

VOZ TIMOR

VOICE WITH TIMOR

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UNTL-VU Conference, Dili 2019.

WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF VOZ TIMOR

VICE CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT PETER DAWKINS AO, VICTORIA UNIVERSITY



Victoria University has had a special relationship with the people of Timor-Leste for over 30 years.

A key part of this has been our relationship with the Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL). Together, we have presented a biennial international conference since 2002. The most recent conference in July 2019 focused on Young People and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Conference has inspired a number of opportunities for VU to advocate for action in response to important recommendations from Timorese academics, researchers, community workers and in particular young people, on how they can advance the SDGs in Timor-Leste.

This VU-led magazine, aptly named VOZ TIMOR (Voice Timor), is one of those opportunities which I hope will draw attention to the ways in which Timor-Leste is making, and can continue to make, progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

I am pleased to present to you the first edition of this magazine, which includes articles derived from the Conference and other issues pertaining to Timor-Leste's sustainable development twenty years after the vote for independence in 1999.

Professor Peter Dawkins AO
Vice-Chancellor & President
Victoria University

BRINGING YOU VOZ TIMOR 'VOICE WITH TIMOR'

JEANNIE REA

The purpose of this annual online magazine is to provide information and opinion - and give (another) voice to Timorese communities in and outside of Timor-Leste and to friends and colleagues around the world.

We hope that the magazine develops as an annual digest of events, conferences, publications and writing focussing upon issues and trends in discourse and implementation on development in Timor-Leste.

In this first edition, the themes are a reflection upon the 20th anniversary of the vote for independence; and, not surprisingly twenty years on, the aspirations of the youth of Timor-Leste. There is also a focus upon the 2019 theme of the biennial conference of UNTL (National University of Timor-Leste) and Victoria University - Engaging young people in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Publishing from Victoria University, we will highlight activities emerging from the long-term relationship with Timor-Leste originally formalised in a MOU

back in 2009. Voz Timor though is not just for the VU community.

The idea for the magazine came from a discussion amongst the VU Timor-Leste committee about ways we could assist in communication, which seems to be both harder and easier in this highly connected digital age.

We invite contributions from friends of Timor-Leste across Australia and the world.

As you read through this first edition, think about where you could make a contribution - write an article, report upon an event over the last year, tell us about upcoming event over the next year, react to an opinion piece, suggest writers and artists we should contact, write a letter, send a picture just to name a few possibilities.

We are initially publishing in English, and if you want to submit in another language we can translate.

Associate Professor Jeannie Rea
Jeannie.Rea@vu.edu.au



UNTL students, Dili, 2019. (Photo: Katrina Gubbins)

INTRODUCING THE MELBOURNE CONSULATE AND HONORARY CONSUL

Timor-Leste's Melbourne Consulate is located at Victoria University's city campus and has always been there. Peter McMullin, business leader and philanthropist, has served as the Honorary Consul since December 2018.

Mr McMullin is passionate in his advocacy and admiration for the people of Timor-Leste. He has been supporting social and economic development for decades including as advisor to the Timor-Leste Government on the establishment of the country's first Chamber of Commerce in 2008.

He also has strong long-term and ongoing ties to Victoria University, and emphasises the significance of the relationship between VU and Timor-Leste. For the Melbourne Timorese community, the consular office continues to be integrally tied to VU beyond its physical location to being seen as a friend and reliable

supporter of the state and people of Timor-Leste.

The consular office evolved from last century when VU provided the CNRT with a Melbourne office, which was a focus for expatriate Timorese and Australian supporters organising to assist the struggle for independence from Indonesia.

For the Timor-Leste government, politicians and civil servants and community leaders, contacting the consular office is understood as a conduit for talking to the Victorian Government and to Victoria University. Mr McMullin emphasised the strength and trust of these relationships, reinforced by many long-term friends and supporters of Timor-Leste amongst the Australian community, including through the resilient Friendship Groups. The relationships are also maintained because of the many VU alumni who continue to serve their country in leading roles across

FOR THE MELBOURNE TIMORESE COMMUNITY, THE CONSULAR OFFICE CONTINUES TO BE INTEGRALLY TIED TO VU BEYOND ITS PHYSICAL LOCATION TO BEING SEEN AS A FRIEND AND RELIABLE SUPPORTER OF THE STATE AND PEOPLE OF TIMOR-LESTE.



Peter McMullin

government, civil society and in education.

Victoria University is ideally positioned to continue this trusted relationship, which will grow and develop, according to Mr McMullin, as a new generation of Timor-Leste leaders emerges. Through his many visits and networks, he sees educated and determined young people eagerly seeking to transform their country in traditional areas with greater sustainable development

in agriculture, but also in harnessing greater economic independence in, for example, high tech development.

Encouraging young entrepreneurs through education and training and through targeted assistance is a way to address the high levels of unemployment, particularly as Timor-Leste seeks to rely less upon international aid.

Mr McMullin emphasised that Timor-Leste does look to VU as

a first choice for partnerships in education and research. VU's translational research focus coupled with housing both VET and higher education means that the University continues to have a key role to play in skills transfer. He looks forward to continuing to play a part in supporting the development of these partnerships.

Peter McMullin can be contacted at tlconsulate.melb@gmail.com

20th ANNIVERSARY OF THE REFERENDUM

SECURING PEACE AND STABILITY IN TIMOR-LESTE



Dr Abel Guterres. (Photo: SBS News)

“SETTLING IN A NEW COUNTRY WITH A DIFFERENT CULTURE AND LANGUAGE WAS NOT EASY, BUT BEING A YOUNG 19-YEAR-OLD, I COULD ADJUST AND QUICKLY MADE FRIENDS WHO BECAME OUR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES UP TO NOW 44 YEARS ON.”

TIMOR-LESTE 20 YEARS ON

DR ABEL GUTERRES

In July 1999, 20 years ago, I returned to Timor-Leste for the first time in 24 years. I left Baucau in September 1975 on an Australian caribou aircraft, believing I would only be gone for two weeks just to see the sights of Darwin, yet, it went on for 24 long years.

After spending 38 hours in Darwin we were sent to Melbourne on a TAA flight, arriving early in the morning on a sunny spring day but it was still cold in September 1975. Melbourne has been a second home to me and my family, and the majority of East Timorese community living in Australia.

Settling in a new country with a different culture and language was not easy, but being a young 19-year-old, I could adjust and quickly made friends who became our adoptive families up to now 44 years on.

My first task was to learn basic English language at the Enterprise Hostel in Springvale and later, advanced English at

the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT). I worked in factories and later joined the Tramways as a conductor, then a tram driver and bus driver till 1999. The job entailed shift work which gave me flexible times to do my activist work for Timor-Leste resistance between shifts during the day or after hours.

THE VICTORIA UNIVERSITY CONNECTION

The period 1999 and 2000 was very traumatic for many of us. I use the word traumatic because I was one of the three people from outside of Timor-Leste who had cast my vote on the ground in Dili and was almost killed twice by the Militias. We were preparing for the UN Consultations Referendum on 30 August 1999 and then had to cope with the mayhem that engulfed Timor-Leste after the announcement of the result on September 4th 1999 and the emergency needs of the displaced inside the country.

Victoria University provided the pro-independence National

Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT) with an office at VU prior to independence in 1999, which later turned into the Timor-Leste Consulate, with the overwhelming support of Chancellor Hon Frank Vincent and Vice-Chancellor Jarlath Ronayne along with university staff, and Jean Mclean, Member of the Victorian Parliament appointed to VU Council. As an MP, Jean Mclean had been on a fact-finding trip to East Timor in 1998 and reported to the VU council.

The Timorese office became the centre to coordinate emergency activities. With the support of VU, the late David Scott and Kevin Bailey, who became Timor-Leste's first Honorary Consul in Melbourne, we established the office as the liaison point with Ms Etervina Gronen running the office.

The Timor-Leste Honorary Consulate was the first diplomatic post to be opened in 2000 and it became official after Timor-Leste formally declared as an Independent State in 2002. It was generously hosted by VU and is still operating today 20 years on.

VU went on to provide further valuable support in the establishment of Dili Institute of Technology in Dili. Veteran supporter Dr Helen Hill, former lecturer in Community Development at VU, convened a landmark strategic development planning conference at VU in April 1999 in collaboration with



Dr Jean McLean was first appointed as Vice Chancellor's Special Adviser on Timor-Leste in 2005. Pictured here with Estanislau da Silva, Minister of Agriculture in first French Government and Dr Helen Hill.

CNRT to plan for the future independent East Timor together with the Timorese diaspora in Australia.

Then in 2005 the 'Cooperating with East Timor: Options for good development practice' conference was held at VU with a Keynote address by first Prime Minister Mari Alkitiri. This led to the establishment of the Timor-Leste Studies Association (TLSA) and subsequent biennial conferences with the National University (UNT), TLSA and VU from 2009 onwards.

I pay my respects and deep appreciation to the leaders and all the individuals of Victoria University for the foresight and leadership in walking alongside Timor-Leste in the areas of education, building and nurturing academic leadership in the country with the various institutions of learning and development needs.

