

Trip Report
Bob Alexander
May 2 – August 7, 2004

General Observations and UHM Program Follow-up Suggestions:

The UHM program has learned relevant things from its own watershed activities and, by analogy, can share lessons learned for applicability in other watersheds. Likewise, while UHM employs a unique comprehensive approach, much relevant piecemeal information can be gleaned from those already working in the watershed and, by analogy, those working on similar activities in other watersheds. Thus, one recommendation is to invest in working more closely with the other organizations in the Seical watershed & with organizations that coordinate information regarding what's happening in other watersheds.

Regarding the former, intra-district coordination, efforts have been made in the past few months to integrate better with the activities of other partners in Baucau. Andre has done much to coordinate with CRS and GTZ, and their participation in the recent agricultural economics workshops is indicative of the possibilities. Staff of both CRS and GTZ talk of the synergistic possibilities of letting UHM pave the way with research and training that sets the stage for their work with farmer groups and entrepreneurs in terms of new product development and technological input use. A good working relationship has also been developed with MAFF/Baucau. But integration of activities seems still an isolated achievement rather than a part of a consistent integrated framework. I suggest monthly coordination meetings in which all stakeholders in promoting agricultural development in Baucau are invited to constructively detail activities and projected time horizons such that synergies can be realized and effects of activities can be ensured as sustainable. Leadership of these meetings could be decided upon based upon which months are best and worst per timetables of projected activities (e.g., UHM would be best not to lead in the summertime but could pave the way with initial leadership in these post-summer months).

Regarding the latter, inter-district coordination, some management is already conducted via the Sustainable Livelihood Network (SLN) & the Columbia University Conflict Resolution Program (CU). The SLN is a monthly meeting and irregular email list postings hosted by Oxfam in which representatives of NGOs, MAFF, and UNTL share what they are doing and any results potentially relevant to others. To augment these coordination meetings, CU has compiled a database of the activities of every organization working in the country. Thus, anyone from the UHM project who is coming to analyze a particular problem might wish to first look at this database to learn who is already working on that problem in the country. They might also wish to write to the SLN (via Andre, now on the email list) and ask for suggestions regarding with whom to speak about particular aspects of that problem when they arrive. Certainly, coordination in TL is lacking relative to coordination boards in other countries in which I've worked and one great boost to the whole country would be funding for an organization to employ a few

people whose sole task is to take on better coordination of activities. But, although seeking it requires a bit of effort, my feeling is that UHM project staff can benefit much from the knowledge of others already involved in similar work while other organizations in other watersheds can also benefit much from UHM staff sharing the results of what we are doing. And, besides such potential benefits, it really just looks ignorant and perpetuates negative perceptions when, for instance, someone from UHM comes to look into post-harvest activities and doesn't make any effort to discuss related findings by UNTL and NGOs.

Because of timing changes and schedule conflicts, I was only able to attend the SLN meeting once and was greeted with much enthusiasm from those who informed me that my attendance was the first of anyone from the UHM project. Likewise, despite having information from seemingly every other organization in the country, the CU database did not have any mention of UHM doing anything. Although I do not believe that a Dili-based country coordinator is a panacea (and am generally opposed to the urban bias inherent in capital-based centralization of resources), I strongly believe that better representation is needed for this coordination and hope that either someone on the UHM staff will take the responsibility for ensuring monthly participation at SLN meetings (and periodic updates to CU regarding our section of the database) or that the result of better intra-Baucau coordination may be that one member of the Baucau coordination team might efficiently represent all stakeholders (including UHM) at such meetings.

Specific UHM Agricultural Economics Follow-up Suggestions:

- Work through coordination boards & MAFF to encourage agri-business training, business incubators, strategic planning workshops, and, especially, rural livelihood stakeholder meetings; for whatever can not (or will not) be conducted by others, assess resources within the UHM project to lead/co-lead development
- Follow through on follow-up training in other parts of the country at all levels of the trainings recently conducted (farmer-level, district level, and central level) to ensure more broad-based understanding; also work on DVD and/or VHS version of trainings such that can be housed at MAFF (and SLN via Oxfam?) for self-training or training sessions as led by someone (MAFF? UHM country coordinator?) who knows enough of agricultural economics to help facilitate exercises
- Despite needs for Agricultural Economics work to augment the other work in the watershed (in determination of what inputs/products may be appropriate), branch out to help with specific needs in other parts of the country; the CCT/NCBA shade tree problem is one example (of which there are many more) of a problem begging for a type of economic analysis that apparently nobody else is capable/willing to provide

