

## **Cooperative University Programs between the University of Wisconsin and East Timor.**

Background: In 2001, the Madison City Council voted to make Ainaro the first East Timorese sister city of any in the US. In May 2002, the former Portuguese colony of East Timor became the world's newest nation, after overcoming 24 years of Indonesian military occupation that claimed the lives of some 200,000 East Timorese. The UN estimates about 70% of East Timor's and 95% of Ainaro's infrastructure was largely destroyed in September 1999 by the departing Indonesian militia. In June 2002, members of a Madison delegation visited the main library of the National University of East Timor in Dili to which Madison shipped 50 boxes of textbooks. We met with student leaders, deans, department chairs, and Chancellor Benjamin Corte Real. We also met with Dr. Dan Murphy, director of the Bairo Pite clinic in Dili<sup>1</sup>. We made contacts with the East Timor government and had conversations with the Ministers of Environment and Investment, Health, Agriculture, and Education and various community leaders. To Ainaro we brought tools, medicine and physicians. We funded projects on community building including adult literacy, scholarships for orphan children, sewing and weaving cooperatives, agriculture and more<sup>2</sup>.

**Program Plans:** To establish and cultivate, with input of UW students, faculty and the Madison community, an interdisciplinary course/program on East Timor studies that will address nation and community building and healing, explore the history and special needs of the East Timor people, and alert concerned participants within and without academe to the larger issues of economic and social justice, human rights, international law, geopolitics, health care, sustainable development, and the links between linguistics, culture and biodiversity. We can offer valuable experience to students through fundraising activities and public relations and projects in economic development, infrastructure planning, and logistics. Engineering students could apply the general system science framework for modeling, simulation and optimization to various problems in economy building, building stable electric power systems, roads and waterworks, or repairing Ainaro's radio station. Students in the arts and humanities could benefit from cultural exchanges of music and art. Other subjects of scholastic pursuit would include

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Murphy last visited Madison in June 2001 and addressed 150 UW medical students.

<sup>2</sup> see <http://www.aideasttimor.org> and <http://bairopiteclinic.tripod.com> for further information.

ethno-pharmacology, land tenure issues, education policy, and the rich languages of East Timor. There would also be the unique challenge in the realm of psychology to help rehabilitate a people coping with the trauma of war atrocities. The Sister University project is a new dimension to a long history of Madison – East Timor solidarity work and may serve as a novel adventure in education and development.

**Outreach mission statement:** What we can accomplish depends on the resources we have. But even with a small group, any of the above topics could be used as a starting point for a term project. Internships for students can be arranged through the East Timor Action Network (ETAN) national field office in Madison. There is the medical student exchange program through the UW Office of International Health. Another international health project involves building distance learning and other training programs for East Timorese health workers (such as through the Bairo Pite clinic). We could also work with other East Timor Studies programs at universities in the U.S and abroad. Outreach to K-12 is quite possible: Ainaro leaders received many requests from children for pen-pals in Madison. We want to encourage vocational-tech exchanges, distance learning from UW to East Timor and vice versa, and ideally, scholarships for Timorese students to study in Madison<sup>3</sup>. Biodiversity and botany survey teams could work closely with the University of Hawaii, and institutions in Australia, the Netherlands (Leiden University), Indonesia, and Portugal. Scientific studies are sorely lacking for Timor, whose alpine mountains create diverse ecosystems, habitats and micro-climates that enhance biodiversity, as do its coral reefs. The potential economic value in studying species and their conservation biology is enormous from the standpoint of medicine, pharmacy, and agriculture. To study and compare the biota and other aspects of Timor with those of other regions is to enhance understanding of important global and local issues.

**Timeline:** Offer 2 one-semester courses beginning Jan. '03; active procurement for other funds by 2<sup>nd</sup> semester. **Place:** on-campus during regular semesters, with possible summer projects in East Timor.

**Personnel :** 1) Michael Iltis, lecturer/coordinator, 2) project assistant (computer support), 3) financial specialist, 4) prep course instructor, 5) summer program coordinator, 6) ad hoc program specialists<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>3</sup> only if additional funding is available through Fulbright Scholarships and other sources.

<sup>4</sup> experts in systems ecology or field biology, agriculture, psychology, education, distance learning and medicine or public health.