This year we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the UNAMET and INTERFET operations which gave Timor-Leste its rightful place as an independent and sovereign state joining the family of nations world over, when Timor-Leste became 91st member of the United Nations. We look forward to continued friendship with Victoria University for the next twenty years and beyond.

His Excellency Abel Guterres was the Timor Leste Ambassador to Australia 2009-19.

“I PAY MY RESPECTS AND DEEP APPRECIATION TO THE LEADERS AND ALL THE INDIVIDUALS OF VICTORIA UNIVERSITY FOR THE FORESIGHT AND LEADERSHIP IN WALKING ALONGSIDE TIMOR-LESTE IN THE AREAS OF EDUCATION, BUILDING AND NURTURING ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP IN THE COUNTRY WITH THE VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS.”



Xanana Gusmao opened the office for the Emergency of the CNRT (National Council of Timorese Resistance) in May 2000 at VU's City Flinders campus. In 2002 Xanana Gusmao was elected first President of independent East Timor.

VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

ELSA (UKE) JOAQUINA ARAUJO PINTO

The theme, Peace, Justice and Education for Women and Girls was the most popular theme of the UNTL – VU conference last July with 39% of participants attending the theme sessions. Uke Pinto was one of the theme organisers and also reported as the Youth Ambassador. She made the following observations.

My first observation was there were a large number of young people taking part in this conference. These young people come from various high schools and universities in and around Dili. Some are NGO staff, many are from volunteer groups and some even small businesses. Young people were brave and really stood up to share their opinions and ask questions. I see this as great progress compare to what happened 10 years ago, when young people were reluctant to speak out.

There were a number of key issues that occupied speakers and participants throughout the sessions on women and girls.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

The high rate of early marriage

and early pregnancies is a recognised contributor to the high number of girls dropping out from school. The Ministry of Education has approved a policy for girls to go back to school following pregnancy. However, it was reported that there is no mechanism in place to implement the policy.

EARLY PREGNANCY AND MARRIAGE

Factors were identified that have contributed to early pregnancy and early marriage including no clear sexual education in households or in schools. Parents do not broach these subjects leaving it to the high schools. But some students stated that while there is some information in our school text books, however the teacher did not explain it in detail, this is because of things related to sex are still considered as secret and taboo.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

These are mostly promoted by the international agencies with a lack of coordination with

the ministries of education and of health. Therefore, it is very difficult to have reproductive health and reproductive rights included in the school curriculum. On the other hand, some of the officials at the Ministry of Education have reportedly declared publicly that, 'the use of condoms by young people should be banned'. In addition, the Catholic Church maintains their own position regarding this issue.

Consequently, access to information about reproductive health is not easy, especially if you are young and not married yet. This is because most of the time, the health professionals would ask for your age, your marital status and if you are still at school or not. This hinders young people discussing their reproductive health with health professionals or seeking for medical assistance when needed.

There is a need to reform the school education curriculum in order to respond to the real problems within the community of early pregnancy and early marriage, sexually transmitted diseases, etc.

GENDER AND GENDER EQUALITY

There is a need to understand what is 'gender' and what is 'gender equality?' There was a lot of disagreement when it comes to discussions about gender and gender equality. It was also agreed that when we talk about gender, most of the time people think that this is women's problems. Men have nothing to do with it. In Timor's society, there is a need to define the terms gender and gender equality clearly before moving on to the discussion of 'why we need gender equality. Why is it important? How would gender equality contribute to the achievement of SDGs? How are we going to achieve gender equality?'

Reflecting further on the previous point, when the talk focuses on issues related to women, men in the room often become defensive and offensive. In our session, men were trying to talk on behalf of women, and also trying to deny the facts shared by women in the same room.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

When it comes to justice, access to justice is mainly available and easier for rich people as they have adequate resources. In some cases, if you have family and connection with the people in the court, it is likely that your case will be attended to quickly and settled as you would prefer, compared to if you have no connections.

LAW AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

While the law against domestic violence has been approved, a lot more effort is needed to ensure the implementation process really takes place.

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE SDGs

A core question that was raised during the discussion is: 'How are we going to engage young people in SDGs while most of our young people are unemployed, have lack of access to quality education, and no opportunity to express their ideas and opinions? This is the big question - and I do not have an answer to it yet.

In conclusion, it was a great conference as it brought together people from different age groups, organizations and nationalities. It was a way for young people and students to express their opinions and how they are largely unhappy with the current systems in Timor – and want to make changes. There was a good mix from the government officials, NGOs, National Parliament representatives, academics and researchers both local and international. There is a strong need to follow up on the recommendations that came up from this conference.

Elsa (Uke) Pinto was a Youth Ambassador at the UNTL/VU Conference. She is completing a Masters in International Community Development at Victoria University (VU).



Uke reporting as a Youth Ambassador in the final session of the UNTL-VU Conference. (Photo: Jeannie Rea)

REFLECTIONS ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF TIMOR-LESTE'S INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM

JAKE LASI



Jake practicing English with a UN soldier post-independence vote, Oecussi, Timor-Leste (Photo: Jake Lasi)

Early on the morning of 30 August 1999, with the roosters crowing and the dew still on the leaves, Timor woke early to choose their destiny with a pen or a nail. Eight months earlier the then President of Indonesia, BJ Habibie, had granted us a referendum on self-determination, and the time had finally arrived.

I was only eight years old and living by the sea in Oecussi, but I remember how excited we were five days later when we gathered to hear the result. About 78.5% of the vote had been for independence compared to just 21.5% for autonomy within Indonesia.

The violence that ensued after that is well known. On 20 September the soldiers and ships of INTERFET had arrived in Dili

and put a stop to the worst of it, but in my home district, Oecussi, the militia continued burning houses and schools. Terrified and traumatised, my family and I fled over the border to a refugee camp near the Indonesian port of Wini.

We had to wait a month more until INTERFET got to Oecussi and it was safe to return. Some people say the Australians weren't planning to come at all until some members of the community sent a boy by the name of Lafu all the way to Bobonaro (a dangerous trip of more than 100km) carrying a note begging for their help. Whatever happened, by the end of October the militia had finally been chased away and it was safe for us to return.

Most of my hometown, a village called Mahata, had been burned down and we lived in a tent city set up in what had been the local primary school. Many were nearly starving, living off what cassava, sweet potato and banana they could forage. Others had managed to stash a stack of rice somewhere safe from the flames, and eventually we were provided with some food by the UN.

Many of us were sick with malaria and dengue, I almost died of it myself, but after that things got a little better. Every day I would play soccer and go fishing. The school had been burned and

most of the teachers had left, but we built a shelter out of palm leaves and began to use that. One older teacher still remembered Portuguese and started teaching us. Though we had no text books I remember learning the word for chicken, galinha, and a counting song, um, dois, tres...

Outside school I also liked to teach myself, especially English. I would practice with the malae (foreign) UN soldiers whose base was near my home (see photo). I would always carry around an old Bahasa Indonesia to English dictionary. Slowly life returned to normal.

But although INTERFET succeeded in restoring peace to Timor and addressing the post-war humanitarian crisis, 20 years later things have not improved as much as we had hoped they might. In parts of Dili gangs still sometimes fight each other on the streets and people don't feel safe. Especially the past years our political system has sometimes been at an impasse, unable to pass budgets or generate results. Many Timorese youth are frustrated, unemployed and disenfranchised. In rural areas, education, access to water and access to health care are lacking.

For its leaders – bureaucratism, egotism, corruption, collusion and nepotism – all of these must stop.

“MY MESSAGE ON THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM IS THAT NOW TIMOR-LESTE HAS WON ITS SOVEREIGNTY, IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY ALL ITS PEOPLE TO WORK TOGETHER TO MAINTAIN A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE PEACE.”

Paralysing political conflicts must be set aside. The youth need jobs, and if they don't get them there is the risk of a return to conflict. The non-oil economy, especially in agriculture and tourism must be effectively stimulated, along with small village level cooperatives and local production of basic goods.

“FOR ITS YOUNG – THE LESSONS OF PAST CONFLICT MUST NOT BE FORGOTTEN. RESPECT AND DIALOGUE MUST BE PART OF DAILY LIFE. THERE NEEDS TO BE A SPIRIT OF SELF-RELIANCE, SELF-EDUCATION AND VOLUNTEERISM.”

To conclude, I have a deep respect and pride in the achievements of Xanana Gusmão for his role in our struggle, both before and after independence, as well as much gratitude to former President Habibie of Indonesia, the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and, last but not least, the brave people of my country who voted in the referendum 20 years ago.

Viva Timor-Leste.

Jake Lasi is a UN Ambassador for the Oceans.

This is the first in a series on perspectives from Timor-Leste, co-ordinated and translated by Dr Michael Rose.

The post “Reflections on the twentieth anniversary of Timor-Leste’s independence referendum” appeared first on Devpolicy Blog from the Development Policy Centre.

A SHRINE TO A NATION

THE TIMORESE RESISTANCE ARCHIVE AND MUSEUM

DR GRAHAM THORPE

In 2017 Timor Leste received 74,000 tourists, and there are plans to triple this number in the next decade. But what are tourists to do in East Timor? They can visit markets, snorkel, go hill-walking, and increasingly a vibrant night-life beckons.

