **timeframe for the transition to independence**. The NGO Forum called upon the donors to commit to a longer timeframe and provide the needed political and financial support so that there is "adequate consultation and civic education on electoral and constitution making processes." The Forum believes that the current constitutional process "does not allow for a genuine process of popular debate on either the election processes or the development of the constitution" As a result, many women and men will not be able to effectively participate in the process.

Arguing that there "can be no reconciliation without justice," East Timor's NGO body identified **an international tribunal and matters relating to human rights** as a second key issue. The Forum expressed serious concerns about the insufficient resources for East Timor's emerging judicial system and the lack of progress in bringing those accused of serious crimes to justice within Indonesia. As such, East Timorese NGOs demanded that international donors and UNTAET "provide resources to ensure that both the court administration and the Serious Crimes Unit are effective mechanisms." They also called upon the donors to provide financial support for

an international conference in East Timor to discuss the need for an international tribunal. In addition, the Forum raised serious reservations about the refugee registration that took place in West Timor in June 2001 and called for "an independent evaluation of the registration process . . . before the international community accepts the results."

The third key issue relates to the need for a **long term strategy for development as well as human and organizational capacity building**. In this regard, the NGOs demanded that there be far greater dedication among international staff in capacity building of both departments in the new government and civil society organizations. This would involve a strong emphasis on recruiting East Timorese women and men and involving them in decision making at all levels. The Forum called upon the donors to ensure that there be "effective performance indicators" and the establishment of some sort of monitoring mechanism.

Next, the NGO grouping expressed their concern that international funders have too much power in determining reconstruction and development programs and projects. The NGOs thus called for greater consultation with civil society and a more democratic and decentralised decision making process. Only in this manner will there be **East Timorese ownership of the development process**.

Finally, the Forum expressed its ongoing concern about **the transparency of the reconstruction process**. The East Timorese people, advocated the NGO body, must participate in the management of the Trust Funds for East Timor. At the same time, the international community must aid in the establishment of a democratic mechanism to monitor the impact of projects funded through the Trust Funds. ❖



East Timor's NGOs Organize to Influence Donors

By Arsenio Bano, Director, East Timor NGO Forum

An East Timor NGO delegation comprised of five representatives attended the Donor's Conference in Canberra. Three steps were involved in preparing the delegation's participation.

First, prior to the delegation's departure, the NGO Forum drew up briefing papers and an official statement. The group also held a press conference under the NGO Forum's name to emphasize the need for discussions at the meeting to not only include the political transition and administration but also issues of transparency and accountability.

The second step involved work during the actual conference where the East Timorese NGO delegation tried to ensure that issues raised in the briefing papers and NGO statement were presented and communicated to donors. The NGO delegation not only focused on the formal gathering but also organized meetings outside of the conference with representatives from the various donor governments. With help from the Australian Council For Overseas' Assistance (ACFOA), the East Timorese delegation also attended a public meeting in Canberra and a meeting with Australian NGOs prior to the opening of the conference. In addition, the delegation had a press conference that raised the issues in the NGO Forum's briefing papers.

In the formal agenda for the donors' conference, the discussion topics focused on four major issues: the political transition; administrative transition; social-economic issues; and budget issues. As such, the NGO delegation divided up responsibilities for representing the NGO Forum's positions on these matters among the five delegation members.

In general, the verbal response from donors and other delegations was quite good, as demonstrated by open support for the statement and briefing papers of the NGO delegation. Also, obtaining meetings with delegates from the missions of various national governments and the World Bank was not very difficult. Nevertheless, we remain concerned about the substance--as opposed to simply the appearance--of support.

For this reason, the NGO delegation pressured UN-TAET and ETTA to follow up on the issues we raised. In our press statement after the meeting, the East Timorese NGO delegation championed the need of the international community in East Timor to build a culture of transparency and accountability, and the need to build partnership relationships between the government and NGOs for an independent and democratic East Timor.

The third and final step is currently taking place: evaluation and preparation for the next donor's meeting which will take place December 2001 in Oslo, Norway. East Timorese NGOs need to monitor whether UN-TAET/ETTA and donors are actually fulfilling the promises made in Canberra.

One issue that East Timorese NGOs must continue to raise is the need for an international tribunal for East Timor. Support for this issue is very strong. East Timorese NGOs unequivocally support the work of human rights groups that continue to raise this matter, and will certainly raise it at the next donors' meeting in Oslo. For such reasons, we will need to prepare well between now and December. ❖



In Brief . . .

