

# Development *of* Human Rights Education & Research

*at the*  
National University  
*of* Timor-Leste

*2019-2022*

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**Global Campus of Human Rights**  
Development of Human Rights Education and Research  
at the National University of Timor-Leste (2019-2022)

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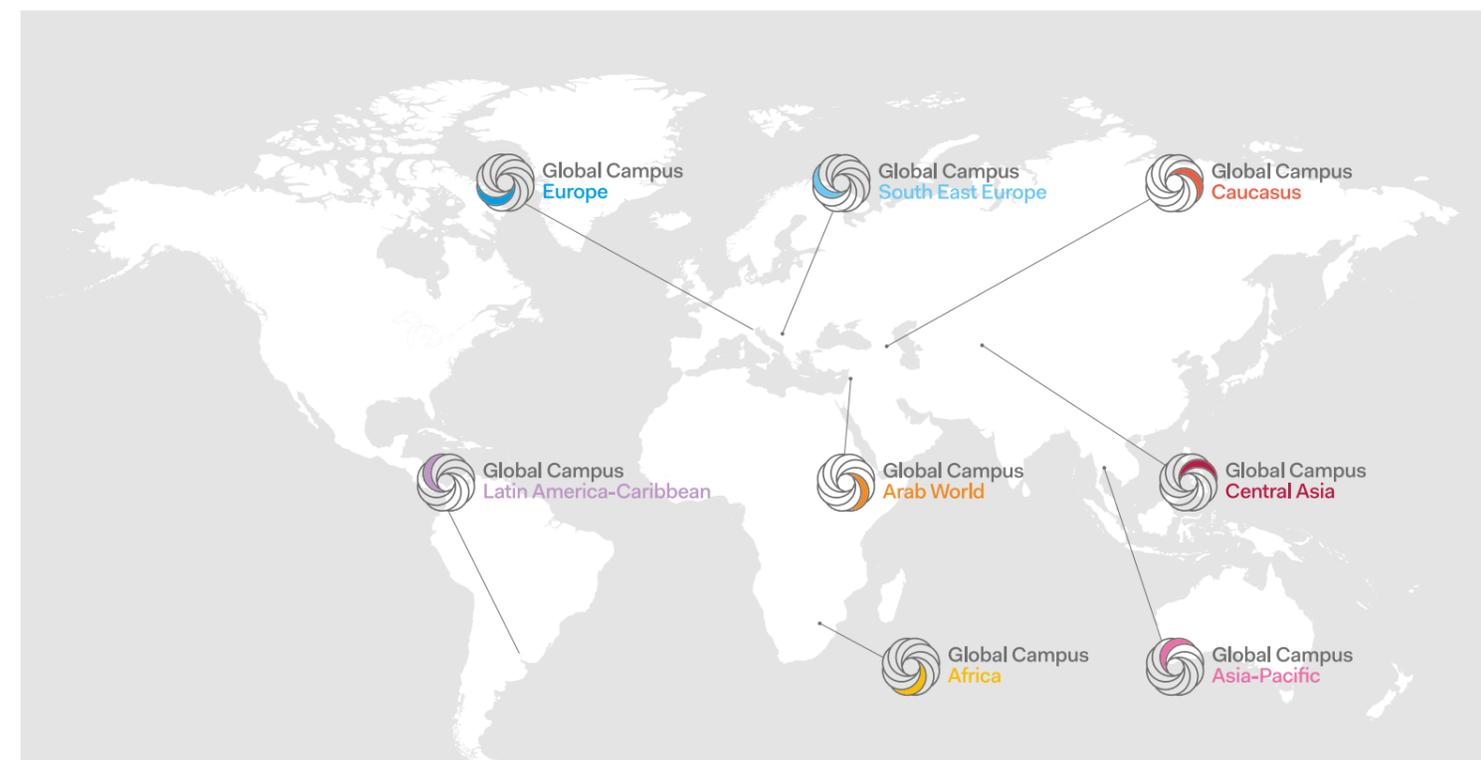


The **Global Campus of Human Rights** is the world's largest network of universities specialized in democracy and human rights education, with over a 100 members in all continents.

Through education and research, the Global Campus works across eight regional hubs, and is committed to fostering new generations of human rights defenders able to contribute to a world in which all human rights are realised.

In light of its vision and mission, the Global Campus increasingly works at the intersection between academia and the development cooperation sector, to promote the affirmation of human rights and democracy in developing countries, countries in transition, emerging democracies, and democracies under pressure, by supporting the establishing or strengthening of human rights education activities in emerging universities worldwide.

## The network





Undergraduate students participate in the 2019 EU Day at the Human Rights Centre.

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# Testimonies

“The Human Rights Centre is a great initiative that will first reach out to our youth so that they will understand what are the fundamental human rights that come from our own Constitution and from the treaties we have ratified (...). This is like an insurance for the rule of law, democracy and freedom”.

## **Josè Ramos-Horta**

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE AND PEACE NOBEL LAUREATE



“The establishment of the Human Rights Centre at the UNTL has relied on the work and dedication of many people. This includes the many students who have taken on human rights as a subject to learn and a goal for their communities, the lectures who have trained themselves as teachers and researchers, the university administrators whose support these actions rely on, and the dedicated staff from the Global Campus encouraging on this project. Remarkable foundations have been built over a short time, demonstrating that there is a deeply rooted interest in human rights and democracy in this country”



## **Michael Hayes**

DIRECTOR OF THE GC ASIA PACIFIC PROGRAMME AT MAHIDOL UNIVERSITY

“Human Rights are universal only as long as each generation re-discovers them and their relevance. In Timor-Leste, the Human Rights Centre allows young people to go on that journey of discovery. Seeing how many young people want to get on board is encouraging not only for the future of Timor-Leste but also for the future of Human Rights in the region and the wider world”.



## **Marc Fiedrich**

AMBASSADOR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO TIMOR-LESTE

“The University is proudly housing the Human Rights Centre with the continuous support of the Global Campus of Human Rights, with the main objective of promoting human rights in Timor-Leste and globally, through academic work and research”.



## **Prof. Joao Martins**

RECTOR OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF TIMOR-LESTE (2021- )

“This is a really important institution, and the value of it is that it will provide top-class education for students, younger people, to know about human rights, but also support all institutions working for education and human rights for all in Timor-Leste (...). It will be a contribution, because of the nature of the Global Campus to link Timor-Leste to the whole human rights community globally”.