However, the most popular tourist activity in Dili is a visit to Cristo Rei, a statue of Jesus Christ facing westerly, out to sea towards Jakarta. The statue was unveiled in 1996 by President Suharto of Indonesia, and it exudes symbolism. The statue of Jesus, the globe on which he stands, and pedestal are 27m high – indicating that East Timor is the 27th province of Indonesia.

The irony is that during 1996 the Timorese were fighting for their own independence from Indonesia, who invaded Timor Leste in 1975. This invasion was followed by over two decades of brutal guerrilla warfare between liberation fighters and the Indonesian armed forces. It is estimated that up to 200,000

East Timorese were either killed, or starved to death.

The Timorese Resistance Archive and Museum, located close to the centre of Dili, chronicles this struggle for independence through a series of large photographic and text panels. These are complemented by tableaux. One of them shows an East Timorese student vaulting over the fence into the grounds of the US Embassy in Jakarta to raise awareness of the cruel treatment meted out by the Indonesian invaders. A second tableau features the tiny 2m by 2.5m bunker from which Konis Santana led the Falantil militia for five years until his death in 1998.

The beautifully housed and presented Resistance Museum is a 'must see' for tourists, but for the East Timorese it has a far greater significance. Although the two official languages in East Timor are Tetum and Portuguese, there is over a score of other languages spoken throughout the country. There are over a half dozen ethnic groupings. It is the

shared suffering and the common goal of independence portrayed in the Resistance Museum that binds these disparate groups into a united nation.

East Timor's population is expected to double in 30 years, and 40% of its people are less than 15 years old. The Resistance Museum and Archive has a key role to play in keeping the memory of the struggle for independence fresh amongst the generations to come.

If you are fortunate enough to visit the Resistance Museum in Dili, remember it is more than an educational institution or a tourist site - it is a shrine to a nation.

Dr Graham Thorpe is an Honorary Professor in VU's College of Engineering and Science.



Outside of the Museum. (Photo: Jeannie Rea)

ABOUT TIMOR'S LEADING UNIVERSITY UNIVERSIDADE NACIONAL TIMOR LOROSA'É

PROFESSOR EDUARDO ANICETO SERRÃO

On 17th November 2019, Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'É (UNTL) celebrated nineteen years as the only state university in Timor-Leste. However, the presence of tertiary education had been available within Timor from October 1986 when the Universitas Timor-Timor was founded, while in 1990 the Polytechnic Dili was established.

After the referendum on 30 August 1999, when most Timorese decided to be an independent country, everything was ruined, including both higher education facilities. During the transition period to the fully-independent nation, a number of key people

from both institutions gathered and decided that a university was needed to contribute to the prosperity of the newborn nation. Therefore, UNTL was founded on 17th November 2000 (before the restoration of independence of Timor-Leste in 20th May 2002) as the state university in the country.

The early years were very tough, with not only facilities in ruins, but also the institutional infrastructure, and much of the administrative and academic staff scattered. However, the founders of the new university were visionary and driven by commitment to the crucial role of the production of human resources for the economic development of the country.

RAPID GROWTH

Today UNTL is growing rapidly, with nine faculties and 41 undergraduate and 15 postgraduate programs. There are more than 25,000 students and 665 teaching and research academic staff, of whom 76% are locals and the rest international. Since 2003 UNTL has graduated more than 15,000 qualified scholars to serve in

nation building. At the time of establishment until 2005, UNTL offered courses across five faculties: Agriculture; Social Science and Politics; Economics and Management; Education Art and Humanities; and Engineering Science and Technology. Since 2005 the faculties of Law; Medicine and Health Sciences; Exact Science; and Philosophy have emerged.

In order to make the role of the university genuine, real and stronger, UNTL has expanded to fifteen research and development centres such as Centre for Climate Change and Biodiversity; National Centre for Scientific Investigation; National Institute of Linguistic with Portuguese, English and Tetun Language Centers; Peace and Conflict Centre; Social Studies Institute; Korean Study Centre; Academic Centre for Inclusion; Timor-Leste Citizenship Lab; Gender Study Centre; Human Right Centre; and American Corner.

UNTL is headed by a Rector (Vice-Chancellor) and supported by 7 Pro (Deputy) rectors including a deputy rector for International

Cooperation; Academic Affairs; Administration and Financing; Counselling; Students Affairs; and Planning and Institutional Development. Faculties are headed by Deans with Vice Deans, supported by an administrative structure.

PARTNERSHIPS FOR QUALITY AND GROWTH

UNTL is working to establish the Centre for Excellence of Higher Education and Scientific Research and pursuing the goal of global university standards. UNTL constantly works at strengthening partnerships with international universities and research institutions, including Australia, America, Portugal, Japan, Indonesia, Philippines, China and others. With nearly a quarter of the academic staff from international universities, this assists in strengthening these relationships the pursuit of excellence.

UNTL has more than 300 cooperation agreements with 191 institutions in 30 countries. We are engaged and actively associated with many international networks, including Associação das Universidades de Língua Portuguesa (AULP), Fórum de Gestão do Ensino Superior nos Países e Regiões de Língua Portuguesa (FORGES), Rede de Instituições Públicas de Educação Superior (RIPES) where more than 150 universities were involved. There is also the trilateral Indonesia Timor-Leste Australia Academic Partnership, as well as the Fórum dos Reitores das Instituições do Ensino Superior da China e dos Países de Língua Portuguesa. Associação de



Photo: Katrina Gubbins

Educação a Distância dos Países de Língua Portuguesa; Rede de Estudos Ambientais de Países de Língua Portuguesa (REALP), International Association of Universities; ASEAN Quality Assurance Association; and the University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific Association.

DIGITAL-LIBRARY STARTED IN 2019

UNTL is increasing the quality of learning spaces and has established libraries within the faculties. In 2019 a digital-library (elibrary.edu.edu.tl) was launched giving students and lecturers access to the best and latest book-publishing around the world in order to enhance and deepen their understanding of their learning. UNTL is working to diversify and improve the numbers of book references in the digital-library through relationships with many partner universities around the world, including in Australia (Australia National University, Victoria University, Charles Darwin University and others), as well as with universities from Portugal, USA, Japan and others.

UNTL has a ten year strategic plan, of which a major focus is continuous improvement of the quality of teaching and administrative staff. When UNTL was established in 2000 most teaching staff only held bachelor degree with a few Master holders. But now, the quality of the teaching program is enhanced with six per cent of lecturers

holding doctorates and ninety percent having masters degrees. This continues to improve from year to year. These qualifications were obtained from universities in Australia, Portugal, USA, New Zealand, Philippines, Brazil, Cuba, Japan and Indonesia.

In pursuing the best in learning and teaching, students of UNTL are engaged in many activities, including classes and pracs and involvement in national and international seminars and workshops, student exchange and many other interactive activities. The compulsory academic subjects are implemented through ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), where a student in a semester should fulfill of 30 ECTS is interpreted to 27 hours of study per credit per semester. In the final year of the four year degrees, students engage in an internship program, which can involve social services in the field, elaborated upon in a small research project to produce a scientific report in the form of a bachelor's degree thesis.

Whilst much progress has been made, enormous challenges continue as UNTL continues working to concretize our vision and mission, to achieve long term goals of elevating the lives of Timor-Leste's people.

Professor Eduardo Aniceto Serrão, Ph.D is Pro-Rector of Cooperation Affairs at the Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'É (UNTL).



Professor Eduardo Aniceto Serrão being interviewed by students and media at the UNTL-VU Conference in 2019. (Photo: Jeannie Rea)

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE SDGS

JOINT CONFERENCE ENGAGES YOUNG PEOPLE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

KATRINA GUBBINS

Over two days from 1-2 July 2019, Victoria University and the *Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e* (UNTL) held a conference titled *Engaging Young People in the Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) in Timor-Leste's capital, Dili.

It was the sixth biennial joint conference to focus on issues facing Timor Leste's development and is part of Victoria University's decades-long commitment to Timor-Leste.

Themes covered sustainable agriculture, health, entrepreneurship, climate action and gender equity with contributions from government officials including the Education Minister (and VU alumna) H.E. Dr Dulce de Jesus Soares and MP Hon. Nelía Menezes, and notable Timorese researchers including Rector Dr Aurelio Guterres.

The conference provided an insight into the country's present and future, and how the next generation are positioning

themselves as agents of change. With 50% of the nation's population being under the age of 18, the attendees, predominately senior secondary school and university students, sensed their importance and role in the development of Timor-Leste.

Many left feeling inspired and empowered as part of this process. Valeria, 18 years old, described how the conference helped her to understand more about the issues facing women and girls:

"WHEN I GO BACK TO MY COMMUNITY, I WILL TELL THEM TO BE MORE PRODUCTIVE AND TO PREVENT THE PROBLEMS THAT THEY FACE SO THEY CAN FOCUS ON THEIR STUDY AND HOW TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS AND TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THE FUTURE" SHE SAID.