In a 30 June 2001 letter to East Timorese leaders, **the Japanese Catholic Council for Peace and Justice expressed concerns regarding efforts within Japan to contribute troops to the international peace-keeping efforts in East Timor.** Following the Second World War, the Japanese people enshrined in their constitution an article renouncing forever "war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling interna-

tional disputes." It further stipulated that "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained." The prohibitions were a response to the country's history of imperial conquest and the horrific brutality of the Japanese military during the Pacific War.

Addressed to Bishop Carlos Belo, Xanana Gusmão, José Ramos Horta, and Taur Matan Ruak, the letter argues that current efforts within Japan to contribute troops to the peacekeeping force (PKF) in East Timor will contribute to a dangerous shift from Japan's current Self-Defense

Force (SDF) to a regular military that intervenes overseas in the name of Japan's "national interest." The Council also sees the move as part of a cynical effort by Tokyo to win support for its efforts to gain a permanent U.N. Security Council seat.

According to the letter, Japan's history vis-à-vis East Timor makes the potential inclusion of Japanese troops to the PKF all the more suspect. "At the time of the UNAMET-held popular referendum," the letter states "the Japanese Government sent only three civilian police to help, and these were confined to work at headquarters. In the wake of the September 1999 devastation, not even one civilian police officer was sent to help. But most disconcerting is the fact that the Japanese Government refuses to acknowledge that throughout this period the Indonesian military was directly or indirectly involved in the violence in East Timor or the fact that it is not only the militia which poses a threat to security in East Timor, but the Indonesia military and police. . . . This is a fatal oversight for a party which would take upon itself the defense of the security of East Timor. In fact, the Japanese Government to this day continues to claim on its homepage that it was a 'volunteer force', not Indonesian army troops, that invaded East Timor in December 1975, in spite of repeated attempts by the solidarity movement in Japan to enlighten it about the facts in the case." This is, the letter states, "particularly callous in light of the Government's refusal to this day to fully acknowledge, apologize for, or compensate the army's sex slaves and other victims of Japan's occupation of East Timor during the Pacific War."

Despite the letter, Xanana Gusmão told *Mainichi Shimbun*, a newspaper based in Tokyo, that "If Japan decides to dispatch its own PKF units, I will welcome the decision." Given ongoing security threats faced by East Timor, "there is no reason for us to reject Japan's dispatch of its SDF," he stated on 13 July.

On 20 June, **the National Council unanimously passed an amended Regulation on the Establishment of a Commission on Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor.** The Commission's two primary functions will be to investigate the pattern of gross human rights abuses committed between 1974 and 1999 within the context of political conflicts in East Timor and to create a community reconciliation body to facilitate agreements between communities and those who are guilty of having committed non-serious crimes.

Following the passage of the resolution, **the Council also unanimously approved a resolution calling upon Sergio Vieira de Mello to take the steps necessary to establish an International Tribunal** to prosecute those responsible for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity in East Timor.

In his final day in office as **East Timor's transitional cabinet minister for political affairs, Peter Galbraith, called upon the international community to establish an international war crimes tribunal for East Timor.** Galbraith stated at a 13 July press conference that he had "seen very little evidence" that Jakarta was seriously trying to bring to trial those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. "If there's no progress toward bringing to justice the people responsible for the crimes ... there should be an international war crimes tribunal," he argued. Based on the press reports, however, it appears that Galbraith limited his call for international prosecution to crimes committed in 1999. And it is not clear how much more time Galbraith feels that the international community should wait for Indonesia to show evidence of "progress."

On 4 July 2001, **approximately 200 people demonstrated in front of UNTAET headquarters demanding that UNTAET support an international tribunal for East Timor. The occasion for the gathering was the independence day of the United States of America.** As such, a number of the banners and speakers focused on the role of the U.S. government in providing significant support to Indonesia's 1975 invasion and almost 24-year occupation. Calling itself the Youth Front for a War Crimes Tribunal, the group peacefully dispersed after a couple of hours. **Later, about 100 people regathered and held a candlelight vigil across from the U.S. Representative's Office in Dili where a reception celebrating the 225th anniversary of U.S. independence was taking place.** Among its demands, the group called upon Washington to fully and publicly disclose its role in supporting Indonesia's crimes against the East Timorese people and to actively support the creation of an international tribunal. The *Timor Post* featured the story of the demonstration and vigil on its front page on the following day. In an accompanying article, the *Timor Post* quoted ETTA foreign minister José Ramos Horta as saying that "Presently, the United States is giving strong support to East Timor. We shouldn't just look to the past. We need to look at the good relations we have with the U.S. in 2001, not our relationship in 1975." Regarding presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, Ramos Horta stated that "I'm very happy with their positions. We should have a demonstration to thank them for their contribution to East Timor."

