

UNESCO

Timor-Leste Newsletter



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Promoting Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems as a platform for Sustainable Development

The dual celebrations of World Environment Day and World Oceans Day in the month of June provided us with an excellent opportunity to reflect on our society's impact on the natural environment. As a nation, Timor-Leste is bestowed with biodiversity-rich terrestrial and marine ecosystems. Besides constituting an important habitat for a variety of species, including four globally threatened birds, Timor-Leste's ecosystems also provide crucial services to its citizens, such as the provision of water, food, and livelihood opportunities.



The natural environment also plays an important role in the Timorese cosmology and therefore in defining the Timorese identity. However, rapid societal change and unsustainable use of natural resources in Timor-Leste, as in the rest of the world, are leading to increasing environmental destruction. To turn the tide, we need to develop better scientific understanding and increased awareness of the functions and benefits of our natural environment. We also need to urgently review our roles as resource users and shift to thinking of ourselves as resource custodians. UNESCO's *Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme* and the *Local and Indigenous Knowledge (LINKS) Programme*, both launched in Timor-Leste during the month of June, are programmes that will support this shift in thinking. They call for a more balanced approach between development and conservation based on respect for local and indigenous knowledge systems and provide us guidance in fulfilling our roles as custodians of Timor-Leste's rich and unique natural environment.

Kirsty Sword Gusmão, Chair, National Commission for UNESCO, Timor-Leste

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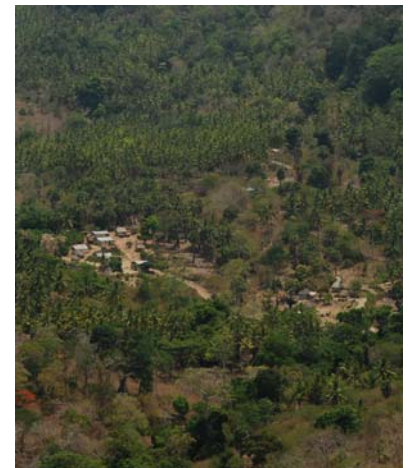
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IN THIS ISSUE:

- *Man and the Biosphere*
- *Indigenous Knowledge*
- *Education for All*
- *Supporting Timorese Media*
- *Protecting the Environment*
- *Visit to the Republic of Korea*

What are UNESCO Biosphere Reserves?

Biosphere reserves are 'living laboratories for sustainable development' and represent learning centers for environmental and human adaptability. Going one step further from mere environmental protection, the Man and Biosphere Programme aims to reconcile conservation with the development needs of the people living in these areas, through culturally appropriate and scientifically sound initiatives. The biosphere reserves fulfill three main functions: conservation, development and logistic support (education, research and monitoring for conservation and sustainable development), in order to promote and demonstrate a balanced relationship between people and nature. The biosphere reserves aim to establish a participatory management system where all related stakeholders are involved in defining and implementing management strategies that ensure the sustainable use of the natural resources. Through the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and regional networks such as the SouthEast Asia BR Network (SeaBRnet), the MAB programme promotes sharing experiences and lessons learnt of best practices on topics such as scientific research and monitoring, socio-economic development, indigenous and local communities' participation, and policy development. The MAB programme provides a unique framework for the management of protected areas in Timor-Leste by integrating conservation with the socio-economic development needs of local communities.



Indigenous Knowledge, a Platform for Development

Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO and the Haburas Foundation hosted a two-day National Workshop titled "Indigenous Knowledge, an Asset for Development" on 7-8 June 2011 at the Hak Meeting Room in Dili.

For the first time in Timor-Leste, a wide range of stakeholders gathered together to share information on and to discuss traditional ecological knowledge from various perspectives: land management, nature conservation, cultural practices and natural resource management.



Some of the presenters and participants at the workshop

Opened by Ms. Kirsty Sword-Gusmao, the Chairperson of Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO and Mr. Demetrio do Amaral de Carvalho, the Director of Haburas Foundation, the workshop was attended by approximately 50 participants representing government officials, international and local NGOs, UN agencies, educational institutions, experts, and community leaders.

The workshop programme included thirteen presentations. The discussions that followed the presentations addressed on the following issues:

- The benefits of using indigenous knowledge for sustainable development
- The challenges of maintaining indigenous knowledge in the context of rapid societal changes
- Steps needed to preserve and promote indigenous knowledge in Timor-Leste
- Steps to ensure the integration of indigenous knowledge in the national development.

Following the workshop, the Haburas Foundation will prepare papers for a book publication resulting from papers presented. The book will be a joint publication between Haburas Foundation, Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO, and UNESCO Regional Science Bureau Jakarta. This publication will be written in Tetum and is expected to be available for dissemination by the end of year 2011.

