

New Zealand Media Observation Mission Report



2007 Timor-Leste Elections

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We would like also to record our sincere thanks to all of the interviewees for their help, time and observations during the pressured period of an election campaign.

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The Mission acknowledges the vision, commitment and courage of Timorese journalists in contributing to the building of their nation. We hope this report contributes to their security, sustainability and success.

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1. Communiqué

The following is the text of a communiqué released at the conclusion of the New Zealand media election observation mission to Timor-Leste 2007

1.1 Introduction

- The New Zealand media election observation mission (the Mission) assessed the contribution of the Timor-Leste news media to free and fair elections in the country's first national elections since gaining international recognition of its independence in 2002. The independent Mission is part of a wider international and domestic observer presence, but it has a unique role in its specific focus on the news media.
- Two visits (six and eight days) were made during preparations for the Presidential run-off and Parliamentary elections. The observation process included interviews, workshops, newsroom visits, district visits, and visits to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, media briefings, news conferences, content analysis and document review.
- Mission members met about 125 journalists, editors, politicians, political party representatives, overseas aid donors and agencies, election officials and NGOs. They also talked with Timorese people living in Dili and nearby districts in a variety of settings including markets and IDP camps. The seven members have experience of print and broadcast journalism, editorial management, journalism education, media policy, indigenous media development, human rights, and electoral education and administration. The variety of backgrounds allowed for diversity of insight and contest of ideas.
- The Mission's method included the writing of an initial scoping report during the first visit, the translation of the summary and recommendations into Tetum for general circulation and feedback from informants. Detailed validation of source material occurred during the second visit.
- This election-eve communiqué will be followed by a full Mission report which will substantiate the following election-related findings and make broader observations and recommendations for future development.

1.2 Country context

- An assessment of the media's contribution to the elections should take account of the Timor-Leste country context. The media are under-capitalised and have significant human and physical resourcing issues that mirror the nation's post-independence and post-conflict reconstruction.

- A severe information divide excludes significant numbers of rural Timorese from the political, economic and social life of the country. This is compounded by the high illiteracy rate of around 50 per cent.
- The use of four main languages poses serious communication challenges. The two official languages are Tetum and Portuguese. The language used in primary education was until recently Bahasa Indonesian. That language is still used from junior high school and in university. English is used widely by the international community.
- News organisations are establishing stronger newsroom systems and processes to cover the country's politics. This development phase has benefited from, and been accelerated by, the Presidential and Parliamentary elections. Audience demand, events driven campaigning, and international expectations and support have provided impetus.
- Election coverage has challenged the media infrastructure in Timor-Leste. Limited resources including transport, equipment and staffing difficulties, have been exacerbated by the long electoral cycle and multitude of candidates or parties.

1.3 Assessment framework

- A framework, based on international guidelines, was developed with three main categories to assess the extent of the Timor-Leste news media's contribution to free and fair election coverage.
- The categories are the duty of the news media to inform, rules regarding election coverage, and protection for freedom of expression during elections.

1.4 Duty to inform

- The news media have a general duty to inform the public about election matters and issues, including a responsibility for voter education.
- Political candidates, political parties, and electoral agencies have a right to access the media on a non-discriminatory basis.
- The Mission concluded that the Timor-Leste news media's sense of their responsibilities to inform the public about election matters evolved as the campaign progressed.
- The coverage was largely "events-centric" with political rallies in Dili and the districts and news conferences dominating daily broadcasts and newspaper headlines.
- There were individual examples of best practice journalism, but there was no consistent approach to the news media's examination of economic and

social issues integral to political development, such as the oil and gas reserves, youth and unemployment, and the future of IDP camps.

- Inevitably there were claims by politicians and party representatives of media shortfalls during the election campaign, but the Mission is unaware of any news media blocking access to candidates, parties or electoral agencies.
- The Timor-Leste news media generally adopted a neutral approach to the right of candidates, parties, and electoral agencies to access the media on a non-discriminatory basis.
- The responses to the published and broadcast stories were often highly political or contested. This resulted in claim and counter claim by politicians and political parties which were often reported without question, or inclusion of current or past contexts.
- The state-owned public broadcasters, Radio Timor Leste and Televisao Timor-Leste, in particular, provided access as fairly as possible within resource and capacity constraints.
- Given the relative newness of the electoral agencies, the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE) and the National Elections Commission (CNE), both developed regular media access to get their messages out, with help from international agencies.
- Publicly aired disagreements between the two agencies became the news, despite operational co-operation, during the Presidential elections, but this appeared to improve during the Parliamentary elections.
- The news media's role in voter education includes ensuring voters understand the importance of voting in democratic elections, and how to exercise their vote including the mechanics of filling in a ballot paper.
- The media's role in Timor-Leste elections was primarily that of a conduit using material developed by STAE or CNE for dissemination to the public. The current difficulties of media penetration in Timor-Leste limits the nationwide impact of this contribution.

1.5 Rules regarding election coverage

- A fundamental tenet of journalism is a duty of balance and impartiality, which is reflected in the Timorese journalists' code of ethics.
- A media code of conduct was developed by STAE and endorsed by CNE prior to the first round of the Presidential elections. The code accredited journalists to enter polling centres, polling and tabulation stations and specified the right of access.

- The code also outlined journalists' rights as the right of access to electoral information sources, the right to security, the right to preserve the secrecy of information sources and the right to be respected by the candidates, political parties, political coalitions and other electoral agents.
- The code also imposed duties on journalists including professionalism, distinguishing between fact and opinion and guaranteeing "equal access to, and exposition of, all candidates, political parties and coalitions".
- Journalists interviewed by the Mission complained of lack of adequate consultation prior to the code's introduction and they expressed concern over the limited number of accreditations for election reporting as per the code for the Presidential elections.
- Ironically, during the Presidential elections the only complaint in relation to the code was made by a CNE spokesperson based on partial information about Televisao Timor-Leste's (TVTL) allocation of time to the parties, which proved to be incorrect.
- The state-owned public broadcasters, Radio Timor Leste (RTL) and TVTL, demonstrated during the election campaigns that they took seriously their responsibility to allocate equal time to the Presidential candidates and political parties. After the Presidential elections RTL reassessed the mechanistic approach to balance in light of repetition from political candidates.
- The print media appeared to adopt a less formulaic approach to balance, partly because of limited resources and because of the nature of newspapers where equal space is less of a tradition than equal time allocation.
- The news media, individually and within professional organisations, should rigorously evaluate their own performance in covering Timor-Leste's first national elections. Formal recording and analysis will help improve ongoing political reporting, and be a valuable resource for media preparations and coverage of the 2012 national elections.
- Equal time allocation for politicians and political parties needs to be reviewed for future elections so that the requirement for balance is reconciled with newsworthiness.

1.6 Protection of freedom of expression

- Despite the code of conduct emphasis on the right to security of journalists in election reporting, there were reported incidents of intimidation by political party supporters, particularly during the Presidential election.

- The Mission was able to verify one episode of physical intimidation. In the district of Ermera a *Timor Post* journalist was beaten and had his arm broken, allegedly by a Fretilin supporter upset at what he regarded as a lack of impartiality by the reporter.
- The Mission expresses the strongest possible concern about any physical intimidation of journalists during election campaigns.
- The Mission is also concerned that media vilification, particularly at rallies, may have unintended physical consequences for journalists at the hand of party supporters, inhibit full coverage, and build disrespect for the media as an important agent for development and accountability in Timor-Leste.
- General security considerations have also limited media movement and, in at least one case, the transmission hours of a district community radio station during campaign periods were severely disrupted.
- The economic independence of the news media impacts on the exercise of freedom of expression by editors, news executives and reporters. The Mission observed that some journalists were afraid to hold politicians accountable, due to lack of professionalism and the financial fragility of media organisations.
- The Mission observed insufficient political understanding of the need for the government to ensure the state-owned broadcasters can operate in the public interest, free from political interference.

1.7 Conclusion

- The Timorese media contributed positively to free and fair first and second rounds of the Presidential elections and to the Parliamentary elections in spite of the very serious constraints under which they operate and their own stage of development.
- Greater investment, improved resourcing, and stronger and more consistent capacity building through education and training are required to properly develop the media's special role in the reporting and conduct of democratic elections.
- The Mission saw strong evidence of the desire by journalists and news executives in Timor-Leste to improve their skills, knowledge and capacity to report election campaigning and politics.
- Lessons from Timor-Leste's media history show the urgent need for a sustainable model of on-going journalism training, education and development that is Timorese led and owned with the support of international media and development agencies.

- Further training and development in holding political and public figures to account by following up on statements, political promises, and political and government policies will strengthen journalism and public discussion in Timor-Leste.
- The Mission believes that a specific media accountability mechanism to address complaints about and from the media with respect to both political and election processes and other issues would strengthen the reporting of future elections and the new government.
- The Mission was left with doubts about the whole-hearted commitment of leading politicians and political party representatives to the Timorese news media as a vital part of democratic processes.
- The Mission believes that the development of media law frameworks should be enabling rather than prescriptive, and promote and protect freedom of expression and information. Punitive provisions such as criminalisation of defamation, the licensing of journalists or media organisations at state discretion, or onerous regulation of right of reply practices should not be enacted.
- The Mission believes that physical intimidation of journalists should result in criminal prosecution as a means of creating a culture of increased safety for reporters.
- The absence of an overall information strategy for Timor-Leste, which includes greater media penetration as a critical component, means that many Timorese risk being information poor for years to come.
- The two visits confirm that the Timorese media want to improve and are appropriately aware of their own needs. Increasing the professionalism of journalism so that there is stronger political reporting is a legitimate and desirable aim for Timor-Leste's social development and democratic future.

The Mission records its grateful thanks to the many people of Timor-Leste who gave so generously of their time, thoughts and general assistance to its work in the lead-up to elections. In particular, it acknowledges the vision, commitment, and courage of Timorese journalists in contributing to the building of their nation.

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2. Introduction

The New Zealand Media Observation Mission visited Timor-Leste twice in the course of its investigations. Four members of the Mission observed the news media's coverage of the preparations for Timor-Leste's second round of Presidential elections between 30 April-May 6, 2007. Between June 18 and 26, six members of the Mission undertook similar activities immediately prior to the Parliamentary elections.

A visit to the Don Bosco and Jardim Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Dili where thousands of people are living provided Mission members with an opportunity to talk to Timorese who had fled from their homes during the May 2006 crisis about the circumstances of their continued displacement.

The purpose of this report is to scope a range of issues relating to the media's coverage of the first national elections since Timor-Leste gained international recognition of its independence in 2002. While the Mission is part of a wider international observer presence, it had a specific and unique focus on exploring the environment in which the Timor-Leste news media works, in assessing its contribution to free and fair elections, and in looking to the future with recommendations for Timor-Leste media development.

Overall the Mission observed a small, poorly resourced but committed Timorese media and a Timorese voting public with a pronounced appetite for information and news about the elections and politics generally, even though the news media has a limited reach. Daily, however, the Timorese media face the challenges of financial insecurity, problems with communications infrastructure, difficult topography, human resource capacity and physical resourcing issues. The volatile security situation in Timor-Leste seriously impacts on the infrastructure, and on the production, reporting and distribution processes of both broadcast and print media.

While a range of views were expressed to the Mission, the Timorese media have a developing sense of themselves as critical to free and fair elections. They are also realistic about their stage of development as an accountability mechanism in democratic processes.

This report covers the following issues:

- Media environment
- The media and electoral agencies
- Law, regulation and ethics
- Training
- Resources
- Coverage
- Participation
- Political parties and processes
- Future directions

**The news media covering aspects of the
Timor-Leste elections 2007.**



3. Media Environment

The Timor-Leste media are under capitalised, have significant human capital and physical resourcing issues and are not the main source of information for many Timorese who live outside Dili.

The difficulties of media penetration are further compounded by Timor-Leste's adult literacy rate of 50.1 per cent and the potential for confusion from the use of four languages. Eighty per cent of Timorese speak the native Tetum, 50 per cent understand Bahasa Indonesian, 5 per cent Portuguese and 2 per cent English. Laws are written in Portuguese and then sometimes translated, to further complicate election processes and the media reporting of them.

The dominant media are the State-owned Radio-Televisão Timor Leste (Radio Television East Timor) with its television division known as Televisão Timor Leste (TVTL) and radio division Radio Timor Leste (RTL), community radio stations, three daily newspapers (*Suara Timor Lorosae*, *Timor Post* and *Jornal Nacional Diário*), at least two weekly newspapers and Radio Timor Kmanek (RTK), a Catholic radio station (97 per cent of the country's residents are Catholic).

However, the audience reach of all the media is limited by transmission coverage issues, small print runs, distribution costs and difficulties and subscription and sales largely confined to Dili. Given that the 50 cent cover price is half the daily wage in Timor-Leste, it is no surprise that sales are limited. The 2006 National Media Survey, funded by USAID through Fondation Hirondelle, indicated that 7 per cent of the 1272 interviewed reported having income of less than US\$1 a day. Only 14 per cent said they earned more than US\$2 a day.

The community radio station infrastructure is fragile and urgently needs capitalisation, and this is referred to in greater detail later in the report.

The Catholic radio station RTK, which claims to be the second most popular station after RTL, indicated it was in a revitalisation stage and is seeking further donors. It receives funding from international NGOs and \$1000 a month for salaries from the Catholic Church.

The station's financial support from the NGO community funds programming rather than operating expenses. During the Parliamentary election campaign, RTK was broadcasting advertisements and paid programming for at least four of the major political parties, although the station was not reporting the election campaigns.

According to the 2006 National Media Survey, in which 1272 people over 15 were interviewed between October to November 2006, most Timorese appear to rely mostly on a combination of radio and interpersonal communication for news.

Among those surveyed, the single most relied on source of information was state-owned public radio (RTL) followed by word of mouth, then television and community leaders. The daily reach of radio is under 30 per cent and the weekly reach is 50 per cent.

Three in four daily TV viewers are in Dili, where the weekly reach is 79 per cent. Nationally, the daily reach of TV is 19 per cent and the weekly reach is 25 per cent.

Numbers of journalists are difficult to determine but the Mission heard there were about 200. Most have little regular or formal training, their resources are slim and the concept of a free and open media and its responsibilities in terms of accuracy, fairness and balance – indeed, the very role the media should play in a free society - is acknowledged but insufficiently understood.

Rates of pay were difficult to determine as well, with considerable variation from those spoken to. Some were reportedly paid as little as \$US75 a month while others received \$US200. The Mission was told some service workers were paid more.