Another attendee, 17-year-old Sergio, felt that the conference provided guidance on how to contribute towards his country in a sustainable manner:

"THE MAIN REASON I ATTENDED THIS CONFERENCE WAS BECAUSE IT RELATED TO YOUTH AND IT REMINDS ME AS A YOUTH TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS THAT'S RUNNING IN THIS COUNTRY, AND TO DEVELOP MY BELOVED COUNTRY WITH THE THINGS I LEARNT HERE," HE CONTINUED.

With a history of 450 years of Portuguese colonisation, 24 years of Indonesian occupation, and a guerrilla struggle to finally achieve independence in 2002,

Timor-Leste is taking control of its future. The UNTL-VU partnership, and VU's commitment to this young country, has an important role to play through advocacy, support and advice.

VU was represented at the conference by the Hon. Dr Jean McLean, VU Special adviser on Timor-Leste, along with College of Arts and Education Chair of Postgraduate International Community Development, Jeannie Rea. Timor-Leste specialist and VU alumna Dr Ann Wigglesworth organised the conference in Australia and Timor-Leste with the assistance of Engagement and Government Relations staff Kerry O'Neill and Katrina Gubbins. VU alumnus Joni Chung looked after logistics in-country. Former academic staff member and VU honorary fellow Dr Helen Hill, now resident in Dili, continued to provide critical support and advice. A number of Timorese VU Alumni also attended or presented at the conference.

Katrina Gubbins is a Communications Coordinator for VU's Precincts, Communities and Government Relations division.



Photo: Katrina Gubbins



Photo: Katrina Gubbins

NO TIME TO STUDY: EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE STUDENTS LIVING WITH EXTENDED FAMILIES IN DILI

TERESE NGUYEN THI PHUONG TAM

Every year young people flock to Timor-Leste's capital city Dili. They come for employment and education with about 84% enrolled in school or university. Today the number of young women migrating to the urban areas is slightly more than the number of young men. Few live independently and most must lodge with their extended family.

Belun's recent briefing paper found various problems have emerged in these shared spaces (Belun, 2018). To further investigate this issue, I discussed it with male and female students in the Social Science Faculty of the National University (UNTL) during my class on Gender and Development, as well conducting other research.

The young women students reported that they do not have adequate time on their own to study, nor for doing extra-curricular activities like field visits or participating in study groups. Their time was taken up by tasks expected by their host family.

WOMEN'S WORK

As many studies of women's work have concluded that women's time is task-oriented, meaning the whole task must be completed regardless of how many hours it may take. A popular cliché says, "women's work is never done". Thomson and Walker (1989) concluded: "The unpaid work is not a gender-neutral bundle of chores that women perform out of comparative advantages or lower resources but instead integral to the reproduction of unequal power relation between women and men."

TIME USE STUDY

Over five years, I invited 116 Gender and Development students to do a daily activities diary including how they allocate time for studying. The results of the students' time use study found that female students spend more than double the time on domestic work than male students.

Students who live with their relatives think that they must

work hard to compensate for their stay and food. They think it is natural that they have obligations to the family in order to maintain family relationships. The family, in turn, are obliged to accept their relatives to stay with them.

The relationality in the family network can be viewed as social capital. It keeps the extended family strong. For this reason, exploitation is not considered as an issue to be expressed or raised in public arena.

Young girls in rural districts have been trained by their mothers since they were small to work and serve others in their households. They were trained to make coffee, sweep houses, and cook. Some mothers believe that they must train their girls well in domestic work to be ready in case they pursue higher education in Dili and stay with relatives. The boys are expected to work in the host family by carrying water and doing some errands, but they have more freedom and do not experience the same level of control as the girls.



Therese Nguyen Thi Phuong Tam presenting at the UNTL-VU Conference in 2019 (Photo: Katrina Gubbins)

EXPLOITED AND TOO TIRED

In a group discussion one girl from Lospalos shared her experiences living with her maternal aunt in Dili, looking after two small children who are one and four years old. After doing household work, she studies from 10pm until midnight, only about two hours a day. She has to wait for water to fill all the containers. Water comes sometimes at midnight and she takes two hours to fill the water before going to sleep. Other times the water opens around 9pm. Her average sleep each night is five hours.

Another girl from Ainaro, lives with other nieces who help her in the housework. She is responsible for looking after a two year old child. She also does the washing, cleaning and cooking. She only has about one hour a day for studying.

Another informant from Baucau came to Dili and stayed with her uncle's family. Her uncle has three daughters living in the house, and each of them has work to do. She said her life was very difficult, because she spent her time preparing "nasi pukus" (cooked rice packs) to sell in the market. She has little time to sleep, going to bed 1:30am then waking up

around 3am to continue working. The family does not allow them to eat early, the family eats first, and the student is not allowed to eat meat, or fish. Everyday around 6pm she also has to sell vegetables in the market until 11pm. When she visits her parents, she dares not complain about her problems. She just told them nice stories because she did not want to create conflicts with her uncle's family.

Some girls develop their own strategies to cope with the situation by, for example, staying on campus longer to study. Some multitask to save their time for resting and studying. Some could not stand the hardship and they have given up their studies and got married. There are some cases where parents found out the truth about their daughter's exploitation and rented them a room away from relatives.

In general, families that host female students expect them to spend time on domestic responsibilities as a mutual obligation of giving and receiving. For most of extended families it is considered normal and natural. The food and the lodging that they provide are expected to be returned in time and labor to the

households. For the students this can make it hard for them to concentrate on their studies. Some said that after dinner they are so tired that they fall asleep once they start reading.

The government, universities, civil society and the private sector need to work together to find solutions for this problem. The government should invest in public boarding houses. They should establish a hot line or emergency centres for girls who need help in such situations. It is time the university thought about community engagement activities, in order to socialize the mission and objectives of the study program and appeal to students' parents to collaborate and support students to ensure their good study outcomes.

Dr Therese Nguyen Thi Phuong Tam is a researcher and lecturer in the Social Science faculty at UNTL.

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MOVING TOWARDS AGRO-ECOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

EUGENIO 'EGO' LEMOS



“YOUTH ARE AN IMPORTANT PILLAR OF OUR NATION. SEVENTY PER CENT OF TIMOR-LESTE’S TOTAL POPULATION IS 35 YEARS OF AGE OR YOUNGER (UNDP HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2018). A BENEFIT OF THIS IS THE WONDERFUL ENERGY AND CREATIVITY OF YOUTH WHO WILL BUILD OUR FUTURE.”

Timor-Leste is a small country, it has diverse micro-climates, beautiful landscapes and is rich in natural resources linked to agriculture, biological diversity and a wealth of local knowledge. Today, our population is close to 1.3 million and the majority live in rural areas and depend on agriculture and forests for their economic base.

Each year, large numbers of students finish their high school and university studies, and the question remains as to how to prepare them for jobs? Many of them have lost interest in the agricultural sector and moved from rural areas to the city to look for work, much of which will not guarantee a sustainable future. Their elders are left in the rural areas to continue to produce food for the population.

PRIORITISING FOOD & AGRICULTURE SUSTAINABILITY

Today Timor-Leste is facing a range of problems arising from a lack of clear policies on food and agriculture. Apart from the lack of interest from young people in the agricultural sector, there

is increasing malnutrition, land degradation and the collapse of local food markets. There are major changes in food systems, which in turn have affected the traditional eating patterns, agricultural methods and livelihoods of Timorese people. This is evidenced by changes in diet, food processing and methods agricultural of production.

The problem is that the population has lost consciousness and understanding about how to protect our beautiful landscape, natural resources and local knowledge which is linked to our culture of cooking and eating, protecting the land, water sources, seeds, forests, etc. This problem has led to a continuing loss each year of national local seeds, a steady decline in national agricultural production, and we have started to lose traditional culture related to varied diets and harvest time.

The consequence is the rise in malnutrition. Imported products dominate the local markets, producing huge amounts of trash which turn our beautiful

landscapes ugly. People are cutting and burning our forests leading to the loss of forests; the number of dried-up natural water sources has increased, and more.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To prevent these problems from becoming worse in the future, a major theme of this year’s UNTL and Victoria University conference focussed on how to end hunger and malnutrition and achieve sustainable life on the land (incorporating SDGs 2 & 15). There was a high degree of student participation in the sessions. Participants described the topics as ‘important’ and ‘interesting’ and many commented on the high quality of the presentations.

The key issues identified during these sessions were:

YOUTH AS FARMERS

The participants heard that permaculture and school gardens can provide education that will attract kids to agriculture and could even result in successful businesses.

Importantly, educated youth need to return home to their communities in the rural areas to share their knowledge to contribute to improving farming practices.

ENDING HUNGER

To end hunger, policies must be transformed into action. This needs good knowledge from schools. School kids eat instant noodles and drink soft drinks which have no nutrition. Foods we

are eating have many chemicals that are making people sick.

We should learn from our ancestors, using wild and domestic foods and protein from the sea. We must promote Food Sovereignty which means ‘Plant what you eat and eat what you plant’

THE ENVIRONMENT

We can see the impact of climate change in the farming seasons. We need to counteract de-forestation, learn about habitat of animals and inform the government on how to protect them.