Recommendations and action plans will be prepared by Haburas Foundation, in close consultation with UNESCO. For UNESCO, this workshop is an important first step in its efforts to strengthen and revitalize traditional ecological knowledge in Timor-Leste and at the same time to develop a strategy and an action plan for implementing activities under UNESCO's intersectoral programmes on Small Island Development States (SIDS) and Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) for the biennia 2010-2011 and 2012-2013.

The SIDS Platform and the LINKS Programme

The Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) platform and Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) programme are an interlink approach to foster interdisciplinary and intersectoral activities that facilitate dialogue between science and policy, and generate usable (rather than merely "useful") context-specific scientific knowledge for society and decision makers.

These programmes are managed by Sciences for Society (SCS) Unit of UNESCO Regional Science Bureau in Jakarta. Among the unit's main areas of action are: (1) Contributing to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Sustainable Development of SIDS, as well as other development objectives such as the Millennium Development Goals, (2) Mobilizing endogenous capacities for sustainable natural resource use and management, including local and indigenous knowledge, skills and worldviews, and their synergies with science, (3) Supporting rural and indigenous communities in their efforts to cope with the interlinked processes of environmental, socio-economic and cultural changes, (4) Building resilience in the face of climate change and variability, while enhancing natural disaster prevention and preparedness, (5) Heightening collaboration and solidarity among vulnerable and isolated communities, across generations (including marginalized youth), and between scientists/decision-makers and society at large.

The work of the SCS unit is interdisciplinary, cutting across the Organization's programme sectors, allowing it to interact with other initiatives on specific themes, such as, climate change, disaster preparedness and education for sustainable development. Some of SCS Unit's activities in Timor-Leste include Strengthening and revitalizing traditional ecological knowledge in Timor-Leste, Development of extracurricular booklets and materials on environmental issues based on traditional ecological knowledge, as support tools for Community Learning Centers (CLCs) in Timor-Leste, and Strengthening Resilience of Coastal and Small Island Communities Towards Hydro-Meteorological Hazards and Climate Change Impacts (StResCom).

For more information, please contact Ms. Lisa Hiwasaki, Programme Specialist for SCS at l.hiwasaki@unesco.org

Promoting Media Freedom in Timor-Leste

UNESCO promotes freedom of expression and freedom of the press as a basic human right, through lobbying and monitoring activities. It highlights media independence and pluralism as fundamental to the process of democracy by providing advisory services on media legislation and by making governments, parliamentarians and other decision-makers aware of the need to guarantee free expression. Another major UNESCO activity in this field includes the proclamation in 1993 by the United Nations General Assembly of a World Press Freedom Day to be celebrated on May 3.

To mark this year's World Press Freedom Day in Timor-Leste, UNESCO in collaboration with the Timor-Leste Media Development Centre (TLMDC) and Timor-Leste's media associations organized a seminar in Dili with as theme "Press Freedom and Empowerment of People".

The seminar, which was attended by 300 participants, was opened by His Excellency Zacarias Albano da Costa, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was also a former radio journalist. In his key-note speech, Zacarias da Costa discussed the topic of Government Transparency and Media. He expressed his hope that journalists in Timor-Leste would continue to abide by the principles of professionalism and ethics.

Other key-note speakers at the event included Journalists, media observers, and representatives from the civil society. Ms. Suzana Cardoso, President of The Timor-Leste Photographers Association (TiLPA) underlined in her presentation the importance for all Timorese journalists to focus on unity as well as improve the quality of journalism as a positive contribution to democratization process.



Key-note speakers addressing the audience at the conference

Mr. Hugo Fernandes from the Asia Foundation, who was invited as the representative from civil society organizations, delivered a presentation with as topic "Critical Analysis of the Role of Media in Timor-Leste". The presentation elaborated on the issue that the majority of the media in Timor-Leste is too much focused on financial benefits rather than on improving the quality of contents. The print media gives often more space to advertisement and information from the internet than articles written by journalists.

The presentation further called on the government to create a healthier environment for journalists and media through media management training, collaboration with other countries such as Indonesia, Portugal, and Australia. The presentation also underlined the importance for journalist associations to discuss the press law and the establishment of a Press Council.

After the closure of the seminar, a photo exhibition organized by TiLPA showing the work of Timorese photographers was inaugurated. In the afternoon, the participants of the event commemorated the courage of journalists who died in the line of duty through a march from the press freedom monument near the Dili Convention Center (DCC) towards the Bekora church, where another monument was built to honor the 'Financial Times' journalist, Sander Thoenes, who was killed in that location in 1999, when covering the referendum. Gil da Silva, the Director of CJIT told that Sander's death is a permanent reminder for all Timorese journalists to remain dedicated to their role in developing and supporting democratic processes in Timor-Leste.