On 17 July, the date which the Indonesian authorities called "**Integration Day**" and which marks the anniversary of Suharto's signing into law East Timor's annexation, a few dozen university students demonstrated in front of UNTAET headquarters. The activists, **members of the Pro-Democracy Student Movement, also called upon the U.N. to establish an international tribunal as a tribute to all those East Timorese who died and suffered during Indonesian's almost-24 year occupation.**

On 10 July, the **Dili District Court ordered the detention for Dr. Sergio Lobo for physically assaulting his wife.** Lobo is the former head of the Department of Health Services for ETTA and the number-three candidate for the UDT in the upcoming Constituent Assembly elections. This incarceration follows a 72-hour detention in February 2001 on the same charges. The court is expected to set a trial date for the criminal case against Dr. Lobo sometime in July. The NGO Forum, the East Timor Women's Network and the newly formed Judicial System Monitoring Program saw the court decision as a hopeful sign that the emerging judicial system is taking seriously domestic violence. But these same **groups expressed profound concerns about his conditional release two weeks later by an appeals court.** The groups are monitoring the case

closely. They advocate that the justice system treat all cases of domestic violence equally and not demonstrate preferential treatment to accused persons in positions of power. "This case will set a precedent for future cases of domestic violence and for any cases that involve a high-level official," said Filomena Reis, Advocacy Officer for the East Timor NGO Forum. There has been a substantial increase in the number of reports of domestic violence in East Timor since the referendum on independence in 1999. Prosecution of cases, however, has been very slow. "Many East Timorese still believe that domestic violence is a private issue and is therefore not fit for a public courtroom," said Laura Abrantes from the Women's Network. "A crime is a crime, whether committed on the street or in one's home." ❖

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ignored the months of intimidation, disinformation, and confusion sowed by those holding the virtual hostages in West Timor. And while Sergio de Mello has stated that "Given the coercive circumstances the refugees have been living under for almost 20 months, the Transitional Administration will not take the choices made by the refugees as necessarily reflecting their true and definite wishes," his response has been insufficient and somewhat inconsistent. He has, for example, called the registration "professionally" run.

The day after the registration, some NGO representatives met with officials in New York, seeking a better understanding of U.N. participation. Although UNHCR and U.S. officials condemned the registration, U.N. Secretariat staffers were unable to understand or justify UNTAET's involvement, saying that the decision had been made in Dili without consulting Headquarters. In their "East Timor Observatory" on the refugee situation, the Portuguese NGO Comissão para os Direitos do Povo Maubere (CDPM) blames UNTAET Chief of Staff Nagalingam Parameswaran, "who visited West Timor on several occasions, and subsequently made statements that were not in tune with the reality of the situation." More starkly, both former and current UNTAET staff describe Parameswaran to *La'o Hamutuk* as more concerned about having good relations with Jakarta than upholding the human rights of East Timorese refugees.

Many in the international community and the Indonesian government, as well as West Timorese civilians, would like to close the camps, thereby removing the strain on West Timor and the most obvious shortcoming of the international community-led reconstruction of East Timor. If the camps are closed, the Indonesian government might relocate the East Timorese refugees to far-off corners of Indonesia.

Already, UNHCR donors and supporters are frustrated with the lack of progress and are exerting pressure to shift political and material resources to other refugee situations in Indonesia and beyond. Although Jakarta and the U.N. may find it convenient to redefine East Timorese abducted to West Timor as voluntary migrants, this abandonment would have disastrous consequences for East Timorese people on both sides of the border. It could potentially permanently divide families and prevent thousands of people from ever returning home.

As East Timorese engage in the electoral process, those still held in Indonesia (about 10% of the population) are entirely excluded. As in 1999, TNI intransigence is again obstructing East Timorese self-determination.

In the future, East Timor's government will hopefully have cordial relations with its Indonesian neighbor. And at the community level, pro-integration and pro-independence East Timorese citizens will hopefully reconcile and live together. But during this transitional period, UNTAET and the governments of the world have a different role: they must use their leverage, including whatever pressure the international community can muster, "to ensure the safe return of refugees and displaced persons."