Weekly log

Week 1 (may 2-8):

- Pre-arrival discussion of Indonesian system (past & present; for context) with crop extension agents in Lombok (Indonesia)
- Post-arrival initial tours of Dili & watershed area (with Fernando, Andre & family, Kent, and David Wilcock)
- initial meetings (further developing context from pre-arrival meetings & readings): Kim Jones & Angela Rodrigues (USAID); Jill Salmon (CARE); Gunther Kohl (GTZ);
- initial meeting with Estanislau da Silva (Minister of Agriculture – MAFF): presented proposed format/framework for agricultural economics workshops & solicited input; results: to be 2 distinct but integrated workshops – one at district level for whole country & one at central (director) level; both to be at the end of July or early August because these are the times when people should best be available; I am to try to tailor program/content according to proposed attendees and deemed capacities & needs; who: directors, managers from different districts, cooperative managers, teachers from agricultural schools – limit to 50 people and have application process; want to get right people there (not forced but motivated) – I am to work on the content & then create brochures to advertise; will provide a certificate as an incentive & otherwise think through possible incentives to get right people to attend with MAFF team & UHM team; Lourenco Fontes appointed as my MAFF counterpart with whom I should coordinate on a regular basis

Week 2 (may 9-15)

- meetings regarding workshop setup/content, candlenuts/other potential products, &/or rural livelihood risk management: Shakib Shahidian (UNTL, Dept. of Agriculture); Rod Nixon (ARD); Fran Ruddick (Peace Corps); Rob Williams (UNTL, Department of Agriculture); Faustino Gomes (UNTL, research council) – wants cooperative research with UHM & looks forward to potential arrangements to do so; Rebecca Engle (Columbia University Conflict Resolution Program) – got copy of database of all activities in the country; David Boyce (CCT/NCBA) [at 1st USAID-EG meeting]; Chana Opaskornal (FAO); Carrie Deutch (short-term consultant then with Oxfam, formerly UNDP, now with JICA)
- initial meeting with Filipe Tiago Dias Ximenes (UNTL, Head of Department of Social Economy in Agriculture): department has 10 lecturers but only 3 beyond a bachelors degree from Indonesia – so they want help in capacity building (in addition to funding, wants to develop relationships for research for the future), want to develop teaching methods/materials, and want training in how to conduct research; wants me to give seminar for faculty but timing of my stay not very conducive – initial suggestion is to (1) attend “Rice & Its Problems” student conference, (2) look into guest lecturing in a class, (3) see if any situation presents itself such that I can contribute to faculty
- UHM project staff work: initial discussions with Jose Ximenes regarding how to conduct marketing surveys

- Initial coordination meetings for the student internships of Brigida da Silva and Filipe da Costa

Week 3 (may 16-22)

- meetings: Richard Stoll (Peace Corps – discussion of future agriculture program of Peace Corps, coordination of translators for the upcoming nursery workshops, & ideas for our agricultural economics workshops);
- Attended/participated in conference: “FAO Consultative Workshop on Post-harvest & Mechanization for East Timor Farmers” [part of FAO project on “reduction of post-harvest losses” – result: what kind of machinery to give to communities via FAO partners]; participated with members of NGOs (Caritas, Hala Rae, HASATIL, USC, IRFED, ETADep) and UNOPS; forwarded results to Bowen and Kent for potential utilization in our workshops

Week 4 (may 23-29)

- General meetings: Joao at Timor Institute of Development Studies (former East Timor Study Group); Lucio Gomes & Shane McCarthy (CCT/NCBA – setup student internship of Flavia da Silva); meetings regarding potential English class curriculum/class studies as part of student internship of Matias Gomes
- meeting with MAFF counterpart, Lourenco Fontes: decision to have initial capacity and needs assessment workshop from central MAFF perspective – to include, besides Lourenco and myself, Permanent Secretary Jose da Cruz, Arcanjo da Silva and Paula Santos from Policy and Planning, and Claudino from Crops
- Presentation of UHM Project at CARE Seed Stakeholder Meeting (28 May, 2004 at Hotel Timor)

