



31st Annual Regional Human Rights & Peoples Diplomacy Training Program

Program Report



21 August -
1 September, 2023

The Diplomacy Training Program's 31st Annual Program received support from the Australian Government's Australian NGO Cooperation Program.



1. Executive Summary

“...here I have fully learned how to approach international human rights activism.”¹

The Diplomacy Training Program’s (DTP) 31st Annual Human Rights and Peoples’ Diplomacy Training for Human Rights Defenders in the Asia-Pacific (Annual Program) was held in Timor-Leste from 21 August – 1 September, 2023 in partnership with FORUM-ASIA, PIANGO, MFA, AIPP, JSMP and UNTL-HRC². Timor-Leste with its Asian and Pacific identity is an ideal place for advocates from the two regions to learn and to share together, strengthening linkages and domestic human rights movements in both regions.

Twenty-four human rights defenders from 10 different countries³ participated in this two-week intensive residential program of learning, sharing and skills building. The participants work on a diverse range of human rights concerns including rights of migrant workers, women and children, LGBTIQ+, gender justice, the rights of persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples rights, peace-building and struggles for self-determination, the environment and climate change.

Trainers in the program included DTP’s Founder and Patron, President José Ramos-Horta and HE Aung Myo Min, Human Rights Minister of the National Unity Government of Myanmar. The program began with a focus on the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the international human rights standards and mechanisms developed to promote and protect human rights over the last 75 years as well as looking at the struggle for democracy in Myanmar and Timor-Leste, with the importance of solidarity across the region stressed. Participants explored human rights in the context of the climate emergency, geopolitical concerns, shrinking civil society space and commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Sessions focused on the rights of women, human rights and business, LGBTIQ+, migrant workers, Indigenous peoples’ rights, child rights, and the rights of persons with disabilities. Skills building included advocacy strategies and the opportunity to apply program content in practical exercises including developing a short video, group role-plays, and exercises to engage with the UN Human Rights System.

Locating this major regional Annual Program in Timor-Leste enables the sharing of lessons of organising human rights advocacy under repression, of effectively using international law and the UN system, of building effective solidarity for human rights, and of building peace and reconciliation out of conflict.

I feel DTP a part of my family. The care DTP has taken for every participant is commendable. If our struggle succeeds it is but due to DTP.

A field visit to the converted prison that hosts the Timorese institution on transitional justice, Centro Nacional Chega! and interactions with the Timorese grounded reflections on democracy movements and human rights struggles in the region, the power of advocacy and global solidarity. End of program participant evaluations highlighted the value of the program and inform this report. DTP thanks its partners, its trainers for their pro bono contribution, the participants who shared their knowledge, and the funders – particularly the Australian Government and the President of Timor-Leste.

¹ These and other quotes are taken from the anonymous end of training evaluations.

² Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO), Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), Judicial System Monitoring Program (JSMP) and the University of Timor-Leste Human Rights Centre (UNTL HRC).

³ Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Timor-Leste.



2. Purpose

To enhance the effectiveness of civil society representatives working to promote and protect human rights across the Asia-Pacific region.

The course taught me the importance of lobbying, video advocacy and ways of advocacy in order to achieve your goals.

This annual, comprehensive human rights and advocacy course is the longest established human rights training program held in the region. It recognises the role that training can play in enhancing the effectiveness of advocates and advocacy, and the value of building support networks among human rights defenders and diverse movements for human rights. The program affirms the critical role of human rights defenders and community advocates in protecting and promoting human rights – and of ensuring human rights agreements are implemented. This program is part of DTP's longer-term strategy of building capacities and networks for the diverse human rights movements of Asia and the Pacific. Each year, DTP works with its partners and alumni to select the right participants, who will then go back to their movements and organisations and continue their work for human rights.

3. Program Methodology and Materials

I am better skilled/ my skill levels are better my knowledge in human rights/ advocacy + Diplomacy is better + I am a better HR Defender.

Since 1990, DTP has established its reputation for delivering relevant and practical human rights training programs for human rights defenders in the Asia-Pacific region. The participatory program methodology is based on respect for the experiences, perspectives and skills of participants. The opportunity to share experiences and lessons with other participants and trainers is one of the key benefits and highlights of participating in the program. The training methodology is interactive with an emphasis on group work, role plays, case studies, exercises and small group discussion. Participants manage the program and are



involved in daily reflections that adjust and guide the program. The course schedule is continuously reviewed and adapted to respond to participants' feedback, advice and requests.

All participants make short presentations highlighting the human rights issues they work on. This helps participants to develop skills and confidence in presenting, encourages sharing of experiences and strategies and builds knowledge on the diverse and shared human rights issues of the Asia-Pacific region. A comprehensive DTP manual complements the training. The DTP Manual and trainer and participant presentations are provided to the participants in soft copy for future reference.

Appreciate that this training prioritizes practice, not just the theory/ principles of UN system.

4. Participants

The 24 participants in the training program were selected through an open and competitive selection process. Efforts are made to ensure gender balance, geographic representation and a mix of human rights issues. Priority consideration is given to Indigenous peoples' advocates and women.

DTP received 235 expressions of interest in the program, resulting in 105 applications. Over 30 participants were selected, but last-minute withdrawals for personal reasons, visa issues etc resulted in 24 program participants. Participants included lawyers, researchers, advocates and trainers working on a broad range of human rights issues. This diversity contributed to the richness of the program.