At TVTL and RTL, unconfirmed information about salaries provided by senior editorial staff indicated the following:

Three journalists at level 6:	\$250 a month
Some journalists at level 5:	\$200 a month
Most reporters at level 4:	\$150 a month

Rates of pay in the print media were more modest. Journalists at the *Timor Post*, for example, were paid between \$US80 to \$US120 a month.

But what journalists interviewed lacked in financial rewards, they compensated for with their enthusiasm for what they do, their eagerness to learn and their desire to improve their own work and their craft.

Improving the professionalism of journalism is hampered, however, by the stage of development of journalists' organisations in Timor-Leste. Many of the reporters the Mission had contact with were members of the Timor-Leste Journalists Association (TLJA), which claims a current membership of 80, as well as Sindicato, the other journalist's organisation which was formed after a split between "activist journalists" (TLJA) and "professional journalists" (Sindicato), according to the current head of TLJA, Virgilio Silva Guterres. A Sindicato spokesperson claimed the organisation was down to 50 members. There are two broadcasting organisations and one for photo-journalists (TILPA).

There is a basic code of ethics for Timorese journalists which is supplemented by some specific newsroom policies, such as at Radio Timor Leste. However,

there is a need for stronger institutional voices speaking on behalf of the media, both for journalists and for media owners. The promotion and protection of freedom of expression by Timorese media and international media watch agencies are critical given the possible introduction of a media law that proposes the licensing of journalists and the criminalisation of defamation.

There is no specific media accountability mechanism that has the mandate to regulate complaints from or about the media during elections and at other times. This results in a lack of leadership in the development of ethical guidelines for the Timorese media, their sources and for their audiences.

During recent years a number of aid agencies and NGOs, such as InterNews and the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), have been involved in helping with journalists' training and the infrastructure of news reporting.

Some journalists have been trained in Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and elsewhere through educational or vocational schemes. A sustainable, cross-media model of journalism training has yet to be developed.

Some 30 per cent of the country has no media at all, and the private daily newspapers and television network reach only around Dili, although the Mission was told radio and television transmission has recently been extended to Baucau and Maubisse. Initially, it will mean a shrinkage of FM radio in those vicinities but within a year, an AM radio network should greatly extend radio coverage across most of Timor-Leste.

The community stations also have little reach in their own areas, for example the community radio in Baucau reached around 1200 homes (pop. 16,000). The cessation of funding from the World Bank, which set up eight of the stations, and from other donors has meant some of the 18 stations (12 in the districts outside Dili) have inconsistent transmission and limited news gathering functions. However, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been supporting the stations with on-site journalism and election training, training material, tape recorders, batteries and battery chargers during the election campaigns. NZAID provided via the Timor-Leste Media Development Centre (TLMDC) small grants during the Parliamentary election campaign to ensure community radio stations could transmit and secure materials for broadcast.

Only one of the three newspapers has its own press (STL). Both *Diário* and the *Timor Post* are printed in Dili and occasionally suffer technical problems. Because of the limited reach of the news media and the Timorese love of oral conversation, accounts by word of mouth are a main currency for information.

This influences the quality of communication during an election campaign where accurate information is paramount in a developing body politic. The Mission heard of instances where inaccurate information from even official sources had led to difficulties, and where politicians had made untrue or inaccurate claims safe in the knowledge they would not be challenged.

Overall, all of the difficulties faced by the Timorese media impact on the way they cover election news. The Timorese news media are in a development phase that reflects the overall progress of evolving political processes in Timor-Leste.

Posters, banners and graffiti around Dili.



4. The media and electoral agencies

The Presidential election campaign consisted of a first round of voting, which resulted in a second round or run-off on 9 May between the top two candidates, Prime Minister and Nobel Peace prize winner Dr Jose Ramos Horta of the National Congress of Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT – Congresso Nacional de Reconstrucao de Timor) and Francisco (“Lu-Olo”) Guterres, of the Fretilin Party. The election was won by Dr Horta with 69 per cent of the vote.

Parliamentary elections took place for the unicameral National Parliament of 65 seats elected from national party lists on June 30, 2007. The long campaign is exhausting for journalists and officials (not to mention party organisers and candidates) and the Mission was advised by several sources that those involved, including journalists, felt the strain.

The Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE) is responsible for ensuring the elections are well organised. It is part of the Ministry of State Administration and is being extensively advised by United Nations organisations and other agencies.

Another body, the National Elections Commission (CNE), headed by 15 commissioners, oversees the process to ensure the elections are fair. While STAE staff are responsible for running the elections, CNE is responsible for supervising the electoral process, approving regulations, adjudicating complaints, counting the votes, deciding whether the votes are valid, preparing the preliminary results, and announcing the final results.

A Portuguese journalist attached to the United Nations Development Programme initially provided media support for both organisations by organising media conferences, disseminating information, setting up a CNE website and advising on television appearances and discussions. The United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) subsequently provided a separate adviser to CNE for the Parliamentary elections. A Media Centre with internet connection has been built to provide a venue for media conferences and accommodate the needs of domestic and international journalists. However, a CNE spokesperson told the Mission the centre was too small and CNE would probably use space elsewhere.

The supervisory role of CNE and the administrative role of STAE inherently create a tension and provide a desirable separation of functions and the necessary vigilance between agencies. However, hostility between the two became a dominant election story during the Presidential run-off to the detriment of public information and confidence in free and fair elections. During the campaign STAE and CNE publicly aired their differences and blamed each other for communication difficulties about electoral processes and results, despite operational co-operation.

The Mission heard complaints from journalists and the KOME (Coalition for Monitoring the General Elections) observers who watched the first and second round process at a local level that STAE staff had been under-trained or were uncooperative, and the CNE spokesperson was the subject of criticism from both politicians, the international community and the news media for inaccuracy of results material and for alleged bias.

CNE received advice from UNMIT, the UNDP and IFES, the former International Foundation for Election Systems. Spokespeople from UNMIT and UNDP told the Mission that their advice was sometimes not heeded.

However, on its return, the Mission heard little in the way of criticism about STAE and CNE, although tensions still appeared to exist over and above those inherent in the two agencies' formal roles. Between elections, IFES was contracted to provide advice and a senior adviser smoothed processes to ensure any disagreements were resolved through appropriate channels.

CNE also took a more pro-active role for the Parliamentary elections and made greater use of a wider variety of the 15 commissioners as spokespeople.

A CNE six-part series of hour-long television programmes aired twice-weekly and was simulcast on radio as well. The programme consisted of up-to-date election news and information about electoral processes. A different commissioner moderated the discussion, and he or she was joined by another commissioner plus two specialists in each programme. It had an interactive section with phone-in questions (although there was only one available line and whoever got through first was immediately "live.") However, the Mission was told there had been a good public reaction and the programme may continue beyond the election campaign.

4.1 STAE Voter Education

Mission members visited the headquarters and spoke to international STAE voter education staff. While they do not deal directly with the news media, they provide the information to be passed on. An example in the Presidential elections was a weekly talk show on national television, TVTL, in which members of STAE and CNE discussed issues, such as their roles, registration, campaigning, polling and counting. In the Parliamentary elections, CNE arranged for the previously-mentioned hour-long information programme.

The limitations in disseminating voter information and conducting training were lack of staff and the absence of a Timor-Leste public information office. STAE has teams of two per district in a country where face-to-face interaction is the most effective means of communication. Because mass education through the media is logistically impossible, STAE targets key entities and

people, particularly the chiefs and administrators of villages and districts, to maximise effect.

To extend the reach, volunteers travel with flip charts to the districts. Mission members observed one of these occasions in a small town, Manatuto, to the east of Dili, during the Presidential elections. An Italian volunteer worked with a translator to explain a series of diagrams about the voting process. Unfortunately she had not been given new material for the Presidential run-off and had to work with the pictures designed for the first round of the election. A small group of men listened to the presentation while the women ignored it to tend market stalls next door.

The STAE staff assured the Mission that women participate equally in voting and had been visibly present in queues at polling stations during round one. In the run-off polling staff were to record the gender of voters to give a more accurate assessment of women's representation.

An UNMIT gender perspective audit of the second round of the Presidential elections showed that women were less conspicuous than men at political rallies, and were passively listening. They were also not prominent in organising these events. Women in Bobonaro, one of the districts surveyed, presented an interesting list of their expectations from the next president. The list included: to resolve refugee/IDP problems and to rebuild damaged homes, to stop fighting among various groups, to solve food shortages, to establish universities in districts, and to have adequate staff, equipment and medicines in hospitals and clinics.

STAE communication to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps was via trucks with loudspeakers, stickers, CDs and specific leaflets providing reassurance of their security at polling stations. The CDs, produced with the help of the Timor-Leste Media Development Centre, were distributed to the community radio stations. Radio messages were considered the next best option to face-to-face meetings. Content included a song about the Presidential election and a dialogue between actors with election information. Each district had a DVD projector, allowing for mobile video nights. As an audience incentive STAE showed a movie – with voter education messages before and after.

When asked about the confusion, in media and public minds, between STAE and CNE, the STAE staff explained their attempts at clarification. Journalists were invited to workshops, a trainer travelled to all the community radio stations and every press release repeated the explanation. STAE said because the organisations are completely new, it will take people some time to understand. Materials had been produced specifically on the differences between the two.

STAE staff wanted journalists to use better mechanisms for checking accuracy. For example, a press release on the day of the delivery of voting material explained 93 cars were involved. On the news, the number had risen inexplicably to 157 cars.

A spokesman for CNE, Father Martinho Gusmão, made no direct criticism of the media reporting nationally, although he was critical of international reporting.

But the UNDP's Media Adviser Miguel Caldeira had a similar story of inaccuracies appearing in newspapers even when the information came from a media release. Journalists were not well trained and were easy to influence. In the main, they were young and needed much more training. Further, he said, it was not in the nature of the Timorese to confront authority or question sources as they felt fearful and uncomfortable.

In the first Presidential campaign, there was criticism of the way results were released through CNE. But for the Parliamentary elections, IFES was working on an internet link which would make results available as soon as they were officially released.

Selling and reading newspapers in Dili.



5. Law, regulation and ethics

A media code of conduct was developed by STAE and endorsed by CNE prior to the first round of the Presidential elections. Media codes of conduct for election reporting usefully outline the ethical framework in which journalists operate and interact with political processes. They also allow audiences such as electoral agencies, political parties, candidates and voters to judge media responsibility and accountability.

The code accredited journalists to enter polling centres, polling and tabulation stations and specified the right of access. It outlined journalists' rights as the right of access to electoral information sources, the right to security, the right to preserve secrecy of information sources and the right to be respected by the candidates, political parties, political coalitions and other electoral agents.

The code also imposed duties on journalists including professionalism, distinguishing between fact and opinion and guaranteeing "equal access to, and exposition of, all candidates, political parties and coalitions."

Timorese journalists raised two issues with the Mission about the code's introduction. These were the lack of adequate consultation prior to its introduction and concern over a limited number of accreditations.

Several other issues arose in relation to the implementation of the code from both journalists and from CNE at the time of the Presidential run-off. These were:

- In general, the Timorese news media took their duty to provide equal access in the first round very seriously. Some reviewed how balance was best achieved for the second round and the Parliamentary elections;
- Despite the introduction of a media code of conduct which emphasised the right to security of journalists in election reporting, there were reported incidents of intimidation of journalists by political party supporters and politicians;
- The code was used for a complaint from CNE to the media about lack of balance. However the CNE spokesperson who complained had incomplete information about the day's broadcast which did provide equal time allocation over a 24 hour period;
- While the media code of conduct referred to the media's right to electoral information, sections of the news media expressed serious concerns about quality of electoral information from CNE, the body that introduced the code

5.1 Balance

Balance and equal access are often justified quantitatively by column inches or minutes of air-time or broadcast time without reference to the quality of news coverage.

Both state-owned broadcasters were perceived as being highly conscious of balance in their election coverage. For example, Radio Timor Leste's (RTL) director Rosario Martins said the first national elections run by the Timorese themselves posed challenging times for democracy and for freedom of expression. Part of the public broadcaster's election mandate was to ensure RTL gave "equal voice to each candidate" in the Presidential election. RTL had two task forces operating in the first round of the Presidential election comprising 46 journalists. The first group covered daily news and the second produced a feature format of 30 minutes airtime per day called "Way to the Palace".

RTL had established terms of reference to give the code practical effect including how journalists should operationalise the duration of voice clips from candidates. The broadcaster had also introduced its own version of a newsroom ombudsman. A Council of Newsroom comprising senior staff examined complaints, oversaw RTL's coverage strategy and was responsible for evaluation.

However, for the second round the public broadcaster changed the content of coverage because of the problem of repetition from candidates rehearsing the same issues day after day. The RTL coverage delved deeper by asking the 14 candidates for their views on four significant issues: centralisation, agricultural development, Timor-Leste's oil and gas reserves and youth/unemployment.

For the Parliamentary elections, integrated election coverage teams for both radio and television were provided by RTTL.

Fourteen teams were established, one each to cover each political party for the duration of the 30-day campaign. They were based at Maubisse, a two-and-a-half hour drive (47km) from Dili, and Baucau, Timor-Leste's second-largest town, four hours (122km) from Dili. Teams were based at these two centres to save on fuel and other logistical costs. Some 14 vehicles were available for national coverage – one for each team.

"One of the main problems for balanced election coverage is that the parties are constantly changing their rally schedules. This makes it difficult covering each party in a fair and balanced manner," Mr Martins said.

In each team of four people, one was a radio journalist, one a television journalist, along with one camera operator and one driver.

Two programmes were broadcast daily on Radio Timor Leste, one containing news with two editions, the other a current affairs magazine - covering the election, a total of two hours 30 minutes long.

The budget for election campaign coverage was \$US21,500. This was over and above the general news budget and took account of per diem payments for reporters on the road and associated in-house costs.

An editorial production team of 35 journalists was deployed in Dili to produce both programmes. This meant a total of 49 journalists for the Parliamentary elections. Sometimes, said Mr Martins, two reporters were assigned to cover one party if the news warranted it.

RTL still produced normal news during this period with 45-minute news bulletins and a severely reduced news team at 7am, 12noon and 6pm.

About five to seven reporters were left to cover ordinary news. Three languages were used for broadcast news normally. But during the election campaign only Tetum was used – “then we go back to basics in July”.

Mr Martins said there was an important need to focus more on youth. He also pointed to a large number of women reporters, saying “we have gender balance”.