## **Roy Trivedy**

UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT COORDINATOR IN TIMOR-LESTE



Preface by

**Manfred Nowak**  
GC SECRETARY GENERAL

In 2018, the Global Campus of Human Rights, a network of some 100 universities worldwide jointly organizing various regional Master Programs in the field of Human Rights and Democracy, was requested by the EU Delegation in Timor-Leste to assist in establishing a Human Rights Centre at the National University of Timor-Leste. I was fascinated by this idea, as Timor-Leste is one of the youngest and most promising nations which gained its independence from Indonesia only after a long and bloody liberation struggle in 2002. I have known José Ramos Horta, Peace Nobel Prize laureate and current President of Timor-Leste, from our common time as members of the board of an influential human rights organization in Geneva, the International Service for Human Rights. This NGO enabled human rights defenders from the Global South to gain access to the various UN human rights mechanisms in Geneva. While Xanana Gusmao and other freedom fighters of Fretilin and its armed wing Falintil, were fighting the Indonesian army in the Timorese jungle, José was their “ambassador” at the United Nations, fighting for the independence of Timor-Leste with amazing political and diplomatic skills in New York and Geneva. His advocacy work was successful, as after the resignation of long-term dictator Suharto in 1998, the United Nations agreed with the new Indonesian President Habibie to organize a referendum about the future of Timor-Leste on 30 August 1999. According to my good friend Ian Martin, who had a very broad experience in organizing UN peace-building operations and who was in charge of implementing this referendum on behalf of the UN, this was definitely his most difficult mission. Immediately after the results of the referendum had been announced (78.5% of voters had chosen independence rather than special autonomy), pro-Indonesian militias with the support of the Indonesian army invaded the country, destroyed most of the country’s infrastructure and killed thousands of East Timorese people. Ian Martin and his team had to be evacuated under very difficult circumstances to Darwin, Australia, from where the UN-authorized military peace-making force INTERFET under Australian command on 20 September 1999 started its operation of liberating Timor-Leste from West-Timorese militias. One month later, the Indonesian Government formally accepted the results of the referendum, and the United Nations established UNTAET, one of the few

successful transitional administrations in the history of the world organization. On 20 May 2002, the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan transferred power from UNTAET to the newly elected President of Timor-Leste, Xanana Gusmao.

I am recapitulating this short history of Timor-Leste's independence as our project of establishing a Human Rights Centre at the National University of Timor-Leste occurred exactly 20 years later. One month after having signed a contract with the EU Commission, we conducted an assessment mission to Dili in January 2019 and, at the end of our 10 days' mission, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Rector of UNTL, Francisco Miguel Martins. After many years, I also met José Ramos Horta again, and he agreed to be a strong supporter and patron of the Human Rights Centre. We realized, however, that we would have to start this ambitious project totally from scratch. The rooms that were offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences were in fact soon afterwards flooded, and it needed the dedication and efforts of our project manager Adriano Remiddi to find other rooms on the first floor, which he could start refurbishing. When I came back on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the independence referendum in August 2019, I was overwhelmed by the progress Adriano and his excellent team of young Timorese staff had achieved in this short period of time. On 27 August, we celebrated the formal inauguration of the Human Rights Centre in the presence of Ramos Horta, Rector Martins, Minister of Higher Education Longuinhos dos Santos, Provedora Nina Gomes, UN Resident Coordinator Roy Trivedi, EU Ambassador Alexandre Leitao and many others. In my ceremonial speech I outlined the reasons why I feel that this project of in-depth human rights education came at the right time: "This young nation was born as a result of the struggle of their people for the right to self-determination, for freedom, human rights and democracy. Many of the leaders and politicians of Timor-Leste are themselves human rights defenders and activists. During their struggle for independence, the people of Timor-Leste have suffered some of the worst violations of human rights you can imagine. The struggle for human rights is, therefore, deeply rooted in the civil society and academic community of Timor-Leste, it constitutes part of the DNA of this country. Nevertheless, human rights as something which makes communities safe, development just, and peace sustainable is not well developed and rooted as an academic field of research and teaching in the curriculum of its schools and universities." The purpose of our project was to empower the young generation of Timor-Leste to study the theory and practical skills of human rights in order to further develop and strengthen the human rights culture in their country. On 30 August 2019, we were invited to join the official ceremony on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the independence referendum, which was a very impressive event.

Three years later, I came back to Dili, this time on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the country's formal independence, which we combined with the official handover of the Human Rights Centre to the National University of Timor-Leste and its new Rector Joao Soares Martins. The handover ceremony took place on 12 December 2022 in the presence of the President of the National Parliament, Aniceto Guterres Lopes, and EU Ambassador Marc Fiedrich, at the Presidential Palace in the context of the Sergio Vieira de Mello Award Ceremony. It was part of the Dili Human Rights Education Week, where we also launched a trilingual textbook "Our Human Rights, Our Future: An Introduction to Human Rights in Southeast Asia", presented the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty together with UNICEF at the UN Compound, participated in the presentation of Master theses by six East Timorese graduates from the Asia-Pacific Master Program of the Global Campus, based at Mahidol University in Bangkok, and organized a key stakeholders' workshop on the future of the UNTL Human Rights Centre. We were also pleased to be invited by President Ramos Horta on the occasion of the inauguration of a meal distribution point at the Presidential Palace for school children living in the neighbourhood, and their families in need.

Within these three years between the two anniversaries, Adriano and his team have achieved amazing progress in fostering human rights education in Timor-Leste, despite the COVID-19 Pandemic, floods and other major obstacles. Many selected students and professors attended the GC Asia-Pacific Master's Program and other training courses at Mahidol University, human rights today form an integral part of all study programs at the various faculties of the UNTL, the Human Rights Centre carries out many research projects in the fields of human rights, children's rights and women's rights, and it is well integrated into the academic community and civil society of Timor-Leste. In its Annual Human Rights Report published in 2020, the European Parliament has singled out the Human Rights Centre as best practice in the field of human rights education, and in March 2023 the project was praised by an Independent Evaluation commissioned by the EU.

I am deeply convinced that comprehensive human rights education is the key to developing a genuine human rights culture. Thanks to this project, Timor-Leste is today one of the few countries in the world where human rights education is mandatory for all students at all Bachelor programs offered at UNTL. The next step will be to integrate human rights education at all levels of pre-school, primary and secondary education in Timor-Leste. Such a deeply rooted human rights culture will protect the people of Timor-Leste against major human rights violations in the future and will at the same time lay the foundations for sustainable development and lasting peace.

Introduction by  
**Adriano Remiddi**

PROJECT MANAGER

HEAD OF THE GC CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT UNIT



A few months ago, during a public debate on the state of democracy and human rights in Timor-Leste, some high-level national and foreign speakers were commenting about the latest Freedom House democracy index. One of the internationals praised the local policymaker: *<<congratulations Sir, Timor-Leste is the first democracy of Southeast Asia! But tell me please, which is the second?>>*.

This humorous anecdote says a lot about the exceptional commitment to the values of democracy and human rights of Asia's youngest nation. Having emerged from decades of brutal occupation and a bloody conflict following the 1999 independence referendum, Timor-Leste soon achieved remarkable results in the promotion and protection of human rights, making the country a respected and leading model worldwide. And a promising hub for human rights education!

In fact, although Timor-Leste was not yet independent when the UN Decade for Human Rights Education was launched in 1995, recommendations for the development of human rights curricula and resources were already clearly set by the post-conflict truth and reconciliation commission report (CAVR) in 2006. Since then, many stakeholders have been working with the national authorities to include human rights at the primary and secondary levels of education, as well as within the armed forces and police.

These favorable socio-political preconditions have undoubtedly provided a fertile ground to engage in the ambitious goal of establishing the **Human Rights Centre of the National University** in Dili (UNTL) and filling a gap by setting up human rights higher education activities, with the support of the European Union.

From the very inception of this project until its end, the UNTL showed a very proactive and progressive approach, demonstrated for example by the will to achieve a multi-disciplinary mainstreaming of the new subject, in opposition to the more conservative and still widespread relegation of human rights education to the fields of law or political studies.

The successful cooperation established between the Global Campus, the UNTL, and the other key stakeholders involved during the project confirmed how human rights are strongly interwoven into the national

public discourse of Timor-Leste and are being identified with its recent struggle for self-determination, hence firmly legitimized as a driver of equitable development.