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Social and Human Sciences in Timor-Leste

The mission of the social and human sciences (SHS), one of UNESCO's five major sectors, is to advance knowledge, standards and intellectual cooperation in order to facilitate social transformations conducive to the universal values of justice, freedom and human dignity. As such, the newly established SHS unit at the UNESCO Cluster Office in Jakarta works to encourage policy research in the social sciences and encourage dialogue between researchers, decision-makers and those concerned with social and economic development in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Timor-Leste. The unit aims to promote social policies that uphold peace, human rights, and democratic governance within the Asia-Pacific region, with priority programmes in youth participation in societal and political changes, social dimensions of global environmental changes, women's access to justice, and migrants' rights. Currently, SHS Unit is implementing a project that aims to strengthen Timorese journalists' capacities on reporting on human rights. This project addresses two gaps in training of journalists in general, and the reporting on human rights and access to training material in particular. This activity will provide as such journalists with new skills. It will also contribute to greater public awareness, and improve the knowledge and capacity of rights holders to claim their rights. This project includes a training, elaboration of handbook on human rights reporting, and planning the integration of human rights courses in the curricula.

For more information, please contact Mr. Charaf Ahmimed, Programme Specialist for SHS at c.ahmimed@unesco.org

Achieving “Education for All” Goals in Timor-Leste

During the Second Quarter of 2011, UNESCO continued to implement the Education for All (EFA) project named “Capacity Development for Education for All in Timor-Leste (CapEFA-TL),” which was launched on November 2010 aimed at improving the capacity of the Ministry of Education, through its National Directorate for Recurrent Education (NDRE) to meet its EFA goals, particularly to increase adult literacy and to promote learning and life skills for the youths and adults.

During the last three months, UNESCO implemented three training activities in the areas of equivalency education, community learning centres and pedagogy of adult learning, which benefited more than 120 officers and staff members of the NDRE. The capacity building process started with a two-day “Study Visit Orientation on Equivalency Education and the Community Learning Centres,” which provided 30 participants with an opportunity to learn more about the culture and education systems of a number of Asian countries that NDRE policy actors and technical staff were planning to visit. The study visits aimed at broaden the international perspective of NDRE staff in managing equivalency education and overseeing the UNESCO-initiated Community Learning Centres, including developing a detailed observation plan. In the beginning of May, 75 officers and staff of NDRE attended and completed a 3-day Capacity Development Workshop on Equivalency Education, which aimed at orienting the participants on regional guidelines on equivalency education in order to rationalize the programme’s implementation in Timor-Leste. The third training activity, a Training of Trainers on the Pedagogy for Adult Learning was conducted in the beginning of June for 14 trainers on equivalency education. The training aimed at strengthening trainers’ stock of knowledge on the theories and practices of teaching adults, including applications in classroom teaching and developing their respective teaching portfolio for adult teaching and learning. To achieve the cascading effects, the graduates of the TOT will train teachers on the pedagogy for adult learning.

After the completion of the three training programmes, a series of study visits was organized for NDRE policy-makers and technical staff to a number of Asian countries, including the Republic of the Philippines (24-30 April); the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal (13 -17 June); and the Kingdom of Thailand (20 –24 June). The study visits aimed at providing the NDRE staff with an opportunity to learn from best practices in implementing equivalency education and managing Community Learning Centres. The models used by other countries in both equivalency education and Community Learning Centres provide learning examples that can be adapted to models that are appropriate and applicable in Timor-Leste. In July 2011 the study visits will continue to Indonesia and Bangladesh. After the study visits are finalized, the results and experiences will be discussed and disseminated to a broader recurrent education audience, composed of district and sub-district coordinators in a two-day workshop on “Lessons Learned from the Study Visits in Five Countries”. The workshop aims at developing a comprehensive plan of action that could be implemented by NDRE to improve the current management and implementation of equivalency education and Community Learning Centres.

Meanwhile, UNESCO will continue to step up its commitment and engagement in the field of Non-formal Education in Timor-Leste. Aside from the current interventions, a new array of additional interventions are planned in order to improve NDRE’s leadership in planning, implementing and monitoring and evaluating equivalency education and its National Literacy Programmes including continuing livelihood projects in the three UNESCO-initiated Community Learning Centres.



The NDRE team composed of policy-makers and technical staff during the visit to the Philippines

The NDRE team discussing the Interactive Computer Learning modules with their counterparts from the Philippines during the visit



The NDRE officials trying the Radio-on-Air Alternative Learning System Programme in the Philippines.