The day the Mission visited, the highlight was the delivery of a significant late-breaking story for the 6pm news bulletin. The new President, José Ramos Horta, held a 4pm press conference to announce he had ordered the international security forces to cease their operation to capture renegade Major Alfredo Reinaldo. The story led the bulletin complete with edited audio from Ramos Horta.

Other items in the bulletin covered a range of events and issues, for example, public transport costs, State Administration comments on corruption, a Provedor report on human rights, IDP camps and voter registration.

The political news bulletin comprised comment and policy statements from each of the parties contesting the election.

TVTL’s Director, Antonio Diaz, told the Mission in May that there had been little pre-election training for its journalists before the Presidential elections, apart from a one-day workshop provided by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ). However, the state-owned broadcaster had some experience of election coverage from the 2001 elections.

Journalists were informed of the requirements of the Code of Conduct, and particular emphasis was placed on the need to provide balance, to be

impartial, and to avoid giving air-time to candidates who made insulting comments about other candidates.

TVTL was conscious of giving equal time to all eight candidates in the first round. Journalists were assigned to each candidate, and studio time was made available for candidates to make 15-minute personal campaign statements. During the election period, a special schedule was kept to ensure candidates were given equal time and exposure, with any imbalances being remedied the following day. “Our mission is to be impartial, to guarantee the unity of this country,” said Mr Diaz.

Both public broadcasters were perceived by some impartial observers as being highly conscious of balance in their election coverage.

A former international adviser at RTTL described TVTL’s coverage of the first round Presidential election as the best news coverage he had seen in the five years he had lived in Timor-Leste. TVTL had a camera and reporters positioned in most of the districts the night before polling day. On polling day, reporters interviewed election officials and voters, then drove back to Dili, edited their stories, and put them to air later that evening. More usually, the stories would have been shown the day after. In the adviser’s view, there was a reasonable balance and diversity of views from young people, women, farmers, and officials, and overall it was well done.

If there was a complaint to be made about TVTL’s coverage it was perhaps that it erred on the side of caution. Apart from being sensitive to balancing issues – which was observed by some to be even more of the case in Radio Timor Leste’s coverage – it was felt that journalists were also motivated by fear for their physical safety in the event that candidates’ followers took exception to any coverage not perceived to be even-handed.

Mr Diaz said he had received some informal complaints about TVTL’s coverage but these had come from a variety of sources, including politicians from all parties, who accused TVTL of not being impartial. He conceded that TVTL had made some errors but these were unintentional and had been corrected immediately. However, at the same time, he considered that many Timorese did not understand the media’s role. “We are all in the process of learning – journalists as well as politicians.”

It was important to provide the public with good coverage. To that end, TVTL’s coverage of the second round Presidential election included interviews with the candidates, as well as ordinary Timorese. Voters had been asked about their concerns and how they felt about a range of issues, including security. Mr Diaz said TVTL played a critical role in guaranteeing the transparency of the process.

However, it was clear to the Mission that TVTL was approaching balance in a mechanistic manner. When the Mission visited TVTL the week before the Parliamentary elections, the broadcaster was grappling with the demands of giving equal time to 14 parties on a daily basis. Its policy was to allocate two minutes 30 seconds to each of the parties in its daily election campaign coverage, in the order in which they appeared on the ballot paper, regardless of newsworthiness. This segment always followed the day's top news stories at the start of the one-hour bulletin (broadcast at 8pm and repeated the next morning at 7.30am). However, if for some reason, a party missed out on its daily time allocation, either because it was not organised enough for coverage on a particular day or because deadline pressures prevented TVTL getting the item to air in time, that party would get double its time allowance (five minutes) the next day.

Despite the stopwatch approach, TVTL's coverage was perceived as biased by some critics – a charge which its head of news and current affairs, Nelio Isaac, denied. He said TVTL measured coverage every day and reporters had instructions to be fair. The station was also alert to the safety of their reporters and cameramen who would be endangered if parties believed they were not impartial.

The Mission observed TVTL on 21 June, and accompanied a crew to a press conference called by CNRT's secretary general, Dionisio Babo, to criticise STL for running a story which claimed CNRT had issued a list of its shadow government. Mr Babo said he had been misquoted and had sent a letter of protest to STL which hadn't been published in full. It was an example of the "immaturity and lack of professional capacity" of Timorese journalists, he said.

Mr Babo's press conference made that evening's bulletin, as the second or third item in the general news segment at the start of the news, which meant that it wasn't counted as part of CNRT's two minutes and 30 seconds campaign allocation for the day.

The broadcaster was on the receiving end of frequent informal complaints from politicians, and these seemed to have had an effect on the way it operated. To avoid continual disputes with political parties, for example, it stopped mentioning crowd estimates in its items. Instead, crowd scenes were shown only if there was a large crowd at a rally or meeting, while the poorly-attended meetings of small parties were shot close-up or filmed in such a way as to disguise their smaller audiences.

To complaints that TVTL showed some candidates speaking directly to the crowds while others were only shown after their rallies being interviewed by a reporter, Mr Isaac said this was because some sound systems at meetings were poor and the broadcaster had to interview sources later to get good sound.

Generally, they accept some people like what they do while others are critical. There had been one incident when two female reporters were verbally abused during the second round of the Presidential campaign. They had been filming in Parliament while it was still sitting and showed pictures of Members of Parliament smoking and dozing. One member had reacted angrily.

There had also been two occasions when politicians had publicly criticised TVTL's news and journalists during rallies in the districts. Mr Isaac said his journalists had felt threatened and unsafe. On other occasions, he had received threatening text messages from candidates after a news bulletin, telling him to "watch out".

Mr Isaac said the establishment of two bureaus in the districts, Baucau and Maubisse, from which TVTL crew could edit and send their stories by satellite, had considerably improved TVTL's ability to cover the Parliamentary elections. Both bureaus had a senior editor, video editor and technician, and were fitted for overnight accommodation, which meant TVTL crews could file stories without having to return to Dili. It also meant crews travelled long distances daily, to follow the activities of the political party to which they were assigned, and then to get to the nearest bureau to produce their stories. Adding to their already difficult jobs was the fact that some parties failed to produce their daily campaign schedules, and not all parties understood how television worked.

Mr Isaac said the government threatened to withhold funding from TVTL during the conflict last year if the broadcaster continued to carry interviews with the rebel leader, Major Alfredo Reinaldo. Meanwhile Reinaldo threatened violence if the coverage was stopped. TVTL's response to this unenviable situation was taking the news off air for a week. The role of the public service broadcaster in relation to state ownership was poorly understood and those who hold the purse strings could apply unreasonable pressure.

5.2 Intimidation

At a workshop run by the Mission with journalists connected to the Timor-Leste Media Development Centre during the Presidential run-off, three alleged incidents of intimidation of journalists were referred to.

The Mission was able to verify one episode of physical intimidation. In the district of Ermera, a *Timor Post* journalist was beaten and had his arm broken, allegedly by a Fretilin supporter upset at what he regarded as a lack of impartiality by the reporter on March 26, 2007.

Timor Post production manager Carlos de Jesus, who led his newspaper's election coverage, said he had gone to Ermera himself to investigate the incident and had met the party's leader in the district who had also said the reporter was not impartial. Mr de Jesus said that the bias allegation could have been true. The reporter still worked for the newspaper and the

production manager had made no official complaint although the police knew of the incident. However, he had brought the issue to the attention of the Timor-Leste Journalists' Association.

Fretilin Party member and political adviser to Francisco 'Lu-Olo' Guterres, Harold Moucho, told Mission members he knew of the attack and its background but said it was a criminal issue, not a Fretilin problem.

There were other incidents of intimidation but the Mission was unable to confirm how serious they were and whether they were a real attempt to prevent the media doing their job or part of the usual cut and thrust of election reporting when politicians are acutely sensitive.

5.3 Complaint

CNE spokesperson Father Martinho Gusmão indicated to Mission members that he had used the Code of Conduct as a basis for a complaint to TVTL about equal time for candidates in the first round of Presidential elections. Father Gusmão believed that only some candidates had featured in a particular broadcast.

However, the broadcaster had responded that the other candidates had received equal time but their broadcasts had been aired earlier in the day. In an interview with Mission members Father Gusmão accepted that he had made mistakes during the first and second rounds but he also believed the media needed better training in electoral law and in understanding the respective roles of STAE and CNE.

He said he respected freedom of expression principles but had been disappointed with election coverage, particularly the Australian media's coverage of a speech made to the Jakarta Foreign Correspondents Association in which he was reported as endorsing the Democratic Party candidate which resulted in controversy about his role and perceived bias.

5.4 Access to information

Radio Timor Leste asked CNE to review its provision of information and the media's access to information as soon as possible during the Presidential run-off. The state-owned public broadcaster, which claims to have a listenership of 68 per cent of Timor-Leste's population, had two complaints, the first about the inaccuracy of electoral results information which when broadcast live was akin to spreading rumour, and the changing schedule of times for CNE's events which caused logistical problems for the news media.

RTL believed that the presentation by CNE of timely accurate information in press releases in four languages – Portuguese, Tetum, Bahasa Indonesian and English – would improve CNE credibility with local and international media and improve the accuracy of information.

The Mission attended a Monday, 30 April, press conference held by CNE's Father Gusmão and Maria Angelina Lopes Sarmiento. It was conducted in three languages - Tetum, Portuguese then English - and attended by local media, members of the diplomatic community including the Brazilian and the Portuguese ambassadors, and members of NGOs, UN and electoral agencies.

In English, Father Gusmão used the press conference to criticise STAE in relation to CNE being "locked out" for a period during the printing of ballot papers. Those present at the press conference who understood all three languages reported there was a difference of tone and tenor between the three versions. In English CNE's criticism of STAE was more muted than it was in Tetum.

A review of the next day's press showed that in both *Suara Timor Lorosae* (STL) and *Diário* the story that STAE locked out CNE was reported "word for word" on the last page of each paper. The Mission noticed that this was apparently despite the fact that, late in the press conference, a clarification in English made it clear that the "lock-out" was the result of a misunderstanding.

Father Gusmão said in an early interview that CNE had no media strategy, was under-funded and lacked resources. It had started with "zero, no desk, no chair" and CNE staff had used their own money for such things as mobile phones and food.

CNE had suffered from rushed establishment and had been forced to rely on the ICFJ to provide a venue for press conferences. He said having to provide a press conference in four languages himself was a "mission impossible". CNE was establishing a media centre and wanted to recruit staff to specialise in communication.

However, for the Parliamentary elections, the situation appeared to have improved. IFES said CNE had arranged for more commissioners to be involved as spokespeople and there had been greater co-ordination.

**Mission members and Timorese journalists
at workshops.**



6. Training

Journalism training in Timor-Leste is irregular, inconsistent, primarily based in the capital Dili and largely dependent on international NGOs. The Mission heard from some older journalists who had received training in Indonesia before independence or in Australia (through the ABC's Radio Australia and universities in New Zealand and Papua New Guinea) but for most formal learning offered by NGOs is limited to short courses of from one day to two or three months.

The fledgling Timor-Leste Media Development Centre attempts to provide training in print and broadcast journalism skills, technical support, media law and policy development but struggles with few resources. It also needs to ensure stronger support from Timor-Leste's journalists, media managers and professional organisations.

Typically journalists are in their early twenties and have had two or three years of secondary education. They were young children during the Indonesian era who may have had their education interrupted for a year or more when 80 per cent of secondary teachers fled the country during the violence in 1999/2000.

In the absence of any training pathways, these young journalists began the business of news reporting post independence by learning on the job, in relative isolation and without the benefit of the experience of a generation of mentors. Around 100 received training from the American NGO, Internews, to a very basic certificate level.

Among older journalists, it is estimated few have degrees in Communications and/or Journalism, most likely from an Indonesian or Australian university. Individuals in this group are also likely to have worked for various news media and are now employed by an NGO. The hand-picking of experienced journalists by international organisations who offer superior salaries and conditions is problematic for the maturing of a domestic news media in Timor-Leste.

There was evidence of some in-house training. The public radio broadcaster RTL had used the Australian Broadcasting Commission to help its journalists, including those in outlying districts, in covering special events like the elections. This was important as the difficulty of the terrain and the time spent in travel tended to discourage the NGOs from venturing out of Dili. Consequently, RTL showed considerable drive and sophistication in its strategies for coverage.

Salvador Soares, publisher and editor-in-chief of *Suara Timor Lorosae*, which claims to be Timor-Leste's largest-selling newspaper, also provides in-house training. He said he believed in "training, training, training." He has sent some 15 journalists to Jakarta for training and he runs a sort of intern scheme

offering training in a well-equipped, modern training room in his own establishment. These interns are employed for three months and the best are offered positions full-time at the newspaper. A list of about 15 prospective interns was attached to the door of the training room when the Mission visited.

A three-month beginners' course was also provided by the *Timor Post* to aspiring journalists, many from high schools. The training is conducted by the paper's senior journalists and the most promising trainees are offered employment. The Mission heard from one reporter whose introduction to journalism, and only training, had been through this course.

The Mission was told about a number of short courses or workshops run by or through these organisations:

- Timor-Leste Media Development Center (TLMDC)
- International Centre For Journalists (ICFJ)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Timor-Leste Journalists Association (TLJA)

6.1 Timor-Leste Media Development Centre (TLMDC)

The TLMDC is a local NGO launched in 2005 by a group of Timor-Leste journalists and media specialists to help support independent media organisations.

The director, Francisco da Silva Gari, has been with TLMDC since 2003 when the Centre was run through Internews Timor-Leste. He is fluent in Tetum, Bahasa Indonesian, English and a regional dialect and speaks some Portuguese.

Internews, an American organisation supported by donors, began working in Timor-Leste in 1999 and primarily built capability in the community radio sector. Before leaving, Internews transferred its role as a local provider of journalism and media training to TLMDC which it helped to establish.

TLMDC uses the NGO Forum as its umbrella organisation and has a governance structure of seven board members. The TMLDC has 15 employees and many like Mr da Silva are multi-lingual and hold high educational qualifications.

The Centre is attempting to establish a sustainable financial footing. It has five broad streams of activity in addition to its training activities that are partly funded by donor aid and partly by commercial activity. These are:

- Gender programme work
- A website aimed at linking Timorese living broad
- A subscription-based news monitoring service that supports three staff
- An internet café which offers cheaper rates to journalists and community radio staff
- Support for community radio.

The TLMDC and the Community Radio Association successfully lobbied UNDP and UNICEF to provide new radio equipment for community radio stations, but the TLMDC cannot afford to travel to all the districts to assist the stations.