While it is not entirely surprising to witness a positive commitment to human rights education in contexts that recently emerged from a dictatorship or other forms of violent domination, such attitude should not be taken for granted, either in the regional or global perspective.

In fact, and very regretfully, it is increasingly evident that access to human rights education (a human right in itself, and a field in rapid consolidation) still too often encounters resistance from central or local institutions, concerned with its great transformative power, which makes it a field of studies like no other.

It is in these terms that the impressive results achieved by the UNTL and its newly established Human Rights Centre, which will be reviewed in detail within this booklet, are particularly noteworthy. Despite the many challenges faced during the implementation, the work of the Global Campus, the National University, and the EU represent a tangible example of the successful interplay between human rights education actors such as specialized, flexible, field-work-based academic institutions, with rights-based development cooperation instruments. In Timor-Leste such interaction allowed to identify and address the primary challenges of the formal recognition by policymakers, hence the permanent integration of human rights education as a component of national curricula. This could be practically achieved only by providing beneficiaries with solid and ample skills and resources, in a shared and co-owned development process.

Moreover, the structural needs and manifold constraints encountered during the project encouraged the Global Campus to advance further a unique working methodology, especially suitable for building capacities of emerging universities in developing countries. This has built upon the experiences and good practices gathered over twenty years through its regional hubs around the world, which have engendered an innovative approach to capacity-building that demands not only academic expertise (typical of classic academic institutions) but also solid know-how in cooperation work, public diplomacy, and international relations.

This practice-oriented approach well describes the character of the GC as a network at the intersection between academia and the development cooperation sector and prospectively sets a model with high multiplicative potential for replication for universities in need.

## Project kick-off

In January 2019, a team of the Global Campus headed by the Secretary General Manfred Nowak and including among others the Project Manager Adriano Remiddi, the GC Asia-Pacific Director from Mahidol University Michael Hayes and a representative of the University of Coimbra (member of GC Europe) undertook a participatory assessment mission to Dili as a first step in the implementation of the project.

The team met at first with President and Nobel Prize Laureate H. E. José Ramos-Horta who enthusiastically agreed to publicly endorse the project. Hence extended visits and work meetings were carried out with National University (UNTL) bodies, including the Director of the Peace Studies Centre, the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Rector and his support cabinet, the Head of the Legal Office. Further meetings were carried out with government bodies, Parliament and State institutions (Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Culture; the National Directorate of Human Rights and Citizenship; the Ombudsperson Office for Human Rights and Justice; the Presidency of Parliamentary Women's Caucus, the Parliamentary Commission F for Health, the Parliamentary Commission Social Security and Gender Equality). Also, the GC representatives met with main stakeholders from civil society organizations and NGOs (with the support of AJAR, CEPAD, J'US), as well as the international community, especially with the United Nations system in Timor-Leste, which organized a closed roundtable meeting involving all agencies, and an open cocktail with key stakeholders.

The set of meetings served to assess and plan the next steps in the implementation of the project, but also to identify topics in the field of human rights which are of special interest in the country, build a solid network and secure support for the action.

The remarkable level of support and enthusiasm gathered around the project by local and international stakeholders during the mission set extremely encouraging elements for the successful development of the action. A clear and positive sign of the fruitful cooperation established was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Global Campus and the UNTL in the presence of major stakeholders – including Nobel Peace Prize laureate José Ramos-Horta, the EU and Portuguese Ambassadors and the UN resident coordinator – signalling the commitment of all parties to the success of the project.

Finally, it is during this early and very positive phase that the decision was taken to anticipate the inauguration of the physical premises of the future Human Rights Centre from December (as initially internally agreed) to late August, in order to include it in the official State celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the independence referendum.



GC and UNTL representatives meet with the EU ambassador Alexandre Leitao during the assessment mission



Aerial view of the UNTL Faculty of Social Sciences, with the Human Rights Centre on the right wing of the building

The National university of Timor-Leste (UNTL - Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e) was created on November 17th 2000 by former faculty members of the two institutions of higher education that existed during the Indonesian occupation, in order to meet the challenges and requirements of training the country's human resources.

As the only public University in the country, the UNTL has established itself as the centre of excellence in Timor-Leste, fulfilling its public service mission through its Faculties, Postgraduate and Research programmes, Development and Training units.

With 29,684 students, 612 lecturers and researchers and 440 administrative staff and technicians, the UNTL is today the largest academic institution in the country.

# Refurbishment works

## “The establishment of the Human Rights Centre dignifies the Faculty of Social Sciences and our University”

Prof. Dr. Francisco Miguel Martins  
RECTOR OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF TIMOR-LESTE (2017-2020)



Providing adequate and conducive facilities for the new Centre has been one of the key priorities of this project given that the UNTL, like numerous other educational institutions in the country, is still suffering from the legacy of wartime destruction and subsequent decay, placing students and staff in a precarious position and hindering educational outcomes.

The refurbishment of the premises and sanitation facilities, conducted over a period of three months, was implemented by a local construction company. The rehabilitation focused on the creation of three main areas, namely the office space, the library and meeting room, and as well as a teaching room together with the two toilets situated on the ground floor. These spaces have been furnished using locally sourced and environmentally-friendly materials produced by a Timorese social project. The reconstruction work entailed

demolition, carpentry, civil and architectural finishing, plumbing, hydraulic works, creation of a storage space, painting, landscaping and fixing of the drainage system. This work was carried out facing the considerable practical constraints also connected to a major flooding experienced in the capital city and especially in the university campus area of Caicoli.

UNTL staff and students, as well as civil society representatives, can now use the Centre's safe, clean and conducive spaces, and benefit from access to the internet and technical equipment. Thanks to these premises, educational and extracurricular activities organised and hosted at the Centre have attracted numerous visitors, thus turning it into a lively hub for students and activists.



Carpenters at work in the future premises of the Human Rights Centre



The Centre's teaching room after completion of the reconstruction works

Teaching room  
for **25** people

Office space  
for **5** people

Reading & meeting area  
for **8** people

WASH facilities **2**

# Inauguration of the premises

The HRC premises were inaugurated on August 27th 2019. The event took place in a highly symbolic year for the country, marking the 20th anniversary of its independence Referendum (Popular Consultation). The decision to request the Timorese government the inclusion of the event in the official agenda of the celebrations was made jointly with UNTL to secure the highest visibility and recognition to the establishment of this new institution.

The inauguration was hence closely coordinated with the appointed Organizational Commission headed by H. E. Xanana Gusmao and its staff supported by the Centro Nacional Chega!. The ceremony was graced by the participation of local and international notable figures, among them, the Nobel laureate Dr. Josè Ramos Horta who delivered a keynote speech. The guests were also addressed by the Rector of the National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL) - Prof. Francisco Miguel Martins, the EU Ambassador - H.E. Alexandre Leitao, the Secretary General of the GCHR – Prof. Manfred Nowak, as well as the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Culture, Prof. Dr. Longuinhos dos Santos.

Over 200 people participated to the event, with strong presence from all national and international key stakeholders as well as diplomatic corps. Delegations of students and two professors from each UNTL faculties were organized to strengthen the sense of co-ownership at University level beyond the Faculty of Social Sciences. During the ceremony also the official HRC logo was unveiled.

Before the event, a public press conference took place with the participation of the EU Ambassador, the UNTL Rector and the GC Secretary General. Following the cut of the ribbon and the cocktail on the terrace of the HRC, a media corner was set up to realise a series of video interviews to capture the impressions of manifold stakeholders involved, from H. E. Ramos Horta to UNTL students, and be used later for visibility purposes - ten videos were later produced and disseminated. The event also enjoyed strong local TV coverage through a reportage done by the national RTTL, while was internationally promoted through the GC and EU Delegation communication offices.

