



# DIPLOMACY TRAINING PROGRAM

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

## **34th Annual Regional Human Rights & Peoples' Diplomacy Training Program in partnership with GLOBAL CAMPUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, AIPP, FORUM- ASIA, MFA, PIANGO, JSMP, HRC-UNTL August 23 – September 6, 2026, Timor-Leste CONCEPT NOTE**

### **1. Summary**

This concept note outlines the purpose, rationale and background for the 34th Annual Regional Human Rights and Peoples' Diplomacy Training Program (Program). This unique program in Timor-Leste brings together human rights defenders from different human rights movements across Asia and the Pacific. It helps to strengthen and renew these movements by building the knowledge, skills and networks of human rights defenders (HRDs) in the Asia-Pacific region.

This annual human rights and peoples' diplomacy training program was first held in 1990 and is the longest running human rights capacity building course in the Asia-Pacific region. It is being held in Timor-Leste at the invitation of DTP's Patron and Founder, and Nobel Peace Laureate President José Ramos-Horta. **In 2025 over 700 Expressions of Interest and 170 applications for the program were received – illustrating the demand and need for this training.**

This Program, held in the partnership with the Global Campus of Human Rights together with DTP's regional partners Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), the Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO), Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) and Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), is recognised as the key foundational human rights course for human rights movements across Asia and the Pacific. The host partners are the Justice System Monitoring Project (JSMP) and the Human Rights Centre at the National University of Timor Leste.

In a context of a rapidly changing world and region, the voices of civil society calling for the respect and implementation of human rights is becoming ever more critical. Strengthening these voices and movements is a lasting investment in promoting shared values of human rights and dignity, and building regional networks of solidarity and collaboration.

The 34th Annual Program will bring together 25-30 Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)/community advocates from Timor-Leste, Asia and the Pacific, linking individuals working across diverse and contemporary human rights concerns. These concerns include shrinking civil society space, violence against women, the rule of law, land-grabbing and forced displacements, climate change, transitional justice, religious intolerance, SOGI rights, Indigenous peoples, migrant workers, persons with disabilities, "disappearances" and extra-judicial executions.

Expert resource people, including DTP's Founder and Patron, President José Ramos-Horta, leading academics and practitioners, including DTP alumni, will lead sessions on human rights and peoples' diplomacy in today's environment. There will be sessions on international human rights standards and mechanisms and approaches to strategic human rights advocacy – and staying safe. Participants will learn from the experiences of Timor-Leste and from each other.

Participants will join the DTP network of 4000 plus DTP alumni across over 90 countries. They will be supported by DTP's partners to apply the training in their work for human rights, building on 35 years of work to strengthen the human rights movement at the national and regional level across the Asia-Pacific.

## **2. Location, Purpose and Context and**

### **2.1 Program Location – Timor-Leste**

Timor-Leste is a strategic location for this program. The newest member of ASEAN, Timor-Leste is an inspirational example of success for those working for human rights, democracy and peace. Its commitment to human rights and democracy stand out in a region of increasing authoritarianism. Its history of engaging the multilateral system, building solidarity, and nurturing peace after conflict is inspirational. Its location and identity as both an Asian and Pacific country makes it an ideal place to bring human rights defenders from the two regions together to learn, share and build networks. Hosting this program enables participants to learn from the lived experience of the Timorese and helps to strengthen human rights in Timor-Leste.

### **2.2 Program Purpose**

The purpose of this program is to enhance the effectiveness of HRDs and movements working to promote and protect human rights across the Asia-Pacific region through building the knowledge, skills and networks of carefully selected participants.

This program is part of a longer-term strategy among the program partners and participating organisations, of strengthening human rights movements, building collaboration and investing in the individuals who can make a difference for human rights.

### **2.3 Background and Context – DTP’s Theory of Change**

DTP’s theory of change recognises the critical role of civil society in the promotion, defence and realisation of human rights – as shared values and legal norms relevant to policy and practice. Human rights, peace, democracy and sustainable development rely on informed and engaged civil society organisations and advocates.

Human rights movements and strong civil society organisations (CSOs) are becoming more important in an unstable world of great power rivalry, retreat from accepted legal norms and growing authoritarianism that feeds on targeting of minorities and marginalised communities.