Positively, TLMDC is surviving and the Mission believes the Centre allows Timorese to take the lead in setting their own agenda for journalism training. It perhaps offers the best prospect for indigenous and autonomous long-term strengthening of Timorese media capacity.

Mr da Silva Gari highlighted areas of weakness in reporting the elections. In his judgement, journalists shy away from investigative reporting through fear of intimidation from members of the political parties, and their inexperience limits attempts to follow up stories.

He said that the American organisation, the International Center for Journalists, had approached TLMDC about combining activities. However, TLMDC had not wanted to be “absorbed” and wanted to build its own identity. While it was happy to co-operate with international media agencies, it was committed to Timorese ownership and sustainability.

6.2 International Center For Journalists

The International Center For Journalists (ICFJ) is a non-profit American organisation which promotes quality journalism. The ICFJ has a two-year donor-funded project to support the development of a “strong, professional and sustainable media sector in Timor-Leste.” USAID and AusAid have co-funded the ICFJ’s two-year project to the tune of US\$1.6 million. Pending results, the project may be extended for four years.

The organisation’s current activities include a journalism “Training the trainer” programme, a content analysis project that assesses local news stories against 27 criteria, and support for election coverage through the provision of a press conference venue and some pool coverage. It is early days for ICFJ’s “Training the trainer” programme. The *Timor-Post*’s Carlos de Jesus said he is preparing to be a trainer but it is “too early to say” if the model will work.

This view was echoed by the TVTL director, Antonio Diaz, who said that three of his staff had taken part in the training but he was not yet sure whether it was effective. He said it was important for any training to relate to what the Timorese media were doing, and their stage of development. For example, training had to take account of the fact that there was no specialisation in reporting in the Timor-Leste media. “Everybody does everything so there is no expertise.”

Fransedes Suni, a Timorese journalist working with ICFJ as co-ordinator of the Special Projects Team, was one of the first to get a journalism degree. His

assessment of training needs is for core skills – language skills, sourcing information, providing balance and investigative journalism.

He wants to see the establishment of a local faculty or institution, possibly in the university. “The most appropriate way internationals can help would be by setting up and running an institution. But the course would have to be led by Timorese. For example the co-ordinator should be Timorese, but would have close assistance from internationals while there is such a large human resources gap.”

The Mission heard a Timor-Leste Media Institute (TLMI) was planned by ICFJ to work with trainer candidates - senior journalists from print, radio and TV – on developing skills which could be passed on to other journalists at their home base. But the ICFJ was still working to gain widespread support and the prospective institute’s relationship in particular with the TLMDC remains unclear. ICFJ’s deputy country director Emanuel Braz, a senior ICFJ manager, said even if ICFJ was to leave Timor-Leste after two years its legacy would be 40 or so trained journalists and media professionals who would provide significant additional capability and capacity.

Fransedes Suni said two types of journalism were prevalent in Timor-Leste election coverage – transcribing and pen-drive journalism. Instead of presenting facts reporters transcribed interviews; they published press releases in their entirety without questions or follow-up.

The ICFJ ran a one-and-a-half day workshop for 30 to 40 journalists participating in the “pool coverage” election project. This initiative came from a desire to provide more coverage of the districts, to give junior reporters experience outside Dili and to overcome the hurdle of news outlets’ lack of transport. Two daily and one weekly newspaper and 14 radio stations took stories in the Presidential campaign. Altogether 35 items were published or broadcast during the three-day project, a disappointingly small number according to the organisers. It was also reported editors were not happy with the quality of the copy.

However, that did not seem such an issue on the second visit when pooled reporting was also being organised. RTTL was not taking part because its staff were fully committed on the election campaign and the newspaper *Suara Timor Lorosae* was also not participating. Five specific categories of news - security, voter turnout, the process of voting including counting, fraud and intimidation and what voters had to say - were identified as themes for pool coverage.

Pool coverage is a cost-effective way of covering elections when logistics, resources and capacity are concerns. However, pool members were instructed that they could not use their special access to gather “exclusive” stories for individual news media outlets.

6.3 United Nations Development Programme

The UNDP programme focused on assisting journalists to understand and report on the elections. Miguel Caldeira is Portuguese, a journalist and UNDP media adviser to STAE and CNE. He is assisted by Julio da Silva, a Timorese journalist and an adviser/trainer. They focused on assisting journalists understand and report the elections.

Ninety journalists attended a workshop in March to explain the roles of the two election organisations in the Presidential elections, and the Code of Conduct for Journalists (which is in Portuguese). Training provided for 20 RTL journalists, and journalists at 11 community radio stations and newspapers included explanation of the laws and regulations of the voting process and the journalists' role.

Television and radio journalists sought advice on questions to put to the Presidential candidates in programmes that were paid for by UNDP. More workshops in the June lead-up to the Parliamentary elections covered the role and importance of Parliament. These were followed by two-day, on-the-job training whereby trainers from UNDP went out on stories with radio journalists and gave feedback on improvements. Without trainers making the journey into the districts, journalists were unlikely to receive any information about how to work on the elections. UNDP made a point of using Timorese trainers to ensure the learning environment was comfortable and productive.

UNDP will make an assessment of improvements, continuing training needs and difficulties. Without any press law, Miguel Caldeira said there are neither sanctions nor quality standards for reporting. No-one is saying whether reporters are doing a good or bad job. "We give them a press release with a table of numbers and two different figures appear in the newspapers. These can be numbers we've never seen before and can be different from the number in the headline. But it is not done on purpose. They are afraid to ask."

6.4 Journalists' Workshops

The Timor-Leste Media Development Centre organised a discussion workshop for the Mission's visit in April during the Presidential run-off. The 14 journalists who attended were typically young (early to mid 20s), worked in community and national radio or produced a women's radio programme funded by Irish Aid.

They were asked for their experiences of reporting the first round of the Presidential election, improvements they would make for the next round, and the role of the international media.

Participants said impediments to doing a good job during the first round included:

- differences between what CNE and election observers were saying

- confusion between the roles of STAE and CNE and the quality of information being disseminated
- lack of transportation to cover the campaign from beginning to end
- lack of finance
- difficulties in covering remote areas
- polling staff not adequately understanding their roles
- NGOs and other related organisations not working together

Improvements the journalists could make themselves, seek help for, or seek from others included:

- training in how to follow up a particular incident or issue
- better organisation of journalists for transport
- greater understanding of the electoral process and law
- confidence in the impartiality of CNE
- better critical and analytical skills
- checking for accuracy and balance
- asking sharper questions in interviews to elicit more information
- maintaining their main job of conveying every point of view to the community
- understanding the media's role in resolving conflict

At the May seminar, the journalists felt they were victims of CNE's failure to supply reliable information, inconsistent messages and lack of co-operation, especially in the districts. They criticised the Presidential candidates for insulting and "demonising" each other as their major election platforms and attempting to intimidate voters and journalists.

They admitted to being used by politicians and others because they reported verbatim instead of attempting to question the material.

However, one participant said at least 60 per cent of the Timorese media provided balance. It was generally agreed a strong association of journalists was necessary to discuss common issues, and provide a united front when one of their members was unfairly pressured or intimidated.

The role and activities of international media organisations in providing support were seen by participants to include:

- assistance with planning coverage for big events like the elections
- sharing experiences and opening minds to alternative techniques for election coverage
- help with improving the quality of reporting, for example, how to respond to manipulation, the most pressing issue in the first round of the election
- working together to improve the media's effectiveness in the next rounds of the elections

The Mission held a second seminar for Timorese journalists on June 21, in which they were asked to comment on election issues in the Parliamentary campaign and other topics.

Issues identified as being topical in the election campaign were:

- Decentralisation of power and decision-making
- Reforming the police and military
- Education
- Health
- Agriculture
- Infrastructure
- Electricity
- Unemployment.

Workshop participants identified the following concerns about reporting the elections:

- A lack of resources to cover all the parties
- The timing of political programmes and events
- The time allocation for all parties
- Transportation
- Insufficient communication resources such as cell phones
- A lack of electricity in rural areas at night
- Insufficient internet connections
- A lack of resources to follow up stories
- Dependence on political parties for transport

The journalists cited the following training issues:

- Journalists usually have a limited education, mostly to high school level, which meant they were not trained to analyse sensitive and complex issues.
- Journalists needed greater technical knowledge in journalism.
- The Government had done nothing to increase the capacity of journalism and instead created bureaucratic obstacles.
- Journalists lack equipment such as computers, recording devices and transport.
- Insufficient wages – “It’s important to have enough to live on.”

Attendees also said journalists needed to be better organised. They advocated the creation of an umbrella organisation to cover all industry groups, including the Timor-Leste Journalists’ Association, Sindicato, the Timor-Leste Photographers’ Association (TILPA) and the two broadcasters’ associations. The umbrella group needed to be well organised and respected by other institutions, and well supported by journalists. It needed to raise levels of professionalism.

They were highly critical of the journalists' organisations. The Journalists' Association's office was sometimes closed for months, and the association had not tried to protect the journalist who had been beaten up. There had been no congress or meeting of members for several years, which made it difficult for members to hold the leadership of the association to account, or push for a programme of action.

Public broadcast journalists also said the status of TVTL and RTL was not clear in terms of journalistic independence. They believed that some politicians felt they owned public broadcasting.

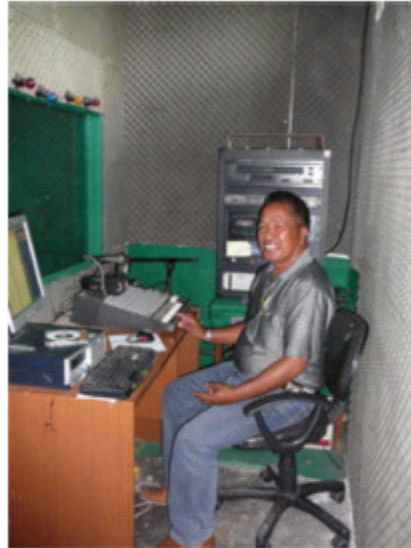
Attendees also said they understood the relationships between making profits, selling more newspapers and better journalism.

There was also a need to set up partnerships through scholarships and professional internships in the region.

News media representatives in Timor-Leste.



Beusau community radio staff (above and right).



Mr Salvador Soares, publisher of *Suara Timor Leste* (L), Mr Roserio Martins, director of Radio Timor Leste, and Mr Jose Gabriel, editor-in-chief of *Jornal Nacional Diario*



7. Resources

The under capitalisation and lack of resources are significant issues for the Timor-Leste media and they influence the public's ability to receive information.

Timor-Leste's poverty and fragile infrastructure present significant challenges for the media, not only in the rural areas, where poverty is more pronounced, but in the capital, Dili.

For example, the practical resourcing challenges to be overcome in broadcasting community radio to the Timorese population include stations having no money to buy fuel for generators, transportation difficulties, transmitters in need of repairs, ageing or broken computers in need of parts and technicians, and the reality of many ordinary Timorese being unable to afford a \$5 radio, or the batteries to keep it running.

So while 68 per cent of the Timor-Leste population has access to the RTTL radio signal, the Mission heard that this coverage assumed "that everyone is on the air and has full power, which has never happened since independence".

7.1 Newspapers

The three daily newspapers depend on sales and advertising for their revenue. They sell for 50c a copy. Given the state of the Timor-Leste economy, advertising is inevitably difficult to attract, and advertising ratios were very low in the newspapers observed. It was difficult to get reliable rates of circulation but the Mission understands these are also comparatively low. *STL* sells about 2000, the *Timor Post* around 1000 and *Diário* even fewer. The *Post* has a 70 per cent subscription rate. Street vendors at the one time sell all three newspapers and compete against each other on the streets of Dili.

Newspaper representatives said they waited for advertisers to come to them rather than trying to attract advertising sales revenue and this reflects the low level of private enterprise in Timor-Leste. The UNDP supported the press during the election campaign by paying for full page advertisements on behalf of CNE. During its second visit the Mission was told UNDP had bought 25 full-page advertisements at \$US600 each. This had enabled *Diário* to increase its size from tabloid to broadsheet. The *Timor Post* printed an acknowledgement from its journalists for the support.

Few copies of newspapers reach the districts, and are out of date when they do, because of the difficulties of distribution. However, when newspapers do reach the districts or IDP camps, there is evidence of a greater pass-on and reading aloud by the literate to others who cannot read.

7.1.1 *Suara Timor Lorosae*

The short history of the largest daily, *Suara Timor Lorosae*, gives some insight into resourcing issues for newspapers. As *Suara Timor Timur*, it was the first daily newspaper published in the country when it began in February 1993. According to its publisher, Salvador Soares, the newspaper was established only after meeting conditions imposed by the then Indonesian Government. In the upheaval that followed the vote on autonomy in 1999, Indonesian-backed militias destroyed the newspaper building and its equipment. The attack was not surprising. Throughout its existence, journalists were intimidated and terrorised by the Indonesian Army and its supporters.

The newspaper was reborn again in July 2000 as *Suara Timor Lorosae* but it ran foul of the Fretilin-led Government of Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri almost immediately. Mr Soares is unabashedly anti-Fretilin and says threats have been made against the newspaper often by the Government, including Dr Alkatiri.

The newspaper rented offices owned by the Government in Dili but was eventually evicted. In February 2005, the newspaper reported 53 people had died in the sub-district of Hatubuiliko and that there was hunger in almost all districts in Timor-Leste. Mr Soares said the Prime Minister threatened to close down the newspaper and ordered all governments to stop subscribing to and advertising in *STL*. They have re-established themselves in a former Japanese aid agency building on the outskirts of the city.

STL is run through the Timor Tatoli Naroman Foundation and has had help from many sources, including New Zealand. According to Mr Soares, the socio-economic climate in Timor-Leste is expected to remain unfavourable for a newspaper for at least the next three to five years. Newspapers may be able to cover their production costs but equipment and training has been dependent on donors.

He has about 50 staff including 21 journalists (five women). He has stringers in Baucau, Viqueque, Ainaro, Same, Maliana and Ermera. In 2003, with aid from Jakarta and New Zealand, it was able to send 14 journalists, three managers and three technicians to training in Jakarta and Bandung, Indonesia.

7.1.2 *Jornal Nacional Diário*

The newspaper, *Jornal Nacional Diário*, provides another example of the precarious nature of newspaper publishing. It was founded in March 2005, and is based in a former Indonesian police station in Avenue Farol. The daily edition grew out of the weekly *Jornal Nacional Semanário* and has 13 reporters.

The paper's masthead editorial team names as one of its contributors, President José Ramos Horta.

The newspaper is published by the Grupo de Media Nacional (GMN) which is linked to the Gráfica Nacional printing company.