## THE LOGO



The logo of the HRC was inspired by a Visual Contest organized with two primary schools in Dili. Two main themes emerged from the children's painting: coexistence and harmony. Many children have included in their drawing elements of living spaces, which range from the earth, their mother country (Timor-Leste), to their homes. They highlighted the peaceful coexistence of different individuals within a bigger picture, in addition to cultural contents from their country. Most of the drawings portray happiness and tolerance between humans and their environment. The identified elements were taken as the foundation for the creation of the Human Rights Centre logo in a way which successfully marries the children's artistic sensibility with elements of the two stakeholders' visual identities. The colourful circle (mirroring the leitmotif of the globe, earth, unity) consists of stylized representations of the human form (another leitmotif of the children's paintings), while the logo's font and colour mirrors that of the UNTL.



A view of the Human Rights Centre exteriors



Longuinhos dos Santos, Minister of Higher Education, cuts the ribbon during the inauguration ceremony



Pupils of the Farol Elementary school in Dili take part in the human rights drawing contest organized to inspire the Centre's logo

# Trainees & Team

**“The presence of Global Campus and of the Human Rights Centre in the Timorese academia is one of the new tools that can help to tear down the barriers of inequality in my society, as I dream about”.**

Francelino dos Santos Serra  
PROJECT ASSISTANT & TRAINEE



Thanks to a broad mapping and selection process jointly implemented with the National University, a team of human rights scholars, researchers and junior practitioners was identified to constitute the future backbone of the Human Rights Centre as teachers, researchers and managers.

They are: six emerging Human rights (group 1); fifteen UNTL professors and lecturers from all faculties and disciplines (group 2) so to ensure the multi-disciplinary approach to the mainstreaming efforts; six leading graduating students and alumni from the Faculty of Social Sciences (group 3), home to the Human Rights Centre.

Contextually, a project team was assembled for the key office in Dili and with the support of academic and technical personnel in Bangkok and Venice.

Working together with the project manager, this highly diverse international team played a crucial role for the right implementation of the activities.



The six human rights defenders (group 1) during their MA studies at the GC Asia-Pacific programme in Bangkok



The UNTL lecturers (group 2) during a courtesy visit by UNTL Rector Prof. Martins



The project team meets EU Ambassador Marc Fiedrich

# Training programmes

“The Programme has greatly contributed to the advancement of my career as a long-standing human rights defender. This opportunity made me embrace diversity, acknowledge and respect differences, and most of all bring human rights to communities at large”.



Juvita Pereira Faria  
HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AND TRAINEE

Three structural “Human Rights Studies & Training Programmes” were developed to forge the Centre’s faculty and team of human rights scholars and managers. They were equipped with knowledge, tools and skills to conceptualise and lead courses, research and learning activities to become a new area of expertise for the UNTL.

All three programmes, taking place in Dili, Bangkok or on-line, were designed following a triadic structure:

Phase 1 - a preparatory training primarily related to academic skills and English language proficiency;

Phase 2 - as the core educational segment, customized for each group in learning objectives and duration

Phase 3 based on an internship period to put in practice and test the knowledge acquired.

The highlight of the programme were six scholarships to attend the GC Master’s Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Asia Pacific (GC Asia-Pacific) at Mahidol University in Bangkok and regional partner universities.



Juvita Pereira Faria and Maria Rosa Xavier (group 1) during a study trip in north Thailand



GC Asia-Pacific team welcomes the Timorese human rights defenders at Mahidol University



First day of the GC Asia-Pacific regional master for the six Timorese human rights defenders

# Outreach activities

From the inception of this project, numerous outreach activities have been conducted in cooperation with local and international partners. Their aim was to build strategic partnerships and establish the UNTL Human Rights Centre as an important stakeholder in the human rights landscape of Timor-Leste, while providing UNTL students and grassroots activists with an opportunity to learn and exchange, as well as with a space to foster their creativity and engage socially.

For this purpose, the HRC's extracurricular activities programme was launched in October 2019, and conceived around three main formats: Weekly "Human Rights Talks" and "Human Rights & Cinema" were implemented to foster human rights values and initiate constructive debate around this new subject.

They introduced the visitors to the most pressing human rights issues for Timor-Leste and the region, following the UN calendar of international days and commemorations. Moreover, the "Fridays4Civil Society", format was designed to meet the needs of small grassroots organizations and activists, freely providing them with a safe and conducive environment to hold meetings, workshops and other activities.

These activities became the highlight of the Centre's programming, as a key contribution to its outreach, dissemination, and awareness raising role, inside and outside the academic community. Thanks to this programme, hundreds of students, activists and experts could join the HRC, and become key actors of its consolidation as a clear hub of human rights education.



Students participate in the Centre's weekly extracurricular activities organized with local and international experts. Many of them are organized together with the UN mission and its agencies



Events:  
63

Participants:  
1593

Male:  
771

Female:  
822

# Partnerships

**“The Timorese have suffered massive human rights violations. They know very well the practice and the struggle for human rights, so I think it is really exciting that now we will have a Centre where people can fortify their knowledge (...) and learn more about the theory of human rights”.**



Anjet Lanting  
UN HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISER IN TIMOR-LESTE (2019)

The project adopted a multi-stakeholders approach to favour strategic synergies that would not only ensure reaching the expected results, but also to foster the necessary co-ownership of the overall initiative by key local, regional and international partners.

The project was implemented in close cooperation with the European Union Delegation in Dili and especially with the Ambassador/Head of Mission, the GC INTPA and the Communication Offices. Besides providing essential technical support for the correct implementation of the action, the EUDEL role proved crucial in facilitating institutional dialogue with the main national and international institutions, successfully organising outreach events and campaigns, and defining visibility and sustainability strategies.

All academic aspects of capacity-building were conceptualized and developed thanks to the expert support of the Institute of Human Rights and Peace (IHRP) of Mahidol University in Bangkok, home to the Global Campus Asia-Pacific Programme. IHRP lecturers were involved in teaching and tutoring

students and trainees, as well as supporting internationalization of the new HRC and facilitating its introduction to the main regional human rights education networks, as the ASEAN University Network (AUN-HRE) and the South-East Asia Human Rights Network (SAEHRN).

The United Nations system in Timor-Leste, including the Resident Coordinator Office and the Agencies, strongly supported the project from its very inception. Their help was critical to further improve the implementation process, facilitate linkages with domestic and foreign stakeholders and support the organization of local events and training of the Human Rights Centre.

The Provedoria for Human Rights and Justice (the national human rights institution) and the Centro Nacional Chega! (the national centre for dealing with the past) became also crucial local actors as their expertise made a vital contribution to incorporating the Timorese experience of the struggle for human rights and democratization into the training programmes and the curriculum development.



Prof. Dulce Martins da Silva receives the completion certificate from the SHAPE-SEA training held at Mahidol University



The UNTL alumni (group 3) at the end of the training organized with Centro Nacional Chega!