Youth must get involved in planting trees, and we need to work hard to look after the environment. Marine life is affected by plastic, so we must properly dispose of rubbish so fish do not choke on plastic.

Climate change requires looking after the planet better.

Ego Lemos is the founder of the NGO ‘PERMATIL’ which introduced and promotes permaculture in Timor-Leste. He is also one of the best known singer-song writers in Timor-Leste.



“THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE POPULATION HAS LOST CONSCIOUSNESS AND UNDERSTANDING ABOUT HOW TO PROTECT OUR BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE WHICH IS LINKED TO OUR CULTURE OF COOKING AND EATING, PROTECTING THE LAND, WATER SOURCES, SEEDS, FORESTS, ETC. THIS PROBLEM HAS LED TO A CONTINUING LOSS EACH YEAR OF NATIONAL LOCAL SEEDS, A STEADY DECLINE IN NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, AND WE HAVE STARTED TO LOSE TRADITIONAL CULTURE RELATED TO VARIED DIETS AND HARVEST TIME.”

DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND COMMUNITIES IN ERMERA

ABEL BOAVIDA DOS SANTOS AND ALBERTO MARTINS GUTERRES

Coffee is Timor-Leste's major export. Ermera is the largest coffee producing region in East Timor. In 2017 the total area planted to coffee in the district of Ermera covered about 32,135 hectares, with total production of 4,020 tons.

The extensive coffee plantations in Ermera District are closely related to the history of colonialism and outside intervention that has exploited the local people. Consequently, this encouraged the emergence of a farmers' movement from 2002, formally established in 2010 as *Uniaun Agrikultura Ermera*

(UNAER or Ermera Peasants' Union).

UNAER is focussed upon strengthening land use in coffee farming through "*Kuda Rai ho Integradu*" (integrated land planting) to try and make family income sustainable. Training young people in integrated sustainable farming and community organising practices is the key.

BACKGROUND

The coffee plantations in Ermera established under the Governorship of Celestino da

Silva (1894-1908) enabled the expansion of control over native peoples' land, the oft repeated pattern over four and a half centuries of Portuguese colonisation. Da Silva and successor governors were directly involved in the commercial export industry. In 1908 a tax was introduced which meant that every Timorese man between the ages of 18 and 60 was liable for this tax which meant he had to produce agricultural products over and above his family's needs for the market, or would have to engage in wage labour, usually on government projects such as coffee plantations. Portuguese colonisation was followed by the illegal occupation by the Indonesian military for 24 years, when the coffee plantations were taken over and exploited by the military.

Immediately after the result of the Independence referendum was announced, in mid-1999, some subsistence farmers in Ermera began to reclaim state and outside owned plantations. This reclamation expanded after the restoration of independence as the Democratic Republic

of Timor-Leste (RDTL) in 2002. The farmers demanded RDTL's first constitutional government immediately implement agrarian reform. These actions were organised by village youths who during the struggle for independence were actively involved in the network of the clandestine movement to fight for independence for Timor-Leste. The peoples' demand for the government to immediately implement agrarian reform was inspired by the spirit of the struggle for the people's liberation which was guided by the slogan "*terra livre, povo livre*" ("Free land, free people").

COMMUNITY ORGANISING

The main objective of UNAER is to achieve agrarian reform which guarantee social justice and promote sustainable agriculture for everyone.

The strategy of UNAER in fighting for the rights and dignity of farmers is to:

1. Defend and fight for agrarian reform policies;
2. Organise farmers to reclaim the plantations and then plant them with integrated farming systems;
3. Maintain and promote sustainable agricultural policies; and
4. Develop networks with other farmer unions at national and international levels as well as other civil society organizations to support and strengthen the peasant movement.

FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

From 2017 UNAER has concentrated on family agricultural production, through an integrated land planting system. Current members of the union include 24,384 families from the district, with the total area planted with coffee of about 32,135 hectares with a total production of 4,020 tons in 2017.

As a social movement, UNAER has a political and economic focus. The context of political movements can be seen from advocacy efforts, both at the local and national level, through community organising and network development to strengthen the movement.

The socio-economic context can be seen from efforts to ensure the sustainability of the movement through the economic improvement program of UNAER member families. It is implemented through activities such as education and training, nurseries and demonstration gardens that are integrated automatically with production activities.

UNAER is now working to transform monoculture plantations into diversification in a system known as '*kuda rai ho sistema integradu*'

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Coffee farmers in Ermera. (Photo: APHEDA)



Farmland in Timor-Leste, travelling between Dili to Suai. (Photo: Ann Wigglesworth)

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(integrated planting system). This transformation is carried out in stages, starting in 2017 with education and training followed by nurseries and demonstration gardens in several UNAER bases.

SCHOOL FOR ACTIVISTS AND COMMUNITY ORGANISERS

UNAER with the support of NGO *Kdadalak Sulimutu Institute (KSI)* has opened a school for activists and community organisers. The school named *Instituto Ekonomia Fulidaidai /Sulu (IEFS)* is the main support of this social movement. The curriculum is designed to integrate theory and community-based organising activities.

Students are selected from communities that have carried out the reclaiming of plantations with the objective being that they will later return to their bases as community organisers.

During the field work, students stay in their respective bases

to conduct participatory discussion with community, identify community problems and resources that can be mobilised to answer the community's problems. They will create nurseries, demonstration gardens and provide training and education on the principles of the UNAER movement and integrated planting techniques.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The program is disseminated through UNAER's 28 bases. Integrated land planting practices have been carried out at eight bases so far. The implementation starts with a nursery, education and training, then by creating a demonstration garden and distributing seedlings to members to plant in their own yards.

In the nurseries various plant seeds that are economically valuable and suitable to the climate in the Ermera region, such as rambutan tree, vanilla,

orange, avocado tree, and other plants are propagated on the nursery land. The next stage is education and training on the basic principles of sustainable agriculture and integrated land planting before the distribution of seedlings to UNAER members for planting. This training is practiced in the existing pilot plantations and UNAER leaders work closely with IEFS students, so this activity is integrated with student field work activities.

BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM

The benefits of planting various crops in an integrated manner in one field is that farmers will save energy and production costs. This practice can be done in the yard of their homes and on plantations that they have reclaimed. If plantations are planted, with not only coffee, but also rambutan, orange and avocado, farmers will then harvest coffee, rambutan and avocado for different harvest seasons each year and this will

ensure the sustainability of family income.

INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE

"Kuda rai ho sistema integradu" is an effort by UNAER to maintain the sustainability of the Ermera peasant social movement and to meet the real needs of farmers through promoting a sustainable agriculture system.

The program of *"kuda rai ho sistema integradu"*, is also a positive step in changing the attitudes and mentality of young people (students) towards agriculture. Agricultural education at universities has not reflected the real needs of the majority of Timorese subsistence farmers. The sustainable agriculture practice of the UNAER model makes students feel proud as agents in social transformation and this makes themselves proud as an integral part of the process of change in which they are active participants. They are

not an instrument of change only driven from the outside, but they become actors who encourage and promote change.

UNAER wants to show that education must be an instrument to free people from their alienation. In this context UNAER seeks to introduce the real

needs of farmers. Students from peasant families are educated as community organisers and agents of change to promote social transformation based on social justice.

Abel Boavida dos Santos and Alberto Martins Guterres are with UNAER (Emera Peasants Union).



UNTL Students-Coffee Production in Maudlo, Ermera.



Young farmer John Soares ready to start the agroforestry tree planting on the Hatulia Manu Sae community base. (Photo: APHEDA)



Coffee Production in Maudlo, Ermera.

IMPROVING ADOLESCENT NUTRITION

JEANNIE REA

One quarter of Timor Leste's population are aged between 10 and 19 years of age. After the critical first thousand days after birth, the teenage years are the second window of opportunity to improve nutritional status during rapid brain development, according to researchers speaking at the VU-UNTIL conference.

Acacia Armento and Namibia Barito wanted to find out what is influencing adolescents in their food choices because the health

data was telling a worrying story. They reported that amongst school-based students (13-17yo), 22% were underweight, 4% overweight – and 11% reported that they were hungry all the time. Nearly 22% of girls 15-19 year olds are anaemic and there is a 7% pregnancy rate. One quarter of 15-19 year olds are not at school and 13% of 10-14 year olds. (2015 Census)

After surveying, interviewing and talking with young people

across four municipalities, the researchers found some predictable, but also surprising behaviours and attitudes.

The adolescents consulted were found to eat 3-4 meals a day including snacks, but these involved low nutritional value products bought to and from school including chips and sugary drinks, although they also bought milk and water. The students reported that they would like to eat more meat and fish and fruit.

Over eighty per cent regularly do not eat breakfast, not because there is a lack of nutritious food at home, but like teenagers the world over, they get up too late.

Students were aware that the choices around school are nutritionally poor but boys, particularly, did not want to be seen bringing food from home, even though they admitted to preferring homemade food.

There were clear messages to promote to change behaviours – including making the time to have breakfast at home, to eat more protein and iron-rich foods, to choose healthier snacks and to eat the more nutritionally balanced traditional foods. The researchers noted that there were actions for young people themselves, but also families in making these changes – and noted was a role for grandmothers as local food promoters.