Diário is the only one of Timor-Leste's daily newspapers publishing four-colour pictures and advertisements (restricted to front and back pages). The cost of publishing the paper (circulation 600) is apparently subsidised by the printer.

Diário has a reputation in some quarters as being a pro-Fretilin newspaper but this view is disputed by the editor-in-chief, José Gabriel: "I think that view [pro-Fretilin] is because we publish some party political statements in full, not just short news items."

Mr Gabriel said editorial decisions were made on electoral (and other news) coverage at an 8.30am daily editorial conference. Story choices were made after reporters returned to the newsroom after 2pm to write up stories.

With only 13 reporters, Mr Gabriel said it was difficult for *Diário* to cover stories on the districts, so the newspaper mostly concentrated on Dili. Pay for most journalists was said to be about \$80 a month.

Transport was also a handicap. The newspaper had no cars of its own for assignments and relied on the use of its fleet of five motorbikes. *Diário* used to have eight motorbikes but three were stolen during the rioting in 2006.

Diário has no code of conduct as part of its election coverage but Mr Gabriel said it tried to achieve balance. He said the paper had not received any complaints from parties about its coverage.

The paper also had no mechanism for handling election complaints.

On the day that the Mission visited *Diário* (20 June 2007), the front page lead story carried a banner headline, "Estadu Ofiusialmente Hapara Operasaun Ba Alferdo [sic] Reinaldo", reporting President Ramos Horta's declaration that the Republic of Timor Leste was calling off the hunt by International Stabilisation Force (ISF) troops for renegade Major Alfredo Reinaldo.

The second lead reported an attack by former President Xanana Gusmão on the Community Fund Programme providing some US\$10,000 for development projects for each suco, or local council, claiming that it led to corruption. For the next day's paper, a *Diário* reporter attended a press conference called by Prime Minister Estanislau da Silva, who had introduced the fund as previous Agriculture Minister and who defended the scheme as an important development initiative.

Another reporter was working on a story about street kids who were being interviewed on how they were allegedly being paid by some political parties to participate in election rallies. The newspaper was also probing the street economics of the youth who were helping support their families by selling newspapers, phone cards and cigarettes.

Most of *Diário*'s journalists are young with a high school background and with limited training and experience. Mr Gabriel told the Mission that his paper needed more training support.

Pay for most journalists was said to be about US\$80 a month. Journalists undergoing training were also assisted with a transport allowance. "Our job is to observe the elections and to provide reports that are fair and democratic. It is important for the press to help teach our people how to vote," Mr Gabriel said.

"About our future? We hope our country will be more independent than it is at the moment, and our newspaper will become more professional than we are now."

7.1.3 *Timor Post*

The *Timor Post* was founded in 2000 by a collective of senior journalists who continue to run the paper. It is regarded as perhaps the most neutral of all the papers - but it also has few resources.

The paper is printed in Dili and reports a daily print run of 1500, of which 1000 goes to subscribers mainly in the Dili district. About 100 are sold on the streets of Dili, and copies are also sent by bus to Baucau (60), Same (30), Ermera (25) and once a week to Oecussi.

The editor-in-chief and acting director, Jose Ximenes, says the concern is worth \$100,000 a year. It's not clear how much advertising revenue the paper makes, though the Mission was told the rate for a full-page advert is \$US80.

The paper employs 12 journalists in Dili and another five based in Baucau, Same, Oecussi, Ermera and Suai, and most were out on the field when the Mission visited on June 20. They are paid \$80 to \$120 a month, and are aged between 20 to 28 years. Many began their journalism careers on the paper's three-month course for beginners, after which the paper hires the most promising recruits. The training is conducted on the job by the Post's senior journalists.

Although perceived by some as pro-CNRT, both Mr Ximenes and senior journalist Mouzinho Lopez denied bias in the *Timor Post*'s coverage of the elections.

Mr Ximenes maintained the editorial line was neutral. He told the Mission the paper allocates the same space for all the parties, and changed the front page to avoid any one party dominating.

Mr Lopez, who is the co-ordinator of the *Post's* journalists, said the paper had done its best to cover the election fairly, but was hampered by lack of money, transport, accommodation, and security considerations.

It did not have the reporters or the resources to adequately cover all 14 parties in the Parliamentary elections, so it concentrated mostly on events in Dili. The paper had only one car and six motorbikes in Dili, and another three motorbikes in the districts, which limited its coverage because it was too dangerous for reporters to travel to the districts by motorbikes. For the Parliamentary election, it had split the country into five regions, parts of which could be covered by its district correspondents. Stories from the districts were filed by cellphone. The decision to send reporters to cover rallies in the areas within these zones was made on the basis of newsworthiness, for example, if the occasion was potentially volatile or controversial.

Mr Lopez said the *Post* had tried to do quality stories, which focused on the programmes of the parties, and contributed to nation-building.

"The election is the biggest event for democracy," said Mr Lopez. "We have to write stories that can contribute to nation-building and stability."

Mr Lopez had himself written stories that were not favourable to CNRT. The week before our visit, he had written about allegations of corruption in the Presidential office while Xanana Gusmão had been in office. Some people had taken this to mean that he was anti-Xanana.

"Everyone has to bow down to the truth. This is different from the revolution times, when people worshipped heroes. Everyone has to contribute to nation-building."

Mr Lopez was adamant that maintaining the *Post's* neutrality was critical to the safety of its reporters.

The paper's former director, Aderito Hugo da Costa, was forced to resign because of his political links after pressure from the paper's journalists led to a board vote. It was Mr Lopez who discovered Mr da Costa's name on the CNRT list. Mr Lopez said he had asked all his reporters about their political links, and had made it clear that they needed to be independent. He had also observed them, and was satisfied that none of them had political links. "It puts the paper at risk."

Mr Lopez says the *Post* strives to be balanced, and sometimes holds stories back to get the other side of the story. He says the quality of journalism can

lead to the perception of biased reporting. A positive piece is perceived to be in favour of the candidate.

The *Post* does not have an internal code of ethics or guidelines for its journalists.

Mr Lopez, who has a journalism diploma from the Divine Word University, Papua New Guinea, a two-year course, says there is an urgent need for journalism training, which is both practical and theoretical. In the absence of university-based journalism training in Timor-Leste, he believes Timorese journalists would benefit greatly from internships with overseas media companies.

“If a media company has professionals, then the paper can be recognised.”

Mr Lopez said Timorese media companies must also provide better conditions for their journalists: “To be a journalist in East Timor is very hard.”

With such small salaries, many journalists are not motivated to spend time on their stories, which leads to unbalanced reporting.

7.2 Broadcasting infrastructure

When the Mission visited in May, work was already under way to improve radio infrastructure including repairing and purchasing new transmitters with the help of UNMIT’s Public Information Office.

To expand TVTL’s coverage beyond Dili, RTTL (with support from the government and Portugal) began building TV transmitters in each of the 12 districts. Seven of those (in Same, Viqueque, Manatuto, Ainaro, Ermera, Liquica and Aileu) were operational but had yet to be commissioned. Construction on the other five transmitters began in May.

However, as very few people outside Dili have television sets, UNMIT was investigating the possibility of providing television sets throughout the districts, located in community centres and other such public places.

UNMIT and RTTL are working together to achieve national radio coverage using AM transmission, which has the potential to provide coverage to 99 per cent of the population of Timor-Leste. The existing transmission site has been off-air since 2003. UNMIT will repair the antenna system, and install a new transmitter and supplementary equipment. RTTL is striving to resolve a property dispute at the site and to secure government and donor funds to renovate the physical site. The funds for the buildings, site and fence are not yet available, which could delay the re-commissioning of this critically needed site.

7.3 Community Radio

The 12 community radio stations in the districts outside Dili have no guaranteed funding streams, according to a UNDP assessment in April, although some are supported or subsidised by UNICEF, USAID, UNDP and other donor agencies and NGOs in a variety of ways. For example, UNICEF sponsors children's programmes.

The 2006 National Media Survey found a total of 18 community radio stations in Timor-Leste, but the Mission understands some of those are no longer operational.

Visits were made by the Mission to community radio stations in two districts, Baucau and Ermera.

7.3.1 Radio Café, Ermera

Radio Café in Gleno, Ermera, is one of those which continues to broadcast but like other community radio stations, transmission is intermittent and haphazard, due to its precarious financial situation.

When it has the money to pay for fuel for the generator, Radio Café broadcasts between 6.30pm and 10.30pm, Monday to Saturday. When the Mission visited the week before the May 9 Presidential election, the station had been off-air for more than a week.

Between August 2006 and January 2007, the radio was closed because its solar panels had been stolen. In March, an Austrian community radio station offered the station a generator, but buying fuel is still problematic.

The station was first established in November 2002, with funding from the World Bank, which provided \$200 a month until April 2003, and then \$100 a month until August 2004.

It now derives what income it gets solely from local entities – including government agencies and NGOs – which pay it to broadcast community messages and other items. The money is used to buy fuel, tapes and batteries. None of the nine volunteer journalists (seven male, and two female, aged between 17 and 25) have ever been paid.

The station operates from within a crumbling building, with a small studio equipped with the minimum required to broadcast. It has one ageing computer with outdated software, one mixing table, one hi-fi, three microphones, and two radio headphones.

It does not have tape recorders for interviews, compact disc players, a telephone line, or access to the Internet. It has two motorbikes in need of repair, but the station cannot afford to fix them. Even when the motorbikes

were in running order, the station struggled to pay for fuel and maintenance. The current transmitter does not cover the whole district, and is damaged.

Despite those considerable limitations, the station manager, Pedro de A. Goncalves, who did some journalism training in Indonesia, is committed to providing information to the community and giving the community a voice. As well as broadcasting local news, Radio Café provides time for music dedications, programmes on education, health (HIV/AIDs, for example), agriculture, women's issues, culture and children. It regularly interviews children about their interests and views.

Radio Café tries to reflect its community's concerns and there is a high buy-in from the community, which owns and governs the station through a council of five elected local people. Initially, the community council took a hands-on approach to the running of the station, which caused some conflict between the station manager and the council, but after the manager resigned, the station went off-air, and the manager was subsequently reinstated by public demand. Listeners complain whenever the station is off-air. The station prides itself on having a good relationship with its audience.

Radio Café's coverage of the election was necessarily limited. Most of it seemed to have focused on the election process, rather than a discussion of the issues. The station ran voter education programmes provided by STAE, and used some of the stories from the ICFJ-organised "pool coverage" in the run-up to the first round of the Presidential election. It relies on information supplied to it, mostly because of its limited capacity to seek it out. The station reported on the candidates' campaign rallies in the district, but reporters did not interview the candidates, in part because of the practicalities of getting them into the studio at night for interviews. However, no requests were made for interviews. The station also went off-air during the campaign when there were outbreaks of violence, because its reporters could not safely walk the three to four kilometres to and from work in the evening.

7.3.2 Baucau Community Radio

The Mission visited the FM community radio station in Baucau, Timor-Leste's second largest town (pop. 16,000). It is housed in an almost vacant building and consists of a small studio and operating desk and an office with a table. The programming schedule is 9am to midday and 6pm to 10pm. In 2005 it was estimated 1,242 homes in the Baucau and surrounding districts (total pop. 104,500) within the station's reach had radios. When the Mission was visiting, the station was running a rotation of Western pop music.

Ten staff work at the station which began in 2001 with support from the World Bank but in 2004 funding stopped. Voluntary labour keeps the station going but activities are haphazard as staff only come to work when they are able. They are required to spend their own money on batteries, transport and

recorders. The two motorbikes which are the station's transport are broken as are a computer and printer. They cannot afford repairs.

The seven staff who met with the Mission said that despite the poor resources, they have made an effort to broadcast election information. Some of them were observers in the first round and passed on what they had learnt from STAE as well as broadcasting the voter education CDs which STAE supplied. The station has four journalists, some of whom received training from Internews when it operated in Timor-Leste. When asked how they would cover a visit from a Presidential candidate the response was that a journalist would report the event. "Through the mission of community radio we spread out information to help the community. The benefit of our radio is that it provides experiences and opens minds."

Generally, old people and children are keen listeners. Special programmes allow children's participation. "The children are so happy when they hear their voices on radio." A connection with UNICEF means children's rights are discussed on air and they intend to form a relationship with the national women's organisation for similar purposes.

The group showed a good understanding of the role, influence, and responsibilities of community radio. Their dedication was apparent in their responses and the fact they had all worked there since 2001. But they want more training about civic matters, technical expertise and professional conduct. An offer from Radio Netherlands for training in Jakarta was turned down because they could not afford go there.

Dili during the 2007 election campaign.



8. Coverage

The Mission acknowledges some limitations in its assessment of media coverage. None of the members speaks Tetum used by the Timor-Leste media.

The Mission relied on a number of secondary sources to examine content. These included some translated news stories, media monitoring material, and the media's own accounts of what was covered and why. During the Parliamentary election campaign, Mission members were able to observe full-day news cycles at two newspapers and at both state broadcasters, RTL and TVTL.

The observations of politicians and party spokespeople and the analysis of electoral agencies have also been taken into account. Comments and material from independent media NGOs on the ground were also considered.

The Mission attended newsworthy events in its own right, either as observers of particular media sector work habits or as invited guests. These included party press conferences or briefings and political rallies.

The Mission's assessment of coverage uses criteria that are traditionally regarded as the news media's functions during election campaigns. These include:

- the provision of information including voter education,
- the reporting of electoral deficiencies and the media's watchdog role,
- the analysis of candidates and policies including evaluation of track records and political promises.

8.1 The media's information role

All of the media appeared to take seriously their role in encouraging people to vote in democratic elections and provided some voter education.

The highly politicised environment of the election campaign, the nature of political rallies and the information vacuum in the districts led to a reliance on other forms of media such as posters, handouts and banners. In Dili, a large banner hung above a major street intersection showed a photograph of Xanana Gusmão dressed as a resistance leader with another picture of him in business clothes.

NZAID-funded posters provided the 14 parties or coalitions in the Parliamentary elections with the opportunity for 200-word statements each about their platforms and policies. Handouts and a CD for community radio to address the information divide in the districts were also produced as part of the project. These manifesto posters, party leader posters and "Vota" posters of different sorts were continually being stuck on buildings, street fixtures, in IDP camps and on monuments throughout the campaign.

The most widely distributed publication in Timor-Leste, *Lafaek*, the education publication for school children, had in its March-April issue eight pages explaining how the country was ruled, the system of government, democracy, and the election process. The Mission heard that it is common for children to read the contents to their parents, and many families cut out the pictures to paste on their walls for decoration. The publication prints 270,000 copies. Because the voting age is 17, and Timor-Leste has a young population, *Lafaek* is a vital information link for aspiring voters.