Week 5 (may 30-june 5)

- general info meetings: Jon Steele (adviser to MAFF Permanent Secretary)
- Capacity & Needs Assessment (June 3): after initial overall discussion of the current state (and many constraints), we specifically isolated the current state in terms of agricultural economic analysis/evaluation in four areas (production economics, analysis of adoption and diffusion, marketing, and risk management), delineated desired states for each (in 5 years), current capacities towards achievement of these desired states, and finally specific training needs to help propel staff towards sufficient capacities; as knowledge of current capacities (and thus needs) of district-level staff was often limited, a suggestion was made to learn more of such capacities and needs directly from some district staff
- Sustainable Livelihood Network meeting (June 4): presented the UHM project to participants & requested feedback regarding our proposed workshops & my proposed food economy analysis (both received enthusiastic responses & helpful contributions in person and via subsequent email)

Week 6 (june 6-12)

- Attendance of parts of UHM nursery training (in Venilale) to get acquainted with nature of MAFF training in Timor Leste
- Capacity & Needs discussions with district-level MAFF staff in Baucau & Viqueque (via translation)
- Discussion of upcoming conference and our workshops with Felipe at UNTL
- Telephone conference call with Bowen & Cathy regarding updates to workshop plans based upon content and logistical insights from initial meetings
- Initial discussions of logistics and arrangements for UHM Student Symposium
- UNTL “Rice & Its Problems” conference (june 12) – although I was originally offered/asked to speak on the effects of an increase in the price of imported rice on the consumption patterns of farmers, Filipe Ximenes determined that too many speakers had already confirmed, so I was asked to attend & contribute through questions/comments; in the closing moments, I was introduced formally to all in attendance and asked to say a few words about the UHM project & my specific involvement in it [note: I was then asked to present to lecturers on July 10th & cleared my schedule accordingly, but, though never officially told that it would not happen, I was told that everyone was busy enough times to understand that, if I didn’t hear otherwise beforehand, there would be no such talk]

Week 7 (june 13-19)

- Submission of typed results of Capacity & Needs assessment, insights from district offices, and revision ideas from UHM conference call to C&N team at MAFF + Minister & Vice-Minister
- UHM team logistics meetings regarding all needing to be done to set up (including agreement on brochure material); clearly laid out to me that the order of incentives for attendance of district-level staff (transport/per diem payments; free accommodation; content of course; certification) needs to be met and described in the brochure in that order to attract the right people to attend; meetings with MAFF administration, Lourenco, and online with UHM to ensure possibilities of making such payments in line with what would get the right people
- Meeting with Paolo Correia (UNTL Social Economy in Agriculture, former trainer for extension agents) & separate meeting with Osorio Verdial (UNTL Social Economy in Agriculture, former head of agricultural vocational school training & also training for extension agents) to discuss proposed program for workshops – received much constructive input regarding content and how to present; concern about interpreters – Paolo offered to find students or young faculty who would be honored to take part in the workshops as translators [note: after repeated subsequent inquiries into this offer, unfortunately, timing of final exams and other student and faculty requirements prevented such possibilities]
- UHM conference call to refine content plan per results of C&N assessment and discussions at UNTL
- Meetings at CCT/NCBA to review former candlenut findings of Sam Filiaci; talks with shipping agents regarding costs of shipping candlenut oil; talks with Harry Ako regarding feasibility of candlenut and aquaculture

Week 8 (june 20-26)

- trip to Ermera with Carlos to help him with student internship needs
- meeting with Jose Ximenes to review progress on Baucau & Venilale marketing surveys; simplified plan agreed upon to ensure sufficient # achieved (with also sufficient information to truly say something); also initial set-up of information-gathering sites for 2nd day of district-level workshops (per suggestion of overall team meeting in Honolulu)
- follow-up UHM team logistics meeting (progress/clarification from last week's meeting)
- submission of all materials regarding workshop plans to USAID (including minister comments, C&N results, district-level talk results, results of UHM conference call as revised framework/plan, brochure/registration form) & one failed attempt to get input/advice regarding how to best proceed (as a meeting that I had specifically set for this discussion became an unsolicited forum for criticism of the project in general that had nothing to do with me or the agricultural economics workshops)
- separate meetings with Geoff Etches and Nina Gomes regarding setup of Student Internship Symposium
- follow-up UHM conference call with agricultural economics team to clarify changes & plans for implementation
- Create draft Brochure & Registration Forms for district-level workshops based on all above input