High school students aspired to professional jobs, were adamant in wanting to marry later, around 23-25 years, and have only two children, so they can provide their children with more opportunities. Young people were very conscious of expected gender roles, including that men and boys have priority over girls

for high value food like meat. Young women already felt the pressure to have many children, and also recognised that they would have limited agency in making household spending and other decisions unless there was change in gender equality attitudes.

Therefore, as future parents and for their own good, it is important to improve young people's knowledge, attitudes and behaviours targeting their influencers and including young people themselves.

Armento and Barito looked to ways to influence young people's food choices. They ascertained that students trusted health providers and wanted them to come to schools. Lafaek magazine had strong brand recognition and so was seen as a good place to

include information, while young people only had limited television and radio access or interest, and did not want Facebook used for health information. Girls also reported that they relied on advice from their mothers.

The outcomes of this project include recommending nutrition sessions in schools with government and NGO partners – and a special edition of Lafaek on adolescent health which came out in December 2019.

Jeannie Rea is an Associate Professor and Chair International Community Development, VU.

See the full report here: <http://tomak.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Adolescent-Formative-Research-English-Full-web-res.pdf>



Students enjoy a meal at the UNTL-VU conference. (Photo: Katrina Gubbins)



Young person and an adult talking over food. (Photo: To'os ba Moris Di'ak – TOMAK)



Young people in a classroom. (Photo: World Food Programme (WFP))

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN TIMOR-LESTE

ACTING UPON THE UNTL-VU CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

A seminar at Victoria University in December 2019 gathered together student and youth representatives, academics and community activists to explore how we can support our Timorese friends and colleagues in implementing the recommendations of the UNTL-VU biennial conference held in Dili back in July 2019.

The focus was upon supporting proposals for action from the perspectives of young people as that was the theme of the July conference, which was also framed around key SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). Timor-Leste students studying in Melbourne played a strong role in the seminar in both advocating actions and responding to proposals for support.

Organised by Dr Ann Wigglesworth and facilitated by Kerry O'Neill, the seminar broke into groups to explore the four key themes, which had emerged as priorities from the UNTL-VU biennial conference. These were:

- Engaging youth in agriculture and good nutrition
- Education for a healthy population

- Work, the informal economy and sustainable communities
- Gender equality and reproductive health.

Starting with a panel on each theme of expert contributors including academics, field researchers and activists, and all including a Timorese student, the groups soon moved into focussed conversations drawing upon the experiences and ideas of all participants.

ENGAGING YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE AND GOOD NUTRITION

Recognising that, on leaving school, many young people have negative views about living in rural areas and working in agriculture, the focus of discussion at the conference and this follow-up seminar was upon how to increase the appeal of agricultural work. Agricultural work continues to be associated with poverty and remuneration is very low. Therefore, even before getting into proposals to increase the interest of young people there was a strong consensus that the government has to provide leadership, which

would be demonstrated in increasing the proportion of the budget allocated to agricultural development.

Practically though the school curriculum can increase the status of agricultural work by facilitating critical thinking, but also through practical opportunities from field work experience to expanding school gardens into secondary schools. The group proposed a stronger focus upon re-connecting across the generations through school and home gardens, cooking nutritious meals and learning more about the value of good nutrition for individual and community health. Popularising an understanding of agricultural practices as science requiring education would help in increasing the status too.

Research in agriculture is a focus at the tertiary level, but some argued that there is a need to explore a sustainable rather than the productivity model for family and community farming. While there are good and successful initiatives in new methods such as 'conservation agriculture', including permaculture approaches amongst NGOs, these

are not necessarily widely known nor evaluated. There was a call for a meta-analysis of existing research on agriculture.

The capacity to work together and transfer good models and skills was discussed. With a number of representatives of Australian friendship groups present, as well as the Timorese students, participants shared their knowledge of examples of successful ventures from primary production to distribution and marketing. These stories demonstrated the need for greater communication and were a call to ensure that actions and projects can be better connected and more productive in providing support for, rather than replacing or duplicating local initiatives.

In-country university student associations and youth groups could be better involved too. Youth representatives emphasised that youth need to be acknowledged and involved including at the municipal government level, where local agricultural leadership should be situated.

EDUCATION FOR A HEALTHY POPULATION

The focus of this group was almost exclusively on water and sanitation. While other issues of road accidents and drug use were on the agenda, the conversation kept returning to the lack of clean and drinkable water.

Acceptance of poor quality drinking water is also contributing to the non-sustainable preference for expensive bottled water. It



Student journalists interviewing Dr Aurelio Guterres, former Rector of UNTL, at the UNTL-VU conference 2019 (Photo: Katrina Gubbins)

was agreed that widespread clean drinking water is a priority, and this means improving maintenance and education around the use of filters at source and in the home, of rainwater tanks including managing mosquitos, and of piped water, as well as education about hygiene and less wasteful usage.

Water and sanitation have been an ongoing issue, with widespread initiatives falling into dis-use both of facilities and of education for maintenance and safe and responsible usage.

Of particular concern is the lack of facilities in most schools. The call was to government to spend more on WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) initiatives – and in a coordinated plan. In addition, inclusive approaches are needed with tertiary students– and encouraging students into careers with scholarships for further

study such as researching access for people with disabilities.

In this group a concrete focus was directed at VU to step up on dialogue and projects between engineers and health scientists and university students and graduates; as well liaising from national to community level on key issues and strategies that can be popularised. Friendship group representatives spoke of projects that have come and gone, and current practical work. They and the students again emphasised the need for improved dissemination and sharing of experience and ideas. Training and supporting young people as advocates in their schools and communities was also part of the conversation.

And back on the road accidents: there was a practical proposal

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to discuss with the Victorian government about road safety policy and campaigns, training and mentoring.

WORK, THE INFORMAL ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

This group agreed that the informal economy comprises networks of workers and producers with no contracts or legal recognition such as street vendors and waste pickers, as well as those organised and legally recognised in non-traditional cooperatives and social enterprises.

Being such a large and diverse part of the economy and people's lives, much greater focus needs to be directed by government, both national and municipal, towards supporting the informal economy and encouraging small enterprises. Instead, it was noted, that the government has taken

an antagonistic approach, for example moving on street traders, giving an impression that 'little development' is not supported compared to formal or 'big development'. It was argued that there is a lack of infrastructure investment to support informal economy enterprises, as basic as roads and marketplaces to communication technology.

As emphasised in the discussion in the other groups, there is no lack of initiatives and good models, but a lack of ongoing support for creating the conditions for sustainability – and sharing of knowledge and skills.

Cooperatives should be popularised, it was argued, as they can create an advantage that supports sustainability, and community engagement, both through making loans to members and working together on production methods and distribution systems. Cooperatives also

offer democratic structures and directly involve members in decision-making.

GENDER EQUALITY AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Taking up the conference prioritising of addressing the adverse consequences of early marriage and early pregnancy, this group was adamant that changes in attitudes are needed as much as in behaviour. Young people, and especially girls and women, must stop being 'blamed' for early pregnancy. This means education about reproductive health, but also cultural change from pressure on young couples to start having children.

Cultural and religious practices and norms are highly respected, but are a barrier to gender equality, argued young people and their supporters. The voices of young people must be heard, but young people are wary of speaking out on these sensitive matters and being criticised and dismissed. Again it was argued that there is a responsibility of schools to include reproductive health in the curriculum; and teachers must be trained to deliver this curriculum effectively.

Women's health remains a background issue and particularly reproductive health, with young unmarried mothers usually excluded from school, and yet girls and young women are wary of being seen seeking reproductive health information. Teenage pregnancy is often physically risky, and also cuts off study and job opportunities.



Photo: Katrina Gubbins

Education was argued as vital too in teaching young people both how to manage their own lives and decision making, but also to assert their rights. Girls are particularly disadvantaged, but importantly, boys and young men also need education to support making different decisions about masculine norms of attitudes and behaviour.

There are learning packages for youth organisations, e.g. Ba Futura have a YouTube film Healthy relationships in Timor-Leste. Young women representatives also want leadership training to support their participation in municipal councils, which are still male dominated. It was also pointed out that NGOs are also often male dominated and too accepting of traditional cultural mores.

The sessions on gender equality and girls' and women's rights were the most popular at the Conference, particularly with young women. Young men also participated respectfully listening to the women. Their behaviour gives hope for change too in the next generation. Most notable though was the leadership demonstrated, and insisted upon by young women across all the topics and issues addressed at the Conference and in this follow-up seminar.

CONCLUSION

This report demonstrates that there are many opportunities for the education sector to continue to increase its role in the development of Timor-Leste. Current students and young graduates have many ideas about

practical priorities and are calling to be listened too as they seek to craft the future of their country.

The climate emergency has focused the attention of youth around the world, who are demanding action by governments and business, but are also implementing immediate changes to the ways they could live their lives more sustainably. The youth of Timor-Leste are part of this global youth movement for change. They are clear sighted about the need to make change now, and they should be supported.

Report compiled by Jeannie Rea and Dr Ann Wigglesworth.