8.2 Reporting of electoral deficiencies

As well as complaints about or from the news media over the elections, the Timor-Leste elections provided the opportunity for the media to report on other accountability mechanisms. However, complaints of intimidation and other election accountability stories were generally only reported if they were claimed by Presidential candidates or other politicians. This reflects a lack of investigative inquiry by the Timorese media.

For example, the Timor-Leste Provedor's office said it had received 10 complaints relating to intimidation of voters in the first round of Presidential elections, according to the Deputy Provedor, Mr Silverio Batista. During the Parliamentary elections, the Provedor's office indicated it had received complaints about the exploitation of young children for political purposes during the campaign.

The Judicial System Monitoring Programme claimed that a number of Timorese had been denied their fundamental constitutional right to vote, including 255 prison inmates, people who were alleged to be "mentally ill", and a number of hospital in-patients during the Presidential run-off.

Such issues appeared to be generally under-reported by the Timor-Leste media during the elections. The Timor-Leste Subscriber News service shows the *Timor Post* reported on April 27 the monitoring group KOMEK's call for election problems to be resolved for the second round of the Presidential poll and the Parliamentary elections.

However, the same monitoring service showed that only the international media reported the story that the first round elections complied with only 13 of 52 benchmarks according to the independent Electoral Certification Team's report. This may reflect the Timorese journalists' sense of newsworthiness during the campaign that accountability is secondary to the "theatre" of politics.

8.3 Content analysis

Alongside its training programmes, the International Center for Journalists is running a pilot content analysis project examining individual stories in the three daily newspapers – *Timor Post*, *Suara Timor Lorosae* and *Jornal Nacional Diário*. The Media Analysis Unit only considers news written in

Tetum or Bahasa by Timorese press and concerning Timor-Leste. Stories are classified as Elections, Political, Justice, Agriculture, Social Sector or Economy. Individual newspapers receive feedback to inform training needs and improvements. It is intended that with big events like the elections, information can be collated and presented as a report card on the media's performance in general.

The analysts are Timorese journalists who have been taught to assess stories against ten international standards and 27 sub-categories. The overall aim is capacity building of the media but of equal importance is to create an appetite for acquiring analytical skills. Because the unit is ongoing, the analyses will eventually include broadcast media.

Participants told the Mission the work has a constructive influence on their roles as journalists. As well as developing skills to identify the hallmarks of accurate, balanced reporting they benefit from daily discussions among themselves in making their judgements. Because the project is still a pilot, results were not available.

8.4 Setting the news agenda

The extent to which the Timorese media set their own agenda for coverage of the elections is debatable. The media were themselves participants in the political process but their coverage was largely orthodox and unimaginative.

The media have yet to develop an election agenda-setting role that is cohesive or planned. The Mission's assessment of the news media coverage for the second round of Presidential elections and the Parliamentary elections shows that the coverage was events-centric. It was also characterised by the ping-pong of claim and counter-claim from the two major Presidential candidates and their parties.

For example, the Fretilin press conference of Friday, 4 May, 2007, was characterised by a series of unsubstantiated rumours and allegations against the Jose Ramos Horta campaign. The conference was attended by international and domestic media who offered little challenge to the presentation and were relatively passive participants.

Reporting of issues such as where candidates stand on security issues, the future of IDP camps, the investment of Timor-Leste's petroleum revenue, unemployment, infrastructure development, public works, education and health were not dominant areas of news coverage when the Mission was in Timor-Leste.

National unity, the justice system in terms of the separation of powers, and blame for past conflict were better reported in the Presidential run-off and there was better coverage of party policy in the Parliamentary elections. This

reflected both the stage of development of Timor-Leste's politics, the prevailing culture of allegation and capacity issues for journalists.

8.5 Coverage of the Petroleum Fund

During the Parliamentary election campaign a Mission member attended an NGO-organised public forum about the Petroleum Fund into which funds from the oil and gas joint venture between Timor-Leste and Australia are banked.

In 2005, the Fretilin-led government established the Fund to try to avoid the "resource curse" problems for Timor-Leste. The fund legislation put emphasis on sustainable management of the country's petroleum income to benefit both current and future generations.

The issue seemed a significant election issue, and was raised at one rally Mission members attended. Although the independent state has received almost US\$1 billion from the oil sector, this has had little real impact on development. Most of the money has been invested in the Federal Reserve Bank of New York but little has been spent for current development in Timor-Leste. In 2005-6, the government spent US\$85 million from the fund on development and although it had planned to spend US\$260 million in 2006-7, no money was transferred from the fund.

The public forum attended by the Mission member was organised by La'o Hamutuk, an advocacy group, along with the NGOs including a splinter group, Luta Hamutuk, at KOTA, near the University of Timor-Leste, on 21 June 2007.

About 250 people, mostly ordinary Timorese, students and some foreign aid representatives were present at the forum, and representatives of all 14 parties were invited to debate the issue. Only 10 of the 14 parties sent representatives. Questions from the public, such as why there was not enough transparency over the fund and what was happening to the money, were put to the party representatives who were each given four minutes to respond.

Although two newspapers published reports about the seminar, neither reported in any depth or with any insights into the public concerns. One of the election issues was alleged lack of transparency about the fund and its fiscal regime.

Luta Hamutuk's Media Officer, Mr Remigio Vieira, a journalist from the Timor-Leste Journalists Association (TLJA) and a columnist for the national press, was not surprised about the quality of coverage.

"They concentrate too much on the party statements and rallies and don't question enough about the issues. This isn't interesting enough for them. Yet the oil fund issue is vital for our national development and it is important that

our people have good information about how the government is managing the oil money and what will be done to achieve a sustainable economy,” he said.

Researcher Charles Scheiner of La’o Hamutuk, said: “It is very difficult to get the media to tackle an issue with in-depth reporting. If you put out a press release, they cover it. But if an issue doesn’t fit in with the reporters’ preconceptions, it cannot be assimilated into the reporting.”

During the debate, Ms Fernanda Borges of PUN (Partidu Unidade Nacional), the only female party leader in the Parliamentary elections, said: “The media needs to do a better job of informing the public on the oil and gas revenue and issues generally.” She also called for a repeal of the legal code providing for criminal defamation and appealed for freedom of information legislation.

Fretilin spokesperson and Minister of Natural Resources in the outgoing government, Mr José Teixeira, also criticised the lack of in-depth media coverage of the issue during the election campaign. “The trouble with the media is that there is no deep analysis. All we get is talking heads and repetition, there is no real analysis.”

8.6 Gender issues

The “talking heads” analogy also has application to the Mission’s analysis of front-page imagery of 20 copies of the three newspapers undertaken in May. The front pages showed a need to improve design to attract readers. The photographs consisted largely of “snapshots” of officials and politicians. Little thought had been given to human interest angles or point-of-sale visual attraction.

None of the front page images in the 20 copies in the Presidential run-off featured women. This confirms other gender research on the elections that shows a need for greater awareness of women’s participation in all facets of the election process including media coverage, given that of the population of about 925,000, about half are women. Male-dominated front-page imagery was also a feature of all the daily newspapers the Mission saw during the Parliamentary elections. However, TVTL’s policy of two minutes 30 seconds for each party or coalition meant regular exposure for the female leader of the PUN party, and several other female party spokeswomen.

The Mission concluded from its observations of media content that the challenges for the Timor-Leste media as they move to the Parliamentary elections and beyond include:

- increasing the depth of analysis and perception of their coverage,
- defining their agenda-setting role, and developing their accountability role,
- developing their watchdog role,
- coverage of issues-based journalism as well as personality politics,
- ensuring greater gender representation in news coverage.

The Don Bosco Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp.



NZ's Ambassador to Timor-Leste Ruth Nuttall and Father Justin de Souza.



9. Participation

The question of how rural people, poor and marginalised groups receive media information about democratic elections, and if they do at all, applies in Timor-Leste as it does to every developing society.

About 100,000 people of the one million population are Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), and most live in tent camps. Around 30,000 of them are in the Dili district. IDP numbers are fluid, ranging from around 38,000 in January to just under 128,000 in May.

Establishment of IDP camps in Dili is also fluid. Following the Presidential election and the burning of some houses in the Ermera district, allegedly by Fretilin supporters, villagers fled to Dili. A new IDP camp was set up between Mission visits near Tama Mini Park next to Motael Church.

The Mission visited two IDP camps in Dili; the Don Bosco camp during the Presidential run-off, and Jardim, an IDP camp in the centre of the capital, when it returned for the Parliamentary elections.

9.1 The Don Bosco IDP camp

At the time of the first visit, the Don Bosco camp, situated in the grounds of a Catholic Church, was providing shelter to some 3,600 people who had fled their homes during the violence of April and May 2006.

Set up as a temporary response to an urgent humanitarian crisis, the camp “celebrated” its one-year anniversary on 28 April 2007.

Of those who remain, around 20 per cent are children under 13, some of whom were born at the camp. Families are accommodated at the rate of two families or 10 or more people to a single tent. The tents were intended to last only four or five months, and are already in serious disrepair.

New Zealand’s Ambassador to Timor-Leste, Ruth Nuttall, stepped in to provide practical help, supplying drinking water and latrines, when the international community was slow to come to Timor-Leste’s aid. New Zealand continues to provide practical support.

More than 100,000 people were displaced as a result of the 2006 crisis, in which more than 30 people were killed; many had their homes burned or destroyed during the crisis.

Those who remain in the IDP camps have no homes to return to, or are afraid to return home because of the threat of violence. They have no confidence in the ability of the police to protect them. The Mission spoke to a woman who had lived next door to a mother and her four children who were burned to death when their home was torched during the crisis. No-one has been arrested for the murders, and the woman fears a similar fate. One man, a

teacher who works in the primary school next to the camp, told of a sense of helplessness that so little progress had been made to help the displaced return to their homes, and to guarantee their safety. Like most of the older people at Don Bosco, he wants to go home.

Due in no small part to the efforts of the camp co-ordinator, Father Justin de Sousa, Don Bosco is in many respects a well-organised and functioning community, despite the poverty evident in the camp. The camp is clean, tents are well-kept and tidy, and there is a school and shop. Healthcare is provided through regular doctors' and midwives' visits. The fear of disease spreading here is a real one; Timor-Leste has the highest rate of tuberculosis in Asia.

Security inside the camp is a priority. Alcohol is banned, and no weapons are allowed; many have been confiscated. The camp's residents have to be inside the compound by 7pm every night, when the gates are closed.

Yet, despite the clear difficulties faced by those at the camp, the Mission heard that the displaced people at Don Bosco were actively involved in the election process. It seems likely that the proportion of IDPs who voted in the Presidential election was comparable to the general population (82 per cent).

Figures from the polling station nearest the camp for the Presidential elections showed a fairly even split in the first round between those who supported the Fretilin leader, Francisco 'Lu-Olo' Guterres (30 per cent of the vote), and those who supported Jose Ramos Horta (31 per cent). In the May 9 run-off, the same polling stations had Ramos Horta with 64 per cent and Lu-Olo with 36 per cent.

The Mission heard of incidences of tension between rival supporters at some IDP camps. Tension was reported during the count for the second round, among IDPs from two camps (Don Bosco and the airport) with opposing party affiliations. Some IDPs from the airport camp who supported Fretilin taunted the polling staff, saying "this is war" as the count was conducted.

It seemed to the Mission that the displaced at Don Bosco were as well informed about the elections as any group of Timorese, if not more so. They have access to television, newspapers and radio (the Mission observed a number of radios during its visit). Everyone is encouraged to gather at the church centre to watch the evening news on TV (although one mother of four said she often missed the news because of her children). Although the camp was not given the STAE voter education materials before the first round, it had received it in time for the Presidential run-off.

9.2 The Jardim IDP camp

The Jardim IDP camp is located on about a hectare of land in the centre of town, across the road from one of Dili's best hotels. It appears less organised

and more makeshift than Don Bosco, with most shelters constructed from tarpaulins and in poor condition. There is water and sanitation.

As with other IDP camps, many of those at Jardim have employment, and some attend school. Some 3,905 IDPs are registered with Jardim for the purposes of food distribution – each person gets three kilograms of beans, eight kilograms of rice and 75 centilitres of oil per month. But it seems unlikely that anywhere near this number actually live in Jardim, and the Mission heard that many IDPs live with extended families or in empty buildings (as is the case with a number of journalists).

Mr Antonio Cabral, a former lecturer at the teachers' training college, says most of those at Jardim are from the eastern districts of Timor-Leste, and most want to go back home. However, he wasn't confident the election outcome would make much difference to the situation of IDPs.

It is clear that while the security situation remains uncertain, there is a deep reluctance to move out of the IDP camp. The Mission heard that despite a chemical spill at the nearby wharf, camp leaders at Jardim resisted efforts to evacuate even the women and children.

There are at least five television sets at Jardim, and a satellite dish, which the Mission was told had been salvaged from the home of one of the IDPs at the time of the 2006 crisis. Some people also had radios, and some read newspapers; the literacy rate at Jardim appeared to be higher than the national average.

Mr Cabral said there was little discussion of the election in the camp, in part because of the sensitivities around supporters of rival political parties. The camp's central position and its accessibility make it less secure than Don Bosco, and more vulnerable to youths and martial arts gangs congregating nearby.

The Mission heard there had been no voter education at Jardim for the Presidentials, (and in fact at most of the IDP camps) but that a UNDP session was scheduled for the following week.

Ms Carolyn Tanner, the project manager for UNDP's Community Outreach for Recovery Project, says IDPs are likely to have the best voter education in Dili.

Her project is focused on getting information into IDP camps; information being key to averting more conflict. It does this through notice boards, which have been set up in every IDP camp except Jardim (UNDP attempted three times to put up notice boards there but the boards disappeared every time); mobile sound systems, which visit the camps daily; and a sponsored page of IDP news (which includes the views of IDPs) in the free national weekly, *Tempo Semanal* (150 copies are distributed to camps in Dili every week). An

initiative to distribute all three daily newspapers to IDP camps ended in November last year because it proved too expensive.

UNDP has also funded a radio production studio, which produces 30-minute radio programmes, aired weekly by RTL, and featuring interviews with IDPs and other IDP news. It is also running voter education sessions in the camps before the Parliamentary elections, with all camps receiving just one session (what Parliament does, how to vote, how the system works). UNDP project workers also distribute by hand any voter education materials from STAE and CNE.