Sustainable development and effective action on climate change requires the informed participation of individuals and communities. There is a need to build the confidence of advocates to engage with officials, to find avenues for dialogue to address human rights and development challenges. Where there is democratic space, there is a need to build the knowledge and skills to enable effective participation. Advocates can use agreed human rights standards as a basis for dialogue and peaceful resolution of differences. Where democratic space is limited, skills in advocacy become vital and international solidarity and engagement becomes more important.

- **The Regional Context – Asia and the Pacific**

In each country, individuals and movements are working to promote shared values of human dignity and human rights, often in very difficult circumstances. Despite declining civic space, every country in the region has ratified at least two international human rights treaties, and every country participates in the UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Each country reports on its progress in achieving the SDGs.

Across the region human rights defenders work on a diverse range of urgent and long-term human rights challenges, including poverty, inequality and discrimination, climate change impacts, migration, forced evictions, political killings, torture and arbitrary detention. Mining, forestry, dams and plantations have been linked with human rights violations – including when community protests

are suppressed. Land grabbing is associated with political corruption. Environmental defenders, those on the frontline of climate change, are targeted and at risk. Challenges of impunity, justice and reconciliation are relevant to societies experiencing conflict and building peace following conflict.

Human rights standards, the SDGs and other international agreements, provide a basis for civil society and governments to engage with each other, providing a framework for both. Human rights connect civil society work across borders.

- **The National Context – Timor-Leste**

DTP has long connections with Timor-Leste, through its Founder and Patron, José Ramos-Horta and its many alumni in government and civil society. International advocacy, appealing to shared values of human dignity, and using the mechanisms of the UN played a significant role in the enabling the Timorese to exercise their right to self-determination. Timor-Leste has ratified more core human rights treaties than most countries yet implementing these standards is challenging.

Timor-Leste provides a good setting for sharing knowledge and experience about human rights, development and international solidarity, especially as the newest member of ASEAN. Timor-Leste has much to share – and in this sharing of its history and achievements, its own commitments to human rights in Timor-Leste are renewed and strengthened.

### **3. Program Description**

#### **3.1 Program Objective**

- To build the effectiveness and networks of human rights defenders and movements in Timor-Leste and the Asia-Pacific region.

#### **3.2 Expected Outcomes**

- 25-30 civil society advocates develop knowledge, skills, strategies and confidence to engage effectively with government and others to address human rights issues
- Participants will establish their own network of support using social media and will join DTP's networks of 3500 plus alumni
- Networks between CSOs across the region are strengthened to support more effective regional networking and experience sharing in advocacy on human rights

#### **3.3 Key Indicators**

At the conclusion of the program participants will:

- positively evaluate the training through qualitative and quantitative end of training evaluation questionnaires and post training surveys
- return to their organisations/communities to work for human rights – positive feedback from their organisations about the impact of training
- be able to engage with the UN processes as part of their advocacy strategies for human rights
- provide feedback, through the newsletters, social media and /or surveys on applied advocacy experiences.

#### **3.4 Main activities**

- An intensive residential program to be held in August-September in Timor-Leste
- Simulated and real-life exercises implementing program content, lobbying skills
- Dialogues with government officials/diplomats
- Development, distribution and use of Training Manual and other resource materials
- Establishment of network among participants, to apply the knowledge, skills and networks developed during the program, participants join wider network
- Follow-up and support through the internet and E-Newsletter.

#### **3.5 Key target beneficiaries**

The immediate beneficiaries are advocates in civil society organisations working for vulnerable groups and populations on human rights issues in Timor-Leste and the Asia-Pacific region.

#### Key Selection Criteria:

- Involvement with NGOs/CSOs, working with and for peoples and communities
- Capacity to apply the training to their work and organisation following the program
- Support of their organisation to participate in the training and references
- Gender balance within the program overall
- Regional balance with the aim of seeking participants from across the Asia Pacific region, with a minimum of 6 places reserved for participants from Timor-Leste.

The main beneficiaries of this project will be the individuals and communities served by the participants and currently experiencing denial of their rights, discrimination and marginalisation.

#### **4. Program Dates and Location - 23 August- 6 September,**

The face to face training program will be conducted from 23 August- 6 September over three locations in and around Dili Timor-Leste. These dates coincide with the anniversary of Timor-Leste's vote for independence in August 1999. An online pre-session for the participants will be held before the program. An online post-training reflection session will also be organised.