For nearly two years, it has been clear that significant efforts must take place to disarm, disband, and remove militia from the camps if the East Timorese trapped in West Timor are to have a free choice. The U.N. has repeatedly stated this, and Jakarta has made numerous promises. Yet one-tenth of the East Timorese population is still under occupation. In 1975 and in 1999 the international community failed to enforce its strong words with actions, and East Timorese people died. It must not happen a third time.

Time is running out. ❖

Editorial: The United Nations: Aiding or Undermining a Resolution of the Refugee Crisis?

When the United Nations Security Council first established UNTAET, it called upon “all parties ... to ensure ...the safe return of refugees and displaced persons.” It also stressed “the importance of allowing full, safe and unimpeded access by humanitarian organizations to West Timor.” Furthermore, it highlighted “the responsibility of the Indonesian authorities to take immediate and effective measures to ensure the safe return of refugees ..., the security of refugees, and the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements, in particular by curbing the violent and intimidatory activities of the militias there.”

Ten months later, militia killed three UNHCR international workers in West Timor and virtually all international agencies withdrew. The Security Council then insisted “that the Government of Indonesia take immediate additional steps ... to disarm and disband the militia immediately, restore law and order in the affected areas in West Timor, ensure safety and security in the refugee camps and for humanitarian workers, and prevent cross-border incursions into East Timor.” The international body further “underlines that UNTAET should respond robustly to the militia threat in East Timor.”

Another ten months more have since passed, and tens of thousands of East Timorese remain in West Timor in refugee camps, surrounded and terrorized by the militias and TNI who displaced them. Abominable conditions exist in the camps where there are serious—and sometimes fatal—problems of malnutrition and disease. And corrupt officials control what little humanitarian aid remains. That such a situation has existed for so long is a devastating indictment of UNTAET’s and the international community’s ability and, perhaps, willingness to support the human rights of the East Timorese. In addition to its calamitous effects on human lives, it demonstrates to Indonesia’s military leaders that they can defy international law with impunity.

On June 6 and 7, the Indonesian government conducted a registration process among East Timorese refugees in West Timor, ostensibly to allow them to choose between resettlement in Indonesia or repatriation to East Timor. The UNHCR (despite having provided significant funding for the registration), the United States, Australia and others refused to send observers, knowing that no matter what happened on registration day the process would be illegitimate.

The results of the registration validate these fears: double the estimated number of refugees registered and 98% of them supposedly expressed their wish to stay in Indonesia. (Humanitarian NGOs in close contact with the refugees estimate the true figure to be 40% or less.)

José Ramos-Horta, local NGOs in West Timor, Jesuit Refugee Service (the only international NGO with a presence in the camps) and many others have rightfully called the registration a sham. Several, including the UNHCR in Dili have restated well-founded concerns about the aftermath of the process, both for those who registered to return to East Timor and for the larger number who want to return but were intimidated or too confused to say so.

Nevertheless, the United Nations has failed to reject the registration. In fact, UNTAET participated in an international observer mission, and endorsed the resulting report. The mission, comprised of twelve international observers and escorted by TNI to a small number of the 507 registration sites, failed to note widespread irregularities. These included: people registering more than once; ineligible people registering; invented family members; misleading information; pressure; and lack of secrecy. It also missed pervasive militia control of the process, terming UNTAS functionaries as “refugee leaders.” Furthermore, the mission

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What is La’o Hamutuk?

La’o Hamutuk (Walking Together in English) is a joint East Timorese-international organization that monitors, analyzes, and reports on the principal international institutions present in Timor Lorosa’e as they relate to the physical, economic, and social reconstruction of the country. *La’o Hamutuk* believes that the people of East Timor must be the ultimate decision-makers in the reconstruction process and that the process should be as democratic and transparent as possible. *La’o Hamutuk* is an independent organization, encouraging effective East Timorese participation in the reconstruction and development of the country. In addition, *La’o Hamutuk* works to improve communication between international institutions and sectors of East Timorese society. Finally, *La’o Hamutuk* is a resource center, providing literature on development models, experiences, and practices, as well as facilitating contacts between East Timorese groups and development specialists and activists from various parts of the world.

In the spirit of encouraging greater transparency, La’o Hamutuk would like you to contact us if you have documents and/or information that should be brought to the attention of the East Timorese people and the international community.