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Protecting Timor-Leste's Natural Environment

As a nation, Timor-Leste is been bestowed with a rich and diverse biological diversity. Much of Timor-Leste's national wealth lies in its rich natural resources, including terrestrial and marine ecosystems. These resources are however fragile and need to be carefully managed in order that they can support the development of future generations. Despite the strong commitment of Timor-Leste in protecting its natural environment, there are increasing conflicts between the conservation agenda and the need for socio-economic development.

As part of its strategy to protect the natural environment, Timor-Leste has established a network of protected areas, including the National Park Nino Konis Santana. While the protected areas' primary function is to maintain Timor-Leste's biodiversity and ecosystems and to provide environmental services to surrounding communities, they often lack the core function of bridging ecological needs and economic and development needs.

As a model, UNESCO Biosphere Reserves provide a critical link between the ecology and the economy, and can thus help Timor-Leste in addressing both environmental protection and poverty alleviation needs. Applying the Biosphere Reserve Model to the management of Protected Areas in Timor-Leste can therefore serve as a framework to reinforce the path towards sustainable development.



Biosphere reserves are sites established by UNESCO Member States and recognized under the organization's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme to promote sustainable development based on local community efforts and sound science. As places that seek to reconcile conservation of biological and cultural diversity and economic and social development through partnerships between people and nature, they are ideal to test and demonstrate innovative approaches to sustainable development from local to international scales.

With as aim to disseminate the Biosphere Reserve concept to a broad range of stakeholders involved in environmental protection and sustainable development in Timor-Leste, UNESCO and the Department of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, organized a national workshop on the topic on the June 22, 2011.

The workshop with as title "Biosphere Reserve in Timor-Leste, National Framework and Potential Benefits/ Reserva Biosfera Hamutuk ho nia Padroes, Potencias no Benefisius ba Nasaun Timor-Leste" introduced the Biosphere Reserve Model and discussed the potential roles and benefits of Biosphere Reserves in Timor-Leste. It further provided information on the structures and processes involved in nominating and managing a Biosphere Reserve. The workshop also showcased several best practices of how Biosphere Reserves are established and managed in the Asia-Pacific Region, including in Indonesia.

The outcomes of workshop, that included some intense group discussion sessions, strongly acknowledged the potentialities of the Biosphere Reserve Model to improve the management of existing protected areas in Timor-Leste, including Nino Konis Santana National Park. It further recommended the need for the establishment of strong communication and coordination mechanism, as outlined under the Biosphere Reserve Model, among all stakeholders to ensure not only the protection of Timor-Leste's beautiful natural environment, but also the wellbeing of the local and indigenous communities living inside and surrounding the protected areas.



Participants, representing a broad variety of stakeholders at the workshop



Scenic beauty in Nino Konis Santana National Park, Timor-Leste's first potential Biosphere Reserve

For more information, please contact Mr. Rob Lee, Head of Environmental Sciences Unit at r.lee@unesco.org

Timor-Leste UNESCO National Commission visiting the Republic of Korea

From end March to end April 2011 the Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO took part in the “2001 Capacity Building Programme for National Commissions for UNESCO in the Asia Pacific Region”, hosted by the Korean National Commission. Aimed at developing skills and sharing experiences, the study visit was attended by representatives of National Commissions of Nepal, Myanmar and Timor-Leste. UNESCO is the only agency to have National Commissions in each of its 193 member countries, the Timor-Leste National Commission being one of the most recently formed. Ms. Jacinta Barreto, the Secretary General represented the Timor-Leste UNESCO National Commission during the study visit.

The four-week study visit consisted of two parts, the first focusing on UNESCO as an organization while the second focused on developing a Joint Proposal. During the first part of the visit, the National Commission representatives learned and discussed in detail UNESCO’s mandate. During this time the participants were able to visit organizations and associations that demonstrated the relevance and impact of UNESCO’s work. The visits included a traditional village, the national museum and the millennium park. This part of the study visit allowed National Commission members to get an in depth understanding of the nature of UNESCO’s work. It ended with a session on ‘Culture’ – an integral part of UNESCO’s mandate – during which participants shared important aspects of their culture. Ms. Barreto gave a presentation on traditional Timorese dance and clothing and also talked about the traditional houses.



Jacinta Barreto giving a presentation on Timor-Leste’s tangible and intangible cultural heritage.



Visit of Jacinta Baretto to the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) in Seoul

The latter two weeks of the study visit focused on the development of a Joint Proposal between the Timor-Leste National Commission and the Korean National Commission. Working with Korean experts, this session focused on the scientific and educational elements of UNESCO’s mandate and discussed project development and implementation in these fields. According to Ms. Barreto “This was a golden opportunity for me to learn and share ideas with leading science and education experts. I hope to be able to use what I learnt in Korea in my work for the Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO”.

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