Ms Tanner says despite the high rate of illiteracy, it was vital to have accurate written information because it gave key people in the camps a basis from which to double check facts and pass on information. She says there is a high level of interest in the voter education sessions, evidenced by the high turnout and the level of engagement.

A survey done by the UNDP project in all 61 Dili IDP camps in March and April 2007 confirms that people in IDP camps are keen users of media, and are hungry for information. Of 156 IDPs surveyed, more than 90 per cent wanted information about health, and almost the same number wanted information about security, government work, and transparency of the situation. Three-quarters wanted information about rehabilitation back to their houses, and 37 per cent wanted information about food.

Some 85 per cent saw radio as a trusted source of information, compared to 84 per cent for UNDP noticeboards, 81 per cent for TV, 77 per cent for newspapers, and 31 per cent for the church. Friends and family were the trusted sources for 19 per cent and text messages for 17 per cent. The survey found that 44 per cent own a radio, while up to 62 per cent have access to one. Almost half of those surveyed listen to the radio every day. About a third never listens to radio.

A third of respondents read the newspaper daily; and some 46 per cent read a newspaper either daily or weekly. About a third never read a newspaper. About 24 per cent said newspapers were read aloud at camp meetings. As for television, 62 per cent had access to a TV set, with 37 per cent viewing daily. Around a third of respondents said they never watched TV.

This compared to the 71 per cent who had heard the UNDP mobile sound system, and the 92 per cent of people who had read the camp notice boards at some time (46 per cent on a daily basis). Of those surveyed, 44 per cent felt that there wasn't enough information for women and children.

Reaching IDPs outside of Dili has been more of a challenge. Weekly information packages are sent to every suco, and UNDP project workers visit IDP camps every two weeks to update notice boards. But most of the project's

work is focused on rehabilitating community radio stations – meeting the technical needs required to bring them into full service (replacing equipment, servicing generators and replacing the batteries on solar powered generators). Installation is due to begin in July, and should be completed by August. UNDP is also distributing 1100 wind-up radios, intended to be used by community groups.

9.3 Rural and market visits

The Mission visited the Hali Laran market on the outskirts of Dili.

A 20-year-old Becora cigarette seller in Hali Laran Market on the outskirts of Dili will be voting for the first time in the Parliamentary elections but he has no media information. He and his fellow market Timorese work long hours to make a living and are dependent on word of mouth for election “news”.

He starts work in the dark at 5am and ends at 7pm, again in the dark. On a “lucky day” he earns about US\$7 or US\$8 for a 14-hour day. But usually it is about \$4 and \$5 a day and transport costs are on top.

A 40-year-old vegetable seller from Lahane, who lives within walking distance from the market, has a small AM radio which he listens to every afternoon to glean what news he can about the elections. He relies on “good news” to inform him what decision to make on polling day.

“Good news for us is some change that can make our lives better, and for the children,” he says. “We’ll vote for the government that will look after us, will protect us against corruption and stop fighting between the gangs and bring us peace.”

Has he made up his mind on which party he’ll vote for? Yes, “but it’s a secret,” he says with a beaming smile. “I’ll keep it my head and I’ll know on voting day.”

A fellow vegetable seller from Comoro says she will vote for the party that “cares about us poor people”.

Village chiefs are enormously influential people. The Mission spoke to one, Mr Afonso da Cruz, the village chief of Bemori, Dili, just before the Parliamentary elections.

Mr da Cruz was elected to the position two years ago, and oversees seven neighbourhoods with a total population of 3,260. He says his area has been affected moderately by the 2006 crisis, with IDP’s being reintegrated.

Mr da Cruz gets voter information and party publicity material from CNE which is then distributed with the help of volunteers. Voters are being advised to “vote according to their conscience.” He says the information given by CNE

and the media is sufficient for voters to be aware of and understand the technical voting procedure.

Mr da Cruz says in his village, people trust the election process and are enthusiastic to find out what happens once the election result is in. He says village council discussions revolve around problems of getting work and improving people's lives but are not a platform for debate of party politics.

Asked about preferences and leanings within his area, Mr da Cruz spoke about parties that "come up with reality" in delivering free health care, free education and retaining Timor-Leste's independence. While not mentioning Fretilin, he says some parties have implemented programmes, while others only have promises of what they plan to do.

The Jardim Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp.



Mr Antonio Cabrel, Jardim Camp



Fretilin rally during Parliamentary election campaign.



10. Political parties and processes

The Mission had separate meetings with the Presidential campaign spokesmen for the Fretilin Party, Harold Moucho, and Dionisio Babo, spokesperson for Jose Ramos Horta, during the Presidential run-off. In the Parliamentary campaign, the Mission interviewed Mari Alkatiri, Fretilin secretary-general and former Prime Minister, and Mario Carrascalao, leader of the ASDT Party and re-interviewed Dionisio Babo, as spokesperson for CNRT.

10.1 Francisco “Lu-Olo” Guterres (Fretilin) campaign

The Fretilin Party’s Harold Moucho said most local journalists were anti-Fretilin. “Most came from NGOs, studied in Indonesia and are influenced by Xanana Gusmão.” He admitted Fretilin had a problem with its image but transforming itself from a long history of armed struggle – up until 1999 – into a modern political party was complex. However, the daily newspaper, *Jornal Nacional Diário*, is commonly associated with Fretilin and during the week the Mission visited, the edition of the new weekly magazine, *Time Timor*, was entirely taken up with pro-Fretilin campaign material that was paid advertorial. (When a Mission member met a reporter from *Time Timor* at a CNRT press conference, the reporter said his paper was planning a special edition on CNRT.)

On the whole, the Fretilin Party tended to go over the heads of the media, taking their message directly to the people because they didn’t think the media’s influence in the election would be great. “Most of the journalists are not journalists but people who try to be journalists.” However, he said while an observer could be quite critical of the way public radio and television covered the election, when their resources and experience were considered, they had to be given some credit.

But there needed to be a lift in standards for all media. Stories often had no context and they usually told only the negative side of a story. There needed to be more balance. He had complained to media organisations on occasions but he could not force them to make changes. “The journalists need to be sent back to university to learn what it is to be a journalist. For example, they don’t go to work on Sunday so you can’t get anyone to cover a story that day. We need a very long-term education plan with assistance from the state.”

Journalists were also not well prepared to cover the issues. Timor-Leste did not have one political journalist who knew all the issues in his view. “They need to take responsibility for what they put out. If I was living in Australia or New Zealand and had newspapers producing the stories they produce here I’d become very rich. I’d sue every journalist and every newspaper every day.” He acknowledged the influence of television, however, particularly if its range extends over the country. Image is important in Timorese culture and therefore television seems more truthful.

Harold Moucho downplayed reported incidents of intimidation by Fretilin party members. Mission members had heard from a young television camerawoman that an MP had aggressively taken her camera from her on one occasion. Harold Moucho referred to the incident without any prompting.

“She was filming the members of Parliament and one didn’t want to be filmed. He went up to her and said he’d take her camera away if she continued. She became terrified. It’s lack of experience. A normal cameraman anywhere in the world wouldn’t take that as a threat. She was shaking when she talked to me. But that has to do with the conditions we’re living in at the moment. They need a lot more training, to know what it’s like to investigate or interview.”

10.2 Dr Jose Ramos Horta (CNRT) campaign

Dionisio Babo, the campaign manager for Dr Jose Ramos Horta in the Presidential elections, agreed the absence of a legal infrastructure allows anyone with reasonable literacy skills to become a journalist. He believes the lack of professionalism generates fear and explains the tendency to report verbatim. He readily admitted the news media was biased in favour of Dr Horta in the Presidential campaign but that this could have had a boomerang effect of working against the campaign.

He cited a handful of journalists from the *Timor Post*, RTTL and STL as having professional standards and echoed the view of others that television is the most effective means of campaigning, even though transmission is limited. Mr Babo was on the public broadcasting board of directors as a representative of the president but he resigned prior to the campaign.

The Horta campaign appears to have been strategic in understanding the motivations of voters and used a range of media to reach them. Mr Babo said they placed advertisements on radio because it reached about 40 per cent of the population. Half-hour paid CDs from the Horta campaign were sent out to the community radio stations daily – and played more than once. Newspapers are accessible to only about 20,000 who tend to be public servants and the better educated.

Even before the campaign officially started the Horta campaign pasted up posters showing Xanana Gusmão with the Pope, and Dr Horta with bishops (Dr Horta also wore T-shirts bearing the face of Jesus throughout the campaign). The images proved so popular they are in many Timor-Leste homes.

Fretilin protested about the use of state-owned media at Easter, three days before polling, to broadcast a long address by the President, Xanana Gusmão, who supported the Horta campaign. Mr Babo said the President took the opportunity to appeal for calm, but then intimated he realised the extent of the political capital to be gained.

Mr Babo said the Horta Presidential campaign had decided not to respond to rumours published in the media and had discussed this with the Fretilin media advisers with whom he was on good terms.

“People here are very independent and will make their own choices. But it’s a paternalistic culture.” That also comes through in the way journalists do their jobs.

The Mission interviewed Mr Babo during the Parliamentary elections in his new capacity as a CNRT party spokesman.

He said nothing much had changed in his view of the news media selection coverage but he felt the newspaper, *STL*, was probably more neutral now. Questions about the professionalism remained and he specifically mentioned reporters’ inability to paraphrase. However, he felt that TVTL had done a good job. He wants to see “organic” press law and he favours the establishment of a Press Council.

He said the media were caught up in the prevailing climate. “Violence overshadows people’s thinking.” In future, Timor-Leste needed to move on from emotive political campaigning with fighting and violence.

10.3 Mari Alkatiri, Fretilin Secretary-General, and former Prime Minister

Dr Alkatiri complained that he was largely ignored by the local journalists, noting that “the media is a power”. He said 99 per cent of journalists had a background as former political activists who were “always against whoever is in power”. He alleged that the media neglected issues and instead carried emotive statements. The media should be more analytical, focus less on personalities and look at issues and problems facing the country.

He also said journalists should be better educated and trained – there were large numbers of journalists in the country but many of the better journalists were being employed in better paid jobs with the United Nations or NGOs.

“People are looking for a better life and it happens in every developing country. You need to keep pushing and training. We have a lot of people who work as journalists in a small country. How is it possible?” he says.

While being an advocate for “tolerance”, he is in favour of a media law as he believes journalists have to be accountable. “Authority without law is nothing.”

Among the newspapers, he singled out the *Suara Timor Lorasae* for criticism for misquotes and quotes out of context: “The *STL* is very dangerous.” While being critical of most media, he says the *Timor Post* was slightly more balanced.

He said public broadcasting was introduced at his behest (as UNTAET), and his now political rival, Jose Ramos Horta, spoke out against the concept.

10.4 Mario Carrascalao, leader of the ASDT

Mario Carrascalao, leader of the ASDT, attributed great significance to the media, seeing it as vital to the development of people's understanding of the world.

Closing Timor-Leste's information gap was critical to the country's progress. "If you want this country to go in front, you have to put this country in the world." He says RTL may in fact have only 50 per cent reach because many villages have no radios at all. He believes every village of five to 10 families should have a radio provided by the State. The spread of information was important not just for political and economic development but also for cultural and attitudinal change.

He stressed the connection between an economically viable news media and editorial independence. "Without economic independence, there will be no media development."

He suggested the granting of conditional soft loans to allow newspapers to be set up as institutions that have a sound capital base. This would give them the independence to go about journalism without being vulnerable to pressure. The condition for such loans would be that papers refrain from reporting what is "dangerous to the national interest", that is, promotion of Timor-Leste's re-integration into Indonesia.

To further the reach of the papers, Mr Carrascalao proposed subsidies to allow the papers to publish in four languages and to be distributed nationwide. He equally called for rolling out relay spots for television and the propagation of radio by promoting solar-powered receivers.

He criticised the timidity of Timorese journalism. "Journalists must be brave enough to fulfil their mission." Timor-Leste journalists were "passive". They should be taking note of political promises to hold politicians and public figures to account. "They should be able to say, 'that man is a liar'."

He deplored the lack of investigative journalism. In his view the media largely ignored key problems, such as issues of poverty and hardship.

While being favourable to some form of accountability, Mr Carrascalao was opposed to a media law tied to the penal code as this could create a repressive environment.

10.5 Antonio Andre, media adviser to the Office of the Prime Minister

Mr Antonio Andre, media adviser to the Office of the Prime Minister, told the Mission he believed the media had not played such an important role in the Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Timor-Leste compared with the standards of more affluent countries because of the poor media infrastructure.

Mr Andre said he believed the media ought to be viewed realistically at this stage of national development: “Of course, we look to the press as if the press related to the civil rights legislation applying in many other countries. But there is no legislation about the media in Timor-Leste. It’s the most free press nation in the world at the moment – there are no constraints at all.”

Asked about speculation over a draft media law and legislation for the criminalisation of defamation, Mr Andre said such a proposed law had not actually been a policy priority of the current government. “The problems of the media are not really related to legislation. They are more to do with skill levels and the conditions of the media.”

He suggested that the country’s fledgling media needed a strategy of “public financial incentives with no strings attached” to strengthen it.

“There can be no free society without a free press and there is no free press if there is no condition of economic freedom.”

While the Timorese media had been reasonably balanced in election coverage in terms of “equal treatment”, its major weakness was that it had been “agenda set”. Its news agenda depended on the initiative of third parties such as political parties, the government, NGOs and the business sector.

While Mr Andre advocated an eventual media watchdog and stressed the need for ongoing training for journalists, he was less enthusiastic about the concept of a possible journalism school for Timor-Leste: “We don’t have doctors. We are starting at ground zero here. There are other priorities.”

All politicians and political party representatives spoken to by the Mission agreed on:

- The need for a vibrant news media;
- Increased professionalism of the news media
- Better training for journalists
- More investigative and analytical reporting

However, the Mission felt that the politicians interviewed had a variable commitment to media freedom and the nature of the legal and regulatory framework necessary to ensure freedom of expression.

CNRT rally during Parliamentary election campaign.



11. Future directions

A stronger news media in Timor-Leste is critical to strengthening democratic participation and institutions.