Week 9 (june 27-july 3)

- farmer group workshop setup in Dili (entire UHM team as led by myself and Carin)
- 2nd meeting with USAID to discuss plans for workshops but EG leader chose not to attend [blaming scheduling error on assistant; assistant did stay and give very very brief input without having ever read what I had submitted] – thus, 2 chances were disregarded despite my attempts to get USAID input; I gave up – I really care about their input, but they don't care enough to read what I give them and attend meetings to which they have committed; thus, I must proceed without their input
- presented to “Entrepreneurship & Marketing” class at UNTL – prepared slides in Bahasa Indonesia but translator (for the 2nd time) stood me up (helped me until lunch with some of preparation but failed to return after lunch to make the presentation); course instructor had to do some spoken translation but overall presentation and discussion received very well
- follow-up meeting with Faustino Gomes (UNTL, research council) to confirm that, together with UNTL Social Economy department, a team of about 5 from UNTL would definitely attend the central-level workshops
- follow-up meeting with Richard Stoll (Peace Corps) to further solidify relationship regarding potential agriculture volunteers & to clarify whether or not any volunteers might be available for our workshops (resounding “no” – only seven volunteers left & none can leave their sites at that point in time)

- follow-up meeting with Lourenco Fontes (MAFF) to clarify content revisions & plan for distribution of brochures to ensure that the right people register to attend both workshops

Week 10 (July 4-10)

- Farm-level (land-use group new product/marketing) workshop objectives: (1) explanation of the workings of markets and prices (examples/simulation; general 4Ps; value-added exercise); (2) tie-in of what was chosen as “land-use” activity with understanding of markets – why choose that particular item & why choose chosen marketing strategy?; (3) collection of farm-level data relevant for district-level & central-level workshops, including a marketing plan written by each group that can be used for practice evaluating marketing plans; (4) practice workshop for staff for “bigger” agricultural economics workshops; (5) chance to work together with GTZ by inviting them to attend & contribute as relevant
- In 2 workshops (9 groups each), successful in the 1st 4 objectives – got marketing plans written by each group, got relevant information regarding reasons for choices, got side questions answered useful for understanding farmer objectives for subsequent workshops, got good practice as a team relevant for orchestrating “bigger” workshops; last objective was a bit of a problem – miscommunication regarding the role of GTZ in the workshops resulted in some “domination” problems on the 1st day but resulted in some nice discussions and future plans such that the general consensus was that objective #5 was also indirectly achieved

Week 11 (July 11-17)

- Collation & submission to translators of all workbook materials for district-level workshops; 2 translators to initially translate all materials, then to transfer all materials to 2nd translator (as recommended by USAID) for reverse translation and subsequent correction of any mistakes; [note: all materials were submitted for such reverse translation except for the presentation by me (as I needed to wait for all other materials to be presented to ensure that mine served to synthesize the others) and of Andre (who had his presentation translated by his own translator & assured me that it was OK for printing)]
- Meetings with Jose Ximenes to review progress on Baucau & Venilale marketing surveys & to define wealth group characteristics
- 3-day wealth-level focus groups (in the Venilale area as organized by Jose Ximenes; 2 focus groups in each of low, medium, and high wealth groups in Fatulia and Tahumasi areas [note: originally wanted to do women and men separately, but, due to time constraints and insistence of informant that women & men must make decisions together in this particular area of TL, agreed to do focus groups that were about ½ & ½ women and men]) to better understand food security and income security conditions within the watershed & create baseline data for understanding not only risk management but also the potential effects of changes in technology and product options in the area (and to be used in the workshops and subsequent presentations); result is understanding of food income (in kilocalories of how much is consumed less how much is purchased) and non-

food income (in dollars & percentages by source) and non-food expenditures (in dollars & percentages by source) + risk scenario of common effects of a risk (drought & pests) in terms of losses of food & non-food income (by wealth group) + reclaiming of how much (by wealth group) through coping mechanisms + potential of changes in all of these amounts through changes in technology or products

Week 12 (July 18-24)

- wonderful, wonderful teamwork by team in Dili to get materials for the workbook together in time to get them submitted by the 20th to the printer (especially “beyond the call of duty” work by Nina Amaral & Flavia da Silva)
- continuation of problems regarding potential translation for district-level workshops (after Peace Corps says that nobody can be available, 2 months of word on the street [via CCT, ARP, UNTL, and others] has only resulted in the one aforementioned failed candidate, UNTL first said that they should be able to find students to help and then later revealed that this was not possible, and repeated words to many people regarding the need for translation help has only resulted in people who have full-time jobs and can thus only help with written work on weekends): UHM student Fidelis Magalhaes (who had agreed to work as a paid translator) reveals that he has taken a job with the US Embassy and can’t work during the workshops – he assures me that he will find someone to replace him who is competent and experienced; after another cancellation of a translator, Nina Amaral finds a professional translator, who, although very expensive, seems qualified in not only translating (both subsequent and simultaneous) but also in agriculture and economics – I had been told that I could not pay more than \$25/day; this was so far out of line as to border the ridiculous – as I’d heard from others before, he required \$25/hour and gave me references to verify this salary; with Hal MacArthur to back me up & in desperation, I agreed to \$150/day. However, due to a death in the family, he called on the day that we left to Venilale to say that he regretfully could not join us. Thus, although all had been planned based on 4 competent translators, we were left with our two UHM students (Nina Gomes and Flavia da Silva, both quite competent) and Fidelis’s replacement, Francesca (not as competent but still subsequently evaluated as “adequate”); one can criticize all that they want about translation problems & they should do so at my expense (since finding translation was my responsibility) – I just know that I tried since the week that I arrived to arrange appropriate translation & regretfully came up somewhat less than optimal at the last minute due to awkward timing
- arrival of Cathy, Bowen, & Kent (with Hal already in Dili and in meetings with me since the previous week) – meetings to prepare among the 4 of us; overall logistics meeting Thursday evening; translation preparation meetings Friday & Saturday
- get demo workbook from printer on Wednesday to submit to USAID for review; get other workbooks from printer on Saturday to take to Venilale

Week 13 (July 25-31)

- leave for Venilale Sunday morning (participants arrive Sunday evening); per other report, conduct district-level workshop Sunday night through Wednesday night (per group vote to run late into the night Wednesday night to finish then rather than continuing for a few hours on Thursday morning)
- in addition to what was stated in the report of Bowen, Cathy, and Kent, the exemplary “beyond the call of duty” work of the UHM team to help ensure that this workshop came together logistically needs special mention; Francisco worked tirelessly (and often sleeplessly) for two weeks before and during the workshops to ensure that all needs or wants by either participants or presenters were met; likewise, Nina Amaral worked long hours daily and sacrificed 3 weekends in a row to selflessly aim to ensure team success in the workshops; overall, the work of all team members deserves more recognition than I can recount in limited space
- presented “Food Economy Analysis for Risk Management and Improved Food and Income Security: Indicative Results from the Seical Watershed of Timor Leste” insights at UNTL “First National Conference on Agriculture and the Environment”
- participation in UNTL Department of Agriculture Conference on Agricultural Research Needs (at Hera)
- preparation for central-level workshop (including submission of materials for English-version book including results of district-level workshops and expectations of participants in central-level workshop)

Week 14 (August 1-7)

- central-level workshop (great disappointment: after 3 months of assiduous coordination attempts with MAFF & UNTL staff for a “director-level” meeting, only 1 MAFF director attended & no UNTL staff attended until the 2nd day (after telephone begging from me)); excuse was that a problem was timing, but all involved knew the timing of the workshops months in advance & said nothing – EXTREMELY disappointing (especially since moved the dates to allow for other workshops involving MAFF & UNTL); however, those in attendance really took to the content and assured me that they would take the workbooks and use them to train others in other districts; they repeatedly expressed how thankful they were for both the workshops and the materials that would allow them to train others in such useful skills; so, overall, perhaps the “inappropriate” people were, in fact, the most appropriate in terms of overall impacts of the material
- Follow-up meetings with Estanislau da Silva (Minister – MAFF) and with Kim Jones & Angela Rodrigues (USAID) to report results of workshops