President José Ramos-Horta visits the Human Rights Centre info point during the EU days

## Curriculum reform

**“As a young woman I wish to see change in the society, but change is nothing without human rights education first”.**

Senhorina Madalena Dos Santos  
PROJECT OFFICER, UNTL HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE



**“The work that the Human Rights Centre does is extremely important for the country. Education on human rights is considered to be one of the best tools to build resilient societies and prevent abuses. Empowering Timorese youth, as the Human Rights Centre does, by teaching about human rights as part of the academic curriculum, is directly contributing to a stronger and more peaceful Timor-Leste”.**

Claudia Soares Gomez Diaz  
UN HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISORS IN TIMOR-LESTE



The support gathered around the project and its team by local institutions helped building the consensus for the mainstreaming of human rights education throughout all nine faculties thanks to a curriculum reform and the adoption of the new general course “An Introduction to Democracy and Human Rights in South East Asia and Timor-Leste”.

This decision was issued in July 2020, by a unanimous vote of the Council of Management of the National University of Timor-Leste. Thanks to the new course, Timorese students will gain insight into human rights core concepts, international and regional HR protection mechanisms, as well as rights of specific groups and various thematic issues that are particularly relevant locally.

The mainstreaming of human rights education on this scale means that each future graduate of the country’s only National University will have acquired the fundamentals of human rights as part

of their formal education. In a country where nearly half of the population is under the age of 18, the potential for transformative societal contribution of such innovation bears the highest significance. This ambitious policy change places the UNTL at the front row of human rights education in the South East Asia region and beyond.

This paramount achievement, however, would not have been possible without the excellent cooperation developed during the project with the UNTL bodies, and the high degree of co-ownership over the implementation process. In this regard, it has to be stressed that the initial impetus for the introduction of human rights as compulsory disciplines emerged as a request from UNTL Faculty Deans, during a comprehensive mapping and consultation which took place in the inception phases of the project, and which represents a key element of the working methodology applied locally.



# EU Recognition



On 15 June 2020, the EU published its **Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2019**, which contains a wealth of interesting information on “EU action to stop the erosion of human rights worldwide” (High Representative Josep Borrell). It provides an excellent overview of the various initiatives of the EU at multilateral level, the implementation of the EU human rights guidelines and other instruments of EU foreign policy, such as human rights dialogues.

Among thousands of human rights projects funded by the EU, this Annual Report puts a special emphasis on our capacity-building project in Timor-Leste as a true success story.

This important recognition helped in raising attention about the Centre and its future potential.



“ We are very proud to support this Centre, and to support the work that it’s doing, bringing the study of human rights into different courses and different parts of the University, and helping young people understand the importance of promoting and protecting human rights in Timor-Leste and across the world. ”

Andrew Jacobs  
AMBASSADOR OF THE EU TO TIMOR-LESTE

# Teaching and learning toolkit

**“This initiative is a new permanent training and studying tool contributing to the didactic innovation of the National University for the mainstreaming of human rights education through its faculties, starting with the transversal course”.**

Prof. Samuel Freitas  
UNTL VICE-RECTOR FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS



As Covid-19 started in the middle of the project, several activities had to be modified or cancelled, with great impact on the envisioned mobility schemes toward and from the GC Asia-Pacific hub in Bangkok.

It was hence necessary to develop innovative ideas to allow for the continuation of key activities, such as the creation of an e-learning platform for lecturers' training, and a first-ever human rights textbook in English, Tetun and Portuguese.

“Our Human Rights, Our Future: An Introduction to Human Rights in Southeast Asia” has been specifically developed to support teachers and students of this new course, as well as any other effort to promote human rights higher education in Timor-Leste and beyond. The textbook is an adaptation of “Introduction to Human Rights in Southeast Asia - Vol. 1, 2, 3” published by the Southeast Asian Human Rights Studies Network (SEAHRN), a teaching tool that aims at the promotion of

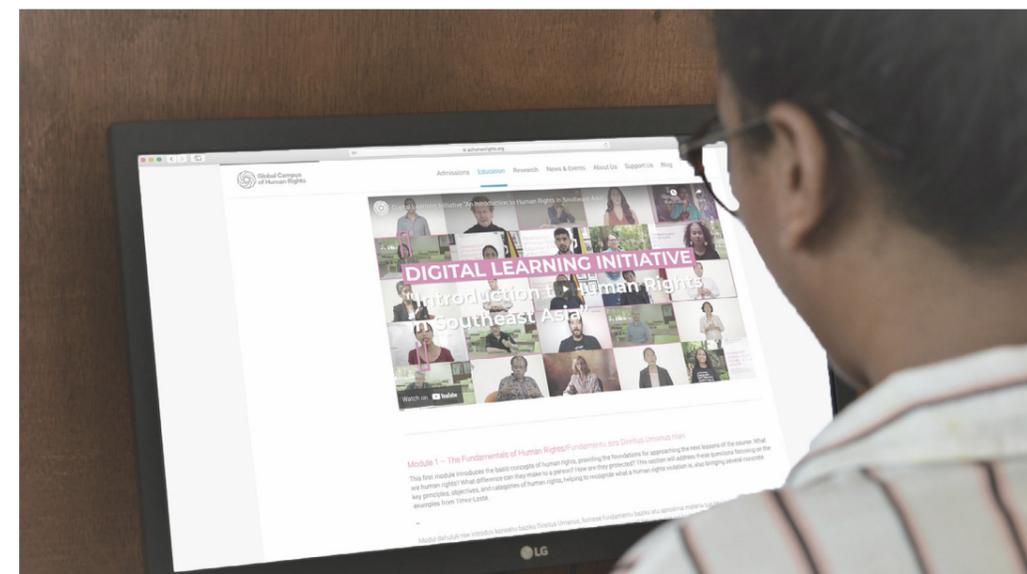
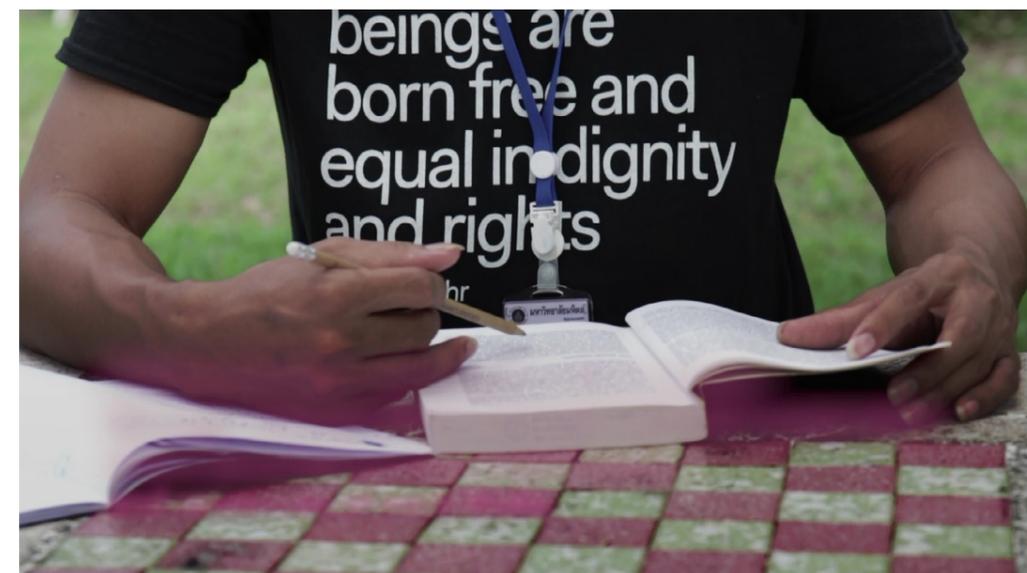
human rights education in current and prospective ASEAN countries.

“Our Human Rights, Our Future” lays out the fundamental notions and standards of human rights, followed by a thematic selection of subjects related to the most pressing issues in Timor-Leste. The textbook was abridged and then adapted to UNTL needs, as well as tested with students to ensure it is well suited to their learning purposes. Moreover, several Timorese civil society organizations have contributed to the development of the materials, especially in the preparation of boxes with local examples and practices.

Very importantly, “Our Human Rights, Our Future” is complemented by a Digital Learning Initiative which makes the three e-books, over six hours of video-lessons, PowerPoint slides and a glossary freely available. This education tool, entirely designed in Tetun and English, makes it possible to combine training and in-class participation with e-learning materials.



Copies of the textbook have been donated to all Faculties' libraries, and to all reading rooms in Dili



# Library

The interruption of the public activities also allowed to accelerate the on preparation of the Centre's library, the creation of its books' catalogue, hence the opening to the university community.

The setting up of the Library also proved to be a particularly complex endeavour considering some practical obstacles, as for example the great limitations to the purchase of items locally, or the high shipment costs, both worsened by the impact of the pandemic.

Opened to the public in the final months' part of 2020, the library offers access to 350 books, 500 e-books, study areas

and an IT working station with free access to the internet.

Very soon the library has become a point of reference for access to knowledge and discussion, making the premises and resources freely available to the university community and all those individuals or groups interested in human rights topics, especially youth and activists.

Overall, and despite the several disruptions due to the pandemic regulations, from its opening to the Centre's handover, the library hosted 800 visitors.

## The Library catalogue includes sections on:

- The Fundamentals of Human Rights
- Human Rights Standards and the International System
- Women and Gender Rights
- The Rights of Person with Disabilities
- Human Rights and Development
- The Environment and Human Rights
- Human Rights and Conflict, Justice, Security
- Human Rights and Citizenship
- Human Rights Education
- Human Rights Regional Perspectives in Southeast Asia and the World
- History of the struggle for human rights in Timor-Leste



Regina Seuc Seran das Dores and Esperança Martins Carvalho (group 3) organize the Centre's library catalogue as part of the internship period



The project team categorize new library items received from a donation by the Australia East Timor Association (AETA)

# Human rights mainstreaming

**“Human rights are universal, open to everyone without discrimination of race, ethnicity, language, sex, religion etc. So, as UNTL students, I feel proud that this subject is in the UNTL curriculum, and I wish to learn more in the future”.**

Fazia Maria Pinto Ferreira



**“Incorporating the human right course in the UNTL curriculum as a mandatory subject for all students deepens their knowledge of human rights and is one of the milestones achieved so far. It is a guarantee for them to uphold the human right values during their life”.**

Prof. Bernardo Idalina Leto



Thanks to skills and tools developed during the first two years of the project, when in-class activities resumed during the end of 2021, the Centre's team could implement the pilot edition of the new human rights course in 5 of the 9 UNTL faculties, involving 13 departments, 21 lecturers and 1130 enrolled students, of which 532 men and 598 women (53%). About 85% of them successfully passed the exam, some with the highest grade.

The positive implementation of this pilot is among the most important outcomes of the project, in terms of its policy-change significance and long-term transformative potential.



Students attend the new human rights course, majority of them are women



# Training of trainers

**“ All human beings have their rights, because they are human, however most of them cannot enjoy their rights because they don’t know them. The presence of Human Rights Centre is really crucial to bring the knowledge to everyone, as the only way for every human to enjoy their rights or to claimed them”**



Elisabeth da Costa Lopes  
A TRAINEE WHO BECAME TRAINER, AND WAS EVENTUALLY NOMINATED THE VICE-DIRECTOR OF THE UNTL HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE

In 2021-22, during the second cycle of the project, a new cohort of lecturers was forged in a training of trainers now organized by the Centre itself.

The training provided the lecturers with a general theoretical knowledge of key human rights education concepts, while also engaging them in academically discussing some of most pressing human rights issues close to their real-life experience, and to the one of peers in Timor-Leste and Southeast Asia. Moreover, the training aimed at enhancing the lecturers’ critical thinking and academic skills.

Importantly, the trainers implementing the activity were a team of selected UNTL lecturers and assistants trained during the 2019-21 first cycle. This demonstrates the success of the previous capacity building endeavour, and testifies to its sustainability multiplicative potential.

Regional and international human rights experts were also included into the training through e-learning tools created for this purpose. Furthermore, each of the ten training modules included guest lectures or field visits, to provide the non-academic practitioner perspective thanks to the collaboration with the project key partners.

24 participants took part in the training and 21 successfully passed the final examinations, hence were awarded completion certificate and diploma supplement. The participants’ evaluations of the training were overwhelmingly positive.

Their contribution was crucial to deliver the second edition of the transversal human rights course in 2022 allowing now to enrol 1960 students (61% women, 39% man), thanks to a team 35 teachers in 7 faculties and 20 departments, eventually reaching a 86% pass rate of participants.



The second cohort of human rights lecturers takes part in the training of trainers



Professors during a work retreat in Dare to focus on the course teaching plan

# Summer School

**“The biggest enemy of human beings are ignorance and oppression. This happens when we do not know our rights. Having knowledge of human rights is a victory against injustice in this world”.**

Celso da Fonseca  
COORDINATOR AT THE UNTL HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE



In July 2022 the UNTL Human Rights Centre organised its first Summer School, taking place as a residential activity in the outskirts of the capital Dili. It was devoted to university graduates who returned to their rural districts after their studies, with the objective of expanding the outreach of the Centre beyond the capital.

Under the title “Our Human Rights, Our Future! Defending Most Vulnerable People and the Next Generations”, the summer school aimed at bridging academic knowledge with the hands-on experience of practitioners and activists. It provided an introductory understanding of what human rights are, focusing on the rights of specific categories at risk (such as children, women and disabled people), on the environment, as well as on how to organise an advocacy campaign, while exploring case studies from other countries of the Southeast Asian region.

During the 6 days of the School, a pool of 9 teachers, comprising the best UNTL lecturers and local human rights experts trained by the Global Campus in 2019-20, delivered 5 thematic

classes, lead 2 events in partnership with the French Cooperation Office in Timor-Leste, and with the local Human Rights Defenders Network (RDDU). Moreover, they prepared and accompanied the participants on a field trip in the eastern municipality of Hera, to focus on environmental rights by visiting one of the largest conservation projects in the country.

This new academic activity was designed for university alumni coming from all over Timor-Leste universities, with representation from each of the country's districts, so as to make human rights education available even to young activists and early professionals who are not based in the capital city. Importantly, the summer school was the first training activity of the Centre which is not limited to UNTL beneficiaries, hence the 25 participants were selected also among the graduates of the other universities of the country.

The summer school represented an incubator for conceptualizing and developing future post-graduate educational activities in support of the Centre's growth.



Summer school participants attend a study visit to the largest mangrove conservation project in Timor-Leste



# Research

As part of its mandate to develop human rights education and research at the UNTL, in 2022 the Centre launched its first research project. Building on the skills acquired during the first cycle training in 2019-20, this activity con-

stituted a unique opportunity for the UNTL-HRC associates to conduct original research to be published in Tetun, and disseminated locally and regionally through the UNTL and the Global Campus Asia Pacific networks.



The research project explored the impact and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic response in Timor-Leste, in relation to the most pressing human rights, social, economic, and cultural rights, political and civil rights issues, including a focus on marginalized and vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, LGBT, students and other relevant case studies through five academic papers:

- The Impact of COVID-19 on the LGBT Community in Municipality of Dili and Liquica in Timor-Leste
- The Impact of COVID-19 on the Online Learning at the UNTL
- The Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Right to Education in Timor-Leste
- The Use of Social Media and the Freedom of Expression During the COVID-19 pandemic in Timor-Leste
- The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Youth with Disabilities

The publication of the research was presented in December 2022 during the Dili Human Rights Education Week, and made available under the creative commons licence on the Global Campus Repository of Open Knowledge.

In April 2021, when the pandemic hit Timor-Leste most severely, university students faced great hardship due to a sanitary fence established around the capital Dili. The project hence joined a collective food donation organised by local CSOs Ekipa Tula Liman Hamutuk and Fundasaun Haburas providing 1850 kilos of food staples.

This was not the only relief initiative engaged by the project. In the immediate aftermath of the 2021 devastating floods, UNTL Human Rights Centre decided to organize a small humanitarian action: a clean-up team made of Staff and UNTL students, bought equipment (such as wheelbarrows, spades etc) with which they have helped the community in Aitarak-Laran suco, one of the most effected. The tools were then donated to the community to increase their resilience.



# Handover

In December, the Global Campus and the National University together with the EU Delegation jointly organised the “Dili Human Rights Education Week”, a major event to present and discuss the results of the four-year capacity building project, as well as the final handover ceremony of the UNTL Human Rights Centre.

This umbrella event comprised a series of academic and outreach activities under the patronage of the Presidency of the Republic and in the context of the year marking the 20th anniversary of the Timorese independence. The opening session took place on 10 December, the international human rights day, with the launch of the trilingual textbook “Our Human Rights, our Future!” and the awarding of diplomas to the 21 UNTL lecturers with their diplomas for having finalised the training of trainers on human rights education organised by the Centre in 2022.

Other activities of the week included the presentation of the six master’s theses by the Timorese human rights defenders who successfully completed the Global Campus Asia-Pacific programme; the publication of the first research project of the UNTL Human Rights Centre, the sub-regional launch of the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberties; the screening of the awarded documentary “Bigger Than Us” together with the Embassy of France; and a stakeholders workshop to discuss the future perspectives for the UNTL Human Rights Centre.

Surely, the most important moment of the week was represented by the high-level handover ceremony of the Human Rights Centre from the Global Campus to the National University. This was organised as part of the ceremony for the awarding of the prestigious “Sergio Vieira de Mello Human Rights Prize”, conferred by the President of the Republic since 2009. This event represented the deserved conclusion for all tireless efforts made during the project implementation, and to proudly celebrate the success story of this new academic institution.

After four intense years, the Centre had demonstrated its readiness to be integrated into the National University as its youngest unit, and to be set to give its important contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy, for a more just and equitable Timor-Leste. With the closing of the project, a new chapter opens up for the UNTL Human Rights Centre which will continue its core activities while also enduring the close collaboration with the Global Campus through joint projects, and as an associate of the regional network for the Asia-Pacific. At the same time, the Global Campus will build on this successful model and continue supporting other emerging universities of developing countries in their commitment to set up quality human rights education.

5 staff

3000+ students educated

2000+ participants to events

65% female

45 trainees

65+ outreach activities

800+ library visits

35% male



GC Secretary General and GC Asia-Pacific director symbolically handover the Centre’s key to the UNTL Rector



Closing stakeholders’ consultation meeting to discuss the vision, mission and strategic objective of the Centre

# Independent evaluation

At the end of the project, an independent external evaluation took place, commissioned by the EU to assess the results and impact of the action. After a competitive tender and selection, the evaluation was carried out between November 2022 and March 2023 by Dr Kerry Longhurst, an academic evaluator in international higher education.

The evaluation found broad appreciation of the project and a substantial need and demand in Timor-Leste for its continuation. The evaluation also identified some points for consideration in the context of the handover of the HRC to UNTL, and the need to build on the projects' achievements thus far and to keep up a positive momentum.

According to the evaluation, the project demonstrated how with the use of EU funds, structured cooperation with a national university and the close involvement of local stakeholders and civil society, significant capacities in human rights teaching, research and outreach can be created from scratch.

The assessment also states that the project demonstrated how human rights education can further national development strategies, advance the EU's Human Rights Action Plan and contribute to the internationalisation of the higher education sector in a Least Developed Country.

Moreover, the evaluator argues that the EU's Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2019 championed the project's achievements in bringing quality human rights education to the Timorese, its function as a hub for civil society and its outreach activities with local stakeholders. According to the evaluation this is further confirmed by the fact that in the following year's report the project was referred to as the EU's 'human rights flagship programme in Timor-Leste'. Eventually, according to Dr Longhurst, these statements confirm the success of the project, its multiple transformative effects and that its outcomes exceeded initial expectations in terms of teaching, research and outreach.

## Concrete Achievements (as for the evaluation)

1. Human rights and democracy education has been successfully mainstreamed into Timor-Leste's tertiary sector and a robust network of 'educators and learners' across all UNTL faculties.
2. Significant human and physical capacities were created at UNTL.
3. The project kick-started academic and policy-relevant research at UNTL.
4. Partnerships between UNTL-HRC and local NGOs and civil society actors were consolidated.
5. UNTL's institutional goals for internationalisation and cooperation with regional universities were significantly advanced.
6. By using GC best practice in stakeholder management, strong partnerships were built and effectively sustained.
7. National human rights challenges and development strategies were concretely addressed, as were cross-cutting issues, including gender.

## Recommendations by the evaluation

### 1. Teaching

- 1.1 Prioritise the creation and embedding of MA-level transversal courses in human rights at UNTL.
- 1.2 Maintain and expand the scope of human rights training for a greater number of UNTL academic staff.
- 1.3 Develop specialist teaching in children's rights based on HRC's research in this field.
- 1.4 Expand numbers of non-academic lecturers involved in the conceptualisation and implementation of training and teaching activities, including experts from local user and donor communities.

### 2. Integration with the Global Campus

- 2.1 UNTL-HRC should ensure that its own vision of relations with APMA and the GC is up to date, includes a concrete work programme with a timeframe for achieving objectives and that it is fully implemented.
- 2.2 Opportunities within the 'Shape Sea' regional initiative should be fully explored and exploited.

### 3. Impact

- 3.1 UNTL-HRC should develop a systematic way of recording and measuring the impact of its activities, including keeping track of the extent and contexts in which UNTL graduates use their human rights knowledge after leaving university.
- 3.2 The HRC needs to continue to make the most of its achievements and to showcase its academic and policy-relevant activities and outputs on UNTL's website and social media platforms, keeping a record of how many visits and downloads posts and documents get.

3.3 In cooperation with the GC project manager HRC staff should establish methods to identify how its activities impact human rights in Timor-Leste.

#### 4. Coherence with Stakeholders

4.1 Activities should continue to be aligned with the EU's Human Rights Action Plan and the UN SDGs.

4.2 Activities need to be continuously updated to reflect gender and other cross-cutting issues in ways relevant to Timor-Leste's socio-economic development.

4.3 Activities should be designed and carried out to further Timor Leste's national development strategies. The HRC should engage in a systematic internal discussion about how its activities can best achieve this.

4.4 UNTL-HRC should consider how its activities can make the most out of collaboration with CPLP states and in the context of Timor-Leste's possible membership in ASEAN.

#### 5. Managing UNTL-HRC

5.1 Continue to work with the GC programme manager to monitor the training-needs of all HRC staff as a basis for individual / group training activities to address potential competence gaps.

5.2 Continue to work with APMA and the GC to support HRC staff to develop their project management skills, including financial management and monitoring and evaluation procedures.

5.3 UNTL should engage in full consultation with APMA and the GC when it comes to new staff / Directorial appointments at HRC.

5.4 HRC's director, alongside the GC programme manager, should carry out routine staff reviews and performance appraisals.

#### 6. Research

6.1 The HRC's research on children's rights should continue to be prioritised in close collaboration with APMA and the GC.

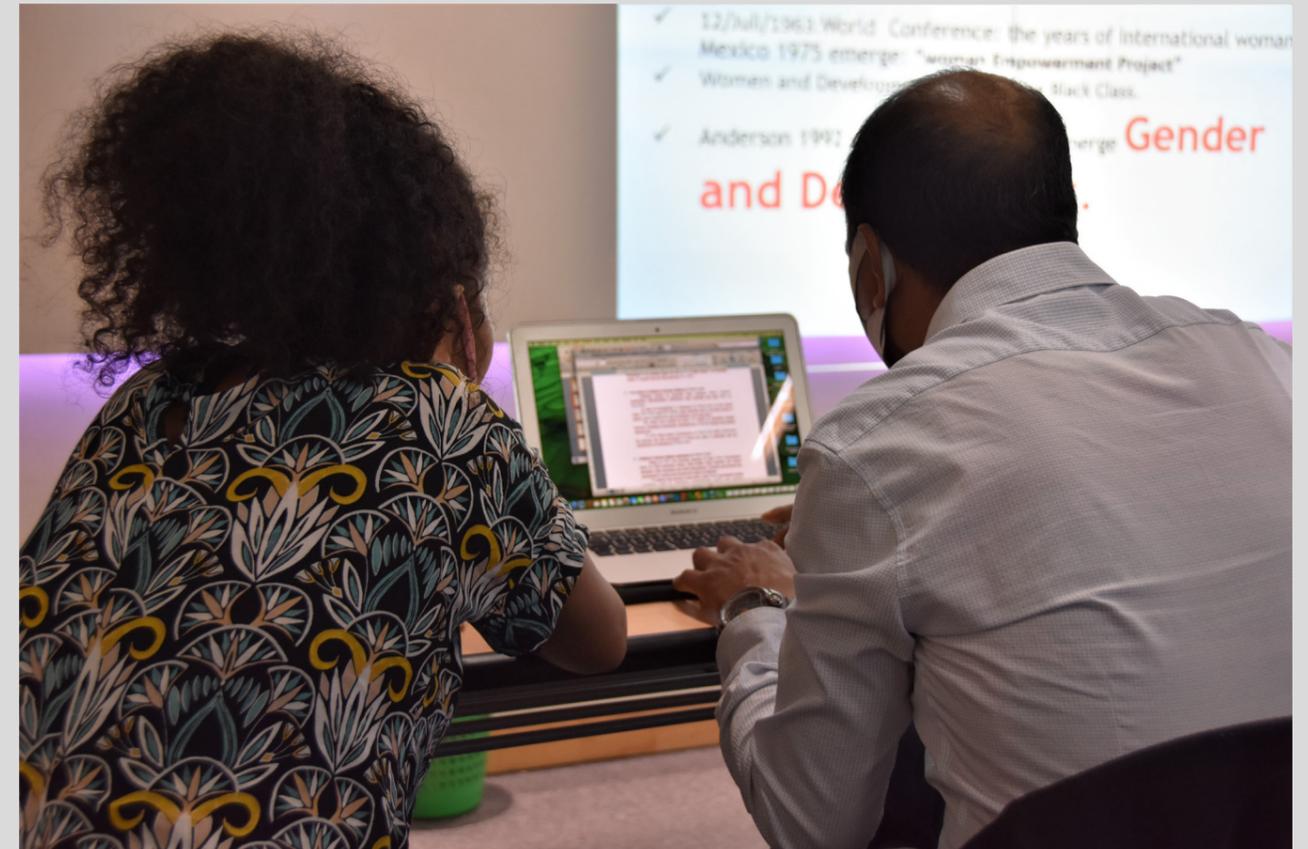
6.2 The HRC's ongoing research and outputs need to be more robustly 'showcased' with local stakeholders and donors, as well as across the Global Campus, with the help of the GC project manager.

6.3 UNTL should ensure that HRC staff have sufficient time to pursue top-up research training.

#### 7. Outreach with civil society

7.1 Continue to work with local NGOs, civil society, grassroots and youth organisations through an open-door policy and its 'Fridays4CSOs' initiative.

7.2 The HRC Director should lead a discussion about how to consolidate and systematically expand HRC's engagement with civil society.



# Project timeline

- 2019**
- January:** assessment mission and signing of the MoU
  - March:** recruitment of staff and identification of trainees
  - May:** training programmes begin in Dili and Bangkok
  - June:** refurbishment works start
  - August:** inauguration ceremony of the Centre's premises
  - September:** the Centre hosts its first public activities
  - December:** the library is opened to the public
- 2020**
- February:** conceptualization of the textbook and digital teaching tools
  - April:** in-person activities are limited by the Covid-19 pandemic
  - August:** teaching methodology trainings are re-organized in Dili due to travel bans
  - October:** the new human rights course is adopted by the University
- 2021**
- April:** the teaching toolkit is finalized as a beta version for testing
  - June:** academic retreat of teaching staff to fine-tune the preparations of the new course
  - August:** the six human rights defenders finalize their MA at the GC Asia-Pacific programme
  - September:** the new human rights course is thought as a pilot edition involving about 1200 students
  - October:** the Centre hosts the human rights section of the Dili International Film Festival
  - December:** Diploma Ceremony for 20 project trainees, together with the EU and Nobel Laureate José Ramos-Horta
- 2022**
- February:** the second cohort of lecturers start its training of trainers in Dili
  - March:** the Centre teams up with UN Women for the "Safe Campus" initiative to address gender based violence cases in academia
  - July:** the first HRC Summer School is implemented in Dare
  - September:** the second edition of the human rights course is implemented involving about 2000 students
  - November:** new projects and funding are agreed with the University and development partners to continue the growth of the Centre
  - December:** the Centre is handed over during the "Dili Human Rights Education Week"
- 2023**
- April:** the external evaluation is finalized and presented
  - June:** the overall reporting duties to the EU are fulfilled



A view of the Dili Bay from the city centre



The second cohort of human rights lecturers are awarded their diplomas during the Dili Human Rights Education Week in December 2022

# Acknowledgements

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## Dili office staff

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## GC Asia Pacific at Mahidol University

Michael Hayes, Yanuar Sumarlan, Caio Perim, Jariya Jaruak, Bencharat Sae Chua, Coeli Barry

## Trainees

### 1st cycle

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### 2nd cycle

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## Implementing partners

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Prof. Miguel Martins, Prof. Joao Soares Martins, Vice-Rectors Prof. Miguel Maia (†) and Prof. Samuel Venencio da Sousa Freitas, and the UNTL Rector's Office team Diogo Freitas da Silva, Marianna Chaves

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For more information on the project visit:

[www.gchumanrights.org/education/capacity-development-programme.html](http://www.gchumanrights.org/education/capacity-development-programme.html)

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