Future developments should be consistent with the following four themes:

- Improving the news media's role in spreading information in Timor-Leste
- Building a sustainable model of journalism in Timor-Leste.
- Ensuring that freedom of expression and opinion is guaranteed and that access to information is not restricted.
- Media accountability – a media council for Timor-Leste

11.1 Improving the news media's information role in Timor-Leste

Many Timorese suffer a serious information vacuum because the media – television, radio, the internet, or newspapers – simply do not reach them. Poor media penetration and distribution is compounded by the low literacy rate. The significant information drought means most Timorese are isolated from information about the economic, social and cultural developments in their country. Information differentials as serious as the one that exists in Timor-Leste can be used as a means of political control. The vacuum is filled instead by rumour, gossip and speculation that can increase security concerns. Those excluded from information have reduced opportunities for participation in public life and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

Section 40 of the Constitution of Timor-Leste, on freedom of speech and information, states that every person has the right to freedom of expression and the right to inform and be informed impartially. Currently approximately half the population cannot exercise this constitutional right through lack of media availability. While the progressive realisation of this important human right is a current challenge in Timor-Leste, it also represents a significant opportunity long-term for the news media to increase penetration and audience reach.

The Mission heard a number of recommendations from journalists, editors, politicians, political party representatives and international agencies for building on the existing media infrastructure and closing the information gap.

These included:

- Improved communications infrastructure, such as telecommunications, electricity supply and roading
- Improved transmission and eventual networking of community radio
- Subsidised distribution of newspapers to the districts
- The state-funded distribution of radios to every five to ten homes in rural areas
- Extending the reach of state-owned public broadcasters RTL and TVTL
- Consideration of cross media pooling of news content to overcome transport and resourcing issues
- Growth of specialist media, for example, an NGO sector newspaper

- Fostering student written publications as a means of training young Timorese in basic journalism.

The Constitution, in particular Sections 40 and 41, effectively sets an information policy for Timor-Leste. Development and implementation of a broad strategy to close information gaps in accordance with the Constitution is urgently needed. The news media are a critical component and they need to be closely involved in information planning, including legislative elements where these are necessary. The Mission was often told that efforts to improve the information infrastructure were ad hoc, slow and hampered by a lack of leadership, coordination and technical expertise.

11.2 Building a sustainable model of journalism in Timor-Leste

The Mission heard a universal call by journalists and news media organisations, electoral agencies, politicians and political parties for training and development to build journalistic capacity and confidence.

A sustainable model of journalism that is Timorese led and owned would include consideration of:

- Strengthening professionalism through journalists associations that can speak with one voice to promote and protect the rights and responsibilities of reporters and broadcasters.
- Enhancing Timorese leadership of a stronger media in media development, newsrooms and in editorial management.
- Development of a journalism training and education programme with close industry links and supported by civil society. The model should encompass basic skills and pre-entry as well as in-career development.
- Consideration of the multi-lingual environment in Timor-Leste and the need to enhance the ability of the news media to transfer ideas and information between users of different languages.
- Mentoring and long term relationship development for individual Timorese journalists that takes account of the need to ensure there is transfer back into newsrooms of individual capacity growth.
- Establishment of media archiving and newspaper and broadcasting libraries that allow journalists to incorporate historical perspective in news coverage.
- Support for an annual media directory that summarises the current status of the news media in Timor-Leste and includes details of ownership, governance and management, editorial and newsroom contacts, publication and circulation details and advertising rates and conditions.
- Better linking of the role of the international media agencies and donors with the continuing development of Timor-Leste's media.
- Fostering private sector media involvement, encouraging media advertising to bolster the business case for independent media.

These elements provide a framework for the state, for Timorese journalists and for aid agencies to consider when working towards a sustainable news media for Timor-Leste.

11.3 Ensuring that freedom of expression and opinion is guaranteed and that access to information is not restricted

The Timor-Leste Constitution makes explicit in Section 41 that freedom of expression and other mass media is guaranteed. It describes freedom of expression as comprising freedom of speech and creativity for journalists, the access to information sources, editorial freedom, protection of independence and professional confidentiality, and the right to create newspapers, publications and other means of broadcasting.

The Mission's attention was drawn to several draft media laws that contain provisions that could criminalise defamation, insist on the licensing of journalists and organisations and regulate onerous right of reply restrictions that would inhibit the proper exercise of editorial autonomy. Other draft provisions of concern relate to a national council for social communication with wide-ranging powers, management and operational controls, restrictions on "doctrinal" publications and unreasonable search.

Some of these violate the spirit if not the substance of Section 41 of the Constitution guaranteeing freedom of the press and mass media.

Despite assurances from various politicians and political media during the Mission's visit that restrictive laws would not be promulgated, the very existence of draft media laws without widespread media consultation and in contravention of international conventions and covenants and the domestic constitution is of considerable concern.

The international media watch community needs to take a stronger role in linking with Timorese professional associations and journalists in ensuring a positive and enabling legal and regulatory environment.

The Mission believes that the state-owned public broadcasters, RTL and TVTL, are providing increasing media leadership and are integral to the growing professionalism of journalism. We were impressed by the quality and commitment of the state-owned public broadcasters. But journalists who spoke to the Mission said the status of the state-owned broadcasters was unclear. Some politicians had displayed an insufficient commitment to a free media and responsible journalism which called into question the independence of RTTL, the governing body.

Section 41 of the Constitution guarantees the freedom and independence of the public mass media from political and economic powers. The Constitution states, "The State shall guarantee the existence of a public radio and television service that is impartial in order to, inter alia, protect and

disseminate the culture and the traditional values of the Democratic Republic of East Timor and guarantee opportunities for the expression of different lines of opinion.” Radio and television stations operate only under a licence, according to the law.

The Mission considers that the political leadership and the public need to understand the role, characteristics and benefits of public broadcasting. While the broadcasters, TVTL and RTL, are owned and funded by the state, their role is to serve the broad interests of all the people of Timor-Leste. Their operations, decision-making, and editorial judgements must be independent and protected from political interference.

The separation of the government from the operations of the state-owned broadcasters should be more clearly defined in legislation, political thinking and expressed through governance and management structures.

11.4 Media accountability – a media council for Timor-Leste

The Mission believes there is a need for a specific media accountability system, both to regulate complaints about and from the media with respect to both political and electoral processes and other media issues. The accountability mechanism should involve representation of both State and private sector media and members of civil society. In addition to a complaints function, it should also have a leadership role in ethical guidance and the development of guidelines.

The regulatory body should act as a vent for complaints about the media as well as be a protection for the media. The existence of such a body which upholds standards of journalistic ethics and professionalism would build public confidence in the media.

For such a body to be effective, governments, politicians and all other public figures must accept the importance that the media plays in a free and democratic society. They have a responsibility and role in ensuring the development of a responsible and professional media.

There should be a collaborative investigation into what sort of regulatory authority would best suit Timor-Leste but the Mission believes it should be funded by both government and industry. It should be backed by specific law which guarantees freedom of expression and which enshrines its functions and independence from government. Such a body would formulate and enforce ethical rules, promote quality journalism and freedom of expression, and adjudicate complaints about the media.

The body could also monitor attacks on press freedoms and consider complaints from journalists about intimidation in any form. It should pass complaints about physical intimidation and violence to the police for criminal prosecution. It could also have a role to play in journalism training.

Before the eventual model is decided, equivalent bodies from the region could be studied and advice sought from competent parties. A single all-media mechanism is desirable, particularly for a country the size of Timor-Leste. This development process and implementation of the media council will require the participation and consensus of local professional organisations, owners (including the State), media law experts, agencies such as the Provedor, and civil society.

The Mission believes that some elements of the four themes will be short term development possibilities while others will need a longer time frame to design, develop, implement and evaluate. The journalists and editors of Timor-Leste need to be consulted. They want to, and need to, guide their own continuing development and improved professionalism. The international aid community continues to have a significant part to play in partnership with the Timorese news media and the new government has an important role in providing a more enabling environment. The news media's contribution to Timor-Leste's first national elections in 2007 presents an opportunity for developing media capability and capacity that must not be lost.

Mission members at work in Timor-Leste.



Appendix 1: List of interviewees

The Mission interviewed about 125 people for this report. Some of these sources were spoken to on field trips and in informal settings in camps, in the districts and in markets. Others agreed to formal interviews and they are included in the list below.

Abric, Isabelle, Communication and Public Information Office, UNMIT
Alkatiri, Dr Mari, General Secretary, Fretilin Party
Andre, Antonio, Media Adviser, Office of the Prime Minister
Aranda, Claudia, EU Observer
Babo, Dionisio, Campaign Manager for Dr José Ramos Horta
Babo, Estanislau, Television Timor Leste (TVTL)
Batista, Silverio Pinto, Deputy Provedor for Human Rights and Justice
Belo, Christiana X, ICFJ
Belo, Tito, Reporter RTL and Reuters Stringer
Belo, Teresa Freitas, CAMS TL Centre
Braz, Emanuel, Deputy Country Director, ICFJ
Cabral, Antonio, IDP, Jardim
Caldeira, Miguel, UNDP Elections Project Media Adviser
Carrascalao, Mario, ASDT-PSD Leader and former Timor Lorosae Governor
Cason, Sophia, International Crisis Group
Cheah, Joanne, UNDP Voter Education Advisor / STAE
Cooper, Allison, Public Information Office, UNMIT
Cordosa, Isabela, News Producer, Radio Timor Leste (RTL)
Cospers, Doug, ICFJ
Cortereal, Anabela da Costa, Journalist, Radio Timor Leste (RTL)
da Costa Junior, Alberico, Media Monitor, Internews
da Costa, José, Administrator, Luta Hamutuk
da Costa, Julio, Reporter, *Jornal Nacional Diário*
da Cruz, Afonso, Chief of Bemori Village
da Silva, Antonio Febu, RTL
da Silva, Estanislau, Prime Minister of RDTL
da Silva, Francisco, Director, TLMDC
da Silva, John, Reporter, *Jornal Nacional Diário*
da Silva, Julio, Media Assistant, UNDP
de Seus, Timotio, Director, JSMP
de Sousa, Fr Justin, Don Bosco IDP Camp
Diaz, Antonio, Director, Television Timor Leste (TVTL)
Esteves, Luis Sena, IOM
Filipe, Tito, Reporter, Radio Timor Leste (RTL)
Flavie, Father, director TRK (Timor Radio Kmanek)
Gabriel, José, Editor-in-Chief, *Jornal Nacional Diário*
Garcia, Rosa, Cofounder, *Timor Post*
Gomcalves, Pedro A., Manager, Radio Café, Ermera
Gusmão, Kirsty Sword, wife of the former President

Gusmão, Fr Martinho, Spokesperson, National Elections Commission (CNE)
 Guterres, Luka, Reporter, Radio Timor Leste (RTL)
 Guterres, Virgilio Silva, TLJA
 Isaac, Nelio, Head of News and Current Affairs and Reuters stringer, TVTL
 Johanson, Vanessa, ICFJ Elections Media Centre
 Katasungkana, Nugroho, Institute for Popular Education Media Observer
 Kersbergen, Elinde, SOMET observer
 Kintas, Paulino, Editor, TVTL
 Kintz, Greg, Communication and Public Information Office, UNMIT
 Leffler, Joe, International Observer, JSMP
 Lopes, Fernanda, Voter Education Adviser, STAE
 Lopez, Mouzinho, Coordinator/Journalist, *Timor Post*
 Maia, Antonieta, National Project Officer, JSMP
 Magno, Marcelo, PD representative and former journalist
 Martins, Ines, researcher/former journalist, La'o Hamutuk
 Martins, Rosario da Graça Maia, Director, Radio Timor-Leste (RTL)
 Martins, Sandrine, EU Observer
 Mihalic, Jadranka, Communication and Public Information Office, UNMIT
 Moucho, Harold, Fretilin Spokesperson for Francisco "Lu Olo" Guterres
 Neves, Guteriano, Researcher, La'o Hamutuk
 Nogueira, Paulo, EUEOM Media Adviser
 Passoa, Ana, Minister of State Administration in outgoing government
 Primus, Father, director TRK, Timor Radio Kmanek, Catholic radio station
 Rodriguez, Nuno, Institute for Popular Education Media Observer
 Scheiner, Charles, Researcher, La'o Hamutuk
 Schnellinger, Lisa, ICFJ
 Seibel, Nicole, USAID
 Setyo, Budi, Trainer, ICFJ
 Soares, Manuel, Reporter, *Jornal Nacional Diário*
 Soares, Salvador J Ximenes, Publisher and editor-in-chief, *Suara Timor Lorosae*
 Soares, Santana, Researcher/Former Journalist, La'o Hamutuk
 Stahl, Max, independent filmmaker, CAMS TL Centre
 Sternberg, Jill, SOMET Media Adviser
 Suni, Fransedes, ICFJ Coordinator, Special Projects Team
 Tahu, Maximus, Researcher/Former Journalist, La'o Hamutuk
 Tanner, Carolyn, Project Manager, Communication Outreach for Recovery, UNDP
 Teixeira, José, Media Spokesman, Fretilin, also Minister for Natural
 Resources, Minerals and Energy Policy
 Thomas, Bronwen, SOMET Media Adviser
 Valentino, Hank, IFES
 Vieira, Remigio, Media Officer, Luta Hamutuk
 Willard, Tom, Former Country Director, ICFJ
 Wright, Jessie, ICFJ Training Coordinator
 Ximenes, Dr Sebastiao Dias, Provedor
 Ximenes, Isabel, USAID
 Ximenes, José, Acting Director, *Timor Post*
 Ximenes, Paulina, News Editor, Radio Timor Leste (RTL)

Appendix 2: Glossary of Acronyms

ASDT	Associação Social Democrata Timorense/Social Democratic Association of Timor (party associated with Mario Carrascalao, a former governor of timor-Leste during the Indonesian era)
CNE	National Elections Commission
CNRT	Congresso Nacional para a Reconstrucao de Timor/National Congress for Reconstruction of Timor (party associated with President Jose Ramos Horta and former President Xanana Gusmao who contested the Parliamentary election)
FRETILIN	Frente Revolucionária do Timor Leste Independente /Revolutionary Front of Independent East Timor (party associated with former Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri, and Presidential candidate, Francisco ‘Lu Olo’ Guterres)
ICFJ	International Center For Journalists
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
ISF	International Stabilisation Forrce
KOMEG	Coalition for Monitoring the General Elections
PUN	Partidu Unidade Nacional / National Unity Party (party with the only woman leader in the Parliamentary elections)
RTK	Radio Timor Kmanek
RTL	Radio Timor Leste
RTTL	Radio-Televisao Timor Leste
STAE	Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration
STL	<i>Suara Timor Lorosae</i>
TILPA	Timor-Leste Photographers Association
TLJA	Timor-Leste Journalists Association
TLMDC	Timor-Leste Media Development Centre

TLMI	Timor-Leste Media Institute
TVTL	Televisao Timor-Leste
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMIT	United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor



