

Trip Report

Traveler: Harold McArthur
Dates: July 11 – July 31, 2004
Locations: Dili and Venilale, East Timor
Purpose: Coordinate Student Summer Internship Presentations
Initiate exploratory discussions with the National University regarding formal collaboration with UH
Coordinate field interview component of the Economic Decision Making Workshop

Summer Internship Program

During the initial drafting of the work plan for the USAID-funded Agricultural Development, Income Generation and Natural Resource Management Project in East Timor, Mr. James Lehman, the senior officer in the USAID Mission in Dili, expressed interest in finding a way to maximize the impact of the Department of State administered East Timor Scholarship Program. Since 2000 this program has placed 18 East Timor students at the University of Hawaii (UH) for both graduate and undergraduate degree training (Attachment 1). With the creation of the special agricultural project that is being implemented by the UH component of the Soil Management Collaborative Research Support Program (CRSP) an opportunity was presented to explore the possibility of combining the academic training of the East Timor scholars with practical research and employment related experiences in their home country. A proposal was presented by UH to include a component in the CRSP project that would provide an opportunity for some of the East Timor students to participate in a project-supported summer internship that would help them gain field experience and establish future employment related contacts.

To this end a proposal was submitted to Mr. Lehman that resulted in \$25,000 being added to the initial project budget to cover the costs of a pilot internship program during the first year of the project. A Program description was developed and circulated to the USAID Mission and to the students (Attachment 2). This was then followed by a request for proposals from interested students who were either pursuing a graduate degree or had achieved upper division in their undergraduate degree studies (Attachment 3). During the Spring 2004 semester the project coordinator received brief proposals and work plans from 8 students, 4 who are studying for Masters degrees and 4 who are pursuing undergraduate degrees. Each proposal was approved by the respective student's UH faculty advisor and the East West Center scholarship coordinator. In the end, one of the graduate students withdrew her application and a decision on one of the undergraduate candidates was deferred because he was only in his second semester of study. By May 2004 internship placements had been confirmed for six students and each was given an internship award that included round trip transportation to Dili (if not already being provided under the auspices of the State Department scholarship plus a stipend of \$400 to cover incidental expenses during the six-week internship period. When scheduling permits, the project also provides support for one trip to East Timor for the principal faculty advisor of each student so that these individuals can provide additional support to their students and also gain a valuable in-country perspective on the research questions and issues being addressed by their student. Thus far, the project has supported trips for three faculty advisors. A fourth was scheduled to travel this summer but had to cancel because of a family emergency.

The awardees for summer 2004 included:

Krispin Fernandes (MS candidate in Civil and Environmental Engineering)
Proposal Topic: Watershed Hydrology and Water Resources Management in the Seical Basin, East Timor

Brigida da Silva (MS candidate in Urban and Regional Planning)
Proposal Topic: Cross Sectoral Analysis of Key Watershed Management Issues and Trends

Carlos dos Reis (MS candidate in Molecular Bioscience and Bioengineering)
Proposal Topic: Preventing Environmental Degradation in East Timor

Matias Fatima Gomes (BA candidate in Language Learning and Linguistics)
Proposal Topic: Kemak Language Study

Felipe da Costa (BS candidate in Molecular Bioscience and Bioengineering)
Proposal Topic: Assessment of Bioresidue Resources in East Timor

Flavia da Silva (BS candidate in Natural Resources and Environmental Management)
Proposal Topic: Evaluation of the Feasibility and Profitability of Vanilla Farming in East Timor

In addition to their faculty advisors, internship participants received in-country support for several UH faculty who were in East Timor this summer to implement other aspects of the Agriculture Development, Income Generation and Natural Resource Management Project.

In an effort to generate greater awareness of these students and their work among the governmental, university and private sector community a workshop was organized on July 15 in Dili where four of the six students were able to make brief presentations on their U.S. educational experience and their internship research activities. Over 50 letters of invitation in both English and Tetun (Attachment 4) were sent to key university, government and NGO officials. Approximately 60 people attended the event. The event was held in the Liceu auditorium at the National University and Vice Rector Mr. Francisco Martins graciously provided the initial welcome. He was followed by the Honorable Joseph Rees, U.S. Ambassador to East Timor. Ambassador Rees talked with each of the students before the program began and then provided some remarks in both Tetun and English on the role he had played in securing U.S. Government funding for the East Timor Scholarship Program. His remarks were followed by brief comments by Mr. Geoff Etches, the East West Center Representative in Dili, on the annual selection process for the scholarship (Attachment 5)

Following these introductory comments Krispin, Brigida, Matias and Flavia each gave a 15-20 minute presentation followed by questions from the audience. From what I could discern a number of people in the audience were concerned that the presenters did not focus more on their research and how this can contribute to the development of East Timor. The Assistant Director of the National Linguistics Institute wanted assurance that the research to be conducted by Matias would not only benefit UH but also East Timor. Prof. Michael Forman, who was present as the faculty advisor for Mr. Gomes, assured

everyone that all research results would be shared with the National University and other relevant government agencies in East Timor.

Following the question and answer period the audience was invited to join the presenters for refreshments. During this period the First Lady, Mrs. Kirsty Sword Gusmão, made a surprise appearance and personally congratulated each of the presenters and wished them well in their continuing studies.



Workshop venue



Ambassador Rees talking with Student presenters



First Lady greeting Brigida da Silva and Dr. Sheila Forman. In the Background Mr. Geoff Etches from the East West Center talks with Prof. Michael Forman

Discussions with the Universidade Nacional de Timor-Leste (UNTL)

Professor Forman and I met twice with both the Rector, Prof. Dr. Benjamim de Araujo e Corte-real and Vice Rector Francisco Martins. I explained that the purpose of our discussions was to determine what areas of common interest might possibly serve as the basis for a more formal collaboration between our respective institutions. Initially Rector Benjamim indicated that it was his preference to proceed with such things as formal

agreements very cautiously as he has received similar inquiries from universities in Australia, Europe, and Japan and that he must be careful to insure that he targets his very limited resources in areas that will generate the greatest return for the university and the individuals involved. He clearly stated that he cannot afford failures and if he sends someone for overseas training and that individual is unable to complete the prescribed course of study or training then it is a failure for the individual, a failure for his or her family, and a failure for the university. Our first meeting resulted in an agreement to meet again.

Following the student internship workshop a second meeting was scheduled and the discussions proceeded more directly to the possibility of identifying some initial areas where UH could assist in strengthening the capacity of UNTL faculty and staff. I also indicated that should we be able to identify a specific set of joint actions that we could consider jointly submitting a proposal for special funding support from the Association Liaison Office for University Cooperation in Development (ALO) that was established in 1992 to promote higher education partnerships for global development. The ALO works in partnership with the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the six major higher education associations in the United States to promote campus-led international development programs. It is possible to receive grants of up to \$100,000 per year for three years to implement joint capacity building programs implemented cooperatively by a U.S. university in collaboration with an overseas partner institution. Currently there are now ALO educational grants operating in Timor-Leste. I made it clear that an ALO proposal would be completely separate from whatever capacity building support that UH may be able to provide under the auspices of our current project.

During our discussions it was revealed that both the Rector and the Vice Rector are linguists. At this point the two men shared many common interests with Prof. Forman who is also a linguist. In the end, the Rector indicated that he would like to initially explore how UH might help to expand the capacity of UNTL's English Department and the National Institute of Linguistics which is also housed in the university. At the end of the meeting we agreed to provide additional information on the Teaching of English as a Second Language and Linguistics programs at UH. I indicated to the rector that we are able to agree on a set of action to address UNTL's needs in these areas this might well serve as the basis for the first year action plan for an ALO grant application. Before the meeting concluded I promised that we would keep the university informed of all future project sponsored training programs so that interested UNTL faculty can participate. We will also provide the university with an advance travel schedule of UH faculty who visit East Timor on project related activities so that the university can determine if it would like any of these individuals to present special lectures or workshops for their faculty and students in such areas as agriculture, agroforestry, economics and urban and regional planning.

Our recent graduate Jesuina Gomes, who is currently a lecturer at UNTL, assisted in the scheduling of the two meetings. She attended both sessions with us and has agreed at the request of the Rector to continue to serve in a kind of liaison role between his office, the project and the University of Hawaii.

District & Farm Level Agriculture Economic Analysis & Decision-Making Workshop (Venilale, July 26-28)

My involvement in this workshop was limited primarily to coordinating the Field Information Gathering component on the afternoon of the second day, Tuesday, July 27 (see Attachment 6). In preparation for this role I met with one of our former students, the first graduate from Timor-Lester under the State Department's scholarship program with the East West Center, Mr. Jose Ximenes, to finalize four separate field locations where the field interviews would take place. Jose, who is from the area, had earlier arranged for farmers and members of local land use groups to be available to interact with the workshop participants.

To prepare the workshop participants for this exercise Bob Alexander, Cathy Chan-Halbrendt and Dick Bowen made presentations on farmer risk management strategies, technology assessment and income generating options. I followed these sessions with a brief PowerPoint presentation on "Ways to Learn from Farmers" that was translated to Bahasa Indonesia and presented in the workshop. During the actual field exercise Jose and I rotated from each site so that I could observe how each group of three to four participants was conducting their interviews. On day three the various interview groups reported back to the workshop on what they had learned about farmer goals, objectives and values as well as current and past farm management and income generating practices.



Bob Alexander addressing workshop participants



Workshop participants interview farmers at Fatulia



Farmers waiting to be interviewed at waitobono



School girls showing off harvest from land-use group vegetable garden at Fatulia



Waitobono women winnowing black rice