Photo: Katrina Gubbins

A CONVERSION WITH STUDENTS AND YOUTH LEADERS

INTERVIEWS BY GIZELA DA CRUZ DE CARVALHO



Interview with Celia Lopez, National Youth Council.

CELIA LOPES FROM CONSELHO NATIONAL JUVENTUDE TIMOR-LESTE (NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL)

Celia commented that the conference was important because it related to the reality of Timor-Leste's national development.

"It is very significant that the conference has focused on issues related to young women and girl and the SDGs. There are many areas we need development."

This includes:

- Ending violence and sexual abuse of women and girls
- End hunger
- End discrimination of the LGBTQI community
- Raise awareness about the vulnerability of women and girls with a disability.
- Support people with a disability through access to the public defender in the courts.

"Step by step we will achieve development, but it should include everybody, not leaving anyone behind."

"I am happy that this conference provided an open platform for young people to learn and express their ideas and issues, and that there was good gender

balance in the conference. People need to achieve the SDGs to the maximum to address these issues" she concluded.

VANIA GRACA COSTA FROM ST IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA COLLEGE IN CASAIT, LIQUICA TIMOR-LESTE.

Vania was selected as a student representative of the college, and had a chat to Gizela during the conference:

This conference helps young people know what the SDGs are and participate, because the SDGs encourage to not leave anyone behind.

It has given the opportunity for young people to participate and raise their ideas. There are many presenters from various levels such as government, civil society, and the United Nations.

I attended a session about Peace and Justice for Women and Girls, and will share the information with other friends at my college.

Gender inequality is an issue in Timor-Leste. I am very happy to hear the efforts to address gender inequality and raise the dignity of women which is supported by the UN in collaboration with the government. We know that in Timor-Leste we give more value



Gizela de Carvalho interviewing Vania Graca Costa.

to men than to women. We need to change the behaviour of men who think that women's role is in the domestic arena.

I am so happy to attend this conference to enhance my knowledge and understanding about the SDGs and participate in the discussions on gender, peace, and justice.

IMELDA, A UNTL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE AND ALSO REPRESENTATIVE FROM ATLETA, A WOMEN'S SPORTS ORGANISATION IN TIMOR-LESTE.

"I wanted to attend this conference to learn about what are the SDGs and how it can help young people."

Imelda observed the following during the conference:

- In the Health sector, it is important to raise awareness and provide training across the country to prevent the transmission of diseases in the sub-municipalities
- To protect our Environment, there must be awareness raising so people do not cut down trees, and communities must be supported to plant mangroves at the beach.
- There is still hunger and need for better nutrition. More support is needed for the agriculture sector.
- Mostly Timorese consume imported products, and there is no regulation for the price of food in the market. We need to love our local products.
- There is little employment so many young people are unemployed
- There is a lack of food security

Gizela Da Cruz De Carvalho recently completed her Masters in International Community Development at Victoria University (VU) and is the founder of local women's organisation, Fundasaun Feto iha Kbiit Servisu Hamutuk (FFKSH).

LABOUR MIGRATION FOR DECENT WORK

DR ANN WIGGLESWORTH

Labour migration has made a big impact on the rural economy of Timor-Leste. Remittances sent home by migrant workers are now the largest source of foreign revenue after oil¹, and exceed the value of coffee, Timor-Leste's major export.

A November 2016 survey found that 19% of respondents had family members living and working outside of Timor-Leste, so almost one in five Timorese families are

supported by remittances from workers, half of whom are living in the UK².

HELPING FAMILIES GET AHEAD

Joviano Salves Reis, a young Lautem man, presented his research on the impact of migration on local communities at this year's VU-UNTIL conference in a session focused on Decent Work (SDG 8). His paper focused upon the costs and benefits

of labour migration. He was motivated to do the research because so many members of his family and his community were working overseas to support their families.

He interviewed 329 individuals who had family members working in the UK from Lautem district. He found a positive impact on family wellbeing through home improvements; greater access to major consumer goods

like refrigerators, television, motorbikes, cars and phones; and more resources to establish a family business.

Cesario, a Baucau man shared his experiences of working in a Northern Ireland meat factory for nine years. He went to UK in 2009 because the money he could earn as a nurse in Baucau hospital was insufficient to support and educate his family. He stayed there until his family's economic needs were met, even though that was longer than he originally intended. But living and working within the Timorese community in Dungannon he never became proficient in English.

He described the sacrifices that the workers made due to their isolation from Timor-Leste. This isolation was compounded by the unwillingness of the Timorese embassy to recognise them because they had arrived in the UK on Portuguese passports. But he is proud that he could provide adequately for his family, and now he has returned to live with his family and they are content with what they have.

YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Conference delegates also heard from two returnees from Australia's Seasonal Workers Program (SWP). A young woman who attended a 'start up' training at Klua Joventude for young entrepreneurs, wanted to start a coffee stall in Dili. As she lacked the finance to do so, she applied to the SWP. After one season in Australia she had enough money to start her business, and was serving excellent coffee at an event before the conference.



Cesario (far right) and his family. (Photo: Dr Ann Wigglesworth)

A young man spoke of his journey from living on the streets to entrepreneurship. He got a lucky break in the form of a job as a barista. He learnt a lot about coffee and was fortunate to go to Bali and Japan to learn more about coffee quality. His extended family had a coffee farm and so he planned to set up a coffee bean processing business using improved technology he had learned about. The SWP gave him the opportunity to earn money to start his business. Last year he exported a tonne of coffee, but he plans to raise that to 30 tonnes a year in future.

OVERTURNING STEREOTYPES

The stereotype about migration being bad and leading to exploitation was raised in the discussion. In contrast, the migrant workers have got good incomes and their families have benefited from overseas work. It was suggested that negative stereotypes about labour migration must be overturned.

To maximise the economic benefits from migrant work the high cost of receiving international transfers into the country should be reduced by government regulation of the banks. In light of migrants' contributions to the family wellbeing and the local economy being high, it was felt that government should better support its overseas workers, especially in UK from where the remittances are derived.

Dr Ann Wigglesworth is a specialist in social development and an Honorary Fellow, College of Arts and Education at Victoria University.

REFERENCES

1. Richard Curtain (2018), Timor-Leste remittances update DevPolicy, 29 March 2018
2. IRI (2016) 'National Survey of Public Opinion', Centre for Insights in Survey Research, International Republican Institute, November 2016



Farmland between the Baucau and Viqueque districts. (Photo: Dr Ann Wigglesworth)

CONFERENCE REPORT: UNDERSTANDING TIMOR-LESTE 2019

THE 7TH TIMOR-LESTE STUDIES ASSOCIATION (TLSA)

CONFERENCE, LICEU CAMPUS, UNIVERSIDADE NACIONAL TIMOR LOROSA'E (UNTL), DILI, 27-28 JUNE 2019

DR MICHAEL LEACH

The 7th Timor-Leste Studies Association (TLSA) conference, held 27-28 June in Dili, represented the 10th anniversary of our first conference in Dili in 2009.

The TLSA was founded in June 2005 by Helen Hill and Michael Leach, with the support of a group of East Timorese and Australian scholars who attended a symposium at Victoria University, Melbourne. The organisation was launched as an *'interdisciplinary, international research network focussed on*

all aspects of research into East Timorese society, including politics and history, economics, communications, health, language, agriculture and science.'

Far more significant developments would follow in July 2009, with the first of our biannual TLSA conferences at the National University of Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL) in Dili. In a multi-language format which respected and reflected the official and working languages of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, East Timorese researchers were joined by international delegates from around the globe to present papers in Tetun, Portuguese, Indonesian and English.

The 2019 the organising committee of Dulce da Silva and Leo Soares (Tetun), Nuno Canas Mendes (Portuguese), Steven Farram (English), Hannah Loney, Uka Pinto, Clinton Fernandes, Mica Barreto Soares, Robert Williams, Claudino Nabais and Michael Leach, welcomed a record number of presenters and conference

registrants. Some 270 people were in attendance, two thirds of whom were East Timorese researchers and students.

The 2019 conference also saw special streams on "1999: 20 Years On", convened by Clinton Fernandes and Mica Barreto Soares; "Gender Research in Timor-Leste", convened by Hannah Loney and Uka Pinto; "Agriculture", convened by Claudino Nabais and Robert Williams; and two panels on "Decolonising Knowledge", organised by Josh Trindade. Full details of the 2019 program can be found [here](#).

The opening session included a welcome by Professor Michael Leach for the TLSA, an opening address by Professor Eduardo Aniceto Serrão, Pro-Rector International at UNTL, and a sponsor's address by Dra. Alzira Reis, Centro Nacional Chega! (CNC). Reflecting the focus on 1999, CNC was a generous sponsor and supporter of this year's conference. A well-attended workshop on Historical

Sources and Methods workshop was held at CNC on the Saturday following the 2-day conference.

As with previous conferences, UNTL was the host and major co-sponsor of the conference, providing venues, staff time, and logistical support. TLSA conferences would not have been possible without UNTL's partnership and support, and particular thanks are due to the Rector, Professor Francisco Miguel Martins. We also thank Swinburne University of Technology and the University of Lisbon for their active contributions, and acknowledge La'ó Hamutuk and the Australian Embassy, which both generously hosted receptions. We also thank Victoria University for their collaboration, which included offering discounted joint registration fees for the two conferences in Dili and shared events. The conference also included a presentation and cocktail function hosted by the new Global Campus of Human Rights at UNTL.

Program highlights including twelve papers on the theme of 1999, a strong turnout of gender researchers, and a record number of papers on agricultural research, two thirds of which were presented in Tetun. The Tetun and Portuguese language streams remained strong in 2019, with a full conference program that included films and book launches.

Notable was the visit from the Minister for State Administration, who chose the TLSA conference as the venue to announce the new government agenda of full municipalisation by 2022.

As in previous years, the TLSA will produce a multi-language publication of conference proceedings. The proceedings will be funded from the remaining registration fees and sponsor donations, and distributed free of charge to Timorese tertiary institutions, libraries and reading rooms, and to all contributing authors. The proceedings will be peer-reviewed and are expected to be published early in 2020.

Following on from the first TLSA conference in Brazil in 2018, the TLSA now looks forward to the first ever TLSA conference in Portugal in 2020, followed by the regular biennial conference in Dili in 2021, where the conference

themes will include a focus on the 30-year anniversary of the Santa Cruz Massacre. As ever, the TLSA hopes to continue its contribution to the research culture of Timor-Leste and to building a thriving association, both within Timor-Leste and internationally. To this end, we continue to welcome and encourage the development of new 'chapters' of the TLSA in all parts of the world.

To find out more, visit <https://tlstudies.org>

Dr Michael Leach is Professor in Politics and International Relations at Swinburne University and convenor of the TLSA conference.



Professor Michael Leach.



Timor-Leste Studies Association Conference, Dili, 2019. (Photo: Jeannie Rea)

HELEN HILL AND THE TIMOR-LESTE SPECIAL COLLECTION

JENNIFER MURPHY & MEG WELLER
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARIANS
VICTORIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Victoria University Library developed a Timor-Leste Special Collection beginning with an initial donation from the Oxfam Australia Library in March 2012.

The Collection was augmented in rare and research quality items from the VU library general collections and continues to grow by donations from personal and organisational collections.

The Collection features a range of monographs, reports, journals, newsletters, yearbooks and pamphlets that focus chiefly on Timor-Leste as an independent nation, but also cover the times of occupation by other countries. The collection's strengths are economics, development and trade, politics, governance and administration, education, culture, society and history.

One of the major donors of material to the Timor-Leste Collection has been Dr Helen Hill who over many years donated material for the general collections at City Flinders, Footscray Park and St Albans campuses, and then to the Timor-Leste Collection from when it was developed in 2012. Of particular significance was the donation of Dr Helen Hill's research collection on Timor-Leste received in 2014.

This is listed in library records to have included 104 monographs and 24 pamphlets as well as DVDs, calendars, newspapers, and journal issues.

Here is a story about the impact of one of the more unique items which was part of Dr Hill's 2014 donation. In 2019 librarians at the National Library of Australia contacted VU Library Special Collections regarding copies of the historic East Timorese newspaper 'A Voz de Timor' ('The Voice of Timor'), held in our Timor-Leste collection. The NLA's Digitisation and Document Delivery Branch were working on digitising 'A Voz de Timor' and were missing a few issues that they hoped we might have. Victoria University library had 9 issues donated by Helen in 2014. We were able to provide two of the missing issues from 1975. In fact, when retrieving the two newspapers, we discovered that one had a special supplement that the NLA did not know about, so they requested we send that as well.

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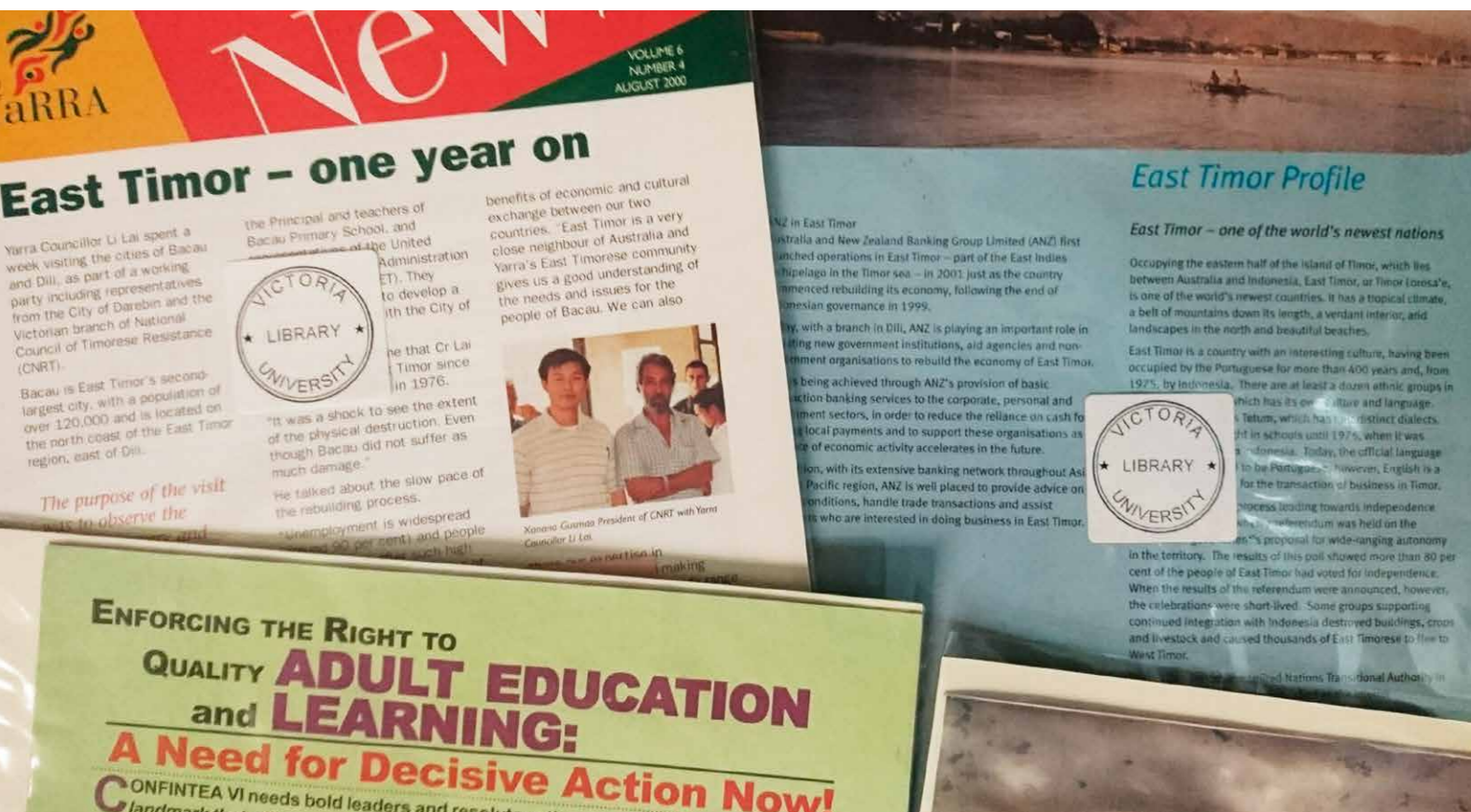


Dr Helen Hill presented the Vice Chancellor's Award for Service for her work on Timor-Leste by Professor Peter Dawkins in November 2011.



Special Collections Librarian, Meg Well, Deputy Rector, Professor Eduardo Aniceto Serrão, Manager of Campus Libraries, Garry Potter and Rector of UNTL, Dr. Francisco Martins, visiting the VU Special Collections.

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Pamphlets are publications, usually with only a few pages, that convey information on a single subject. The Collection contains many pamphlets which were donated by Dr Helen Hill.



These issues of the Dili Weekly from the Collection are the only copies listed in an Australian Library.

The National Library arranged for the newspapers to be couriered to Canberra and back, where they were digitised and uploaded to Trove. The newspaper issues are available on Trove for anyone to read, (they are in Portuguese), along with others sourced from the NLA's collection and the collection held by CHART (Clearing House for Archival Records on Timor) among others. If you are interested in having a look at the entry on Trove, you will find it here: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/title/1498>.

CHART was also involved in a digitisation project with Victoria University in 2014-2015 to make two significant print publications available online. These were Tapol Bulletin and Timor Link which can

now be viewed through the VU Research Repository, together with a selection of digitised reports and discussion papers from the Timor-Leste Collection. Dr Helen Hill was part of this project team.

The Collection is a lot richer in content through the involvement of Dr Helen Hill and the library thanks her for her past and ongoing donations to the Timor-Leste Collection. Information about the Timor-Leste Collection can be found on the Library website or the Special Collections Guide. Researchers from Victoria University and other institutions are welcome to contact the Special Collections librarians by email special.collections@vu.edu.au



The Collection contains many television off-air video recordings from the years before streaming and on-demand television. The Library is looking at ways to preserve this content and make it available in a more accessible format.