DTP acknowledges the commitment of the participants, many working on challenging human rights issues in the region, thanks them for their energetic participation, for sharing their knowledge and experience and the support they extended to each other throughout this intensive learning program.

One of my favourite aspects of the training, building people-to-people solidarity, remembering that we are not alone in our struggle.

5. Trainers

DTP relies on the pro bono contributions of its trainers, who share DTP's commitment to investing in human rights defenders. Trainers, presenters and facilitators in the program included DTP's Founder and Patron, President José Ramos-Horta and HE Aung Myo Min (Human Rights Minister of the National Unity Government of Myanmar), Ruki Fernando, Claudia Diaz, Joshua Cooper, Arul Prakkash, Noam Peleg, and Patrick Earle, as well as Timorese experts and activists, Mica Barreto Soares, Carmen da Cruz, Joao Travolta, Antero Bendito, Koko Valenti Pinto, Hugo Fernandez, Casimiro Dos Santos, Renezio Sura Cerlias M. de Carvalho, Bella Galhos, Berta Antonieta Tilman Pereira, Santana Soares, Judite Dias Ximenes, Mrs Maria de Fatima Guterres, Gaspar Afonso, Nelson Santos and Aderito Soares. Trainers and facilitators included at least three DTP alumni. A



highlight was the Masterclass on human rights in the region delivered by DTP’s Founder and Patron and Timorese President, José Ramos-Horta.

The practical sessions really helped build my skills, and also the advice from trainers helped a lot.

6. Program Description and Highlights

Welcomes and Opening - UDHR @ 75 and Struggle for Democracy in Myanmar

“...our region needs a strong generation of human rights defenders.”

The program opened in Dili, Timor-Leste on 21st August, with a welcome to participants by Ana Paula Marçal (Executive Director of JSMP), Dr Maubere Lorosae da Silva Horta (Director of UNTL-HRC) and Patrick Earle (Executive Director of DTP).

H.E. Aung Myo Min, Human Rights Minister (NUG-Myanmar) delivered the Opening’s [keynote address](#). He shared his history with DTP and praised the Timorese for their longstanding support of the people of Myanmar and their struggles for democracy and freedom. He recounted how during the historic 1988 student rising for democracy, a “Jungle University” was set up in the camps on the Thai border and he came across a copy of the UDHR in the “library”. The document spoke of equality and freedom and these ideals have since inspired his work as a democracy and human rights activist over many decades. In this, the 75th anniversary year of the UDHR, he spoke of the importance of human rights and how the NUG plans to build their government on “peace, unity, equality and human rights”. From his long involvement in DTP, he stressed that the “course will add to your strengths and skills”. He finished highlighting the significance of the participant’s work: “our region needs a strong generation of human rights defenders”.

Sharing on Timor-Leste’s Struggle for Self-Determination and Human Rights in Timor-Leste Today

Timorese activists Mana Mica Barreto Soares, Mana Carmen da Cruz, Maun Joao Travolta, Maun Antero Bendito and Koko Valenti Pinto participated in a panel discussion that reflected on Timor’s struggle for self-determination, building Timor’s democracy and efforts to secure justice for the victims of human rights violations almost 25 years after the vote for independence in the UN supervised popular consultation. They shared what the human rights landscape is like now in Timor-Leste, and echoed Aung Myo Min’s point on the importance of solidarity in struggling for democracy around the world. A lively Q&A session followed with further discussion on Timor-Leste’s political spectrum today. Some of the live issues include the consolidation and re-writing of history, conciliating with or holding to account the perpetrators of human rights violations.

UDHR @ 75 - Introduction to Human Rights – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Bill of Rights, Human Rights Treaties, The Human Rights Council, and The UN’s Special Procedures and the UPR



H.E. Aung Myo Min engaged the participants as he charted the development of international human rights standards and the UN Human Rights System. He introduced the inalienable nature of human rights, and through interactive exercises and sharing he outlined the generations of human rights progress. Drawing on his long history of human rights defending and current role as Minister for Human Rights for the NUG, he highlighted the importance of working together for a common goal. A human rights approach is not only what you achieve, but how you achieve it.

Sri Lankan human rights defender, Ruki Fernando, led sessions on human rights and the UN system. These sessions provided participants with an overview of the United Nations human rights mechanisms and the avenues for bringing their issues to the UN. He explored with participants through role plays and group discussion how civil society can engage with these mechanisms and raise human rights issues on an international stage and use these to hold their governments to account. Some participants expressed their frustration and anger with the failings of the UN system, including based on personal experience of trying to work with it. Through these sessions, Ruki worked with participants to recognise and work within the inherent limitations of the UN. He encouraged participants to see what each of the mechanisms can offer human rights defenders, and how they can work with them to achieve real changes and outcomes.

Ruki led participants through an examination of the UN Special Procedures, what they can do for human rights and how to engage them. Focusing on the ins and outs of country visits, he took participants through the process of organising country visits for best effect, and then the aftermath of the visits. A discussion was had on how to translate visits to actual action on the ground. Participants engaged in a role play of civil society lobbying of a Special Rapporteur. The exercise solidified the importance of preparation and clear, concise messaging. Advocates need to think strategically about how to make best use of their time with a mandate holder, how to present their issue, and their recommendations.

Joshua Cooper's sessions on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the end of the program provided a wonderful opportunity to consolidate the two-week's worth of learning. Drawing on his extensive insider experience working on different country reviews over the years, his anecdotes of representing different groups offered practical tips and prepared everyone for their mock UPR session – always a highlight of the program. The UPR simulation has each participant taking on a different role in a UPR session. During the final morning of the session, the participants prepare for and conduct the UPR of a member state (Bangladesh). Participants put into practice the knowledge, strategies and skills developed during the program.

DTP helped me understand international human rights, standards, principles and mechanisms in practical ways and will be very helpful and useful as a tool.

OHCHR – Field Presences: The Role of Human Rights Advisors and UN Country Teams

Claudia Diaz, UN Human Rights Advisor, Timor-Leste, provided an engaging session drawing on her experience working for the UN in Timor-Leste. She explained the human rights architecture of the UN – and that human rights are a core purpose of all the UN's specialised agencies – and could be engaged with by civil society to promote human rights. She outlined the distinctions between human rights violations and crimes, and the power of various bodies to act on them. Claudia discussed with participants the political nature of the UN, mapping where the power lies and how to act effectively.

Human Rights in Timor-Leste – Reflections on advocacy and SOGIE, GBV and other challenges

Leading women's and LGBTQIA+ activist Bella Galhos shared her story, reflecting on the dual fights she has fought since a child – the struggle for self-determination for Timor-Leste and the fight for LGBTQIA+ rights in Timor-Leste. She recounted her experience of violence under the occupation, her exile in North America where she became a leading campaigner for solidarity and recognition of the Timorese struggle for self-determination. Despite her high profile and wide support for her work for Timorese independence she encountered widespread opposition from the Catholic Church, and conservative society, for her work for gender equality and LGBTQIA+ rights. She was frank in explaining that the fight for self-determination came at a cost to self-identification and awareness.

International Solidarity / Sharing on Advocacy and Campaigning / Strategy and Tactics

“After all, no dictator lasts forever.”

Advocacy, engagement and solidarity are key drivers of accountability and better governance. One of the key focuses of the program is to build participants’ skills in strategic advocacy in order to make change for human rights. Patrick Earle led a session on campaigns and advocacy, sharing not only his many years of working in this space, but also drawing directly on the participant’s own experiences. The interactive session explored various strategies and tactics employed by the group, reflecting on successes and challenges.

Bringing the issue from local to international. Building networks and solidarity.

Aderito Soares joined participants for a follow up session at the end of the program. He focused on the importance of building solidarity networks across civil society wherever you go, if only to boost the morale of local activists, and how this international solidarity was critical for the eventual success of self-determination in Timor-Leste. He stressed that it was the role of civil society to keep demanding their rights and that in addition to solidarity, it is important for civil society to maintain their belief: *“After all, no dictator lasts forever.”*

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and Engaging Diplomats for Human Rights

2023 marks the 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The Declaration sets out the rights and responsibilities of States, human rights defenders and all actors in society in ensuring a safe environment where human rights defenders are recognised, valued and encouraged to work for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Ruki Fernando took participants through the Declaration, exploring who are human rights defenders and stressing the important role they play and how the Declaration assists their work. Participants looked at measures that can be taken to try and ensure personal safety and security and the value of international solidarity in this work, including Guidelines for Human Rights Defenders issued by various governments.

The HRD Declaration has been reinforced through the adoption of HRD Guidelines by the EU and governments in North America and Europe. These mandate action by diplomats to protect and promote the work of human rights defenders. Participants looked at examples of foreign diplomats engaging in human rights issues within their own countries and shared personal experiences of engaging with diplomats and government officials. Ways to get introductions to diplomats as well as protocols when meeting with diplomats in different settings was also discussed. These experiences and reflections were fed into a discussion around the upcoming visit with the President.

CEDAW and Gender - Engaging the Treaty Bodies / Treaty Body Advocacy / Sharing Experience from Timor’s Report to CEDAW Treaty Bodies

Participants were joined by three leading Timorese women’s rights activists – Berta Antonieta Tilman Pereira, Santana Soares and Judite Dias Ximenes – for a discussion on CEDAW, gender, and women’s rights in Timor, both past and present. Berta provided a background of the significant role women played in the Timorese resistance movement. She explained how the fight for gender equality was sacrificed during this period as they fought for national liberation. Since independence, Timor-Leste has adopted very progressive policies in regard to women and women make up 38% of the Timorese parliament. However, not enough has been done to implement these policies. Santana took participants through the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), looking at what it contains and how it is monitored. Together with Judite, they shared their experiences of Timor’s recent review by the CEDAW Committee in May. Social norms of male hierarchy in Timor were sketched out by

the presenters, symbolised by the idea of the “Big Brother”, and that “whatever is said by the *Maunbootizmu* at the table stands”.



Video Advocacy

Data collection, documentation, awareness raising, and international solidarity of human rights issues was raised in a number of sessions over the program. These all culminated in the sessions led by WITNESS' Arul Prakkash on video advocacy, where he focused on advocacy skills of documentation, safety and security, messaging and targeting. Participants were given advice on the latest apps, tools and advocacy strategies being used in the field. The use of mobile phones to record videos was explored, with technical training provided on the recording and production of video footage that is both compelling and effective with an eye on safety and security. Participants had the opportunity to create and screen their own advocacy videos. The power of narrative storytelling to engage and build support was explored. As with previous programs, this practical, skills-based exercise was another highlight for participants.

The UN Convention the Rights of the Child – Key Concepts and Issues, Introduction to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Using CRC and CRPD in Rights Advocacy / Programming

Noam Peleg introduced the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). He discussed the background of child rights, the development of the Convention and outlined the four principles of the Convention: non-discrimination, best interests of the child, the right to survival and development, and respect for the views of the child (child participation).

DTP alumnus Gaspar Afonso introduced the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He was joined by Mrs Maria de Fatima Guterres. Moderated by Noam, Gaspar and Maria looked at the intersection of child rights and the rights of persons with disabilities, taking questions from the participants. The session provided a good context of these rights in Timor-Leste and the social and political barriers in place limiting the full realisation of the rights for these communities.



Building Skills in Peoples' Diplomacy

DTP alumnus and Timorese diplomat Nelson Santos led a practical session on peoples' diplomacy. Beginning by providing participants with his own history as an activist in exile as a refugee in Australia and then, following independence, government advisor and diplomat – “Being a diplomat is an easy job, being an activist is the toughest job”. He gave clear examples of diplomacy, preparing the class for mock diplomat/government minister meetings. In groups of three, participants approached and attempted to initiate a discussion with Nelson. Nelson's response to and further interaction with the group was then based on the way they presented themselves and their methods of engaging him. Participants appreciated the immediate feedback from Nelson in regard to their different approaches of engaging diplomats and the opportunity to try different strategies in a safe environment.

Human Rights, the Environment and Climate Change – Engaging with and Using the Global Framework – New CRC General Comment and the SDGs, The Climate Crisis and Human Rights – Bringing it All Together

In a joint session, Noam Peleg and Joshua Cooper explored the intersection of child rights and climate change, looking at the new General Comment 26 on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change. They discussed the effects of the environment on rights and what is the duty of states in this regard. Touching on effective action, the importance of solidarity and the life-giving importance of the land, the pair challenged participants to think about the way climate change affects the lives of children and the different dynamics that impact on their lives, not only in the present but also in the long term. They explored different rights that were being violated due to climate change and stressed the important role human rights defenders have for treaty body committees and other UN bodies/mechanisms in understanding the very real situation on the ground in your countries.

Joshua also led a session on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the climate crisis and human rights. He touched upon the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which demands unified action on limiting temperature rise and strategies to deal with the impact of climate change. He shared his experience in the most recent SDG negotiations and the battle of language in international documents. He clearly explained the process of setting human rights and sustainability goals.

Human Rights and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – Indigenous peoples in the UN System

Joshua Cooper also delivered a session on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and their involvement with the UN system. Mixing first-hand experience of advocacy with a clear history of the establishment of Indigenous peoples rights in the UN system, he shared the inspiring stories from the early 20th century of powerful Indigenous leaders whose international advocacy ensured spaces for Indigenous peoples in the UN System and secured the adoption in 2007 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) by the UN General Assembly. He touched on the place of Indigenous peoples in the SDGs and unpacked the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). He explained the interconnectedness of Indigenous people and the environment, disrupting the Western human/nature divide. Joshua shared his story of fighting climate change in the UN system and then fighting fires caused by climate change in Hawaii.

Field Visit: Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation - Guided Tour & Reflections on the Struggle for Independence - Building International Solidarity, Peace and Reconciliation

Early in the program, participants spent an afternoon visiting the Centro Nacional Chega! and the Santa Cruz cemetery. Housed in the Old Balide Prison, a Portuguese-era prison where the Indonesian military interned Timorese resistance figures during the occupation, Chega! provided participants with the opportunity to learn firsthand of the Timorese struggle for independence. Participants were visibly moved by the museum's exhibition, telling the stories of the victims, and their struggle for justice, within the context of history, international politics and law. Following a guided tour of the exhibition, participants

were provided with an overview of the truth and reconciliation process in Timor-Leste and where they stand now with presentations by CNC Director Hugo Fernandez, JSMP Deputy Director Casimiro Santos and Renezio Sura Cerlias M. de Carvalho, ACBIT. Participants engaged deeply with the presentations at Chega!, and the nuances of reconciliation, documentation and remembering were teased out by the four speakers. This led into a broader discussion on justice post-independence.



The tragedy of Indonesian occupation took physical form for the participants with the visit to the Santa Cruz Cemetery, where 270 peaceful demonstrators were massacred in November 1991. Led by four survivors, participants visited the grave of the late Max Stahl, documentary-maker whose smuggled film footage of the massacre showed the tragedy of Timor to the world. Participants then wound a path through the cemetery to the grave of Sebastião Gomez, the independence activist whose murder prompted the demonstration. Personal recounts are powerful, and the discussion ended with strong shows of solidarity between participants.

Special Session with President José Ramos-Horta

A highlight for participants and trainers alike was the special session with the President of Timor-Leste and DTP's Founder, José Ramos-Horta. Hosted at the Nicolau Lobato Presidential Palace (the official workplace of the President), the President spent two hours talking with and fielding questions from participants. The discussion covered a wide range of topics, mixing personal anecdotes, humour, local politics and global events. President Horta's personal story is an inspirational one for human rights and democracy defenders, and his continuing support for human rights defenders greatly appreciated. The meeting was followed by a morning tea reception at the Kantina Matak, an on-site presidential cafe that serves up 500 free meals a day to neighbourhood kids, run by leading LGBT+ advocate, Bella Galhos and her wife, as well as a tour of the Arte Moris – fine arts school, cultural centre and artists' association.



Special Event: International Day of the Disappeared: Film screening and panel

30 August marks the anniversary of the Timor vote for independence in 1999. The vote was a remarkable achievement, made possible through effective international solidarity, including with Indonesia's democracy movement and skillful advocacy using international law and mechanisms. The anniversary is part of the reason the program is held during this time in Timor. 30 August also marks the International Day of the Disappeared.⁴ Participants and trainers attended a special public event in the evening hosted by leading Timorese human rights NGO, HAK. Following a screening of a film recounting the Independence vote and the events that followed, a panel discussion featuring Virgilio da S. Guterres (Providor, PDHJ), Maria Manuela L. Pereira (Director, ACbit) and Domingos Pinto (Coordinator, Nasional ASS-Vitima 74-99) and moderated by DTP trainer Aderito de J. Soares shared memories from the vote and its violent aftermath (including describing hiding out in a house near HAK on the night of the vote), the situation in Timor-Leste today as well reflections from the audience on situations in their own countries – Myanmar, Sri Lanka to name a few.

7. Program Evaluation

Throughout the program, participants were involved in daily reflections and evaluations of the program. This enabled the program coordinators to adjust and change the program and activities, including the process of the daily reflections themselves. At the end of the training, participants completed extensive anonymous evaluation questionnaires – and this was followed by a final group sharing of reflections. During this session, participants had the opportunity to take stock of what they had learnt and experienced over the two weeks and discuss future plans, both personal as well as how they plan to incorporate their learnings into their work.

23 participants submitted end of program evaluations. All 23 participants agreed that the training met their expectations. The degree of difficulty of the training appears to be pitched at the right level with 60.9% of participants in agreement with the statement, with 8.7% finding the program very difficult. At 12 days, the Annual Program is DTP's longest training program, however, it has only been this short in more recent years, having previously run for between 2.5 weeks to a month. The majority of participants felt that 12 days was the right length for the program (56.5%), while 8.7% felt it was too short.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES AS A RESULT OF PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROGRAM:	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. I have gained knowledge of international human rights standards, principles and mechanisms	16	7		
b. I have built knowledge and skills in engaging the UN human rights accountability mechanisms and UN system	15	8		
c. I have gained practical skills in strategic advocacy, video advocacy, lobbying, and 'peoples' diplomacy'	19	4		
d. I have stronger networks in the region to enable the sharing of information and support	17	6		

⁴ Also known as the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances.

8. Reflections and Lessons Learnt

...every moment was interesting & fruitful.

8.1 Program Location in Timor-Leste:

This was DTP's return to Timor-Leste following the COVID pandemic. Timor-Leste is a special location for this program. The personal story of DTP's Founder, President José Ramos-Horta and the history of the Timorese struggle for independence is an inspiring one for human rights defenders across Asia and the Pacific. International solidarity, international law, and the UN system are all elements of that story and central to DTP's work. The location provides an opportunity for DTP participants to see theory in action, and to learn from lived experience. Timor-Leste leads in democratic freedoms and civil and political rights in a region of increasingly authoritarian governments.

- **Support from DTP's Founder, President José Ramos-Horta** is a compelling reason to organise the program in Timor-Leste. He was personally generous with his time, his office offered support with the costs and perhaps most significantly, there is nowhere else that human rights defenders can interact so closely with a head of state or receive such support and encouragement for their human rights work from a head of state.
- **DTP's partnerships and relationships:** DTP's association with the Timorese struggle for self-determination means that it has an extraordinary range of relationships spanning generations, government and civil society. To its existing valued partnership with the Justice System Monitoring Project this year, it added the Human Rights Centre at the National University of Timor-Leste. It is hoped that this partnership can help DTP's programs to have a more sustainable and lasting impact in Timor-Leste.
- **Increased Costs of Travel:** The increased post-pandemic travel costs make Timor-Leste an even more expensive place to organise this program. The costs of transit visas, and transit accommodation between connecting flights through Indonesia add to the program costs. With longer planning, it may be possible to offset some of these higher costs through arrangements with airlines.
- **Travel, Visas and Logistics:** Timor-Leste allows visas on arrivals for all and the process is simple and efficient. However, participants from most non-ASEAN countries require a transit visa for Indonesia (or Singapore) or Australia for a number of Pacific participants. This adds to costs, and timelines, particularly for participants from Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- **Internet:** Internet access and speeds remain a challenge in Timor-Leste, affecting the delivery of programs – it is difficult to navigate websites live during sessions for example, and this can make some of the sessions too passive.
- **Costs in Timor-Leste:** The costs of hotel accommodation and catering in Timor-Leste are higher than elsewhere in the region, but it was possible to reduce these costs significantly by staying in convents/seminaries which provide excellent value and service.
- **Location, Accommodation and Venues:** The program was held in three venues, two in Dili and one in Dare (30 minutes outside Dili). Basic accommodation was a mix of twin-share and single-rooms. The Convent (Dili) and the Seminary (Dare) provided excellent value, service and food. Disability access remains a major challenge in Timor-Leste – and that is true for all of the venues and accommodation and this is being discussed with local partners.
- **Transport:** Moving a group of 30 plus around different venues, and on field trips etc can be challenging. JSMP provided their staff and cars, and two buses were hired for the longer trips and microlets for some of the shorter trips. In future programs it would be useful for DTP staff also to have a car throughout the program. Wheelchair accessible transportation is scarce in Timor and remains a major challenge in having international participants in wheelchairs attend programs in Timor. This is being discussed with local partners.

- **Trainers:** DTP was able to call on many excellent Timorese trainers with lived experience of human rights work and building international solidarity.

8.2 Responding to the Human Rights Emergency in Myanmar

- In developing this program, DTP wanted to respond to the human rights emergency in Myanmar. It prioritised inclusion of participants from Myanmar (Diaspora), and it invited HE Aung Myo Min to deliver the opening keynote for the program. The need to build solidarity with the people and democracy movements in Myanmar was a constant theme of the program. The Timorese trainers and participants emphasised the role of Asian solidarity in their own struggle, and expressed the commitment to stand with those in Myanmar who were now looking for their help.

8.3 Participants:

I feel I have solidarity for the cause of different peoples and nations participating in the 31st Annual DTP.

- **Numbers/Selection:** From the 100 plus applications for the program DTP consulted its regional and local partners to select over 40 participants for the program. We agree criteria with our partners which includes capacity to participate, capacity to apply the training to their work, support of their organisation, and a gender/regional/issues balance. For this program we reserved up to 6 spaces for Timorese participants recommended by local partners. The intention in selection is that we strengthen not just the individual, but their organisations and movements. Regrettably we only managed 24 participants on this program and we extend our apologies to those that missed out.
- **Age and gender balance:** Overall this was a younger cohort of participants than in previous years. Some of the younger participants reflected on the value of being in a program with older and more experienced advocates. There was an even distribution of male/female participants (11 of each; 45.8% male and 45.8% female) and two identifying as non-binary (8.2%). 1 participant identified as having a disability (4.2%) and there were 10 participants (41.7%) who identified as Indigenous.
- **Regional Distribution:** Costs, visa and organisational issues skewed participation towards ASEAN participants. Costs of travel were very high post COVID – and this impacted South Asia and Pacific participation in the program. DTP usually tries to find support for travel costs at least for Pacific and South Asia participants, but was unable to do so this time.
- **Range of Human Rights Issues:** It is a strength of this program that it draws participants working on such a wide range of human rights issues including disability, LGBTQIA+, Indigenous peoples rights, self-determination, gender-based violence, poverty and the environment being just some of them. There was a range of prior knowledge of international human rights standards and the UN system among the participants – and for some it was their first introduction. The UDHR is the foundational document for the international human rights treaties developed subsequently by women’s, migrant, disability and other



movements, and the program enables participants to see the connection to human rights between their causes.

- **Travel Logistics:** DTP was directly responsible for organising the travel for most of the participants for this program. This stretched DTP's capacity, especially post-pandemic. The need for visas, and transit accommodation were complicating factors. DTP would like to acknowledge with great appreciation the support provided by MFA in making travel bookings. DTP will need to review its processes as part of the preparations for the next program.

8.4 Program Content and Curriculum

Human Rights Standards, Principal and mechanism was the most useful sessions of the training because without having skills and knowledge on the standards, principal and mechanism may not be effective enough in your advocacy work.

- **Content range/depth.** This program aims to give a comprehensive introduction to international human rights laws, and to the UN system that has been developed over the last 75 years. It is committed to helping advocates see these standards and mechanisms as tools to be used in their advocacy strategies for rights and justice. The sources of content and human rights knowledge have been growing, but the time availability of advocates has been shrinking, which makes the balance of depth and range a constant challenge. The emphasis on peer-to-peer learning is a valuable part of the process of network building.
- **Length of Program.** This is an intensive two week program – with 10 days of training, divided into 40 x 1.5 hour sessions. It has been shortened from the previous 3-week program, and there is value in continuing to review the length of the program.
- **Timorese/International content/experience.** This program drew more than others on the context and history of Timor, and the knowledge and experience of Timorese advocates. This gave the program the richness of lived experience, but there could have been more emphasis on the development of the international law of human rights and how it has evolved.
- **Field visits.** The field visits to learn the history of Timor's struggle and to engage with survivors and the families of victims were an important part of the program, enabling the sharing of practical lessons. All of the international participants were moved and inspired.
- **Program Materials:** DTP provides participants with a hard/soft copy Manual. This is supplemented by PPTs and extra resources from the guest trainers. All are provided to participants in soft copy at the end of the program. There is a need to review the materials/program manual.

8.5 Partnerships:

- **Regional.** DTP works with regional partners in the human rights, Indigenous peoples and migrant workers movements. Its aim is to use this program to help support and build the capacity of these, and other, movements for rights. DTP's hope is that its partners see this program as a valuable opportunity to invest in their current and future leaders, and to help connect their various different causes and member organisations.
- **Timor.** DTP has worked over many years with JSMP, which provides on the ground logistical and other support, including advice and engagement with civil society leaders in Timor. This year DTP added the Human Rights Centre (HRC) at UNTL as a partner, and UNTL HRC staff were both facilitators and participants in the program. The inclusion of child rights and a child rights expert in the program was agreed to assist the HRC in the development of its work on child rights.



8.6 Funding:

- The program was supported with funding from DFAT, National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the President of Timor-Leste's office and DTP's individual supporters. DTP records its appreciation to all. Agreed co-funding from the European Union did not materialise in the end.
- Unlike previous programs, DTP was not able to raise funds through participant fees.
- DTP did not manage to secure additional funding support for travel costs, and this impacted on participation.

8.7 Disability:

- DTP is committed to promoting the rights of persons with disability and the inclusion of persons with a disability in its programs.
- DTP wanted to accept two international applicants who had identified their disability in the application process, but in the end it was unable to include them for the following reasons:
 - Lack of assurance about the suitability/access of venues and accommodation in Timor.
 - Lack of assurance of logistical support from local disability peoples organisations (DPOs) in Timor – due to limited DTP capacity to connect and follow-up with local DPOs.
 - Funding capacity for the individuals from the Pacific and South Asia – including the need to find an additional fare and costs for a support person.
- DTP included a session on the CRPD in the program and was honoured that it was led by a DTP alumnus who now works with the President's Office as an advisor on social inclusion, but DTP received some feedback it should have included local DPOs in delivery of the session.
- DTP reached out to the Australian Embassy for advice and support recognising the commitment and support Australia has provided on this critical human rights issue for Timor.

8.8 Program Impact and Follow-Up:

- The program was positively evaluated by the participants during the program and in end-of training evaluations.
- Participants established a WhatsApp group that continues to be active in sharing information months after the program.
- Most participants said that they planned to share what they had learnt with their organisations and networks after the program.
- Impacts on the participants and their work can only be assessed over time, and through follow-up surveys and engagement, and importantly through feedback from partner organisations.

- DTP is continuing to follow-up with some participants based on their needs and requests.

I do have plans to share what I have learned with my organisation through a skill share with session. I also have plans to share my knowledge and skills with the Fiji CSOs I work with, I now have friends from other countries who I can share ideas with and support in the cause of human rights.



Annex I: List of Participants

Country	Name	Organisation
Australia/Fiji	Aman Ravindra-Singh	Human Rights Lawyer
Australia/Myanmar	Anna Thimyo	CRPH/NUG Support Group (Australia)
Australia/Myanmar	Naung	
Cambodia	Munny Thuon	Cord International UK
Cambodia	Sovanrith Noun	The Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
Fiji	Milika Ligabalavu	Citizens' Constitutional Forum
India	MC Meetei	Manipur International Youth Centre (MIYC)
Indonesia/Papua	Rudi Kogoya	Jakarta Legal Aid Institute
Indonesia/Papua	Rudolf John Meki Sawaki	PRISMA Papua
Malaysia/Bangladesh	Abu Sayed Piquel	North South Initiative (NSI)
Myanmar/Thailand/Bangladesh	Nyo Mar Than	Minority Affairs Institute
Myanmar/Thailand/Bangladesh	Khaing PwintZin	Equality Myanmar Institute
Philippines/Indonesia	Bertha Samponu	International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS) Pax Romana
Philippines	Alexandra Chua	Liyang Network
Philippines	Jane Elizabeth Nabong	Indigenous Peoples Movement for Self-Determination and Liberation
Philippines	Myrasol Dela Cruz	Asia Pacific Network of Environment Defenders (APNED)
Sri Lanka	Kobinath Jayaraman	Civil AMAYAM (Batticaloa)
Thailand	Thanida Piyachot	Human Rights and Development Foundation
Thailand	Veerawat Kamkom	Human Rights and Development Foundation
Timor-Leste	Belizia Maria Mesquita Dias	Juventude ba Dezenvolvimentu Nasional
Timor-Leste	Crispim Gomes de Jesus	Many Hands One Nation
Timor-Leste	Francelino dos Santos Serra	UNTL- Human Rights Centre
Timor-Leste	Joanita Antonita Pinto	Feminist Revolutionary (FERA)
Timor-Leste	Norberta Vicente Soares da Cruz	Community Based Rehabilitation Network Timor-Leste



**DTP 31st Annual Human Rights & Peoples'
Diplomacy Training Program**
**With Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
(FORUM-ASIA), Pacific Islands Association of NGOs
(PIANGO), Judicial System Monitoring Program (JSMP), The
Human Rights Centre of the National University of Timor-
Leste (HRC-UNTL)**