#### **5. Monitoring and Evaluation**

DTP and its partners have rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes. Programs build on previous program evaluations and recommendations. A training needs analysis is conducted with participants before the program and forms the basis for the program's continuous M&E. Daily evaluation and continuous improvement processes are implemented during the program. A final anonymous program evaluation is completed by all participants along with an oral feedback session. An end of program review / reflection is held with partners, and key trainers. A draft program report, which includes recommendations for future training is written and distributed to partners, trainers and participants for comment and advice prior to publication. A 12-month survey is conducted to supplement the information on implementation of training which is captured through the E-News and social media networks established.

#### **6. Cross-Cutting Issues – Gender and Disability**

Human rights provide the overall framework for the program. A human rights-based approach to development underpins the program, enabling participants to use human rights standards as a lens for assessing human rights challenges and priorities. A specific focus is given to gender and disability. Program trainers and sessions integrate a gender perspective, and gender balance is a consideration in selection of participants and trainers.

#### **7. Risks and Sustainability**

DTP has an established risk assessment, monitoring and management framework and a proven track record of successful program delivery in complex environments across Asia and the Pacific. The major risks to the successful implementation of this project include the non-availability of key trainers, a major regional climate or health event and political instability. DTP addresses the challenge of sustainability with its partners and through the careful selection of participants. Participants are selected based on the evidence and track record of commitment to working on issues of human rights, development and justice. Participants work with known CSOs that will support the participants in the application of the knowledge and skills to their work. DTP maintains contact with participants following the training and knows from experience and evaluations that most participants go on to give many years of service to human rights causes.

## Appendix 1: About the Diplomacy Training Program and Program Partners

**GLOBAL CAMPUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS** is an inter-disciplinary centre of excellence supported by the EU. They strive to promote human rights and democratisation through higher education, specialised training programmes, research and outreach. They operate worldwide through our broad network of member universities - <https://gchumanrights.org/>

The program will be developed and implemented in partnership with local partner **Judicial System Monitoring Program (JSMP)**. The Judicial System Monitoring Programme (JSMP) is a Timorese led not-for-profit organisation working to improve the judicial and legislative systems in Timor-Leste. JSMP's mission is to advance and protect democracy, law, justice and human rights through court monitoring, legal education and advocacy. JSMP also conducts important legal research, analysis and law reform activities - [www.jsmp.tl](http://www.jsmp.tl)

**UNTL – HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE** was established in 2019. The Centre is engaged in training, international networking and research activities, and is part of the Global Campus of Human Rights - <https://www.facebook.com/UNTL.HumanRightsCentre/>

**DTP** is an independent award winning NGO that has been developing and delivering education in human rights and advocacy in the Asia Pacific region and Indigenous Australia since 1990. In 2019 DTP received the 2019 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award. DTP is affiliated with the Faculty of Law and Justice, UNSW, Sydney, Australia. DTP is a registered charity in Australia and complies with the regulatory regimes for Australian development agencies and charities – <https://dtp.org.au/>

**PIANGO** is the major regional network of NGOs in the Pacific with membership in 24 Countries and territories of the Pacific Islands. For over 25 years, PIANGO has served the Pacific through strengthening and building the capacity of the civil society sector – [www.piango.org](http://www.piango.org)

**FORUM-ASIA** works to promote and protect human rights, including the right to development, through collaboration and cooperation among human rights organisations and defenders in Asia and beyond. FORUM-ASIA is committed to building a peaceful, just, equitable and ecologically sustainable community of peoples and societies in Asia, where all human rights of all individuals, groups and peoples – in particular, the poor, marginalised and discriminated – are fully respected and realised in accordance with internationally accepted human rights norms and standards - [www.forum-asia.org](http://www.forum-asia.org)

**ASIA INDIGENOUS PEOPLES PACT (AIPP)** is a regional organisation committed to the cause of promoting and defending Indigenous Peoples' rights and human rights and articulating issues of relevance to Indigenous peoples.

**MIGRANT FORUM IN ASIA (MFA)** MFA is a regional network of NGOs, associations and trade unions of migrant workers, and individual advocates in Asia who are committed to protect and promote the rights and welfare of migrant workers. It is guided by a vision of an alternative world system based on respect for human rights and dignity, social justice, and gender equity, particularly for migrant workers.

### Program Contact Information:

More information about DTP and its work is available at [dtp.org.au](http://dtp.org.au) or on request from [dtp@unsw.edu.au](mailto:dtp@unsw.edu.au) or contact:

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**Appendix 2: The Diplomacy Training Program's Theory of Change**