Timor-Leste
21 August – 1 September 2023

PROGRAM SCHEDULE FINAL

Week 1	August 21 – Monday	August 22 – Tuesday	August 23 – Wednesday	August 24 – Thursday	August 25 – Friday	August 26 – Saturday
8.30 to 9.00	Welcome and Introductions: JSMP/UNTL-HRC/DTP	Recap & Participant Presentations	Recap & Participant Presentations	Recap & Participant Presentations	Special Session with President José Ramos-Horta, DTP Founder and Patron	9 – 10.30 - Visit to Tais Market 11.00 Depart JP II 11.30 Alola Foundation - Visit/talk/shop
Morning 1 9.00 to 10.30	Opening Ceremony – Welcome from Partners Ana Paula Marcal – JSMP Dr Maubere Lorosae da Silva Horta - HRC Keynote: HE. Aung Myo Min, Human Rights Minister(NUG) – UDHR @ 75 and Struggle for Democracy in Myanmar	UDHR @ 75 - Introduction to Human Rights – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Bill of Rights Aung Myo Min	OHCHR – Field Presences: The Role of Human Rights Advisors and UN Country Teams – UN Human Rights Advisor, Timor-Leste Claudia Diaz – OHCHR/UNDP	Reflection on CNC Visit/Santa Cruz International Solidarity / Sharing on Advocacy And Campaigning / Strategy and Tactics		
Facilitated	DTP/JSMP/UNTL-HRC	Elizabeth Lopes - HRC	Ruki Fernando	Elisabeth Lopes - HRC	HRC, JSMP, DTP	
Break 10:30-45					Café Martak	
Morning 2 10:45-12:30	Introductory Session: Introductions and Expectations, Course Outline and materials. Logistics Local Orientation	Human Rights and Development - Using Human Rights to promote Rights Based Policies Aung Myo Min	UN HRC - Using the Human Rights Special Procedures - Practical Exercise - Using Participant Issues/Cases	Engaging the UN – OHCHR / UN SPs Role Play Exercise	Arte Morris/President's Cabinet Travel back to JP II	
Facilitated	DTP/JSMP/UNTL-HRC	Elizabeth Lopes - HRC	Ruki Fernando	Elisabeth Lopes - HRC		
Lunch 12:30-1.40						
1.40 – 2.00		Participant Presentations	Participant Presentations	Participant Presentations	Participant Presentations	
Afternoon 1 2:00-3:30	Sharing on Timor-Leste's Struggle for Self-Determination and Human Rights in Timor-Leste Today Panel: - Mana Mica Barreto Soares - Mana Carmen da Cruz - Maun Joao Travolta - Maun Antero Bendito - Koko Valenti Pinto	An introduction to human rights in the UN System – Human Rights Treaties, The Human Rights Council, and The UN's Special Procedures	Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation - Guided Tour & Reflections on the Struggle for Independence -Building International Solidarity, Peace and Reconciliation - Hugo Fernandez - Casimiro Dos Santos - Renezio Sura Cerlias M. de Carvalho	Human Rights in Timor-Leste – Reflections on advocacy and SOGIE, GBV and other challenges Bella Galhos	CEDAW and Gender - Engaging the Treaty Bodies / Treaty Body Advocacy / Sharing Experience from Timor's Report to CEDAW Treaty Bodies – Practical Exercise - Berta Antonieta Tilman Pereira - Santana Soares - Judite Dias Ximenes	
Facilitated	Casimiro dos Santos/Jose Pereira - JSMP	Ruki Fernando	Jose Moniz - JSMP	JSMP/HRC – Elizabeth Lopes	Elisabeth Lopes - HRC	
Break 3:30-3:45						
Afternoon 2 3:45-5:30	Sharing of Participants Human Rights Issues – and Introduction to Human Rights Standards	Using the UN System and its Human Rights System - Human Rights Treaty Bodies and The UN's Special Procedures	CNC Panel – Timor-Leste's Struggle for Human Rights – Justice Visit to Santa Cruz Cemetery – Site of the Dili Massacre	The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders – 25 th Anniversary and the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders – Engaging and Lobbying Diplomats – Prep for JRH Visit	Reflection	
Facilitated	HRC / JSMP	Ruki Fernando	JSMP / Nov 12 Victims	Ruki Fernando		
	Diary Exercise	Diary Exercise	Diary Exercise	Diary Exercise	Diary Exercise	
Evening	Welcome Dinner	Night Out	Free Night	Cultural Night	Free Night	

WEEK 2	August 27 – Sunday	August 28 – Monday	August 29 – Tuesday	August 30 – Wednesday	August 31 – Thursday	September 1 – Friday
8:30 – 9:00am	Free day	Recap & Participant Presentations	Recap & Participant Presentations	Recap & Participant Presentations	Recap & Participant Presentations	Recap & Participant Presentations
Morning 1 9:00-10:30		Human Rights Quiz and Recap	Video Advocacy	The UN Convention the Rights of the Child – Key Concepts and Issues	Human Rights, the Environment and Climate Change – Engaging with and Using the Global Framework – New CRC General Comment	Bringing It All Together – Human Rights and the UN System
Trainer(s)		HRC/DTP	Prakkash - WITNESS	Noam Peleg	Noam Peleg / Joshua Cooper	Joshua Cooper
Break 10:30-45						
Morning 2 10:45-12:30		Defending the Defenders – Introduction to Basic Safety and Security for HRDs	Video Advocacy	Introduction to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Human Rights and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – Indigenous peoples in the UN System	UPR Role Play Preparations
Trainer(s)		Prakkash – WITNESS	Prakkash - WITNESS	Noam Peleg	Joshua Cooper	Joshua Cooper
Lunch 12:30-1.40						
1.40 – 2.00		Participant Presentations	Participant Presentations	Participant Presentations	Participant Presentations	Participant Presentations
Afternoon 1 2:00-3:30		Video Advocacy	Video Advocacy	Using CRC and CRPD in Rights Advocacy / Programming - Mrs Maria de Fatima Guterres	SDGs, The Climate Crisis and Human Rights – Bringing it All Together	UPR Role Play
Trainer(s)		Prakkash - WITNESS	Prakkash - WITNESS	Noam Peleg / Gaspar Afonso	Joshua Cooper	Joshua Cooper
Break 3:30-3:45						
Afternoon 2 3:45-5:30		Video Advocacy	Return to Dili	Building Skills in Peoples Diplomacy & Practical Exercise Nelson Santos	SDGs, The Climate Crisis and Human Rights – Bringing it All Together (continued)	Feedback and Evaluations Reflections on Human Rights Advocacy and Solidarity – Aderito Soares
Trainer(s)		Prakkash - WITNESS		DTP	Joshua Cooper	HRC/DTP
		Diary Exercise	Diary Exercise	Diary Exercise	Diary Exercise	Closing Ceremony with President Horta/JRH Residence
Evening	Film Night		Anniversary of Popular Vote for Independence / International Day for the Victims of Enforced Disappearances - HAK	Dinner out together at Ariea Branca		